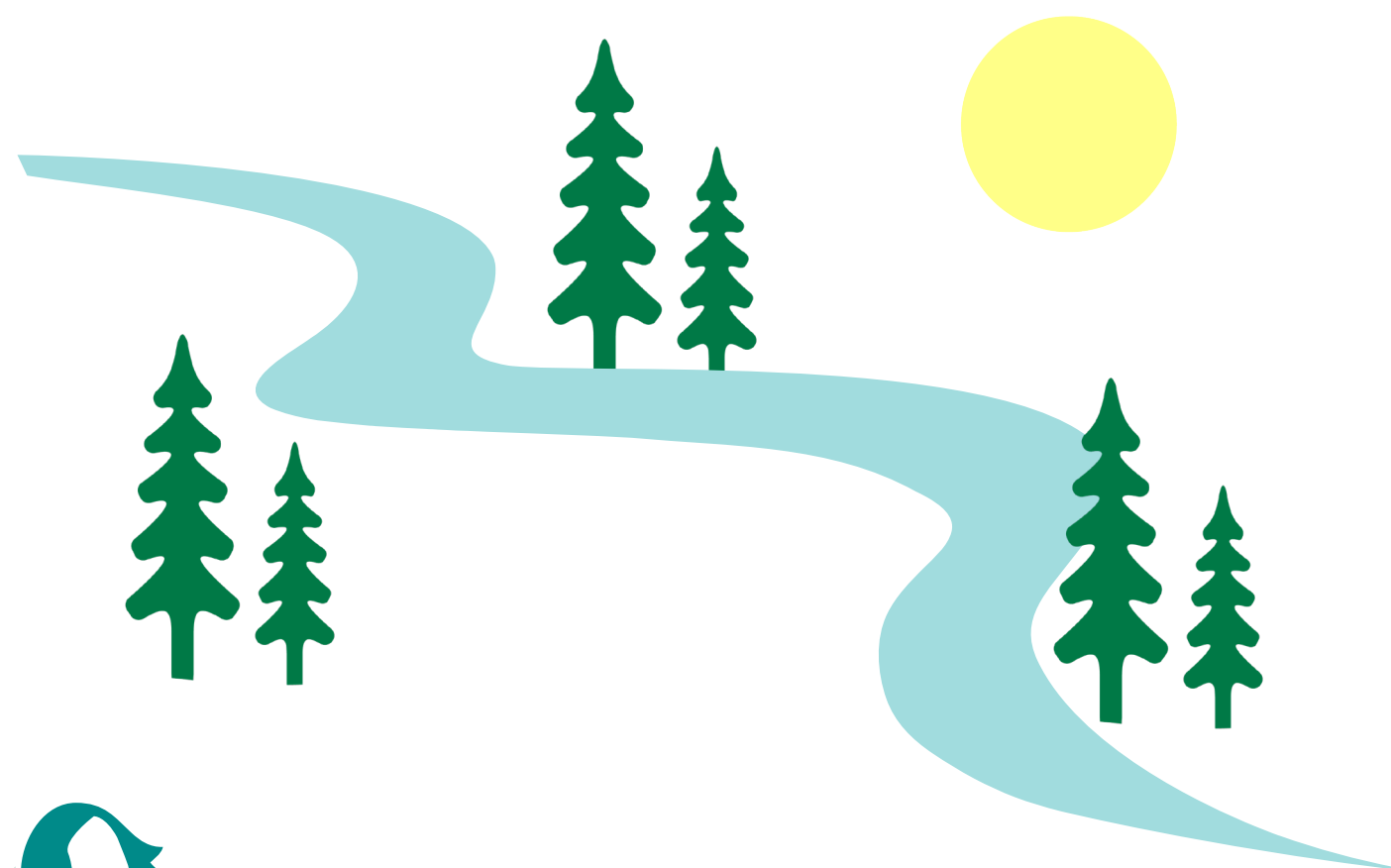




**French River
Pow Wow**

FRENCH RIVER POW WOW GUIDE

Boozhoo! Aanii! Welcome!

