
Subject: Niagara Children's Water Festival Summary

Report to: Public Works Committee

Report date: Tuesday, September 12, 2023

Recommendations

1. That report PW 43-2023 **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to update the Public Works Committee on the 2023 Niagara Children's Water Festival (NCWF), held May 24-27 at Brock University.
- The Niagara Children's Water Festival is a collaborative event held in partnership with Niagara Region, Brock University, City of St. Catharines, Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, and Ontario Power Generation.
- The Steering Committee was excited to return to an in-person event in 2023 for its 20th year at a new location, Brock University.

Financial Considerations

The NCWF, including student transportation, continues to be provided free of charge to all participants. This unique feature of the NCWF ensures that it is not cost prohibitive for any youth or schools in the region.

The targeted cost of the 2023 NCWF was \$98,640 and the total cost was \$83,868 (including 1.76% non-recoverable HST). The festival was delivered under target by nearly \$15,000 as a result of not utilizing the site contingency fee and actual costs for the consultant, transportation, supplies and promotional items being less than budgeted.

The NCWF Steering Committee actively seeks sponsorships to offset costs associated with the festival. In 2023, \$28,500 in sponsorships were acquired. This brought the net cost of the 2023 NCWF to \$55,368.

Analysis

With the move to a new location, a return to in-person after a three-year hiatus, and a shortened festival planning timeline, the decision was made to scale back from four

days to three days. Despite this, the festival still hosted over 2,100 grade three and four students and nearly 300 teachers and parents from across Niagara region.

Attendees had the opportunity to participate in 27 unique activity centres that educated students on the importance of our most natural resource – water. Activity centres are hosted by industry experts from our partners and other community organizations and provide a great opportunity to showcase the work they do related to water resources in Niagara. The committee is grateful to the over 200 volunteers who helped make the event a success.

Feedback received from participants and volunteers was overwhelmingly positive. In a follow-up survey, teachers rated satisfaction in various categories at an average of 92% (4.6 out of 5), and volunteers at an average of 88% (4.4 out of 5).

The committee looks forward to expanding the festival in 2024 to a four-day event for an even greater reach within our community and making improvements based on lessons learned and feedback.

Alternatives Reviewed

No other alternatives have been reviewed.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

- Green and Resilient Region
- Equitable Region

Other Pertinent Reports

None

Prepared by:

Amanda Deschenes
Education & Engagement Coordinator
Water-Wastewater Services

Recommended by:

Dan Carnegie
Commissioner of Public Works (Acting)
Public Works Department

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared in consultation with Rachel Beni, Water-Wastewater Outreach Program Representative, Heather Sim, HJS Solutions and reviewed by, Ben Collins, Program Financial Specialist, Ed VanVliet, Acting Associate Director, Integrated Systems, Joe Tonellato, Director, Water and Wastewater Services.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Niagara Children’s Water Festival Summary Report



NIAGARA CHILDREN'S **WATER FESTIVAL**

2023 Summary Report

July 2023

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Budget	3
3. Activity Centres	6
4. Registration.....	7
5. Volunteers.....	8
6. Student Transportation	10
7. Risk Management.....	11
8. Media Coverage	11
9. Continuous Improvement.....	12
10. Concluding Remarks.....	15
Appendix A. 2023 NCWF Map	16
Appendix B. 2023 NCWF Budget Summary.....	17
Appendix C. 2023 Sponsors.....	18

1. Introduction

The Niagara Children’s Water Festival (NCWF) is a collaborative event held in partnership between Niagara Region, Brock University, Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA), the City of St. Catharines and Ontario Power Generation (OPG). This annual festival engages grade three and four students from throughout the Niagara region to learn about water and the environment through a series of fun and interactive activity centres.

The NCWF has been an annual event since 2003, with the last three years having been virtual as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Steering Committee was excited to return to an in-person festival in 2023 at our new location, Brock University. This year’s festival reached over 2,100 grade three and four students from throughout the region.

The NCWF is typically a four-day event; however, in 2023 the decision was made to scale back to three days. The Steering Committee had tight timelines and wanted to ensure success at our new venue after coming off a three year in-person hiatus. After a successful return this year, the Steering Committee hopes to move back to a four-day program in 2024.

