



St. Regis Mohawk Tribe

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PRESS RELEASE

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Second Annual "Kids for Fishing" Brings Pro-Fishermen and Kids Together

Kids Learn about Fishing and Safety

Akwesasne - In Akwesasne, fishing has always been more than a pastime. Through the efforts of Cpl. P.J. Burns of the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Police Department, the art of fishing is making a swift return in the younger generation with the second annual "Kids for Fishing" event, held Saturday, May 12 in Akwesasne at the Fountains Woods Camp Site. Organizers couldn't have asked for a better day for this event, as 30 kids showed up to learn about fishing, drug awareness, boating safety, environmental issues and sun safety.

"Kids for Fishing" began last year as a half-day event and involved the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Police, community health programs and brought in professional fishermen to explain the different baits, rods, reels and other fishing equipment needed. Presentations on prevention for drug abuse and boater safety made this event not only fun, but also informative.

"I'm feeling good, it's satisfying to see the smiles on the kids' faces," said Cpl. Burns at the end of the day. "The whole intent was to get the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Police Department and Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service to deliver a positive message to the kids, while having a good time. The day began at 9:00 a.m. with a presentation by Tracey Cook, Meghan Bushy and Tiffany Leabo of the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe's Alcohol/Chemical Dependency Prevention Program (A/CDP). The A/CDP specializes in educational prevention and curriculum in Headstart through grade eight. The second presentation was by Jeffrey Ford and Chad Marshall of the United States Border Patrol. The officers talked about boater safety. Following that presentation was Tony David, the Water Resources Program Manager of the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe's Environment Division. His presentation focused on invasive species like zebra mussels and gobies being introduced into local waters.

Candice Thomas and Allison Lamesse of Community Health, who spoke about sun safety, delivered the next presentation. The last presentation of the morning before the group broke for lunch was by the Shimano representatives, Paul Shibata and Steve Barnett talking about the different types of rods and reels. "PJ spoke to me about this idea a year ago. As a representative of Shimano, what we do is to assist in trying to get kids to focus their attention on fishing because once they catch a fish they are hooked," said Paul Shibata of G.Loomis. "By profession I'm an environmental consultant and the great thing about events like this is that when kids get to experience the environment they become better stewards in the long run." *Continued*

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Burns met the professional fishermen who volunteered to attend this event through his experiences joining the ranks of professional fishing last year, along with his fishing partner Norman King, another Akwesasne local. Together, Burns and King lobbied the professional fishing community and brought in top fishermen to work with local kids. "This was amazing and great to see the kids smile and have fun, and at the same time it was also very informative," said professional fisherman Jack Levert. "I shared information about fishing, and they told me about themselves as well."

Registration was held this past spring for the 30-coveted spots for this event. After two days of registration there were over 70 kids signed up for the event and Burns decided that the best way to determine who would go would be a random draw. While doing a live radio talk show on a local station, 97.3 CKON Radio, PJ Burns and radio show host Reen Cook randomly drew the lucky 20 participants, with 10 spaces reserved for children with special needs. "Today was awesome and it was great to see the smiles on the kids' faces," said professional fisherman Steve Barnett. "I was just telling the other guys that when one kid caught a fish it felt like we all caught a fish - it was the way that they cheered for each other."

The excitement slowly built as the kids lined up to receive their tackle box and lures, life jacket, rod and reel all from contributions made by the sponsors of this event. Parents and kids stood watching as the pro-fishermen began to load their bass boats into the water. Quickly the kids crowded the shoreline waiting their turn to hop into the boats to begin their afternoon on the river. "Today was fun, the kids were awesome, curious, and now they need to step up on their fishing," said Professional Fisherman Max La Gaipa. "I would do this again here in a heartbeat; it was an awesome and really nice experience."

Ending the day was a weigh-in for the top small mouth bass. Tazz Oakes managed to land a four-pound, 11 ounce bass, taking the top honors. Second went to Jake Jock who pulled in a 4-pound, 9- ounce bass, with Tianna Back rounding out the top three with a 4-pound bass. "The two girls I had with me were a blast. It got to a point where they were netting fish for each other," said Captain Nate Laskiewicz of Lakes Region Fishing. "PJ did a really nice job with this event."

The Second Annual "Kids for Fishing" event would not have been possible without the support of the following sponsors: the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe Police, the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service, Cook's Greenery, Truck Stop #9, Mohawk Racing Parts, McEwen Gas, MCA - Wholistic Health and Wellness, MCA - Community Health, SRMT – A/CDP Program, Bulla-n-Joes Tent Rentals, Pepsi-Cola, Coca-Cola, Divalissa's Treats, the Akwesasne Community Partnership Fund, CKON-97.3 FM, G-Loomis, Venom Lures, Lakefork Trophy Lures, and Shimano. A big thanks to all who made this event a success!

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