

Municipal Display – Showcase Kawartha Lakes

Traditionally, the host municipality provides a display within the Tented City to aid attendees to become familiar with the region they are visiting, or for the residents, to get to know more about their home. Economic Development led the municipal display.

Showcase Kawartha Lakes was produced within a 70'x150' Quonset-style coverall building within the Tented City for attendees throughout the event hours. A tourism survey of 455 attendees identified that 31% of attendees were local, and 97% were from Canada. Forty-two percent of visitors would stay overnight averaging five nights.

The Showcase included a variety of components to give attendees a sense of what Kawartha Lakes is all about from a community, business, social, and environmental perspective. It represented the City's brand of Community, Connected, Naturally, and represented the strategic priorities of A Healthy Environment, An Exceptional Quality of Life, A Vibrant and Growing Economy and Good Government. Multiple community partners, businesses, not-for-profit organizations and individuals were engaged by the City to bring the showcase to life with visual displays, interactive activities, entertainment, food sampling and other experiences.

Northern Lights Landscape Architects assisted with the layout design including key water landscape features, vignettes, entertainment stage, vegetation plan and branding concepts. Fifty percent funding for this design was provided by the Partnership Allocation Program offered by the Regional Tourism Organization 8.

The Economic Development Officer – Agriculture, the Economic Development team, Communications staff, and staff from the Kawartha Region Conservation Authority (KRCA) partnered in planning and delivering the Showcase. The central water feature, representing a wetland, lake, waterway and a beach was designed and built by the KRCA team. To give perspective to each aspect of the changing environments surrounding the water feature, two local tree suppliers, Rockwood Forest Nursery and Pineneedle Farms, were engaged and donated the use of trees, shrubs and plants. Installation and removal of the landscaping and placement of the vegetation was provided by Parks and Recreation staff, and removal of mulch was assisted by Public Works staff.

To deliver a 'fiscally responsible wow', staff reached out to the community to involve a cross section and to borrow items such as:

- Entertainment stage from the Fenelon Falls arena

- Re-use old brick pavers, planters and furniture
- Other décor and installations such as the lakeside dock was provided by Naylor Systems
- Water trailer was provided by the Ontario Clean Water Agency
- Agricultural equipment simulator was provided by Fleming College
- Augmented reality sandbox was provided by Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority
- Live art demonstrations and an "Art-Off" were provided by the Kawartha Arts Network
- Mini-robots and building kits were provided by Ampere and Make Stuff Move
- Local food samples were provided by Mariposa Dairy and Bistro 96
- Staff volunteered at the showcase

Beyond the natural environments surrounding the water, the showcase also represented forests, agricultural lands, culture and heritage spaces, a 'main street', manufacturing, innovation and business zone, and an entertainment stage.

With an accessible layout the public flowed throughout the exhibit, taking in the views, hanging banners, information and educational information, taking part in many hands-on activities, sampling local food, enjoying local entertainment, and engaging with local tourism representatives from communities across Kawartha Lakes. Visitors left with tourism materials and a sense of what Kawartha Lakes offers to visit and experience. It was an inviting space where visitors tasted treats prepared by Board & Nibble while resting in the coffee house space listening to local musicians on stage or added their name to the signature quilt. There was so much to learn about growing a rain garden, fencing livestock from water ways, composting food waste and diverting waste from landfills, making spaces bird and bee friendly, learning more about the osprey, or how wide is their wingspan, how old is 'that tree', and what they can do to improve the land around them.

With strong partnerships and participation by 30 organizations and businesses within the showcase, many developed new materials, displays, and refreshed tourism attraction collaborations. Key strengths were recognized in the ability to reach visitors and support them in exploring across the community, through the collaboration between the five Chambers of Commerce and BIA organizations.

At a wrap-up meeting of the showcase Kawartha Lakes planning team, the team noted the growth of strong partnerships, new and lasting relationships between organizations. It was an undertaking that involved people and organizations coming together as a community to show off our community.