

Gathering of the Clans (GOC) and Canada Day report 2023

The 72nd anniversary Pugwash Gathering of the Clans and Canada Day dodged the rain clouds for the day.

The day started with the Highland Dance competitions on the Harbourfront stage and ended with Ashley MacIsaac playing the Harbourfront Centre and fabulous fireworks at 10pm.

The theme for the Parade was “Proud to Call this Home – welcoming residents and visitors new and old. Greg Nix, community volunteer extraordinaire, was the Parade Marshall. The parade winners were:

Commercial

- 1st Cunningham Construction
- 2nd By the Bay Farm AND Fort Equipment
- 3rd Wallace Fire Department 50th anniversary

Non-commercial

- 1st George Lockhart
- 2nd Pugwash Communities in Bloom
- 3rd West Pugwash Women’s Institute

Most Original/Humorous:

Glenn Pettigrew

There were 80 Highland Dancers competing on the Pugwash Harbourfront Centre stage through the morning. The winner of the much-prized Bonny Gael Memorial Trophy was Grace Porter of Rusagonis, NB. The judge was Barbe Yorke from Kensington, PE.

There were three pipe and drum bands this year, two from Cape Breton Island Pipe Band and the Corrections Canada band Grade 5 band competed for the first time in several years. Cape Breton Island Pipe Band won the Grade 4 and Grade 5 There were 9 pipers and 1 drummers who registered for a total of 28 solo competition events. Updated numbers from field entries are pending.

After several years of warning that they could no longer afford to come to Pugwash, the midway games and rides are no longer available for July 1st. They were replaced by inflatable activity area, an expansion (so-to-speak) of last year’s “bouncies” which was very popular. Entry was by wristband or one-time ride tickets. Advance tickets were sold at the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) and local merchants.

With the addition of beach toys and bubbles, the volleyball court became a very popular sand pit, entertaining youngsters for free all day.

26 vendors registered for the day. Four didn’t show. Most of the vendors were new to the festival, COVID having taken its toll on many others.

The heavyweight games were held again at the Cyrus Eaton Elementary school playgrounds.

The Opening Ceremony was held on the Pugwash Harbourfront Centre. Competition and parade winners were announced from the stage and those present were awarded their prizes.

The entertainment at the PHC were Drew Polegato, SheNova, the Mark MacMillan Trio and Ashley MacIssac, accompanied by Kyle Waymouth. By the time the fireworks were set off around 10pm by the fire department, the park was packed. Conservative estimates were that there were at least 3,000 people in the park.

Preliminary numbers for wristband sales. Advance sales and the six gates took in \$26,442 (up from \$19,403 last year) representing 3,830 wristbands sold. This was down 10% from last year's wristband numbers. Revenues were up due to a long overdue gate ticket price change.

Thank you to the 150 or more volunteers that helped the day go. All the various events, parade security, the gates and bankers are all run by volunteers and all deserve big thanks! Other paid help also helped make the day run smoothly and professionally: Hub City Sound (sound and lights), Ron MacNutt (stage manager and MC), the competition judges and HRM Inflatables.

Thanks also go to the many sponsors whose generosity help make this historic event a success. There were fewer Bronze sponsors this year but more Silver and Gold level sponsors. Sponsorship showed a significant increase from last year. Sponsors make a tremendous difference in keeping this festival going.

Advance sales at the VIC/Clerk's Office improved again this year. We used e-transfers for many sales. Not having an assistant help with event organization and registration, made for a much busier day than last year.

A final report and financial report will be ready for the September 11th meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Betts, Coordinator

August 2023