

## Get up close and personal with Aurora's past at Saturday's Town Square opening



Saturday's grand opening of Aurora Town Square is as much about the Town's future as its past as the Aurora Museum & Archives hosts a number of activities throughout the day including an unboxing of artefacts.

The public are invited to be part of the thrill of discovery by helping museum staff unpack historic items that were safely stored away during the four-year construction of Town Square from 11.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m.

This is a new way for a hands-on experience, says Michelle Johnson of the Aurora Museum and Archives. It's a fun way to really engage with artefacts in a way that you normally can't as they're behind glass. We have a lot to unpack and bring into their home, so we would love if people want to come and help us with the process.

As the Museum left its digs at the Aurora Cultural Centre for the duration of construction, no less than 1,168 boxes of artefacts were packed up and put into storage.

Cultural partners like the Museum and the Aurora Cultural Centre have had a few weeks to settle back into the new and refurbished buildings and Museum staff have had a head-start on the unboxing process, going through checklists to make sure each item is in the same condition at which they were packed.

Volunteers who come out on Saturday will get a brief tutorial on how to complete the checklists as well, leaving their proverbial mark on each piece's story.

We have a lot of unpacking to do; we'll have tables set up and we'll take volunteers through a few minutes of our daily life of what it's like unpacking these artefacts, then they will get a first-hand look at the types of mounts and storage systems that were crafted for these artefacts, says Johnson.

We are taking care of this collection for the people of Aurora. This is an incredible perspective for them to see how we're taking care of the collection. When things are in storage for four-and-a-half years, what did that mean? What did that look like? How were they stored? They weren't just put in a box and shipped away. The amount of time and care that went into crafting the storage compartments for them and documenting everything about the item was incredible. Just for the community to see how much this collection means to those who care for it, and how much it means to the people who we care for it on behalf of is a great opportunity.

Throughout the day, the Museum will also offer behind-the-scenes tours of state-of-the-art storage and curation areas more than

double the footprint of what once was.

?Our collections care capacity has increased in an incredible way,? says Johnson. ?We can say yes to things that directly connect with our collections policy and collections mandate, which is huge. Museums have to be responsible. A lot of museums want to say yes to as much as they can, but space is a real issue. The fact that our collections care facilities have been built with growth in mind, we're incredibly grateful. It allows us to continue doing our job so that some other places are a probably a bit envious of because we have space.

?If it's important to Aurora's history and continuous narrative, we will find the space. This just makes our job a lot easier in being able to have a spot for it kind of right away. We have had some brilliant donations come in and they just fit and this is the right home for it and we make it work. Now that making it work part is easier.?

**By Brock Weir**