

## Aurora hosts inaugural Holi Festival celebration



The Town of Aurora celebrated its first-ever Holi Festival on Saturday, March 15th, at Aurora Town Square.

The Holi Festival is a vibrant Hindu event that marks the triumph of good over evil and the arrival of spring. This year's celebration was the first time the Town had embraced it, with a series of events held throughout the day at Town Square.

The festivities began with a Holi Festival-themed storytelling session at the Aurora Public Library, hosted by Jocelyn Jones. Families with young children gathered to sing Holi-themed songs, read stories, and play with colourful streamers.

"The kids had so much fun, the families were so happy, and we're just so happy that we got to connect with families in this way," said Jones.

In the afternoon, residents gathered at the Addison Dance Studio within Town Square for a Bollywood Dance Demo led by Karishma, who hosts similar demos across York Region as @dancewithKarish on Instagram.

"We're so thrilled to see the turnout. It's really wonderful," said Nichole Campbell, Cultural Development Coordinator at the Aurora Cultural Centre. "It's something new, right? So, you never know when it's something new what exactly to expect, but it's been fantastic."

Following the dance demo, attendees enjoyed vegetable samosas in front of the Armory Cafe.

Colouring pages were prepared for young attendees, along with a photo booth with vibrant, Holi-themed props.

The final highlight of the day was the much-anticipated colours festival, which allowed participants to experience one of Holi's most well-known traditions—tossing multicoloured powders onto one another. The playful event was met with much excitement and praise.

Resident Marilyn Merrikin expressed her enthusiasm for the event: "I came because of the colours. I've always wanted to see it because it's so beautiful. This is amazing, it's at my doorstep. I [knew] I would have to come and check it out."

Sonia Palta, who is Hindu and a former resident of Aurora, expressed her excitement about the event, highlighting it as a local way

to share her culture with her children.

?Because we're further away from places like Brampton and Mississauga where you can usually find these kinds of events, I think that this is a good idea,? she said. ?I think it's an excellent chance to give [my children] that exposure.?

When asked whether Aurora would continue to host Holi Festival events, Campbell said, ?Absolutely!?

?It's our first year, so we started small just to see the community feedback and the community response, and I think it's been fantastic. So, I'm excited to see what we can put together for next year!?

**By Selena Loureiro**