

Canada Day to be celebrated in three-day party



Get ready to don your red and white as Canada's Birthday Town prepares for a three-day Canada Day celebration.

The Town's traditional Dance in the Park, Canada Day Parade, day-long activities at Lambert Willson Park, and, of course, the grand finale fireworks show are all back in full force for the first time since the start of the global pandemic.

The festivities will kick off Thursday, June 30, with a Dance in the Park, hosted by the Town in partnership with the Rotary Club of Aurora.

Dance in the Park will run from 7 ? 11 p.m., and feature two concerts ? the first by Bernadette Connors at 7 p.m., followed by Glenn Marais and the Mojo Train at 9 p.m.

?One magical reason why everyone should try this is for those who do the annual Summer Concerts in the Park, they are always from 7 ? 9 p.m., but this is from 7 ? 11 p.m. so you get two fantastic concerts back-to-back,? says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora, who notes that in addition to the music, food trucks will be in Town Park, the Aurora Armoury will open their patio with a special menu, while Rotary will operate a beer garden.

The fun will continue the following morning, Canada Day itself, with the traditional Canada Day Parade.

This year, however, there will be a change of direction with the parade beginning at Yonge Street and Murray Drive before travelling north to its end at Aurora Heights Drive.

?We have marching bands, the Governor General's Gorse Guards, the Legion Colour Party and many cultural performers such as the Brazilian ?Hips Don't Lie' trip, an Italian trio called ?Toronetol' as well as Mexican performers and Chinese dancers,? says Ms. Ware, adding the parade will feature a number of community groups and organizations with their floats.

Marching bands and live performers in the parade are set to include the White Heather Pipes and Drums, the Barrie Pipes and Drums, the Uxbridge Legion Pipes and Drums and, acting as the ?caboose? of the parade, the York Lions Steel Drum Band.

Following the parade, the celebrations shift to Lambert Willson Park, just behind the Aurora Family Leisure Complex on Industrial Parkway North, where festivities from concerts to an interactive virtual trip around the country, will run from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., just in time for the spectacular fireworks show.

?From 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., the main concentration is the stage as well as a plethora of family activities with our signature concept being our passports where families can travel around Canada, experiencing hands-on interactive activities reflective of each province and territory,? says Ms. Ware. ?We're very proud of this concept because it is very unique in terms of how other communities celebrate Canada Day. When you visit Yukon, you get to try your hand at panning for real gold and new this year when you travel to the Northwest Territories, we have a mobile planetarium and you're able to go inside this dome, learn, and experience all about the Aurora Borealis with real footage experience from up in the Northwest Territories. The experiences just keep going from there, reflective of each province or territory.

?In addition to those fun activities, we do also have the tried-and-true fun things such as inflatables, mini-golf, mock ice fishing. We have Hands-On Exotics stepping up with a Jurassic World theme. There's a lot happening and we have spaced it all out so everything will be really spaced out well to ensure comfort of all attendees and we even have a community zone where we have local community organizations which will be setting up.?

Displays in the park will include a Birds of Prey show by the Canadian Raptor Conservatory, Sensational Snakes and more.

Stage activities will begin around 11 a.m. with a Canadian Citizenship reaffirmation ceremony, classic rock tunes from the Durham Street Band, performances by the four cultural groups featured in the parade, and much more.

Following a patio performance from Tangent at the nearby Royal Canadian Legion, music will continue at the Lambert Willson Park stage at 6.15 p.m. with the Pheromones, followed by headliner Shania Twin, the premiere Canadian tribute to Shania Twain at 8.15, who will perform until the start of the fireworks around 10 p.m.

All the while, the Town will offer free drop-in skating, swimming and gym time at the Leisure Complex.

Closing out the three-day celebration will be a partnership between the Town and the Aurora Farmers' Market.

?On Saturday, July 2, we've teamed up with the Aurora Farmers' Market, and with Canada turning 154-years-old, for those who get festive in their gear, whether it is a festive Canadian hat, colour coordinating their outfit, the first 154 attendees of the market can earn themselves a treat,? says Ms. Ware.

?There's sheer patriotic excitement,? she adds of being able to offer the full slate of Canada Day activities for the first time since 2019. ?It has to be seen as a special celebration. Although there is fun with inflatables and all those things, it is a day to really reflect, take stock, and just be proud and amazed as to how fortunate we are either to be Canadians and/or to also just reside on Canadian soil.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter