150 random facts about Canadian children’s literature

Barbara Reid
Creating Worlds of Wonder

When Worlds Collide
Meet Jason Chabot, Wesley King & Joel A. Sutherland

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Reviews of over 35 books by Karen Bass, Deborah Ellis, Jacques Goldstyn and Geraldo Valério
Who doesn’t love kids’ books?!!

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Margie Wolfe, publisher at Second Story Press, thanks those in attendance at a sold-out evening celebrated in her honour at The Acadian Court in Toronto this past October. The event helped raise funds for the Canadian Children’s Book Centre.

COVER: Illustration from When the Moon Comes written by Paul Harbridge and illustrated by Matt James. ©2017 Matt James. Used by permission of Tundra Books, a division of Penguin Random House Canada Limited. For more information visit www.penguinrandomhouse.ca

MEDIUM: Acrylic paint and India Ink on Masonite board.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR: Matt James is a painter, illustrator, and musician. His books have won many awards, including the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award and the Governor General’s Award. Picture books he’s illustrated include The Stone Thrower, The Pirate’s Bed, From There to Here, and the wintry When the Moon Comes (also shortlisted for the Governor General’s Award), written by Paul Harbridge. Matt lives in Toronto with his family.

As a Matter of Fact — A Lot Can Happen in 150 Years
A compilation of 150 intriguing and random facts about Canadian children’s literature.

News Roundup
In Memoriam: Jan Andrews, Sheila Koffman; Who’s Going Where? TD Canadian Children’s Book Week May 5-12, 2018; An Evening in Honour of Margie Wolfe; Joanne Fitzgerald Illustrator in Residence — Ashley Barron.

Keep Your Eye On... Jon-Erik Lappano

Profile: Barbara Reid
Through her acute powers of observation, attention to detail and variety of perspectives, Barbara Reid has the ability to transform the commonplace into something special.

Focus: When Worlds Collide
What do Jason Chabot, Wesley King and Joel A. Sutherland have in common, and how do they inspire reluctant readers?
BOOKS FOR FOLLOWERS & LEADERS

“THERE IS SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE IN THIS SMALL BUT MIGHTY BOOK.”
—SCHOOL LIBRARY CONNECTION

“THIS WELL-TOLD NARRATIVE SHOWS...HOW SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE INTERNET CAN HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE WORLD.”
—SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL

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In this, our final issue of 2017, we bring you some interesting facts about Canadian children’s literature over the past 150 years. Although the industry didn’t really take off in Canada until the 1970s, there were a few notable events that transpired before that. As you can imagine, this piece could have gone on for pages and pages, but we hope we’ve chosen some interesting tidbits to pique your interest.

Senta Ross chats with one of Canada’s most celebrated and beloved author-illustrators, Barbara Reid. As a pioneer in the use of Plasticine as an illustration medium, she has gone on to gain international success. Barbara talks about the challenges she faces when creating her works of art, how her work has changed over time, what it means to her to be the Honourary Chair of Family Literacy Day, and so much more.

In Heather Camlot’s interview with Jason Chabot, Wesley King and Joel A. Sutherland, we gain a great deal of insight into how these three gentlemen have achieved their goals and what makes them tick. In “Keep Your Eye On…” we get to know more about author Jon-Erik Lappano, whose first book, Tokyo Digs a Garden, won the 2016 Governor General’s Literary Award: Young People’s Literature — Illustrated Books, and our “Bookmark!” column includes titles recommended by book sellers from coast to coast as wonderful gifts for the young people in your life. Our “Red Leaf Literature” and “We Recommend” sections include reviews of some of the best literature Canada has to offer.

At the time this issue went to press, we learned the very sad news that Sheila Barry, publisher of Groundwood Books, passed away due to complications following her treatment for cancer. She was surrounded by those dearest to her. She leaves behind a legacy of books and she will be missed by those whose lives she touched. Our condolences go out to Sheila’s family and friends.

Sandra O’Brien
As Canada’s 150th anniversary celebrations are winding down, we’ve compiled 150 intriguing and downright random facts about children’s literature in Canada. There is so much to discover. Although impossible to include every fascinating tidbit, we’re serving up many fabulous ice-breakers for the next time you balance a cocktail and canapé. So, until Canada’s 200th celebration, did you know...

1. The Franklin series created by Paulette Bourgeois and Brenda Clark continues to be the most successful franchise in Canadian children’s publishing history.

2. A Canada Post stamp honoured the Franklin series’ 25th anniversary.

3. Roch Carrier felt Eaton’s catalogues made better hockey pads than Simpson’s.

4. Richardo Keens-Douglas’s The Nutmeg Princess was inspired by a child who asked if he knew a story about a Black princess.

5. Gordon Korman wrote This Can’t Be Happening at MacDonald Hall in grade seven.

6. Anne of Green Gables has been translated into at least 36 languages, including Braille.


8. Lucy Maud Montgomery’s body of work sold an estimated 50 million copies worldwide.

9. She was named a Person of National Historic Significance by the Canadian government.

10. Farley Mowat’s Lost in the Barrens won the Governor General’s Literary Award in 1956.

11. Mowat was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1981.


13. So far, Love You Forever by Robert Munsch has sold 15,000,000 copies.

14. Munsch studied for seven years to be a Jesuit priest.

15. Roald Dahl forwarded a draft of Kenneth Oppel’s Colin’s Fantastic Video Adventure (1985) to his own literary agent.

16. Mordecai Richler named Jacob Two-Two after his son.

17. Beautiful Joe by Marshall Saunders (1893) became the first Canadian book to sell more than a million copies.

18. Saunders championed the rights of women and animals.

19. The Superman character was co-created by Canadian artist Joseph Shuster, cousin to Frank Shuster.

20. Phoebe Gilman published her first book, The Balloon Tree, in 1984, and was also known for her Jillian Jiggs series.


22. The Secret World of Og by Pierre Berton was illustrated by his daughter Patsy.


24. Little writes for kids who have disabilities and are frustrated with the way they are portrayed in literature.

25. Several public schools have been named after notable children’s authors, including Farley Mowat, Ted Harrison, Phoebe Gilman, Robert Munsch, Jean Little and Barbara Reid.


28. Sheree Fitch’s Toes in My Nose and Other Poems celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2017.

29. Fitch’s first board book, Kisses, Kisses, Baby O, was given to every child born in Nova Scotia in 2008, as part of a family literacy program.


31. Heidbreder won the Prime Minister’s Award for Teaching Excellence in 2002.
Margaret Atwood has published seven books for children.

In the 1800s, the Manitoba printing industry met European immigrants’ demand for information and literature.

Winnipeg remained the multilingual publishing centre for most of Western Canada for decades, producing materials including children’s books.

The Best of All Worlds — Le meilleur monde imaginable by Dr. Gina Valle is the first multilingual book of its kind in Canada.

Dr. Valle received the Diamond Jubilee Medal for her work through her organization Diversity Matters.

The Spirit of the Dragon: The Story of Jean Lumb, a Proud Chinese Canadian, by Arlene Chan, features her mother, the first Chinese Canadian to receive the Order of Canada for her community activism.

In 2009, Rukhsana Khan’s A New Life was commissioned by Canadian Heritage and used by Settlement Workers in Schools.

Susan Hughes was a 2016 Ontario Advocate for Library Services for the Toronto Public Library.

Dr. Gina Valle is the first multilingual book of its kind in Canada.

Born in New Delhi, Rachna Gilmore (Lights for Gita and Group of One) was inspired by Anne of Green Gables.

In 2009, Rukhsana Khan’s A New Life was commissioned by Canadian Heritage and used by Settlement Workers in Schools.

Anne Renaud’s research for Pier 21: Stories from Near and Far included finding people who came through Pier 21 as youths.

Making Canada Home by Susan Hughes was a 2016 Ontario Library Association Best Bet.

Raziels Reid’s When Everything Feels Like the Movies won the children’s category of the Governor General’s Literary Awards.

Librarian Ken Setterington was the first Children and Youth Advocate for Library Services for the Toronto Public Library.

Setterington wrote Branded by the Pink Triangle and co-authored A Guide to Canadian Children’s Books in English.

Steven Soloman, author of Homophobia: Deal With It and Turn Prejudice Into Pride, was awarded a Toronto District School Board Excellence Award, in part for helping students establish Gay-Straight Alliances in schools.

Robin Stevenson’s Pride: Celebrating Diversity and Community is a 2017 Stonewall Honor book.

Rosamund Elwin, publisher and co-author of Asha’s Moms, views publishing first-time writers as cultural activism.

Very few picture books appeared in Canada until the 1970s.

Book publishing in Canada is a $1.7 billion industry.

Juvenile (including Young Adult) was the best-selling genre in Canada in 2016.

In 2016, 64% of Canadian book publishers brought in from 1-10% of their revenue from digital book sales.

The percentage of publishers selling digital books to libraries has increased to more than three quarters, from 61% in 2013.

Marie-Claire Daveluy’s Les aventures de Perrine et de Charlot (1923) is considered the first Québécois text specifically written for children.

Around World War II, Fides and Paulines publishing houses produced periodicals, including Stella Maris, JEC des Jeunes, Sais-tu and Hérauts, to name a few.

The Hockey Sweater author Roch Carrier felt he was really himself after putting on hockey equipment as a boy.

Gilles Tibo, author of the Simon series, illustrated more than 80 children’s books before discovering his passion for writing.

Tibo’s Too Many Books was selected as the TD Grade One Book Giveaway book in 2008.

As of 2016, 225 of Alain M. Bergeron’s award-winning books, including his series Le Capitaine Static, have been published by more than 12 publishers.

André Marois, Pierre Pratt, Mélanie Watt and Simon Boulcic were among the 2017 winners of Le Palmarès Communication-Jeunesse.

Jon Klassen was the first Canadian to win the prestigious Caldecott Medal and Britain’s Kate Greenaway Medal for This Is Not My Hat.

His books have spent more than 100 weeks on The New York Times picture-book bestseller list.

“I try to give the kids in my illustrations spunk and make them a bit defiant…” — Michael Martchenko.

Marchenko won the Ruth Schwartz Award for Thomas’ Snowsuit in 1986.

When author and illustrator Marie-Louise Gay was a teenager, a series of bizarre cartoon creatures invaded her schoolbooks.

She won three Governor General’s Literary Awards and has been nominated twice for the Hans Christian Andersen Award and the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award.

Scaredy Squirrel by Mélanie Watt has won many awards, including the Ruth and Sylvia Schwartz Children’s Book Award for Children’s Picture Book and the Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Illustrator’s Award.

Scaredy Squirrel has sold more than 1.6 million books worldwide and is very popular in the Trudeau household.

Ted Harrison had his first art showing at the Public Library in Whitehorse in May 1969.

Harrison wrote several children’s books and illustrated The Cremation of Sam McGee and The Shooting of Dan McGrew by Robert Service.

The strongest influence in his life and art was living on the land in the Yukon, his “Shangri-la.”

Isabelle Arsenault has won the Governor General’s Literary Award for Children’s Literature — Illustration three times.
72. Her books, published in both English and French, have won her international recognition.

73. Barbara Reid, Canada’s Queen of Plasticine, has gained international recognition for her art.

74. **The New Baby Calf**, written by Edith Newlin Chase, was the first book Reid illustrated using Plasticine after graduating from the Ontario College of Art and Design.

75. Andrea Beck created the Elliot Moose series, which became a television series. It aired in Canada and the US for 10 years.

76. Beck’s book *Good Morning, Canada* was chosen as the 2017 TD Grade One Book Giveaway title as it celebrated every province and territory.

77. Ian Wallace has read to more than 800,000 kids across Canada, the US, Australia, Great Britain and China.

78. Wallace went out on the first Book Week tour sponsored by the CCBC and created the poster for the 40th anniversary of TD Canadian Children’s Book Week.

79. Julie Flett’s book *Wild Berries / Pakwa che Menisu* was chosen as the First Nation Communities READ title selection for 2014-2015.

80. Flett is the first recipient of the 2014 Aboriginal Literature Award.

81. *Fatty Legs* by Margaret Pokiak-Fenton and Christy Jordan-Fenton is included in CBC’s *The great Canadian reading list: 150 books to read for Canada 150*.

82. The first Indigenous Editors Circle was organized by the Saskatchewan Arts Board in 2014.


85. Lisa Charleyboy, editor-in-chief of *Urban Native Magazine*, was named by Huffington Post as one of three Aboriginal Millennials to watch.

86. Proceeds from the sale of *Secret Path* will go to The Gord Downie Secret Path Fund for Truth and Reconciliation.

87. The Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Books at Toronto Public Library includes over 80,000 rare and notable modern children’s books up to 1910.

88. The oldest artifacts date from 2,000 B.C.E.

89. The Osborne Collection includes the Lillian H. Smith Collection and the Canadiiana Collection.


91. The Library and Archives Canada collection of children’s literature contains more than 140,000 fiction and non-fiction books.

92. Ensuring that students learn to read fluently is the most important and fundamental aspect of teaching in formal schooling.

93. It is reading, the basic ability to get meaning from print, that is fundamental to school success.

94. Links between children’s reading and the library and a librarian have been demonstrated as essential across grade levels, socio-economic levels, and across rural and urban schools.

95. In 2017, the Alberta government committed to investing $1.6 million over three years to support summer literacy camps for Indigenous kids.

96. Lieutenant Governor’s Aboriginal Literacy Camps were inaugurated by the Ontario government in 2006, in collaboration with Frontier College, to provide literacy enrichment and outreach activities to Aboriginal children.

97. Average Number of Children’s Books in Home Base: Parents with Children Aged 0–17 Ontario — 80, Quebec — 76, British Columbia — 65, Alberta — 88, All Others — 92

98. May Cutler founded Tundra Books in 1967, publishing titles in English and French, including *The Hockey Sweater*.

99. Cutler is credited with revolutionizing the industry.

100. In 2016 and 2017 respectively, Kids Can Press and Groundwood Books were named North American Publisher of the Year at Bologna Children’s Book Fair.

101. Scholastic is the only major publisher in Canada able to simultaneously publish children’s books in both official languages.

102. Every month, *Chirp, chickaDEE* and *OWL* reach over 450,000 readers by paid distribution.

103. The majority of children aged 6-17 (86%) are currently reading or have just finished reading a book for fun.

104. Girls (38%) are more likely than boys (30%) to be frequent readers.

105. Children, particularly those who are frequent readers, gain inspiration (76%) and a sense of accomplishment (90%) from reading.

106. Ninety-four percent of children agree that their favourite books are the ones they picked out themselves.

107. Parents of children aged 0-5 cite reading books aloud, telling stories and talking together as among the most important things parents should do with their children to develop language skills.

108. Kids have read 23 books on average in the last year, with the average decreasing as children grow older.
Six in 10 kids under age two choose their own books at least most of the time.

Four in 10 kids have read an e-Book, but prefer print books.

—Little Grace, or, Scenes in Nova Scotia by Miss Grove published in Halifax.

—Uncle Jim’s Canadian Nursery Rhymes for Family and Kindergarten Use, published in Toronto — the same year as Anne of Green Gables.