This report includes a summary of the 2023 NCWF, running from April 25 to 27, including information about:

- Budget
- Activity Centres
- Registration
- Volunteers
- Student Transportation
- Risk Management
- Media Coverage
- Continuous Improvement

A copy of the 2023 festival map is included in **Appendix A**.

2. Budget

The NCWF, including student transportation, continues to be provided free of charge to all participants. This unique feature of the NCWF ensures that it is not cost prohibitive for any schools in the region. The following sections discuss the 2023 funding sources and expenditures, and **Appendix B** includes a summary of the 2023 NCWF targeted costs.

Sources of Funding

Sources of funding for the NCWF are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Sources of Funding for the 2023 NCWF

Source	Amount
Niagara Region	\$55,368
City of St. Catharines	\$10,000
Ontario Power Generation	\$5,000
Other Sponsors	\$12,500
Grants	\$1,000
Total Funding	\$83,868

Niagara Region supports the majority of the NCWF budget as part of its overall operating budget as approved by council and funded through the Region’s water rate requisition. In addition, the NCWF receives donations from our partners, the City of St. Catharines and Ontario Power Generation (OPG).

Brock University became a partner in 2020 and has generously donated the use of their facilities (representing an in-kind donation valued at \$35,100.06 plus HST). The Steering Committee is appreciative to Brock University for this substantial in-kind contribution.

The NCWF sponsorship program was re-developed for the 2019 festival and re-launched in 2023 which resulted in additional funding. Water-themed sponsorship levels were designated and a variety of sponsor benefits were provided. Local area municipalities, contractors, consultants, past supporters, and grant programs were solicited for sponsorship. An additional \$12,500 was received as part of the sponsorship program for the 2023 NCWF. The NCWF was also thankful to receive a \$1,000 grant from Enbridge in 2023.

A summary of the sponsors at each level is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. 2023 NCWF Sponsors

Sponsorship Level		Sponsors
Watershed	\$5,000+	N/A
Lake	\$2,500+	GM Blue Plan Engineering Peters Excavating Inc.

Sponsorship Level		Sponsors
River	\$1,000+	Associated Engineering Devine and Associates Limited Enbridge Hamilton-Oshawa Port Authority RJ Burnside
Creek	Up to \$999 including volunteer only in-kind donations	Alfred Beam Excavating Bass Pro Shops Birdie Golf Carts Kerry T. Howe Engineering Limited Land Care Niagara Mad Science Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) Niagara Coastal Niagara Drowning Prevention Coalition Niagara Falls Nature Club Niagara Media Company Niagara Parks Commission Niagara Rowing School Peninsula Field Naturalists WSP
Sponsor an Activity	\$250	N/A

The Steering Committee appreciates the generous contributions made by all of the NCWF sponsors. **Appendix C** includes a copy of the sponsorship thank you page that was included in the Teacher and Volunteer Guides and displayed as a poster at several locations throughout the festival site.

Expenditures

Major festival expenditures each year include transportation, tent rentals and volunteer lunches. The retention of a consultant to coordinate the festival represented an additional expense in 2023. The decision to return to hosting an in-person festival was made in late 2022. At that time, there were two staff vacancies and limited time to coordinate a festival of this magnitude. Heather Sim of HJS Solutions Inc. was retained to coordinate the festival due to her familiarity with the NCWF and her successful coordination of the 2018 festival under similar circumstances.

The cost for many of the festival service providers and materials has increased over the last few years; however, the total budget remained similar to 2019 because the festival was only three days this year instead of four. The festival is expected to return to a four-day program in 2024.

The targeted cost of the 2023 NCWF was \$98,640 and the total cost was \$83,868 (including 1.76% non-recoverable HST). The festival was delivered under target by nearly \$15,000 as a result of not utilizing the site contingency fee and actual costs for the consultant, transportation, supplies and promotional items being less than budgeted.

3. Activity Centres

In 2023, 27 activity centres (accommodating 32 groups per day) were hosted at the NCWF. Table 3 lists each of the 2023 activity centres along with the partner/sponsor responsible for its delivery and content. All of these activity centres have been used in the past; there were no new activities added this year. The numbered activity centres are 15 minutes in length and those denoted with two letters are 30 minutes in length. All groups were scheduled to visit at least one 30-minute activity during their visit.

