

Church Street School Cultural Centre – operating as the Aurora Cultural Centre

Executive Director's Q3 2013 Managerial Commentary

Intended to accompany the Centre's July to September 2013 Third Quarter financial statements.

Highlights – 2013 Third Quarter

- 11 Instructional Programs Running during Q3
- 5,349 Visits during Q3 / 18,307 visits Jan to end Q3
- 319.5 Operational Volunteer Hours during Q3
- 538 Governance Volunteer Hours during Q3
- 27 Facility Rentals during Q3
- Town of Aurora – Aurora Room June 18 – Nov 8/13
- One of 24 non-profit organizations across Canada to be granted approval to use the Imagine Canada Trustmark



December 13, 2013

PROGRAMMING Q3 2013

TOTAL Q3 Programs = 34

Our programs are enjoying the support of a large number of participants. We are committed to presenting top quality cultural programming for our community. The Centre has produced 119 programs from Jan to end Sept.

Art Exhibitions Q3 = 7 [19 to end September]

The Art Gallery program forms a major part of our operational plan to make the Cultural Centre accessible to everyone. All galleries are open free for the public to explore, be inspired and learn from. The exhibitions are changed regularly with great variety. The Centre provides a mix of free, by donation and registered/ticketed events.

Watch for more exciting exhibitions during Q4 !

June 17 – August 28 Centre & youth: <i>My Aurora! 150 Youth – 150 Years</i>	Great Hall Gallery
June 17 – August 28 Karen Merk: <i>Jennifer Boksmans Photos of Thailand</i>	Reception Gallery
June 18 – Aug 24 Centre’s art students’ work: <i>A Child’s Self Portrait</i>	Red Gallery
June 24 – August 26 Bowie, Aston & Tong: <i>Playing House; Making Home</i>	Blue Gallery
August 27 – October 15 Mikko & Greg Locke: <i>Abstractions</i>	Red, Blue & Reception Galleries
August 29 – October 21 Michelle van Nie & Robin Burnett: <i>Memory as a Landscape</i>	Great Hall Galleries

Heritage Displays of Artifacts Q3 = 2 [8 to end June]

The Aurora Historical Society has a glass case for the display of artifacts from *The Aurora Collection* located at the front reception desk area. As well, the Centre has developed our “*Community as Curator*” program where Aurora citizens, organizations and businesses are invited to display their artifacts and collections throughout the year also at the front reception area.

To assist the Town of Aurora in its 150th birthday celebrations, the Aurora Room housed the Town and Aurora Historical Society’s 150th display of artifacts from The Aurora Collection (“*Aurora Collects*”) from June 19 to November 8th. Beginning January 2014 the Aurora Room Gallery will be devoted solely to the display of artifacts from The Aurora Collection.

May 6 – August 27 125 Years of Double Blue: <i>Aurora’s First High School Through the Decades</i> - Artifact Display	Community as Curator: <i>Dr. G. W. Williams Secondary School</i> Reception Display Case
September 4 – December 16 Caruso & Company: <i>Celebrating 100 years in Aurora</i>	Community as Curator: <i>Caruso & Company</i> Reception Display Case
June 1 – November Aurora Historical Society – <i>50 Years of Heritage</i>	<i>Aurora Historical Society</i> Reception Display Case
January – to date Church Street School Artifacts	<i>Aurora Historical Society</i> Library Room Display
June 19 – November 8 <i>Aurora Collects: Revealing 150 Years of our Shared History</i>	<i>Town of Aurora & Aurora Historical Society</i> Aurora Room Gallery

Concerts Q3 = 0 [9 to end September]

We did not schedule concerts over this softer summer concert schedule. Rather, we focussed on growing our summer instructional programs.

Special Community Events Q3 = 14 [27 to end June]

Community events are initiated by the Centre, partnered by the Centre with other groups, or the Centre provides the location for a community event facility rental. However it comes about, a community event always welcomes the community into the facility for a special activity; often at no charge.

July 1	<i>Canada Day and opening reception of Aurora Collects: Revealing 150 Years of our Shared History</i>
July 13	<i>Summer at the Centre programs, gallery openings & community activities – 160 people attended</i>
August 17	<i>Doors Open Aurora – 353 visitors</i>
August 8	<i>Aurora Historical Society Celebrates 50 Years event</i>
September 7	<i>Meet the Artist in the Gallery: Miiko in Blue & Red Galleries</i>
September 12	<i>Meet the Artist in the Gallery: Michelle van Nie in Great Hall Gallery</i>
September 14	<i>Meet the Artist in the Gallery: Robin Burnett in Great Hall Gallery</i>
September 19	<i>Artist Lecture: Miiko & Greg Locke “Breaking the Rules”</i>
September 21	<i>Meet the Artist in the Gallery: Greg Locke in Red & Blue Galleries</i>
September 12	<i>Kevin Leung Piano Quartet Concert (rental)</i>
September 28	<i>Culture Days events; galleries, community art project, film-making workshop - 138 people attended</i>

