

Museum Mondays will offer behind-the-scenes look at Aurora's heritage

If history ever feels like it's stuck in the distant past, a new initiative from the Aurora Museum and Archives will prove it is anything but.

The Aurora Museum & Archives next month will launch a new season of its learning series, Museum Mondays.

With the first installment set for Monday, September 15, Museum Mondays will offer anyone aged 7 and up an "informal, insider's view of your community museum." Participants will receive a guided tour of ongoing exhibitions, a behind-the-scenes glimpse of collection and curation spaces, and an "Ask Me Anything" session with members of the Museum Team.

"Museum Mondays came about when we were really first getting to know Town Square before it even opened to the public and we were just quite amazed with all the new spaces that the museum has and our ability to exhibit more," says Michelle Johnson, Collections & Exhibitions Coordinator for the Town of Aurora.

The Aurora Museum & Archives and its various iterations over the years were traditionally housed at the historic Church Street School.

The Church Street School is now at the heart of the redeveloped Aurora Town Square, which includes a significant expansion of the heritage building, which has, in turn, significantly expanded the elbow-room in which the Museum has not only to showcase Aurora's history but preserve it as well.

"We thought it would be neat to give the public a guided tour of the spaces, but also show them some of the behind-the-scenes and let people know what the process was like of getting to move into this building, planning for our exhibitions and storage in the building, and really being able to provide that behind-the-scenes look we got to experience as a team," says Johnson.

"During the exhibition portion of the program, we'll guide people through and then once we get to the Collection room, we'll have some ideas about what we want to show. For example, when we ran one of these programs in November, we focused a lot on our military connection and artefacts, but it is really special to be able to take our lead from participants. There's always such a varied group and varied interest in terms of the people who attend. This is a really informal setting where they'll be able to ask questions and we're able to take our lead from what their interests may be."

Johnson notes that Museum Monday initiatives are open to all residents "ages seven to 99, so it is a great family experience that allows for intergenerational learning," and, if you're interested, all they ask is for you to book your space at aurora.ca/whatson and bring your curiosity with you.

"I think being curious and not being afraid to ask questions," she says of what she hopes participants bring to the table. "If there's something that they've always wanted to know a little bit more of in terms of local history or a specific time period, it's good to know that at the beginning of the program so we can think on it a bit and we're ready by the time we go into the storage area."

"It's always fascinating finding out what inspired people to attend the program and what their individual interests are. Often those things resonate with a larger population. Something we may have innocently overlooked in the collection, we could have a participant that might be a bit of an informal subject matter expert on a specific tool or item that's there and that's always fascinating for us. The learning process is definitely collaborative and it goes both ways. I think what we bring to the table is in terms of being able to provide access to the collection space and exhibitions and share the knowledge that we have, but we always learn such an incredible amount from those who show up, are engaged, and eager to participate in a program like this."

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