



# ONTARIO

Festivals Visited

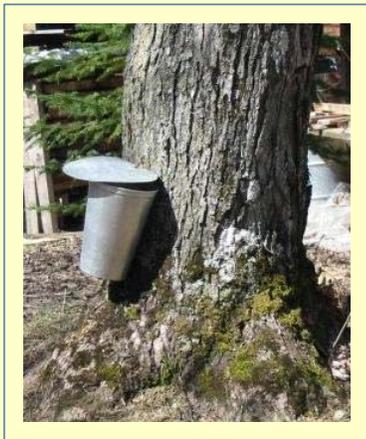
# Festival Notes

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Collecting sap at the  
Elmvale Maple Syrup Festival



"Kevin Stuart"  
Festival Nomad Correspondent

## The Year Begins...

By Gary McWilliams, *the Festival Nomad*

I know that the "*calendar year*" begins on January 1st, but for me, the year actually begins on March 1st. Why you might ask? It's simple, it's the beginning of the festival season! In *March* we have *maple syrup festivals*; in *April*, it's *flower and gardening shows* and in *May*, it's *community theatres* opening, outdoor *art shows* being held and *farmers' markets* setting up! You get the picture! The problem, as always, is that there are so many festivals and events to choose from! Someone once told me that there were about 4,000 festivals and events being held in Ontario. However, I once did a quick (unscientific) survey of community tourism brochures. The results were staggering! I believe that there are thousands more than the 4,000 suggested. Frankly, I don't think that anyone could accurately calculate the actual number of events! To me, the extreme number is great news! It's great because it shows just how much people love and appreciate their communities! And, after all, isn't "*community*" what life in Ontario all about? I'll give you an example of what I mean.

Please see *The Year Begins...* on page 2

## Festival Nomad's Report...

FEBRUARY has been like the *Katy Perry* song "*Hot n' Cold*" that says "*You're hot and then you're cold*"! The weather has taken us on a frantic rollercoaster ride and I think that most of us have enjoyed the warmer "*ups*", but not the chilly "*downs*"! I know that I have enjoyed the "*warms*". Anticipation of spring is always "*interesting*" and I'm looking forward to seeing what it has to offer! As I mentioned in our last issue, February is for "*lovers*", "*groundhogs*" and "*families*". Sher St. Kitts reports that their *Love Train Revue* was a great success! So much so that she is now planning *Aurora jazz+ Festival* which takes place this coming July. This year's groundhog watch had Warton Willie search for his shadow. Fortunately he couldn't find it, so only 6 more weeks of winter weather! Hopefully he's right! *Family Day* in our area was very active. Our intrepid Festival Nomad Correspondent, Kevin Stuart, and his family braved the elements and visited the Family Fishing Weekend held on Rice Lake. You can read all about the visit on the Ontario Festivals Visited website (Link:

[http://www.ontariofestivalsvisited.ca/fesivals/2011/winter/familyfishing\\_ricelake.html](http://www.ontariofestivalsvisited.ca/fesivals/2011/winter/familyfishing_ricelake.html))

Please see *Festival Nomad's Report* on page 2

*The Year Begins...* from page 1

Last December I was invited to visit *Spencerville* for its annual "*A Country Christmas Remembered*". Spencerville, in case you don't know, is located just north of Brockville, off of Highway 416. It is a quaint village with a small population. When I first entered the village for their event, I wondered what I had driven into! But, as they say, first impressions can be wrong and, in this case, very wrong! The residents of Spencerville "*out did*" themselves! Needless to say, I had a great visit! I was sad, though, because Judi was not with me. She was volunteering at *Lang Pioneer Village* for their *Christmas By Candlelight* event. Spencerville, however, is having another great event, the *Spencerville Mill Heritage Fair*! It's held annually in June, and Judi and I hope to be able to visit it. Spencerville is not alone in its "*community*" enthusiasm! I know that there are many, many other "enthusiastic" communities in Ontario! Judi and I have visited some and hope to "*discover*" many more in the future! If you live in such a community, let us know, we'd love to visit it! See you there!

