

Wednesday concert will offer audience taste of history they never learned in school?

On stage with his trio, Dave Mowat is an accomplished Blues performer with a passion for the post-war music of the 40s and 50s.

History is a thread in the other sphere of his life, too, as Chief of Alderville First Nation.

Both come together next Wednesday, June 21, as Mowat will be on stage at Aurora's Town Park for a free public concert to mark National Indigenous People's Day.

As much as it will be a musical celebration, it will be an education for many as Mowat aims to offer audiences a taste of the history they never learned in school.

"I am looking forward to it," Chief Mowat says of the upcoming gig. "I'm bringing Clayton Yates and Terry Wilkins with me, we're all veteran players and combined we probably have 125 years of experience, giving the flavour of music and I look forward to reiterate as briefly as possible some important history; history that helped grow up what became Canada, the history of the Anishinabek peoples that helped them to open up what became Ontario, and a history of what eventually became Canada in 1867."

Aurora, says Mowat, is part of the land covered by the Williams Treaties and that will be a springboard for some of the conversations set for June 21.

"We're bringing a couple of wampum belts to explain what the wampum means and how it relates to the earlier, pre-colonial history of this area and we work that into the presentation and then make the jump into our music. I want to offer a taste of the history our kids aren't learning in school, but it is enshrined in those early wampum belts. It's an oral tradition of peace agreements. One belt I wish to bring is the 1764 Great Belt of the Covenant Chain. It encompasses when the British met with the Anishinabek nations of the Great Lakes region to secure peace after the Seven Years War.

"That's an important wampum belt because it's an early ratification of the Royal Proclamation. I hope to impart, as brief as it will be, some knowledge to the audience and teach them about Canadian and Ontario history that they have never heard of before."

Speaking to The Auroran about his upcoming gig as wildfires raged across the country, he said the impact of the fires was uppermost in his mind during National Indigenous Peoples' Month. June 21, National Indigenous People's Day, is the summer solstice, a very important time of year when all the new life has been born into this world and the plants and animals are finding new footing.

"I feel saddened by the fact everyone is talking about the poor air quality and Toronto's air index is really bad and all the effect on people, but nobody is talking about the impact on animals, especially because the denning animals and the small animals have just been born. The impact on the ground over a large geographic area is probably something that we're not going to really realize until after the fires go out. It's a difficult time in our history.

"I am saddened by the fact that a lot of this has to do with human impact. Here we are, celebrating Indigenous History Month but keeping our eye to what's happening to our world. It's burning up right now. I am troubled by the impact human kind is having on our resources, having on the animal kingdom, and having on our quality of life and health. It's just something that is mind-boggling. While it is an important month and it is an important time of our year, even on the Indigenous calendar, what's happening in the world and what's happening around us is very, very troubling for me."

The Dave Mowat Trio and Band, which takes over the bandshell from 7 to 9 p.m., isn't the only event being hosted by the Town of Aurora to mark the Day. In conjunction with the concert, a new trail marker created by Indigenous artist Donald Chretien will be unveiled at Town Park. It will complement a similar trail marker symbolizing the bee unveiled in the popular green space last year.

For more information, visit aurora.ca.

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