Each year the French River Visitor Centre First Nation & Aboriginal Advisory Committee partners with Ontario Parks, French River Visitor Centre to host an annual Pow Wow.

The French River Pow Wow is a traditional Pow Wow that welcomes and extends an invitation to the general public to participate in this event.

A Pow Wow is a cultural gathering that honours and celebrates Indigenous heritage and ceremony. Pow Wows can be public, private, traditional or competitive. A Pow Wow is not a performance or show for entertainment purposes.

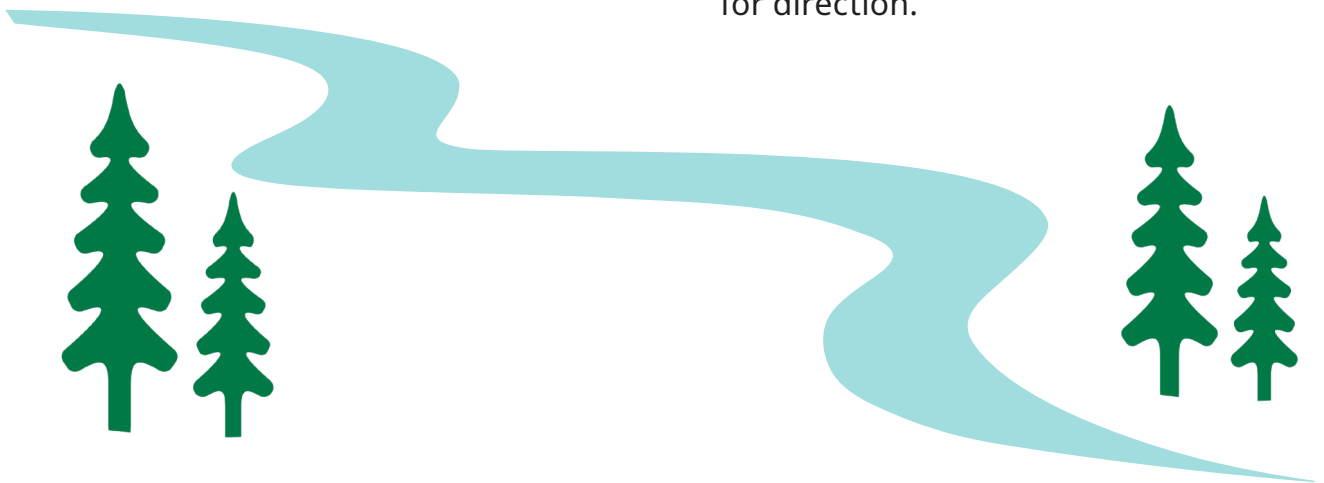
Please note that this is a not for profit event and voluntary donations can be made at the Information Booth in the Donation Box.

Pow Wow Protocol

Everyone is welcome to attend and participate in our Pow Wow, but we do request that you observe our protocol as follows:

1. **Absolutely, no alcohol or drugs** (including Cannabis use) is permitted, as this is a public, family event.
2. **Inappropriate, aggressive or abusive behavior is not respectful and WILL NOT be tolerated.** You will be asked to leave and/or escorted off the property.
3. **No dogs or animals are allowed** on the Pow Wow grounds. Please leave your pets at home or in a safe place. Only certified service dogs are permitted.
4. **Do not take any pictures or recordings without permission.** The Master of Ceremonies (M.C.) will identify when and if you are allowed to do this.
5. **Additionally, be respectful of Dancers and their Regalia.** Dancers have a spiritual connection to their Regalia, so do not touch or photograph them without their permission.
6. **Individuals who are experiencing their menstrual cycle or Moon Time, are asked to refrain from handling sacred items or medicines,** as this is considered to be a time of personal cleansing and powerful energy. Individuals are encouraged to use only Sage which is considered to be a feminine medicine.
7. **Do not dance while carrying your infant or child** as you are offering them up to the Creator.
8. **Listen and follow the information provided by the M.C.** who will direct the events of the day. They will also indicate when participants need to stand and remove their hats.
9. **Remember to bring your own seating** as certain areas may be designated/reserved for Elders, Dancers and/or Invited Speakers.

