



Ontario Visited, P.O. Box 272, Cobourg, ON, K9A 4K8, Canada  
 www.ontariovisited.ca gary@ontariovisited.ca (888) 818-0255

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## Strength In Numbers...

By Gary McWilliams, *the Festival Nomad*

Last week Judi and I had the privilege of meeting and interviewing the *Ontario Minister of Tourism and Culture*, the *Honourable Michael Chan*. Judi will be posting her interview with the *Minister* on her **THE INSIDE SCOOP** blog, so I won't go into details about the *Minister* and our meeting with him. Rather, I wanted to talk about one of the concepts we discussed and, in my opinion, the importance of it. In the last few years the Ministry has introduced *RTO's*, *RTO* stands for *Regional Tourism Organization*. In Ontario there are thirteen regions. *Region 13* or *RTO13*, which is located in the far north of Ontario, is divided into 3 areas. The idea behind the *RTO* system is to bring together everyone to form a stronger tourism marketing force. You know the old axiom "*Strength in Numbers!*" I think that the biggest challenge is to get everyone, in each area, to buy into the concept. In many areas, business, attractions, communities and events are used to "*going it alone*". Changing to group marketing, and losing a certain amount of control, can be very difficult for some people. However, I believe, that the ultimate benefits far out weigh the negatives. This is why I believe combining efforts, or attractions, into one package is so attractive, especially for area visitors. As *Minister Chan* put it, regions should try to convince visitors to their area to stay longer, not for just a day or two, but for a week or more. This can only be accomplished by regions offering as many activities and attractions as possible. To do this, all stakeholders have to work together to develop interesting and unique packages. What I am afraid of is that regions may not see immediate results and prematurely abandon this fantastic initiative. As I understand the process, regional stakeholders will have to make a decision sometime in 2012 as to whether or not they will continue with the *RTO* concept or go back to "*going it alone*". I hope that cooler heads prevail and that they give the *RTO* system a real chance for success. I think that those who do, will be greatly rewarded! I know that we, at *Ontario Visited*, will do everything in our power to help *RTO* boards succeed in their efforts. There is, of course, one note of caution. There are elections in Ontario this coming October. If there is a change in government, I would encourage the new government not to act too quickly, if at all, to change or cancel this initiative. I say to all, give it a fair chance to succeed or to possibly fail. Tourism and festivals and events are an integral part of the fabric of Ontario life and its prosperity! Let's move forward together! There is "*strength in numbers!*"