—Toronto Public Library’s Boys’ and Girls’ Division is established. It is headed by Lillian H. Smith, the first trained children’s librarian in Canada.

—Boys and Girls House, Toronto Public Library, opens first separate children’s library in the British Empire.

—Children’s Book of the Year Award inaugurated by the Canadian Association of Children’s Librarians.

—Beatrice Clement founds the Association for Writers of Youth Literature. (She also organized Les Éditions Jeunesse.)

—Parliament establishes the National Library of Canada.

—Governor General’s Literary Awards administered by Canada Council.

—Sheila Egoff joins the School of Librarianship at the University of British Columbia as the first tenured professor of children’s literature at a Canadian university.

—Munro’s Books in Victoria opens.


—in Review begins publication.

—Communication-Jeunesse established in Montreal to promote children’s literature published in Quebec.

—The Canadian Library Association and the Association canadienne des bibliothécaires de langue française request the appointment of a children’s librarian / consultant at the National Library.

—Judy Sarick opens Children’s Book Store in Toronto.

—The University of Guelph begins publishing Canadian Children’s Literature / Littérature canadienne pour la jeunesse, renamed Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures in 2009.

—Irene Aubrey appointed Chief of the Canadian Children’s Literature Service at the National Library of Canada.

—Canada Council Children’s Literature Prizes begin publication.


—TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award established by the TD Bank Group is awarded to the most distinguished Canadian children’s book of the year in both English and French.

—The first Marilyn Baillie Picture Award awarded to Marie-Louise Gay for Caramba.

—John Spray Mystery Award awarded for the first time to Y.S. Lee for A Spy in the House.

—PJ Sarah Collins wins the first Monica Hughes Award for Science Fiction and Fantasy for What Happened to Serenity?

—Amy Mathers completes the Marathon of Books by reading one YA book each day, establishing the Amy Mathers Teen Book Award.

—Prix Harry Black de l’album jeunesse established by the CCBC to honour the best French-language Canadian book for children.

Marylynn Miller Oke is a freelance writer. With experience in broadcast news and public relations, she writes frequently for the academic and non-profit sectors.
News Roundup

AWARDS, BOOK LAUNCHES, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND THE LATEST NEWS

IN MEMORIAM
Jan Andrews, 1942—2017
Canadian children’s author and storyteller Jan Andrews passed away on September 2, 2017. Several days prior, Jan sustained severe brain trauma after falling down a flight of stairs.

Born in Shoreham-by-the-Sea, Sussex, England, Jan came to Canada in 1963, living in Saskatoon before settling in the Ottawa area. Her first children’s book, Fresh Fish... and Chips, was published in 1973, by Canadian Women’s Educational Press. Jan went on to publish several noted children’s books, including The Auction, The Very Last First Time, The Silent Summer of Kyle McGinley and When Apples Grew Noses and White Horses Flew.

In addition to writing children’s books, Jan was widely recognized as a superb storyteller. She was the first president of the Storytellers of Canada—Conteurs du Canada and served as director of the StorySave project.

Our condolences go out to Jan’s family and friends.

Sheila Koffman, 1945—2017
Canadian bookseller Sheila Koffman passed away on September 15, 2017. Sheila was the owner and founder of Another Story Bookshop in Toronto’s Roncesvalles neighbourhood. The store originally opened on the Danforth but moved to the High Park area in 2005. Sheila was very passionate about equity, diversity and social justice, and this was reflected in the books she sold.

“Sheila was someone whom I admired deeply and I feel so thankful for having known her. She was a passionate person who stood up for what she believed in — anyone who knew her could see this in the books she sold, and in her life’s work. She ‘walked the walk’ so beautifully,” says Maria Martella. “In our world of bookselling, she was a strong and constant force for all that is good. She was my friend and I will miss her wisdom and authentic voice.”

We extend our condolences to Sheila’s family and friends.

Who’s Going Where?
TD Canadian Children’s Book Week
May 5–12, 2018
The Canadian Children's Book Centre is excited to announce the tour locations for the authors, illustrators and storytellers taking part in TD Canadian Children's Book Week, which runs from May 5-12, 2018. Schools, libraries, bookstores and community centres can visit bookweek.ca for more information and to apply for a special visit from one of these fabulous Canadian creators!

Alberta
Lana Button, author
Marina Cohen, author

British Columbia
Interior
Sylvia Gunner, author

Lower Mainland
Tom Ryan, author

Vancouver Island
Alice Kuipers, author

Northern Region
Soyeon Kim, illustrator

Manitoba
Rina Singh, author
Vikki VanSickle, author

New Brunswick
Lori Joy Smith, author & illustrator

Newfoundland
Anna Humphrey, author

Labrador
Mariella Bertelli, storyteller

Northwest Territories
Stephanie McLellan, author

Nova Scotia
Kass Reich, illustrator

Nunavut
Carey Sookocheff, author & illustrator

Ontario
Alex A., author & illustrator
Darren Groth, author
Alison Hughes, author
Shoshana Litman, storyteller

Lorna Schultz Nicholson, author
Andreas Oertel, author
Pam Withers, author

Prince Edward Island
Elly MacKay, author & illustrator

Quebec
Eileen Cook, author
Anne Glover, storyteller
Melanie Jackson, author
Jessica Scott Kerrin, author
Jennifer Mook-Sang, author

Saskatchewan
Northern Region
Caroline Pignat, author

Southern Region
J. Torres, author

Yukon
Joel A. Sutherland, author

An Evening in Honour of Margie Wolfe
On October 25 the Canadian Children’s Book Centre hosted an event in honour of Margie Wolfe, publisher at Second Story Press. For 40 years, Margie has been publishing stories about women and girls, social justice, human rights, the Holocaust, equality, ability, and most recently, Indigenous issues.

Michael Enright, host of The Sunday Edition on CBC Radio One, was the master of ceremonies and along with family members, friends and colleagues from the publishing industry paid tribute to Margie. While there was much laughter throughout the evening as Margie’s eccentric fashion sense was discussed, there were also some very sentimental and touching moments. Among those who spoke were Margie’s cousin, who had come all the way from Israel for the evening, her sister Helen who gave a heartfelt speech; a video tribute was played with messages from those who could not attend. Overwhelmed and moved, Margie thanked all those who spoke and were in attendance at the end of the evening.

Many thanks go to the artists who donated their work for the silent auction, continued on page 10.
MYSTERY, ROMANCE, AND DANGER ARE ALWAYS ON THE RIDE AT SADDLE CREEK.

Tradewind Books
Celebrating stories authors and illustrators from diverse communities and cultures.
tradewindbooks.com
TD Bank Group and all the companies/organizations who sponsored tables and to the staff and volunteers of the CCBC for helping to make this a memorable evening for Margie.

**2017 Joanne Fitzgerald Illustrator in Residence — Ashley Barron**

For the month of October, I travelled up to the Northern District Library four days a week to give portfolio reviews, class visits and evening workshops, all the while having my artwork showing alongside Joanne Fitzgerald’s.

The Thursday evening workshops had a great turnout with presentation topics that included Finding Your Authentic Voice, Career Paths in Illustration, Building Your Portfolio and Showing Your Work and Illustrator as Entrepreneur.

Prior to this residency, I had experience presenting to children, but not so much to adults. But as the weeks went by, my confidence grew, and the one-on-one portfolio reviews were such a treat. I was floored by some of the hidden talent I witnessed.

During my residency, I got to meet with 10 classes from schools all over the GTA. I’d start my talk with a little slide show of my studio, my illustration process and the books I’ve worked on, and then we’d go on to discuss other areas where an illustrator’s work might be found: magazines, graphics on t-shirts and backpacks, posters and billboards. But whenever I’d bring up video games and the fact that it was someone’s job to design the backgrounds and the characters, their eyes would just light up.

For the younger grades, I borrowed a pond scene from *Shaping Up Summer* to launch our art activity. A blue piece of felt was laid on the floor and the class was given the task of filling it with pond-related plants and animals, all made out of paper. The results were always unexpected. The older grades were given the task of dreaming up a landscape and creating a complete picture of it using only paper, scissors and glue sticks. The students were quick to understand the difference between foreground and background and I was pleasantly surprised by their unconventional colour choices for depicting sky, land and water elements.

I had such a wonderful time as this year’s IBBY Canada Joanne Fitzgerald Illustrator in Residence and I’ve made some great friends along the way!

**Tell us about your newest book or a project you are currently working on.** Nothing official to report yet, but I have a few projects I’m excited about in development.

**Tell us about your process of writing.** I’m still working that out, but right now my writing process occurs mostly at night after the kids are asleep and starts with a few phrases or images that have been swirling around in my head. With *Tokyo Digs a Garden*, for example, the phrase was: *cities have to eat something, after all*, and an image of city devouring the countryside.

I then craft a narrative around these. Often, the stories fizzle out and I’ll abandon them to languish on my desktop. Others slowly make it to what you could call a first draft. Even more rarely, I’ll have a wave of inspiration, and the story unfolds in one or two sittings.

I tend to write in bursts until I can no longer stay awake, then walk away for a day or so, and return to change much of what I’ve written. I read the stories aloud to myself to get the rhythm and tempo right, cutting and changing as I go. Next, I read it to my daughters, who are perfectly blunt with their feedback (many stories don’t make it past this stage). I’ll then agonize over one or two sentences for weeks, drink too much coffee and bite my nails until I feel ready to pitch it. Next, I curl up into the fetal position and perpetually refresh my inbox.

**How did you first get published?** I am lucky to have a fantastically talented designer/illustrator as a brother-in-law (Kellen Hatanaka), who had previously published two books with Groundwood Books (*Work: An Occupational ABC* and *Drive: A Look at Roadside Opposites*). I told Kellen about an idea for a story that I’d been sitting on for about a decade, and we decided he would pitch it to our publisher at an upcoming meeting. So, I wrote a first draft of *Tokyo Digs a Garden*, Kellen pitched it and Groundwood agreed to publish it.

**What do you like about writing for young people?** I write stories that I enjoy reading, which I hope resonate with people of all ages — but I do think my stories are best-suited for the weird minds of kids living in a strange world. Young people haven’t formed too many opinions or conclusions about the way things are supposed to work yet. They are honest and open readers that don’t take anything for granted.

Life is completely ridiculous, after all; it is hilarious and wondrous and horrifying and strange and out of control. I think children have a unique understanding of that, because they’re new here. For this reason, I think stories can shape, in small and big ways, how young people think and act. Books I read as a child certainly did that for me, and I know books our daughters read do that for them. If any of the stories I’ve written now or [will write] in the future do that for any young people anywhere, I’ll be thrilled.
Congratulations TO THE WINNERS OF THE 2017 CANADIAN CHILDREN’S BOOK CENTRE AWARDS!

The Tragic Tale of the Great Auk
Written and illustrated by Jan Thornhill
Groundwood Books
Winner of the TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award

Même pas vrai
Written by Larry Tremblay
Illustrated by Guillaume Perreault
Éditions de la Bagnole
Winner of the Prix TD de littérature canadienne pour l’enfance et la jeunesse

The Snow Knows
Written by Jennifer McGrath
Illustrated by Josée Bisaillon
Nimbus Publishing
Winner of the Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award

The Mark of the Plague
(Blackthorn Key, Book 2)
Written by Kevin Sands
Aladdin
Winner of the Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People

Canada Year By Year
Written by Elizabeth MacLeod
Illustrated by Sydney Smith
Kids Can Press
Winner of the Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children’s Non-Fiction

Exit, Pursued by a Bear
Written by E.K. Johnston
Dutton Books
Winner of the Amy Mathers Teen Book Award

For more information, visit www.bookcentre.ca
What is it about Barbara Reid’s creativity that elicits such enthusiasm and contemplation amongst readers of all ages? Could it be her well-crafted text and subject matter — be it about trees, skies or creatures, both great and small — that encourage us to think more deeply about our place in the world? Or is it the stunning masterpieces she creates from Plasticine, her medium of choice, which are so unique that one can’t help but pause and examine her artwork more closely while pondering, How ever did she do this?

Through her acute powers of observation, attention to detail and variety of perspectives, Barbara has the ability to transform the commonplace into something special, thus filling us with awe at the scope of her imagination and talent. Her books never fail to enchant!

As one of Canada’s most celebrated and beloved author-illustrators, Barbara has been tireless in promoting the reading and literacy engagement of young people throughout our country. Those who have received a visit from her at their schools, libraries or conferences will fondly remember her marvellous presentations, warm personality and extraordinary original art.

The recipient of numerous national and international awards for her publications, Barbara was made a member of the Order of Canada in 2013, for her contributions to the Canadian children’s literature community. She also has the distinct honour of having a school named after her in Whitchurch-Stouffville, Ontario, which opened in September 2017.

Tell us about your training as an artist and how you came to be a children’s illustrator.

I studied illustration at OCAD (Ontario College of Art and Design). I always loved children’s-book illustration and managed to work child-related themes into most of my assignments. Many of my first jobs after graduation were in educational illustration. Working with (and against) the restrictions of textbook illustration was good preparation for the greater freedom of picture-book work. Children’s book publishing in Canada was madly growing in the mid ’80s. It was a wonderful time to be starting in the business.

How do you approach your work with Plasticine and what are the challenges you face?

Each illustration begins with rough sketches and thumbnails. Once there is a final-size drawing, the Plasticine comes out. I create a palette, pre-mixing a lot of the clay. Most of the colour decisions are made at this stage. Making the picture is very low tech. I spread the clay onto treated illustration board, modelling and adding textures. The most complicated part is figuring out the order of the layers, as the picture builds from background to foreground. Illustrating transparency is the biggest challenge with Plasticine — a most opaque material. I use all sorts of tricks with colour and some special effects using acrylic paint. Most of the time, I like the limitation of modelling clay, partly because it reduces the choices. If I
had every medium, colour and technique at my fingertips to create a rabbit wearing pyjamas, I might never finish! The limitations are somehow freeing, plus it’s a lot of fun.

Because the art is dimensional, the final piece is photographed and digital files are sent to the publisher. My husband, photographer Ian Crysler, shoots all my work. It’s very handy to have a photo consultant and studio in the house.

**How has your work changed over time?**

Early on, I used the clay in a flat-collage sort of way, thinking in terms of edges and lines. Now, I work with more sculptured forms to catch the light. No doubt, working with Ian has encouraged this development. I also pay much more attention to colour. Although my work is mainly done with Plasticine, some projects call for additional techniques. I incorporated found objects in *The Subway Mouse* to capture the look of the subway, and added line and wash drawings to *Perfect Snow* to advance the action. I do love drawing! Each project presents a different challenge, and I still enjoy learning.

I feel that my work has evolved, but I don’t want to lose the naive playfulness of Plasticine. While digital photography and Photoshop have certainly made some things easier, such as removing dirt or enhancing light effects, I strive to keep the technology at a minimum. I like kids to be able to look at the art, figure out how it was done and think, *Hey, I could do that*— and they can!

In 1992, you wrote *Two by Two*. Tell us about your transition to becoming a writer and describe the relationship between words and pictures in your books.

Although I had dreamed of being a writer since childhood, there was a time when I was quite opinionated that writing and illustrating were very different skills. Then my friend, author-illustrator Veronika Martenova Charles, pointed out that illustrators are ‘already storytellers.’ That was the permission I needed.

