

Meeting with icon benefits charity event

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Sometimes dreams really do come true.

Ever since Brian O'Sullivan discovered Bruce Cockburn's music back in the 1970s, he's wanted to meet the iconic Canadian singer/songwriter.

Last month, he did.

The 58-year-old Stouffville musician "volunteered with great excitement" to get Cockburn to autograph a guitar that will be auctioned off during the ArtsCan Benefit concert Sept. 20 at the Parkview Village auditorium.

O'Sullivan, along with his wife Deborah, took the donated acoustic guitar to Parry Sound where Cockburn was playing a concert.

The night before the show, while sitting around the campfire of a local lodge with other Cockburn fans, O'Sullivan pulled out the guitar, had it anointed with the sacred fire and played some songs.

One of those tunes was Cockburn's Silver Wheels. The following night, Cockburn opened his show with that very song.

But before he took to the stage, the O'Sullivans met with the singer/songwriter.

O'Sullivan wasn't quite sure what to expect at the pre-arranged meeting and thought when they arrived at the venue, a roadie might take the guitar from them, get it signed by Cockburn and promptly return it to them. However, that was not the case.

The couple was invited into the venue's green room and spent 30 minutes with Cockburn discussing music, mutual friends, including



Bruce Cockburn (right) and Brian O'Sullivan.

Stouffville's Marie-Lynn Hammond, among other things.

"Tongue tied. It was huge, this huge moment," O'Sullivan said.

"It's been a dream of mine my whole life to meet Bruce Cockburn, to say thank you and how much his music has meant to me my whole life," he said.

O'Sullivan heard Cockburn could be a bit stand-offish with people but he found him to be a "quiet, gentle person".

"I'm not expecting a dinner invitation. I wouldn't want that because he's a busy man," he said.

Cockburn's three-year-old daughter, Iona, was also around during the meeting.

O'Sullivan's wife, an audiologist, who also makes story beads as a hobby, made one for Iona with a lion in it, which represented her favourite song by her father - Wondering Where the Lions Are.

Later that day, while the O'Sullivans walked around downtown Parry Sound, they saw Iona with her nanny and clutched in the little girl's hand were the story beads.

The idea to have Cockburn sign the guitar came about while Jim Priebe, the event's organizer and Mike Burns, the co-organizer, were making plans for this year's ArtsCan benefit.

For each of the first two fundraisers, Long and McQuade donated a guitar that was raffled off at the show.

Burns suggested, according to Priebe, this time they get a high profile musician to sign it in hopes of raising more money for the charity.

ArtsCan Circle, the event's beneficiary, links artists with Canada's at-risk indigenous youth in the hopes of increasing their self-esteem.

As Priebe was already in contact with Cockburn's manager via social media, he thought he'd asked if his client would be interested in signing the guitar.

There is more to this year's ArtsCan benefit show than the guitar raffle. Musicians will also perform, including The Marion Drexler Band, The Albert Street Four, Brian Gladstone and Burns.

Admission is pay what you can, with all proceeds going to ArtsCan Circle.

For more information and reservations for the ArtsCan benefit concert, email jim@canadian-rootsradio.ca

PEACE ON AGENDA

For the second year in a row, the ArtsCan show is being held in conjunction with the Stouffville Peace Festival, which runs from Sept. 16 to 21.

Events taking place during the festival include a staged reading of Einstein's Gift by Theatre of the Beat, Sept. 16 at Nineteen on the Park.

The arts' centre is also where Omar, a 2014 Norwegian peace film winner, will be screened Sept. 17.

There will be two labyrinth walks. One takes place Sept. 19, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the Parkview Village auditorium. The other is Sept. 20, 2 to 4 p.m. at the Legacy Center, 9 Lobraico Lane, Whitchurch-Stouffville. (See page 27.)

A panel discussion with writer and humanitarian Dr. James Orbinski and Stephen Scharper, a professor in the University of Toronto's school of environment. It will be moderated by Stouffville's Dr. Jane Philpott and take place in the Parkview Village auditorium, Sept. 21.

The 2014 Stouffville peace prize will also be handed out to Grade 10 Stouffville District Secondary School civics and 20th century history students.

For more information on the Peace Festival, go to www.facebook.com/StouffvillePeaceFest

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