



## Announcing the Winners of the 2015 Ontario Tourism Awards of Excellence

November 11, 2015

Toronto - The best of the best in Ontario tourism were celebrated at the annual Ontario Tourism Awards of Excellence Gala on Tuesday, Nov. 10 in Toronto. The Ontario Tourism Awards of Excellence recognize industry successes by acknowledging those who have made significant contributions to Ontario's tourism industry.

Jointly presented by the [Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance \(OCTA\)](#), the [Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation \(OTMPC\)](#) and the [Tourism Industry Association of Ontario \(TIAO\)](#), the Ontario Tourism Awards of Excellence are divided into three respective categories. The Culinary Tourism Awards of Excellence are about the passion of those dedicated to advancing the culinary movement in Ontario, and recognize those who work hard to tell the stories of our growers, producers, chefs, winemakers and brewers. The Tourism Marketing and Travel Media Awards of Excellence celebrate those who contribute to Ontario's tourism industry through impactful partnerships, marketing activities and media relations. The Tourism Industry Awards of Excellence are presented to organizations, businesses and individuals that represent the quality of outstanding offerings that make Ontario a world-class destination.

*The winners for 2015 are:*

### **Culinary Tourism Awards of Excellence**

Ontario Culinary Tourism Leadership Award — Norfolk County  
Ontario Culinary Tourism Experience Award — Niagara Culinary Tours  
Ontario Culinary Tourism Event of the Year Award — Taste-Real: Local Food Fest

### **Tourism Marketing & Travel Media Awards of Excellence**

Tourism Marketing Campaign Award Under \$25,000 — County of Bruce  
Tourism Marketing Campaign Award Over \$25,000 — Tourism Toronto  
Tourism Marketing Partnership Award — Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island  
Tourism Print Collateral Award — Southwest Ontario Tourism Corporation  
Tourism Digital Marketing Award — The Great Waterway  
Travel Media Story Award — Mariellen Ward  
Travel Media Photography Award — Colin Field

## **Tourism Industry Awards of Excellence (TIAO)**

Accessible Tourism Award — Royal Ontario Museum  
Sustainable Tourism Award — Mariposa Folk Festival  
Tourism Employer of the Year — Attractions Ontario  
Tourism Champion of the Year — Kevin Eshkawkogan  
Tourism Innovator of the Year — Teanna Lindsay Events  
Tourism Event of the Year — Supercrawl  
Lifetime Achievement Award — Don Braden

For more information on each award category and the winners' achievements please see the backgrounder below.

Congratulations to all of the 2015 winners! Each one exemplifies Ontario's diverse, vibrant tourism industry and demonstrates clear a commitment to making Ontario a destination of choice.

### **Quotes**

"Congratulations to this year's winners! The Ontario Tourism Awards showcase the province's finest tourism products; we're very proud to recognize these organizations and individuals as shining examples of our industry's great work."

– Beth Potter, President & CEO, Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO)

"We're equally thrilled to announce the winners of the Ontario Tourism Awards as we were the finalists. It's just such a good group! The achievements of our industry and those championing locally grown and made food and drink this year really show the breadth of talent, expertise and passion on offer in our province. Well done!"

– Rebecca Mackenzie, Executive Director, Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance (OCTA)

"I'm proud that Ontario has such a diverse and innovative tourism sector that is always looking to showcase our province in new and exciting ways. Congratulations to the winners of the 2015 Ontario Tourism Awards. Through their hard work, they are helping to grow our economy, create jobs and attract visitors to discover and experience all that Ontario has to offer."

– Michael Coteau, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport

"Congratulations to each of the 2015 finalists and award winners! The OTMPC is pleased to recognize the achievements of our distinguished tourism industry partners. It is through collaboration with our partners that OTMPC fulfills its vision to position Ontario as a global destination, and highlight to consumers the unique, compelling and welcoming experiences that define Ontario."

– Ronald Holgerson, President & CEO  
Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation (OTMPC)



## **Backgrounder**

### **Ontario Culinary Tourism Leadership Award—Norfolk County**

Through financial contributions by local businesses, Norfolk County's cooperative marketing partnership includes promotional tactics such as the annual Experience Guide and Map featuring over 90 local food businesses, as well as a community driven cookbook. Aggressive social media and direct email also drive traffic to the food and drink features on [norfolktourism.ca](http://norfolktourism.ca).

### **Ontario Culinary Tourism Experience Award—Niagara Culinary Tours**

Appealing to world travellers and locals alike, Niagara Culinary Tours creates food tours and culinary events for those who want to eat, walk and embrace their inner local food lover in the Niagara region.

### **Ontario Culinary Tourism Event of the Year—Taste-Real: Local Food Fest**

Taste Real is an initiative of the Economic Development Department at the County of Wellington that works collaboratively with its municipalities and regional stakeholders to promote local food experiences and local food purchasing in Guelph Wellington area while building lasting relationships amongst the region's stakeholders.

### **Tourism Print Collateral Award—Southwest Ontario Tourism Corporation**

The Ontario Southwest "Build A Better Beach Vacation" 2014 free standing insert incorporated a four step guide which, step by step, communicated the vast array of experiences to be found on or adjacent to Southwestern Ontario's shoreline assets. As a result, the insert helped prospective visitors plan an unforgettable summer escape.

