



Greetings from Muskoka Chautauqua



2025 stands out as one of the most dynamic and fulfilling years in Muskoka Chautauqua's recent history. Our partnerships with post-secondary institutions continue to inspire us and the work and enthusiasm of the students have contributed to building such a strong cultural community in Windermere and Muskoka Lakes. We continue to work with the Township in laying a strong foundation for the future. Special thanks to Miranda Britton and Queen's Arts Leadership program for our first cultural mapping of the area and to Lara Ross (great-great granddaughter of an original Muskoka Chautauqua founder) and the Lang School of Business at

University of Guelph for a deep dive into the history of our organization. We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to this vital work.

This year's Festival was a vibrant celebration of creativity, community, and connection. From the exhilarating opening performance by the Steel Orchestra on the shores of Lake Rosseau to the inspiring art workshops, literary talks, nightly concerts, historical walks, and community conversations, every moment of Chautauqua 2025 was infused with meaning and joy. We were especially proud to support the return of Windermere Family Fun Day at the waterfront—an event made possible by the dedication of Windermere community volunteers and our festival partners.

Our deepest appreciation goes to the patrons, supporters, sponsors, volunteers, advertisers, staff, and partners who helped bring our vision to life. Your commitment and generosity continue to shape the spirit and success of Muskoka Chautauqua.

In a time of global uncertainty, we remain anchored in the principles that define Chautauqua—upliftment, education, unity, and open-heartedness. These values guide our work and strengthen our resolve to foster a welcoming and inclusive environment for all. We respectfully acknowledge that Muskoka Chautauqua takes place on the traditional territory of the Ojibway, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Anishinaabe peoples, including the Wahta Mohawk and Chippewa. We honour their enduring connection to this land and commit to walking forward together with respect, gratitude, and care.

As we prepare for Chautauqua 2026, we invite everyone to walk gently on the Windermere land and join us in celebrating the extraordinary gifts and talents of those who make our Festival possible.

With Gratitude,
The Muskoka Chautauqua Team



Charitable No. 889548593RR0001

Mailing Address

P.O. Box 172
Port Carling, Ontario
P0B 1J0

Contact

Phone: (705)-765-1048
info@muskokachautauqua.com
www.muskokachautauqua.com

Office Address

1182 Foreman Road
Port Carling, Ontario
P0B 1J0

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About Muskoka Chautauqua



Muskoka Chautauqua is a not-for-profit organization fostering arts and culture, culminating in a summer festival in the historic village of Windermere.

Muskoka Chautauqua is a community for the curious and the creative. Springing from a tradition that started 100 years ago, when the village of Windermere attracted North America's leading thinkers to its shores, Muskoka Chautauqua is one of the longest-running and more iconic cultural institutions in the region.

With more than 15 Chautauqua communities across North America, Muskoka Chautauqua is the only remaining Canadian chapter. After going dormant after the Great Depression, Gary Froude and Gayle Dempsey revived the concept in the late 1990's and officially relaunched Muskoka Chautauqua in 2004.

Muskoka Chautauqua continues to grow and evolve, with a goal of providing a breadth of diverse arts and culture programming to the residents and visitors of the Muskoka Lakes region.

Vision

To be a recognized leader in the provision of inclusive and innovative arts-based programming for enrichment and life-long learning, while contributing to the economic and social vitality and offering a place for all in the community.

Mission

To collaborate with partners, diverse people and communities to present innovative, multi-disciplinary arts-based programs that inspire lifelong learning, well-being and resiliency by celebrating creativity and Muskoka's heritage and natural environment.

