

# 50th annual Nova Scotia Bluegrass & Oldtime Music Festival report

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The Bluegrass Music Association of Canada

# Bluegrass Canada

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*This article is a contributions from [Bluegrass Canada](#), the bluegrass music association of Canada, and their quarterly magazine by the same name. Editor Mike Higgins has promised to send us regular updates from the scene up north, and assures us that things are hoppin' in bluegrass all across Canada. This one was written by Karen DeCoste.*



On July 27-30, 2023 we held a milestone event In Eastern Canada. The [Downeast Bluegrass & Oldtime Music Society](#), led by festival co-chairs Jeff McRae and Karen DeCoste, produced the 50th Annual [Nova Scotia Bluegrass & Oldtime Music Festival](#). The new board of directors and festival committee worked round the clock with fund raising, attracting the best regional bands, and bringing the festival back to Ardoise, NS where it had been held for many years. With over 1,300 people attending over the weekend, this is the highest attendance at this festival for many years.

We started off the week before the festival with unprecedented rainfall in the area that impacted infrastructure in the surrounding areas, and the unfortunate loss of lives. Once we were cleared to continue with our planning, we ended up a few days behind.

Many generous volunteers stepped up to help. Hosts and campground owners Mark and Kelly Cameron and their volunteers pulled out all the stops at this milestone event to do whatever was necessary in preparation for, and during the event for a successful festival.

The first evening, Thursday July 27, brought crowds to the stage that we have never seen before at this festival. There was an open mic session featuring a house band made up of members of the groups that would play later in the weekend. The evening closed off with a crowd pleasing local country music band.

On Friday afternoon the bluegrass bands started with the opening ceremonies being held early in the evening, attended by the local MLA and Counsellor. The rest of the weekend was made special by the regional bands, including three reunion bands that came together for performances for this festival. There was something for every bluegrass fan at the stage throughout the weekend.

On Saturday we had a children's activity area where they had fun with crafts and face painting. They learned a bit about music and practiced for a very special performance they would give on stage later that evening.

We had many workshops over the weekend. From mandolin building, to instrument repair and maintenance, song writing, and then a special appearance by three of the original members of the Bluegrass 4 Band who shared their stories and songs, touching many hearts.

To close out the workshops we spent some time with the founding fathers of the festival, answering questions and telling stories. The many vendors in attendance received positive feedback from the attendees as they all contributed in a special way.

Author Alf Dalton released his book entitled *50 Years of Bluegrass In Nova Scotia* at the festival and folks were lined up to get a copy. The entire weekend was wrapped up with an appreciation get together with the festival and campground volunteers as they celebrated the success of the festival and forged new friendships. This entire event could not have been possible without the generous contribution of our many sponsors for which we are very grateful. The dedication and hard work of all volunteers was second to none and we appreciate every one of them.

Please visit our website at [downeastgrass.com](http://downeastgrass.com) or [Facebook](#) to learn more about the 51st Annual NS Bluegrass & Oldtime Music Festival: July 26-28, 2024 at the Beechbrook Campground in Ardoise, NS.