

Sid Elford
3287 Grassfire Crescent
Mississauga, Ontario, L4Y3J8
(574) 377-7936
elfordms@grace.edu

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THE CANADIAN NATIONAL EXHIBITION: A LOOK BACK AT 2017

By Sid Elford

“Let’s go to the EX!” This slogan is plastered all over the greater Toronto area leading up to the last weeks of summer. The Canadian National Exhibition (CNE or the EX) is Canada’s largest annual community event. Taking place over the 18 days leading up to, and including Labour Day, from August 17 to September 3, the CNE offers a wide variety of entertainment and events including Bandshell concerts, celebrity chef demonstrations, aerial acrobatics and ice skating shows, a dog show, a working farm, parades, and a three day Air Show, all of which are free with admission to the CNE. Midway rides and games, wacky fair food, as well as international food and shopping are also popular highlights of this major Toronto events.

Founded in 1879, the CNE was the designated spot to experience the very best from the latest innovations in technology and commercial products. As Canada celebrated its 150th birthday this past year, the CNE events in 2017 reflected the past of the CNE, as well at the celebration of Canada 150 by adding some newer attractions, such as an eight-foot tall CNE sign with a Canadian maple leaf, The Quilt of Belonging; featuring 263 quilted squares representing the 71 indigenous groups and 192 nationalities found in Canada, and a Celebrate Canada photography and art exhibit, showcasing in commemoration of Canada 150.

The CNE is synonymous with wacky foods, e.g. bacon milkshakes, and 2017's CNE challenged its food vendors to create new items, while the hungry audience waits in anticipation for what the vendors will create next. However, if a Spam Double Down sandwich, or deep fried cheesecake isn't to your fancy, there are many traditional fair fare options, such as candy apples, Tiny Tom Donuts, corn dogs, hot dogs, and hamburgers.

The CNE is a great venue for music lovers, as all concerts are included with the price of admission to the CNE, making it one of the best valued buys of the summer for concerts in Toronto. The 2017 schedule was packed with many different talents from across several music genres on The Bandshell concert stage each night, featuring Canadian rock and roll veterans The Sam Roberts Band, and the former Rolling Stone cover boys The Sheepdogs. On the country music side was Chad Brownlee, Aaron Pritchett, and Canadian actor/singer/songwriter Keifer Sutherland.

"My family tradition is to go to the EX every year since I was born in 1944," says Toronto resident, Lyla Ricciardelli. "My mother was a Bingo fan and I was taken as a baby all through my life at home with my parents. Now I take my children every year and meet other relatives at the fountain and have continued the family tradition for my entire lifetime."

The Canadian National Exhibition will continue for its 139th year in 2018, and will continue to feature similar rides, food, concerts, and other entertainment options, while always looking to add new attractive exhibits. This is a must see event for all residents of Toronto and the greater Toronto area, of any age.

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Potential Market: My Mississauga Magazine