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Six Nations celebration attracts

By Lynn Douris
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OHSWEKEN — Rain and cold weather on Monday didn't stop thousands of people from attending the Six Nations Independence Day celebrations.

About 2,500 people stood outside at the Ohsweken fairgrounds waiting for the traditional distribution of bread and cheese.

Volunteers distributed 3,000 pounds of cheese and 1,600 loaves of bread to crowds inside the Six Nations Sports and Cultural Memorial Centre.

Queen Victoria began the tradition more than 100 years ago. Each year, on her birthday, she provided money for blankets for members of the reserve in recognition of their loyalty to the Crown during the American Revolution. The gift was changed to bread and cheese when blankets became more expensive.

After Queen Victoria's death, the Six Nations continued the tradition

and the event is now paid for by the band council.

Modern celebrations include a midway, games booths and bingo.

The traditional parade, cancelled last year, went on despite the rain. It included a marching band dressed in traditional costumes, and a variety of floats, including one from the Six Nations Figure Skating Club. Miss Six Nations, Debbie Johnson, rode in an open car.

The outdoor sporting events were cancelled, but the midway and concession stands remained open.

"I'm just totally amazed that so many people showed up," said Cheryl Henhawk, one of the organizers.

There were so many people at the fairgrounds that parking became a nightmare. "Next year we're definitely having parking attendants. People are just abandoning their cars," Miss Henhawk said.

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despite

weather