If you have questions, please approach one of the Pow Wow Volunteers for direction.



Reconciliation

Speech made by Shawn Spencer, Assistant Park Superintendent, Killarney & French River Provincial Park Cluster, Ontario Parks

September 2023

“Seventeen years ago, Chuck Miller, who was the Superintendent for French River Provincial Park at that time, understood that Ontario Parks needed to develop relationships with the Indigenous communities that have lived along and traveled the French River since time immemorial, to learn from them to better preserve the land.

We are charged to protect and to take the first steps down the long and hard path of reconciliation. So, when it was decided that a visitor centre would be built here on the French River, Chuck Miller knew that he needed to hear the voices of the Elders and educators of these communities to ensure that the construction of the visitor centre, development of its museum, and its ongoing operation could move forward in a good way.

Now, today (September 9, 2023), this is the 16th pow wow being held at the French River Visitor Centre, and I am glad to continue to walk the path that Chuck Miller began for Ontario Parks in his work with the committee.

The work that these Elders, educators, volunteers, and committee members began all those years ago laid the foundation for new Indigenous advisory committees and cultural events at Killbear, Rondeau, MacGregor Point, and many other provincial parks across the province.

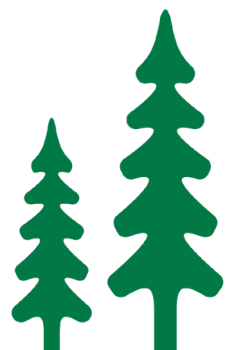
Now, back to where we are today (September 9, 2023), what the committee helped to create, and what it means to Ontario Parks. Inside the visitor center there is a museum that the committee helped to design. The exhibit in this museum is called, “The Voices of the River.” It tells the history of this place, the history of French River as we know it, to the best of our ability to tell this history.

There are recordings that can be played. Many are dramatizations of the words of long-dead historical figures, but some more recent displays have recordings of the actual voices of those who are still within living memory.

They tell their stories in their own words and in their own voice. They tell of how their history shaped the river, and how they were in turn shaped by the river.

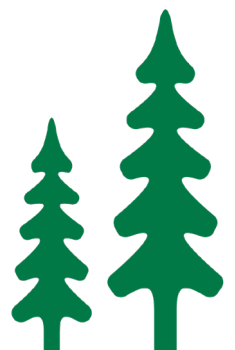
For Ontario Parks, the Elders, educators, and volunteers that comprise the committee and make this pow wow possible are the Voices of the River and I would like to thank them all again for the guidance that they offer Ontario Parks as we continue to walk the path towards reconciliation.

Thank you all.”



Terminology

- **Elder(s)** - Elders are individuals who have earned respect and recognition by their respective communities. They are knowledge keepers who have life experience, along with spiritual and cultural knowledge. Elders are committed to lifelong learning and sharing their knowledge with others. They are also seen as positive role models who have a deep respect for Indigenous ways of knowing.
- **Fire Keeper** – The Fire Keeper is one of the most important positions and part of any gathering. Fire Keepers are well respected, traditional individuals who walk their life path in a good way. They are responsible for opening and closing the spiritual doorways. They care for and maintain the sacred fire throughout the event.
- **Sacred Fire** – The Sacred Fire is often used in ceremonies and only sacred medicines, such as tobacco, sage, cedar and sweetgrass are placed in the fire. Individuals can use the medicines to make offerings, to acknowledge ancestors and/or for prayer.
- **Master of Ceremonies (MC)** – The MC informs, guides and directs the events of the day. They relay protocols like when to stand/sit, when to remove hats or when it is appropriate to take pictures. They can also manage the drum rotation, announce various dances and/or invited guest speakers.
- **Arena Director** – The Arena Director ensures that protocol is being followed according to the Elders. They direct the Grand Entry as to the proper order of participants. They keep the dance area clean and as natural as possible. They are responsible for keeping everyone moving.
- **Big Drum** – A Host Drum is responsible for the songs during Grand Entry, the Flag Song and Veteran's Song. Drums symbolize the circle of life and the heartbeat of Mother Earth.
- **Grand Entry** – Grand Entry represents the beginning of the Pow Wow. The Eagle Staff has the highest honour and enters first as it represents our Indigenous flag. This is followed by other Flags, Head Dancers and Dancers.
- **Blanket Dance** – During a Pow Wow, a blanket can be laid down and is used to collect voluntary, monetary offerings for a variety of reasons such as supporting dancers, drummers, individuals in need or as a gesture of honour.
- **Regalia** – Most Dancers wear a variety of clothing known as Regalia. Regalia has spiritual meaning to the Dancer and is often handcrafted to reflect personal significance.



