

Peacekeeping Past & Present in focus at Hillary House National Historic Site

The International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers will be marked by the Aurora Historical Site with a presentation from a decorated peacekeeper.

Next Wednesday, May 29, Vishnudat Persaud, a veteran peacekeeper who has been awarded for his services in Bosnia, will present 'Peacekeeping in the Past & Present' from 7 ? 8.30 p.m.

The evening is part of the Aurora Historical Society's (AHS) Speaker Series program and will be a hybrid program taking place at Hillary House National Historic Site as well as virtually.

'This month's talk is happening on the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers,' say organizers. 'Audiences are welcome to hear from Vishnudat Persaud, who joined the Canadian Forces in the 1980s and is still active in the service today.'

'Hear about how Persaud's journey overseas and how his past experiences are repeating in present-day peacekeeping efforts.'

As much as the AHS looks to the past in programming, they feel it's equally important to bring context to current events and Selin Kahramano?lu, AHS' Programming and Outreach Coordinator, says this event dovetails perfectly into their mandate.

'The speaker we were lucky enough to be in contact with thanks to Historica Canada, is in active service right now with the Canadian Forces and seeing the global situations,' says Kahramano?lu. 'Of course, our Historical Society wants to shine a light on history, but also modern issues and connect the two. We are very happy to get a speaker who focuses on peacekeeping throughout his work with the Canadian Forces.'

'We take seriously getting our community more of those local history stories from people who can talk about their personal experiences, kind of an oral history, and we're hearing that people are interested a lot in military history. The other thing we always aim to do is welcome new speakers to our roster. We have the favourites that the audience always looks forward to hearing but we wanted to branch out and just hear from speakers on topics that maybe the Aurora community is interested in hearing' that is why we had an influx of speakers with different backgrounds, either personally or experience-wise, to help bring that variety and diversity to the Aurora community so they can see themselves reflected back.'

And there is much more of that to come.

Throughout the summer and into the fall, the Speaker Series will continue ? first with AHS Curator-Manager Kathleen Vahey who will lead a presentation on recent archival findings from within the Society's extensive collection, particularly items associated with Hillary House and the family that called it home for more than a century.

This talk will shine a brighter light on the generations of doctors who practiced out of Aurora's only National Historic Site, one that is continually cited as an exemplar of Victorian Gothic architecture.

Author Ted Barris, a popular fixture in the Speakers Series, is set for a summertime return, as is historian Arlene Chan, who will speak about Chinese Canadians and early pioneers in what is now York Region and the Greater Toronto Area.

'We're very excited to welcome her in July,' says Kahramano?lu. 'She is a very busy woman and I'm very happy she made time for us and we're looking forward to bringing more of that narrative of Chinese Canadians in Aurora. I would encourage people to attend that one. She's extremely knowledgeable and she's talking from a place of personal experience. We have a lot of gratitude around that talk.'

For more information on the Aurora Historical Society's Speaker Series, and all future events, visit aurorahs.com.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter