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Huge crowds attend Wilno's Kashub Day Festival on weekend

By Gerald Tracey
News Editor

Wilno -- A group of Kashubian visitors from the homeland of many of Wilno's ancestors -- Kazsebe -- are back home after a week-long visit to Canada's first Kashubian and Polish settlements, likely tired and weary, but filled with many fond memories of their stay here.

The group flew out of Pearson International Airport Monday, just two days after the 18th annual Kashub Day Festival in the small hamlet of Wilno where a couple of thousand people enjoyed food and music, dancing and drinking, and socializing with friends and relatives.

The festival has become a homecoming of sorts for many people who make it a point to attend the celebrations, held the first Saturday in May, regardless of weather. This year, the weatherman provided a mixed bag with the celebrations starting off with 18C temperatures with sunny periods that changed to showers and a cool front moving in later in the day.

But despite Mother Nature's change of mood, it did not dampen the spirits of the celebrants nor did it keep them from turning out in large numbers.

Among the highlights of the celebration is the crowning of the honorary Kashub, the crowning of the Royal Kashubian family, the unveiling of family stones in beautiful Heritage Park and music and dancing.

"People actually stayed, despite the weather, because they want to celebrate their heritage," remarked David Shulist (aka Johnny Kashub), one of the festival organizers.

Mr. Shulist believes Canadians enjoy celebrating other cultures and this was evidenced Saturday by the large number of non-Kashubs who enjoyed the festivities.

"We build bridges, not fences," Mr. Shulist said. "And I think that is a big plus for us here."

He said this year's celebrations were a bit special with 18 visitors attending from the Kashub homeland of Kaszebe. "They enjoyed themselves so much," Mr. Shulist said. "They couldn't be-

lieve how we end up celebrating our culture here which is connected to the homeland."

For all but one or two of the visitors it was their first visit to Wilno and they were amazed at what has been done here by the locals to preserve their heritage almost 150 years after the first families left Kaszebe.

"They were absolutely in shock that they could sit down with someone that speaks the same language as they do," Mr. Shulist said.

Henry Bartul, a native of Gdansk, Poland who now lives in Barry's Bay, was crowned the Honorary Kashub, a title given to a non-Kashub for his or her contribution in helping to preserve and promote the Kashubian culture.

Mr. Bartul is a filmmaker and has produced two documentaries on Wilno and its history entitled: *Canadian Kashuby Part I - The story of Canada's first Polish settlement 1858-2008* and *Part 2, 1950 to 2010*. Mr. Bartul moved to Mississauga upon his arrival from Poland and retired in recent years to Barry's Bay. He began filming for his documentaries in 1996. He presented copies to the visitors to take back with them.

Introduced by Mr. Shulist, Mr. Bartul first swallowed a glass of Kashubian vodka and then kissed the *dupa* of the *pupka* (the rear end of a toy doll) which is part of the tradition of accepting the honour, much like a Newfie (Newfoundlander) kisses a cod.

Mr. Shulist introduced the 18 visitors who were dressed in traditional Kashubian regalia and as they stood before the crowd, Gienek Preczkowscy, a member of the group told the Canadian Kashubs they were very proud of them for protecting the Kashubian tradition and language.

Mr. Preczkowscy introduced four young high school students from the visiting group and said they would like to begin an exchange with students of Kashubian ancestry in the Wilno area who could teach each other their languages. He also extended an invitation to Canadian Kashubs to visit their homeland.

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Crowned Queen and King of the Kashubs

Margaret (Dombroskie) and Zigmund (Ziggy) Biernaski of Round Lake were chosen as this year's King and Queen at the annual Kashub Day Festival in Wilno Saturday. Mr. Biernaskie has been a volunteer at the Wilno Heritage Park since it was established several years ago and Mrs. Biernaskie has written several family books on the Kashubian heritage.

BV brings in \$2 bag fee and new tags

By Debbi Christinck
Staff Writer

Eganville -- As Bonnechere Valley council brings in a new waste management plan, bag fees and service fees will be going up, and the unpopular clear plastic bags will be replaced with tags.

A bag of garbage will soon cost \$2, up from \$1.50 or an increase of about 35 per cent. The service fees at the Snodrifters site, which were \$20, will be increased to \$35 to cover the cost of having a township employee travel to the site to open the gate for a contractor or business on a day the site is not normally open. The new fees go into effect on May 20.

These are some of the changes to be introduced to the community and which council outlined in a new brochure being prepared for ratepayers. Although the change in bag fee will be introduced, it was not brought up during the review of the brochure at last Tuesday's committee meeting of council and only addressed after a question from the *Leader* on the bag fee.

