

Leacock publishes first online book

By Mark PavilonsEditorLocal Journalism Initiative

A Schomberg resident has penned his first book, a dream come true. Robin Leacock released *Evolo*, a young adult science fiction novel. The story is set in a dystopian future, where people live in fear of an apocalyptic event called the Last Day. The leaders in charge of keeping everyone safe create a new world to escape to, but suspicious events occur and secrets are exposed that call everything into question. Leacock explained that on a smaller scale, the story deals with themes of creativity, imagination and dreams, which "I think are all interesting concepts to explore, especially for young readers." In terms of the book's bigger picture, there's a lot of attention paid to what's real and what isn't, and whether or not the people in power are telling the truth. "So, you could say our real world inspired me to create this fictional one." Leacock said he's been writing as a hobby his entire life. "When I was a child, I would copy texts from books or magazines, typing away on my parents' typewriter, then go door-to-door selling my unintelligible 'news' to my neighbours for quarters." Writing and publishing a book became a goal of mine in high school. I wasn't a great student, but the only subject I cared about and got good grades in was English. Reading and writing were the only tasks that motivated me and became passions of mine. "Since then, he admits he's started and abandoned hundreds of stories. A couple years ago, his wife told him that if I really wanted to write and become an author, he would have to pick his best idea and go with it." She was right. That idea became *Evolo*, and publishing it definitely qualifies as a dream come true. "During the process, Leacock learned a lot about himself as a writer. "I learned about the importance of planning, and to not be afraid to let other people see my work. I found readers that I trust, who will give me their honest opinions and critiques. I've also learned that my community is extremely supportive." When it comes to the publishing process, he said he's learning something new every day. As a self-published author, he took on all of the marketing duties, which is fun but challenging. "I've also learned about printing and distribution costs, as well as the importance of building an audience. It's fair to say that I'll be doing a few things differently on the next go around." The most important thing I've learned is that this is what I want to do. Nothing has ever felt more rewarding or creatively fulfilling than publishing my first novel, and now I want to do it more." Leacock said he's been "pleasantly surprised" by the reception. He's heard from friends, family, former students of his and young readers. "They've all enjoyed different aspects of the book, whether it be the story's twists and turns, its characters, its setting or its message. I've also gotten some constructive criticism that I know will help me in the future." Fitz, the story's main character, struggles with social anxiety. To make matters worse, in the future in which he lives, the term "anxiety" has completely disappeared, so he's simply seen as a weird and awkward kid that no one understands. Fitz fights hard to overcome all of this. "I want young people to know that having social anxiety is normal. They need to know that they're not alone and that they can still live life to its fullest, even with their anxiety." He's already been asked about a sequel. While it's a possibility, his main goal now is to get the book into the hands of young readers. "The idea of a 13-year-old reader getting lost in the world I've created motivates me. I believe in the story and believe that young people will love it." I'm also looking to set up virtual Meets with English classes from GTA schools. I'd love to share my experience with students and encourage them to write and read. "Of course, he has "dozens" of ideas floating through his brain on a regular basis. "I'm ready to attack them all." *Evolo* is available on Amazon, in both paperback and Kindle formats. Leacock is an English teacher at École catholique Pape-François in Stouffville. He lives in Schomberg with his wife Andrea and their dog Milo.

