

Congratulations Winners of the 2020 Ontario Tourism Awards of Excellence

October 29, 2020—Congratulations to all of the recipients of the 2020 Ontario Tourism Awards of Excellence. The best of the Ontario tourism industry were celebrated virtually at the annual Ontario Tourism Awards of Excellence Gala on Wednesday, October 28. These awards recognize tourism industry successes by honouring individuals and businesses that have made significant contributions to Ontario's tourism industry.

Jointly presented by the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO), the Culinary Tourism Alliance (CTA) and Attractions Ontario, the Ontario Tourism Awards of Excellence are divided into four respective categories:

- The *Tourism Industry Awards of Excellence* are presented to organizations, businesses and individuals that represent the quality of outstanding offerings that make Ontario a top destination of choice.
- The *Tourism Marketing and Travel Media Awards of Excellence* recognize those who contribute to Ontario's tourism industry through impactful partnerships, marketing activities, and media relations.
- The *Culinary Tourism Awards of Excellence* celebrate the passion of those dedicated to advancing food tourism in Ontario, and recognize those who work hard to tell the stories of the province's growers, producers, winemakers and brewers.
- *Ontario's Choice Awards* calls upon tourists and locals to vote for their favourite attractions in eight different categories, with the overall top-voted nominee earning the distinction of Attraction of the Year.

"Congratulations to all winners of this year's Ontario Tourism Awards of Excellence! The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) is immensely proud to acknowledge the organizations, businesses, and individuals who make it possible to represent Ontario as a destination of choice. It goes without saying, it has been a challenging year for the tourism sector but seeing what innovative and knowledgeable leaders we have in our industry makes it clear we will come back stronger than ever." – Beth Potter, President & CEO, Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO)

Congratulations again to the all finalists and winners! Your ability to pivot and your dedication to outstanding service is what will continue to make Ontario a place to discover for travelers.

2020 Ontario Tourism Awards of Excellence Winners

Ontario's Choice Award for Attraction of the Year (Attractions Ontario)

Top Attraction	Treetop Trekking
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Culinary Tourism Awards of Excellence (Culinary Tourism Alliance)

Culinary Tourism Leadership Award	Destination Northern Ontario and Indigenous Tourism Ontario
Culinary Tourism Experience Award	Forest City Culinary Experiences
Culinary Tourism Event of the Year Award	Feast on the Farm

Tourism Marketing & Travel Media Awards of Excellence (TIAO)

Tourism Marketing Campaign Award Under \$50K	Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island - Holiday Campaign
Tourism Marketing Campaign Award Over \$50K	Culinary Tourism Alliance - 50 Best Explores Ontario
Tourism Marketing Partnership Award	Tourism Partnership of Niagara - Rosé Day Getaway
Tourism Digital Marketing Award	Tourism Kingston - Weddings Campaign
Travel Media Story Award	Alec Jacobson: First Visions - Toronto's Indigenous Artists
Travel Media Photography Award	Colin Field - Nottawasaga Lighthouse

Tourism Industry Awards of Excellence (TIAO)

Accessible Tourism Award	Cowbell Brewing Co.
Sustainable Tourism Award – Large Organization	Metro Toronto Convention Centre
Sustainable Tourism Award – Small Organization	WindsorEats

Tourism Employer of the Year	Attractions Ontario
Tourism Champion of the Year	Jim Marchbank
Tourism Innovator of the Year	The Introduction of Commercial Air Service into the Muskoka Airport
Tourism Event of the Year	Toronto Zoo's Terra Lumina: An Enchanted Night Walk Into A Bright Future
Indigenous Tourism Award	Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung Historical Centre
Lifetime Achievement Award	Patricia Forrest

For more information on award recipients, please see the backgrounder below.

Backgrounder:

Ontario's Choice Award for Attraction of the Year — Treetop Trekking

Canada's leader in zip line adventures and unique forest experiences. Guests of all ages and abilities are able to experience nature like never before, surrounded by a team of friendly and energetic staff. Climb, swing, and zip through the forest canopy on exciting aerial game courses. Child specific activities introduce the youngest explorers to nature in a safe and fun way.

Ontario Culinary Tourism Leadership Award — Destination Northern Ontario & Indigenous Tourism Ontario

In a region that is dotted with Tim Horton shops and known more for shore lunches than other signature dining experiences, the idea of developing a great Northern Ontario food tourism offering posed some challenges. This partnership exemplified what's possible when two organizations work together to build something unique – from the ground up.

Ontario Culinary Tourism Experience Award — Forest City Culinary Experiences by the Lavery Culinary Group

Forest City Culinary Experiences in London, Ontario offers customizable experiences and partner with other community organizations to develop sustainable experiences for followers and culinary enthusiast. From hands-on and from-scratch cook class experiences to a wide range of food and drink focused walking experiences in Downtown London and the surrounding

area. Guests are connected to the Forest City in a new way indulging their senses with an insider experience by local culinary experts.

