

Making Peace celebrates international - and local - Nobel laureates



By Brock Weir

Lester B. Pearson spent many of his formative years in Aurora, taking lessons at the Church Street School, setting him on the path to becoming one of Canada's most notable Prime Ministers.

But, before he took up residence at 24 Sussex Drive, he already achieved a Canadian first: receiving the Nobel Peace Prize for his work during the Suez Crisis.

Now, his legacy and those of other Nobel laureates and peacemakers will soon be celebrated here in Aurora with an expansive outdoor installation, the latest stop in the Making Peace Exhibition.

Making its way around the world, Making Peace is now installed in Toronto through September 24. After stops in Brazil, Italy, Belgium, South Africa, Bosnia and Sweden, among other locations, it is set to open at Town Park on September 29 just in time for Aurora Culture Days, staying in place until the snow starts to fly.

Event organizers Shawna White and Councillor John Abel received the last bit of funding they needed to make the local event a reality after Council voted to grant them \$7,000 from Council's Contingency Fund to augment the \$5,000 already secured in private sponsorships.

Even before they had secured the final piece of the cash puzzle, however, they were already excited to bring to Town Park what Councillor Abel describes as "the most important public art exhibition we have ever done in Aurora."

Making Peace has been touring since it was unveiled in Geneva in 2010.

It is built around the "Five Colours of Peace" symbolizing Disarmament & Non-Violence; Conflict Prevention & Resolution; Economic & Social Justice; Human Rights, Law & Democracy; and Environment & Sustainable Development.

"While there are many meanings and definitions of peace, we believe there are five main elements that go together to form peace and, and they can be represented by five colours," say the developers. "Only by bringing these five elements together can we create sustainable peace."

The photo exhibition consists of 100 panels featuring 124 photographs from 110 photographers, and a total of 11,000 words.

"It has been a whirlwind because we literally just found out about it [this summer]," says Ms. White. "The curator came up and walked through Town Park, we talked about it, and now we are working with the Aurora Cultural Centre, who have agreed to host the opening for it on Wednesday, October 4. Now we have the logistics of how we are getting it here and having all the contingencies in place."

They have given themselves a week from the time the exhibition arrives on September 25 to work out all the kinks before it is opened to the public.

Scouting locations, in the mind of Ms. White and Councillor Abel, there was really only one ideal location for Making Peace, that being Town Park. After all, she says, it is celebrating its own 150th Birthday this year and is just a stone's throw from where Pearson attended school.

"Town Park is a coming-together place and this, being of peace and what it means from a global perspective, that conversation can

happen in Town Park where people can come together," says Ms. White. "It just seemed like a natural fit."

If all goes according to plan, including sponsorship, the aim is to have everything ready by Friday, September 29, coinciding with Aurora Culture Days.

The October opening, however, is set to be a more formal affair.

The curator of the Making Peace exhibition has been in talks with a granddaughter of Lester B. Pearson to be present as Guest of Honour at the opening and share recollections of the man, as well as some of his mementos with the audience.

"It is nice because not only is he the only Canadian to have won the Nobel Peace Prize, he also spent time here," says Ms. White.

"The opening is going to be in the building he actually attended school in for a number of years. We just want people to come together and realise that we're not that different from each other, that we all want those basic human things. It spurs a discussion.

We're going to try to organize some seminars and lectures while it is here and just talk about issues that are in our own community.

"New Canadians are now part of the Aurora Story and we would like to capture their stories and for people to just be aware that we are now a global society and things are going on in other parts of the world we can't turn a blind eye to. We have to be aware and supportive of those who have gone through [turmoil] and they are here in our community."