The first books I ‘wrote’ were the wordless Zoe board books, followed by the adaptation of a folk song for *Two by Two*. When writing my own stories, I sketch at the same time. Some stories run like a movie in my head. The first drafts are very wordy. Even though I know there will be pictures, I seem to be compelled to describe everything. I like to work with a storyboard and post-it notes to help me choose the moments to highlight and reduce the text. Over time, the pictures do more of the talking and the word count continues to go down. Who knows? I may eventually come full circle and write wordlessly again.

**What effect do you hope your books have on your readers?**

Of course, I dream that my book will be the one that a child knows by heart and asks for over and over! I create books to draw attention to things that are important to me; sometimes very small things, like the beautiful curl of a tail, a cloud or a gesture. I want readers to enjoy these as much as I do. I hope readers make connections, either by finding something in the book that echoes their experiences, or by noticing something in their world after seeing it in the book.

Illustrators work in solitude a lot of the time. How do you prepare for presentations that involve hundreds of children and/or adults?

Ha! I prepare by being very prepared and then getting really, really nervous. It helps to be presenting something that I am very passionate about, and that kids are a totally open and honest audience. Preparation gives me courage at the start, but once I have a sense of the audience, it becomes much easier to respond to their energy and follow their interests. The best presentations are often the ones where surprise events, questions or interruptions happen.

**Can you recall any particularly memorable moment(s) in response to one of your books or presentations?**

It’s always a thrill to visit a school where the gym or library has been turned into a gallery full of art kids have created in response to the books. When an enthusiastic teacher or librarian takes a book and runs with it, the impact is ENORMOUS. As most children’s authors can tell you, if students are deeply engaged in a book, the rewards have already been received before the visit takes place. When we meet, we are already old friends. Spending time in a bustling school library is just so heartening. I can see the obvious benefits to the school and wider community, but I also see kids for whom the library is a safe place to explore and be free.

Travelling to schools across Canada has given me opportunities for amazing experiences. In Labrador, I met with Innu children who were facing many challenges in their lives and community. There was a language barrier and I worried about communicating. I needn’t have. The kids just plunked down on the floor with me and started turning the pages of the books, pointing and laughing at what they saw, teaching me the names of things and telling stories to go with the pictures. It was a very moving experience that’s hard to express in words.

In response to books, kids reveal bits of their lives that range from hilarious to heartbreakingly. I have a thick file of special letters and artwork. A 10-year-old girl wrote that her house was overcrowded with a lot of fighting and she longed to find a space of her own just like Nib in *The Subway Mouse*. A set of class letters from a kindergarten in Arkansas included a post-it note from the teacher. Her students loved Buttercup the cow in *The New Baby Calf* ‘because she was a good mother,’ something not always available to many of them.

I don’t think I have ever come away from a school or event without having learned something valuable.

**Which artists and writers are you inspired by?**

My current obsession is with Tom Thomson, because of his skies. Other important inspirations, in no particular order and for a variety of reasons include these: Bruegel the Elder, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Chuck Jones, Edward Ardizzone, Pauline Baynes, William Kurelek, Anthony Browne, Tove Jansson, Arthur Rackham, Barbara Cooney, Ludwig Bemelmans, Dayal Kaur Khalsa, Marie-Louise Gay, Brenda Clark, Quentin Blake, the Brothers Grimm, Shaun Tan, Elly MacKay, Carson Ellis,
Hans Christian Andersen, Sydney Smith, Phoebe Gilman, Marthe Jocelyn, Cybèle Young, Ruth Ohi, C.S. Lewis, Dave Pilkey, Edith Nesbit, Maurice Sendak, Jeremy Tankard, Hilary Leung, Isabelle Arsenault, Jeff Lemire, plus pretty much all the student art I see in schools and receive in the mail.

Has any individual(s) within the publishing community mentored or influenced you?

It has taken a village! The children’s publishing community is ridiculously friendly and supportive. Good influences and life lessons have come from friends through CANSCAIP, icons like Jean Little and Claire Mackay, the Canadian Children’s Book Centre and a close group of illustrator / author pals. Ken Setterington has been a tremendous support and inspiration, as has Peter Carver. Early on, I was fortunate to work with terrific people at Kids Can Press, HarperCollins and Scholastic Canada. I may not have been quite as young as Gordon Korman when I began working with Scholastic, but I do feel I have grown up there. It has been a long and happy relationship; I enjoy working with the whole team. It is how much of the show came about. Score one for social media!

I also took part in the show The Art of Parenting at the Carnegie Gallery in Dundas, Ontario, in June 2017, with the fabulous Derek Douglas and Hilary Leung. It was great fun to take part in a family event there and see kids being able to experience original art and interact with the artists. It would be great to see more opportunities for Canadian illustrators to exhibit work.

Tell us about your newest publication, Picture the Sky.

In researching for Picture the Sky, I found myself looking at a lot of fine art with fresh eyes, particularly the work of the Group of Seven. So much sky behind all those trees — who knew! We tend to focus on the subject of a painting, but the background literally sets the scene and establishes the mood. I feel like the title could have been Sky — not just a background!

Have you noticed how often the sky is depicted in children’s art? Children are extremely observant, and have sophisticated ideas and feelings. Modelling clay is a great medium for expression, especially where there is a literacy or language gap. Just a few tips can help children expand their ability to represent what they see and feel. I get tremendous feedback from the YouTube Plasticine tutorial videos on my website. The sky is something we all share — it’s accessible to everyone. I hope readers are encouraged to notice and appreciate it.

Picture the Sky is a companion to Picture a Tree, but the vastness of the subject made it even harder to squeeze it into 32 pages. I focused on an artistic and emotional response to the sky, rather than a scientific approach. Taking a child’s-eye view helped me choose the settings and details. It was huge fun to make northern lights, fog, a thunderstorm and an erupting volcano. As with Picture a Tree, I created 40 small images, sketches really, for the end pages. They were a way to stuff even more pictures into the book, but I could have made 80 or more. The book is in print, but I’m still coming up with more ways to express the sky. I plan to create more tutorials, and can’t wait to see what young artists teach me in return.

What is the best question you have ever been asked?

Recently, a very young student was the first to ask, “Do you feel the same way as the picture you are making?” Such insight! A future artist? My answer: yes.

What is next for Barbara Reid?

I’m excited by a number of ideas, so it’s time to find a quiet space and a stretch of time to make something of them.

Senta Ross is a former elementary teacher and teacher-librarian in Kitchener, Ontario. Barbara Reid was a guest at five of the schools where she taught during her teaching career.
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What inspired you to start writing and what inspires you now?

**Jason Chabot (JC):** My trilogy was inspired by struggles and events from my past, but the initial story idea stewed inside my head for years before I actually did anything about it. My career as a chartered accountant was already so demanding, but eventually the right hemisphere was bursting with so many ideas that I felt compelled to take action. As soon as I strung together the words for the opening sentence of *Below*, I knew I had found the artistic outlet I’d been craving. Ever since, I draw inspiration from personal experiences, as well as social issues in our complicated world.

**Wesley King (WK):** I've always felt inspired to be the wrong word — more like obligated. Even as a kid, there was too much floating around in my head and it needed to go somewhere. That was my reason as a four-year-old and it's still my reason now.

**Joel A. Sutherland (JAS):** I've been obsessed with stories in all forms — books, movies, plays, video games — for nearly as long as I can remember. When I was in third grade, I shamelessly stole a story idea from my older brother; he’d written a series of picture books about a cat who played professional sports, so I wrote a series of picture books about a dog who played professional sports. These days, I find inspiration in many places, but mostly in the work of other creators whom I admire. Nothing fires me up more than reading an incredible novel or watching a brilliant movie and wondering how I would have approached the story differently.

Can you give an example of how you translated a real experience into your work?

**JC:** Over a decade ago, during an excursion deep into the Egyptian desert, I happened to notice something in the sky that I couldn’t identify. It all came floating down around me and settled on the sand — thousands of pieces of plastic! I’ll never forget that moment. To witness a previously pristine desert become completely littered with plastic was a shocking example of humankind’s long-lasting impact on our environment. This concept became a fundamental theme in each of my books.

**WK:** For me, that is most recently centred on my struggles with OCD and its reflection in *OCDaniel*. My own transition of finally talking about OCD — something that was a long time coming — led to Daniel's journey down that road. That story is mirrored so closely, it’s hard to pick out a single moment.

**JAS:** *Summer’s End* opens with four friends finding an injured bird in the woods, deciding whether they should end its suffering and then needing to decide who should do the killing. It’s based on a childhood experience of mine. Confronting the grim reality that everything dies is a pivotal moment where childhood begins to shift to young adulthood, and it’s therefore an ideal topic to explore in horror fiction.

You live in various parts of Canada. Does place affect your writing?

**JC:** Living on the west coast of British Columbia developed my utmost appreciation for nature, and my concerns for our planet have manifested in my writing through an exploration of how our future existence might be altered. The oceans, the forests, the very real threat of earthquakes, the heavy storm clouds hanging low overhead as if the sun might never break through — these all became crucial elements that shaped the fantastical settings into which I thrust my characters.
WK: I love my new home in Nova Scotia, and I love having the ocean outside my window, but that is more influential on my non-writing life. When I am writing, I am in my head and lose all track of time and space. The location doesn’t matter as much as total solitude.

JAS: I live in Courtice, a suburb east of Toronto filled with cookie-cutter homes, but there’s one old farmhouse smackdab in the middle. It’s a creepy-looking place, made creepier by the fact that, in eight years, I’ve never seen a living person in or around the house. But every now and then, a horse wanders out of the barn behind the house, strolls around the property, then disappears back into the darkness. The House Next Door is about that house and that horse.

You’ve all written series. Do you go into a project thinking, I’m going to write a three-book arc?

JC: When I finally began to write, I knew I had an epic tale to tell. It immediately became obvious that a single book would not suffice. The only reasonable way to share everything I had envisioned was to structure The Broken Sky Chronicles as a trilogy. It’s funny now to think back to my earlier trepidation about writing one book, let alone committing myself to completing three.

WK: I have set out to write series on several occasions. Sometimes, it’s the only way to keep from overdoing it on any given book – promising yourself that there will be more opportunity to expand. I also love reading a series, most of my favourite books fall within them. It’s more time for character and world building, and I think every author likes that.

JAS: The Haunted Canada series, which is non-fiction, and the Haunted series, which is fiction, are standalone books that can be read in any order, so I haven’t planned story arcs per se. But with the Haunted series, I am laying the foundation for a bigger story arc that will play out in future books if the series does well.

The Broken Sky Chronicles, The Vindico series and OCDaniel, and The Haunted Canada series have been recommended for reluctant readers. How do you draw these readers in?

JC: I focused on eliminating any excuse a reluctant reader might devise to avoid reading, which meant keeping my chapters short, my pacing fast, my narrative captivating, my action scenes intense and my characters relatable, despite their many flaws.

WK: There usually has to be a quicker pace to the writing, and the prose has to be accessible to find that broader range of readership. Those are basic steps. But what reluctant readers need are friends to go along with them, so for me, it always comes down to characters that they want to spend time with.

JAS: For the Haunted Canada books, I don’t waste any time before jumping right into one of the scariest accounts I can find from each of the haunted locations. My game plan for each chapter is get in, freak out the reader, sneak in some educational facts, scare them again for good measure and get out.

What book would you recommend for a reluctant reader?

JC: The Giver, by Lois Lowry. The novel is an excellent introduction to the dystopian genre, with the story’s action and intrigue beginning almost immediately. It also raises many interesting societal questions that parents, librarians or teachers can discuss with a reluctant reader to further enhance their engagement with the book.

WK: There are a million obvious ones, but a relatively recent release is The Knights of the Borrowed Dark by Dave Rudden. It’s fantastical, fast-paced and has that likeable protagonist I mentioned. And there is now a sequel.

JAS: As a Children’s & Youth Services Librarian, I help reluctant readers and their parents nearly every day. Anything funny is a big draw, like Captain Underpants and Diary of a Wimpy Kid. Books based on popular franchises, like Pokémon and LEGO, have instant appeal. The most important thing is to let reluctant readers choose their own reading material and, no matter what, do not judge. Some parents say movie novelizations and comic books don’t ‘count’ as reading. Says who? I grew up on that stuff and I think I turned out okay.

Tell me about your latest book and next project.

JC: My most recently published book, Beyond, is the third volume of The Broken Sky Chronicles, and it wraps up the adventures of Hokk and Elia... or does it? I can’t stop generating more ideas, and now there’s enough material for at least two more books before I’d ever consider the series finished. I am also working on a stand-alone psychological thriller where I explore corporate corruption, society’s twisted obsession with celebrity, and the long-term consequences of emerging technologies.

WK: My latest book is Laura Monster Crusher, which has a really bada** protagonist named Laura Ledwick, whom I love, and my next book to be released is A World Below, which is a cool subterranean survival story told from multiple perspectives. I also have some really big stuff coming out in 2018, which I can’t talk about yet, but it’s going to be a crazy year.

JAS: Published in the fall, Kill Screen, the second book in the Haunted series, is about a video game where the player has to travel from one haunted location to another, fighting ghosts along the way. There’s a glitch in the game and it appears to be unbeatable, until a girl named Evie figures out how to win, but — spoiler alert — she shouldn’t have done that. I also finished Haunted Canada 8 and am working on the third and fourth books in the Haunted series — all three are scheduled for publication in 2018.
You’ve had alternate jobs (Jason a chartered accountant, Wes a business strategist, Joel a librarian) — when and how did you find time to write?

JC: I scrounged absolutely every spare minute I could find during my evenings or weekends. I had vowed to write a little bit each day and I never wavered. My progress was slow, but it was also steady, and with each new chapter I completed, I felt more inspired to continue.

WK: We all want to start out as full-time authors, but someone has to pay the bills while you are banging your head off your desk. It means long hours and writing outside of your comfort zone. In the end, it’s probably a good thing. I learned that I don’t always need inspiration; I just need time. If you work, the inspiration will come. That is invaluable even now when inspiration isn’t always readily available.

JAS: You have to write during any small scrap of free time you can get. I’ve written most of my books during my lunch breaks, five hours a week. The remarkable thing I’ve discovered is the busier I am, the more productive I am. I always try to plan what I’m going to write well before I open my laptop, so I can hit the ground running.

What advice would you give a new writer?

JC: Dedication. When you are fully committed, you’ll take the necessary steps to educate yourself, nurture your imagination, read other great works of literature, utilize constructive feedback from peers and industry professionals and spend as much time as necessary to edit your manuscript so that it’s the best it can be. It is equally important to stay true to your voice and remain confident in your creation. Sometimes people can’t grasp what you are trying to communicate, but there will be many others who’ll understand and appreciate your perspective.

WK: Be stubborn. Everyone is going to tell you that you suck and are crazy for trying to write a book — or maybe that was just me. Regardless, be in love with your story and push it relentlessly. And if you’re not in love with it, get back to work. Listen to your editors. They exist for a reason. Write constantly. Read constantly.