Ontario Culinary Tourism Event of the Year — Feast on the Farm

West Nipissing's Premiere Food Festival – Feast on the Farm is an annually sold out tradition celebrating local food and drink. Located at Leisure Farms and hosted by the West Nipissing Chamber of Commerce, Feast on the Farm is an open concept dining experience where guests have the opportunity to walk through a thriving family farming business while sampling local fare.

Tourism Marketing Campaign Award Under \$50K — Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island – Holiday Campaign

Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island (TWEPI) launched a winter holiday marketing campaign under \$50K promoting (1) local small businesses which create locally made goods as gift ideas during the holiday season and are (2) centered around TWEPI's program called W.E. Made It (the W.E. being short for Windsor Essex) embracing local artisans, makers, and retail partners. Through this campaign, TWEPI was able to call out to related content and events centered around W.E. Made It including:

1. A holiday guide for locally made goods
2. A digital holiday events guide
3. A market series highlighting local events offering locally made goods
4. Hotel packages for visiting family and friends.

Tourism Marketing Campaign Award Over \$50K — Culinary Tourism Alliance – 50 Best Explores Ontario

The purpose of the 50 Best Explores Ontario project was to take Chefs and Restaurateurs from the 50 Best family and bring them on an adventure to highlight the diverse, dynamic and delicious food experiences available in Ontario. This project showcased the diversity, strength, and local secrets of Ontario's culinary culture, focusing not only on restaurants but farms and producers as well. With the keen eyes of an international chef, established local chef, young local chef, journalist and a dedicated camera crew, we documented their journeys across three key Ontario regions: Toronto, Kawartha Northumberland, and Wine Country Ontario

Tourism Digital Marketing Award — Tourism Kingston – Weddings Campaign

Kingston Weddings campaign incorporated a tiered partnership program as well as content development (video, editorial, and listicle), paid search, and a robust digital marketing program that showcased the dynamic nature and possibilities of Kingston's vibrant wedding scene.

Tourism Marketing Partnership Award — Tourism Partnership of Niagara – Rosé Day Getaway

National Rosé Day (June 8) celebrates the popular, pink wine varietal, championing viral events and content surrounding the favoured summer drink. To magnify Ontario's Niagara region as a leader in luxury travel and unique, authentic experiences, Tourism Partnership of Niagara collaborated on a one-of-a-kind marketing stunt—the Rosé Day Getaway—along with global brand Booking.com and the locally-celebrated winery Two Sisters Vineyards

Travel Media Story Award — Alec Jacobson – First Visions – Toronto's Indigenous Artists

Indigenous art is enjoying a renaissance and Toronto is at the colourful epicenter. In this piece/article/story, we meet the first nations people at the forefront of the movement. Featured in the September issue of American Airline's Magazine American Way.

Travel Media Photography Award - Colin Field – Nottawasaga Lighthouse

This photo ran in the summer 2019 issue of the Mountain Life Blue Mountain magazine. Mountain Life is a print magazine with an annual circulation of 60,000, a total readership of 435,000 and a pick-up rate of 99%. All of the print content is also posted online www.mountainlifemedia.ca. ML Online has 25,000+ followers on Facebook, 17,500+ on Instagram and 5000 on Twitter.

Accessible Tourism Award – Cowbell Brewing Co.

Cowbell Brewing is a destination craft brewery, restaurant and event venue where accessibility has been carefully considered and discreetly integrated, with attention to detail in every aspect of the facility. With the support and guidance of local community members who have experienced life with a disability, Cowbell created a beautiful facility while thoughtfully embedding their vision. Cowbell Brewing has received the 'Accessibility Certified Gold' rating under the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) program, receiving a score of 90/100. Cowbell Brewing is the first brewery in Canada and the first restaurant in Ontario to achieve 'Gold' certified status and is only the second building in Ontario to achieve 'Gold' certified status.

Tourism Event of the Year — Toronto Zoo's Terra Lumina: An Enchanted Night Walk Into A Bright Future

Terra Lumina takes guests on a journey through a luminous vision of our planet's future. Passing through a portal, travelers will be transported to a fantastical vision of the year 2099, a time when humans have learned to live in harmony with nature, protecting our planet and the wildlife that calls it home. Created specifically for the Toronto Zoo, Terra Lumina creates positive moments of connection. Vibrant lighting, multimedia effects, animated projections, inspiring storytelling, and an original score conjure an immersive future world that shares a message of hope for a brighter tomorrow.

Tourism Champion of the Year — Jim Marchbank

Jim has a longstanding career in tourism, all beginning in Sudbury in 1982. As a Director at Science North, he eventually became CEO in 1987 – a position he held until 2011. Under his leadership, Science North was established as one of the best-known sciences centres in the field. Between 1994 and 2009, the centre added an IMAX Theatre, a motion simulator, a butterfly gallery and a planetarium. Also, in 2003, the former Big Nickel Mine was transformed into a new mining technology and earth science centre called Dynamic Earth. These developments not only elevated Science North’s profile to new heights, but helped solidify Sudbury as a premier tourist destination. Jim has also held many volunteer positions, including as a director of Destination Ontario and served as their Chair from 2014 to 2020.

