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For Immediate Release

## **MUSKOKA PRIDE CELEBRATES 10 YEARS**

### **Lots happening during the 2018 Muskoka Pride Festival**

MUSKOKA, ONTARIO – July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018 – Muskoka Pride has announced that **July 20<sup>th</sup> through 29<sup>th</sup>** is the **2018 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 celebrates 10 years of LGBTQ visibility in Muskoka. "The first Picnic was held 10 years ago with only 26 attendees and a lot of uncertainty of how the public would react. Fast forward ten years and we're expecting hundreds of people to attend the Picnic and Muskoka's first-ever Pride Parade, plus many events across Muskoka."

This year's Festival theme is "Bringing Pride To You," which represents an acknowledgement of Muskoka's huge geography and Muskoka Pride's commitment to holding events in all municipalities. "Distance and transportation is an issue for many people in Muskoka," explains Forth, "so this year we're doing our best to bring Pride celebrations to the different communities."

All municipalities in Muskoka will be raising the Rainbow Pride flag, but it is happening differently this year. Instead of them all being raised simultaneously, each community will have it's flag raising individually, followed by a community BBQ to allow residents to participate in the Pride celebrations locally.

#### **Flag Raising schedule:**

Friday July 20 – Dwight @ 10AM and Huntsville @ 1PM

Monday July 23 – Bracebridge @ 11AM and Gravenhurst @ 2PM

Tuesday July 24 – Port Severn @ 10AM, Wahta First Nation @ 1PM, and Port Carling @ 3PM

The Pride Festival week begins on **Friday July 20<sup>th</sup>** with the annual **Pride Kickoff BBQ** in Huntsville at **River Mill Park**. Over 200 people are expected to attend. There will be free hot dogs and drinks, over 15 vendors and community booths, a music DJ, and events for the whole family. Volunteers from the Huntsville Fire Department will once again be cooking food at the BBQ.

## EVENTS

The week will play host to several events. A Pride Church service will be held at Port Carling United Church on July 22nd. The Gravenhurst Opera House is holding a pride night on Wednesday July 25th. The annual mini-golf tournament in Bracebridge on Thursday July 26th. A film screening of “Love, Simon” and a speaker series starting at 6PM in Bracebridge on Friday July 27th. On Saturday July 28th there will be a Drag Show at Sawdust City Brewery, which organizers expect to be at full capacity.

A full listing of events can be found at [www.muskokapride.com](http://www.muskokapride.com) or on Muskoka Pride’s Facebook page.

## PICNIC and PARADE

The Muskoka Pride Festival will come to a close on **Sunday, July 29th** with the tenth annual Muskoka Pride Picnic and Muskoka’s first-ever Pride Parade.

The Parade will start at **11:30** along Manitoba Street, 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](http://www.muskokapride.com)

The 10th 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.” There will be over 35 vendors and community booths. 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 Signature Sponsors: The Town of Bracebridge, Bala Cranberry Festival, TD Bank, and Walmart Canada.

To see a full schedule of events go to [www.muskokapride.com](http://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.