Mandate & Purpose

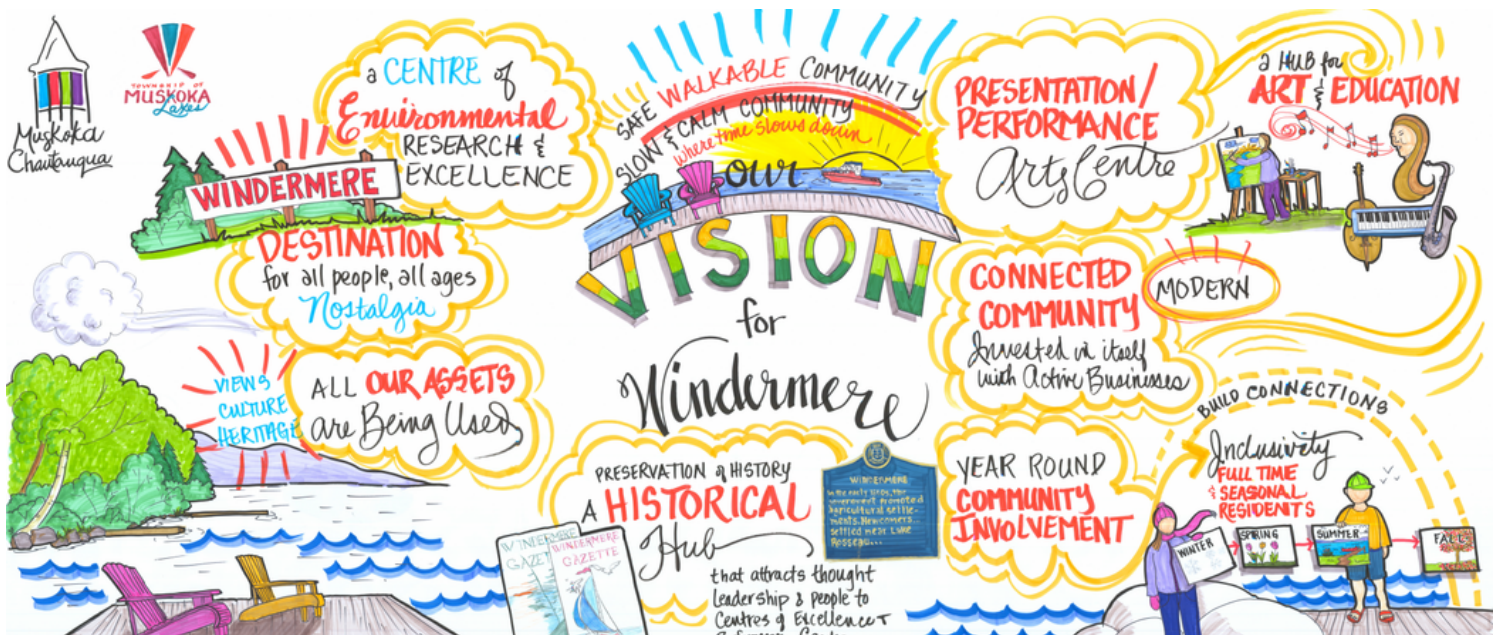
To provide inclusive and accessible arts and culture experiences that advance and enrich people's lives in rural communities, inspire life-long learning, well-being, renewal and resiliency by celebrating creativity and the human spirit. Muskoka Chautauqua is committed to preserving its unique heritage and natural environment and to continuing its contribution to the economic and social vitality of our communities.





Reimagining Windermere

In 1921, Chautauqua first graced the shores of Windermere, launching its inaugural summer season in Muskoka. Over a century later, Windermere Village continues to be the heart and home of our summer festival—embraced by residents, seasonal visitors, and cottagers alike.



One of the highlights this year was our ongoing Community Conversation series, which brought neighbours together at Windermere House to envision the future of the village. To date, Muskoka Chautauqua has hosted four successful community conversations. The fourth conversation culminated in the creation of the shared vision for Windermere (see image above). This vision was collaboratively built through a unique, visual note-taking exercise by all participants, capturing the community's deepest aspirations.

Following the establishment of this vision, Muskoka Chautauqua transitioned from dialogue to action by forming three working groups (WGs). These groups are structured around the core themes and goals that emerged from the community conversations, all of which are aligned with the Township of Muskoka Lakes' strategic plan. Numerous community members have already signed up to participate, eager to help drive these goals forward. To ensure the success and sustainability of the working groups, Muskoka Chautauqua has been actively pursuing key partnerships and resources. We are currently working with the Township of Muskoka Lakes to move the Working Groups forward.

Working Group 1: Strengthen Communication, Connection & Values

- Goals: encourage community participation in discussions, planning, and implementation.
- Community vision examples: Focuses on core values of inclusivity, reciprocity, and storytelling, while enhancing local communication (e.g., local Gazette(s)).

Working Group 2: Monitor Development/Infrastructure/Environment

- Goals: Ensure community-driven, sustainable development (economic and environmental).
- Community vision examples: Focuses on infrastructure (renewable energy, safe roads, trails/bike lanes), and local economic stability (employment, general store).

