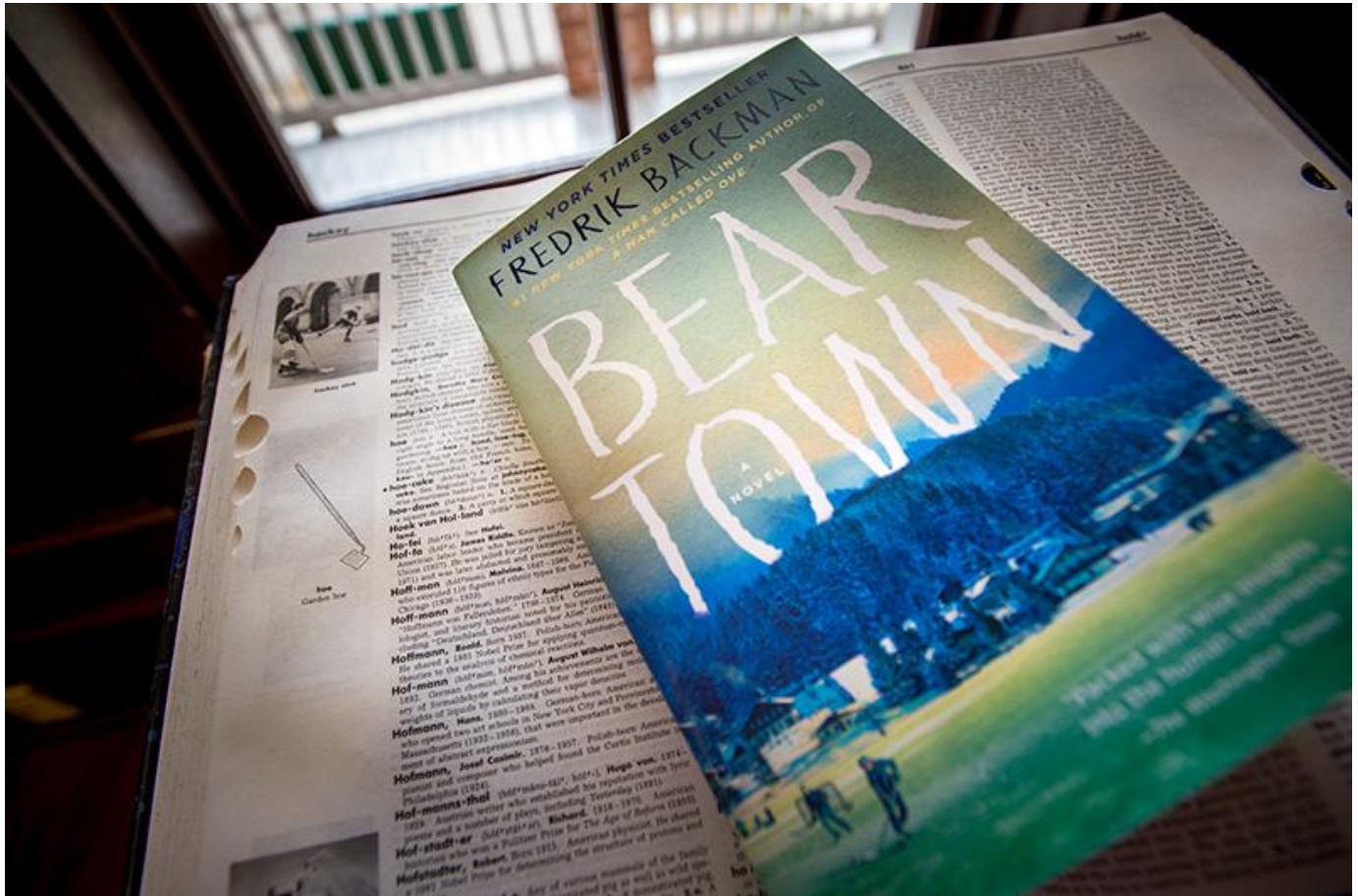


Reading Project opens dialogue about relationships, sexual assault

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Incoming first-year students can connect with Tulane faculty and peers while discussing *Beartown*, the 2018 Tulane Reading Project selection. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Beartown, the 2018 [Tulane Reading Project](#) selection, is a novel by Fredrik Backman (*A Man Called Ove*) that depicts a small forest town rocked by news of a violent act as the local junior ice hockey team prepares for a national competition. Incoming first-year students at Tulane will delve into the timely topics explored by the book—including social class, relationships and sexual assault.

“The mission of the project is to create a common intellectual experience for the incoming class,” said Jenna Burt, who coordinates the Tulane Reading Project as senior program coordinator of academic programs.

Beartown was selected for the project by a committee comprised of faculty, staff and students. The selection promises to foster dialogue on difficult subjects, like the devastating impact of sexual assault.

Each year’s selection is announced with a letter from Tulane’s president. When this selection was shared, President Fitts noted: “Tulane is currently engaged in a “Wave of Change” – a university-wide effort to eradicate sexual violence from our campus. As we contend with the challenge of shifting our culture, *Beartown* is a fitting medium to consider how our actions come to define our environment. As Backman reminds us, ‘What is a community? It is the sum total of our choices.’ For our first-year students embarking on their college careers, this project is a launch-pad to a lifetime of thinking critically about difficult issues like sexual violence.”

Students will examine the book’s themes together by taking part in faculty discussion groups, which will also provide them a chance to engage with faculty members before starting their first college courses.

The groups will be led by 46 faculty members representing different departments and disciplines on Thursday, Aug. 23, and Friday, Aug. 24, during [New Student Orientation](#).

Students can also attend the [2018 Kylene and Bradley Beers Reading Project keynote lecture](#) where activist and former NFL quarterback Don McPherson will lead a discussion titled, “Football to Feminism and the Blind Spot of Masculinity.”

The lecture takes place in McAlister Auditorium on Tuesday, Sept. 4, at 6 p.m.

McPherson, an advocate for the prevention of sexual and domestic violence, as well as an educator and entrepreneur, played for both the NFL and Canadian Football League.

“This was an exciting opportunity to bring in somebody to touch on the intersection between sports culture, toxic masculinity and feminism,” said Burt.

Copies of *Beartown* are available for purchase at the [Tulane University Bookstore](#) in the Lavin-Bernick Center on the uptown campus.

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