JAS: Read, write, repeat. Submit your work. Develop a thick skin. Go to conventions, join writers’ groups and follow authors, editors and agents on social media. Be polite. I can’t stress that enough, but I’ll try one more time: be polite.

Chabot toured for TD Canadian Children’s Book Week in 2017; two-time winners King and Sutherland attended Forest of Reading. What is it like being part of such big events?

JC: The tour was an incredible experience that brought together everything I love about being an author: sharing my passion for reading and writing, travelling to new places, meeting fascinating people. It gave me the opportunity to share the unexpected path my life has taken; I approached every presentation with the goal of encouraging others to pursue their own interests and talents. And I really must say, I couldn’t have been more warmly welcomed.

WK: It’s definitely one of the highlights of the job. It is thrilling and gratifying to see large-scale celebrations bringing readers together. Kids’ lit is stronger than ever, thanks to teachers and librarians and volunteers endlessly pushing our work and creating this excitement. It’s a beautiful thing.

JAS: There’s nothing like TD Canadian Children’s Book Week or the Forest of Reading. Touring British Columbia a few years back for Book Week and winning the Silver Birch Non-Fiction Award two years in a row have been my greatest career accomplishments thus far. I love presenting to kids and getting them fired up about reading and writing — and ghosts, of course.

What’s your best fan moment?

JC: I get the greatest joy when I’m approached by a former reluctant reader; hearing that they’re eager for my next instalment is exhilarating. Such enthusiastic feedback means that my efforts allowed me to connect with someone in a profound way, making them keen to include more reading in their life.

WK: The loveliest experience came in Brampton at a school for the visually impaired. Following the presentation, a young girl, maybe 11, was helped over by an education assistant. She had read my books in Braille and sat through the presentation with the most infectious smile. She handed me a piece of paper and asked for a signature, but as I went to sign with my pen, she said, “Can you use this, please?” and handed me one of those scented markers. After I signed it, she brought it close to her nose and smelled the signature deeply as if to affirm it was there, smiling the whole time. Her obvious delight made me feel humbled, small and very lucky.

JAS: I was in Chapters in Ajax recently when I saw a girl buying a copy of Summer’s End. I couldn’t help but approach her and the adult she was with and introduce myself and offer to sign the book. My wife was mortified, but the girl couldn’t believe her luck.

Would you prefer to be abducted by supervillains, stay in a haunted house or live in a post-apocalyptic world?

JC: I’d have to choose life in a post-apocalyptic world. Not only would it be the ultimate test of my survival skills, but after writing three books in which I forced my characters to face so many life-threatening situations, it only seems fair that I endure similar challenges to find out how I would cope.

WK: I’m probably biased, but I have to go with supervillains. I really want a superpower. And the other two options sound inherently unpleasant — but make for wonderful stories.

JAS: I’m actually a bit of a chicken, so I’m going to go with supervillain abduction. If there’s one thing I’ve learned from a lifetime of reading comics, it’s that where there are supervillains, there are superheroes. I’d have no shame being rescued by Spiderman or Wonder Woman — in fact that sounds awesome.

Heather Camlot is the author of Clutch and freelance writer, editor and translator.
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“BOOKMARK!” Usually highlights books for a variety of grade levels around a particular theme. In this issue, however, we asked booksellers across Canada to recommend books they thought were exceptional choices for holiday gift giving. Thanks go to Lisa Doucet, Kelly Dyer, Erin Grittani, Heather Kuipers and Kirsten Larmon for taking the time to recommend such fabulous titles.

Bookseller Recommendations

**LISA DOUCET**

**OF WOOZLES IN HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA**

* Town Is by the Sea
  * written by Joanne Schwartz
  * illustrated by Sydney Smith
  * (Groundwood Books, 2017)

In this poignant picture book, a young boy wakes up one sunny morning to the sound of the sea. He calls on a friend, visits his grandfather’s grave and goes to the store, but all the while his mind strays to his father, digging for coal deep under the sea. One day, it will be his turn.

  * written by Wade Albert White
  * illustrations by Mariano Epelbaum
  * (Little, Brown and Company, 2017)

Anne, Penelope and Hiro are nominated for Best Illegal Quest That Nearly Destroyed the Entire World at the annual Quest Academy Awards, but they barely get to enjoy it before a strange boy tricks Anne into activating a new quest. Her charge, to kill the dragon queen, is a problem: Anne doesn’t want to kill any dragons.

* The Fashion Committee
  * written by Susan Juby
  * (Penguin Teen Canada, 2017)

Charlie Dean is a style-obsessed girl who eats, sleeps and breathes fashion. John Thomas-Smith is a boy who forges metal sculptures in his garage and couldn’t care less about clothes. But they share one thing in common: both are gunning for a coveted scholarship to a private art high school. And whoever wins the fashion competition will win the scholarship.

**KELLY DYER**

**OF AUDREYS BOOKS IN EDMONTON, ALBERTA**

* Stolen Words
  * written by Melanie Florence
  * illustrated by Gabrielle Grimard
  * (Second Story Press, 2017)

When a little girl asks her grandfather how to say something in his language — Cree — he admits that his language was stolen from him when he was a boy. She then sets out to help her grandfather find his language again. This title is also available in French as *Les mots volés*.

* The Assassin’s Curse
  * written by Kevin Sands
  * (Aladdin, 2017)

Wherever Christopher Rowe goes, adventure — and murder — follows. Even a chance to meet King Charles ends in a brush with an assassin. So when Christopher’s code breaking reveals the attack’s true target, he and his friends are ordered to Paris to investigate a centuries-old curse on the French throne.

* Heartfire
  * written by Kate A. Boorman
  * (Amulet Books, 2016)

Matisa’s people are dying from a sickness that once deterred newcomers. Wors, Dominion soldiers with brutal weapons, desperate for a cure, are claiming the land as their own. To negotiate peace, Emmeline and Matisa must return to the settlement to find a remedy. Now, Emmeline must confront her past and risk her life to secure the future that burns in her heart.
KirSten lArMon
Of muNRO BOOKS IN
vICtORIA, BRItISH COLumBIA

The Bad Mood and the Stick
written by Lemony Snicket
illustrated by Matthew Forsythe
(Tundra Books, 2017)

Once there were a bad mood and a stick. The stick appeared when a tree dropped it. Where did the bad mood come from? Who picked up the stick? And where is the bad mood off to now? You never know what is going to happen.

Coyote Tales
written by Thomas King
illustrations by Byron Eggenschwiler
(Groundwood Books, 2017)

Two tales, set in a time “when animals and human beings still talked to each other,” display King’s cheeky humour and master storytelling skills. Freshly illustrated and reissued as an early chapter book, these stories are perfect for newly independent readers.

Turtle island: The Story of North America’s First People
written by Eldon Yellowhorn and Kathy Lowinger
(Annick Press, 2017)

Going back as far as the Ice Age, this book details how North America’s Indigenous people lived before the arrival of the Europeans in 1492. Turtle Island refers to a Native myth that explains how the Americas were formed on the back of a turtle. Based on archaeological finds and scientific research, it gives us a clearer picture of how the Indigenous peoples lived as far back as 14,000 years ago.

HeATHER KUIPERS
OF ELLA minNow IN TORONtO, ONt ARIO

Yak and Dove
written by Kyo Maclear
illustrated by Esme Shapiro
(Tundra Books, 2017)

Friends Yak and Dove are complete opposites. Yak is large and Dove is small. Yak has fur and Dove has feathers. Yak is polite. Dove is ill-mannered. Yak likes quiet. Dove likes noise. One day, as Yak and Dove list their differences, they come to the conclusion that maybe they aren’t meant to be friends. This picture book whimsically captures the highs and lows of friendship through the three interconnected tales of two very different friends.

The Lottery’s Plus One
written by Emma Donoghue
illustrations by Caroline Hadilaksono

Sumac Lottery is the fifth of seven kids in her VERY large and EXTREMELY unruly family that includes four parents, a parrot, a dog, a rat and two cats. When an estranged grandfather must come and live with them, everything changes. Can Sumac and Grumps find a way to get along?

KIRSTEN LARMON
OF MUNRO BOOKS IN VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA

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Optimists Die First
written by Susin Nielsen
(Tundra Books, 2017)

Feeling responsible for her baby sister’s death, Petula, once a crafting fiend with a happy life, has shut herself off from the world. Then Jacob, a boy with a prosthetic arm and darkness behind his sunny surface, joins Petula’s art-therapy group. Forced to collaborate on a project, she slowly opens up to Jacob… until a hidden truth threatens to derail everything.

ERIN GRITTANI
OF GLAD DAY BOOKSHOP IN TORONTO, ONTARIO

Sam & Eva
written and illustrated by Debbie Ridpath Ohi
(Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2017)

When Sam starts drawing a super cool velociraptor, Eva decides to join in. But Sam isn’t too happy about the collaboration. Soon Eva and Sam are locked in an epic creative clash, bringing to life everything from superhero marmots to exploding confetti. But when their masterpieces turn to mayhem, will Sam stay stubbornly solo or will he realize that sometimes the best work comes from teamwork?

Clutch
written by Heather Camlot
(Red Deer Press, 2017)

It’s 1946, in a poor Jewish neighbourhood in Montreal, and 12-year-old Joey Grosser has plans to make a better life for his family. Just across town, something incredible is happening. Jackie Robinson is playing for the Montreal Royals. And he’s going to change the world. If Jackie can do it, then so can a poor Jewish kid from the Plateau.

The Marrow Thieves
written by Cherie Dimaline
(Dancing Cat Books, 2017)

Humanity has nearly destroyed its world through global warming, but now an even greater evil lurks. The Indigenous people of North America are being hunted and harvested for their bone marrow, which carries the key to recovering the ability to dream. Frenchie and his companions struggle to survive as they make their way up north to the old lands.

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Optimists Die First
written by Susin Nielsen
(Tundra Books, 2017)

Feeling responsible for her baby sister’s death, Petula, once a crafting fiend with a happy life, has shut herself off from the world. Then Jacob, a boy with a prosthetic arm and darkness behind his sunny surface, joins Petula’s art-therapy group. Forced to collaborate on a project, she slowly opens up to Jacob… until a hidden truth threatens to derail everything.
Red Leaf Literature

Red Leaf Literature features titles chosen by Canadian Children's Book News' reviewers. These books are thought to be of the highest quality and signify titles of exceptional calibre. Whether you’re a parent, teacher or librarian, our reviewers feel that these books would make an excellent addition to your home, school or library collection.

PICTURE BOOKS FOR PRESCHOOL AND UP

**Letters to a Prisoner**

*Storyline and illustrations by Jacques Goldstyn*  
*Translated by Angela Keenlyside*  
*Owlkids Books, 2017*  
*978-1-77147-251-7 (hc) $18.95*  
*For Grades 3 and up*  

*Picture Book | Protests | Hope | Letter Writing | Imprisonment | Human Rights*

In this emotionally charged, wordless story, told in beautifully rendered cartoon images, a man and his young daughter join a peaceful protest. She is carrying a red balloon, while her father and other protesters carry placards — each with a bright red circle just like her balloon. Outside an official-looking building, the protesters meet a phalanx of blue, faceless soldiers with shields and batons ready. The clash is ugly and violent — the man is bludgeoned and dragged off, his daughter left alone, terrified and crying. In a particularly cruel moment, a menacing soldier raises his weapon and pops her balloon.

Using stark black-and-white sketches washed with a soft watercolour palette of yellows, browns and greens, Goldstyn depicts the man, now a prisoner, locked away in solitary confinement, experiencing emotions from despair to melancholy and hopelessness. When a bird delivers a letter with a message of support, hope is kindled. As more and more letters arrive, they are burned by his captors, but the smoke forms an SOS and people from around the globe begin writing messages of solidarity. With a lovely touch of the fantastical, the man escapes on wings composed of letters.

This wordless book has a compelling message about the power of words. In an author’s note, Goldstyn tells readers that his inspiration was his own experience with Amnesty International’s Write for Rights and his hope that he will inspire others to become involved. Not just a picture book for young children, this book could be used through high school as a thought-provoking springboard for discussion about human rights, political protest and the value of individual action.

An uplifting testament to hope and freedom of expression, this moving story will continue to resonate with readers long after they put the book down.

Tracey Schindler is a book reviewer and former teacher living in Bethany, Ontario.

**Picture the Sky**

*Written and illustrated by Barbara Reid*  
*North Winds Press/Scholastic Canada, 2017*  
*978-1-4431-6302-6 (hc) $19.99*  
*For Preschool to Grade 3*  

*Picture Book | Sky | Weather | Emotions | Imagination*

“There is more than one way to picture the sky.”

Join Barbara Reid as she extends an intriguing invitation to look up and take notice of the sky in its many guises. Be it strewn with stars, ruptured by lightning or permeated with fog, the sky is the main attraction here.

Reid’s expressive text is to be savoured: “It [the sky] can be a blanket, or the curtain rising on your day.” / “It’s an ever-changing, always open, everyone welcome art gallery.” / “It is the roof over our heads.” Accompanying her insightful observations are her incomparable Plasticine illustrations, masterfully photographed by Ian Crysler. Comprised of one- and two-page spreads, as well as diminutive snapshots, the artwork encourages us to pause and think widely about what lies above the earth as well as the emotions it invokes within. On one page, the sky peers between tall city buildings, while on another, it stretches to the far horizon of a prairie setting. What could be more relaxing than lying in a hammock, visualizing the shapes the clouds create? Reid has captured all this, and more, in a most ingenious manner.

One will never look at the heavens in the same way again!

Senta Ross is a former elementary teacher and teacher-librarian in Kitchener, Ontario.
The Water Walker
written and illustrated by Joanne Robertson
Second Story Press, 2017
978-1-77260-038-4 (hc) $16.95
for Grades 1 to 3
Non-fiction Picture Book | Indigenous Culture | Ojibwe Culture | Water | Water Conservation | Environmental Activism

The Water Walker is the story of Josephine Mandamin, an Ojibwe grandmother, who set out one day to raise awareness of the plight of water in North America. Josephine — referred to in the book as Nokomis (Grandmother) — has a deep respect and love for water as the foundation of all life on Earth. Concerned that water would become both scarce and expensive, Nokomis, along with a group of like-minded women, formed The Mother Earth Water Walkers. With a copper pail of water in one hand and an eagle staff in the other, The Mother Earth Water Walkers walked around all the Great Lakes and along the St. Lawrence River to draw attention to the water that is being wasted, polluted and disrespected.

Joanne Robertson reconstructs Josephine’s remarkable story with simple prose and colourful illustrations that will appeal to young readers. Ojibwe words are used throughout the story, and there is an illustrated glossary at the back of the book to help with the occasional translation. The book itself is small and light, but there are many weighty subjects touched upon within its covers — water conservation, environmental activism, Indigenous culture and social history.

While The Water Walker is worth reading for its own sake, it would also be a memorable component of any classroom unit exploring water conservation and the environment. It ends with an invitation to step into the story: what do you plan to do to protect the water? Nokomis Josephine would love to hear your ideas!

A mailing address has been included at the back of the book.

Ildiko Sungen is a reviewer from Ottawa and the mother of two young readers.

