



**RESORT MUNICIPALITY OF WHISTLER**

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## STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

**PRESENTED:** May 14, 2024 **REPORT:** 24-048  
**FROM:** Village Animation and Events **FILE:** 8100-20  
**SUBJECT:** CANADA DAY CONCEPT 2024

### RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

**That** the recommendation of the General Manager of Community Engagement and Cultural Services be endorsed.

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

**That** Council endorse the Canada Day Village Festival concept for the 2024 celebrations as described in Administrative Report No. 24-048.

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's support for staff to proceed with the Village Festival concept for Canada Day 2024, which offers a full day of activities, activations and animation that will connect citizens, delight visitors and support local businesses as we celebrate the diversity and spirit of our community.

Information Report  Administrative Report (Decision or Direction)

### DISCUSSION

#### **Background**

The Festival, Events and Animation (FE&A) team serves to create fun, engaging and memorable moments for citizens and visitors alike, while also supporting the overall sustainability and success of the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW). The events produced by the FE&A team are funded by the Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) which was introduced in 1987 by the provincial government to provide funding to support and enhance tourism-related initiatives. Funds are generated through a tax on short-term accommodations and reinvested back into the community. To align with how MRDT can be used as mandated by the province, the FE&A team invests in programs that help Whistler achieve its tourism growth and management strategies, enhance the overall visitor experience and vitality of the resort, make best use of tourism infrastructure, and help fund marketing campaigns that promote Whistler including FE&A activities. Citizens of Whistler also benefit from MRDT investments as the FE&A team always considers how events can bring the community together, deepen a sense of connection and belonging, and celebrate the spirit and diversity that brings people to Whistler.

Planning and production of Canada Day is funded by MRDT and has evolved over the years and the current format is a result of responding to year over year feedback and changes in the local economy.

From 2011 to 2019, the approach focused on setting the tone for a busy celebratory holiday period and working to drive visits and extend the visitor's length of stay. These celebrations tended to have some activation in the morning, a traditional float parade around mid-day, and an evening activity. However, in 2020, the pandemic was declared, and public health orders required the RMOW to cancel all large gatherings.

In 2021, with the pandemic and public health orders still influencing events, the FE&A team adopted a hybrid model to celebrate Canada Day, focusing on dispersion animation to address legal limits to gatherings. That year the resort was also struggling with significant staff shortages, as well as contemplating and reflecting on the announcement regarding the former grounds of the Kamloops Residential school.

Then, in 2022 and in 2023, the FE&A team planned the Canada Day schedule with real intention to not only delight residents and visitors, but to also support local business recovery efforts post-pandemic. Staffing was still hard to come by and many communities had begun to reimagine how to mark Canada Day. The Village Festival, also known as the People's Parade concept, was born during these years (see Appendix A for the 2023 program) as it kept people in and near the Village Stroll longer to support local business, gave people options for when to participate and how (should they have any reservations about being in a crowd), and offered all ages fun from early morning to late at night. It is important to note that the Squamish Lílwat Cultural Centre (SLCC) has also provided extensive Canada Day activities from the First Nations perspective in previous years and FE&A funding contributes to their efforts.

In 2024, FE&A is building on the successful format developed over the last two years and is aiming to further enhance efforts through additional collaboration with community partners and a greater focus on moments of connection between citizens, Council and visitors.

## **Analysis**

Canada Day celebrations for 2024 again build off the Village Festival concept, and aim to further strengthen community connection, unity, and sense of belonging by showcasing Whistler's cultural diversity and providing opportunities for people from different backgrounds to come together and celebrate.

The 2024 celebrations will begin at 8:00 a.m. with a group yoga class, followed by the Rotary Pancake Breakfast from 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. From 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. the squares and thoroughfares of the Village Stroll will be alive with animation, activities, and activations to delight, excite and engage. The five-hour activation of the Village provides citizens and visitors with choice on how to plan their day and supports ongoing business recovery by enabling folks to linger and explore the Village Stroll and its local shops and restaurants. The day is topped off with the first of the Whistler Summer Concert Series – an act that will not disappoint.

Additional efforts have been made in 2024 to engage with many community partners to offer some additional experiences that provide unique ways for people to connect with Council, with each other, and help people get to know Whistler in a more authentic way. The team is speaking with Whistler Blackcomb about a possible collaboration around their 25th anniversary of the bike park that weekend. Talks have been held with Whistler Museum and Archives and the Multicultural Society to help us showcase heritage, culture, and diversity. The Invictus Games team is keen to do an activation on Canada Day as well. FE&A is also hoping to have some of the SLCC activation take place in the

Village. Ongoing conversations are being held with others as their plans for the summer come together. The FE&A team is nothing if not creative and resourceful when it comes to creating memorable events.

The FE&A team believes the 2024 concept achieves the following:

- A vibrant Village Festival designed for all ages.
- A day of diverse and local entertainment.
- Activations that include live music, cultural performances, interactive fun, and displays.
- Keeps participants engaged and supports local businesses.
- Celebrates community spirit and unity while fostering connections and lasting memories.