Terminology

- **Men's Traditional** – This dance tells the story of a warrior through movements that represent hunting, tracking and fighting. Regalia can include a bustle, quillwork, beadwork and moccasins.
- **Women's Traditional** – Some dancers are stationary while another variation is a zig zag pattern or side step around the circle. This dance is softer and more graceful. It represents a woman's strength, pride and honour. Regalia can include buckskin with beadwork/ quillwork or cloth and cape with beadwork or quillwork.
- **Men's Fancy** – Dancers demonstrate fast footwork, spins and jumps. It requires strength and stamina. Regalia can include brightly colored regalia along with twin feather bustles. Most will also wear a roach on their head.
- **Women's Fancy Shawl** – Similar to the men's fancy dance. The shawl is the main extravagant part of the Regalia. Shawls are fringed, colorful and flashy. Chokers, earrings, bracelets and Eagle Plumes can also be worn. Moccasins and leggings complete the Regalia.
- **Grass Dance** – Dancers mimic grass swaying by wide sweeping movements and tapping is also used to imitate laying down the grass. Regalia includes long fringes made with yarn or ribbon.
- **Jingle Dress/Dance** – Is known as a healing dance. Regalia is made with metal cones that jingle when they are moved. This symbolizes the rain bringing healing to the community. Regalia includes cloth dresses adorned with a number of cones.
- **Intertribal Dance** – When an MC announces an intertribal dance this means that everyone is welcome to dance. You do not have to be wearing Regalia to participate.
- **Fallen Eagle Feather** – At times you may hear the MC announce that there is a fallen Eagle Feather on the grounds. Because Eagle Feathers are sacred it requires a Veteran or Elder to pick it back up through Song and return it to the Dancer. It is a time to remember warriors of past and present who did and are willing to sacrifice their lives to protect others.
- **Smudging** – It is a way of cleansing or purifying negativity from a person or a space through the smoke.



Four Sacred Medicines include tobacco, sage, cedar and sweetgrass. They can be burned all together or individually for their unique qualities.



- **Tobacco - Asemaa** is a medicine that allows one to communicate with the spirit world. It can be used for prayer, when requesting help, and as an offering to other living beings.



- **Sage - Mashkodewashk** helps to remove negative energies and is a cleansing medicine. It is known as a feminine medicine and can be used when an individual is on their Moon Time.



- **Cedar - Giizhik** helps to purify physical spaces and also one's mind, body and spirit. This medicine can be used in a tea, a bath or as protection.



- **Sweetgrass - Wiingashk** is referred to as Mother Earth's hair. When it is braided, it symbolizes mind, body and spirit. It attracts positive energy.



- **Tobacco Ties** – are used for a variety of reasons and in various situations. Individuals can use tobacco ties when asking for assistance in some way. You can use these ties for an offering when in prayer or seeking advice. The tobacco ties are often put into a sacred fire. Tobacco ties do not replace remuneration or honouraria.



@frenchriverpowwow



FRENCH RIVER VISITOR CENTRE
FIRST NATION & ABORIGINAL
ADVISORY COMMITTEE



Canadian Heritage
Patrimoine canadien

Design
de Plume