The emotions and images evoked through Paul Harbridge’s strong, expressive writing are so vivid that one can’t help but sense the young hockey players’ exhilaration as they take part in their favourite game on the perfect ice. Picture this: “It is dark, dark now, and the face of the sky is fleckled with stars. But on the far side of the flood, the sky is brighter behind the trees. The moon is rising.” Or this: “Our wet pants freeze solid in the cold, and we walk clanking like knights in armor, lances over our shoulders, hoods like helmets around our faces.”

Although Harbridge’s text could easily stand on its own, it would take the skill and sensitivity of a gifted artist to add more lustre to this story. Matt James’ illustrations do just that! His distinctive artwork, rendered in acrylic paint and India ink on board, conjures up scene after enchanting scene of the wintry countryside with all its nighttime wonders. The spirited images of those children playing hockey under the luminous moon with such carefree abandon won’t soon be forgotten.

Senta Ross

JUNIOR & INTERMEDIATE FICTION AND NON-FICTION FOR GRADES 4 TO 9

Clutch
written by Heather Camlot
Red Deer Press, 2017
978-0-88995-548-6 (pb) $12.95
for Grades 4 to 8
Historical Fiction | Friendship | Loss | Post-World War II Montreal | Judaism | Baseball | Jackie Robinson

Twelve-year old Joey Grosser lives in post-World War II Montreal in the Jewish neighbourhood known as the Plateau. Having just lost his father, Joey is determined to raise his family out of poverty. He has plenty of money-making ideas but faces constant challenges. The father of his best friend, Ben, offers to help him, but he is not a man to be trusted and will only lead Joey down a dangerous path. Ben tries his best to protect Joey from his dad, but it’s tough for a child to stand up against an abusive parent.

Camlot deftly weaves the story of Jackie Robinson’s season playing for the Royals into the plot by giving Joey a baseball-crazed little brother and begins each chapter with a baseball quote to further intrigue the reader. She also includes the Holocaust story of old Mr. Friedman, a neighbourhood friend, as an invaluable lesson in history. Readers can refer to the glossaries of Yiddish and baseball terms and learn more about the author at the back of the book. It’s obvious great attention has been paid to details in this thoroughly researched novel.

Heather Camlot has hit a home run with this debut novel! Chapters are short, the plot moves along at a great pace and she has created endearing characters that are easy for kids to relate to. Both reluctant and proficient readers will want to keep turning the pages to reach the end, and whether they’re baseball crazed or not, they’ll love this heartfelt and moving story about a young Jewish kid who just wants a better life for himself and his family.

Sandra O’Brien is the editor of Canadian Children’s Book News.
**Louis Undercover**

written by Fanny Britt
illustrated by Isabelle Arsenault
translated by Christelle Morelli and Susan Ouriou

Groundwood Books, 2017
978-1-55498-859-4 (hc) $19.95
978-1-55498-860-0 (eBook) $16.95
for Grades 5 to 9

Graphic Novel | Family | Alcohol Abuse | Divorce

Narraed by a young boy named Louis, Britt and Arsenault’s latest graphic novel tells the story of a family split apart by an alcoholic father. Louis and his younger brother, Truffle, shuffle between their dad’s country house and their mom’s city apartment. In the city, Louis and his friend Boris spend time spotting unmarked police cars and talking about Louis’s crush on a girl named Billie. By the end of the school year, Louis is still terrified to speak to her. Later that summer, the brothers visit their father, who appears to be sober. The family has a hopeful reunion and decides to embark on a trip to New York City. The family vacation is cut short after Louis’s father is found drunk on a park bench. Upon their return, Louis’s father enters a rehab program and the boys and their mother return to the city. Despite the disappointing summer, Louis returns to school with newfound courage and speaks to Billie, who responds with a smile.

*Louis Undercover* explores challenging topics of divorce and alcoholism in an age-appropriate manner through Louis’s authentic voice. While the family struggle unfolds, Louis embarks on his own personal journey of becoming brave, a quality not seen in his father. Britt and Arsenault collaborate well together; Britt uses text sparingly to nuanced effect in both Louis’s poetic narration and the realistic dialogue between characters. The sparse text allows Arsenault’s illustrations to breathe and forego the use of heavy panel outlines, creating a dreamy quality to the book. Arsenault’s use of pops of colour in heavy sepia illustrations depicts rare panel outlines, creating a dreamy quality to the book. The sparse text allows Arsenault’s illustrations to breathe and forego the use of heavy panel outlines, creating a dreamy quality to the book. Arsenault’s use of pops of colour in heavy sepia illustrations depicts rare moments of joy or happiness, and her use of single- or double-page spreads, often with little text, captures moments of emotional impact. Along with successfully portraying heavier topics, *Louis Undercover* features a main male character with emotion and sensitivity not often seen in middle grade fiction, but very much appreciated here.

Scott Robins is a Children’s Services Specialist at Toronto Public Library and co-author of *A Parent’s Guide to the Best Kids’ Comics*.

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**The Painting**

written by Charis Cotter

Tundra Books, 2017
978-1-101-91887-6 (hc) $21.99
978-1-101-91888-3 (eBook) $11.99
for Grades 4 to 8

Fiction | Mother-Daughter Relationships | Forgiveness | Healing | Time Travel

In her new middle grade novel, Charis Cotter has created a beautiful and emotionally resonant story about the complicated and challenging relationships between mothers and daughters, and what it takes to repair them.

Annie and her mother don’t have much in common. When she finds a painting of a lighthouse in the attic, she is immediately drawn to it, but her mother wishes that she would leave it alone. When Annie’s mother slips into a coma after a car accident, Annie finds herself falling into the painting and meeting a girl her own age living in the lighthouse. Like Annie, Claire also has a difficult relationship with her mother, and Annie thinks she can help them resolve their differences. But who is Claire, and why does Annie keep travelling into the painting?

The chapters alternate between the girls’ voices, which adds another layer of depth to the book and paints a picture of two girls who desperately want to be understood. While the voices do feel similar at times, both characters are compelling and sympathetic and readers will identify with them.

The story is cleverly constructed, and the time-slip device works well to help illustrate the parallels between the girls. Cotter does a good job of keeping their connection to one another a mystery, and building suspense. The book is well paced, and the revelation of who they are will surprise and delight readers.

Themes of forgiveness and healing are paramount to this story, and Cotter ends with an optimistic message about dreams and the role time can play in healing relationships. Highly recommended for middle grade readers.

Rachel Seigel is the Adult Fiction Specialist at Library Services Centre.

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**Sit**

written by Deborah Ellis

Groundwood Books, 2017
978-1-77306-086-6 (hc) $14.95
978-1-77306-110-8 (pb) $9.95
978-1-77306-087-3 (eBook) $12.95
for Grades 5 to 7

Fiction | Short Stories | Chairs | Challenges

In “The Hope Chair” the teacher, Miss Lily, says, “...humans have been telling each other stories as far back as we can remember. Stories about families, stories about children, stories about work and danger, about love and funny animals. We are these stories, and these stories are us.” From a little pink plastic chair with a dinosaur painted on it to a tatami mat, the stories of the varied lives of children and teens around the world and the chairs they sit on make up the affecting collection, *Sit*, by award-winning author Deborah Ellis.

Often heartrending and emotional, *Sit* explores everything from abuse, child labour, divorce, death and the aftermath of Japan’s tsunami. Ellis’s characters certainly do not lead easy lives, but there is something compelling about each that makes this hardship bearable for the reader: the bond between a brother and sister, the defiance of a daughter in her time-out chair, the bravery of a girl who wants to rescue her mother’s donkey, the acceptance modelled by a boy who has had much taken from him.

Ellis’s writing is memorable and touches the heart. She brings out our common humanity in her stories, encouraging her readers to put themselves in the character’s place and imagine what happens next, and to think about what their own chair story would be. A beautiful collection to be read and discussed, *Sit* does require some guidance for younger readers as it contains serious and, at
My name is Jimmy Tornado. I’m 15 years old and I’m a gorilla...
DEAL WITH IT!
times, disturbing themes. Each story can be taken separately, as only two contain repeating characters. Despite weighty undertones, Ellis provides a fitting preface to her work with the dedication, “To all who just need a moment of peace.”

Amy Mathers is a columnist for the CCBC’s e-newsletter for teachers and a YA reviewer for the National Reading Campaign.

**Speaking Our Truth: A Journey of Reconciliation**
written by Monique Gray Smith
Orca Book Publishers, 2017
978-1-45981-583-4 (hc) $29.95
978-1-45981-585-8 (eBook) $9.99
for Grades 4 to 8

Non-fiction | Reconciliation | Resilience | Respect | Canada | Indigenous Peoples

Truth and reconciliation, residential schools, cultural genocide and systemic racism are difficult topics that we, as Canadians, are grappling with as we acknowledge our history and our painful relationship with Indigenous peoples. Healing of past wounds and repairing that relationship require time, awareness and, importantly, education. Monique Gray Smith has written an astoundingly honest and inclusive book that tackles these issues with compassion and clarity.

Of mixed heritage herself, Smith welcomes readers to take this journey of reconciliation with her, “In my Nîihiyaw (Cree) language, we say tawâw, which loosely means “there’s always room.” For you, for me, for your friends, your family, your community. There’s always room.”

The book is comprised of three chapters based on the three strands of a braid of sweetgrass and incorporates elements of the Seven Sacred Teachings. Chapter one, Honesty, explores our collective history as Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians, including The Indian Act, residential schools and the cumulative effects of those schools on generations of Indigenous children. Love, the second chapter, asks the question “Where Do We Stand Today?” Here Smith explores the meaning of reconciliation, explains the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and looks at continued barriers to justice. Chapter three, Kindness, examines what it means to be an ally and the importance of bridge building. In this chapter, a diverse group of young people speak about what reconciliation means to them.

Smith provides many opportunities for reflection within the text and asks thought-provoking questions. Her respectful, authentic voice shines throughout the whole book and she allows room for multiple perspectives. She takes the time to clarify meanings and provides ample documentation through an array of archival photographs, mini-interviews and explanatory sidebars. Smith also reminds readers to take care of themselves when reading topics they find upsetting. Valuable information is also included in the endnotes.

This exemplary title, so obviously written from the heart, is a book that all young people should read. Indeed, it is a book that all Canadians need.

Tracey Schindler

**Two Times a Traitor**
written by Karen Bass
Pajama Press, 2017
978-1-77278-031-4 (hc) $17.95
978-1-77278-024-6 (pb) $12.95
for Grades 4 to 8

Historical Fiction | Time Travel | Family
18th-century Canada | Siege of Louisbourg

Fresh from another fight with his father, 12-year-old Laz wanders during a family vacation to the Halifax Citadel and ends up stranded in 1745. At first, Laz thinks it’s a joke — some elaborate prank by his father to reform him — until he is accused of being an Acadian spy and held captive on the Constance, a British ship. Surviving in the 18th century is a daunting prospect, requiring Laz to think and act fast to get himself out of some dire situations. As the days pass, however, new connections make him question whether he really wants to return home after all.

Two-time winner of the Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People, author Karen Bass follows up Graffiti Knight and Uncertain Soldier with Two Times a Traitor, weaving an exciting tale of adventure, time travel and war, all within a historical perspective.

Bass’s writing provides a visceral experience of the events leading up to the Siege of Louisbourg, thrusting Laz into a life completely unknown to him, without technology, clean drinking water or regular bathing. Armed with his parkour skills and a certain knack for getting people to trust him, Laz manages to get by and even thrive under such harsh conditions.

The result is a sharp contrast. Given opportunity and independence in 1745, Laz proves he is capable of taking care of himself and stepping up into a more adult role, whereas, in the present, Laz is constantly at odds with his father and without opportunity to show how capable he actually is. Bass explores this contradiction briefly in the book’s resolution, highlighting the fact that reintegrating into the modern world is not going to be easy.

Resurfacing after being immersed in Bass’s highly charged, patriotic and engrossing portrayal of 1745 is certainly a challenge, not just for Laz but for the reader as well.

Amy Mathers

**#NotYourPrincess: Voices of Native American Women**
edited by Lisa Charleyboy and Mary Beth Leatherdale
Annick Press, 2017
978-1-55451-957-6 (pb) $14.95
978-1-55451-958-3 (hc) $19.95
for Grades 8 and up

Non-fiction | First Nations | Stereotypes | Diversity | Indigenous Women | Racism | Identity | Inequality | Gender | Prejudice | Self-esteem | Tolerance | Multiculturalism | Adversity

#NotYourPrincess: Voices of Native American Women, edited by Lisa Charleyboy (Tsilhqot’in — Tsi Del Del First Nation) and Mary Beth
Leatherdale, is a powerful, reflective anthology, featuring the words and art of more than 55 contemporary female Indigenous artists from across North America.

Through a sweeping range of poetry, interviews, essays, illustrations and photographs, this poignant collection offers an emotionally raw and much-needed perspective on what it means to be a Native American female today. Invisible wounds from the past mix with lessons for and celebrations of future generations, immersing the reader in bold journeys of contemplation, healing and renewal.

Broken into four separate sections — The Ties that Bind Us, It Could Have Been Me, I Am Not Your Princess and Pathfinders — this 112-page compelling resource grabs hold right from its arresting title and Charleyboy’s heartfelt foreword — “…a love letter to all young Indigenous women … to help dispel those stereotypes so we can collectively move forward to a brighter future.”

Done in the same engaging format and visual style as the 2015 bestselling Dreaming in Indian: Contemporary Native American Voices (which is also edited by Charleyboy and Leatherdale), #NotYourPrincess is a thought-provoking, vibrant and inspirational exploration of identity, stereotyping, tolerance, strength and diversity and contains four pages of detailed contributor bios.

Its indelible, passionate message of courage and hope is sure to spark meaningful conversation both in and out of the classroom, making this a moving, one-of-a-kind must-read that needs to be on the shelves and in the minds of teachers, librarians and teens everywhere. Readers can join the conversation on Twitter by using the book’s title as the hashtag.

Jennifer D. Foster is a freelance editor and writer, chair of Editors Toronto and administrative director of Rowers Reading Series.

This magnificent debut novel invites readers into a finely crafted world that is rife with political machinations and rich with ancient mythologies. The author expertly weaves the Old One and the old stories into her tale, creating a complex and compelling saga. Asha is a well-developed character, whose desire to please her father and alone for her terrible mistake gives her a vulnerability that softens the fierce persona she has adopted. And her tender-heartedness is often in evidence, particularly when she discovers the truth about her connection to the dragons. As the bond between her and Torwin (the slave with whom her life seems to be inextricably bound) deepens, their love story becomes one more element to savour in this epic tale that features strong world building, engaging characters and an intricate plot.

Lisa Doucet is Co-Manager of Woozles in Halifax.

The Lives of Desperate Girls
written by MacKenzie Common
Penguin Teen Canada, 2017
978-0-14-319871-0 (hc) $21.99
978-0-14-319872-7 (eBook) $11.99
for Grades 8 and up
Fiction | Mystery | Murder |
Sexual Assault | Indigenous Women | Injustice |
Gender-based Violence

“White victims get full-page articles about their personalities, their achievements and their dreams. Aboriginal women were only bodies.”

