

Music, milestones and history on tap as Canada Day approaches

Music and milestones will be observed and celebrated across Aurora starting this week as National Indigenous History Month and Canada Day approach.

Iconic Canadian band Spoons will kick-start Canada Day celebrations with Dance in the Park on Tuesday, June 30, followed by a full day of celebrations beginning with the traditional Canada Day Parade on Yonge Street and the community celebration and fireworks that follows at Lambert Willson Park.

Before the party starts, however, poignant and sometimes difficult elements of our shared history will be explored at Town Park this Saturday, June 20, with Indigenous Storytelling & Live Music from 9 a.m. to 12 noon featuring oral traditions from Anishinaabe Grandmother Kim Wheatley and a concert from Dave Mowat & Trio.

Immerse yourself in the power of oral tradition as Grandmother Kim Wheatley, an Anishinaabe Knowledge Keeper, shares stories that illuminate culture, identity, and the enduring strength of Indigenous communities, say organizers of the morning's 9 a.m. start, marking National Indigenous History Month.

The concert follows at 11 a.m., blending tradition, artistry, and contemporary expression.

We're very, very fortunate to be able to have [Wheatley] with her storytelling, says Shelley Ware, Special Events Supervisor for the Town of Aurora. Storytelling for Indigenous culture is such an important ancestral tradition, and no matter how many times I've personally seen Grandmother Kim share her stories, there are always new layers that I learn. It's such an incredible experience. Dave and his band offer a very, very unique sound. He's a very talented artist with the kind of delivery we just don't seem to have around here. It's another unique and special experience that is coming to Aurora on Saturday.

As Grandmother Kim would say, she likes to plant seeds and seeds require effort to cultivate and grow. I really hope that as people leave the park on Saturday that not only will they have had an amazing experience.

Town Park will be a destination once again on Tuesday, June 30, when Canada Day celebrations kick off with Aurora's traditional Dance in the Park, headlined by Spoons.

Prominent entertainment will also be on stage at Lambert Willson Park on July 1 itself with a performance from 54-40 ahead of the evening's spectacular fireworks display.

Join us for one of the most memorable event in Aurora a celebration of our diversity, freedom, heritage, and strong sense of community, said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement. This year, we are thrilled to welcome two iconic Canadian bands the Spoons and 54-40 adding even more excitement to our celebration. There is no better place to celebrate than right here in Aurora Canada's Birthday Town where we show our pride for living in the greatest country in the world.

For Ware, bringing Spoons and 54-40 back to Aurora was very much by public demand.

We were very fortunate to have the Spoons several years ago at Ribfest. However, the night we had them it was such heavy, heavy rains. We didn't cancel, but clearly the weather had an impact on the audience, says Ware. This time, I think it's going to be a really intimate treat because of the landscape of Town Park.

Following Dance in the Park, celebrations shift to Yonge Street the next morning, Canada Day proper, with the Town's traditional Canada Day parade, which begins at 10 a.m. at Yonge and Murray Drive, heading north to Aurora Heights.

This year, we definitely have an increase in cultural groups and cultural performers, which is really nice because when we have

these groups at the Santa Under the Stars parade, their clothing has to change due to the weather ? but, in the summer, their textiles and movements can be so much more freeing. With it also being early in the morning, it's before any heat comes in, so the timing works very well.?

The party shifts to Lambert Willson Park, just behind the Aurora Family Leisure Complex in Industrial Parkway North, beginning at 11 a.m. with a full day of fun for the whole family.

In addition to the activities on the ground, the stage will come alive with performances from Cal Buckley at 11 a.m., a citizenship reaffirmation and cake-cutting ceremony at 12.15 p.m., Fiddlestix at 12.45 p.m., Tangent at 2.30 p.m., and, at 8.30 p.m., event headliner 54-40.

54-40 last performed in Aurora at the 2022 edition of Aurora's Ribfest and Ware says there has been a consistent demand for their return.

?Bring good weather,? says Ware to all those looking to attend these free attractions. ?Don't let your family and friends make plans elsewhere because Aurora is the place to be. Invite them over to this community so not only do they get to experience the full Aurora community in a group setting, but also the dynamic entertainment and amazing volunteers that pull it all together.?

For more information about the Canada Day lineup, visit aurora.ca/canadaday.

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