

Youth show artistic flair for Aurora's heritage in upcoming exhibition



By Brock Weir

Amid a sea of crumpled clear packing tape, shoeboxes, fabric swatches, sewing needles, and a few hockey jerseys thrown into the mix for contrast, students are dabbling in Aurora's past and present.

This is the scene in the classroom of Sherri Richardson at Hartman Public School as students put their creativity to the test as just one group of students from across Aurora gearing up for the first Youth Art Exhibition hosted by Aurora's Heritage Advisory Committee.

Youth up to the age of 18 are invited to create their own vision of Aurora's past and present for the upcoming show which opens Saturday, June 7 at the Aurora Cultural Centre.



While registrations are being accepted by the Town through May 30, Ms. Richardson's students, who have become very familiar with Aurora's heritage over the past year or two, have had something of a head start.

Forming bodies out of materials close at hand, students Brendon Macras and Myles Vasilevski are busy working on displays that will show off their old hockey jerseys. Brendon and Myles have both been active on the ice since the age of three and, to them, this is what Aurora is all about.

"I want people to learn what the old jerseys look like and how Aurora is a sporty community," says Myles. "We have been around for a long, long time and people have been playing sports since the start of Aurora."

While they are looking at how Aurorans have played over the years, others are looking at how Aurorans worked and moved around before the advent of cars. Hunter Wong, for instance, is working on a transportation showcase showing the evolution of movement around Aurora.

He got his inspiration, he said, from a unit they did on horse-drawn carriages the previous year and he decided to show transportation from past to present.



The transition from past to present is also a highlight in the paintings of Amal Mukadam, who is painting grey and brown streetscapes of the past to contrast with the vibrant streetscapes of today.

‘I love painting,’ she says. ‘This is one of my favourite things and I like the contrast of colour and putting them together.’

Colour is also something Richard Wang is working with. Using the packing tape, he is making life models of his own hands and arms. When all is said and done, each arm will be painted a different colour, joining hands in a cluster at the centre to show the diversity that typifies Aurora today.

Mahma Ahmed, on the other hand, is reviving something of an old fashioned craft for her project, making a quilted wall hanging showing the evolution of Hartman from the one-room school house which now stands on Wellington Street at Berczy to the modern school of today.

‘I just think quilting is fun to do with all the colours and being able to make it yourself,’ she says. ‘Not a lot of people quilt, so it is unique.’



As the kids sprawl out around the floor and on the desks with their respective projects, Ms. Richardson looks on with pride as they put what they have learned into practice. Ms. Richardson helped spearhead a recent initiative on local history which has now been adopted by the province into a permanent unit entitled Communities In Canada: Past and Present.

‘Students had no idea there was so much history here in Aurora,’ she says. ‘The question is how are they going to impact the history and what is their role in the whole community? That is why I am giving them free rein here. This is great for me as a teacher because I know they actually did learn something about Aurora and a lot has stayed with them.’

‘You have a curriculum that is not in a textbook that is steps from your door.’