

New mosaic will highlight community unity, story



Inclusion, empowerment and belonging in sport will be the focus of a new community mosaic set to take shape at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex this Saturday, but these themes go far beyond the rink, pool or baseball diamond.

Residents will have the chance to leave their mark on the mosaic by painting its first tiles at the grand opening of the new SARC gymnasium, set for Saturday, April 5, beginning at 10 a.m.

The mosaic is an element of the Town of Aurora's Sport Plan and will be unveiled in its entirety at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex this fall as part of Culture Days.

Organizers are mum on the final image the mosaic will form, but urge creativity to abound at this weekend's painting opportunity, and at several other chances planned between now and the end of summer.

"One of the first activations in alignment with the Sport Plan is this mosaic mural activation called 'Unity on Canvas: Painting Our Community Story,'" says Hailey Jones of the Town of Aurora. "The mural is really a symbol of Aurora – our commitment to inclusion, belonging and empowerment in sport. The bigger picture is really being able to bring all members of our community, regardless of creed, background, immigration status, and all of those things, to be able to bring everybody together to collaborate between not only the Town, but local sport organizations, and community partners.

"It is really an opportunity to bring sport, recreation, arts and culture all together, especially on the heels of Aurora Town Square opening. The grand opening of the Desjardins Gymnasium will be the very first activation."

While the mosaic comes out of the Sport Plan, Jones stresses that what you paint doesn't have to be sports-related. It can be "anything that speaks to their identity, their journey – it's completely up to them."

"That's why we're calling it 'Unity on Canvas: Our Community's Story' [because] as individuals we are strong, but as a community we are even stronger. It's about bringing all of those pieces together and the recognition that we all have our own story, but together we make our community what it is," says Jones before elaborating on the unifying factor of sport.

"At the end of the day, sport is about more than competition. Sport builds community, it fosters leadership, it strengthens connections – this idea of bringing everybody together regardless of your age, regardless of who you are and all these other pieces, we can come together and create a sport culture in the community where everybody belongs. Culture, sport, art, recreation – all of these pieces are often seen in siloes and this is a very intentional approach to bring all of it together."

To be among the first to leave your mark on the mosaic, head over to this Saturday's SARC Gym grand-opening ceremony. Painting will take place throughout the day, but there are many different activities on tap from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For more, visit aurora.ca/sarcgym.

Additional painting opportunities will take place at a recreation job fair set for the SARC on May 7, a June 22 R.I.S.E. (Recreation Inclusion Supports and Engagement) meeting on June 22 at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex, Pride events in June and on select Saturday Aurora Farmers' Market days throughout the summer.

“The goal is to engage with over 300 residents to build this mural,” says Jones. “It really speaks to the work we're doing in the Sport Plan and in the Sport Plan – it's not just the Town's, it's not just the local sporting organizations, but it is for everybody. It's really keeping that front and centre to say that we are united as we move forward and this is an opportunity for people who maybe don't identify with a sport, or maybe don't identify as an athlete or coach, to be a part of this positive movement.”

By Brock Weir