

# event celebrates Nationhood

By Donna Durie  
Writer

In what has become a sort of tourist phenomenon, the 118th annual Bread and Cheese Day event held at the Gaylord Powless arena on Monday brought out droves of visitors from near and far. Judging from Sunday's crowds, there were plenty of non-natives in atten-

shouted "Let's eat some Bread and Cheese!"

Brant Liberal MPP Dave Levac, beads of sweat dripping from his face in the sweltering arena, welcomed the hungry crowd with an inspiring speech about peace and friendship.

"Thank you for inviting me to be on the territory and bring greetings," said Levac, who is also Speaker

The event was kicked off with a parade that threaded its way down Fourth Line Road into the arena parking lot, led by the Six Nations Veterans' Association and accompanied by a pipe band.

Volunteers at the bread and cheese tables moved like a well-oiled machine, serving thousands one large hunk of bread and cheese



**Lacrosse players come in all ages and these little guys had just finished the long parade route before coming in to get their bread and cheese.**

dance at an event that was historically meant to be celebrated by Six Nations people marking their nationhood and status as Allies of the British Crown.

Elected Chief Hill welcomed the crowd numbering well over 5,000 people to the "tourist" event.

"It's an exciting day," she

of the House at Queen's Park in Toronto. "Queen Victoria had it right; she just wanted to say thank you, for being a friend, for being an ally. We have to treat each other with respect and be a good friend. I will continue to do that as long as I'm your representative at Queen's Park."

each, the moment they started pouring through the doors of the arena at 12 p.m. sharp.

By 12:45 p.m., there was no more cheese left so a number of volunteers just handed out big bags of left



**Steve Williams a long time Bread and Cheese volunteer welcomes Brant MPP Dave Levac to the event where the MPP said "Queen Victoria had it right...she just wanted to say thank you for being a friend, for being an ally." he told the crowd.**



**Dolly Powless-Anderson 83, has seen a lot of Bread and Cheese even when she was at the Mohawk Institute she said they took the students in their tunics The bread and cheese looked bigger when I was smaller" she said.**



**Miss Six Nations Chelsey shows off some bread and cheese after getting tips from Turtle Island News editor Lynda Powless on handing out the goodies to the waiting crowd. (Photo by Donna Durie)**

over bread to the last few stragglers coming into the arena.



**Elected Chief Ava Hill hands out Bread and Cheese.**

In the parking lot, a fun midway with lots of rides and booths serving up tasty carnival fare accompanied the annual Bread and Cheese celebration, as a hot mid-day sun left many seeking shelter under the shade to enjoy their tasty treats.

Six Nations has been celebrating Bread and Cheese on Victoria Day since the early 1860s when the Confederacy Chiefs first organized the event marked by gifts of blankets from Queen Victoria to her allies

on her birthday. It later changed to bread and cheese and when the Canada imposed the band council systems across the country in 1924 the band continued the tradition using Six Nations trust funds to pay for the annual event. The day is marked with speeches, games and a gift of bread and cheese to community members.

It is meant to remember the Haudenosaunee peoples' prominent role in the War of 1812, celebrating them as Crown allies.

In 1898, the Haudenosaunee Chiefs' Council spent \$30 for 600 loaves of bread and \$50 for 800

pounds of cheese.

This year, Six Nations Elected Council spent \$25,000 for 2,000 loaves of bread and 2,000 kg of cheese.

The event was paid for by Queen Victoria, who marked the Crown's relationship with its Haudenosaunee allies, until her death in 1901.

The HCCC began paying for the event until 1924, when Canada installed an elected band council system who took on paying for the celebration out of a special coffer called the "Ottawa Trust" fund.

There is roughly \$2 million in that fund.



**Band Councillor Dave Hill gives the thumbs up to the event as he helps hand out bread and cheese. (Photo by Donna Durie)**