

Faraday drumming circle keeps the beat



Faraday Community Drumming nights continue to provide an open forum for musicians of all skill levels and abilities, who jam together at the Community Centre, on the second Thursday of every month. Photo by SARAH VANCE

By Sarah Vance

Faraday Township continues to be home to a drumming circle, which meets on the second Thursday evening of every month at the Community Centre near Bow Lake, starting at 7 p.m. It's a public event, open to everyone. Handmade drums and shakers are shared with newcomers who might not have their own instrument.

Many of the drums have images painted onto their leather surfaces that tell the stories of the people who have made them ? wolves, butterflies, hummingbirds being just some of symbols that decorate the instruments you might play when you attend.

?I use mung beans inside the leather to create a unique earthy sound,? said Tom Feenstra, a member of the drum circle, as he offered a handmade shaker.

The evening began with a smudge. In the centre of the circle, a leather Grandmother Drum, with four leather entwined wooden sticks, allowed groups of men and women to strike the drum in unison, while the larger circle kept harmony on hand-held instruments.

?Always return to the heart beat,? said Edmund Bonner, one of the event organizers, as he encouraged everyone in the room to join in the percussion. ?Sometimes the beats can become complex, but there are no mistakes in drumming.?

Musicians such as Feenstra accompanied on flute as Amber Simpson invoked signs of spring, when cupping her hands over her mouth to make loon calls. Local elders Ada and Gidge Tinney used hand-held drums and shakers, which were shared among participants

?There is a core group of seven drummers who attend regularly. When we are invited to play at community events, we do our best to accommodate,? said Bonner. ?We have played at events like Canada Day, Women's Day and the Village Playhouse.?

Circles are often understood to be a symbol of the cycles in nature. They also symbolize a space of equity where no voice or presence has more power than another.

This was noticeable on Thursday night, as several first time players were welcomed with the same respect and encouragement as the drummers, who have been playing together as part of the Faraday Drum Circle since it started approximately six years ago.

?During the summer months, which bring so many cottagers, our numbers double,? said Bonner. ?It is truly delightful when the children join us to play. They just have a ball.?

The Faraday Drumming Circle provides a blend of many different native cultural traditions, which are woven together by songs and improvisational beats.

This provides for a truly intertribal sound and special tempo.

Spring was a theme on Thursday night, as people spoke of returning birds like robins being sighted in the municipality. The next drumming circle night will take place on April 14 and new players at all experience levels are invited to attend.