

One Book One Aurora is built by the community: Library

One Book One Aurora is led by the Aurora Public Library (APL), but owned by the community ? and this year's selection, Finding Edward, has no shortage of themes to engage the community in the months ahead, according to APL's Reccia Mandelcorn, Manager of Community Collaboration.

One Book One Aurora (OBOA) aims to start a community-wide conversation around a particular book and, as announced last month in The Auroran, this year's selection is the novel Finding Edward by Sheila Murray.

Finding Edward centres on Cyril Rowntree, a Jamaican immigrant to Canada who, in the midst of navigating an unfamiliar country, goes on a journey of discovery spurred by photographs and documents dating back nearly a century.

?What's really important to me is the telling of the historical experience of Black people in Canada, narratives that bring people into a mystery, so you're going to have factual information but you're swept into the magic of storytelling ? and I think that's what Sheila Murray has done so amazingly in this book,? says Mandelcorn. ?She's presenting the facts, but in an accessible and compelling way that invites the reader to engage and learn more about history and the present of Black people in Canada through the characters.

?It has substance, it has breadth, it has interest, and it has lots of programming possibilities.?

But, at the end of the day, programming is up to the community ? the secret of OBOA's success leading up to this, it's tenth anniversary season.

?This is the 10th anniversary of OBOA and that's a very significant anniversary,? says Mandelcorn, noting the community has taken increased ownership in the programming with each passing year. ?A lot of the programs I like to leave to the community because the success of OBOA is it might be led by the Library but it is owned by the community.

?We know we're going to have a writing workshop with author Marnie McGuire, but we're also working with community groups like the Aurora Black Community, the Newmarket African Caribbean Canadian Association (NACCA) and the Aurora Black Caucus and they will be deciding the kinds of programs that they would like to have. As an example, I was speaking with the ABC and we were talking about bringing food into the programming because food really unites people.

?Since the main protagonist hero is from Jamaica, we're going to be bringing cooking into the programming, we're looking at music ? NACCA is bringing in their youth group to work on programming so some of that is still going to be a surprise to me because it will be the community that will be planning it and we will be facilitating it. It is still in development and if any organization wishes to contribute to the project, it could be in the Library, it could be at their facility or even online. We have a few months to put together an amazing fall schedule of programming.?

Additional programs include a writing contest hosted by the Library inviting writers to consider the theme of social justice, while a photo contest sponsored by The Auroran will invite photographers to ?inquire as to a sense of place in their photos ? because of the immigrant experience, it can be in your own backyard, it could be in your travels,? says Mandelcorn, and both contests have adult and youth categories.

Having read and loved Finding Edward, Mandelcorn says she hopes readers absorb the history, look at our present-day environment and see how much has changed ? and what has not ? in the century of time contained within its pages.

?I hope people kind of look at this society that we're building and realize that a lot of this isn't just history; in fact, some of the history will be new to them ? but this is an ongoing process of welcoming and encouraging diversity, supporting each other as community and as a country. You only do that when you become more aware of your history. They say you learn from your past to know where you're going and I hope that's what this project takes on.

?If you're a reader, you know part of the joy of reading is the experience and talking about it. If you've read a really good book, you want to share it, you want to develop ideas, you want to talk about your ideas, you want to get somebody else's take. You want to recommend it to other people who are excited about reading. There's the sharing of reading. You may want to come to a music event and you may never have read the book at all. You might be interested in food, but you're not a reader ? but you will learn about the stories of some of the recipes that are from Jamaica, and enjoy that, and maybe you'll start to read the book after. We always try to balance it out ? both for readers and for people who like experiential learning that may not be in a book. It's all part of the process of coming together with the idea of sharing ideas.?

For more about One Book One Aurora 2023, visit onebookoneaurora.com.

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