"The Honourable Michael Chan"  
 Ontario Minister  
 of  
 Tourism and Culture

## Festival Nomad's Report...

**WOW!** I can't believe that we are already halfway through summer! In *July*, as I thought, we were very busy! It all started off with a visit on July 1<sup>st</sup> to *Lang Pioneer Village and Museum* and their *Dominion Day Celebrations*. While Judi and I were at Lang, Kevin (our trusty *Festival Nomad Correspondent*) traveled Northwest to enjoy *Sarnia's Canada Day* bash. On July 9<sup>th</sup>, Judi and I attended the Opening Night festivities at the *St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival*. We had the fun of watching their production of *Twelfth Night*. Driving to Prescott to enjoy one of the Festival's two plays is certainly worth the trip! The next day, we traveled back to *Lang Pioneer Village* for their annual *Antique and Classic Car Show*. From Lang we made our way to Peterborough to hear the *Peterborough Concert Band* perform at the *Gazebo in Riverview Park & Zoo*. Judi's nephew is a member of the band and is also its manager. The *Peterborough Concert Band* has been entertaining audiences for over 150 years! On July 16<sup>th</sup>, we braved the Toronto traffic and drove to *Niagara-on-the-Lake*. We traveled there with our friend Paul Putman. While Paul and Judi enjoyed the wonderful shops at *Niagara-on-the-Lake*, I visited *Fort George* and enjoyed the *Battle of Fort George reenactment*. It was an amazing spectacle with over 300 reenactment participants! Mid-week we were joined by our friends, *Barbara and Laurence Stevenson*, on our visit to *Gardens Plus* and their *Daylilies in Bloom Festival*. Although *Gardens Plus* was closed that day, *Dawn*, chief gardener and owner, was there and was kind enough to open up for us to visit. The *Gardens Plus* array of Hosta and Daylilies are amazing and I know that Barbara, especially, enjoyed the trip. Barb, as you may know from past articles, is a horticultural enthusiast and it is always an adventure to visit gardening events with her! While we were in the area, we also visited the *Village of Keene*. Judi and Barbara fell in love with a unique gift store, *Patricia's Gift Shop*, and spent quite sometime "looking around". Laurence and I "patiently waited" outside where we wondered how much room we would need for the girl's purchases! On July 23<sup>rd</sup>, we were back on the road, this time to *Wasaga Beach*. We were headed to the *Wasaga Under Siege* reenactment. This is an annual event organized by our friend, *David Brunelle*. While there, we visited with the *Algoma War of 1812* organizers, who were at this event promoting next year's *War of 1812 Bicentennial celebrations in Sault Ste. Marie and district*. On July 16<sup>th</sup> Kevin Andrade and I drove as *Nomad's* together to the *Hamilton International Airport* located in Mt. Hope to visit the *Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum*. Kevin's father, *Malcolm*, is a volunteer and guide with the Museum, so we had a "first class" tour of the facility and its artifacts. As I mentioned before, we met with the *Honourable Michael Chan, Ontario Minister of Tourism and Culture* on July 27<sup>th</sup>. Our final visits



"Dominion Day Parade"  
Lang Pioneer Village



"Crowds enjoying the day"  
Canada Day in Sarnia



"Scene from *Twelfth Night*"  
St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival

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"Two Classics"  
Antique and Classic Car Show  
Lang Pioneer Village



"The Band plays on!"  
Peterborough Concert Band



"Cannon Fire"  
Battle of Fort George  
Niagara-on-the-Lake

took place during the Civic Long Weekend. First up was the *Aurora Jazz+ Festival*. This is a fabulous annual event, organized by Sher and George St. Kitts. The next day, and the last day of the month, we traveled to Barrie for *Kempenfest*. This is a terrific festival and is located along the banks of Lake Simcoe's *Kempenfelt Bay*. This is one of the best summer events that we have visited!

In *August*, we will be visiting more great festival and events. Here is a list of some that we hope to visit.

August 6th - [Siege at Old Fort Erie](#)

August 13th - [Festival of Textiles](#) (Lang Pioneer Village)

August 14th - [Buckhorn Fine Art Festival](#)

August 14th - [Peterborough Concert Band](#) (at the Buckhorn Fine Art Festival)

August 20th - [Collingwood Art, Jazz & Blues Festival](#)

August 27th - [Niagara Passion](#)

August 28th - [Barrie Fair](#)

September 3rd - [Paris Fair](#)

## Inside Review...

The *Inside Review* is a monthly review of festivals and events that we have visited over the past month or two. In doing so, we will take a closer look at each event and then make suggestions on how events could improve themselves. Where possible, we will also mention areas that were well done! We are hoping that all of this will help broaden the scope of our reviews and help event organizers.

### IN THE SHADE

It has been particularly hot and sunny the last few weeks. Walking festivals in these conditions can be challenging. Many events don't take these conditions into consideration when they are planning the layouts of their events. This is a real opportunity missed. I believe that organizers should plan rest stops throughout their facilities. The rest stops should include plenty of seating, some type of shade and if possible, water facilities. The rest areas should be easy to find and well marked.