Table 3. 2023 Activity Centre Listing

Activity Centre Name	Theme	Partner/Sponsor Responsible
1. Global Water Race	Water in developing countries	Niagara Region
2. Yellow Fish Road	Storm drains and water protection	NPCA
3. Rolling to the River	Watersheds and pollution	NPCA (Presented by MECP)
4. Water Whirl	Water trivia	City of St. Catharines
5. Tap Into It	Drinking water treatment	Niagara Region
6. Save Silly Sal	Water safety	Niagara Drowning Prevention Coalition
7. Keep it Clean	Waste sorting	Niagara Region Waste Management
8. Flush the Kids	Septic systems	NPCA
9. Go with the Flow	Wastewater treatment	Niagara Region
10. Duck Detectives	Bird migration and wetlands	NPCA
11. Global Water Race	Water in developing countries	Niagara Region
12. Go Fish!	Fishing	NPCA

Activity Centre Name	Theme	Partner/Sponsor Responsible
13. Yellow Fish Road	Storm drains and water protection	NPCA
14. Alien Invasion	Invasive species	NPCA
15. Water Recreation	Water recreation and safety	NPCA (Presented by Niagara Rowing School)
16. The Power of Water	Hydro	Ontario Power Generation
17. To and Fro with H2O	Water distribution	Niagara Region
18. Water Whirl	Water trivia	City of St. Catharines
19. Rolling to the River	Watersheds and pollution	NPCA (Presented by MECP)
20. Climate Change	Climate change	NPCA
21. Agent H2O	Fat, oil and grease	Niagara Region
AV. Aboriginal Voices	Indigenous perspectives	Niagara Region
FF. Fire (2 groups)	Fire safety	St. Catharines Fire Services
MS. Mad Science (4 groups)	Science	NPCA
NN. Nuts About Nature (2 groups)	Nature hike	NPCA
ST. Simply Treemendous	Carolinian forest	NPCA (Presented by Land Care Niagara)
TB. Things That Bite	Biting insects and water	Niagara Region Public Health

4. Registration

Online registration was launched on February 15, 2023. Invitations advertising the NCWF were emailed to the District School Board of Niagara and Niagara Catholic District School Board for distribution to all grade three and four teachers. In addition, emails were sent to French schools, a home educators' association, as well as private and Christian schools that had previously attended the festival. Registration was also advertised via Niagara Region's Twitter feed.

All 96 available spots and 25 wait list spots were filled in less than 30 minutes when the registration opened on February 15. Several teachers inquired about space after the wait list was filled. The NCWF is in high demand and the Steering Committee will look at additional options for next year to accommodate more students (i.e. more groups per day and/or more days).

A total of 2,191 children with 103 teachers and approximately 200 parents/guardians attended for a total attendance of approximately **2,494** people over the three-day NCWF. The breakdown of participants per day is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Number of Participants Per Day

Date	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Number of Parents *	Total Participants
April 25, 2023	723	34	68	825
April 26, 2023	721	35	74	830
April 27, 2023	747	34	58	839
	2,191	103	200	2,494

* The number of parents was estimated when teachers registered. In many cases these numbers may have fluctuated up or down. Teachers were asked to provide at least one adult supervisor for every 10 students.

5. Volunteers

Volunteers play an essential role in the successful execution of the NCWF. Each activity centre is presented by volunteers representing a variety of environmental professions. Their enthusiasm and energy create a positive learning environment for all participants. In addition, most activity centres also had assistance from a local high school volunteer.

Festival Volunteers

Festival volunteers are recruited from partner organizations as well as several other supporting organizations. The 2023 NCWF included a mix of longstanding volunteers as well as many new faces, including some from our sponsor organizations. Volunteers assist in nearly every aspect of the festival, including:

- Running activity centres
- Providing information to festival registrants and volunteers
- Coordinating transportation and traffic control
- Ensuring student safety
- Maintaining activity centres and delivering power and water
- Lunch area coordination
- Festival set up and tear down
- High school volunteer coordination
- Parent and volunteer parking assistants

The following organizations provided NCWF volunteers in 2023:

- Brock University
- City of Niagara Falls
- City of St. Catharines
- Land Care Niagara
- Mad Science
- Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP)
- Niagara Coastal
- Niagara Drowning Prevention Coalition
- Niagara Media Co.
- Niagara Falls Nature Club
- Niagara Parks Commission
- Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA)
- Niagara Region – Planning and Development Services, Corporate Performance and Strategy
- Niagara Region – Planning and Development Services, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Indigenous Relations
- Niagara Region – Public Health, Environmental Health Division
- Niagara Region – Public Works, Waste Management Division
- Niagara Region – Public Works, Water and Wastewater Services Division
- Niagara Rowing School
- Ontario Power Generation (OPG)
- Peninsula Field Naturalists
- St. Catharines Fire Services
- St. John Ambulance
- WSP
- Various Community and University Student Volunteers

Table 5 summarizes the number of festival volunteers per day.

