

Windfall to celebrate rich history of local food with Provincial windfall



By Brock Weir

Each fall, Aurora's Windfall Ecology Centre throws open its doors for an annual festival; but 2017 is no ordinary year. This fall, close to 2,000 people are expected to descend on the Sheppard's Bush facility for Celebrating Diversity: Food, Land and People. Windfall formally announced their festival, which will take September 24, upon receiving a significant boost from the Newmarket-Aurora MPP Chris Ballard and the Ontario Government through the Community Celebrations Program in place to mark both the 150th anniversary of Canada and the Province of Ontario.

Windfall was one of four organizations to receive the grant, which Mr. Ballard says are intended to "honour our past, showcase our present, and inspire future generations."

Windfall is taking this theme to heart, programming a festival that celebrates our local culinary past through a showcase of First Nations and pioneer dishes, as well as foods grown locally today.

"We've decided to throw a party," says Brent Kopperson, Executive Director of Windfall. "We're going to gather the community together in what is really the jewel of Aurora, the heritage site that is Sheppard's Bush Conservation Area. We will have 30 or 40 exhibits honouring our First Nations partners as well as a lot of events in period costume. It is a bit of a costume party as well. There will be all kinds of things for young people of all ages, some pretty interesting pop-up events that we're going to be doing and, best of all, there is going to be all kinds of food from our history, from present-day cuisine and moving forward.

"We have been wanting to do something in the fall around diversity, people and food for a long time and decided that Canada's 150th birthday was the place to start."

Mr. Ballard also announced three additional Ontario 150 grants as part of the Ontario 150 Community Capital Program, which highlights infrastructure project "building a strong, social, cultural and economic legacy in the province."

The Aurora-based Alzheimer Society of York Region was one such recipient of a \$25,000 grant over 10 months to renovate existing washroom facilities and install new accessible washrooms in their Thornhill facility. Steps To Recovery will also receive \$15,000 over eight months to complete interior and exterior renovations at their Kettleby Ranch, which provides clients with addiction counselling, training and skill development, household responsibilities, and opportunities to give back to the community to become "fully functioning members of society."

"It is a chance for us to celebrate just how incredible this Province is and how much we have to be proud of, and how much we can accomplish when we come together," said Mr. Ballard of the grant program "The programs celebrate the qualities and values that define our province and breathe life into communities by supporting meaningful infrastructure projects. Through our government's support for these important infrastructure projects, we're building a strong social, cultural and economic legacy for our province. This is going to be a really exciting year where people from across Ontario have the opportunity to come together and celebrate the incredible province we all live in."