Heritage Lectures [3 to end June]

Heritage lectures are now offered by the Aurora Historical Society at Hillary House. Please check their website for details. www.aurorahistoricalociety.ca

Summer Instructional Arts Programs Q3 = 11 [41 to end September]

This summer the Centre was the recipient of a *Young Canada Works* grant to assist with the hiring of one summer student. This student had just completed her first year of University working towards a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degree. We were thrilled to hire this enthusiastic and talented young woman to design our summer children’s arts program. In July we hired a second student who was ready to begin her first year of a BFA in September. Together these hardworking young women created and ran a very successful summer of almost sold out programs for children at the Centre. After a brief test run in summer of 2012, we ascertained that there was an appetite in the community for week-long, half day children’s art programs in the summer. 2013 represented the Centre’s first year of running a full four season program slate. This summer our 4 – 6 year olds program had a 93% fill rate with 74 registrations. Our 7 – 11 years olds had an 89% fill rate of 107 registrations. Overall our summer children’s programs filled to 91% of capacity. An excellent base from which to grow and learn!

Young Artist Studio Mornings for weeks of: July 15, 29, Aug 12, 19	Ages 4 - 6 74 registered
Mixed Media Mash-up Afternoons for weeks of: July 8, 15, 22, 29 August 12, 19	Ages 7 - 12 107 registered
September 18 1 day workshop: Watercolours for Absolute Beginners	Ages 16+ 10 registered

Total Q3 registrations were 191. Our fall instructional programs began September 23 and will be reported on in the last quarterly report for 2013.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION Q3

Community participation flows through everything that happens at the Centre.

*With **5,349** visits in the Third Quarter of 2013, - up 42% over Q3 2012 and **18,307** visits January to end September this year – up 3% over YTD 2012, it is clear that the community is enjoying participating at their cultural centre.*

The third quarter of 2013 offered some inspiring community engagements of note. Here is just a taste!

- In July the Centre was very pleased to see the opening of Aurora Collects exhibition in the Aurora Room. The artifacts and timeline presented a snap shot of the collection and the development of the town.
- On July 13th we had a great afternoon during our Summer Launch Party where we held receptions for 3 new gallery exhibitions including the Centre’s own 150th activity *My Aurora: 150 Youth/150 Years* photo and creative writing exhibition. We decorated Great Hall with bunting and hung the 150th youth exhibition with pride. We provided an all ages community heritage activity, the Aurora Historical Society had the 150th display open and our Board of Directors encouraged visitors to celebrate by ringing the school’s newly refurbished, but original bell. 160 people came out on a summer weekend to join us.
- Our MP Lois Brown visited the Centre to make some announcements, then went downstairs to our children’s summer programs and met the student who had benefited from the *Young Canada Works* funding and spent time a happy time getting “hands on” with the children and their art projects.
- Every Friday afternoon during July and August we enjoyed hosting *Spotlight Theatre* as they rented Brevik Hall to showcase their summer camps end of week recitals to a full house of parents. We were busy with our own end of week summer activities and the schoolhouse was buzzing on all three floors with young people and their families.

- This summer one could often find our showing artists in the galleries where they would greet the public and speak about their work and anything else of interest to our visitors. We also had a well attended arts lecture by two artists. These programs are free to the public and are an example of the Centre partnering with creative people to provide interesting cultural and educational experiences for our visitors.
- The big event of August was *Doors Open Aurora* where we had lots of activities to be experienced by visitors. It was a busy day with 353 people through the doors.
- September brought a different kind of “busy” at the Centre. Gone were the children filling the daytime hours and our evenings began to get busier as people came back from summer vacation. We had a well received 1 day painting workshop for “absolute beginners”, a daytime lecture, artists in the gallery, interesting rentals, the Aurora Community Band is back for rehearsals, of and course – CULTURE DAYS.
- Culture Days is a national initiative where free culture activities are underway right across Canada. In Aurora we partner with the Aurora Cultural Roundtable where the Public Library, Aurora Historical Society, Aurora Farmers’ Market and the Centre work together to create offerings at our various sites that are complementary and occur throughout the weekend. This is a growing celebration that gets bigger each year.
- September also means the beginning of the fall schedule of instructional programs that run 4 and 8 weeks from September 23 to November 18th throughout the Centre.

OUR VOLUNTEERS Q3

Volunteers are another important measure of community participation at the Centre. Our volunteers donate thousands of hours of their time. All ages offer to volunteer at the Centre in operations; including couples and families volunteering together. We are always happy to welcome more people to our volunteer team. We offer a thorough orientation and interesting volunteer opportunities. Our Board of Directors and citizens sitting on occasional ad hoc committees donate a huge number of hours to the governance of the Centre. We simply could not operate the Centre without our dedicated volunteer force.

