

Historical Society offers programs on early Black communities, traditional medicines

The Aurora Historical Society is kicking off a winter of virtual programming with presentations on some of the earliest Black communities in what's now Ontario, as well as traditional Indigenous methods of healing.

The Aurora Historical Society's (AHS) Speaker Series kicks off Wednesday, January 31, at 7.15 p.m. when historian Deirdre McCorkindale presents virtually on Free Black Communities in Canada West.

McCorkindale will speak to residents via Zoom about the development of these communities and their association with the Underground Railway to registrants.

"It's a historical talk about the early settlement period and particularly Black communities from that time period," says Selin Kahramanoğlu, Programming & Outreach Coordinator for Hillary House National Historic Site. "It's about local history, which is part of our mission and mandate. We always have to connect all of our programs to that theme. Her talk is naturally on history and as a historian she is very knowledgeable about that subject. She has some great themed talks with other historical societies in the area, and we want to jump on that and make sure Aurora residents have the opportunity to hear it as well."

The Speaker Series continues on Saturday, February 24, from 11 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. with Living by the Medicine Wheel, a presentation by Indigenous Medicine Woman and author Asha Frost, a member of the Cape Croker First Nation.

Over Zoom, Frost will read from her bestselling book, "You are the Medicine" and share additional Indigenous teachings and wisdom.

It's a fitting program for the Aurora Historical Society and Hillary House, which is home to the Koffler Museum of Medicine.

"We're very excited to welcome Asha for a talk," says Kahramanoğlu. "I was researching speakers who we haven't worked with before and as a result of the talk that we did late last year on mental health and the role of museums and helping provide mental health resources. There was a great conversation had during that talk with the Canadian Mental Health Association and looking more to what is already offered in our community and leveraging those resources a bit more. Thankfully I came across Asha and saw she has a very impressive, extensive background in speaking and guiding community through traditional Indigenous practices. I thought she would be an excellent person to book for one of our speaker series."

"We like to think of ourselves as well-rounded [from a medical standpoint] but, historically speaking, this house was always a home of healing and we like to explore all the different ways healing comes into play, not just through Western medicine."

For more on the Aurora Historical Society's 2024 Speaker Series, including registration and ticket information for the events led by Deirdre McCorkindale and Asha Frost, visit aurorahs.com or call 905-727-8991.

By Brock Weir
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