

Multicultural pride showcased at rebooted festival



By Brock Weir

Rain didn't stop Aurorans from turning out to celebrate its diversity on Saturday as Ada Johnson Park hosted the Town of Aurora's rebooted multicultural festival.

Based in large part on a similar program held in 2013 to celebrate Aurora's 150th Birthday, the party included performances and booths to showcase Chinese, Greek, Korean, Portuguese, Russian and South Asian cultures, along food trucks and barbeques to serve tasty exotic treats, henna body art and more.

The first in what is hope to be an annual Aurora tradition was spearheaded in large part by Councillor Harold Kim, the event became subject of social media discussion led by local businessman ? and former council candidate Anthony Pullano ? who criticized organizers for a lack of representation from the Italian-Canadian community in this go-round (See Page 4), but Councillor Kim said next year would be 100 per cent led by the public.

?I am ecstatic,? said Councillor Kim. ?It is the same feeling I had when I watched my first child being born: I felt like I did very little. Staff did almost all the work, but because it is Aurora's first event, and especially because the theme is multiculturalism, it is a lot to do.

?We have a survey that is going to be handed out during the Festival so I am really hoping that participants will give us some valuable feedback because it is pretty much going to be 100 per cent led by the public next year because there will be more time to do it and we have one year's experience to go by.?

In addition to Councillor Harold Kim, the event was attended by Councillors John Abel, Wendy Gaertner, Sandra Humfries, Tom Mrakas, Paul Pirri, and Michael Thompson.

Councillors Humfries and Pirri, who are both of Italian descent, said they were delighted with how the festival was unfolding.

?It is a fantastic opportunity for us to come out and celebrate the cultures that exist within Aurora,? said Councillor Pirri. ?Ultimately, this is an event about inclusion, so it is not about what cultures I want to see represented, it is about learning from other cultures and having Aurorans represented.?

Added Councillor Humfryes: ?By celebrating any heritages or any cultures we are learning more. It is really an amalgamated amazing event. How I see it is perhaps we couldn't fit every single culture in Aurora, but you get to come here and experience it and bring your own culture and share your backgrounds.?

As for the future, she said she had an idea for festivals to come: ?The next time, I would suggest everyone come and bring a table and just show your own culture as well as share your experiences as a neighbour, saying here's what we do, here is our dress, and it will be great.?