

Music and family are themes that help guide One Book One Aurora 2022

Music, which transcends language barriers, has brought people together since our ancestors sounded the first notes.

It connects people in a powerful way, sometimes in ways we find hard to understand. In *Swimming Back to Trout River*, the debut novel of Linda Rui Feng that was recently selected by the Aurora Public Library to form the basis of its One Book One Aurora campaign, it "connects characters through space and time."

The power of music is one of the many themes local readers will be asked to consider while reading the book and participating in 10 months of programs made possible by the community and inspired by the author's words.

"*Swimming Back to Trout River* has themes of family, art, culture, music, immigration, and all of that will spark discussion and provide lots of opportunities for programming that will enrich the readers' experience," says Reccia Mandelcorn, Manager of Community Collaboration for the Aurora Public Library (APL). "I personally really love that it afforded a perspective on history through a literary lens."

Swimming Back to Trout River, which was critically acclaimed upon its release, begins in a small Chinese village the summer of 1986, centred on Junie, whose emigre parents to North America promise to collect her by her 12th birthday. Four interwoven stories come together to share a slice of the immigrant experience "and secrets we keep from ourselves and others."

"There was another reason I chose the book," Ms. Mandelcorn adds. "We have a growing population in Aurora of community members whose original country was China. They may not be the first immigrants, but they have family members and history that go back. I hope this selection will invite participation and maybe even some collaborative programming from our community of Chinese descent."

The pick is already bearing fruit.

Poet, photographer and journalist Yafang Shi, for instance, has come on board to curate a powerful art exhibition (currently virtual) entitled "Women's Voices, Censorship & Resistance" to go along with the community reads initiative.

"When she came back from China a couple of years ago, she had some of her work censored when she was there and she actually faced some censorship when she came back to York Region," Ms. Mandelcorn explains. "She started to do a series of photographs of beautiful flowers against barbed wire, against fences, blanketed by shading. When we started to put together the program, she offered her exhibit to be a part of it, along with reading one of her pieces of poetry."

"We have also partnered with the York Chamber Ensemble for a performance of *The Lovers Concerto*, hopefully live in our Library Living Room, on Saturday, October 1. This is a piece with violin and keyboard and it is from two Chinese composers "a beautiful piece. The violin has a prominent role in the novel. This is something that, again, pulls from the themes of the novel and I think the public will be just so delighted when they hopefully come in and see this live performance."

In addition to consuming these expressions of art, participants will have the opportunity to get their own creative juices flowing through writing and photography contests inspired by *Swimming Back to Trout River*.

The theme of "family" is one that figures prominently in APL's writing contest, while photographers will be challenged to submit their own photos capturing how they see the power of music.

"Family plays a really important role in this," says Ms. Mandelcorn, touching upon themes of immigration, secrets, trauma, love and betrayal. "In our APL writers' group, there are a lot of stories that come out, fictionalized versions sometimes, of people's past history. Family is a very interesting theme. It could be your family as real, it could be imagined, in any genre you want."

"We challenge photographers to capture the power of music and performance through photography. It can even be that they're listening to music while they're taking an image. They could be at Concerts in the Park, they could be anywhere, as long as it is related to music. I also thought this would be a really good contest because we have opened up in the last two years not only an adult category but also a youth category for ages 14 ? 17 and thought music would be something that young people are involved with; it is part of their lives, and that might inspire a younger generation."

This is just a sample of some of the programming inspired by Swimming Back to Trout River that will roll out across Aurora through 2022.

An up-to-date list of programs can be found at onebookoneaurora.com and if you have any ideas for community programs of your own, Ms. Mandelcorn wants to hear from you at rmandelcorn@aurorapl.ca.

"One Book One Aurora is led by the Library but it is owed by the community," she says. "We really do encourage community involvement. Let's work together!"

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter