

One Book One Aurora gets cooking with community partnerships, opportunities

This past winter, the Aurora Public Library announced Sheila Murray's novel, *Finding Edward*, as this year's selection for One Book One Aurora 2023, an initiative that aims to get all of Aurora reading from the same page.

Since its launch, scores of local residents have delved into the gripping story of Cyril Roundtree, a Jamaican man who emigrated to Toronto in 1912 and begins to navigate his way through the implications of being racialized in a challenging new land and an unexpected journey he takes after finding a mysterious suitcase of photos and letters from the 1920s.

The book has, in recent months, found a big following in local book clubs and at the Library where free copies of the book are available to borrow, read, and either return to the Library or pass along to another reader.

And, as the campaign reaches its crescendo this fall, the community is stepping up to embrace the story of *Finding Edward* with initiatives of their own.

"I have never had such amazing feedback," says Reccia Mandelcorn, Manager of Community Collaboration for the Aurora Public Library, on what she's heard from book clubs. "The uptake in reading has been one of the most amazing reading experiences I have had and this is our tenth year, so that means a lot. I think it speaks to the book. It's an important book because it talks about Black History, it talks about Canada, but it talks about it in a fictional narrative, so although you're learning a lot, you're taken away by the mystery and the story."

Local readers have the summer months to catch up on the book if they haven't done so already as fall will be jam-packed with opportunities to delve deeper.

Aurora author Marni McGuire, for instance, will host a writing workshop this fall called "Finding Creative Spirit in History" where she will combine prompts based on historical sources that will invite the writer to connect with an ancestor, real or imagined.

"Marni's writing process uses all the senses," says Mandelcorn. "I have taken a lot of workshops at several universities and writing groups and what Marni does is unlike any workshop I have ever experienced."

Registration for *Finding Creative Spirit in History* opens August 1.

Also open for registration on August 1 is an engaging talk led by local historian Jacqueline Stuart, who has written several books on Aurora's history.

"Jackie is the most amazing historian and keeper of knowledge in Aurora," says Mandelcorn. "For all of our programs, we take threads from the book and how we can apply it. Because *Finding Edward* is about tracing one's ancestors, I started to think about early Aurora. We all come from different places, we're all multicultural, but Aurora has a lot of stories that are untold as well."

"She's doing a workshop that is a take-off on *Finding Edward* called *Finding Home*. She's going to take us back in time to Aurora in the early 20th century and tell us some stories of people who face various challenges and either overcame them and, as she said, either lived happily ever after, or survived but not necessarily happily! That's Jackie's humour and engagement coming through in her description."

Finding Home will take place at APL on Thursday, September 21, at 7 p.m.

The following week, the sounds of Reggae will ring out through APL's "Living Room" space when Newmarket musician Glenn Marais takes to the stage with percussionist and vocalist Craig Reilly on Saturday, September 30, at 2 p.m.

Additionally, the flavours of Jamaica will be yours to discover as APL collaborates with the Aurora Black Community (ABC) and ABC founder Phiona Durrant on a collection of recipes originating in the Caribbean.

?I asked Phiona if she would be interested in working through the ABC to share some recipes from her home,? says Mandelcorn. ?I asked her for more than just the recipes; I asked her if she would share stories about the recipes as to why they were important to her, and some anecdotes. We're now gathering that together and will be putting out a little cookbook so we can experience some of the food in Jamaica, which I think will be really interesting. She sent me a few pictures and they're totally to drool over!?

The more groups APL can bring together over the themes in Finding Edward the better, Mandelcorn adds, noting she's open to all pitches from the community.

For more information on One Book One Aurora 2023 and its associated programming, visit onebookoneaurora.com, and stay tuned for more on the Grand Finale with author Sheila Murray this October.

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