### NOISE INTERFERENCE

Judi and I have been to many music events where you can't hear yourself think. You may think I'm talking about loud music, but I am not. I'm talking about "*noise interference*". This is where competing sounds drown each other out. Imagine sitting listening to great music and have some background sound interfere with your listening enjoyment. The interfering sound can be anything from people talking, kids shouting or midway's blaring their music. Good organizers take this into consideration and find different ways to combat this challenge. Luckily, we have been to several events recently, where "*noise interference*" has not been evident. *Congratulations!*

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## SIGNAGE

I don't know why this continues to be a problem, but it does. Having proper and effective signage would seem to be obvious. "Unfortunately" festivals and events are planned by local people often. They know where the "fairgrounds", "parks", "arenas", "community centres" are located. Why would anyone need a sign to get there? That may be true for local residents, but if you want to attract visitors from outside areas, good signage, and plenty of it, should be strategically placed. Smart organizers even make it a "profit centre". They sell "ads" to local businesses. Businesses like it because it's an inexpensive way to let visitors, especially put-of-town visitors, know that they exist.

## INSIDE with the Festival Nomad...

### Working the Show (Part One)

Over the years Judi and I have worked and managed many show booths! The two hardest, but most "interesting" aspects of "Working the Show", are the "Set-Ups" and the "Take Downs"! To me, the "set-ups" are the hardest. You want to make your booth look "perfect". The process, actually, starts prior to the show; gathering up materials and products. In our case, fragile framed art. And then, once everything is gathered, it needs to be packed in the car, van or truck neatly and methodically. Also, part of the preliminary process is planning how the booth will look, and where everything will be placed. Arriving early at the festival or show is always a good idea! With everything "perfectly" in place, it's time for the "set-up" Nothing can go wrong! Or can it? Here a couple of our more "interesting" experiences! To read more about our experiences, visit ["The Adventures of the Festival Nomad" Blog](#).

#### 1. Hurry Up and Wait...

At one show we were required to take our van to an off-site location and then wait to be called to come to the show site. In our show package we were given an exact time to be at the off-site location, plus an approximate time that we would be allowed to drive into the show. It was like being at a doctor's office. I got there right on time, but there we had to wait two hours before they would allow me to leave for the show site. In the meantime, Judi was at our booth wondering where I was!

#### 2. Hello Dolly...

It's amazing how every exhibitor wants and needs a "dolly"! However, it seems that shows never have enough! And, of course, the big exhibitors always seem to get preferential treatment. I can remember a number of shows where we had to "steal" a dolly for a few moments! Unfortunately we normally got caught and had to give it back. There were some nice exhibitors who shared their dollies, but more times than not, we had to make many trips from our vehicle to the booth carrying cumbersome, oversized packages. It was an exhausting experience!



"Dawn"  
Daylilies In Bloom  
Gardens Pus



"Water Battle"  
Wasaga Under Siege - Wasaga Beach



"Malcolm Andrade at work"  
Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum



"Downloading Files"  
Festival Tips



"Sher & George St. Kitts"  
Aurora jazz+ Festival



"Judi with Tom Atkins"  
Kempfest - Barrie

## Festival Tips...

### Downloading Files!

by Judi McWilliams

The season is flying by and the *Festival Nomad* and I are on the road often these days! With modern technology we have been able to keep up-to-date with our reports on the great adventures of the festivals, events, fairs, communities and historical sites that we visit. I thought I would take this time to remind everyone of a few event/festival "tips"! We did a report about our favorite *Top Ten Tips* some time ago. However, using these "tips" is a different story. I'll keep my story short, but soon, you will see my point!

