

Students to celebrate Aurora and its people



By Brock Weir

A community is only as strong as the people within it, so what does your community mean to you?

That is the question the Aurora Cultural Centre is putting to Aurorans between the ages of 5 and 18 to define 'My Aurora.'

'My Aurora' is an initiative spearheaded by the Centre to celebrate Aurora's Sesquicentennial with a '150 Youth/150 Years', a photography and creative writing exhibition. Going out to local schools and through workshops and camp programs, organizers of the initiative are asking 'What does Aurora mean to you?', 'Where is your favourite space or place in Aurora?', 'If you had a wish for Aurora, what would it be?', and 'In 150 years, the future youth will be able to see your images and read your words - what would you like them to see and read?'

Put on your thinking caps because the deadline for writing or photography submissions is Friday, June 7. If selected, your own words and images will hang in the Great Hall Gallery of the Aurora Cultural Centre from June 19 through September 3 in honour of Aurora's Sesquicentennial.

'My Aurora' is the initiative of the Centre through the efforts of Clare Bolton, who is looking after the creative writing entries, and Stephanie Nicolo, who is turning a keen eye towards the photography.

Ms. Bolton says with the writing component, which had a bit of a head-start earlier this year through some of the Centre's March Break creative writing programs, she has been surprised by the creativity and comfort level of local students in expressing themselves in what the Town means to them, particularly the people within the community.

'They are very open and very uninhibited,' she says. 'One of the young women wrote a beautiful poem and in it she included Aurora, the Goddess of the Morn. Another prompt was to write to a famous person, personality, or someone they really admired to say what they liked about Aurora. Stones from Aurora, NY inspired some boys and they were able to open up. What surprised me was they were really comfortable and open expressing themselves. Some of them had really strong opinions on Aurora specifically, and others just preferred to express themselves.'

'I am passionate about writing and hearing people's voices and while I love working with adults, I have just been pleasantly surprised [with the youngsters]. It was really a team effort to have the images and the words.'

In looking at the images that could form this exhibition, Ms. Nicolo wants to leave it open for the youth to capture images of Aurora that truly reflect what the community means to them and particular elements of the town that really resonate with them.

?The theme for the individual pieces can really be quite broad, but it all comes back to what Aurora means to this youthful person,? she says. ?I am leaving the creativity to them as much as possible by giving them this opportunity to showcase. In terms of who influenced them, it can be family members, it could be a teacher they had, somebody from their school being taught in Aurora, it could be a spiritual leader who has influenced them, or even the guy at Subway who knows exactly what you want to order before any words come out of your mouth.?

In getting a mental plan of what the exhibition is going to look like, Ms. Nicolo says it has been interesting to see what has come in from the creative writing side. Themes indicate Aurora is being seen in a very positive light, as well as positive insights into the community both for today, and through a lens looking to the future.

?This is a chance to brag about your hometown, to tell us something interesting, and is a way to participate in the celebrations,? said Ms. Bolton. ?They can invite their friends to see their work on display and if they need any help, we can guide them. It is fun to express yourself and it is fun to be heard, and we don't always have the opportunity to be able to show it in a public space.?

Added Ms. Nicolo: ?It gives an insight of what influences the youth of Aurora and that is the youth of Aurora and what relationships they have with one another.?

Photo and written submissions can be made directly to submissions@auroraculturalcentre.ca. For further information, call Stephanie at 905-713-1818.