

Festival honors Italian fur trader

'This is living history,' organizer says of Henri di Tonty Festival

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Henri di Tonty arrived in Kingston yesterday afternoon the same way he arrived for the first time in 1678.

Dressed in full period costume and led by a group of six natives from the Tyendinaga Reserve, di Tonty — played by Kingstonian Michael Marrello — arrived on foot at the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes all ready to take part in the Tonty Festival.

The festival had been organized to honor the first Italian fur trader to arrive in the area, and was spon-

sored by the Italo Canadian Club and CFFX Radio.

"This is living history," said organizer Phil Quattrocchi, "a real lesson."

According to fellow-organizer Richard Gold, who is curator of the MacLachlan Woodworking Museum in Pittsburgh Township, di Tonty was a real adventurer.

Di Tonty lost his hand during his service in the French military after a grenade went off beside him. "He replaced it with an iron hook," said Mr. Gold, "and then a copper fist. He used that fist as a personal weapon.

"Di Tonty was a lieutenant under the explorer, LaSalle. And La-

Salle even named an island after him — Ile Tonty — which is now Amherst Island," Mr. Gold said.

During the festival, "di Tonty" was welcomed by natives from the Tyendinaga Reserve and members from Legion 560, who told him of the changes to Canada over the past 300 years. Legion members each carried a different provincial flag to show to the explorer.

"I am surprised to discover that my island has been re-named," joked "di Tonty." A group called Peacemakers Drum and Dancers from the Tyendinaga reserve performed a friendship dance in traditional costume. Several onlookers joined in and danced alongside

them.

Native women then picked corn and squash from the Unity Garden, which is located beside the museum. (These vegetables were later delivered to the Kingston food bank.)

"The spirit of the event was joyful. All kinds of different people were working together on the program," said Mr. Gold. "It was a real fundamental sense of different cultures getting along together and co-operating. That was the point of the whole day."

He estimated that 250 people took part in the Tonty Festival, which included spectators and participants.