



Festival Notes

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"Festival News"
New Feature



"The birds are back!"
Presqu'ile Provincial Park

What's New?

By Gary McWilliams, *the Festival Nomad*

With the "Visitor's Forum" comments and the "Rate This Festival" survey sections now launched, it's time to turn our attention to other new features. We have plenty planned, but we intend to move slowly and make sure we get it right! The first project is almost completed. It is placing a "Google Map" link on all festival and event articles. Once that has been completed, our next project is to add a new section entitled, *Festival News*. Throughout the remainder of April we will be developing and then launching this new service. We will be providing our readers with articles about Ontario festivals and events. The articles will include "Breaking Festival News", "General Festival News", "Festival Updates" and "Feature Articles". We are even planning on offering a weekly "Opinion Poll". Organizers are and will be encouraged to send us information about their festival or event. There will also be a reader comment section. We hope that festival visitors will let us know their news and thoughts. You will be able know what's happening in the Ontario world of festivals and events. Eventually we hope to expand the *Festival News* section to contain world-wide news of interest to Ontario visitors and organizers. Finally, once it has been fully completed we intend to offer a RSS (Really Simple Syndication) Feed to those who want their festival news quickly. I know it will be interesting and fun to produce this section and we hope you enjoy it and find it helpful and informative!

Spring Flowers...

I love the spring! It's the rebirth of nature! Birds returning north, flowers sprouting up and blooming, buds and then leaves on trees all mean new life! It is also a time of renewed hope and new beginnings. And, Judi and I, of course, are now planning our visit schedule for this coming spring and summer. It is always a challenge because there are so many great Ontario festivals and events. We have already seen some of them in March. At the beginning of the month we attended the Festivals and Events Ontario President's Gala.

Please see *Spring Flowers...* on page 2

Spring Flowers ... from page 1

Awards are announced. We had the privilege again this year to be part of the judging team. Ontario's top 100 festivals and events were also honoured. You can see the complete list of the "Top 100" on our website at

http://www.ontariofestivalsvisited.ca/top_100.htm

. If you want to find out more about individual festivals or events, there is a "link" back to each of their websites. During the middle two weeks of March we visited the Warkworth Maple Syrup Festival and the Presqu'île Waterfowl Festival. In between these two events, I drove to Toronto to see the Suitcase Theatre play, "*The House That Jack Built*". This is a play that the theatre company hopes to take on the road to some of Ontario's southern festivals and events. At the end of March we visited the Buckhorn Maplefest held at the McLean Berry Farm. It was a productive month. April should also be quite busy. Here is a list of some of the events and activities we hope to visit. We hope that everyone has a wonderful "Earth Day" and "Easter"!

April 4th - Lindsay Model Railway Show

April 11th - Ontario's Unique Malls - Vaughan Mills Mall

April 18th - Toronto Harbourfront Centre

April 26th - Earth Day at Downsview Park

Shawn King – SEO Master/Friend

You know how when you first meet someone, you instinctively know whether or not you are going to become friends! Shawn King was one of those people I instantly knew was going to become a friend. It started like any other meeting. A company had purchased the hosting company I was working with and Shawn worked for the takeover company. He was in charge of servicing (and calming) the acquired customers. I was one of those who needed calming and Shawn met the challenge! This all happened when I was first establishing my Ontario Festivals Visited website. Frankly, during those first shaky days he went far beyond normal customer service! Since those first days he has helped me wind my way through the maze called the internet! Shawn's expertise is SEO or Search Engine Optimization. He has made a study of how best to optimize websites to obtain maximum results!

Please see *Shawn King – SEO Master/Friend...* on page 3



"Stoking the fire!"
Warkworth Maple Syrup Festival



"Bird watching!"
Presqu'île Waterfowl Festival



"Boiling the sap!"
Buckhorn Maplefest at the
McLean Berry Farm



"Shawn King"
At the Franchise Show

"It was a 'Puppet Musical'..."



