SideBurn 2026: The Great Rewilding

Flame Ontario Arts Collective Inc. hosted SideBurn 2026 under the theme “The Great Rewilding,” welcoming participants back to Stone Mills, Ontario for a celebration of nature’s chaos, human creativity, and our connection to the land. This year’s effigy, “The Octahedron Spire” by Royal Molly, stood as a gathering place for celebration, watching over the event by sun and moon. Our temple, “Calling the Corners” by Constructing Hope, invited participants to reflect on the four cardinal directions and their elemental associations, and to take part in the rewilding of the natural world by planting a seedling ahead of the temple burn.

Pre-Event

Preparations for SideBurn 2026 were shaped by heavy rain in the lead-up to the event. Thanks to our ongoing relationship with the Township, our Department of Public Works was able to arrange for gravel to be delivered and laid across key access roads, helping keep the site accessible for participants despite the wet conditions on opening day.

The Event

Ticketing

SideBurn sold out again in 2026, with 1,099 tickets issued against a target population of 1,100. Our ticketing and volunteer portal team welcomed three new members this year and delivered a number of technical improvements, including a new ticket class for volunteers with 12+ hours of service the previous year, a new “Raise the City” early-access pass, added visibility into lottery status and place in line, integration of the RV pass lottery into the ticketing platform, text notifications for ticket and RV purchase windows, and the ability to add tickets to Google and Apple Wallet. The team also completed a full rebuild of the platform’s continuous integration system, laying the groundwork for future improvements.

Art

Art continued to be a cornerstone of SideBurn 2026. We received 89 grant applications and awarded 55 grants — up from 44 in 2025 — across our microgrant, legacy grant, creators grant, and fire arts creators grant categories, totalling approximately $238,700 in funding. Our effigy and temple builds were each budgeted at $5,500, with the effigy team coming in under budget thanks to a secondhand plywood purchase. Independent, self-funded art also grew significantly, from 5 registered projects in 2025 to 19 in 2026, and 7 projects across all categories included a fire or flame effect.

Theme Camps & City

39 theme camps were placed on site in 2026, including our effigy and temple build crews, drawn from 48 applications submitted and 37 accepted. 37 theme camp grants were awarded, with $21,600 ultimately distributed.

Sound remained an area of active attention this year. In the lead-up to the event, our City and Sound teams worked with theme camp participants to conduct a scaled sound test at multiple points around the event's perimeter, in partnership with members of our surrounding community. The results confirmed that our existing policy of capping amplified sound at 80 decibels continues to strike the right balance between a vibrant on-site experience and being a good neighbour, with some room for higher levels on days when weather conditions favour sound containment. We're grateful to the community for their continued patience and partnership as we refine this approach.

Equity

Our Equity team processed 147 reduced-cost ticket applications, resulting in 105 reduced-cost tickets purchased — 100 funded directly by the Flame Ontario Arts Collective and 5 through community Pay It Forward donations — along with one reduced-cost RV pass. We also received 12 Equity Assist ticket applications, with all 10 available assist tickets purchased, and provided 4 Equity RV passes. Our community again showed up for our Pay It Forward initiative, purchasing 164 tickets.

Flow

At the gate, 542 cars officially checked in, alongside 34 regular and 4 equity RVs. Despite continued growth in ticket sales, parking did not reach capacity, and increased volunteer support helped keep traffic moving smoothly throughout the event.

Safety, Sanctuary, Rangers & F.A.S.T.

Across our Safety departments this was a strongly positive year. Sanctuary's redesigned space — with its fire pit, cozy furnishings, and self-referral system — was warmly received by participants seeking a quiet place to decompress, and new training guides brought welcome structure to the team. Rangers benefited from a restructured 4-hour shift model that made it easier for volunteers to take on multiple shifts, a strengthened mentorship pairing between new and experienced Rangers, and the successful rollout of a digital logbook. Our F.A.S.T. team — covering flame effects, fire spinning, burnable art, inspections, perimeter, and ember control — brought together experienced, committed people to help keep ambitious fire art safe throughout the event.

Looking Ahead to 2027

We're already thinking about how to make next year even better. Areas of focus include exploring ways for theme camps to apply to the ticket lottery as a group, protecting directed ticket pools for theme camps facing refunds or expirations, refining how we assess and administer art grants, continuing to improve our approach to sound measurement, and expanding Sanctuary's leadership structure. Across the organization, we remain committed to clearer training, documentation, and onboarding so that the dedication of our volunteers and Board continues to translate into a smooth, safe, and joyful event for years to come.

2026 Finances

Total Income	*$205,822.00*
Revenue from Tickets Adults	*$169,747.00*
Revenue from Tickets Minors	*$960.00*
Revenue from RV	*$8,600.00*
Revenue from Vehicle Pass	*$23,960.00*
Ice Sales	*$2,555.00*
Total Expenses	*$186,669.40*
Event Expenses	*$93,650.21*
DPW Expenses	*$7,928.54*
City Expenses	*$1,551.42*
HIVE Expenses	*$2,139.02*
Volunteer Expenses	*$10,925.96*
FAST Expenses	*$2,178.70*
Safety Expenses	*$3,631.32*
Comms & Tech Expenses	*$2,542.27*
Flow Expenses	*$1,044.46*
Grants	*$60,577.50*
Donations	*$500.00*
Net	*$19,152.60*

Expense Category Details

- **Event Expenses** — The core costs of running the event itself: venue permit, site mowing and gravel, security, porta potties, first aid staffing and supplies, infrastructure rentals, radios, event insurance, fuel, ice, heaters, chairs, printing, the participant census, and general event supplies.
- **DPW Expenses** — Costs supporting our Department of Public Works crew: building materials, lighting, flags, volunteer food, DPW swag, and general DPW supplies.
- **City Expenses** — Costs for supporting theme camp placement and City operations: printing, supplies, and swag/snacks for the City team. (Theme camp grant funding is tracked separately, under Grants.)
- **HIVE expenses** — Costs for HQ, Volunteer Coordination, and Engagement: HIVE supplies, stickers, and Centre Camp decor.

- **FAST Expenses** — Costs supporting our fire art safety team: training, the fire truck, and general FAST supplies.
- **Safety Expenses** — Co**Grants** — All grant funding distributed to the community: Theme Camp Grants and Art Grants (including microgrants, legacy grants, creators grants, and fire arts creators grants).
- **HIVE Exp**sts across Rangers, Sanctuary, and general Safety operations: Sanctuary tent and supplies, harm reduction supplies, LED armbands, perimeter and safety swag, lighting, QR codes, admin supplies, and power systems.
- **Volunteer Expenses** — Costs supporting our volunteer base: meals, snacks, t-shirts, swag, and stickers.
- **Comms & Tech Expenses** — Costs for communications and website infrastructure: website hosting, newsletter tools, Zoom, translation services, general tech, and comms supplies.
- **Flow Expenses** — Costs for gate and traffic operations: wristbands and general Flow supplies.
- **Donations** - we made a $500 donation to Stacey MsGuyver Feldman's GoFundMe.