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Local author reads her children?s book exploring Canadian Black history

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Dufferin County residents had the opportunity to learn about a commonly forgotten story in Canadian Black History from a local author, focused on highlighting the experiences of people of colour.

The Museum of Dufferin (MoD), hosted local author and educator Suzette Daley on Saturday (Feb. 22) for two reading sessions of her children's book The Lucie and Thornton Blackburn Story.

The book follows the real-life story of Lucie and Thornton Blackburn, two freedom seekers who escaped enslavement in Kentucky and later founded Toronto's first taxi company, The City. After their deaths, the duo left behind a legacy of entrepreneurship, community and anti-slavery activism, which led Thornton and Lucie to be designated as ?persons of national historic significance? by the Government of Canada in 1999.

?It's important for me to highlight their story, their journey, their resilience and perseverance and what they've done for Canada over the years. It's also to highlight a story that has been undiscovered for many people,? said Daley.

Daley was first introduced to the Blackburn story through the books I've Got a Home in Glory Land by Karolyn Smardz Frost and Trailblazers by Tiyahna Ridley-Padmore. After reading both books, Daley began writing her own version of the true story, but this time with a focus on regaling it to children.

?As an educator I wanted the younger generation to have a nice snapshot of these two stories. I created my book to tell it without giving them too much information,? she explained.

Shelburne resident Janine Rose and her eight-year-old daughter Emma, were among the individuals who attended the reading sessions at the Museum of Dufferin.

?She comes home [from school] with so much information about different cultures, and I don't feel like we had as much exposure,? said Rose, about attending the event. ?It's good to have more knowledge and understanding of the different aspects in the community.?

Marcia Ortiz and her friend Ann Maree Day also attended the reading and noted they'd never heard the story of Lucie and Thornton Blackburn.

?It really is an awesome to hear the story of these two people and what they built,? said Ortiz.

Speaking with the Free Press, Daley concluded that she hopes by sharing Lucie and Thornton's story that younger generations understand resilience and perseverance.

?If a couple coming all the way from Kentucky with nothing can come to Canada and start a taxi company we now celebrate today, then anything is possible,? said Daley.