"We have not had an increase in the bag fee in four years," Mayor Jennifer Murphy noted.

"If we are doing an update on waste, we need to tell people the bag fees are going up," Councillor Meredith Jamieson agreed.

However, council did discuss the switch from plastic bags to tags.

"We think this will be a big bonus for people who don't like the clear plastic bags," the mayor said.

In the past people have been known to place their own dark garbage bag inside the plastic bags before they are picked up. Now ratepayers can purchase their own bags and attach the tag for garbage pick up.

The tags will be available at the township office, although there are 2,500 clear plastic bags remaining the municipality will sell first. The "punch" card used at the waste transfer sites will also continue to be available, although the price is going up for the card to reflect the new \$2 fee. Cards purchased before the fee increase is implemented will still be accepted at the waste transfer sites.

There are other changes as the township amalgamates into one waste stream following the departure from the Ottawa Valley Waste Recovery Centre. Organic bins are available for use now at all transfer stations (except Snodrifters where household waste is never accepted) and this is a free service to residents. There is no charge for dropping off organics.

Councillor Jackie Agnew said many people have been asking about organics and how this will work.

"They need to understand it is free for them," she said.

Mayor Murphy said the new brochure on waste will be something residents can continually use for reference to see what can be composted under the new organics program, as well as containing more information on the hazardous waste transfer facility and a continuing emphasis on the blue box recycling program.

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Gravel from former mayor's pit was the best deal

By Debbi Christinck
Staff Writer

Golden Lake -- North Algona Wilberforce council has been plagued by several issues, not the least of which is the gravel controversy over purchasing gravel from former Mayor Harold Weckworth at the Berndt Road site, but speaking publicly the former works superintendent stands behind the decision to use that site.

"Accountability and transparency are not terms that popped up only for this council but have been around for a long time," Harvey Reckzin, who retired as NAW works superintendent three years ago, said. "I stand by my decision to pursue the value of this pit for the ratepayers of the township because I am one of them and pay taxes also."

He offered a little clarity on the gravel issue for *Leader* readers, as well as some information on the challenges of finding good, acces-

sible gravel.

The township first began looking for a reliable good quality gravel source in 2006, he recalled.

"Many different gravel pits were considered, because all gravel is not the same," he said. "It was a problem that most municipalities were faced with."

At the time, he recalled a contractor he had employed had started a new extraction area on Berndt Road.

"This was before the aggregate act and influence of the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR)," he noted. "We now live in an era of engineers and technical data to put the onus on someone else to make decisions with regards to these matters."

The township had had a record with using various gravel suppliers with poor results, such as Shaw Woods Road being closed one spring because of inferior gravel, which turned to pure mud, Mr. Reckzin said. Having a township gravel source seemed like

a good idea, he noted.

"The biggest hurdle we had to cross was getting the mayor who owned the land (Mr. Weckworth) to agree to let us move forward," he said. "His main concern was the fact that any agreement might be perceived as a 'conflict of interest'."

The mayor recused himself from any discussion about this gravel pit and every conceivable aspect was examined, Mr. Reckzin said.

"We felt that we were not doing anything illegal or morally wrong," he said. "Apparently at least one ratepayer felt differently about this."

The process of licensing the pit was done under the watchful eye of the MNR, Mr. Reckzin noted.

"If you have had the occasion of dealing with the MNR you will understand that everything has to be documented and verified," he said. "They were not about to licence a pit

that had any shadow hanging over it; the landowner still owned the land and the township owned the licence with sole extraction rites."

Having its own pit made NAW the envy of other townships, he said.

"There was always a premium for gravel and the money is in the hauling of it, so having a close source is important," he said.

Mayor Weckworth never set the price for gravel while Mr. Reckzin was working at the township, he added. The township at the time determined a good going rate of \$1 a yard, which was the lowest rate possible in the area at the time. Other pits in the area were much more expensive, he added.

"This was done by me and he always agreed to my recommendations," he said. "Believe it or not, we thought that we were doing the ratepayers of the township a favour by providing a cheap source of gravel."

There were other pits being considered, including one in the Deacon area, which would have meant a long truck haul to the Rankin area. Another pit which was still undeveloped was on Passaw Road which was not suitable for large equipment and had to be upgraded by the township, he said. (The road still has not been upgraded to the required standard).

"The last pit considered was on Black Creek Road, but we considered the cost of the raw material and to my knowledge even today there has been very little activity at this site," he said.

The Berndt Road Pit was also a good location, close to many gravel roads and accessible for the whole township, the former road superintendent said.

Eventually the township will have to find a new site anyway, he noted. Council knew the pit would not last forever, he said.

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