Set in 2006, MacKenzie Common uses her life growing up in Northern Ontario to tell a tale that still resonates with the experiences of women and girls in 2017. When Jenny Parker’s best friend, Chloe Shaughnessy, goes missing, the town focuses its full attention on trying to find this young woman. This includes the local police department, who are determined to bring Chloe home again. When Helen Commanda, a quiet Indigenous girl from the local reserve, is found dead in a snowbank, those same police are so wrapped up in Chloe’s disappearance that they move Helen’s case to the back burner. Shocked by the blatant disregard for this young Indigenous woman’s life, Jenny takes matters into her own hands to piece together Helen’s last days and possibly find her killer. Rife with suspense and harsh realities, Common’s debut novel sparks conversations about the ongoing mistreatment of Canada’s Indigenous female population. Because Common spent the majority of her life living in Northern Ontario, she is able to provide a believable narrative structure that gives teens the chance to reflect on their own privileges. The gender-based violence that is explored in this novel may seem harsh to some readers; however, it is an important conversation starter about whether “Life would always be a playground for men and a survival course for women,” as the main character reflects during her search for these two missing teens.

Ashley Pamenter writes for Girl Guides of Canada – Guides du Canada — and is a former elementary teacher in Toronto, Ontario.

The Last Namsara
(Iskari, Book 1)
written by Kristen Ciccarelli
HarperTeen, 2017
978-0-06-256798-7 (hc) $21.99
978-0-06-256800-7 (eBook) $13.99
for Grades 8 and up
Fiction | Fantasy | Mythology | Mythical Creatures | Identity | Romance

With her hideous scars to serve as a constant reminder, Asha never forgets that it was her illicit love of the old stories that brought down the fiery wrath of Kozu, the First Dragon, on the people of Firgaard when she was just a child. Since that time, Asha has accepted her role as the new Iskari, or life taker, the realm’s most fearsome slayer of dragons. And when her father, the king, asks her to help him Kozu’s head, which would bring an end to the old ways, to the Old One and the old stories, Asha doesn’t hesitate to accept the challenge. Especially when her reward will be the dissolution of her betrothal to Jarek, the loathsome and arrogant commandant of her father’s army. But when her brother begs her to help save the life of one of Jarek’s slaves, Asha finds herself caught up in a very different movement, and she slowly begins to see the truth along with the lies, manipulations and betrayals that have made her into the person she has become. Only then is she able to discover her true identity, and who she really wants to be.
These Things I’ve Done
written by Rebecca Phillips
HarperTeen, 2017
978-0-06-257093-2 (eBook) $13.99
for Grades 9 and up
Fiction | Friendship | Forgiveness | Grief

After spending a year away, Dara has made the difficult decision to come home to complete her senior year. She thinks she is ready to face the memories of the years that she and her best friend, Aubrey, spent at that school together; to endure the accusatory stares of former friends and classmates; to cope with the unending guilt that she lives with every single day, as she relives her involvement in the terrible accident that claimed her best friend’s life. But one thing Dara definitely isn’t prepared for is Aubrey’s brother Ethan’s reaction to her. Ethan makes it clear that he doesn’t hold her responsible for Aubrey’s death, and despite her parents’ admonishments to give him and his family space, Dara finds comfort with Ethan and his bandmates. Soon, she also finds that her feelings for Ethan have deepened into something more. But can she forgive herself enough to let herself be happy again? And can two people who have lived through something so unequivocally life changing find their way to forgiveness and healing, together?

Heartbreaking and beautiful, this book is a thoughtful, compelling and exquisitely crafted exploration of grief. The story unfolds in a non-linear fashion, alternating between the months leading up to the accident and the present. In this way, readers slowly piece together not only the full account of what happened, but also come to know Dara, Aubrey and Ethan, and the dynamics of their relationships before everything changed. The two stories (before and after) are deftly woven into a finely nuanced story of friendship and forgiveness. The characters are complex, imperfect and authentic. Both Dara’s and Ethan’s roads to healing and acceptance are believable, and Dara’s family’s feelings of protectiveness, fear and helplessness in the face of her suffering are realistically depicted. Phillips has given readers an unforgettable story that is thought provoking and masterfully crafted.

Lisa Doucet

The Winnowing
written by Vikki VanSickle
Scholastic Canada, 2017
978-1-4431-4886-3 (pb) $10.99
for Grades 7 and up
Fiction | Science Fiction | Coming of Age | Relationships | Revolution

When Marivic Stone wakes from a vivid night terror of running through hot lava, she realizes what it means almost instantly: the ACES have begun. This means that the time has come for her to go to the Barton Centre to undergo a procedure called the winnowing, which puts an end to the ACES along with any ‘physical impairments’ that might arise during one’s adolescence. Since the discovery of SuperGen, the cure for the infertility crisis that threatened the world’s future not so long ago, the winnowing has become a standard part of adolescence. Marivic is anxious but ready to join her best friend, Saren, at Barton. But when she arrives, things don’t go exactly as she expects. The infertility crisis that threatened the world’s future not so long ago, the winnowing has become a standard part of adolescence. Marivic is anxious but ready to join her best friend, Saren, at Barton. But when she arrives, things don’t go exactly as she expects and she begins to ask questions and develop misgivings. Soon it becomes evident that Marivic and Saren have very different views on the winnowing, and a rift develops between them. Then the unthinkable happens and Marivic’s world is thrown into utter chaos. As she tries to pull herself together in the wake of a terrible tragedy, she makes the decision to join a group of revolutionaries.

In this breathtaking work of speculative fiction, middle grade author Vikki VanSickle veers off into very new territory, and does so with admirable aplomb. She deftly creates a chilling version of society in which the winnowing is simply accepted as some sort of a rite of passage, even when some young people don’t survive the procedure. The plot moves briskly and yields numerous surprises along the way, but never falters or gets too cumbersome despite the complex realities of this version of society, and the work of the Barton Centre. The characters are fully realized and relatable, and, despite the extraordinary circumstances she finds herself in, Marivic shares the same insecurities, hopes and dreams as other teens. The story gives readers much to ponder and will lead many to hope that the author will continue to explore this genre.

Ashley Parmenter

To Look a Nazi in the Eye: A Teen’s Account of a War Criminal Trial
written by Kathy Kacer with Jordana Lebowitz
Second Story Press, 2017
978-1-77260-041-4 (eBook) $10.99
for Grades 7 and up
Non-fiction | Memoir | Holocaust Remembrance | Survivors | Law | Teens | Consequences

This memoir of Jordana Lebowitz, as told by Kathy Kacer, is not a typical story of Holocaust survival. Focusing on the trial of war criminal Oskar Groening, the novel provides the reader with an opportunity to reflect on the modern-day ramifications of the death machine that was the Auschwitz concentration camp. Kacer takes the reader through Lebowitz’s experience as a young Jewish person coming to grips with her family’s past. Still haunted by the actions of the Nazis, Lebowitz becomes fascinated with the trial of 94-year-old Groening and, through grit and creativity, is able to attend his trial in Germany. While there, she comes to realize that there is more to the German identity than Nazis and Holocaust deniers.

In order to bring the pieces of this story together, Kacer uses the blogs Lebowitz kept as well as in-depth research. She alternates between a third-person narrative following Lebowitz and her experience and the first-person testimonial of Groening. As such, Kacer is able to help the reader better understand the conflict with which both are struggling. Although no direct transcript of the testimony exists, Kacer’s treatment of Groening’s story is fair and even-keeled, in spite of the idea that “If you think of the ‘death machine’ [Auschwitz] as a machine, then all the parts of the machine must work. Otherwise the machine doesn’t work.” This concept that there are no blameless Nazis is a powerful one that is rarely explored.

Ashley Parmenter

REVIEWS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED BOOKS

To Look a Nazi in the Eye: A Teen’s Account of a War Criminal Trial
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Ashley Parmenter

The Winnowing
written by Vikki VanSickle
Scholastic Canada, 2017
978-1-4431-4886-3 (pb) $10.99
for Grades 7 and up
Fiction | Science Fiction | Coming of Age | Relationships | Revolution

When Marivic Stone wakes from a vivid night terror of running through hot lava, she realizes what it means almost instantly: the ACES have begun. This means that the time has come for her to go to the Barton Centre to undergo a procedure called the winnowing, which puts an end to the ACES along with any ‘physical impairments’ that might arise during one’s adolescence. Since the discovery of SuperGen, the cure for the infertility crisis that threatened the world’s future not so long ago, the winnowing has become a standard part of adolescence. Marivic is anxious but ready to join her best friend, Saren, at Barton. But when she arrives, things don’t go exactly as she expects and she begins to ask questions and develop misgivings. Soon it becomes evident that Marivic and Saren have very different views on the winnowing, and a rift develops between them. Then the unthinkable happens and Marivic’s world is thrown into utter chaos. As she tries to pull herself together in the wake of a terrible tragedy, she makes the decision to join a group of revolutionaries.

In this breathtaking work of speculative fiction, middle grade author Vikki VanSickle veers off into very new territory, and does so with admirable aplomb. She deftly creates a chilling version of society in which the winnowing is simply accepted as some sort of a rite of passage, even when some young people don’t survive the procedure. The plot moves briskly and yields numerous surprises along the way, but never falters or gets too cumbersome despite the complex realities of this version of society, and the work of the Barton Centre. The characters are fully realized and relatable, and, despite the extraordinary circumstances she finds herself in, Marivic shares the same insecurities, hopes and dreams as other teens. The story gives readers much to ponder and will lead many to hope that the author will continue to explore this genre.

Ashley Parmenter

REVIEWS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED BOOKS

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written by Kathy Kacer with Jordana Lebowitz
Second Story Press, 2017
978-1-77260-041-4 (eBook) $10.99
for Grades 7 and up
Non-fiction | Memoir | Holocaust Remembrance | Survivors | Law | Teens | Consequences

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Ashley Parmenter
The Dog
From award-winning translator and author Helen Mixter
With vivid illustrations by Margarita Sada
Available at bookstores everywhere
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By the Time You Read This...
written by Jennifer Lanthier
illustrated by Patricia Storms
Clockwise Press, 2017
978-1-988347-05-9 (hc) $19.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 2

Picture Book | Friendship | Emotions | Forgiveness | Imagination

Oscar is composing a letter to end his friendship with Sam. He is upset, so understandably his language is a bit dramatic. Addressed “To my mortal enemy,” each line of the letter begins with “By the time you read this” and ends with Oscar dismantling a special piece of their friendship — their Scientific Experiment of Glorious Doom, their Indestructible Fortress of Fiendishness, their Magical Zoo of Mystical Creatures, and on the list goes!

Jennifer Lanthier successfully conveys the bitter anger that disguises a child’s deeper feelings of sadness and betrayal. Many children will identify with Oscar and his need to erase every part of his friendship with Sam. His feelings explode onto the page in a cathartic and humorous rampage of destruction, brought to life with Patricia Storms’ clever and thoughtful illustrations. From the look of determined upset on Oscar’s face to his Magical Zoo of Mystical Creatures — which includes both a MegaKraken (a goldfish) and a Farting Fur-tail (a giant purple stuffy in a makeshift cage) — Storms succeeds in drawing out the emotional magnitude of Oscar’s gestures as well as the magic and imagination upon which a childhood friendship can be built.

This is a book for any child who has experienced (or is experiencing) a turbulent friendship. Perception in these situations can make all the difference. While a misunderstanding might spark the kind of rage and hurt we see in Oscar, an explanation and an apology can go a long way toward mending what has been broken.

Ildiko Sumegi

Jump, Leap, Count Sheep!
A Canadian Wildlife 123
written and illustrated by Geraldo Valério
Owlkids Books, 2017
978-1-77147-289-0 (hc) $16.95
for Preschool to Kindergarten

Picture Book | Canadian Wildlife | Numbers | Counting

How clever! Geraldo Valério has already published the successful alphabet book, Moose, Goose, Animals on the Loose, and with this publication he sets his sights on introducing children to numbers from one to 10, again featuring wildlife from across Canada. Ten double-page spreads, one for each numeral, highlight a variety of mammals, birds, reptiles, fish and insects in increasing numbers. “1 Bighorn Sheep jumping, 2 Grebes dancing, 3 Mantids hunting”... and on they go. Each spread includes the number spelled out, the numeral and a brief phrase about the animal, using an action verb. An informative glossary on the last page provides a few brief facts regarding each creature: “8 Eight Lemming — A northern collared lemming’s front teeth continue to grow throughout its entire life. These strong teeth allow the lemming to eat tough plants, mosses, twigs, and roots.”

Children will enjoy exploring Valério’s colourful collage artwork. Created using magazine and wrapping papers, glue and a big pair of scissors, these lively illustrations are uncomplicated. The creatures are easily located, doing what they do best. There is also one other component to count per spread, which adds a bit of intrigue.

Who knew that counting from one to 10 could be so much fun?

Senta Ross

The Land Beyond the Wall:
An Immigration Story
written and illustrated by Veronika Martenova Charles
Nimbus Publishing, 2017
978-1-77108-465-9 (hc) $22.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 3

Picture Book | Immigration | Refugees | Art

A girl named Emma lives with a harsh aunt in a sad grey world, her parents having been mysteriously taken away. Yearning to be an artist, she confides her hopes to her mother’s doll. Taking a chance and urged on by the doll, Emma boards a boat and sails across stormy seas to a new world where she loses her voice and finds it again.

Artist and writer Veronika Martenova Charles has spent years researching and retelling folk tales in her Easy-to-Read Wonder Tales and picture books and has also explored them in her adult book, Fairy Tales in the Classroom. Now she uses this format to tell her own story.

A teen singing star in Cold War Czechoslovakia, Charles defected during a plane refuelling in Gander, with only a comb, a shark’s tooth and an English dictionary. (An informative Afterword details her story and honours the kind people who helped her during her three-month stay at Pier 21, before the immigration centre became a museum).

The allegorical tale beautifully evokes both a sense of life behind the Iron Curtain and the universal struggle of immigrants to find
a voice and a place in a new country. The story works well as a read-
along; the language and the rhythm of an experienced storyteller is
evident on every page.

Charles’s gentle illustrations move from grey-toned in Emma’s
homeland and in her moments of despair to bright and sunny as
she begins to achieve her dream. Astute readers will also notice
Halifax landmarks.

Gillian O’Reilly is an author and editor.

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**The Man Who Loved Libraries:**

*The Story of Andrew Carnegie*

written by Andrew Larsen
illustrated by Katty Maurey
Owlkids Books, 2017
978-1-77147-267-8 (hc) $18.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 3

Non-fiction Picture Book | Andrew Carnegie | Libraries | Philanthropy

This introduction to the life of industrialist Andrew Carnegie
follows his family from humble Scottish roots to new beginnings
in America when Andrew is 12. At the height of the Industrial
Revolution, he progresses from bobbin boy in a cotton mill, to
telegraph boy, to railway tycoon and industrial magnate. Emphasis
is placed upon his philosophy of gratitude and sense of obligation
to contribute to society. This attitude was exemplified by his
establishment of over 2,500 public libraries around the world,
which revolutionized the concept of library access for all.

This is an engaging, easily read text made more inviting by its
attractive layout. While the intended target group limits us to a
mere glimpse at the highlights of Carnegie’s long and accomplished
life, the book provides much to consider. His belief in hard work,
financial wisdom, reverence for literature and education, respect
for roots and, above all, his commitment to giving back are
enduring messages.

