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Shelburne Public Library hosts renowned author, shares recommended read of the week

?We are not makers of history; we are made by history? ?Martin Luther King Jr.

This past weekend the Shelburne Public Library had the great privilege of partnering with Small Town Big Ideas, BookLore and the Museum of Dufferin to host Antonio Michael Downing, one of Canada's most powerful new authors and host of CBC's The Next Chapter.

In conversation with Shannon McGrady, CEO of the Shelburne Public Library, Antonio Michael explored the themes of race, identity and belonging, woven throughout his debut novel, Black Cherokee. He reminded us that our history and the stories and experiences of our ancestors shape us; and at times, can even haunt us. Through his work, Antonio Michael challenges his readers to consider how multifaceted we are and why it is so important to accept others in all their facets of being.

The conversation was deep yet hopeful. It encouraged us to think, to question, to ponder, to pause. Libraries (and museums) are the perfect places to have such civil discourse.

As one of Shannon's favourite writers once said ??Libraries are bastions of democracy and oxygen for the life of the mind, which is our single most ferocious frontier of resistance to inequality and injustice.? ?Maria Popova.

If you haven't had a chance to read Black Cherokee or Antonio Michael's memoir ? Saga Boy ? place a hold today and be sure to follow Small Town Big Ideas for more great events.

Recommended Read of the Week

The Shelburne Public Library's staff pick of the week, selected by Molly, is Black Cherokee.

This is the first book I've read by this author and after the first few pages, I slowed way down to savor it. Told between the 90s to mid-aughts from the perspective of Ophelia Blue Rivers, I was immediately drawn in because I also lived in South Carolina at the same time.

To say I was ignorant of the area's history is a profound understatement. In Black Cherokee, Downing winds a fictional (but historic) river tale of South Carolina around his readers in order to deliver a deeply North American story; coming of age in a time of great division. Ophelia moves through her family and she is moved around by them, but she tries to remind herself how she is connected through them. I was impressed by Downing's adept writing of female characters, and how he showed their greatness through their human faults. This book brings together two things I'm passionate about: truth and learning through ancestral narrative.

-This weekly article was submitted by the team at the Shelburne Public Library.