

# CreeFest modern version of First Nation tradition

Posted By JESSICA YOUNG, [THE DAILY PRESS](#), August 15 2008

It is based on the old tradition, started generations ago, when Northern Aboriginal communities would gather in the summer to meet up with family and friends. For about a month, people from across the North would get together and take part in social activities, music and food.

CreeFest is the modern-day setting of this old tradition, CreeFest community organizer Kara Louttit.

"This is a great opportunity for anyone to experience our rich cultural identity," Louttit said. "It's been getting bigger each year and is a way to pass on our teachings to help continue our culture and our language."

The opening ceremony began Thursday with headliner Crystal Shawanda hitting the stage. The three-time 2008 Canadian Country Music Award nominee took to the microphone at the Tim Horton Event Centre in Cochrane.

Today, teepee workshops on traditional ceremonies and rites-of-passage events will take place and there will be 13 Clan Mothers Teachings by Betty Albert- Wabimeguil.

For youth, teepee workshops will include hand drum and medicine wheel teaching.

Louttit said that youth involvement has increased year after year, a positive movement she's proud to witness.

"We're getting more youth involved and wanting to know more about our traditional ways," she said. "With our Elders getting older, this is a great opportunity to pass on our teachings."

Youth activities continue on Saturday. At the Hillcrest Soccer Field, children's activities take place alongside traditional foods and a sweat lodge ceremony.

A Cree language preservation forum -- hosted by Louis Bird, Edmond Metatawabin and George Kataquapit -- will take place at 10 a. m. on Saturday, and reiki and traditional foot soaks with Irene Camillo from 10 a. m. to 2 p. m., in addition to a youth powwow.

Closing ceremonies will take place at 6 p. m. with a variety of bands and dancers hitting the stage including Thelma Cheechoo Band, Francine Wietsche, James and Daisy Cheechoo, Diane Meloche and Estelle Deschamps, Blues Brigade and Ministik Dance Group and Waskaganish. The all-star finale band, Creefest Rockers, will cap off the festivities.

Tickets are \$15 per night for adults or \$30 for all three days. Seniors pay \$10 per night or \$20 for the weekend.

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