

# Native Americans share their culture at Autumn Harvest fest



Chelsea Cleland of Waterford celebrates Ojibway Nation traditions with her children, Behnmi, 5, (left) and Kniwi, 2. They participated in the Autumn Harvest Indian Festival last year, at the Southfield Pavilion.

How do you prepare fry bread? Why do Native Americans make cuchia dolls? And what's the difference between a wigwam and a teepee? You'll find the answers to those and other questions about Native American culture during the 10th annual Autumn Harvest Indian Festival, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 9 and 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 10 at the Southfield Pavilion, 26000 Evergreen, a half mile south of 11 Mile, Southfield.

Visitors will experience Native American traditions through its colorful dances, drumming, storytelling, crafts and foods.

"It really draws the attention of families because this time of year, children are learning about Thanksgiving, Native Americans and pilgrims. A lot of Native Americans don't want to be represented just by Thanksgiving," said Alexis Bourkoulas, vice president and general manager of the Metro Parent Publishing Group, which produces the festival. "There's a wonderful culture behind it. The dancing is spiritual and mesmerizing."

Twenty-five dancers — many of them from Michigan — will perform during the festival. "They represent the three nations that are indigenous to Michigan — Ojibway, Potawatomi and Ottawa. We have Native American singers and drummers."

For several years the event organizers produced an authentic pow wow, which required adherence to specific spiritual traditions. "The circle must be blessed. You must please all of the (Native American) nations represented and everyone had different customs," she said. "We did a full-blown pow wow until about four years ago. Now it's exhibition dancing. The dance-



Travis Schuyler, 17, of Livonia, is a grass dancer descended from the Oneida Nation. He'll perform ceremonial dances at the Autumn Harvest Indian Festival Nov. 9-10 at the Southfield Pavilion.

ing is the same. It's just the different ceremonial pieces we are not required to do. Only someone who attends pow wows would understand the differences."

William Memberto director of Urban and Indian Affairs, Detroit, will emcee the dancing, explaining the significance of such dances as the Grass Dance and Jingle Dance. The Swirling Wind Singers will drum for the performance.

"The inter-tribal dance is

open for children to dance, too. The emcee teaches kids how to dance — it's fairly easy to learn — and they learn that the circle is sacred. It's symbolic of the circle of life."

All of the festival's 55 traders are Native Americans. They'll sell items — including musical instruments, moccasins, jewelry, pottery, blankets and garments that represent their tribes.

Vendors also will sell authentic Native American foods, such as Indian tacos, fry bread, buffalo burgers and corn soup.

Youngsters can duck inside a teepee and a wigwam and learn about the different dwellings.

"They can check it out, which is a cool experience," Bourkoulas said. "We'll have a Native American storyteller as well."

Youngsters can take home a packaged craft — a totem pole — and make a cuchia doll on site.

"The cuchia doll represents the spirits that carry the prayers of the Native American people," Bourkoulas noted.

She said families should plan to spend 2- to 2 1/2-hours at the festival.

Admission is \$6.50 for ages 3 and up. Group tickets are available in advance for \$5 each for groups of 10 or more, by calling (248) 352-0990. Parking is free.

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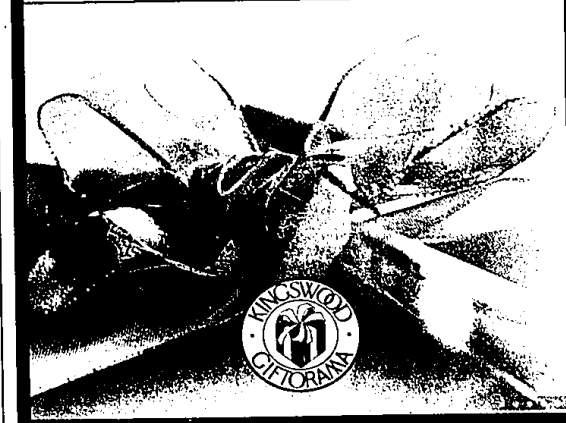
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