Working Group 3: Celebrate Culture, Heritage & Traditions

- Goals: Cultivate community benefits by embracing culture and actively preserving local heritage.
- Community vision examples: Focuses on heritage preservation (stone walls, archives), establishing an arts/education hub, and developing new cultural assets (performance space, arts centre).

Throughout the Year

While our flagship arts and culture festival in Windermere remains the highlight of our summer, Muskoka Chautauqua continues to bring vibrant arts programming to the region year-round. The very popular 'Company of Good Cheer' Coffee Houses hosted by Brandy Creek Music & Publications returned to The Muskoka Place Gallery during the fall and winter months. Every night saw packed houses and lively performances, keeping the community connected through music during the shoulder seasons.



**Rainbow
Registered
Arc-en-ciel
Officiel**

We're also proud to share that Muskoka Chautauqua became Rainbow Registered in 2024, demonstrating our dedication to fostering safer, more welcoming, and respectful spaces for 2SLGBTQI+ guests, artists, and community members. We remain committed to regularly reviewing and improving our DEI practices to ensure that everyone feels at home here.

One of the most exciting aspects of arts and cultural organizations is their esteemed position as core elements of vibrant communities. Over the past several years, we have hosted co-op and field placements from institutions including Laurier, the University of Guelph Lang School of Business, OCAD University Community Arts, and most notably, the Queen's University Arts Leadership Masters program. By partnering with Queen's University and the University of Guelph in 2025, we were able to provide student placements and summer job opportunities, helping to inspire the next generation of arts and culture leaders. We are excited to continue these partnerships in 2026 and beyond.

Miranda Britton, a multi-disciplinary artist who hosted the copper etching workshop, conducted critical Cultural Asset Mapping research within Watt Township. This initiative identified Windermere as the central cultural hub, affirmed a strong, shared community vision for the village, and establishes a foundational framework for building community.



**UNIVERSITY OF
GUELPH**



**Queen's
UNIVERSITY**

CONGRATULATIONS!

You've been nominated for

CO-OP EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR



We are also pleased to announce that Muskoka Chautauqua was nominated for Co-op Employer of the Year by Lara Ross, an outstanding student we took on from the University of Guelph.

Local arts and heritage were celebrated during our self-guided 'Watercolour Sketches in Muskoka Chairs' Culture Days event in partnership with Artisan Trading Post, as well as in the Township's public art spaces for the duration of the year.

Thank You to Our Team

Board of Directors

Our board of directors plays a key role in shaping the direction and strategy of Muskoka Chautauqua. All directors are deeply committed to the value of arts, culture and heritage programming in Muskoka. We are grateful for their unwavering support and oversight.

Glad Bryce, Chair

Beverlie Robertson, Secretary

Cheryl Hollows, Treasurer

Bonnie Newell

Dr. Bernie Gosevitz

Jen Morgan Anderson

Susan Hindle

Maureen Cubberley, Vice Chair

Leah Leslie

Founders/Administration

Gary Froude, CEO

Gayle Dempsey, Director of Development

Volunteers

Muskoka Chautauqua is proud to have many volunteers and we would like to express our deepest gratitude and special thanks for their exceptional efforts. We could not do it without them!

Festival Team

Sean Dempsey, Executive Producer

Tori Grant, Event & Marketing Coordinator

Alex Goltz, Summer Student

Lara Ross, Summer Student

Dale McIntosh, Onsite Producer

Mary Ellen Shrimpton, Onsite Producer

Jennifer Wilson, Festival Events & Volunteer Coordinator

Thank You to Our Supporters

Muskoka Chautauqua is so thankful for the generous support we received to continue arts & culture programming in our community. A very warm thank you to all of our artists, partners and donors.