### **Committee of the Whole Feedback**

At the Committee of the Whole (COTW) meeting on [April 23, 2024](#), staff heard feedback from Council that some council members would prefer a return to a full parade during Canada Day. Should the majority of Council prefer to move in this direction, staff would recommend a non-motorized parade to align with the RMOW's [Big Moves Climate Action Strategy](#). To incorporate the logistics and organization of a parade, the program for the day will continue to offer morning yoga and the pancake breakfast, a ~45-minute parade around mid-day, followed by the concert in the evening. As staff mentioned at COTW, producing a parade will require the team to redirect financial and human resources as well as space along the Village Stroll to enable the parade. This change will mean a reduction in the Village Festival scope and pauses in programming before and after the parade. The FE&A team are proud of the event concept presented in this report, however, should Council direct a shift to a parade, staff will deliver a great experience for citizens and visitors alike.

### **ALTERNATE RESOLUTION OPTION**

**That** Council direct staff to reduce the scope of the 2024 Canada Day Village Festival concept to free up the financial resources, human resources and physical space required to enable a non-motorized parade with spectators to take place along the Village Stroll.

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## **POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Relevant Council Authority/Previous Decisions**

[April 23, 2024](#): COTW presentation – Canada Day 2024 Concept

### **2023-2026 Strategic Plan**

The 2023-2026 Strategic Plan outlines the high-level direction of the RMOW to help shape community progress during this term of Council. The Strategic Plan contains four priority areas with various associated initiatives that support them. This section identifies how this report links to the Strategic Plan.

#### **Strategic Priorities**

- Housing

*Expedite the delivery of and longer-term planning for employee housing*

- Climate Action

*Mobilize municipal resources toward the implementation of the Big Moves Climate Action Plan*

Community Engagement

*Strive to connect locals to each other and to the RMOW*

Smart Tourism

*Preserve and protect Whistler's unique culture, natural assets and infrastructure*

Not Applicable

*Aligns with core municipal work that falls outside the strategic priorities but improves, maintains, updates and/or protects existing and essential community infrastructure or programs*

### **Community Vision and Official Community Plan**

The Official Community Plan (OCP) is the RMOW's most important guiding document that sets the community vision and long-term community direction. This section identifies how this report applies to the OCP.

FE&A is guided first and foremost by the [community vision](#), to ensure original programming events, like Canada Day, and those produced by third parties supports the community: *A place where our community thrives, nature is protected and guests are inspired.*

Programming is also developed to align with OCP [Goal 3.2](#) to ensure that the history of both the Líl'wat Nation and Squamish Nation, and the importance of Whistler to both Nations is widely understood. FE&A provides funding to SLCC for Canada Day to encourage visitation to the SLCC and plans its own events with the past, present and future in mind.

As mandated by the MRDT funding agreement with the Province, FE&A ensures its plans align with OCP [Goal 6.6](#) to support a vibrant, growing and successful local business community. This is done through local partnerships, supporting local artists and musicians, and drawing the community and visitors into the Village Stroll for extended periods of time.

Section 8 of the OCP addresses the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of the Community and several important goals are listed under the heading [Sense of Community](#). While FE&A may seem on the surface to be just a collection of fun events throughout the year, in fact, the staff team deeply considers how to incorporate opportunities to strengthen the community's sense of place and belonging, develop programming that encourages social cohesion and connectedness for residents and visitors, and strengthens a culture of inclusion and diversity. The concept for Canada Day 2024 is deeply rooted in these goals and policy objectives.

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## **BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS**

Canada Day celebrations are produced by the FE&A team, funded by MRDT, and approved in the Five-Year Financial Plan.

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## **LÍL'WAT NATION & SQUAMISH NATION CONSIDERATIONS**

The RMOW is committed to working with the Líl'wat People, known in their language as *L'il'wat7úl* and the Squamish People, known in their language as the *Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw* to: create an enduring relationship; establish collaborative processes for Crown land planning; achieve mutual objectives; and

enable participation in Whistler’s resort economy. This section identifies areas where RMOW activities intersect with these relationships.

The FE&A team has a long-standing relationship with the SLCC to support their programming and Ambassador program. FE&A funds are directed to the SLCC through an annual agreement as well as one-off funding for special projects such as the ongoing Sister Poles carving initiative. SLCC will be offering its own activities on Canada Day; however, the RMOW helps to market their event and the FE&A team is working with them to see if there is capacity to include them in the Village-based events.

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## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Level of community engagement commitment for this project:

Inform     Consult     Involve     Collaborate     Empower

Comment(s):

The FE&A team listens to feedback from Council, citizens and seeks feedback each year from community partners about its programming and how and where it can adjust or make improvements. The 2024 Canada Day planning includes consultation with many community groups and resort partners to understand their needs or how they might be involved in or benefit from the day.

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## REFERENCES

Appendix A – 2023 People’s Parade Program – Pique Advertisement

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## SUMMARY

The FE&A team has developed a Village Festival concept for Canada Day 2024 that:

- Creates an all-day event filled with diverse entertainment and activities.
- Ensures inclusivity and fun for attendees of all ages.
- Fosters a vibrant Village atmosphere to support and boost local businesses.
- Respects our history while celebrating our cultural diversity.
- Embraces the richness of our community by providing engaging and memorable experiences for all.

The planning and concept reflect staff’s commitment to organizing Canada Day celebrations that align with the values and spirit of Whistler while catering to the needs and interests of our residents, visitors and businesses.

**SIGN-OFFS**

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