

Indigenous Art workshops kick off Centre's education programs in Town Square

Indigenous art can communicate complex stories and traditions in deceptively simple ways, and these traditional art forms will be in the spotlight as a new era of education unfolds at Aurora Town Square.

Art workshops, led by Indigenous instructors, will lead the Aurora Cultural Centre's fall education programs as the organization settles into their new and traditional spaces at Church and Victoria Streets following the grand opening of Aurora Town Square on Saturday, September 21.

The first of these workshops will be a highlight of the grand opening ceremonies itself as Joy Rogers, a member of the Six Nations of Grand River, and Annwin, a mixed-First Nations Ojibway artist, lead the community in a Beaded Orange Shirt Pin workshop from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

It's the first of five one-day workshops that will unfold over the autumn in a program that includes beading, tufting with caribou hair, and painting using natural materials, designed for community members of all artistic abilities and experiences.

"Our public surveys consistently reveal a keen interest in learning Indigenous art forms from Indigenous arts practitioners," says Aitak Sorahitalab, Education Manager at the Aurora Cultural Centre. "We have established relationships with a number of artist-educators who are not only highly experienced in their art form but have that special facility to teach and guide."

Following the Beaded Orange Shirt Pin session on September 21, which was picked to lead off the program ahead of National Day for Truth & Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day on Monday, September 30, workshops include a Beaded Harvest Patch session on October 6 from 1- 3 p.m., a Tufted Keychain workshop on October 20, from 1 ? 3 p.m., Painting with Nature from 1 ? 3 p.m. on November 3, and, just in time for Remembrance Day, a Beaded Poppy Patch workshop on November 10 at the same time.

"Symbolically, we wanted to start our programming with these practices as a land acknowledgement that we have in all of our meetings," says Sorahitalab, underscoring the importance of bringing in Indigenous educators and artists to lead these initiatives. "It's about authenticity and [the principle of] never talking about them without them. We follow that. They have that knowledge, they bring it to us, and they share it with us generously. We're happy to be able to spread it out into the community. It's a beautiful practice."

Throughout Aurora Town Square's grand opening celebration, the Aurora Cultural Centre will host Discovery Days at the same time, which will allow residents and all participants to proverbially get their feet wet in a number of different artistic areas.

Taking over the Square's Shining Hill Arts Studio on September 21 from 1.05 ? 1.30 p.m., Joy Rogers will host a beading workshop.

A full day of discovery will unfold at Aurora Town Square thanks to the Cultural Centre on Monday, September 23, with Comic Drawing with Jan Dolby taking place in Shining Hill Arts Studio A from 4 ? 4.30 p.m.; Wood Carving with Arnold Koch from 6 ? 6.30 p.m., in the Art Activity Room; Acrylics and Oils with Eva Folks from 6 ? 6.30 p.m. in Shining Hill Arts Studio A; and a Drawing Club with Jan Dolby at the same time in Shining Hill Arts Studio B.

The following day, programs will begin at 3.30 p.m. with Watercolours with Karen Levert; from 6 ? 6.30 with Simi-e Japanese Ink with Diana Bullock; and Acrylics with Helen Walter from 6 ? 6.30 p.m.

Aurora artist Judy Sherman will lead September 25 programming from 10.30 ? 11 p.m. with an Acrylics and Drawing Workshop; followed on September 26 from 6 ? 6.30 p.m. in Shining Hill Arts Studio A by Karen Levert with another watercolour workshop and Bookbinding with Mohammad Tabesh at the same time in Studio B.

Rounding out the Discovery Days program on Saturday, September 28, from 9.15 ? 9.45 a.m. will be Early Years Music with Nicole

Ross ? ?Bring your little one to move and groove through expressive music-making and movement.?

?The intention of Discovery Days are they are free of charge programs, so kind of a sneak peek for people to come and experience the Aurora Cultural Centre education programs, what is happening in there, and [meet] the artists,? says Sorahitalab. ?It's a chance to see their work and?speak with the artists directly and ask questions. It's an opportunity for us to show who we are, to show the community what we do ? a face-to-face communication ? and it's a busy, but very exciting time!?

For more on these and other offerings from the Aurora Cultural Centre, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca.

By Brock Weir