*Festival Nomad's Report...* from page 1

**MARCH** is beginning to look quite busy. Judi and I hope to visit a number of festivals and events this month. Here is a list of some that we hope to attend:

March 5 - Toronto Golf Show

March 12 - Norfolk Wildlife Festival & Adventure Show

March 19 - Canada Blooms

March 26 - Buckhorn Maplefest (McLean Berry Farm)

April 2 - Elmira Maple Syrup Festival

## The Inside Scoop...

Interview with Sam McLean (by Judi McWilliams)

It's Maple Sugar Time at the McLean Berry Farm!

This week's interview is with Mr. *Sam McLean*, owner/operator of the *McLean Berry Farm*. It is a family affair with Sam leading the way! The interview is timely because the *Buckhorn Maplefest*, held at the *McLean Berry Farm*, is just a few weeks away! This festival of maple syrup, pancakes, hayrides and demonstrations takes place over three fun-filled weekends! You can find out more about this event at <http://www.mcleanberryfarm.com/maple.html>.

*Sam McLean* is a leader and expert, especially when it comes to one of my favorite times of year, *Maple Sugar Time*! Sam has owned the *McLean Sugar Bush*, in the Buckhorn area just north of Peterborough, since approximately January 1991. They were fortunate to continue with the existing set-up and began tapping right away. This is their 21<sup>st</sup> year and they will be celebrating the anniversary during the *Buckhorn Maplefest*.

Please see *The Inside Scoop* on page 3



"Spencerville"  
A Country Christmas Remembered



"Spencerville Mill"  
Spencerville Mill Heritage Fair



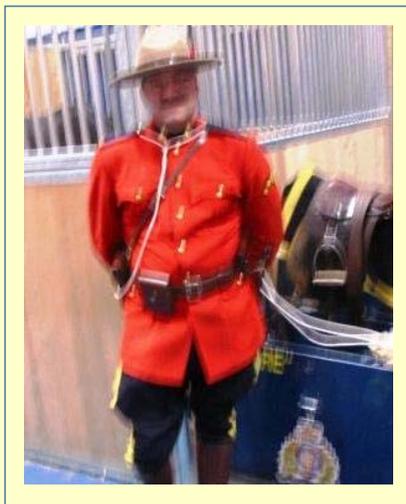
"Sam McLean"  
Buckhorn Maplefest



"The old fashion way!"  
Buckhorn Maplefest at the McLean Berry Farm



"Wagon Ride"  
Buckhorn Maplefest



"His brother officer pulled us over!"  
Royal Canadian Mounted Policeman  
(aka The Mountie!)

*The Inside Scoop...* from page 2

I am anxious to share with you a look behind the scenes with Sam, but first, I want to tell you a bit about Sam. Sam tells me that farming is a way of life, so I wondered what he did prior to owning the *McLean Berry Farm*. It wasn't too much of a surprise when Sam told me he had been a cabinet maker for about 15 years prior to this adventure. He is still in familiar territory with all the surrounding Maple trees! Ironically, Sam's favorite wood to work with for cabinet making is *butternut*. Getting back to *THE INSIDE SCOOP*, I wanted to know the correct name for this "*quest for maple sugar*". Sam tells me the simple version is the maple sugar "*harvest*". I had heard rumors that this year's harvest was going to be good, so I asked Sam what he thought. He replies that he just doesn't know yet, that it is too soon to tell. Part of what determines if it will be a good year collecting syrup depends on what happened last year. If it was a hot, warm summer you get good sap, the sugar stores well in the roots. Once the weather turns mild and gets above freezing it can start to run. Sam tells me that the ideal situation is below 6 degrees Celsius in the night and above 6 degrees during the days. Apparently, the diverse and changing temperatures, creates stress in the tree and forces the sap out. This is where Sam becomes the *expert* in this industry! He states that he knows his trees, saying that over the years you get to know them. You learn how it varies. They vary in sweetness depending of their size. Last year the *McLean Sugar Bush* yielded approximately 10,000 gallons of sap, 1,000 liters. The method of tree tapping used is the traditional tree tapping. I asked Sam if this process was a *dying art*.