DON & KAREN LANG

HELLYER FOUNDATION

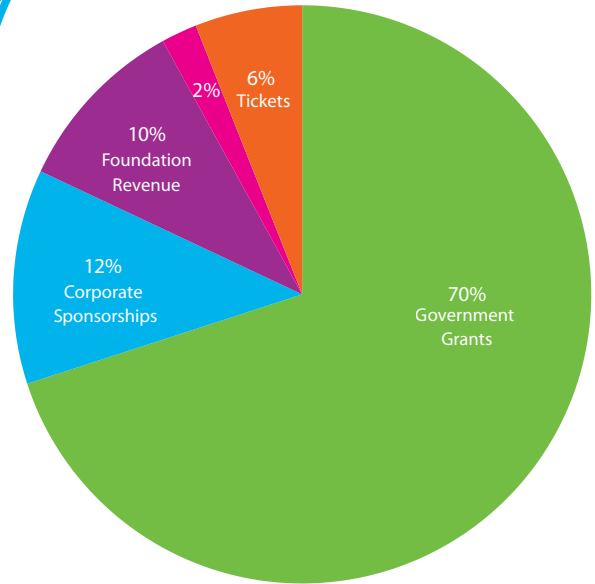
DONALD F. HUNTER FOUNDATION

KIM & STU LANG

2025 Financial Summary

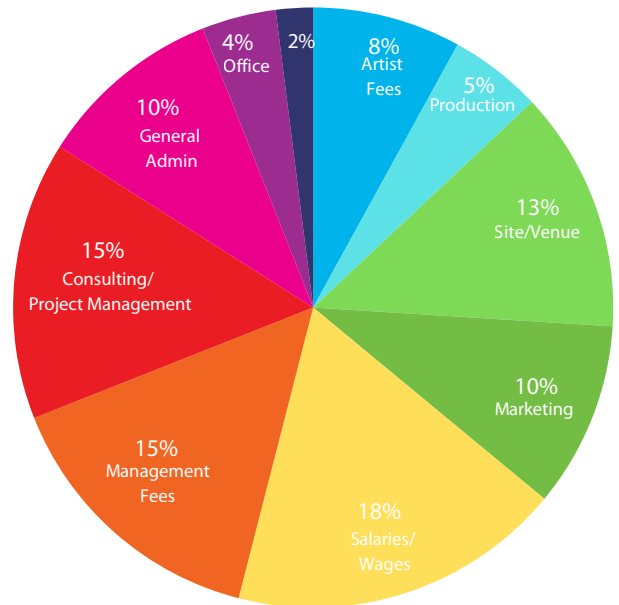
Revenues

Government Grants	\$221,345	70%
Corporate Sponsorships	\$ 37,650	12%
Foundation Revenue	\$ 31,000	10%
Donations	\$ 6,122	2%
Tickets	\$ 20,164	6%
Total Revenue	\$316,281	



Expenses

Artist Fees	\$ 23,736	8%
Production	\$ 16,502	5%
Site/Venue	\$ 41,257	13%
Marketing	\$ 30,881	10%
Salaries and Wages	\$ 56,867	18%
Management Fees	\$ 46,773	15%
Consulting/Project Management	\$ 45,343	15%
General Administration	\$ 31,558	10%
Office	\$ 13,544	4%
Amortization of Capital Assets	\$ 6,146	2%
Total Expenses	\$312,607	



Donate

[Donate Here](#)

This year's festival will proudly employ over 60 artists, staff and production crew. We hope you'll join us in supporting them with your applause and your cheers and, where appropriate, your dollars. Donations of \$25 or more will receive a tax receipt. This year's festival will proudly employ over 60 artists, staff and production crew. We hope you'll join us in supporting them with your applause and your cheers and, where appropriate, your dollars. Donations of \$25 or more will receive a tax receipt.

Sponsor

[2026 Sponsorship Package](#)

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, please reach out to mci@artsinmuskoka.com. If you would like to provide support in some alternative way than what is listed in the package, we are happy to tailor sponsorship to your needs/goals.

Muskoka Chautauqua



Festival Venues

The festival takes place in venues throughout historic Windermere village:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Theatre in the Woods: 1039 Golf Ave. | 6. Community Centre: 2416 Windermere Rd. |
| 2. Gallery in the Woods: 1039 Golf Ave. | 7. United Church: 2497 Windermere Rd. |
| 3. The 'New' Baldwins: 1024 Golf Ave Rd. | 8. Windermere House: 2508 Windermere Rd. |
| 4. Christ Church: 1018 Fife Ave. | 9. Windermere Wharf: 2510 Windermere Rd. |
| 5. Pop-Up Bookshop: 2496 Windermere Rd. | 10. Windermere Beach: 2510 Windermere Rd. |

Historic Walking Tour



Follow the trail app, or join a guided tour during the festival



Walking Path