

Motivated motorcycle mamas

By Carla Antonio

As International Women's Day approaches, themed with a "Make it Happen" slogan, a group of motivated women gathered to chase a common goal – they want to ride motorcycles.

Over 50 women gathered at MotoSport Plus in Kingston last Friday for an evening of motorcycle basics and riding fundamentals in a comfortable, ladies-only environment.

"It's mainly for new riders and women who have never ridden before," said the event's co-ordinator Kim Gascoigne.

"They usually come in a bit nervous, not knowing what to expect or what's going to happen if they've never been before, and then they leave with more of a confidence after they realize it's not so scary."

The annual event incorporates five stations for the aspiring female riders to rotate through.

Starting with a guide to riding gear and moving along to a "fit" station, the women are able to take the rider's seat and figure out which type of bike fits them best. They can then visit the parts customization station where the women can further determine what would make them most comfortable.

"If your motorcycle doesn't fit you properly, we can show you what you can do to make it better," said Gascoigne.

"Change the seat, lower it – whatever you need."

The participants then move on to the "bike lift," where they are able to practise picking up a bike that is on its side.

"One of the things that many women are nervous about is if their bike falls over, then what do they do. So we teach them how to pick it back up," said Gascoigne.

The final and most popular station, the "jump start," allows the women to sit on a running bike and go through the gears while it sits on a stationary jig, offering them the closest thing to a ride without actually hitting the road complete with a fan to simulate the wind blowing through their hair.

"It's nice to have an empowering evening to get the women in and get



Photo by Carla Antonion

Renée Belzile gets a lesson in riding from Mark Delaney at the Ladies' Garage Party held at MotoSport Plus in Kingston last Friday. The interactive event was held exclusively for women who are new riders who are looking to learn the basic fundamentals of motorcycle riding.

them feeling comfortable and getting to know other women that ride or want to ride," said Amanda Bray, the assistant operations manager at MotoSport Plus.

Bray's passion for riding a motorcycle has been with her as long as she can remember, as her parents have owned the

dealership for 33 years.

"I got my motorcycle licence the day I turned 16 and I've been riding ever since," she said.

"It's that freedom of feeling the air... It's just something that totally takes away everything -- your mind is in a different zone."

Philomena McClelland, who recently completed her motorcycle course, attended the event after hearing about it while shopping at the dealership.

"I thought, 'This is perfect, because they teach you so many things, like how you pick up your bike' and just meeting all of these other people that ride, it kind of

gets me all excited about riding," she said.

Although still a bit nervous, McClelland left with a little more confidence and looking forward to riding.

"I feel more excited, that's for sure."

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Mohawk language being revitalized

By Elaine Bombay

Although once moribund, the Mohawk language is making a comeback through revitalization efforts on Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory.

Indigenous languages were one of the victims of the official policies and social treatment of the First Nations in Canada.

Sherry Procuiner Kawennanó:ron teaches the Mohawk language at Quinte Mohawk School.

"I've taught at this school now for almost 22 years and I have seen a major change in the attitude of people in our community. Young parents really do want their children to know about their language and culture and have a good sense of identity of who they are," she said.

In school, students spend 50 minutes a day in Mohawk language class. The rest of the subjects are taught in English, though culture and language are integrated into everything the students do. Art classes focus on the work of First Nations artists and physical education classes incorporate traditional activities such as the snow snake track or the peach stone game.

"In the past 10 years, there has been a big revitalization movement in First Nations communities, at least in southern Ontario, where communities and schools are working together to try to create programs that both adults and children can access," said

Kawennanó:ron.

If parents and children learn the language at the same time, they can use it in the home and reinforce each other's learning. "You are a support group for each other," Kawennanó:ron said.

According to the Ethnologue, a database of information for all the known languages in the world, there are just over 500 people who speak Mohawk as a first language, although more than 24,000 people identify themselves as Mohawk throughout Ontario, Quebec and the northern United States.

Callie Hill is the executive director of Tsi Tyonneht Onkwawenna, which promotes Mohawk language and culture in the community. She is working on a master's degree in indigenous language revitalization through the University of Victoria. She estimated that about 60 people in Tyendinaga could be considered proficient to some degree in the language. According to Statistics Canada, the population of Tyendinaga is just over 2,500.

Tsi Tyonneht Onkwawenna offers three streams of language learning, as well as awareness raising in the community.

The language nest is for pre-schoolers. They spend the day with a grandmother, or *totahne*, who speaks Mohawk fluently.

Hill describes the language nest as "spending a day with grandma." It's an informal program where the children spend the day colouring or playing or baking a cake, but everything is done while speaking

Mohawk.

