



News Release

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Winners of the first Tree Trust Provincial Tree Pageant were announced recently. Entries were submitted from across Ontario during the two-month competition, which invited people to submit a photo of a much-loved tree with a few words about it. “We were excited to discover so many beloved trees,” said Tree Trust Director Toni Ellis. “What a testament to the public’s affection for trees!”

From 130 online entries, three winning trees were selected by a panel of judges: Mike Schreiner, Green Party leader and MPP for Guelph; Wayne Simpson, award-winning Ojibwe photographer; and CBC journalist Aashta Shetty.

“Choosing from so many remarkable trees was tough”, says Aashta Shetty. “Really, we wished we could recognize them all, for the ways they enrich the lives of people who love them.”

The winners are:

Honourable mention – an ancient Apple tree, dubbed a ‘spirit tree’ that is growing in Georgina Township. This tree has proffered food for 7 generations of the family living at the homestead.

Third place – a majestic White Elm gracing Perth’s Stewart Park. It is likely older than the park, which itself was donated to the town in 1947. Miraculously, the tree has avoided the Dutch elm disease, which killed so many Elm trees. Today, it serves as a stunning backdrop to many summer festivals and concerts.

Second place – a much loved, 380-year-old White Oak with a canopy spanning 125 feet. This healthy giant in Kingston provides a treasured, shaded oasis for its homeowners.

First place – Known as the Great White Oak, this landmark tree stands majestically in front of the Royal Ontario Museum, where it was already established when Canada’s pre-eminent museum opened in 1914. Amazingly, construction of the Yonge-University subway tunnels 50 years later managed to dodge its roots. Throughout ROM’s many expansions and renovations since opening in 1914, Museum staff have ensured the protection of the White

Oak and its roots. Most recently, this has included the construction of the Michael-Lee-Chin Crystal, the restoration of the Queen's Park entrance, and the current transformative OpenROM project. Through it all, the tree – now in the later stages of its expected lifespan – remains healthy and a landmark along the Queen's Park facade of the Museum.



“ROM's heritage white oak is a beacon to the region's past when oak-pine forests dominated the landscape. It, and the other giant oak trees that dot Toronto's parks and streets, are the offspring of those forest trees,” said Deborah Metsger, ROM's Assistant Curator of Botany and co-author of [A Field Guide to Trees of Ontario](#).

“They are the sentinels of today's urban forest, still producing acorns that will grow into trees gracing the canopy of our city in the future. Thank you to all who cherish this splendid tree and have honoured it in this way.”

A short celebration is being planned at the tree to honour it, with details to follow.

All entries will remain on display on the Tree Trust website for the rest of the year.

Organizers are grateful to the pageant's sponsor, Ecclestone Financial Group, and to everyone who took the time to submit their stories and pictures of treasured trees.

Tree Trust is a program of the Elora Environment Centre. With chapters in eight Ontario communities and counting, our mission is to preserve mature urban trees that provide countless social, environmental and economic benefits.