VOLUNTEERS donated a total of 857.5 hours July to end Sept 2013 [3,618.5 hrs donated to end Sept]

Operational Volunteers TOTAL hours donated Q3	319.5 hours (not including Board Of Directors)
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Governance Volunteers Board of Directors (12 members + Mayor Dawe) TOTAL hours donated Q3	538 hours
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FACILITY RENTALS – AN INDICATOR OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION Q3

Facility Rentals bring large numbers of diverse community groups and organizations to the Centre where we are able to further engage them with culture. We are seeing more and more return bookings from happy users.

- Facility Rentals = 26* bookings Q3 [144 bookings to end September]
*These are in *addition* to the rental noted in the **Community Events** section of this report. (= 27 rentals total)

We continue to have long term, standing rental relationships with the following organizations:

- Quilters of York Region
- Society of York Region Artists (SOYRA)
- York Region Arts Council (YRAC)
- Aurora Community Band
- Pine Tree Potters
- Theatre Starts
- Aurora Farmers' Market
- Spotlight Theatre
- Aurora Performing Arts (Wave Theatre)
- York Region Children's Chorus

Some interesting bookings of note in Q3 were:

- York Region Finance Department
- York Regional Environmental Services – public information sessions
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Sandgate Women's Shelter
- Kerry's Place Autism Services
- Wellness Seminar
- Windfall Ecology
- Private rental - birthday party
- Private rental - classical piano concert

... and of course our regular monthly bookings for SOYRA and the Aurora Community Band.

PARTNERSHIPS Q3

Partnerships are an integral programming component for the Centre.

In the first nine months of 2013 we are proud to have worked with:

- Aurora High School
- Town of Aurora
- Aurora Farmers' Market
- York Region Arts Council
- Aurora Community Band
- Aurora Historical Society
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Theatre Starts Inc
- artists, writers, performers, lecturers
- Sacred Heart High School
- Society of York Region Artists (SOYRA)
- Pine Tree Potters
- Dr. G. W. Williams High School
- York Region District School Board
- Austrian Consulate
- Rickard Banjos

- Bonsai Hill Tea
- Priestly Demolition
- Aurora Cultural Roundtable
- Culture Days
- Caruso & Company
- Disal Contracting
- Apple Suites
- Backyard Pools & Spas

FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES Q3

The Fund Development Committee of the Board of Directors has spent several months researching and preparing a detailed activity plan for the Centre's upcoming Fund Development Program for 2013 and 2014. This multi-layered approach to fundraising is ambitious. Now that the Centre is operating in a more secure environment with a strong relationship with the Town of Aurora, we have been able to build a fund development plan and a strategy to activate it.

We did it! Aurora Cultural Centre Awarded Trustmark Distinction Through Imagine Canada

The Centre was one of only 24 successful non-profit organizations (out of a field of over 75 applicants across Canada) granted approval to use the **Imagine Canada Trustmark** by achieving thorough compliance of a rigorous set of standards in five key areas:

- Financial Accountability & Transparency
- Board Governance
- Fundraising
- Staff Management
- Volunteer Involvement.

The Centre now proudly joins a select group of only 45 non-profit organizations nationwide working at this recognized level of excellence; organizations such as Save the Children Canada, The Canadian Diabetes Association and World Vision.

We are thrilled with this gold standard recognition of our practices and our ability to bear the coveted "Trustmark".



Currently the Centre is in the midst of launching its *Friends of the Centre* program which includes levels of support from \$50 to \$1,000+ with corresponding benefits

100% of the Board of Directors has supported the Friends Program.

Our *Business Partners* and *Event Sponsorship* programs are also newly underway.

ON GOING FUNDRAISING INITIATIVES

- Friends of the Centre program
- Concert & Event Sponsorship opportunities
- Business Partner opportunities
- Fundraising events

SUMMATION

This was an exciting summer for the Centre. The robust environment of “our” 181 summer kids, which became even greater every Friday as the *Spotlight Theatre* kids joined us, was a bit of an “awakening” for us, and quiet Aurora summers have now become a thing of the past for the Centre. It was wonderful to mentor and watch our two summer students grow and develop over the course of a VERY busy summer. We look forward to continued success next summer.

We also enjoyed celebrating with the Town and its residents, the 150th birthday celebrations. Our windows were decorated and the Great Hall Gallery was super cheerful with its bunting and youthful artistic creations on display.

We anticipate another highly successful year for the Centre will come to a close on December 31, 2013.

Laura Schembri
Executive Director
Aurora Cultural Centre

December 13, 2013