For those wanting more about Carnegie’s legacy, an informa-
tional spread at the end of the book provides more detail on his
many achievements and also touches on his controversial attitude
toward his workers. A list of sources for further reading is also
included.

Complementing the text, the large stylized illustrations in
muted colours are a pleasure to pore over. Animated figures and
depictions of rural scenes of Scotland, bustling city life and calm
places of learning evoke the era and extend the text. In all, this is
a good addition to any collection for young children.

Aileen Wortley is a retired librarian living in Toronto.
Despite the title’s slight size and simplicity, the information provided is eye-opening regarding the habits of puffins and the dedication of those who help them. The simple text manages to convey a significant amount of information about puffin nesting habits, their flight to independence at night and their instinct to follow the stars to their ocean life — a wonder of nature. Equally inspiring are the endeavours of Puffin Patrol volunteers who search for distressed birds and band, weigh, measure and test them for bird flu before sending them to freedom.

The story captures the children’s concern for the helpless pufflings and their joy at setting them free, knowing that through their efforts, these birds will return next year. These emotions are paralleled in the large, vibrant, brightly coloured illustrations that depict earnest children, beautiful landscapes and endearing bewildered pufflings that transform into magnificent free-flying, diving birds.

Additional information about the Puffin Patrol association would be useful, but addendums revealing miscellaneous puffin facts and suggestions on ways to help them are good additions. This is a charming and endearing book that educates and inspires.

Aileen Wortley

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**Polly MacCauley’s Finest, Divinest, Woolliest Gift of All**

Written by Sheree Fitch

Illustrated by Darka Erdelji

Running the Goat Books & Broadsides, 2017

978-1-927917-10-7 (hc) $19.95

For Grades 2 and up

This is a complex tale, with many plot threads interweaving to create the whole. First a lamb, a very special lamb, is born to Farmer John and Farmer Gillian. Her first “Baa” travels around the world. Unfortunately, the greedy Count Wooliam and his equally selfish sister, Woolamina, the Countess of Fleece and Fluff, hear the bleat and journey to find the source. Polly MacCauley hears the sound, too, and knows that this is the lamb that will provide her with the wool to knit the “very finest, most divinest, woolliest gift of all!” Yes, the threads of this yarn weave and interweave to a most satisfying ending.

Fitch is in top form as she plays with language and voice in the telling. Some parts of the text rhyme (there’s even some Gaelic and a literary nod to John Burningham), and all of it is richly poetic. This is writing that begs to be read aloud.

On soft washes of off-white shades, Erdelji’s graceful illustrations almost conspiratorially thread through the pages. They create skies, seas, lands, even air, leading the viewer to the story’s conclusion: *Polly MacCauley’s Finest, Divinest, Woolliest Gift of All* is a treasure to be cherished!

Theo Heras is a writer and the former Children’s Literature Specialist of the Lillian H. Smith Library, Toronto Public Library.

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**The Puffin Patrol**

Written and illustrated by Dawn Baker

Pennywell Books, 2017

978-1-77171-176-0 (pb) $12.95

For Kindergarten to Grade 3

This is a book that defies categorization from Sheree Fitch, one of Canada’s most exceptional and daring writers for children. Is it a picture book? At 68 pages, it’s unusually long; but it is beautifully illustrated by Darka Erdelji. The publisher calls it a ‘storybook’ and that old-fashioned word is spot on. Who is the audience? The answer comes from the cover — “A Yarn for All Ages.”

Correct, again.

It is a misty August night in Witless Bay, Newfoundland, and the season when fledgling puffins leave the burrows where they hatched and take their first flights out to sea. On nights like this, when stars are obscured, baby puffins (pufflings) often become disoriented by lights on the shore. Two friends help a volunteer from the Puffin Patrol to search for puffins that have accidentally strayed. Tomorrow they will release them to the ocean.

Despite the title’s slight size and simplicity, the information provided is eye-opening regarding the habits of puffins and the dedication of those who help them. The simple text manages to convey a significant amount of information about puffin nesting habits, their flight to independence at night and their instinct to...
Stolen Words
written by Melanie Florence
illustrated by Gabrielle Grimard
Second Story Press, 2017
978-1-77260-037-7 (hc) $17.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 3
Picture Book | Residential Schools | First Nations | Intergenerational Relationships

“How do you say grandfather in Cree?” This question from a little girl to her grandfather elicits painful memories in him. Of Cree descent, the grandfather recounts how his language was stolen from him when he was taken away to a residential school as a boy. “Away from home. Away from laughter and soft words. Away from our mothers who cried for us... Away to a school that was cold and lonely, where angry white faces raised their voices and their hands when we used our words... They took our words and locked them away, punished us until we forgot them, until we sounded like them.”

Melanie Florence has written a moving account about the repercussions of the residential school system and how a former resident is determined to regain that which was taken away from him, namely his language. When the little girl presents her grandfather with a book from her school library entitled Introduction to Cree, the words slowly come back to him. “He turned the pages of the book carefully. Masinahikan. Book. He turned another. Word after word. Pikiskwêwina. His words. Pages and pages of them.” With the support of his grandchild, the healing begins. Winner of the Second Story Press Aboriginal Writing Contest, Florence's poignant subject matter and text have emotional impact and historical relevance.

Florence's evocative text is enhanced by Gabrielle Grimard’s sensitive watercolour, gouache, oil and pencil illustrations. The muted black and grey shades employed for residential school memories contrast sharply with the bright colours of the present day. The final page, depicting the young girl walking hand in hand with her grandfather, exudes a sense of intergenerational love, resilience and hope.

Senta Ross

Water’s Children: Celebrating the Resource That Unites Us All
written by Angèle Delaunois
illustrated by Gérard Frischeteau
translated by Erin Woods
Pajama Press, 2017
978-1-77278-015-4 (hc) $18.95
for Preschool to Grade 3
Picture Book | Water | Water Conservation

Child of here, Child of there, child of water... tell me about the water you see, the water you drink, the water that bathes you.

So begins an exploration of the world where readers are introduced to 12 landscapes and the crucial role water plays in the lives of its residents. Of special significance are the children’s reflections on this precious resource in their homeland, which may flow abundantly or with scarcity, depending upon where they live.

The tour begins with a child’s perspective in Quebec: “For me, water is everywhere: / the tap that I turn on without thinking, / the bathtub full of bubbles, / the sprinkler that greens the grass, / the lake that summons us for vacation fun. / For me, water is a burst of laughter.” In sharp contrast is the statement given by a child in arid Mauritania at journey’s end: “For me, water is a miracle: / my abandoned village roasting in the sun, / the endless walk on burning paths, / the shade of the tent where we can sleep at last, / the tank truck that keeps us alive. / For me water is an outstretched hand.” Between these extremes, we visit children in Nunavut, Spain, Russia, Germany, Brazil, Peru/Bolivia, China, Israel, India and Morocco while learning about snow, dams, gardens, rainforests, monsoons and the desert. Originally composed in French by Angèle Delaunois, the lyrical prose has been translated into English by Erin Woods.

Gérard Frischeteau’s vibrant, digitally rendered illustrations aptly portray the landscapes and components of daily life in each country visited. Of added interest is the inclusion of the phrase ‘water is life,’ which has been translated into each child’s language and script and placed within watermarks on each two-page spread. Even the swirls depicting water in this publication’s endpapers serve as a palpable reminder about the necessity to protect and conserve this fragile resource throughout the world.

Senta Ross
“Sleep in safety, eat in earnest, and be happy at Heartwood.”

These are the words that summarize the cheerful sensations evoked from reading Kallie George’s new tale of acorn souffles and brittle seedcakes. The first two titles in this new series, from the author of the Magical Animal Adoption Agency series, once again bring magic to the furry critters of this world.

In A True Home, our sweet protagonist, Mona the mouse, has been wandering the forest in search of a true home since a horrid flood washed her family away. One stormy night, she comes across a majestic tree and is struck by a small heart engraving that perfectly matches the one carved into her walnut suitcase, the only surviving family heirloom she has. Unbeknownst to her, behind this small engraving lies the Heartwood Hotel. Mona stumbles upon the owner of this luxurious safe haven, the imposing badger, Mr. Hartwood, himself. Taking pity on the bedraggled mouse, Mr. Hartwood hires Mona as the new maid, and she is soon overcome by magic at the furry critters of this world.

The second volume, The Greatest Gift, begins with the arrival of mysterious thieves, which leads to the discovery of a hidden orphanage. Mona’s newly formed friendships with the melancholic bird, Cybele, and the proud squirrel, Tilly, have continued to flourish, and she feels more a part of the Heartwood family every day. Between bumbling bears, hungry wolves and cryptic porcupines, life at Heartwood Hotel proves to be as dangerous as it is exciting. As each new threat arises, Mona must use her wits to bring her new friends together and defend her new home. But as childhood memories begin to resurface, Mona realizes she may have found a home that’s not so new after all.

This darling series is an excellent introduction to chapter books for young readers. Kallie George writes a heartwarming tale of courage, love and finding one’s true family. Every enchanting sketch of Stephanie Graegin’s helps reel the reader in, providing the tale with a nostalgic feeling. With George’s clever balance of adventure and mystery, the reader can watch as Mona becomes a brave role model who is never defined by her small size.
her missing mother. With only an envelope to go by, Cammie needs help, something she is loath to ask for from anyone except her best friend, Evelyn Merry. As the other girls in the dormitory find a place in Cammie’s life and the mystery begins to unfold, Cammie learns the true meaning of family and finally escapes Aunt Millie’s grasp.

Although Cammie and Aunt Millie grate on each other, Best makes it clear that their contentious relationship is because they are two peas in a pod. Both filled with spitfire, they may have different ideas about what needs to be done, but they are equally bullheaded about getting there.

Best has a talent for showing the multiple sides of her characters: while in Cammie’s 11-year-old eyes Aunt Millie is clearly a villain, she is humanized by stories about her own past and the surprising motivations Cammie uncovers.

Fans of Cammie will be enchanted by Cammie Takes Flight, rooting for her once again as she confronts challenges in many areas of her life.

Amy Mathers

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The Doll’s Eye
written by Marina Cohen
illustrations by Nicoletta Ceccoli
Roaring Brook Press, 2017
978-1-62672-204-0 (hc) $23.99
978-1-62672-205-7 (eBook) $10.99
for Grades 4 to 6

Fiction | Horror | Fantasy | Magic | Dolls | Haunted House | Gratitude | Family

Hadley has just moved into an old house with her mother, stepfather and stepbrother, but she resents the time and affection her mother spends on her new family and wishes that things could go back to the way they were — just Hadley and her mother in a small apartment in the city.

One day, Hadley finds an antique dollhouse in the attic that looks remarkably like the house she now lives in. This strikes Hadley as odd, but odder still is the glass eye she finds rolling across the floor. When Hadley makes a careless wish, events take a creepy and curious turn. Nicoletta Ceccoli accents this suspenseful tale with three two-page black-and-white illustrations.

Marina Cohen uses a light touch with her pen to conjure an increasingly chilling tale that is sure to cause goosebumps. While Cohen does not shy away from a fearsome ending, she also offers her readers hope: the ending of the book may not in fact be the ending of this particular story.

This book would appeal to children who complain of boredom — readers will eagerly turn the pages as they chase down the inevitable fright that is to come. Many children will see their own sentiments reflected in Hadley’s feelings of frustration and resentment, her wish that things could be different.

While The Doll’s Eye is a page-turning ride designed to chill and thrill, it is also a meditation on happiness and gratitude. Hadley soon learns that wishes do not always turn out the way one imagines.

Ilöko Sumegi

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Legal & Safety
written by Johanna Wagstaffe
Orca Book Publishers, 2017
978-1-77086-493-1 (eBook) $9.99
for Grades 4 to 8

Non-fiction | Earthquakes | Seismology

This jam-packed, up-to-date volume is the product of the author’s lifelong fascination with earthquakes, through both personal experience and a career in seismology. Using scientific explanation and personal interviews, the complex topic of earthquakes is broken down into five general areas comprising the causes of quakes, the use of technology to enhance our knowledge of them, their widespread repercussions, early warning systems and personal preparedness. Recent or historically major earthquakes and tsunamis are highlighted, and insightful information is presented on the oft-predicted earthquake on the west coast of North America.

Despite the quantity and complexity of material, the subject matter is clearly presented and made easier to assimilate through the subdivision of chapters and a plethora of charts, diagrams and ‘Quake Facts’ in the form of sidebars. These devices, together with a variety of colours and typefaces invite browsing. Many coloured photos, some being stock pictures, others of the author at work, are well captioned, providing another learning source. There are a glossary of terminology and a number of website resources for further reading as well as an index. The contrast between factual information and the first-hand experiences of children living through a quake is powerful.

Using the slogan ‘Be prepared, not scared!’ the author discusses individual responsibility in terms of preparation and safety procedures that include survival techniques and emergency plans, kits and supplies.

This is a valuable tool for public libraries as well as junior and middle schools, and a must-read for those living in earthquake zones.

Aileen Wortley

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Love, Ish
written by Karen Rivers
Dancing Cat Books, 2017
978-1-77086-492-4 (pb) $12.95
978-1-77086-493-1 (eBook) $9.99
for Grades 5 to 8

Fiction | Friendship | Family | Dreams | Hope | Courage | Cancer | Loss

Thirteen-year-old Mischa (Ish) knows her destiny. She is going to be one of the first colonizers of Mars. Ish has applied to the ‘Mars Now’ project 47 times, and while she hasn’t been accepted yet, the mission won’t leave for another 10 years; so with single-minded determination, Ish is preparing for a Martian life while still stuck on Earth — which she believes has pretty much been ruined by humans. Also, Ish is working on forgetting Tig, her best and only friend, who moved away and has not contacted her even once.
She and Tug shared everything, especially Mars, and his absence is an ache in her heart she tries hard to deny.

On the first day of grade seven, alone at a new school, Ish collapses and when she wakes up in the hospital, she is given a diagnosis that jeopardizes her future plans. Now battling cancer, Ish’s bright, imaginative inner life seeps into her altered reality. Her dreams, blurring the line between waking and sleeping, become more vivid as the disease takes its tragic toll. Mercifully, Ish spends more and more time on Mars, experiencing the space adventures she had always known awaited her.

Karen Rivers, award-winning author of *The Girl in the Well Is Me*, has captured the voice of pre-teen Ish perfectly. Her inner monologue is poignant, engaging and beautifully authentic; it is the voice of a feisty young girl gradually understanding — and accepting — that her life is ending before it really gets started. While the story is at moments unbearably sad, it is also hopeful, joyous and even laugh-out-loud funny. Ish goes where most of us fear to tread. She is brave and hopeful and vibrant to the end. A heart-breaking and luminous story of friendship, courage, family and loss.

