

# Kite festival ends on high note

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## Five-day long Dieppe Kite International wrapped up yesterday amid much Acadian fanfare

They came. They flew. And of course, they partied.

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The crowd watches magician Remi Boudreau do a magic trick at Dieppe Kite International at Dover Park on Saturday.

Over the last five days, more than 50,000 people converged on Dover Park for the annual Dieppe Kite International, basking in the beauty of the flying creations, the variety of family activities, and yes, the heat. The festival, the largest of its kind in North America, officially wrapped up yesterday, coinciding with that gigantic, feel-good party of the year known as Quinze-Aout. National Acadian Day served as the perfect backdrop to celebrate the massive success of this past week and the hard work and drive of the kite festival's organizing committee.

For the festival's president, Louis LeBlanc, all the time, effort, and endless planning was worth it.

"It is safe to say that this year's festival has been our best yet," he proudly declared, surveying the masses enjoying themselves over the weekend at the festival grounds.

LeBlanc was especially pleased to see a surge in young people attending this year's event, and emphasizes that the kite festival is practically synonymous with family.

"The turnout at the children's kite creation tent has been fantastic. We were expecting to make about 1,000 to 1,200 kites, but we ended up making about 1,500 and were running out. It's never been like this before," he said on Saturday.

"We will always make sure that Dieppe Kite International remains a family event. I can't express enough how great it is to see all the smiling parents watching their kids play on the grounds, or to actually see the parents as excited as the children. That's what the festival is all about."

Over the weekend, it would be fair to say that the numbers of festival attendees increased significantly. Undeterred by the scorching sun, children flew their kites under the watchful eyes of their parents, crowds gathered to appreciate the intriguing talent of magician Rémi Boudreau and in the evenings, revellers enjoyed live performances by such renowned Acadian and other artists as The Divorcees, Sweet Temptation, Dominique Dupuis, and George Belliveau.

"As always, the festival has met our expectations," indicated Lina Roussel. "We try to come out every year with the children, who especially enjoy seeing the big kites fly in the air. And we enjoy watching them watch the kites."

"It's great for the grandkids. It's a way for us to have fun with them that is exciting but not expensive," said Emile Haché.

For nine-year old Jake McLaughlin, his favourite part of the whole week was watching, awestruck, Rémi the magician.

"The kites were pretty cool, but the magician was even better. I wish I could have seen more," he said.

Someone for whom the kites were actually the coolest thing about the festival is undoubtedly British kite maker and flyer Karl Longbottom, who has been to Dieppe Kite International every year.

"It's like a bad smell, you can't get rid," he declared with a wide smile. "We've been to four continents already this year for other kite festivals, but we always come up to Dieppe. There's something about this place that we really love."

Having officially kicked off last Wednesday, Dieppe Kite International offered a wide variety of activities targeted at children as well as adults over a five-day period, which included exciting Rokkaku kite challenges and acrobatic kite demonstrations, a dazzling indoor kite show produced by Las Vegas-based Aerial Experience Productions, three successful evening concerts, and, not to forget, plenty of inflatable castles and other bouncy contraptions for the little ones.

But, even with all the activities listed, there is always room for more in the future. "There have been suggestions of doing more arts and culture things, like for example offer Acadian food around National Acadian Day, but these remain just ideas for now, and will have to be discussed further by the organizing committee. But we do know for sure that this festival is going to continue to grow," indicated Louis LeBlanc. Dieppe Mayor Jean LeBlanc was overjoyed that the turnout for this year's festival is better than previous years. For him, the impact of the event on his city is huge.

"The festival has had an impact with regards to identity," he explained. "People have started to recognize that the kite festival belongs to Dieppe, and that it represents the qualities of this city, which include artistic talent, participation, and good health."

He had nothing but good words for the organizing committee of this massive festival.

"They were extraordinary, especially when you consider the fact that before the festival was always every two years, and this year we decided to make it annual. And they took the challenge and succeeded. I congratulate all of them and all of our volunteers."