

One Book One Aurora culminates with words and music



By Brock Weir

The living room of the Aurora Public Library was filled with eager readers on Saturday as author Kim Echlin and pianist Paul Neufeld came together for the grand finale of the One Book One Aurora campaign.

Ms. Echlin's novel, *Under the Visible Life*, was chosen as the centrepiece of the 2016 program which aimed to get all of Aurora reading from the same page and circulating copies of the book through small lending libraries around Town.

It was the first time a book by Ms. Echlin had been chosen for a One Book campaign, an initiative picking up steam across the country, and she too was eager to share the experience with local readers.

"When I looked online and saw my book in the book boxes and imagined the whole community reading the book at the same time, it just felt like such a privilege," she said. "I thank you for participating in this way. It is unusual, but we talk about what Netflix movies we're watching but we don't talk as communities about books as much as we used to. It really is a great privilege to be a part of this."

Many of those gathered in the Library's living room space were already familiar with the book, which follows the distinct but intersecting lives of two women united by music. Speaking to the audience, Ms. Echlin gave readers a behind-the-scenes look at the evolution of the book, which was, in part, born out of her fascination with Ontario laws oppressive to women, which were not repealed until the late 1960s.

"Every woman I know would get arrested under this law!" she joked, referring to the legislation where women could be arrested for being 'incorrigible,' a word which gave lawmakers plenty of wiggle room to enforce. "It could be applied between a woman and the judge with no one else present, so people were very vulnerable to the interpretation of this law, which was broad to begin with."

Her interest was compounded by her discovery that just a decade after Ontario repealed the archaic Female Refuges act, similar laws were being handed down in Pakistan governing "a women's morality." This parallel intrigued Ms. Echlin, and she dove deeper.

"There are things all around us that we often don't see and feel, but we don't know how to know them," she said. "Through storytelling we begin to feel them in a different way. This book is about the things that are under the surfaces that we may feel but may not be consciously able to articulate. It is an art form that does very well with exploring this kind of thing."

Since One Book One Aurora launched this spring, the APL and the community have spearheaded a number of initiatives and tie-ins to engage Aurora at large. Jan Freedman of Jan's Country Pantry, a mainstay of the Aurora Farmers' Market, for instance, created two specialty products for One Book One Aurora, which proved exceptionally popular. The Library hosted a panel discussion with community leaders on "The Changing Face of Canada", held writing and photography contests, hosted Amnesty International and their own Tuesday Philosophy Club in discussions and workshops, and partnered with community organizations for a series of concerts.

"This is the third year we're doing it and this year has totally flown and it has flown because of the community connections Aurora

has,? said APL's Reccia Mandelcorn. ?The Library started this but a one book project doesn't really work unless everybody chips in. This has been led by the Library, embraced and programmed and attended and discussed by the community, so this is a celebration of the Library, of One Book One Aurora, the magnificent story of Under the Visible Life by Kim Echlin and the Aurora community, who make things happen all the time in mysterious and exciting ways.?