Tracey Schindler

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**The Night Garden**

written by Polly Horvath

Puffin Canada, 2017

978-0-14-319-864-2 (hc) $21.99

978-0-14-319-859-8 (eBook) $11.99

for Grades 5 to 8

Fiction | Magic | Mystery | Vancouver Island | World War II | Family

Franny loves her quiet, peaceful life on Vancouver Island. She writes, her adoptive mother, Sia, sculpts and her adoptive father, Old Tom, tends to their gardens — including the mysterious night garden, to which entrance is forbidden. The garden can supposedly grant each person who enters a single wish, but as readers are cautioned, wishes must be made carefully, because wishes can never be undone.

When their neighbour Alice begs Franny’s mom to watch her three children, Franny’s life is turned upside down. Alice suspects her husband is up to no good and must travel to his military base to see him. Shortly after the children arrive, they start receiving mysterious letters from their father. At first, they don’t understand what they mean, but by the time they figure them out, it’s too late to stop the plan he’s put into action. Can a wish from the ancient, forbidden night garden save their father and their family?

The story is funny and unpredictable, and readers will have a hard time guessing what is going to happen next. Franny is perceptive and insightful, and her narration offers readers a perspective on how children think.

The language is sophisticated and poetic, and the book would probably work best as a read-aloud. While young readers will certainly appreciate the story, average nine-year-olds might find this too challenging to fully comprehend on their own.

Overall, this is a thoughtful, beautifully written book that will provide readers with a magical mystery adventure, full of off-beat and zany characters.

Rachel Seigel

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**Out of Tune**

(*A Riley Donovan Mystery, Book 3*)

written by Norah McClintock

Orca Book Publishers, 2017

978-1-4598-1465-3 (pb) $10.95

978-1-4598-1467-7 (eBook) $8.99

for Grades 5 to 8

Fiction | Mystery | Family Dynamics | Music | Pressure | Adoption | Bullying | Abuse

In this final instalment before her passing in early 2017, Norah McClintock creates the perfect end to the Riley Donovan Mystery series. These dark and thrilling novels introduce readers to a strong-willed and stubborn protagonist. Each novel expertly weaves a new standalone tale that presents Riley with the opportunity to covertly — and not so covertly — support her detective aunt in solving crimes in fictional small-town Canada.

In this most recent case, a promising teen violinist disappears without a trace, and the town is left to pick up the pieces. When her body is discovered in a foreboding forest, everyone is thrown into a tailspin as the police try to find her murderer. Her best friend, Carrie, is accused, so she asks Riley to clear her name. It is quickly revealed that nothing is what it seems.

Filled with teen drama and rumours, the novel becomes more than a straightforward whodunit. McClintock introduces themes of abuse, bullying and teenage pressures seamlessly throughout the story. Her use of parental pressure, especially for teenagers studying classical music, creates a realistic edge to the novel, reflecting the experience of many young prodigies. The first-person narrative style of Riley Donovan makes this an interesting and accessible read. Although more advanced mystery enthusiasts may pick up on the clues before Riley herself, the plot does not shy away from some darker topics, creating an enthralling read for all.

McClintock will be greatly missed by all her readers.

Ashley Pamenter

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**Smartphone Movie Maker**

written by Bryan Michael Stoller

illustrated by Victor Beuren

Candlewick Press, 2017

978-0-7636-9411-1 (hc) $29.99

for Grades 3 to 7

Non-fiction | Smartphones | Film Making | Storyboarding

The Smartphone Movie Maker box set includes everything kids need to make their own movies at home using only a smartphone. The set includes a book that guides the reader step by step through the process of creating a film, with all kinds of practical advice, from how to write a script, to assembling costumes and props and creating animation and special effects, all the way to setting up the end credits. A second booklet gives storyboarding examples, along with blank-template pages with ample space for kids to draw. Finally, the box itself can be turned into a projector, which, along with their smartphone, readers can use to screen their movie. Cutout sheets included in the box can be turned into tickets and a popcorn box.
could just turn off her anxious thoughts, this is far easier said than done. However, with her relocation come many thrills, including a budding relationship with the quirky violin-playing Salix, and assisting at the birth of her baby sister.

Mac unflinchingly relays the realities of individuals with severe anxiety without romanticizing their struggles or reducing them to their anxiety. With the rising number of discussions surrounding how mental health is portrayed to young adults, this sweet tale offers a refreshing take on the issue. This novel is beautifully appropriate for young teens, extending the narrative to revolve around a young queer woman who is defined by neither her sexuality nor her anxiety.

Kayla O’Brien

10 Things I Can See from Here
written by Carrie Mac
Alfred A. Knopf, 2017
978-0-399-55625-8 (hc) $23.99
978-0-399-55627-2 (eBook) $12.99
for Grades 9 and up
Fiction | Anxiety | Family | Relationships | Romance | LGBTQ Issues

Carrie Mac’s editor, Kelly Delaney, provides us with a delightful statement at the beginning of this novel, declaring that this is a book about anxiety and a book about love, but it is not a book about curing anxiety with love. The life of Maeve, our witty protagonist, is thrown into chaos when her mother, her main confidante, leaves to work in Haiti for six months, forcing Maeve to move in with her father, stepmother and energy-crazed twin brothers in Vancouver. Although Maeve wishes that she
discarded talents and dead dreams,” will play no future role in her life. She envisions herself following her boyfriend to California, where he will pursue his celebrity chef dream, and she will become — well, about that she’s not quite sure. To graduate, Twyla requires 40 community-service hours, and she, a pacifist, finds herself providing domestic assistance to a ‘warmonger,’ a 20-something Marine vet, Gabriel Finch, whose two combat tours in Iraq have contributed to his PTSD diagnosis.

The title refers to the ‘therapeutic’ mural that Gabriel is creating in a decommisioned intercontinental ballistic missile silo situated on his parents’ bankrupt farm. Beyond its underground location, what makes Gabriel’s 150-foot-high mosaic unusual is its subject matter, Uruk, the world’s oldest city, and Gabriel’s materials, spent cartridges and shell casings, which he glues to the silo’s walls. Though character development is at the novel’s core, the geographic setting functions much like an antagonist. Over the past decade, Halo and its environs have experienced severe economic dislocation, and the imminent closure of the adjacent air force base will further impact the already limited futures of Halo’s youth. Since few YA titles consider what follows the receipt of a graduation parchment, adolescents will appreciate Berkhout’s emotionally moving rite-of-passage novel.

For some three decades, Dave Jenkinson taught children’s and YA literature at the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

### On the Spectrum
written by Jennifer Gold
Second Story Press, 2017
978-1-77260-042-1 (pb) $13.95
978-1-77260-043-8 (ebook) $8.99
for Grades 7 to 10

Fiction | Eating Disorders | Autism | Social Media Awareness | Self-acceptance

Sixteen-year-old Clara Singerman has grown up in the shadow of her beautiful, slender mother, the famous ballerina, Catherine Malcolm. As such, she has always felt pressured to be thin by a mom with an unhealthy food avoidance. When the school guidance counsellor suggests that Clara may be battling anorexia, tensions grow as mother and daughter become more cognizant of their eating habits. After a social-media disaster, and frustrated by her diagnosis, Clara decides to spend the summer with her father in Paris. There she develops a unique bond with her six-year-old half-brother, Alastair, who is on the autism spectrum. Alastair introduces Clara to a whole new world, one that includes the handsome young pastry chef, Michel.

Jennifer Gold’s strong characterization brings to life these vibrant characters — from the depiction of women battling eating disorders to the struggles of a child who is deemed to be different from his peers. The protagonist’s constant denial of her eating disorder, her growing understanding and empathy for her younger autistic brother and her relationship with Michel enrich this coming-of-age story.

Young females between the ages of 14 and 16 will easily identify with the very likeable character, Clara. With issues surrounding self-acceptance, acceptance of others and the risks of social media, teenage readers will find applicable themes to connect with. The Parisian setting is an excellent backdrop to the well-paced plot, making On the Spectrum difficult to put down.

Melissa Connolly is a Literacy Consultant in Brantford, Ontario.

### Prince of Pot
written by Tanya Lloyd Kyi
Groundwood Books, 2017
978-1-55498-946-1 (ebook) $14.95
for Grades 9 and up

Fiction | Family | Relationships | Dreams | Identity | Illegal Drugs | Nature

Isaac has always managed to keep a low profile at school; he had to, in order to keep his secrets safe. Isaac lives in a remote wooded area with his family who operate an illegal marijuana grow-op. Despite his social awkwardness, he befriends Hazel, a grizzly bear that protects the house and his family who are always at risk of being arrested.

Isaac has a deep passion for art and, according to his teacher, this is a talent worth exploring. Isaac has to push aside his dreams to fulfill the responsibilities his father has set for him. To leave for post-secondary school means leaving his family for good, and this is not part of his father’s plan.

Isaac later becomes involved with Sam, a girl from school who is the daughter of a police officer. Their relationship develops into something that gives Isaac hope, and he begins to dream of a life where he can have it all. Sam proves to be unpredictable and very needy. Her attempts to get her father’s attention spiral into a disastrous graduation night with risky behaviour that puts everyone in Isaac’s life in jeopardy.

Tanya Lloyd Kyi was able to knit many interesting characters and plot lines together to give the reader an inside view of Isaac’s life. Young teens will easily identify with these realistic characters that, while searching for themselves, begin to understand how choices can come at a high price.

Christine O’Sullivan is a secondary teacher-librarian in Brantford, Ontario.

### Zero Repeat Forever
(The Nahx Invasions, Book 1)
written by G.S. Prendergast
Simon & Schuster Canada, 2017
978-1-50114-711-1 (hc) $22.99
978-1-50114-713-5 (ebook) $11.99
for Grades 9 and up

Fiction | Science Fiction | Dystopia | Abuse | Identity

Sixteen-year-old Raven is a summer camp counsellor at an isolated wilderness survival camp when the Nahx invade. She is a fierce heroine, strong, smart and capable, fuelled by her hatred of the Nahx and her hope that other humans have survived the invasion.

Eighth is Nahx, a lowly foot soldier in the Nahx army, who is identified only by rank. His job is to protect his Offside and let her do the killing. When he wakes up in the middle of a battle and
is uncertain of anything except for the directives that are fed to him through an implanted device in his mind, he discovers his Offside has been killed. Alone and confused, he has no details of the mission beyond his directive to ‘dart’ humans and leave them where they fall. But when Eighth encounters Raven, who’s been injured, he rescues her.

Raven and Eighth are complex and conflicted characters who have every reason to hate each other, but also recognize that loss and a mutual need to survive make them less different than they imagined. Raven and Eighth discover that even enemies can have something in common, and gradually shift from mutual hatred to genuinely caring for one another.

The story is well paced, and Prendergast does an excellent job of creating tension as each chapter alternates between Raven’s and Eighth’s perspectives. There are many twists and turns and subtle hints about the origin of the Nahx. Their ultimate goal will pique readers’ curiosity.

Prendergast puts a unique spin on the alien-invasion trope to create a highly suspenseful and thought-provoking novel that will have readers anxiously awaiting the next book in the series.

Rachel Seigel

The Christmas Wind
written by Stephanie Simpson McLellan
illustrated by Brooke Kerrigan
Red Deer Press, 2017
978-0-88995-534-9 (hc) $19.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 3

Picture Book | Christmas | Winter | Kindness

It is a cold and windy Christmas Eve and Jo, her mother and baby brother are in need of shelter. Her mother is sick and little Christopher needs to be fed. When Jo spots Franklin Murdoch’s barn, she is reluctant to seek refuge there as Murdoch is known to be as unfriendly as the wind. Having no other options, Jo takes her little brother and lays him in an empty manger and then goes back to help her mother to the barn. When she returns, Baby Christopher is gone, forcing Jo to knock on Murdoch’s door to get the baby back. But Murdoch exhibits great kindness by taking Jo and her family in for the night and surprising them with a magical Christmas morning.

This charming read reminds us of what is most important during the festive season and has many elements of the original Christmas story hidden within its sparse text and stunning illustrations. Both McLellan and Kerrigan have outdone themselves in the creation of this beautiful new Christmas story. Prior to the release of The Christmas Wind, McLellan worked with almost 1700 students on a unique literacy initiative that resulted in 13,000 drawings inspired by the story. For more information, visit www.stephaniemclellan.com.

Sandra O’Brien
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RED LEAF LITERATURE

#NotYourPrincess: Voices of Native American Women
Lisa Charleyboy, Mary Beth Leatherdale (ed.)

Clutch
Heather Camlot

The Last Namsara
(Iskari, Book 1)
Kristen Ciccarelli

Letters to a Prisoner
Jacques Goldstyn, Angela Keenlyside

The Lives of Desperate Girls
MacKenzie Common

Louis Undercover
Fanny Britt, Isabelle Arsenault, Christelle Morelli, Susan Ouriou

The Painting
Charis Cotter

Picture the Sky
Barbara Reid

Sit
Deborah Ellis

Speaking Our Truth: A Journey of Reconciliation
Monique Gray Smith

These Things I’ve Done
Rebecca Phillips

To Look a Nazi in the Eye: A Teen’s Account of a War Criminal Trial
Kathy Kacer, Jordana Lebowitz

Two Times a Traitor
Karen Bass

The Water Walker
Joanne Robertson

When the Moon Comes
Paul Harbridge, Matt James

The Winnowing
Vikki VanSickle

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WE RECOMMEND

10 Things I Can See from Here
Carrie Mac

The Adventurer’s Guide to Dragons (and Why They Keep Biting Me)
(The Adventurer’s Guide, Book 2)
Wade Albert White, Mariano Epelbaum

By the Time You Read This...
Jennifer Lanthier, Patricia Storms

Cammie Takes Flight
Laura Best

The Christmas Wind
Stephanie Simpson McLellan, Brooke Kerrigan

The Doll’s Eye
Marina Cohen, Nicoletta Ceccoli

Fault Lines:
Understanding the Power of Earthquakes
Johanna Wagstaffe

The Greatest Gift
(Heartwood Hotel, Book 2)
Kallie George, Stephanie Graegin

Jump, Leap, Count Sheep!
A Canadian Wildlife 123
Geraldo Valério

The Land Beyond the Wall:
An Immigration Story
Veronika Martenova Charles

Love, Ish
Karen Rivers

The Man Who Loved Libraries:
The Story of Andrew Carnegie
Andrew Larsen, Katty Maurey

The Mosaic
Nina Berkhourt

The Night Garden
Polly Horvath

On the Spectrum
Jennifer Gold

Out of Tune
(A Riley Donovan Mystery, Book 3)
Norah McClintock

Polly MacCauley’s Finest, Divinest, Woolliest Gift of All
Sheree Fitch, Darka Erdelji

Prince of Pot
Tanya Lloyd Kyi

The Puffin Patrol
Dawn Baker

Shark Lady: The True Story of How Eugenie Clark Became the Ocean’s Most Fearless Scientist
Jess Keating, Marta Álvarez Miguéns

Smartphone Movie Maker
Bryan Michael Stoller, Victor Beuren

Stolen Words
Melanie Florence, Gabrielle Grimard

A True Home
(Heartwood Hotel, Book 1)
Kallie George, Stephanie Graegin

Water’s Children: Celebrating the Resource That Unites Us All
Angèle Delaunois, Gérard Frischeteau, Erin Woods

Zero Repeat Forever
(The Nahx Invasions, Book 1)
G.S. Prendergast

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