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War of 1812 Bicentennial Initiatives Receive Financial Boost

The St. Lawrence War of 1812 Bicentennial Alliance, the planning group leading the region's upcoming bicentennial marketing in Eastern Ontario, recently received an organizational boost with additional financial support from a number of partners.

The Eastern Ontario Community Futures Development Corporation Network through the Eastern Ontario Development Program committed \$67,443 to primarily help the Alliance assist educators and special events to become engaged in "living history".

The Alliance role is to facilitate, support and market new and existing events and activities that will commemorate or celebrate the 200th anniversary of the War. While the Alliance itself is not an organizer or producer of special events, their Executive Director, Jan Bonhomme, is well versed in events and funding and can provide advice to community groups planning their own bicentennial activities.

"Our primary goal is to help various community groups celebrate and link to the bicentennial theme and raise visitor interest in understanding the strategic role that Eastern Ontario played in the war" said Bonhomme. With this in mind, much of the funding has gone towards purchasing 45 historical wedge tents and creating four educational trunks filled with War of 1812 related activities – especially appealing to children. These trunks will be used throughout the region and include stovepipe shakos hats, youth military barrack coats, wooden click muskets, toy drums, penny whistles, Union Jack flags, moccasins, native war clubs, and heritage toys. The goal is to support event organizers and educators in creating "living history" experiences through the use of these valuable heritage tools. Another part of the funding will be used to design and purchase pull up banners for promotional use at events in the upcoming months showcasing the importance of "Celebrating Our Roots".

Bonhomme is very excited on how this grant will make a huge difference in promoting the bicentennial and assisting Canadians on understanding who we are and where we came from. She is especially pleased to be working with a number of Eastern Ontario vendors who specialize in making sure their supplies are authentic to this key historical period.

The second funding boost of \$50,000 came from the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture which considers the War of 1812 Bicentennial a signature heritage tourism event of international stature with significant economic potential for the province. In his funding grant letter, Tourism and Culture Minister, Michael Chan outlined that "this funding will assist the St. Lawrence region to carry on with your planning and development activities in preparation for the War of 1812 Bicentennial period, and to continue to build on your regional and local strengths in order to take advantage of this unique tourism and heritage opportunity."

Pat Macdonald, Alliance Chair, explained "This funding is extremely timely for the Alliance because it not only gives us the opportunity to partner with new and existing events, but will allow us to explore ways of optimizing the celebration and commemoration of the War of 1812 in Eastern Ontario. We now have the funding and tools to support our various partnering initiatives." She commended the government support, "I am thrilled that both the Ministry and the regional Community Futures Directors understand the importance of this huge tourism opportunity and supported us with this much needed funding".

For more information about the upcoming 1812 Bicentennial and the St. Lawrence Alliance, visit our website at www.celebrate1812.com