Table 5. Number of Festival Volunteers Per Day

Date	Approximate Number of Volunteers*
Tuesday, April 25, 2023	90
Wednesday, April 26, 2023	90
Thursday, April 27, 2023	90
	270

** This does not include high school volunteers. Several volunteers returned each day so not all 270 are unique volunteers.*

In total there were **approximately 270** volunteers. The Steering Committee appreciates the support of each and every NCWF volunteer.

Secondary School Volunteers

The Steering Committee is grateful for the high school students from Notre Dame College School, Thorold Secondary School and Denis Morris Catholic High School who offered their time to assist with the 2023 NCWF.

Table 6 provides a breakdown of the number of secondary school students volunteering at the festival each day.

Table 6. Number of Secondary School Volunteers Per Day

Date	School	Number of Student Volunteers
Tuesday, April 25, 2023	Notre Dame College School	26
Wednesday, April 26, 2023	Thorold Secondary School	26
Thursday, April 27, 2023	Denis Morris Catholic High School	24
		76

In total there were **76** secondary school volunteers.

6. Student Transportation

School bus transportation was provided by Switzer-Carty (formerly DanNel) and Student Transportation of Canada (STC). Both vendors have provided service to the NCWF for several years and bookings were divided between the two companies.

Table 7 indicates the number of buses required each day of the festival to transport students to and from Brock University.

Table 7. Number of Busses Per Day

Date	Number of Participant Busses	Number of Secondary School Busses	Number of Schools
Tuesday, April 25, 2023	23	1	11
Wednesday, April 26, 2023	23	1	14
Thursday, April 27, 2023	22	1	13
Total	68	3	38

Students were dropped off at Brock University in front of the Walker Complex on University Road West. Each bus was welcomed by a transportation volunteer and given instructions for the day. At the end of the day, the busses lined up along Village Road facing north for loading. Schools with accessible busses were unloaded and loaded in front of Walker Complex. Festival transportation coordinators as well as staff from STC helped ensure the safe and efficient loading and unloading of busses.

7. Risk Management

The Risk Management Plan (RMP) was extensively updated in 2020 to reflect the new location of Brock University. In 2023, minor updates were made to the RMP to reflect an updated transportation / bussing plan.

The RMP includes the following chapters:

- Sheltering Locations
- Inclement Weather and Site Risks
- Traffic Control Plan
- First Aid and Medical Emergency Plan
- Fire Safety Plan
- Site Accessibility Plan
- Missing Child Procedure
- Lock Down Procedures
- Imminent Threat Procedures
- Visitors
- COVID-19 Considerations

The Steering Committee reviews and updates the RMP each year to reflect changes and continually improve.

8. Media Coverage

Coverage of the 2023 NCWF included the following:

- [Media Release](#) issued by Niagara Region on April 24, 2023
- [YourTV](#) feature
- [610 CKTB radio interview](#) on April 24, 2023
- Social media coverage ([Twitter](#))
- Photographer from Niagara Media Company

9. Continuous Improvement

The Steering Committee is committed to continuously improving the NCWF to ensure its ongoing success and relevance. The following sections discuss some of the processes utilized to help with continuous improvement.

Steering Committee Debrief

The Steering Committee held a meeting on May 18, 2023. Debrief notes are recorded in the meeting minutes and some of the highlights include:

- The 2023 NCWF was another great success.
- Brock University is a great, central location to host the event and the indoor space was appreciated by teachers and volunteers.
- There is significantly more demand for the Water Festival than we were able to accommodate. The Steering Committee will look at options for expanding next year (number of days and/or number of students per day).
- The activity centre list should be reviewed and activity centres should be retired, updated and/or added to ensure new ideas and messaging are included.
- Lunch time for students should be lengthened.
- Improvements to the site map and schedule can be made next year to help students transition more quickly between activities.

