

Concerts in the Park organizers aim to launch physically-distant music series

It's not 100 per cent clear how, but the show will go on!

This is the word from organizers of Aurora's popular
Concerts in the Park summer music series.

A summer staple in Aurora's social calendar, hundreds
typically fill Town Park each Wednesday night for an evening of live music and
cultural performances.

While COVID-19 cast doubt on the future of Concerts in
the Park for 2020, organizers promise that music will continue to ring out ?
albeit in a new way with a new timeline.

?Our plan is to do five concerts ? a concert every
Wednesday in August and the first Wednesday in September,? says Shelley Ware,
Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora, noting that until they have
some clarity closer to the date from the Provincial Government on what physical
distancing measures will be in place, a number of options are being considered.

?It may start off as Concerts in the Chambers whereby we
would have a band in Council Chambers playing and we would livestream it. Based
on whatever gathering sizes are at that time, we would be issuing free
wristbands based on that gathering size [until we reached capacity]. If it is
25 people, 50 people, we would have them properly spaced out in the Chambers.

?If our gatherings are over 100 people, we are strongly
considering moving into Town Park with a gated entry and we would still operate
within our wristband scenario, but we would be chalking rectangles onto the
grass which would give 'pods' for families to sit as they watch the
performance. For those unable to get a wristband, we would be broadcasting the
concert through Facebook Live so that there is still a virtual component as
well as an in-person component.?

At this time of year, the full roster of Concerts in the
Park talent is typically finalized and the schedule set. Of course, this year
is a year like no other and organizers are starting from scratch programming
this reconfigured performance series.

What is certain is that if Concerts in the Park can return to its traditional
greenspace in Aurora's historic downtown core, there will be no intermission.
Concerts typically run two hours with an intermission between sets. Concerts
this year, if they proceed, will run 90 minutes straight through with no
intermission.

?Intermissions cause gatherings,? says Ms. Ware. ?Our
chalked rectangular squares will comfortably hold four people and we will
cascade the squares so everyone will be spaced out, but with no intermission
your focus and objective there is to enjoy the live music being performed.

We're going to see as the industry rejuvenates itself, subtle changes like that type of programming.?

Less subtle changes are also being considered to make sure the Movies in the Park experience, a rotating screening of blockbuster films that rotate through three Aurora parks near the end of the summer, continue ? this time as drive-in movies. And Ms. Ware says the Town has secured the radio frequency required to make this a reality.

?This is all providing guidelines are available and we can operate legally,? says Ms. Ware. ?This drive-in movie experience would take place towards the middle to late August and will take place in a variety of our rec centre parking lots. They would involve a 50-foot screen and then we'll have cars within the spots with a space between each car.

?Those plans are underway. It is just a waiting period right now until the drive-in movie theatres get their licensing and the ability to operate. Once that happens, we will be able to offer this.?

By Brock Weir