Tsi Tyonneht Onkwawenna also offers immersion education for students in senior kindergarten to Grade 4.

"We operate very much like a one-room school house. It's a different kind of education. It's very much culture-based, with our priority being language acquisition, not so much academic acquisition, though we do provide that as well," said Hill.

There is also a full-time, intensive adult program that runs from September to June, five days a week, six hours a day. This program has been running for 10 years.

The fourth stream is community outreach, with events on evenings and weekends. They work with other Mohawk communities to find speakers to present on various cultural topics or run workshops.

"The speaker series is a primer on the culture," Hill said. It touches on major aspects of Mohawk culture and worldview, such as the creation story, the clan system, the cycle of ceremonies, and the great law.

Although the emphasis of the speaker series is on Mohawk culture, it also serves to show people how the language reflects their worldview and to pique their interest in the language as more than simply a tool for communication.

The workshops are usually offered on a Saturday and focus more on music and arts, such as drumming or basket-making.

"It's not as specifically language as our other programs are, but it is more bringing the culture to a wider audience. Educating the broader audiences is what we have to do to help raise awareness of our issues," said Hill.

Most of the adults who decide to learn Mohawk do it to communicate with family members or to be able to support their children in the immersion programs, said Hill. "When they start learning the language, they realize that they need to know it as part of our identity," she added.

Kawennanó:ron also believes that having a strong sense of who they are as First Nations people will stand her students in good stead in the future.

"Once students are comfortable with their language and their culture, and understand their traditions and all their legends and their dances, they just seem more confident as learners. And that can't hurt them no matter what they do in their future," Kawennanó:ron said.

Asked what her hope is for the Mohawk community 50 years from now, Hill replied, "I'd hope that we have a lot more speakers than we do now. I have a new grandson and so it's become even more important to me that there is something here for him so that he can learn the language. In 50 years, the children that are here now are going to be our elders. I hope that they've raised their children and grandchildren in this way."

Paintballers battle for supremacy in Picton

By Callum Rutherford

Surrounded by Soviet flags, the sound of air raid sirens and distant explosions, it might seem like the days of the past.

It's actually Feb. 28 at PRZ Paintball in Picton, Ont. The field was holding its annual winter game, which this year was called Battle for Berlin.

During the day, the players fought back and forth trying to meet objectives. Objectives were anything from planting bombs (not real ones), capturing mortars, and attacking or defending a location to changing flags at a flag station.

Players came from as far as Peterborough for the game. Evan "Bird" Partridge from Peterborough was one of the players at the game for the German side. Partridge, who has been playing for a year and half, said, "It was a great day."

"I think this weekend was the most fun I have had paintballing next to maybe Operation Mongoose in the fall," said Michael Juthman, who was playing for the Russian side. Juthman drove down from Havelock.

Paintball is a sport that involves shooting a gelatin ball filled with a paint mixture (polyethylene glycol) at another person to mark them. A mark the size of a quarter is considered a hit and the players are then eliminated.

Even though the goal is to mark the other players, it's all in good fun.

"The people and the owners, they are so nice and everyone's always trying to help you out, and try to help you figure things out its just a really friendly sport,"



Photo by Phil McLachlan

Russia (Red) vs. Germany (Blue) in the Battle for Berlin at PRZ Paintball in Picton. More than 200 players attended the event, making each team consist of around 100 players.

said Partridge.

Approximately 250 players showed

up for the cold snowy game at the abandoned military hospital that was known

as Prince Edward Heights. Players have

the chance to fight it out in and outside

the buildings know as the Craig Complex.

The building was built in the mixed design of an active 1960s hospital and an army garrison barracks, complete with warehouses, kitchens and even a school and gym centre. The only off-limit areas are the back forests and the school portion of the buildings.

As for new players, both Partridge and Juthman tell people about the sport.

"I try to grow the sport by bringing it up as much as possible and getting people interested by telling them about the fun and intense action involved with the game," said Juthman.

"I've gotten a whole bunch of friends to come out and play," said Partridge. Partridge's team, the Titans, gives away little things like patches at games to players old and new.

Lunch was available for the players to buy during a 50-minute break before the teams continued until the final battle. The last 30 minutes of the game was an all-out run to leave three flags in the centre of the small field with your team's colour.

At the end of the day, the final score was given. Germany won with just over 10,000 points. Russia had just over 9,000.

With the final scores revealed and the battle commanders done their speeches, everyone said their goodbyes and headed home, waiting for the next big game to happen from April 10 - 12 for the season opener.

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