### **Tourism Digital Marketing Award—The Great Waterway**

This innovative campaign maximized the use of mobile advertising technology to reach potential cruise customers and to provide business operators with customer leads through web visits and phone calls. A GPS-enabled mobile web environment was created to provide visitors with a list of cruise operators, distance to dock, and time of next cruise. The campaign generated over 50,000 direct web visitors and 15,000 phone calls.

### **Tourism Marketing Partnership Award—Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island**

A unique partnership between the Art Gallery of Windsor, Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island and the Windsor Endowment for the Arts culminated in a major art exhibition, "Possible

Futures: What is to be Done? The 2014 Windsor-Essex Triennial of Contemporary Art”, which took place at the Art Gallery of Windsor and four additional venues throughout the region.

#### **Travel Media Story Award—Mariellen Ward**

Niagara Falls is one of the world's top tourist attractions, visited by more than 10 million each year. However, to many of us who grew up in Southern Ontario, our somewhat jaded view has reduced "The Falls" from a phenomenon of nature to a corny commonplace. In her article "On the edge at Niagara Falls," Mariellen tried to get as up close and personal as she could to rediscover the wonder that attracts so many from around the globe.

#### **Travel Media Photography Award—Colin Field**

Colin Field's photograph was taken on an epic day at Blue Mountain on a run affectionately known to 'in-the-know' locals as Happier Valley. The conditions were just right for Colin, accompanied by fellow skier Greg Sturch, to take the shot that earned him the prize for the best piece of travel media photography this year.

#### **Tourism Marketing Campaign Award Under \$25,000—County of Bruce**

County of Bruce's Adventure Passport program is an 'Amazing Race' style contest. Adventure Passport participants must visit a minimum of 7 of the 12 locations, punch their Adventure Passport using a unique hole punch and submit it for entry to be eligible to win packages and getaways sponsored by local tourism partners. 2014 marked the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Adventure Passport and record-breaking participation numbers.

#### **Tourism Marketing Campaign Award Over \$25,000—Tourism Toronto**

In 2014, Toronto enthusiastically hosted WorldPride for the first time in North America. Leading up to the event, Tourism Toronto produced a marketing program that focused on generating awareness and interest in WorldPride with the ultimate goal of driving attendance and building legacy around what it means to be a proud world city.

#### **Accessible Tourism Award—The ROM**

Beyond its commitment to accessibility standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the Royal Ontario Museum offers programs and exhibitions—such as its Alzheimer's Tour Program, or the *Fashion Follows Form: Designs for Sitting* exhibition—that are not only inclusive for people with disabilities, but that highlight and discuss disabilities themselves.

#### **Sustainable Tourism Award—Mariposa Folk Festival**

Celebrating its 55th year of operation, the Mariposa Folk Festival is a true leader among sustainable events in Ontario. Beyond consistent and successful efforts to facilitate waste diversion, eliminate the use of plastic water bottles and utilize compostable serving wares, the festival also encourages other event organizers to adopt best practices for adaptive management of environmental impacts. In addition, the Mariposa Folk Festival educates vendors and participants about how they can contribute to environmental sustainability.

### **Tourism Employer of the Year—AttractionsON**

AttractionsON has had the same team of permanent staff since March 2005. The organization's minimal turnover is one hint that it's a great employer; other examples can be found in the programs and policies in place for employees as well as Attractions Ontario's dedication to evolving and expanding while simultaneously paying attention to the strengths and weaknesses of its staff team.

### **Tourism Champion of the Year—Kevin Eshkawkogan**

Kevin has been instrumental to the development of Aboriginal tourism in Ontario by spearheading the 2014 launch of Aboriginal Tourism Ontario—an organization with goals to create a provincial support system to grow Aboriginal tourism. Through a variety of other initiatives (both professional and in the community), Kevin has demonstrated his passion for tourism coupled with business development, and as such exemplifies what it means to be a tourism champion.

### **Tourism Innovator of the Year—Teanna Lindsay Events**

In 2014 Teanna Lindsay Events spearheaded two new events in the Windsor area: The Walkerville Night Market and The Tasting Trolley. These two events exemplify tourism innovation and also encourage and celebrate the local tourism products that Windsor and Essex County have to offer.

### **Tourism Event of the Year—Supercrawl**

Supercrawl is a free, three-day outdoor music and arts festival that celebrates the cultures, businesses and creative people in Hamilton's downtown core. In 2014, the festival covered a dozen city blocks, featured a total of 24 hours of programming, attracted more than 165,000 visitors and had a resulting economic impact of over \$14 million.

### **Lifetime Achievement Award—Don Braden**

Building tourism in the Blue Mountains, Georgian Bay and Ontario was Don's passion. His successes can be seen in a number of different projects over the past decade from marketing to strategic development. As President of the Blue Mountain Village Association, Don inspired his staff and regional partners to enhance each visitor's experience at all times of the year. He encouraged risk-taking to achieve success, and most importantly, he encouraged partnership and collaboration. As one of the most respected tourism innovators and leaders in the community, Don touched every level of tourism partner from groundskeepers to municipal staff in an effort to educate, inspire and reach for world-class destination status. Don passed away of complications following a stroke in May—this achievement is awarded posthumously in celebration of all the commendable work Don did for tourism in Ontario.

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