"Getting married!"
The House That Jack Built
Produced by the Suitcase Theatre



"Wanted!"
Whitney Smith
The House That Jack Built

Shawn King - SEO Master/Friend ... from page 2

He has taught me what to look for and how to overcome obstacles. This has helped the **Ontario Festivals Visited** website become one of the top 3 - 4 websites for the keywords, Ontario festivals and Ontario festivals and events, on all the major search engines (Google, Yahoo and MSN). Our traffic count has also gone up steadily. We now have over 4,000 visitors per month with an average of over 30,000 pages open per month. And over this time, Shawn and I have become friends, so much so that we are now partnering on several projects. Judi's fine art website (<http://judimcwilliamsfineart.com/>) was one of them, but the one closest to my heart is the restructuring of the **Ontario Festivals Visited** website. We are working, right now, to make the site the best festival and event website in the world! A tall and daunting task I know, but one I feel worthwhile and, better yet, achievable! The next few years will tell the tale, but with friends like Shawn, who can miss!

Festival Ideas...

Each month this section features ideas gained from attending so many festivals. For the April issue we want to talk about the Suitcase Theatre Company and their play, "The House That Jack Built". A few weeks ago I wrote an article on "The Adventures of a Festival Nomad" blog about their play. We are republishing it for your enjoyment/information?

The House That Jack Built...

A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to attend a play in Toronto, "The House That Jack Built". The play was created and produced by members of the **Suitcase Theatre Company**. I had been invited to see the play by one of its creators, Whitney Smith. It was a "Puppet Musical" and had been developed especially for kids! The fact that I enjoyed the play proves that I am a "big kid at heart"! Yes, I must admit that I really enjoyed myself and, judging by reaction of the other "big kids" in the audience, they enjoyed it too! If you read my article at http://www.ontariofestivalsvisited.ca/fesivals/2009/winter/suitcase_theatre.htm you will learn that the play was loosely based on the poem, *The House That Jack Built*. After the play I had the opportunity to meet and talk with Whitney. During our conversation we talked about the Company's desire to present this play, and others, to audiences throughout southern Ontario. They would like to do this at festivals and events during the summer and fall months.

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Festival Ideas ... from page 3

I would suggest that if you want to have some great fun with your kids and grand kids, look for festivals and events featuring one of the Suitcase Theatre's plays. As stated on their website (<http://www.suitcasetheatre.com/index.html>) "*Suitcase Theatre is an independent arts company operated under the auspices of the Seeds of Hope Foundation, (<http://www.seedsofhope.ca>) a non-profit charitable foundation that oversees five social rejuvenation projects in downtown Toronto aimed at nurturing the talents of people facing special challenges.*"



"Kids love parades"
Festiving with Kids
Cobourg Santa Claus Parade

Festival Tips

Festiving with Kids...

With the economic times as they are, many families will exchange their expensive "away holidays" for less expensive "local excursions". Many of these "local excursions" will be to festivals or events that are located close by. Because of this idea, I thought now would be a good time to write about kids and festivals. Most parents know how to "travel with kids" plus there are lots of articles about the subject. So, I won't talk about "getting there". Instead I'd like to discuss choosing "kid friendly" festivals and events, how to prepare for them and what to do when you get there. Because this is a fairly lengthy subject, I am dividing it into three parts, "Choosing", "Preparing" and "Being There". "Choosing" will appear in this month's newsletter, "Preparing" in the May issue and "Being There" in June's issue.

Part One - Choosing a Festival

The best way that I know of, to find a "kid friendly" festival or event is through research. I think that the Internet provides the best tools for this research. Most festivals and events have websites. If they don't, I feel sorry for them. Each website should show you what the festival/event is offering, things such as theme, activities, events, etc. This information should give you a good idea as to how "kid friendly" the event will be. For example, if the event is mainly arts and crafts, it may appeal to you but not to your kids! On the other hand, if it has a midway, music, animals and puppet shows, it likely will appeal to them. Price could also be a big factor, so check out the festival's admission fees. Most festivals have reduced children's rates. The distance you need to travel could affect your decision. If your children don't travel well, long distances may eliminate some events. The festival website will hopefully give you a schedule of events and their times. This information will allow you to plan when to leave home so that you won't miss any of the events you really want to see. If you don't find all of the information you want from the website and you still want to go to the event, contact the event organizers by telephone or e-mail and get them to answer any questions you might have. If they don't respond, it probably isn't a festival you want to attend. After you have decided on which festival or event you are going to visit, preparation comes next. (To be continued - see the May issue for Part Two, Preparing to Visit a Festival)

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