All action items and debrief notes from this meeting will be considered by the Steering Committee as they plan the 2024 NCWF.

Teacher Feedback Surveys

In an effort to continually improve the NCWF, all teachers who attended the festival were invited to complete an online survey following the festival. The Steering Committee appreciates their time and feedback as it is helpful in continuously improving the NCWF. In total, there were 48 respondents and the results are summarized below.

Teachers were asked to rate various components of the NCWF on scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). Table 8 presents their average scores.

Table 8. Teacher Survey – Average Ratings on a scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent)

	Average Rating Out of 5
Age appropriateness of activity content	4.4
Relevance of activity content to Grade 3/4 curriculum	4.3
Festival communication	4.8

	Average Rating Out of 5
Helpfulness of staff/volunteers	4.8
Organization of transportation/bussing	4.8
Overall festival organization	4.8

Other information collected from the teacher survey includes:

- 56% of respondents had attended the NCWF before.
- 98% indicated they read the Festival Guide prior to attending.
- Some of the students' favourite activity centres included:
 - Flush the Kids
 - Mad Science
 - Fire
 - Nuts About Nature Hike
 - Water Recreation
- Several respondents indicated that they believe their students retained key messaging. Some examples include:
 - Students often refer to the contaminants that end up the Great Lakes during Social Studies.
 - Students talk about the importance of not dumping chemicals and waste down storm drains.
 - Students spoke about how much fun the festival was. They mentioned the underground pipes in the city, how water conducts electricity and how we have to keep our water ways clean.
 - Students connected the hike to our habitats unit and they were still talking about how the water gets to their homes and its treatment from the lake. They also are more aware about what can and cannot go down the drain.
 - Students couldn't believe that people in developing countries do not have accessible water like we do and that they have to carry buckets of water to their homes.
- Examples of some additional comments from respondents include:
 - Thank you for such a great, local, hands-on experience for our students! Well done!
 - Extremely well organized and all events were relevant, age appropriate and fun!

- I love that each station was engaging!! Students participated and they were learning relevant information!
- The venue was excellent and the event was well organized.
- Great venue! Much more accessible for students in wheelchairs.
- Very pleased with the attention to detail to accommodate my special needs students.

Volunteer Feedback Surveys

In an effort to continually improve the NCWF, all volunteers were invited to complete an online survey following the festival. The Steering Committee appreciates their time and feedback as it is helpful in continuously improving the NCWF. In total, there were 55 respondents and the results are summarized below.

Volunteers were asked to rate various components of the NCWF on scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). Table 9 presents their average scores.

Table 9. Volunteer Survey – Average Ratings on a scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent)

	Average Rating Out of 5
Festival communication	4.6
Helpfulness of other staff/volunteers	4.9
Food	3.6
Scheduling	4.4
Overall festival organization	4.7

Examples of some of the additional comments from volunteers included:

- Wonderful experience, so fun to give back to the community! Would definitely volunteer again. Thanks!
- It was a pleasure for me to attend this year's event in my role. The coordination and communication was exceptional and the feedback I received about same was all positive. I look forward to working with the team again next year. Congratulations on a successful first festival at Brock.
- Everyone I spoke with (children, teachers, parents, Brock staff, volunteers) all said this was a very well-organized event!
- Brock was a good location, not as scenic as Ball's Falls, however nice that it had indoor stations.

10. Concluding Remarks

Niagara Region successfully hosted the 20th annual NCWF with ongoing support from the Steering Committee partners.


The 2023 NCWF:

- Successfully **taught over 2,100 children about the importance of water** and the environment.
- Was **delivered under targeted cost**.
- Was **well received with excellent feedback** from teachers and volunteers.
- Continues to be a **preferred educational field trip** for teachers and students in the Niagara region.
- Was a **great opportunity for Niagara Region** and other NCWF partners to showcase the work they do related to water resources in Niagara.

The NCWF would not be possible without the support of everyone involved. The Steering Committee would like to extend its appreciation to all festival volunteers, high school volunteers, partners, supporting organizations, teachers, parents and students.

