

Emancipation Day to be marked with Aurora Town Square ceremony Saturday

The 'legacy of freedom in Canada' will be celebrated at Aurora Town Square this Saturday, August 9, as the community marks Emancipation Day with a special observance.

Led by the Aurora Black Caucus, in conjunction with the Town of Aurora, the event 'marking the end of slavery and celebrating the legacy of freedom in Canada' will take place in the Davide de Simone Performance Hall from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., and will feature music, a panel discussion, and more underscoring the importance of Emancipation Day in Canada.

Emancipation Day, which is typically celebrated on August 1 each year, commemorates the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, which abolished slavery across the British Empire.

The day has previously been marked by the Aurora Black Caucus in ceremonies held in Council Chambers, but this is the first time they've based commemorations out of the Town's newest gathering space.

'We're very excited that we're able to host this event at Town Square,' says Nichole Campsall, Cultural Development Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. 'We've worked with the Aurora Black Caucus over the past couple of years to do a flag-raising and kick-off for Emancipation Day at Town Hall [and] now that we have Town Square open, we're so happy the Aurora Black Caucus can expand on their programming and do a little bit more to celebrate Emancipation Day.'

'It's going to be just a great day of reflection and discussion and really community talking about the importance of the day, where do we stand today, and how we continue the important work that has to be done. The Aurora Black Caucus has really put a lot of great information into what the day turns out like and to be able to interact with the community.'

AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER PROGRAMS

Saturday's Emancipation Day event kicks off a busy August and September for Aurora Town Square. (ATS)

On August 13, ATS will present an Egyptian Belly Dance workshop for dancers at all levels, blending 'authentic technique with fun choreography, teaching you how to move with grace and confidence.'

ATS first presented the belly dance workshop in the spring and, given its success the first time around, they were eager to bring it back.

'The instructor is just so fantastic and she really pulls you out of your shell and teaches you about the culture, a little bit about the history of belly dancing, and then she just empowers you to feel the music and put yourself out there,' says Campsall. 'It's such a fantastic program and it's a great way to interact with other people in the community, having a fun time.'

The fun continues on August 23, when laughter will ring out throughout the Performance Hall thanks to the comedians of Yuk Yuk's.

'We're very excited to have Yuk Yuk's back,' says Campsall, noting their first performance in January was a sell-out. 'It really is just so much fun. They're hilarious. It's so cool to see the audience all together, laughing together, enjoying the show together. We will continue to bring Yuk Yuks back about twice a year. So, if unfortunately, you miss out in August, keep an eye out. We'll have them back in January as well. It seems like the community has responded quite well to this, so we're thrilled to be able to bring Yuk Yuks continually back.'

Programs shift from comedy to politics on September 7 when the Town of Aurora and Aurora Public Library team up to present An Afternoon with Steve Paikin & Bruce Dowbiggin, hosted by Andrew Applebaum.

‘Long-time colleagues and lifelong friends Steve Paikin and Bruce Dowbiggin share 35+ years of stories from their broadcasting and journalism careers, plus the twenty books they’ve collectively written!’ say organizers. ‘Steve and Bruce co-hosted the Double Play radio show on The Fan 590 and worked together at CBC-Toronto. They’ll share their positive (and not-so-positive) interactions with well-known athletes and politicians, along with tales from Steve’s 19 years hosting TVO’s The Agenda and Bruce’s days as a columnist at the Globe & Mail and Calgary Herald. Keeping them ‘on task’ will be host Andrew Applebaum from the Toronto Legends podcast. This incredible experience will also include a meet and greet, photo opportunity, and book signing.’

Heritage programming continues on September 19 when Pathway to the Stars, a live performance presented as an Old Time Radio show, developed to mark the Centennial of the Royal Canadian Air Force, returns to the performance hall.

Brought to life by Michael Hood and Tom Jenkins, directed by Sarah Moyle, Pathway to the Stars was one of the first performances to grace the Hall last year, and it was an audience hit.

Four episodes will be presented by the actors, each featuring ‘heartwarming true stories of Canadian heroes from the Royal Canadian Air Force.’

‘It really is just such a unique experience,’ says Campsall. ‘It’s a live theatre production where you have the actors on stage in front of you, and they are telling you stories from Pathway to the Stars: 100 Years of the Royal Canadian Air Force, and they’re telling you in the style of old-time radio, so it really is so unique. I really don’t think there’s a lot like it out there, and the music is incredible.’

‘The talent is amazing watching them, and again, as people were leaving last year, they just had huge smiles on their faces, and they were so just moved by the piece. When Sarah came back to us and said, ‘Hey, we’d love to come back again,’ we were very excited to bring this back.’

For more information on these events, including ticketing information where applicable, visit aurora.ca/whatson.

By Brock Weir
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