

STORYLINE

Toronto Celebrates National Aboriginal Day.

[VOICEOVER] The beats of drums and traditional aboriginal dances resonated across the field of downtown Toronto's Fort York National Historic Site, as the city celebrates Canada's 18th annual National Aboriginal Day at the 200 year-old garrison.

[VOICEOVER] Since 1996, Canada has celebrated its National Aboriginal Day on June 21. The national holiday is dedicated to the indigenous people of Canada, and recognizes the contributions the country's aboriginal communities had throughout its history.

[VOICEOVER] In Toronto, the celebrations lasted from sunrise to sunset. The day's festivities culminated in a Sunset Ceremony, filled with song and dance performances.

[SOUNDBITE] 0:53 – 01:12 DAVID O'HARA, MUSEUM ADMINISTRATOR, FORT YORK.

“What you have going on behind us is one of the elders doing a ceremony with the fire and fire keeper down in what we call the dry moat here, so we have programming going on out here just at the west gate of the fort and it'll conclude at the end of evening with the sunset ceremony.”

[VOICEOVER] In full traditional costume, Kyle Joseph Laforne of the Anishinaabe-Ojibwe community performs a warrior's dance in a ceremony to honour his people.

[SOUNDBITE] 4:17 - 4:40 KYLE JOSEPH LAFORNE, TRADITIONAL DANCER, MEMBER OF FIRST NATIONS.

“Here I actually got my dance stick which I use horsetail, which I use to cleanse the ground when I dance, I have my eagle feathers here on my dance stick, which involves a bald eagle feathers along with an eagle talon, which when the honour beats come I put it to the sky to honour the feather that I use with the creation and with all the warriors in my area.”

[VOICEOVER] The day is observed annually on the summer solstice, since many aboriginal groups celebrate their culture and heritage around this time of the year. The call for a national holiday dedicated to the First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in Canada was first proposed in 1982, and was finally established more than a decade later.

[SOUNDBITE] 06:45- 07:06 KYLE JOSEPH LAFORNE, TRADITIONAL DANCER, MEMBER OF FIRST NATIONS.

“Aboriginal day is actually the best thing, especially for a lot of kids that don't know, even new people coming to Canada they don't know about First Nations, which they learn about Christianity first, which is kind of harder when you are coming to a different multicultural community right? So First Nations were the first ones here in Canada, the original inhabitants of it and you don't hear a lot of it.”

[VOICEOVER] Canada's aboriginal people played a crucial role in the formation of the country. The early settlers relied on their expertise to survive in the new frontier, and today, many locations in Canada use indigenous names. Even the word, Canada, came from an Iroquois word for "village" and "settlement."

[SOUNDBITE] 01:15 – 01:48 DAVID O'HARA, MUSEUM ADMINISTRATOR,
FORT YORK.

"I think it's extremely important for us to have a National Aboriginal Day. These are the founding people of the country and they've been here for 12,000 years. We talk about the 200th anniversary of the bicentennial of the war of 1812, but the First Nations have been here for 12,000 years and the Mississauga in particular we are working with today play a key role in the battle of York. So I think at Fort York. It's a wonderful place to talk about the history of the First Nations and their role in the development of this country."