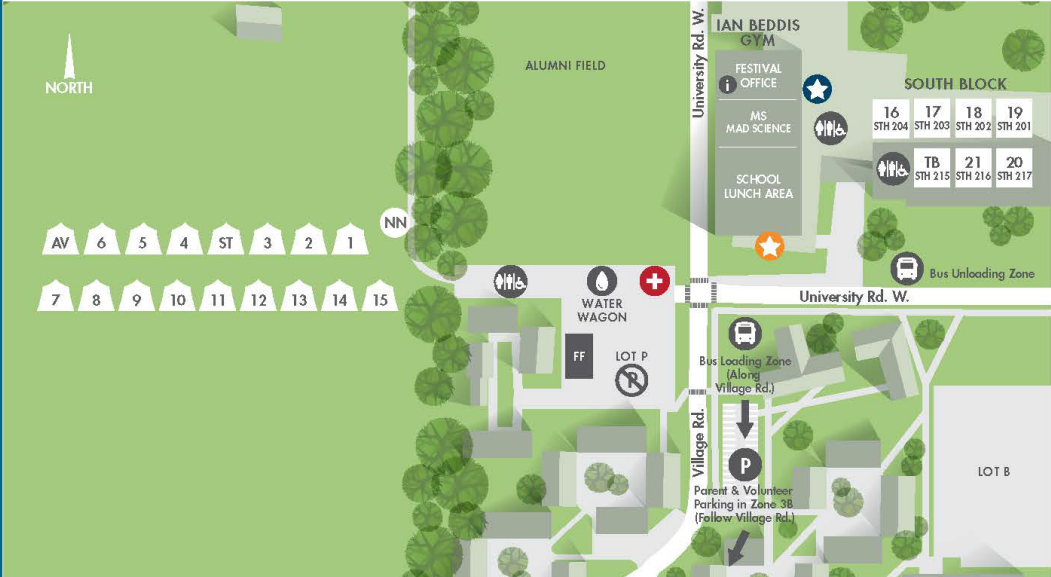
We look forward to hosting another successful event in and hope to expand to reach even more Niagara students in 2024!

Appendix A. 2023 NCWF Map



**NIAGARA CHILDREN'S
WATER FESTIVAL**

2023 ACTIVITY CENTRE MAP










Outdoor Activity Centres

FF. Fire
NN. Nuts About Nature Hike
1. Global Water Race
2. Yellow Fish Road
3. Rolling to the River
ST. Simply Tremendous
4. Water Whirl
5. Tap Into It
6. Save Silly Sal



Indoor Activity Centres






AV. Aboriginal Voices
7. Keep it Clean
8. Flush the Kids
9. Go with the Flow
10. Duck Detectives
11. Global Water Race
12. Go Fish!
13. Yellow Fish Road
14. Alien Invasion
15. Water Recreation

Legend

-  Washroom
-  Parent/Volunteer Parking Zone 3B
-  Water Wagon
-  Bus Zones
-  Info
-  First Aid
-  School Registration
-  Volunteer Registration
-  No Parking

Lake Sponsors

niagararegion.ca/waterfestival

Appendix B. 2023 NCWF Budget Summary



2023 Niagara Children's Water Festival Budget - Summary

SOURCES OF FUNDING

Item	2023 Budget		2023 Actual	
Regional Municipality of Niagara	\$	83,640	\$	57,868
City of St. Catharines Donation	\$	10,000	\$	10,000
OPG Donation	\$	5,000	\$	5,000
Other Sponsors	\$	-	\$	10,000
Grants	\$	-	\$	1,000
	\$	98,640	\$	83,868

EXPENDITURES

Item	2023 Budget		2023 Actual	
Service Providers	\$	33,675	\$	30,986
Equipment & Supplies	\$	5,000	\$	2,158
Rentals	\$	2,500	\$	3,618
Promotions and Marketing	\$	7,215	\$	7,170
Tents	\$	8,400	\$	8,385
Transportation	\$	20,000	\$	18,492
Food and Hospitality	\$	12,100	\$	10,882
Health & Safety	\$	2,250	\$	2,177
Staff Expenses	\$	500	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	-	\$	-
Site Fees - Custodial	\$	2,000	\$	-
Site Fees - Contingency	\$	5,000	\$	-
	\$	98,640	\$	83,868

Actual amounts include 1.76% net HST.

Appendix C. 2023 Sponsors



THANK YOU

TO OUR 2023 PARTNERS AND SPONSORS

LAKE





RIVER









CREEK



























OUR PARTNERS









