

Local author offers 'fifty shades of green' with sci-fi adventures

By Brock Weir

Inspiration can strike people in the strangest places, and at the strangest times. For Aurora resident Brian Horeck, the commonplace sighting of a few water bugs doing the backstroke in a minnow trap started turning the gears on an unlikely career path.

Now, the Sudbury native, who once saw high school English as the enemy, is a best-selling sci-fi author and will be bringing his Northern Ontario stories to a hometown crowd at this Sunday's annual Aurora Chamber Street Festival.

'They look like aliens,' was one of Horeck's first thoughts when he cleaned out that fateful minnow trap but, as the creative mind went to work, he pondered, 'What if they actually were?'

His first novel, 'Minnow Trap', focuses on a Northern Ontario summer where three long-time fishing buddies stumble onto some strange happenings 'and critters' at one of their favourite haunts. Soon, they are in a nightmare not only with extra-terrestrial life, but international intrigue.

'English being my worst subject, I hand wrote my chapters and went to the computer to try typing, which I had to try with just one finger,' he laughs. 'I went to my late wife, who I lost just as I finished writing the book, and I got the book out with her help.'

With his first book typed up and ready to go, he set about on a rather unconventional marketing campaign, self-publishing the book and advertising it on billboards scattered along the Ontario stretch of the Trans-Canada Highway. Giving away little more than 'Minnow Trap' was coming, it got people pondering just what 'Minnow Trap' was.

Soon, Horeck found out that it is a little bit harder than he anticipated to get word out on a self-published novel, but he was confident they would sell, a confidence bolstered by his sure knowledge he had a good story behind him.

'The hardest part is convincing yourself that you have a product,' he says. 'You have to make a first impression and you only have one chance. I know I am not the best writer and I had that going against me, but I had to get sales up there. I did my best with a run of 3,000 copies. I got them out there and I couldn't believe how they were selling!'

Even at that point, Horeck didn't necessarily see himself as an author and gave little thought to writing a second book but after 'Minnow Trap' got out there, he heard from readers wanting more. Before coming up with a sequel to his debut novel, he published 'Frozen Beneath,' a second novel set in Northern Ontario exploring a meteorite crash.

Only, it's not a meteorite crash. A spacecraft has taken a nosedive into a frozen lake, a craft carrying space tourists. Naturally, chaos ensues when hunters Kevin and John delve deeper into just what is sitting at the bottom of the lake.

'I know the books before I write them,' he said, adding he's always looking for authenticity. 'I went ice fishing and watched for everything my friends said or did to pick up stuff, whether they accidentally lost the slush scoop through the ice trying to clean the hole up, or dropped their cell phone down. I want people to relate to it and think, 'I feel like I am out there with my buddies.' I want to relate to people and be real in what is happening. I see tens of thousands of vehicles going up the 400 with ATVs, snowmobiles and boats behind them and they just want to get up to God's country just to relax, fish, hike and I want to write to them.'

For example, once up in God's country, he happened to be in a store and overheard one of the locals refer to urbanites as 'Citiotis,' That, of course, made it into the book 'only now they are a target audience!'

'I read everything now, even romance to get some ideas,' he says. 'With Minnow Trap 2, I am getting a bit of feedback that it is '50 Shades of Green' with a little something going on there with an alien who is in human form and rather appealing to the men. Now, my Grade 10 English teacher showed up at a book signing at Chapters in Sudbury and she said she had to make sure she saw me in person, saying that the Brian she knew never even read a book let alone wrote a book. She couldn't believe it, so you just never know!'

'I felt I was the only person to tell that story.'

For more on Brian Horeck, stop by his booth at Sunday's Aurora Street Festival from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., or visit www.brianhoreck.ca.