The weather this year seems to be unpredictable. It was just a few weeks ago the sun popped out and the day became hot and sticky. We were in a field visiting the grand opening of *The Sunny Acres Barnyard Zoo* and the *Spencerville Mill Heritage Fair*. I had remembered to pack our dog, *Dusty*, lots of water but forgot my own "tip", wet a cloth, freeze it the night before and pack it in a plastic bag to bring. It would have been very refreshing and it helps rejuvenate you. Keeping hydrated internally and keeping externally cool is important. The second "forgotten tip" occurred while we were visiting *Nancy Island* in Wasaga and *Discovery Harbour* in Penetanguishene. We had pre-planned our routes, pre-printed the appropriate computer maps with directions, distances and alternate routes should any roads have unexpected challenges. It seems the only "challenge" that day was the *Festival Nomad* himself! I was napping (*with my trusty pillow I had remembered to pack*), and did not notice at all where we were. I did catch a glimpse, as the *Festival Nomad* did, of a sign saying Port Severn River. However, the next sign said we were on our way to Parry Sound and at the "Bala" exit, not our destination of "Bracebridge". Fortunately (*although I had my computer with me, keeping up-to-date you know*). Unfortunately, we were in the middle of no-where! Computer maps just don't work in some remote places! As "fate" would have it, the tried and true ancient huge folding map was in the trunk of the car. We were able to use our trusty reading glasses to see the small print on the map. To make matters worse, I had taken our "true north" compass out of the glove box (*it's back there now*) so our directions still were shaky! The *Festival Nomad* is savvy and we found our way around and back in the correct direction ... *Bracebridge via the scenic route!* This turned out to be very exciting! Part of the *scenic route* was seeing a young deer directly at the roadside. The other part of the *scenic route* was a "big black dog", also at the side of the road. I suggested that the *Festival Nomad* slow down as we approached as I could not tell if the "dog" was on leash or off and might just cross the road in front of us. We were surprised as we were nearly beside the "big black dog" that it turned out to be a young but "big black BEAR"!

I must admit, as the event and festival season rolls on, we have brushed up a lot and refreshed ourselves on our own "Tips". You too can check the "Tip" list out on our website at ([http://www.ontariofestivalsvisited.ca/top10\\_festivaltips.html](http://www.ontariofestivalsvisited.ca/top10_festivaltips.html))  
*Happy Travels!*

## The Inside Scoop...

by Judi McWilliams

*Interview with the Honourable Michael Chan, Ontario Minister of Tourism and Culture.*

On this warm sunny Wednesday morning in July, the *Festival Nomad* and I traveled to downtown Toronto to get "THE INSIDE SCOOP"! It was with great anticipation and excitement, because we were being offered *Scoop* from none other than one of the main leaders in the festival and event industry, *The Honourable Michael Chan, Minister of Tourism and Culture!* Much preparation went into this occasion. The *Minister* is fortunate to have a remarkable advisor helping him with coordination and details. I must say that Mr. *Mukunthan Paramalingham, Director of Communications, Office of the Honourable Michael Chan* is incredible at his job! *Muku* (as he prefers to be called), is completely thorough, responsible, knowledgeable and kind! I had pre-sent *Minister Chan* a list of *INSIDE SCOOP* questions to ponder prior to our meeting. I might be a little "thorough" myself. Some of my pre-questions had been answered through our ever changing society and its rapid media availability. Fortunately, I had time to adjust my questions, which, in the long run, turned out to be much more genuine and I hope will help give you the best *INSIDE SCOOP!*

A day in the life of *Minister Chan* usually begins at 6:15 a.m. and he doesn't return home until 9:30-10:30 p.m. Many times, he tells us his *dinner hour* starts at 5:30 p.m. and goes on for a long, long time, as he is often required to attend up to 4 or 5 dinners per night. He laughed when he told us one of his nicknames is "The Honourable Ministry of Food Tasting". I wondered how *Minister Chan* became the *Minister of Tourism and Culture*. He shares with us that his portfolio with the government started as *Minister of Revenue*, then *Minister of Citizenship & Immigration* and now *Minister of Tourism and Culture* in 2010. He tells us that the government found it a natural choice to combine Tourism and Culture. *Muku* adds here that "it is the *Premiers prerogative to appoint a Minister, but they wanted to put someone with an economic background to the portfolio and someone with a business mind. Mr. Michael Chan met all these requirements and more*".

If you would like to read more about my interview with *Minister Michael Chan*, visit my weekly *THE INSIDE SCOOP* Blog at <http://judisinsidescoop.blogspot.com/>.



Judi and Gary with Minister of Tourism & Culture, Michael Chan



Gary with Minister Chan and Mukunthan (Muku) Paramalingham



"Judi in front of the fountain at the Hearst Block" Before Meeting with Minister Chan

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