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For Immediate Release

MUSKOKA PRIDE CELEBRATES 50 YEARS OF LGBTQ+ PROGRESS

Lots happening during the 2019 Muskoka Pride Festival

MUSKOKA, ONTARIO – July 11th, 2019 – Muskoka Pride has announced that **July 19th through 28th** is the **2019 Muskoka Pride Festival**. The annual week of activities celebrates the Muskoka lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) community.

This year's celebration is special, according to Muskoka Pride board member Shawn Forth, because it recognizes 50 years of LGBTQ+ visibility and progress. "The year 1969 saw two significant events in LGBTQ+ activism. In New York City the Stonewall riots that started June 28th are seen as the spark of LGBTQ+ activism after decades of police raids and brutality. In Canada on May 14, Bill C-150 partially decriminalized homosexuality and led to further legal protections."

This year's Festival theme is 'Reflecting Pride.' "We want participants to take time this year to reflect on the progress we have made in society in the last 50 years," explains Forth, "and also to acknowledge that there remain many marginalized members of the LGBTQ+ community – particularly transgender and gender-diverse folks, and queer people of colour. We want our community to commit to working toward full inclusion."

FESTIVAL LAUNCH PARTY

The Pride Festival week begins on **Friday July 19th** with the annual **Pride Launch Party** in Huntsville at **River Mill Park**. Over 300 people are expected to attend. There will be free hot dogs and drinks, live music with Emily Bridle and her band, over 15 vendors and community booths, a music DJ, and many activities for the whole family. Volunteers from the Huntsville Fire Department will once again be cooking food at the BBQ.

FLAG RAISINGS

All municipalities in Muskoka will be raising the Rainbow Pride flag on Monday July 22nd. The public is invited to attend: 10AM in Dwight and Port Severn, 11:15AM in Huntsville and Wahta First Nation, 1PM in Port Carling, 2:15PM in Gravenhurst, and 3:15PM in Bracebridge.

EVENTS

The week will play host to many events across Muskoka. A Pride Church service will be held at **Bala United Church** on July 21st followed by a community BBQ in the park. A community campfire on Wednesday July 24th. The annual mini-golf tournament at **Northern Escapades Mini-Putt** in Bracebridge is on Thursday July 25th – families can play golf between 2PM-7PM for only \$2 each. On Saturday July 27th there will be a Drag Show at **Sawdust City Brewery**, which organizers expect to be at full capacity.

CONCERTS

On **Thursday July 25th** the Huntsville Festival of the Arts has **The Queer Songbook Orchestra** playing at the Algonquin Theatre (tickets online). The Toronto based group is a 12-piece chamber pop ensemble, dedicated to exploring and uplifting LGBTQ+ narrative through the lens of popular music.

On **Friday July 26th**, Bracebridge Memorial Arena plays host to **Night Fever**. Come and dance to the music of the Bee Gees and Freddie Mercury, performed by North America's number one touring tribute band. Fresh off of appearances in the US and sold-out performances at Toronto's Roy Thomson Hall, this will be a show you won't forget. Tickets are available online for \$25

PICNIC and PARADE

The Muskoka Pride Festival will come to a close on **Sunday, July 28th** with the eleventh annual Muskoka Pride Picnic and the Muskoka Pride Parade.

The Parade will start at **11:30AM** along Manitoba Street (between Anne Street and Memorial Park), finishing at Memorial Park. Many groups have already signed up, but there is still time for additional groups to register online at www.muskokapride.com

The 11th annual Picnic takes place this year at **Memorial Park** in downtown Bracebridge from **Noon – 4PM**.

This year's Picnic will feature live music by local band, "The Dirty Little Swing Thing." Local duet "Hot Pink" will play during the band's intermissions. There will be over 35 vendors and community booths. There will be many children's activities, including: Drag Queen story time, Home Depot kids building tent, face painting, and crafts.

The public is invited to bring a lawn chair or picnic blanket as they enjoy this relaxed afternoon event. Food and beverages will be provided at this free family event. The Bracebridge Fire Department will be cooking at the BBQ again this year.

Everyone, no matter how you identify, is welcome to attend all Muskoka Pride events.

The Muskoka Pride would like to thank its numerous sponsors, including Festival Sponsors: The Town of Bracebridge, Boink Boutique, and Delta Bingo & Gaming. Signature Sponsors: McMaster's Muskoka, Bala Cranberry Festival, TD Bank, and Walmart Canada. Media Sponsors: Star Metroland Media, Moose FM, Xtra.

To see a full schedule of events go to www.muskokapride.com or click “Events” on the Muskoka Pride Facebook Page.

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About LGBT Pride Events – Pride events celebrate lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) culture. Most pride events occur annually and many take place around June to commemorate the Stonewall Riots in New York City on June 28, 1969. The first Pride march happened in 1970. Today Pride events are held in cities and towns all over the world.

About Muskoka Pride - Muskoka Pride is a volunteer group that formed in 2009, whose purpose is to increase awareness of the LGBTQ+ community of Muskoka and to create opportunities for inclusivity within Muskoka that overcome heterosexism and homo/bi/trans-phobia, providing a safe community for LGBT people. Muskoka Pride hosts the annual Muskoka Pride Picnic on the Sunday before the Civic Holiday weekend and Pride Week activities throughout Muskoka. A conference is held each fall, and regular social events happen throughout the year.

