

Canadian and Caribbean traditions come together for Family Day



By Brock Weir

Whether you want to step back in time, or step right into the middle of a raucous present, there is something for every taste on tap in Aurora for Monday's Family Day commemorations.

Celebrations will be **IGNITED** at the Aurora Cultural Centre at from 1 ? 4 p.m. as they host Toronto's Pan Fantasy Steelband in a presentation geared towards the whole family. The presentation is part of the **IGNITE** initiative, events designed to celebrate the cultures of the Americas in conjunction with this summer's Pan Am and Parapan Games in Toronto.

Founded nearly 30 years ago as an outlet for youth in underprivileged areas in Toronto, teacher Wendy Jones has been with Pan Fantasy since the start. Over the decades, she and the founding members have watched the steel drum group grow and develop as these youth found their creative outlet to the world, eventually bringing their own children into the fold. It continues to serve as a vital outlet for the GTA, as well as communities further afield, to this day.

?When we started we were just coming out of school and moving on out of high school into universities and colleges and we saw an urgent need to form the group,? says Ms. Jones on the foundations of the group, which has now been embraced by the Toronto School Board. ?A lot of youth thought this was something new and different so they wanted to try it. Some dropped off, but most of us stayed with it in the community and we attracted more youth by playing out in the community and playing at other schools.

?The enticing part is once you have mastered the instruments you realise that you can play something totally different and you can play everything on the pan in terms of music. It is an instrument that carries an orchestra behind it. You can play jazz, pop, calypso, classical and I think that is what makes it popular with the kids. We even do a lot of hip hop with them.?

Come to the Cultural Centre to feel the warm breeze brought on by the island sounds and, if you're brave, stay following the performance to try the pans for yourself as the group hosts a free try-it-yourself workshop.

?We're looking to bring the light of the entire community and light up Aurora with some nice, sweet music ? and bring the warmth to Aurora as well,? says Ms. Jones. ?Hopefully we will be able to share with them our culture. We love it when kids start, so I am hoping [attendees] will grasp the fun we have playing the instruments. Once you learn it, you always want to keep playing it.?

Hands-on activities are also the order of the day at Hillary House National Historic Site as the Aurora Historical Society (AHS) plans a day of stories, workshops, and even fitness.

Traditional crafts and refreshments will be on tap in the ballroom, with activities including scrapbooking and doll-making out of fabric. After 1.30, the ballroom will be cleared to make way for G.R. Fitness, who will lead a Family Fitness afternoon at 1.30. If

you would rather be outside enjoying the snow, the hills behind Hillary House will be available for unsupervised tobogganing.

?I think it is a great idea to come out to Hillary House on Family Day because the house will be lively, fun and open like the house was when it was originally with the Hillary Family who had nine children running around,? says Erika Mazanik of the AHS. ?We often have people coming in and telling personal stories, so having events like this is a great opportunity for people to come in and see it for the first time.?