

Bay Day kicks off summer in Barry's Bay



Crowds wander the Opeongo Line in Barry's Bay on Saturday. The street was closed down to celebrate Bay Day.

By Sarah Vance

They arrived in classic corvettes and Ford Model T's and even in a line of vintage tractors and lawn mowers for Bay Day, the annual Barry's Bay street-fest that closed down the Opeongo Line last Saturday. Several of the vehicles on display at the annual classic auto show were driven by Bancroft Cruisers and Renfrew Valley enthusiasts, who opened their hoods, talked catalytic conversion, and let kids crawl through the interior.

This event kicks off the summer season in the Bay, and promotes the many upcoming events scheduled in the region. It also underscores the importance of local small-enterprise farmers who showed up with potatoes and pies and the first fresh greens, as spring market activities begin.

In Barry's Bay, farmers gather to form a vibrant market every Friday from May 27 to Thanksgiving weekend, at the Railway Station Park. And on Saturdays, they haul their booths to the corner of Mill Road in Combermere.

These valley markets continue to promote sustainable small-enterprise farming, which has an effect of drawing tourists to the area. "I like to know who produces the food my family eats," said Tracy, who travelled from Pembroke, for the event.

The market is also a venue for artisans such as Oh So Mad Designs, which offers personalized metal stamp art jewelry using rifle and shot gun shells embedded with gem stones. "I am a country girl, and I come from a big family of hunters," said Amanda Aleck, jewelry designer, who handcrafts the line of shotgun shell rings and necklaces. "I go to a lot of shooting ranges and collect the used shot gun shells."

Bay Day is a cultural tradition, with families arriving from all over the Madawaska Valley. As far as food is concerned, several shops set up barbecues to grill foot-long hotdogs. Shulist Family Farm was also on-site, selling poultry, pork and lamb that can be pre-ordered for fall.

"The township has a booth today by the vintage cars and bikes," said Madawaska Valley town Councillor Carl Bromwich. "Dunn Street is blocked off for pedestrians and the whole town is on display." In addition, a flatbed trailer was transformed into a stage, where the Fran Band set the beat, playing blues and rock favourites while small children danced in the street.

"The Fran Band have been playing the Bay Day since Day One!" said Bromwich. "There's a good turn out today and a great beginning for summer."

Children were delighted by Barry's Bay's Best Balloonist who made custom balloon designs, on-demand, as young enthusiasts saw swords and tigers come life before their eyes.

The festival also hopes to boost cultural tourism, whose economic impact has been identified in the area of \$3.7 billion in GDP in Ontario, with 67,000 jobs and \$2.4 billion in wages generated.

"All our communities offer amazing trail systems and recreation, like water rafting," said CAO Craig Kelly. "But we are specifically seeking increases in tourism in our capacity as a known destination for the arts."

To help this out, down the line at the South of 60 Arts Centre, in the old Railway Station, a beautiful mosaic is being created.

Anyone old enough to pick up a paintbrush is invited to glue a tile or a gemstone to the living community installation.