*NOTE - The remainder of the interview can be seen by visiting THE INSIDE SCOOP at <http://judisinsidescoop.blogspot.com/>.*

## INSIDE with the Festival Nomad...

### Across Canada... *The Police, Again!*

In Ontario, we have the *Ontario Provincial Police* (aka *The OPP*). In Manitoba, the province is policed by the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police* (aka *The Mounties*). It was quite late and rather dark as we traveled northward from Winnipeg to the Ontario border. It was a long stretch of road and there were few other vehicles in view! We were traveling along, minding our own business, when much to my surprise I saw "*flashing red lights*" in my rear-view mirror! I said, incredulously, "*Where did they come from?*" She just glared! I pulled over to the shoulder of the road and rolled down my window (*a crack - remember Winnipeg!*) as the officer approached my vehicle. I said, in my most innocent voice, "*Hello, can I help you?*" The officer immediately asked me, "*Do you know how fast you were going?*"

Please see *INSIDE with the Festival Nomad...* on page 4

*INSIDE with the Festival Nomad...* from page 2

I didn't know the answer, so I stole a quick glance at Judi. Her eyes were still "*glaring*"! With no quick or witty (not even half-witty) answer to the question, I sheepishly said "*No*". I said this with a "forlorn" look on my face, hoping for mercy! He said, "*You were going 15 kilometers over the speed limit.*" I gulped and said "*Are you sure, it didn't seem that fast?*" Like Judi, he just "glared" at me! So much for sympathy! With that he handed me a ticket! I "*thanked*" the officer and bid him a "*good night*"! Frankly, I'm not sure why I bid him a "*good night*" because I was hoping that the rest of his night wouldn't go too well! So much for Canadian politeness! With a wave, I cautiously pulled back onto the highway and handed the ticket (unread) to Judi. She asked me how much it was for. I just shrugged my shoulders (a perfectly good male response) and said I didn't know because I hadn't looked at it! After a few minutes my curiosity got the better of me and I asked her, reluctantly, how much! She turned the interior light on and glanced at the ticket. With that, she started laughing! Annoyed, I asked why she was laughing! I told her that I didn't think getting a *Speeding Ticket* was a laughing matter! She just laughed harder! Finally, between breaths, she was able to blurt out that it wasn't a traffic ticket at all, but rather, a "*courtesy*" warning, to keep my speed down! It also told me to "*drive safely and to have a nice day*"! We finally entered Ontario and passed through Kenora. The "glare" was gone and we were both in good spirits! North of Superior awaited us!

## Festival Tips...

### Observations (Part One)

by Judi McWilliams

When you STOP ... its amazing what you can *observe!* From what you see, to what you hear, and even to what you smell, it all adds up to *observations!* I overheard a conversation while I was "*standing*" at a red light on a busy downtown Toronto street corner. The people were talking about a lecture they had just attended. They were commenting that they observed (saw, heard, learned), more from the professor as an "*observer*"! They were saying that when they themselves were the focus of the conversation they were "*caught-up*" in that particular focus. They went on to say they learned a great deal more as "*observers*"!

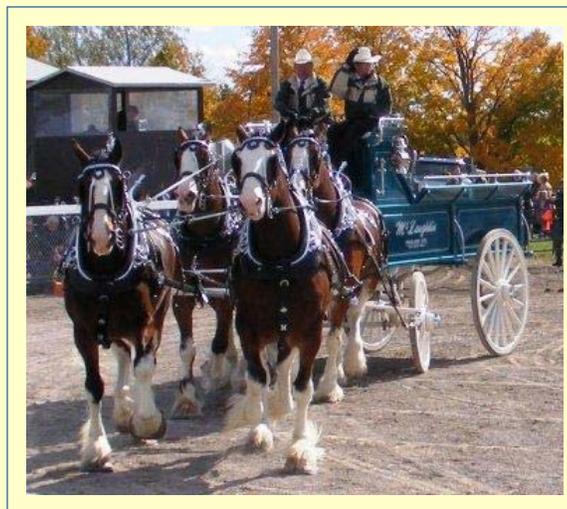
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"Crates of Cranberries"  
**Bala Cranberry Festival**  
(a successful small town event)



