

Fire & Ice to keep families warm at Arctic Adventure



By Brock Weir

For decades, archaeologists have been able to chisel prehistoric creatures out of blocks of tundra ice, giving us a good idea of the larger-than-life animals that used to roam the earth.

This Monday, amateur sleuths will be able to see what they can uncover at Arctic Adventure.

Monday is Family Day and the Town of Aurora is hard at work pulling out all the stops for the annual winter festival, which always sees thousands of residents brave the cold for a day of fun at Town Park.

This year, however, organizers are putting a bit of a different spin on the party ? building morning and afternoon programming based around the theme of Fire & Ice.

?Fire and ice are two extremes and I really wanted to add that to the mix,? says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora ?The idea of the two extremes has been percolating since last spring and this year everything just lined up well.? Helping bring this theme to life are fire jugglers, the ever-popular Battle of the Chainsaws ice sculpting competition, a bonfire to keep families nice and toasty, an outdoor skating rink that is purely at the mercy of Mother Nature, Body Zorbs, and a new activity for the kids.

?Kids will get the chance to get to chisel and crack away at ice to free animals from the ice age,? says Ms. Ware, who says the Special Events team has had quite an interesting time through trial and error bringing this event to fruition, but they have perfected the technique. ?There are hippos, elephants, bears, monkeys, moose, zebras, rhinos, cougars, chickens and cows. We'll have this activity twice and there will be 120 animals in total to uncover each time ? but you won't know what animals are in it until you start working on them.

?You always want to look at what you've done in the past, what's currently coming up, and this year we have settled enthusiastically on our Fire & Ice theme, doing our overall entertainment programming slightly different than we have in previous years. We'll start off Family Day with the White Pine Dancers, an indigenous group that will be doing presentations and storytelling. They were the first families 20,000 years ago and we'll be starting the day with some of the oldest families.

?Back by popular demand, we will have the Speaking of Wildlife show which is going to give an educational animal display on animals [often associated] with the winter, and then we'll move into the Battle of the Chainsaws which will see two professional ice carvers compete to create what the crowd determines is the best ice sculpture. This will be followed by a dynamic 40-minute fire juggling show by The Fire Guy, followed by a second round of the Battle of the Chain Saws with new sculptures.?

Family Day is often a day where people stay home and focus on the family, says Ms. Ware, but they hope Arctic Adventure will encourage families to try something new. Their goal is to provide as many quality programs as possible for local families, for free, giving families a new experience each year.

If going out into the February cold is not your idea of a good time, however, the Town will also hold two indoor activities at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex to mark Family Day: a free Zumba class with Club Aurora at 11 a.m., and a free leisure swim at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

?We have really tried to strike a balance between some indoor activities as well as the outdoor activities,? says Ms. Ware.

?Regardless of the weather, because you have the ability to dress up for it, come down and experience something new. This is an event where, every single year, I've met new residents who have just moved here during the winter and this was the first event they

had been out to. After talking to them, you would see them start to talk to the people in the park and you can just start to see that friendly, welcoming appeal Aurora has. You can actually see it in action.

?For those who haven't come and those who have come before, come out and take in an experience which is something that isn't always otherwise accessible, like the Battle of the Chainsaws, the Fire Guy and Body Zorbs. Everything is meant to keep you active and keep you captivated.?

For more information on Monday's Arctic Adventure, visit www.aurora.ca/arcticadventure. Events run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Town Park (Mosley and Wells Streets).