Tourism Employer of the Year — Attractions Ontario

Attractions Ontario is the authority on Attractions & Trip Motivators in Ontario, the voice of the industry and the source for consumers to discover Ontario’s destination experiences. The Association offers best-in-class, high-value access to consumers in bolstering attendance and business activity for the Attractions industry. A small organization, Attractions Ontario has only 5 permanent staff members. Collectively, these 5 staff members have 62 years of work experience at Attractions Ontario. No permanent employee has left the organization since March 2005.

Sustainable Tourism Award (Large Organization) — Metro Convention Centre

The MTCC is the top performing convention centre in Canada by measurement of economic impact, gross revenues and profitability. Economic impact is an important part of their mandate and represents one of the many ways that we support our local community. Beyond economic impact, they also strive to make a positive difference in the community where we live and do business. They were the first convention centre in Canada to offer clean renewable power to our customers, the first facility in Toronto to be on Enwave Energy’s Deep Lake Water Cooling system and the first convention centre in North America to reduce the CO2 emissions during the delivery move-in for trade and public shows with Voyage Control.

Sustainable Tourism Award (Small Organization) — WindsorEATS

WindsorEats is a for-profit destination marketing organization with a focus on culinary and a developer of award winning festivals, events and tours. WindsorEats announced its commitment to initiatives that promote environmental, social and economic sustainability within the local tourism industry. After enduring several severe climate-induced weather incidents that hampered our tourism season in 2019, WindsorEats is officially ensuring their focus is on a Triple Bottom Line. Triple Bottom Line is when business success is no longer defined only by monetary gain, but also by the effect on people and planet. Every ticket WindsorEats sells to one of our experiences will now include a 2% contribution to ERCA,

specifically to plant trees and grow the tree cover in the Windsor-Essex region, which has some of the lowest tree cover in all of Canada.

Tourism Innovator of the Year — The Introduction of Commercial Air Service into the Muskoka Airport

Porter Airlines started flying to the Muskoka Airport in the summer of 2019. Popular with outdoor enthusiasts, Muskoka has established itself among the world's iconic summer retreats. Travellers can soak up stunning scenery, from picturesque historic towns and villages to iconic Algonquin Park, and the area's famous waterways, including beautiful Georgian Bay. Muskoka offers a charming variety of amenities with golf courses, marinas, camps and cultural attractions spanning the region.

Indigenous Tourism Award — Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung Historical Centre

Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung Historical Centre (KNCWN) is owned and operated by Rainy River First Nations (RRFN) and offers indoor and outdoor interpretive tours, workshop-based learning activities, a collections space with over 16,000 cultural items, a gift shop that showcases artwork by local Anishinaabe artists, and a restaurant with a menu featuring traditional Anishinaabe ingredients. Designated a National Historic Site of Canada in 1969, the site contains the largest concentration of Indigenous burial mounds in North America. The importance of this site has been acknowledged for generations by all cultures and peoples who have lived, travelled, and admired the majestic Manidoo Ziibi or Spirit River (Rainy River). The Centre is an educational resource for the community and allows Rainy River First Nations to educate visitors about Anishinaabe history, language, geography, culture, and traditions. Through these activities, the site continues to serve as a gathering place, a role it has played for thousands of years.

Lifetime Achievement Award — Patricia Forrest

Pat has had a long and successful career in tourism. Many of you will know her and many of you will have worked or collaborated with her over the years.

Pat has had a distinguished professional career of glittering successes starting when she was a young marketing manager for Fort William Historical Park. Pat made the case to management for a festival that would celebrate the rich culture and influences of Indigenous people in our nation's fur trade history. Management agreed and she was tasked with developing and delivering such a festival. She sought the advice of noted Indigenous people such as the late Freda McDonald, her friend and a respected elder, among others in its planning and "Ojibway Keeshigun" was born. The event has endured and grown in popularity and is known today as Anishnawbe Keeshigun with much the same program as the original.

ABOUT TOURISM INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO (TIAO)

TIAO is recognized as the umbrella advocacy organization for leading associations, destination marketing organizations, regional tourism organizations, educators and businesses serving Ontario's diverse tourism industry. Collectively representing 200,000 businesses and 400,000 employees, TIAO provides a strong and unified voice for the sector and is committed contributing to evidenced-based policy and providing strategic insight on how to create favourable public policy that allows the tourism industry to flourish. Find out more at tiaontario.ca

Media Contact:

Jessica Halliday
Communications & Media Relations Manager
Tourism Industry Association of Ontario
jhalliday@tiaontario.ca