



1000 Islanders Chorus are always a popular group at Brockville Culture Days



Culture Days flag raising 2016 M. Jiggins (representing Steve Clark), M. Plooy DBIA, M. Wheeler author, T. Komery musician, R. Disotell facilitator

# CULTURE DAYS

## Brockville's Premier Street Festival

By Russ Disotell

Culture Days is an annual three day, cross Canada celebration of Arts and Culture in the community. It takes place, starting on the last Friday of September, which this year means Sept. 29, 30 and October 1st weekend. The mission of Culture Days is to foster appreciation and support of the artistic & cultural life in communities across the country. This event promotes direct interaction between creators and community to increase understanding and appreciation of art & culture, and to affirm that every citizen is the guardian of the cultural life of the community.

That's the official description of Culture Days. In Brockville, the celebration is essentially a community street festival held throughout the downtown. The Brockville DBIA sponsors a street closure on King Street where the bulk of the activities take place on the Saturday, this year, September 30th between 9 am and 4 pm,

2017 is the third year for Brockville Culture Days and it has grown every year as more individuals and groups join in. 2015 saw the festival organized from scratch with six weeks lead time and no budget. It was one of the busiest, fall weekends, according to the Brockville Tourism Office. Buoyed by this success, Culture Days returned in 2016 and was the fifth largest celebration, based on participants, in Canada for cities with populations below 50,000.

In addition to the King Street main hub, there are activities spread throughout the downtown core. One of the most popular sites last year, the Brockville Museum, is returning for 2017. The Brockville Irish Cultural Society held a very successful series of workshops at the Museum last year. These workshops included; how to make Irish soda bread, tin whistle lessons, several beginners Irish dance classes and how to draw a Celtic knot. They are returning with more workshops in 2017. They will be joined by the Creative Stitchers group at the Museum's Henry Street location.

Planning for this year's event continues as this article is being written. It is fair to say there will be more participants than ever as more individuals and groups join the celebrations. This is definitely an event that offers something for everyone, no matter your age or interest. You can expect artists of every stripe; dancers, musicians, artisans, crafts workers, and writers all sharing their passion and expertise. A number of not-for-profit agencies take part to showcase what they have to offer the community in the way of programs and services.

There are far too many participants to list them all, but here are a few to give you a flavour of the event. Brockville 50+ Activity Centre, (formerly the Shepherd Welcome Centre) have been enthusiastic contributors since day one. They will be back with yoga and tai chi demonstrations, as well

as members of their quilting and painting groups. There will be volunteers to answer questions about their many classes.

Transition Brockville is another charter member of the group. Their booth is always a hotbed of activity. Younger attendees are fascinated by the hand cranked apple peeler and corer demonstration, which is always a big draw. This year they promise a full range of demonstrations and talks on eco-friendly techniques to help live a simpler life.

Maggie Wheeler is the Seaway Valley's Queen of Mystery! She will be on hand at Brockville Culture Days, holding the local launch of "All My Worldly Goods", the latest "Lost Villages Mystery." This novel deals with the history of The British Home Children through Faran Mackenzie's ancestry.

New this year is Aaliyah Dance & Friends and Shimmy mob who are going to present different forms of American and Middle Eastern belly dance. Shimmy mob is the largest group dance performed worldwide on World Belly Dance Day to raise funds and awareness of the issues of domestic violence.

Culture Days is a local, grassroots celebration. All of the participants are local and the money from any sales stays in the community. It is also interactive. Participants try to incorporate activities to engage or instruct the public. Where this isn't possible everyone is more than willing to discuss their particular passion.

The event provides you with, not only entertainment and engagement, but a chance to learn more about activities, groups, classes and instruction available in our own community. **LH**

**More information on Brockville Culture Days can be found at [www.brockvillearts.com](http://www.brockvillearts.com) or the Brockville Culture Days page on Facebook.**