

Canada 150 legacy taking shape ? one square at a time



By Brock Weir

Flex that creative muscle this week by adding your own unique square to Aurora's Canada 150 legacy project.

The first tiles, which will come together to form Aurora's Canada 150 Mosaic mural, will be ready to paint beginning this Friday, September 8 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Aurora Town Hall and the whole community is invited to take part.

A second painting session will take place the following day, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Town Park (inside the Armoury) in conjunction with Aurora's Multicultural Festival.

In all, 600 tiles will need to be filled in to create the 8 foot by 12 foot mural, which is being spearheaded by local artists Claire D'Aurore, Eva Folks, Judy Sherman, and Christine Valentini, along with Eric McCartney, and Aurora's Canada 150 Ad Hoc Committee.

Once completed, the mural will feature landmarks such as the Hillary House National Historic Site, the Aurora GO Station, trumpeter swans, which were restored into Ontario by Aurora resident Harry Lumsden, and reminders of Aurora's legacy as Canada's Birthday Town.

“The Committee worked together with a very passionate group of local artists and each of them put together their thoughts, their rationales and their justification for what they thought were important landmarks to feature within the mosaic,” says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. “All of those were put together and ultimately the Canada 150 committee blended in the themes that would best serve the end product. The trumpeter swans is one project that Auroran Harry Lumsden actually helped save. The Hillary House is a national historic landmark. The train station has always been a popular landmark in Aurora and then, of course, Aurora's Canada Birthday Town incorporated into it.

“With something like this, there could have been 100 things included but with the structure of the mural we had to come up with one core concept and only a couple of secondary images to fill it in. We were slightly limited in the creative process, but it was done in collaboration.”

The artists have been working hard to make this happen since first proposing their idea to Council this past winter. Intended to be part of a Canada-wide network of mosaics, each serving to be a focal point of public art in their respective communities, it is an ambitious legacy project and one which, at least in Aurora, almost didn't happen.

Whether or not it could go forward was contingent on funding and, at first, this funding was not available. However, a planned Military Tattoo to commemorate the Canada 150 Commemorations ultimately fell through for various reasons and the money allocated to that project allowed for an \$18,000 infusion into the Mosaic project.

The project was first brought to local attention by artist Christine Valentini who, after a chance encounter with a niece just returning from a mural painting project, delved deeper into the vision.

“I thought it was a perfect match for what we were talking about,” said Ms. Valentini, once the project was approved. “We were thinking about doing a mural of our own at one point and this, I thought, was a good way of getting people involved, children involved, and have a legacy in Aurora that people can participate in.”

From those initial seeds of inspiration, a garden of ideas ? and enthusiastic advocates ? began to take root. The number of interested artists snowballed, and realtor Eric McCartney got involved to help then navigate through the proper channels of bureaucracy. Now, those waters are calmed and it is time to crack out the paint brushes.

Aurora aims to get 300 tiles painted on Friday, with the balance painted on Saturday.

Once completed, the hard part will be deciding where it will ultimately be displayed.

Some of the participating artists, including Ms. Sherman, have suggested the perfect place would be whatever is ultimately created in Library Square, but it will be contingent on the look, weight, and, in the end, Council's decision.

?Our locations might rotate between facilities, but it will be a piece that requires an installation,? says Ms. Ware.

Registration to paint a tile at either of the sessions is not required, but registration will ensure you do indeed receive a tile. Register by visiting aurora.ca/mosaic150.