

Friday's day for National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to be marked across Aurora

September 30 marks the second annual National Day for Truth & Reconciliation and a full afternoon and evening of activities are planned to take place in Aurora to mark this poignant occasion.

Honouring the lost children and survivors of residential schools, their families, and their communities, when the day was first commemorated last year a series of Indigenous-led activities were held at Town Park hosted by the Aurora Cultural Centre and the Town of Aurora.

Town Park will once again provide the backdrop to performances, activities and cultural exchanges that are designed to help people reflect and move forward on the road to reconciliation.

Events will begin with a presentation from the Aurora Cultural Centre co-presented and hosted by Jared Big Canoe, a member of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation.

From 3 ? 5 p.m., the observance will begin with a welcome and land acknowledgement, an opening prayer and talk from Becky Big Canoe and Jared will then share his personal story of impact from Residential Schools.

An opening song will be performed by the Shining Waters Drum Group followed by a performance from a traditional dancer, talks by Jan Beaver and Jared Big Canoe, a performance from an Inuit Throat Singer, and further dance performances.

Jared Big Canoe will then perform ?The Children,? a reflection on the loss of children to Residential Schools, followed by Shining Waters who will close out the first part of the program with musical reflections.

Throughout the afternoon, participants can participate in a Healing Card Creation Activity facilitated by Asha Frost and brought back to the Chippewa Nation from Georgina Island.

The venue will turn over to the Town of Aurora at 5.30 with a municipally-hosted event led by Anishinaabe Grandmother Kim Wheatley, with activities kicking off with community members invited to leave orange handprints on picnic tables that will be dispersed throughout Aurora's parks and public spaces.

?This is a collaborative effort with members of the Indigenous community and work through the Indigenous Relations Committee,? said Daniel Bitonti, Manager of Communications for the Town of Aurora. ?Anishinaabe grandmother Kim Wheatley is part of that working group and it's a collaborative effort to ensure we are acknowledging this important day appropriately.

?Starting at 5.30, community members are invited to Aurora Town Park to take part in this handprint activity where your hands will be painted orange and you will place your hand print onto these picnic tables that will eventually be placed at various parks around Aurora. Of course, that is kind of a very visual reminder of the fact that we simply won't forget the children that didn't make it home, and not just the children but the survivors as well as their families.?

The main ceremonies, beginning at 6 p.m. and running through 8 p.m., will be led by Wheatley, Elder Pat Floody, Ancestral Knowledge Keeper Raidon Levesque and Shining Waters.

Additionally on September 30, the Town will formally unveil its permanent land acknowledgement plaque at Town Hall, a message which has been etched on a piece of ash that will find a permanent home at the Town's seat of government, as well as public spaces like the Aurora Family Leisure Complex.

For more on the Aurora Cultural Centre's program, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca/ndtr2022. For further details on the Town of

Aurora's observances, visit www.aurora.ca/en/recreation-arts-and-culture/truth-and-reconciliation.aspx.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter