

Mosaic Mural leaves colourful legacy of Canada 150



By Brock Weir

If you were one of the 400 Aurora residents who showed off their artistic flair last year painting a small tile to be a part of a larger picture, there's no rush. You have the next 25, 50, 100 years to find where it ended up.

A lasting legacy of last year's Canada 150 celebrations, Aurora's Canada 150 Mosaic was formally unveiled by Mayor Geoff Dawe at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex on Thursday night, an unveiling which not only brought together local dignitaries but also many of the community artists – amateur and professional – who took a brush to paint in order to make it a reality.

Aurora is one of 78 communities that took part in a cross-country mural project commemorating the sesquicentennial of Confederation last year.

The eight by twelve foot mural was spearheaded by a group of local artists and volunteers – Christine Valentini, Claire d'Aurore, Judy Sherman, Eva Folks and Eric McCartney – who not only brought the Mosaic opportunity to the attention of Aurora's Canada 150 Committee, but brainstormed various themes that could come together to speak to how Aurorans saw the community in the past, how they see it now, and how they see it in the future.

They finalized the concept and the general layout, but it was up to an Alberta-based company which came up with the idea of a cross-country network of murals, to guide the process over the finish line.

In a series of community painting parties last summer, participants were guided on the general colour themes their respective tiles should follow and how it might fit in with the whole.

The completed product, featuring depictions of the Hillary House National Historic Site, the Aurora Train Station, and other landmarks, was not known to the local project leads ahead of last week's unveiling.

But, before the Mayor did the honours, they eagerly shared their anticipation.

"It is very exciting to be here right now, now that it is finally here!!" shared Ms. Valentini. "I am looking forward to seeing it all together and hopefully we can step away far enough to see it!"

Added Ms. d'Aurore: "Like with any mosaic, you have to step back and get a full view. When it was first painted, we were looking at it up close. The team put it together, but we gave them the concept and Christine has worked diligently on it. It was a long journey and Christine started the journey. I am glad the whole town followed behind her."

In his remarks before the big reveal, Mayor Dawe paid tribute to the "dedicated group" who got the ball rolling on the project.

"It is really a great synopsis of what our residents feel and think about our Town," said Mayor Dawe. "It is going to be a great legacy and it is a great opportunity for us to leave a legacy that talks about the history of our Town, how our residents feel and think of our Town."

The mural's current location on the second floor of the Aurora Family Leisure Complex might not, as the Mayor noted, be its final location. While it will be the mural's home for the foreseeable future, other suggestions for a permanent location have been floated,

including having it take pride of place ? protected from the weather ? in a completed Library Square.

?Now, our next job is to play Where's Waldo?? Mayor Dawe concluded before the artists in attendance, young and young at heart, excitedly came up to the mural to point out their handiwork.

As they did, the volunteers who made it possible reflected on the project.

?It is amazing what the community can accomplish when they all get together, that they could all come up with something so beautiful,? said Ms. Valentini. ?It looks different from the original because [in the original concept] the sky was so plain, now it has all the images in it. This is the fun part when people come here and they will go and have to spend time trying to find theirs. It should be a lot of fun.?

In the end, that might be its lasting legacy as future generations come out to find the tiles their parents or grandparents contributed as a permanent tribute to this once-in-a-lifetime milestone.

?I am so glad we have a legacy for our town and everyone who participated,? said Mr. McCartney. ?it is a legacy for them and their family for decades to come, especially the people who participated, to say, ?Hey, my mom did that. My grandmother did that one.' They probably have pictures of what they did already, but when they come here and see it all together, picturing and pointing it out, it will mean a lot to that family.?

Added Ken Turriff, a member of the citizen-led Canada 150 committee: ?I think it is such a gorgeous mural and it will be great here, it will be great wherever it goes. I think it will be a legacy and be awe-inspired for many years and many generations to come, to see what we were thinking about, when people conceived of their individual times.

?I would like to see what the people around for Canada's 200th can do to top this in terms of a legacy project going forward. This one will be around in another 50 years and 100 years, and I would be so interested to see what the next generation would come up with to represent Canada 50 years from now.?