

Spirit Walk goes back to basics as Hallowe'en and 'Stage 2' collide

As far as creepy coincidences go, York Region heading back into Stage 2 with Hallowe'en on the horizon is pretty spooky indeed.

But local historian David Heard is rolling with the punches as he prepares to re-launch the Aurora Spirit Walk - this time pivoting back to his original vision after Friday's announcement from the Provincial Government on Stage 2 poured cold water on the walk's new virtual direction.

On Friday, October 30, Mr. Heard, who has been spearheading the Aurora Spirit Walk for the past 11 years, was due to try something new: transforming the hall of the Aurora Legion into a virtual, socially-distant spirit walk, to raise money for the local veterans' organization.

'The biggest thing that has come about over the last many years is all the people saying they would love to do the tour but don't have the ability to walk through the downtown or up stairs,' said Mr. Heard of a virtual tour, 24 hours before the latest health measures were announced. 'There are seniors who want to come, there are people with disabilities who want to come, and while I was at the Legion doing the music presentation, they had this huge space in their hall and I thought we could do an indoor tour there, give people tons of space with a small group and give the people who can't make the walk an opportunity to hear and see these stories.'

Mr. Heard's plans were to present the virtual tour from behind a protective screen. There, he would be telling Aurora's ghost stories as images of the Town from the late 1800s to early 1900s were beamed around the room, along with spooky videos that have been recorded on previous tours and during other local paranormal investigations.

'I wanted to help the Legion keep going,' said Mr. Heard. 'The funny thing is the presentation would be done in a room that was the very first place I ever presented in any sort of professional capacity, at a public speaking contest in 1978, doing a speech on how, if given a chance, people who have disabilities could become community leaders. Here I am, 40 years later, and giving this ghost tour there and that public speaking contest in that very hall is [what led to it].'

'The roots are there for me. I want to support the Legion because we know what our veterans go through. Times have changed, and now a lot of our veterans are supporting disaster relief and I just can't believe the horrors they would see. It totally impacts their being.'

Unfortunately, the rising numbers of new cases of COVID-19 within York Region has spelled an end to this virtual tour, but not to be deterred, Mr. Heard is re-launching the traditional, on-foot Spirit Walk tour to fill the void while still supporting the Legion.

Individuals who already have their tickets for the now-postponed October 30 virtual tour can now book a spot for tours that will be held October 29 - 31, beginning at Town Park each evening at 7.30 p.m., while being able to enjoy the virtual tour indoors once circumstances allow. Ticket-holders for the physical walking tour will also have the opportunity to take part in the virtual presentation at a later date.

For more information, visit creepytrips.com.

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