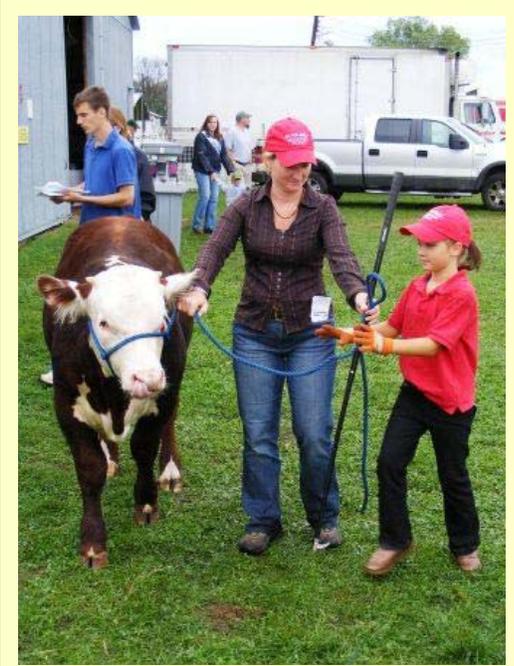
"Canadian Artists"  
**Buckhorn Fine Art Festival**  
(a successful small town event)



"Judging the Wagons"  
**Norwood Fall Fair**  
(a successful small town event)

*Festival Tips...* from page 2

The light turned green and that was the end of that! However, it became clear to me that this knowledge (that I just overheard), could be applied to the wonderful festivals and events we organize. Sometimes, as festival/event planners/organizers, we get caught-up in the details. We tend to focus on problem solving such as coordinating volunteers, issues on finances, logistics, and such. Perhaps, as festivals and event organizers, we too could get a clear picture, *clear observation*, if we attended our own festival/event as a "visitor"! Start observing (*recording*) our experiences, right from the very start of our "visit". Perhaps we should try making observations about our experiences and then recording those experiences. We might be surprised by what we *observe*! Try finding your festival/event through media outlets (*website, newsprint articles, T.V. and radio media*). How was your experience? How the parking experience was for you; the admission process (*where there long line-ups*); was the cost affordable/reasonable; were you greeted by friendly event staff/volunteers? Take time to taste the foods, beverages and treats offered. How was the quality versus cost, was there ample selections, was it healthy food? In order to "observe" your festival or event, you need to take the time to participate in the activities, performances, events offered. Check to see if there was there adequate seating; reasonable wait times; too many conflicting external noises and, was it entertaining? Basically, as a "visitor", see if you can gage how enjoyable this entire overall experience was for you. Take the time to record your observations throughout your visit. I believe that if we (*as festival and event organizers*) can step back, *stop and observe*, that we can learn a lot about the "perceptions" that visitors have about our events. If you haven't had a chance to watch the TV show, "*Undercover Boss*", I would suggest that you do. Some of the most successful CEO's are finding how useful this process is! It is important to take this new found (*observed*) knowledge and apply the valuable insights to your festival and event. You can adjust accordingly, to re-structure, if needed and apply your new found knowledge to enhance your festival/event. Add the new ideas and delete any problem areas. If "*observations*" are working for our youthful students in the universities and colleges and the North Americas top CEO's, and they are applying what they have "observed", perhaps this strategy can work for you! Hopefully you will take the time to "*visit*" your own festival/event... perhaps we will see you there!



"Family Business"  
Orono Fair  
(A successful small town event)



"The Winner - Sitting on his THRONE!"  
Redneck Games - Harriston  
(a successful small town event)

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