

Monday's Family Day celebrations focus on Olympics and 'warriors within'?



By Brock Weir

Countless Aurorans since Friday have either gotten up at the crack of dawn, pulled an all-nighter, or settled into some primetime viewing, celebrating Canada's winter warriors as they contend for the gold in Sochi.

On Monday, however, residents will have plenty of time to celebrate the 'warriors within' as Aurora's Family Day celebrations turn to the Winter Olympics and next year's Pan Am Games.

Aurora's annual Arctic Adventure at Town Park will have a distinctly Olympic feel. Running from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Mosley and Wells Street landmark, Olympic-themed activities will include a hockey shoot-out, snow shoeing, miniature snow-tubing, ice fishing, mini golf and broomball.

According to organizers, participants can collect stamps on event passports and, once they have completed all activities, they can win a prize.

Live entertainment, including the traditional First Nations presentation, will also be on hand - as will Beaver Tails, hot dogs, hamburgers, chili, coffee, and hot chocolate.

If Mother Nature cooperates, plans also include outdoor skating, professional ice carving with a live igloo building demonstration, which culminates at 1 p.m. with the Battle of the Chainsaws, featuring two professional ice carvers going head to head - or saw to saw - to complete entire ice sculptures in just 30 minutes.

All Arctic Adventure activities are free, but parking is limited so arrive early!

While a free family skate will be held from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex, the Aurora Cultural Centre will turn on the heat, 'IGNITEing' a celebration in honour of Toronto's PAN AM 2015.

At 1 p.m. the Cultural Centre will host the first in what promises to be a long string of programming, honouring the wealth of cultures in North and South America as part of the Pan Am Games' IGNITE program.

Free for everyone, the afternoon will include the drumming, music and visual arts of Brazil, including a special demonstration of capoeira and martial arts.

"We are going to be demonstrating an Afro-Brazilian warrior dance to remind us of the warrior spirit and the warrior within," says Dean Gyler, a martial artist who prefers to be known as Instructor Soquete, a name given to him by his own martial arts teacher, in honour of the history of capoeira."

Soquete, a native of Australia who came to Canada in 2010 to teach in Aurora, was first exposed to capoeira through the 90s action flick called "Only The Strong", which featured the fusion of fighting and dance.

"It is such an amazing fusion of acrobatics and martial arts and music, song and culture," he says. It is just something which resonated with me and I have been training since 1997. The drumming is an amazing orchestra of percussion and instruments and it is a rhythm you can just feel from the inside out. It is quite primal and one of those things you just can't help but stick around and watch. It is a visually spectacular and enchanting thing to see and experience. It just draws you in."

The history of capoeira is uncertain, but most subscribe to the theory that after dancing by slaves was outlawed, but fighting was still permitted, it was developed as a covert way to continue their own rich traditions in the face of suppression.

"The only way they could communicate and share themselves was by sharing their art forms," says Soquete. "Life is short and in life we are easily overrun. This is something you need to be completely present for. I hope people enjoy the moment they are experiencing and if it creates an interest to find out further about Brazilian history or culture, that is an added bonus. We love to show how much we love this and share our passion."