

Dancing and author's talk to round out 2022 One Book One Aurora program



Over the course of 2022, book lovers across Aurora have been enjoying *Swimming Back to Trout River*, the debut novel of Linda Rui Feng.

The story follows five-year-old Junie in the wake of China's Cultural Revolution.

Taking readers from the present, to the past, and back again, the evocative story has sparked a community-wide dialogue, with events ranging from An Evening with Jan Wong, live performances in the Library's Living Room space, writing and photography contests, writing workshops and more.

Now, the program is set to culminate this month with further cultural performances and a virtual event with the author herself.

"The Cultural Revolution is the backdrop to the novel and the fall programming [at the end of September] was An Evening with Jan Wong, an award-winning journalist and bestselling author speaking about her experiences in China and her work as a foreign correspondent with China in the late 80s and early 90s," says Reccia Mandelcorn, Manager of Community Collaboration for the Aurora Public Library, who also spearheads the One Book One Aurora (OBOA) campaign.

"It was fascinating to hear what it was like to witness the 1989 massacre at Tiananmen Square. She was watching from the balcony and to hear her perspective on current political relations, including the detention of the two Michaels?the audience was very well-informed and they asked fabulous questions that really sparked an amazing conversation."

Partnerships have been "essential" to the OBOA campaign, she said, and one such key partnership was with the York Chamber Ensemble, which performed earlier this month at the Library with the orchestra and soloist Joyce Lai taking on the *Butterfly Lovers Concerto*.

"Our living room was packed and the audience was absolutely transformed by the magic of the performance," says Ms. Mandelcorn. "What I loved was seeing all the children, many of whom were enjoying their first experience of classical music. There was one little boy who was underneath the staircase dancing. Who would expect somebody would be dancing to a classical performance?"

When you invite a community to go down a common literary path, perhaps the unexpected is the only thing that can be expected as each reader will have different takeaways from what is on the page.

"*Going Back to Trout River* offered rich opportunities for programming with its themes of politics, immigration, family and music," says Ms. Mandelcorn, adding that programming will continue this Saturday, October 15, with *The Art of Chinese Dance*, performed by The Mellow Sisters & Tian Shu Art Group, a non-profit art group that supports Chinese culture and promotes multiculturalism,

with this set of artists sharing cultural experience through both dance and vocals.

The 2022 One Book One Aurora campaign will conclude next Saturday, October 22, with a virtual question and answer session with Rui Feng over Zoom. The talk is set to begin at 2 p.m.

?Guests will meet the author and get a fascinating glimpse into the events that shaped this powerful book,? says Ms. Mandelcorn. ?Come online and meet Linda. She's fascinating, she's an academic, storyteller, novelist, and to talk about the book? I know that many people are anxious to meet her because they loved this book, but I think this will be an experience for people who haven't read the book, because they will leave with something positive.?

And, in the end, that's what it is all about: leaving a positive legacy and always keeping an eye on what books might continue to unite the community through the written word.

?The OBOA project is supported by the Library but it is owned by the community and every year we invite book clubs to sign on to receive copies of the book to discuss at their meetings and what was really exciting this year is the number of book clubs has grown from a couple when we first started to nine this year, and each has between five and 25 members. This is not including the casual book clubs but registered book clubs that are reading. That was very exciting.

?This year's selection, *Going Back to Trout River*, it offered rich opportunities for programming with its themes of politics, immigration, family, music. If anyone has a great title in mind for next year's selection, I hope [the community] will contact me at rmandelcorn@aurorapl.ca. Authors have to be in commuting distance to Aurora. We hope that we will be back to an in-person format next year. The book needs to have themes we can draw upon to enlarge the reading experience through programming and contests. I'm looking for ideas.?

For more information on this weekend's performances, to register for next Saturday's book talk, or take part in ongoing virtual programming, visit onebookoneaurora.com.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter