

## Williams alumni invited to walk down Memory Lane as school prepares for move

Generations of Aurorans have walked down the halls of Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School since it opened on Dunning Avenue in 1952.

As the Williams community prepares to move to its new school building at Bayview Avenue and Spring Farm in time for the 2025-2026 school year, alumni are invited back to Dunning this May to make some final memories before the new chapter begins.

The Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School Celebration: Honouring History & Memories One Last Time will take place May 30 at 39 Dunning from 6 - 8 p.m.

It will feature rooms dedicated to each decade the campus has welcomed students, memorabilia including some from the Aurora Museum & Archives to showcase its history, and performances throughout both the site and the evening by the current crop of Williams students.

For some of the staff, it has been quite emotional, says Williams Principal Andrew Gazaneo. We have some staff who started teaching in this building, stuck around, and have been here 15 or 20 years.

Speaking to The Auroran this month, it happened to be a day when some teachers brand-new to the Williams community, had just started to welcome students.

There is a wide variety of teachers, but there is a lot of love for this space, Gazaneo continued. It has had many iterations, it has had many additions and renovations over the years. As well, I think there is a lot of anticipation [around the reunion] and in a newer building because an old building like this has its flaws; it's got its mice, so I think a lot of the staff are looking forward to something new, but it's bittersweet.

This is a feeling shared by Jessica Pin, an educator who is relatively new to the Williams community. Pin has been immersed in the school's history as she leads students in the creation of the 2024-2025 yearbook and says she has been amazed by the connection that people have to this building.

I can't believe the amount of people who want to really come back and see the building and the connections they have, says Pin. I wasn't expecting that, and how many people from the Williams community still keep contact, still talk about this building as being such an integral part of their identity, their past, and [a source of] some of their fondest memories. That, for me, has been really amazing.

Integral in helping the reunion take shape has been former Aurora councillor and Public Education trustee Bob McRoberts, himself a retired Williams teacher whose roots with the school go back generations.

We will have the Arts on full display on May 30 brass music, flutes, and string ensembles playing throughout the building, there will be student artwork on full display, and we will have lots of student volunteers providing tours, says Gazaneo of what he describes as an informal gathering. Some of the key classrooms that are very meaningful will be open and we will have students and volunteers in those spaces as well.

There will even be an opportunity for alumni to take home a piece of history.

From what I understand, because we have back office full of older yearbooks, they are going to be available for sale, says Pin. Former alumni who may not have been able to get their yearbook in the past will be available to purchase them.

As the Williams community prepares to say goodbye to 39 Dunning at the end of the school year in June, they are very much

looking ahead to forging new memories in their new space.

Gazaneo says the York Region District School Board will maintain ownership of the current building, which could then become Board offices and an adult education centre under a new name in due course.

**By Brock Weir**