

# “Chasing Painted Horses” is 2021 One Book One Aurora pick



Contributed photo

Author Drew Hayden Taylor penned “Chasing Painted Horses”, this year’s selection for One Book One Aurora.

**BY BROCK WEIR**  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

As he headed in the direction of a fairground attraction, five-year-old Drew Hayden Taylor stopped in his tracks to look at a small horse taking his fellow youngsters for a “ride” in small circles.

It was tethered in place, limited to that circle, day in and day out.

“It just looked down and never looked up,” Hayden Taylor recalls decades later. “Even as a little kid, it looked so sad to me.”

It may have just been a daytrip to Campbellford he took with his grandfather, but this takeaway was anything but.

Over the years, this horse has fuelled both his imagination and his creativity. Now, the resulting novel, Chasing Painted Horses, has been selected by the Aurora Public Library (APL) as its One Book One Aurora selection for 2021.

One Book One Aurora is APL’s initiative to get all of Aurora reading from the same page.

With multiple copies of the book ready to be released throughout the community over the coming months to be picked up, read, shared and passed on, it will form the centrepiece of a year’s worth of Library programming.

Chasing Painted Horses begins with Ralph Thomas who comes across graffiti of a horse in an alleyway.

“He recognizes the horse. A half-asleep Indigenous homeless man sees Ralph’s reaction to the horse and calls out to him. Over the course of a morning’s worth of hot coffee on a bitterly cold day, Ralph and the homeless man talk and Ralph remembers a troubling moment from his childhood when an odd little girl, Danielle, drew the most beautiful and intriguing horse on his mother’s Everything Wall, winning the competition set up for children on the Otter Lake Reserve.

“Ralph has lived with many questions that arose from his eleventh winter. What did the horse mean – to him, his sister, his best friend, and, most importantly, the girl who drew it? These questions have never left him.”

Nor has the story of the horse left Drew Hayden Taylor:

A resident of Curve Lake First Nation near Peterborough, Mr. Hayden Taylor has had a storied career as a writer. His credits include episodes of The Beachcombers, Street Legal, and North of 60, a number of novels, and short story collections.

Chasing Painted Horses began life as a short story in his collection “Fearless Warriors” under the title The Girl Who Loved Her Horses.

“It wasn’t happy just being a short story, so I wrote it into a one-act play for a young audience,” Hayden Taylor tells The Auroran. “It was my favourite thing I ever had the opportunity to write but, again, it still wasn’t happy being a one-act play for kids; it kept telling me it had more story there.”

Hayden Taylor didn’t start out wanting to be a novelist. In fact, he was often discouraged from writing by his mother and “oddly enough, my Grade 11 English teacher.”

“Growing up on the Reserve can be quite boring, so I read a lot and the more I read the more I realized I wanted to be a writer. I gave up wanting to be a writer and it wasn’t until I was in my 20s...that it wasn’t so much of me finding my art, but my art tracking me down and kicking me in the ass,” he says.

He started off writing magazine articles before turning to the film industry. He turned in his first television script at the age of 25, but didn’t really feel he had found his voice until his late 20s when his first play became a hit. He published his first novel nearly 15 years ago, with his second novel, Motorcycles & Sweetgrass, becoming a national hit.

“I never thought I was a novelist, that involves real effort – novels are like a marathon – but I realized I could write it and this story had been sitting in the back of my mind for so long that it eventually came forward and said, ‘Don’t forget us.’ So, I decided to blow the dust off the horse, Danielle and Ralph, sit down and just create their world once more and give them much more freedom, dimension and life.”

Now, this story, with its complete freedom, dimension and life, is set to become the heart of a community

conversation and Mr. Hayden-Taylor says the fact that “it was picked for something like [One Book One Aurora] that lets other people feel the resonance of what I felt from the story and wanted to share on a larger scale means so much to me.”

“Getting face-to-face, one-on-one interactions with [Aurora readers] is what I am most looking forward to,” he says about One Book One Aurora. “I hope they like the book and [I look forward to] learning what they liked about it. As a die-hard lover of reading books, as well as writing them, sitting down and talking about literature is just so much fun. A lot of people talk about movies, a lot of people talk about television... I do that, but I also like to talk about literature. I miss authors festivals and all my usual lectures where we get to talk about the wonders of Indigenous literature. I am very, very flattered.”

Drew Hayden Taylor has recently

completed work on a 13-part documentary series for APTN called “Going Native” and is presently working on a non-fiction book that will form the fourth installment of what he calls his “Me” series. Previous volumes include Me Funny, which “deconstructs” Indigenous humour; Me Sexy, which explores Indigenous sexuality, and Me Artsy, which looks at how Indigenous heritage influences art. The latest, Me Tomorrow, looks ahead.

“It is about Indigenous futurisms, where we will be in 10, 20, 50 years from now,” he says. “People are always thinking of Indigenous people, including ourselves, where we came from, what was lost, what we’re trying to get back, our connection to the past. I want to turn that lens around to see where we will be in 10, 20, 50 years.”

For more information about One Book One Aurora, including programming as it takes shape, visit [www.onebookoneaurora.com](http://www.onebookoneaurora.com).

**I don't really need help but I'm so scared because....**

- I might fall again.
- I keep forgetting and mixing up my pills.
- I can't even drive my car now.
- I'm taking up so much time every day from my Daughter and her family.
- I want to stay always in my home.

Living Assistance Services can help you right now at an affordable cost.

[www.laservices.ca](http://www.laservices.ca)  
Contact now Brian Porter, Director, for advice and help at 905.758.2486 (cell) or 416.483.0070 (office); or, [b.porter@laservices.ca](mailto:b.porter@laservices.ca)

華語服務客戶經理: Helen Huang  
華語: 416.880.6889 [h.huang@laservices.ca](mailto:h.huang@laservices.ca)

**LIVING ASSISTANCE services**

**HOME CARE FOR SENIORS**  
20 years of the best care for seniors

**Without care and support from a caregiver, I'm so scared for Mom because...**

- Mom will have a fall again.
- She can't remember her pills.
- She'll forget to turn off the stove again.
- Mom thinks that she can still do everything by herself.
- I need more time with my own family and my life every day.
- She wants always to stay in her home.

Living Assistance Services can help you right now at an affordable cost.

[www.laservices.ca](http://www.laservices.ca)  
Contact now Brian Porter, Director, for advice and help at 905.758.2486 (cell) or 416.483.0070 (office); or, [b.porter@laservices.ca](mailto:b.porter@laservices.ca)

華語服務客戶經理: Helen Huang  
華語: 416.880.6889 [h.huang@laservices.ca](mailto:h.huang@laservices.ca)

**LIVING ASSISTANCE services**

**HOME CARE FOR SENIORS**  
20 years of the best care for seniors

## Kempfenfelt

### W I N D O W S & D O O R S

**Voted #1, "AGAIN"**  
**20 Years in a ROW!**

- 100% Financing
- Free Estimates
- 0 Down

**SHOWROOM**    **905.895.1554**    **Lowest Prices Everyday!**

[kempfenfeltwindows.com](http://kempfenfeltwindows.com)    **569 Steven Crt #6**

The Signs You See Everywhere!