

Mohawk chapel celebrates Queen's Diamond Jubilee

By Donna Duric
Writer

Dozens of Six Nations people celebrated the Queen's 60th year on the throne at the famed Royal Chapel of the Mohawks Sunday, reiterating their allied relationship with the Crown formed hundreds of years ago.

Speakers, dancers and refreshments marked the celebration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee as the late afternoon sun peeked through the canopy of trees dotting the front lawn of the historic chapel.

There was a heavy Six Nations cultural influence on the celebrations, with prominent local farmer Barry Hill playing the organ, the Emily C. General Soft Shoe Dancers, and elected Councillor Bob Johnson addressing the crowd. Six Nations' Augustus Jamieson opened the ceremonies with a tradi-

tional thanksgiving prayer in Mohawk.

Johnson said the purpose of the day's service was to ensure that Six Nations' allied relationship with the Crown and other Europeans was not forgotten.

"My message is simply referring to the political ties we have with England," he said. "As far as I'm concerned, we still have a direct tie."

Baptized Christians were invited to take part in the "Eucharist" (eating bread, which symbolizes the broken body of Christ, and drinking wine, which represents Christ's blood) others were invited to receive a blessing from the clergy present.

Instead of tithing, participants offered donations for Six Nations Welfare and Innovations' annual Christmas Baskets program, which sees gifts and food go toward deserving families and children

on Six Nations every Christmas.

The Emily C. General Soft Shoe Dancers entertained the crowd with an old moccasin dance, women's shuffle dance and a smoke dance.

The infusion of Six Nations culture at an institution that represents a dark chapter in the history of aboriginal people was an irony not lost on Brant MPP Dave Levac.

He pointed out that the chapel stood only a few hundred metres down the road from the "Mush Hole", also known as the Mohawk Institute. The residential school aimed to erase Six Nations' culture and assimilate children into mainstream Canadian society and was run by various Protestant and Catholic churches in conjunction with the Canadian government of the time.



Chapel board member Barry Hill plays during the ceremony. (Photo by Donna Duric)

"These were children who were told not to honour their traditions," Levac told the congregation. "As a child walking through the playground and seeing those children and not knowing, I'm sorry."

Her Majesty's Royal Chapel of the Mohawks is the oldest building in Ontario and the first Protestant Church in Upper Canada. Constructed in 1785 by the British Crown, the chapel was given to the Mohawks

led by Joseph Brant for their support of the Crown during the American Revolution. The celebration was funded through a grant from the federal government through the Heritage Ministry and Celebrate Canada Program.