

Creativity comes together for Ontario Public Libraries week



Student Eric Shoesmith's beautiful photo of a national park in Nova Scotia was the winner of this year's One Book One Aurora photography contest hosted by the Aurora Public Library and The Auroran Newspaper, the theme of which was "Shoot the Land"

By Brock Weir

Public libraries provide spaces for the community to 'live and breathe,' according to Bruce Gorman, CEO of the Aurora Public Library, and this is the message he brought to patrons and dignitaries last week to mark Ontario Public Library week.

But you first have to make take that all-important initial step through their doors to get to know the Aurora Public Library (APL). Indeed, the theme for this year's Ontario Public Library Week, which was marked October 14 - 20, was 'A Visit Will Get You Thinking' and the APL's Open House on October 15 provided plenty of food for thought.

'I have been in the library business for quite a while and events and opportunities like this are great for libraries, advocacy and telling people what we can do,' said Mr. Gorman to a crowd that included Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa, up-and-coming local singer-songwriter Louisa Barbosa, who provided the evening's entertainment, and representatives from the AIDS Committee of York Region, Pathway Community Services of York Region, the Women's Centre of York Region, and the York Regional Police's Diversity & Cultural Resources unit. 'In the past, I think a lot of people do still have this old perception of Library, how you can't talk in a library and how you can only come in and get books, but actually libraries are really agile. We move and change with the communities as they change, or we would become irrelevant.'

You didn't have to look far to see this change in action. Renovations are currently underway at APL to provide new community spaces, which Mr. Gorman called 'the spaces that people need to live and breathe.'

'Whatever capacity they can use the library, there are not many spaces like that where people can go to and make it their own space, whether it is a living room, or whether you're coming in to discuss business with a colleague, whether you bring your family in to undertake some STEM programming in our children's area, and a whole host of other things,' said Mr. Gorman. 'That is my mission in my career to make sure everybody gets to know how great libraries are, how fast we move, how agile we are, and this is a great opportunity to talk about this.'

In a lighthearted speech to the assembled, Mr. Parsa took a moment to acknowledge the agility of a public library.

'I used to use the public library for various reasons, to be honest with you, just going in there reading books and I went on a lot of dates at the public library,' he said. 'It was a great way to meet people, not very expensive, and I could show off some of the books I had read! I used to take them to that section where I would know three or four of the books and say, 'You ought to try that.' It's a little bit different for today's generation!'

Switching gears, he added: 'On behalf of the Government of Ontario, it is with great pleasure that I extend warm greetings and

congratulations to the Aurora Public Library on the annual open house celebrating Ontario Library Week. A library is not just a building full of books, it is rather a gateway to thousands of worlds. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the importance of libraries and all the services they provide to communities all over the Province.?

Local creativity in its many forms was recognized throughout the evening. Outside of Ms. Barbosa's concert, which featured a Brazilian bossa- nova and original songs entitled 'Good Kid' and 'Circle' awards were handed out for the top place finishers in a photo contest co-hosted by Aurora Public Library and The Auroran, along with the winner of the Library's Writing Contest, both of which were based around themes in this year's One Book One Aurora reading selection.

University student Eric Shoesmith took home top honours ? and movie passes ? with his beautiful photo that captured the assigned theme 'Shoot The Land' while John Thompson's story 'Little Man' took home top literary honours.

'Every year, the Aurora Public Library selects one book we think everybody should read,' said Reccia Mandelcorn, Manager of Community Collaboration for the APL, explaining this year's selection, Strangers with the Same Dream, whose opening line, 'This story begins with a lie' formed the basis of the writing contest.

'This speech does not begin with a lie,' continued Elizabeth Bishenden, one of three community readers judging this year's writing contest. 'This begins with an honest truth: the stories that were offered were fantastic. They all started with a lovely spark of imagination and true craftsmanship to complete a story. I probably had the best three days of reading, of stories from my own community. It was a delight. Little Man is a story that just breaks your heart. Golly, it is such a well-imagined story!'