

## Emotions run high at graduate art show ? by design



**By Brock Weir**

Before she took out her camera, Nicole Cipriani knew nothing about the iconic Mexican painter Frida Kahlo, but the more she learned, the more she became inspired.

Impressed with her backstory, Nicole set out to recreate Kahlo's famous evocative self-portraits, so much so that she turned the lens on herself, added some colour to her eyebrows and lips, and set to work ?capturing an emotion.?

?Frida painted for herself and only herself,? says Nicole. ?She wanted to express emotion and that is something all the artists here can relate to. We create for us and to inspire other people.?

This was a sentiment left in little doubt as students, teachers, dignitaries and local art lovers filled the Aurora Cultural Centre last week for the opening of two new exhibitions curated by art students from Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School and St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School, which run through this Saturday. While they tackled their individual shows from their respective schools and perspectives, they were united in their themes of making a difference and touching the individual.

?The word that comes to mind with this show is brilliant,? said Mayor Geoff Dawe who presided over the opening. ?The art is absolutely fabulous and, as I go around, it is so gratifying that this facility is used for this kind of purpose. I think it is incredibly important to our community the work you artists have done sharing with us some of your innermost thoughts. It is very challenging to come up with a theme [like social activism] because it could mean almost anything. There is some really fascinating stuff.?

This is the sixth year the Aurora Cultural Centre has opened its galleries to the work of local high school students. For curator Stephanie Nicolo, it was a celebration of all forms of art from the visual arts provided on the wall by each school, to the performance art offered that evening from Williams students, to the goodies served up by culinary students from St. Max.

?Last year we started to evolve the program as well to include new opportunities for student curators,? said Ms. Nicolo. ?The program allows the students from the participating classes or art councils to take an extra step and further their development to learn how to take it from painting in the studio, taking a photograph, or putting on an exhibition.?

These opportunities were not only appreciated by the student curators, but staff as well, exemplified by Williams Principal Chris Hilmer who formed a heart out of his fingers and held it to his chest.

"They say a picture is worth 1,000 words, so I want to leave you with an image and the image is this," he said. "I want to thank these student artists for showing their hearts, for showing their emotions, their feelings, giving us their impressions of society, their impressions of themselves."

"This is our future, what they show in their art. Thank you for being supporters of the arts because it is important we show our love for the arts. It is important young people have that outlet to show their art. Just remember: heart. You can't spell it without 'art.'"