

## Bancroft's Canada Day: A community united in celebration



By **Alejandra Cervantes**

Canada Day is a day to celebrate everything that makes us Canadian; we celebrate our values, diversity, freedom, and the natural beauty of our country. This year, Bancroft, a small but vibrant town nestled in the heart of Ontario, marked the 157th anniversary of Confederation with a celebration that was both grand and intimate. The festivities showcased the town's unique charm and the strong sense of community that defines it. Hundreds converged at Riverside Park and across the country to celebrate Canada Day. Adults, kids, and even pets across Bancroft teemed with red and white as our community celebrated the unique privileges that come with being Canadian. The atmosphere was electric, filled with the joyous chatter of friends and families reuniting, and the anticipation of a day filled with fun and festivities. As the sun blazed down on Station Street, people strolled toward Riverside Park, discussing the various treats they were looking forward to tasting. Umbrellas popped open, not for rain but for shade, as the heat of the day settled in. The excitement was palpable as people approached Riverside Park. Promptly at 1 p.m., Rory McRandall, dressed as an 1868 official, opened the event with the sounds of a bell and the announcement of the country's formal creation, followed by the national anthem. This ceremonial start, with its nod to history, set a tone of reverence and pride for the day. Municipal government officials then gave a formal welcome, acknowledging the land and its history before inviting the traditional indigenous Shawashkong Ikwe Singers to perform. Their powerful voices and rhythmic drums resonated through the park, honoring the rich indigenous heritage of the area and celebrating the unity of all Canadians. The afternoon was a symphony of music, laughter, and community spirit. A variety of musical performances graced the main stage, each act bringing its own flavor and energy. The talent on display was a testament to Bancroft's thriving arts scene and the town's support for local artists. Meanwhile, the event featured a bustling array of vendors, offering everything from handmade crafts to mouth-watering food. Children lined up for face painting, their faces soon transformed into colorful butterflies and fierce tigers. The scent of a traditional barbecue wafted through the air, mingling with the sweet aroma of freshly made donuts. The Bancroft Cruisers car show was another highlight, showcasing gleaming vintage cars that drew admiring looks and nostalgic conversations. Speaking with attendees, the theme of community came up repeatedly. Jennifer Leddy, a local cottager, shared a heartwarming story of befriending a family from Germany while on vacation. This year, the German family joined her to celebrate Canada Day in Bancroft for the first time. "It's wonderful to share our traditions and see them embraced by others," she said, her smile wide with pride. Mr. Wilson, another local resident, expressed a sentiment that many seemed to share. "I'm just so happy to be a Canadian and blessed for all the wonderful things we have," he said, his eyes shining with emotion. His words encapsulated the collective gratitude felt by many on this day, a gratitude for the freedoms, opportunities, and natural beauty that Canada offers. The celebration wasn't confined to Riverside Park. The North Hastings Heritage Museum and the Gem and Mineral Museum opened their doors to the public, offering a glimpse into Bancroft's rich history and its status as the Mineral Capital of Canada. These museums provided an educational counterpoint to the day's festivities, reminding visitors of the town's unique geological heritage and the stories of its early settlers. Celebrating Canada Day in Bancroft this year was a poignant reminder of how far I've come and the welcoming spirit that defines this nation. Watching the community come together, seeing the

joy on the faces of both longtime residents and newcomers, and feeling the shared pride in our country was a deeply moving experience. As the day's celebrations drew to a close, the sense of togetherness remained. Canada Day in Bancroft was more than just an event; it was a testament to the town's spirit, its people, and the enduring values that make Canada truly remarkable. Whether you're a lifelong resident or a newcomer like me, the pride of being Canadian and the joy of celebrating it together is a feeling that lingers long after July 1. I came to Canada 25 years ago and I'm very thankful and grateful for this country because it gave me a better life.