TRANSLATION
A Glimpse Into Other Cultures and Viewpoints

Sheree Fitch
Poet, Storyteller, Dreamer

Bookmark!
Mystery, Mayhem and Magic!

Reviews of over 35 books by Elise Gravel, Allan Stratton, Jan Thornhill, Eric Walters and more
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**Medium:** Gouache, ink, pencil and a toothbrush.

**About the Illustrator:** Marion Arbona was born in France. After obtaining her diploma in animation at the École nationale supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, she moved to Quebec. She devotes her life to illustration, painting and animation. In constant evolution, she explores new techniques such as scratchboard, pastel and transparency, which she combines with her favourite media: gouache, ink and image retouching. For more information, visit [www.marionarbona.com](http://www.marionarbona.com).

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“Absolutely necessary.”
-kirkus, starred review

“A medicine bundle of hope and a treasury of hard truths. We are witnesses together who can all do our part in the great healing ahead.”
—Richard Van Camp, award-winning author of Little You

“Includes messages of resilience from community leaders and elders and devotes an entire chapter to interviews with young people as they express how important it is for them to contribute to the healing of their communities. One survivor says, ‘Reconciliation is asking myself who my Ancestors were the day before they went to residential school, then doing everything I can to return to that.’ Smith’s book is an effort that returns, offering diverse voices that invite the world into the reconciliation experience.”
—-Kirkus, starred review

Monique Gray Smith is a mixed-heritage woman of Cree, Lakota and Scottish ancestry. She is an international speaker, an award-winning author and a sought-after consultant. Monique and her family live on Lekwungen territory in Victoria, British Columbia.
As you sit down to read this, the days are most likely getting cooler and the leaves are starting to change colour. Fall has always been my favourite time of year for so many reasons, but now, in my second year as editor of Canadian Children’s Book News, I am excited to see what Canadian publishers are featuring in their fall line-ups. And I do not think you will be disappointed. We have reviews of some fabulous books to share in our “Red Leaf Literature” and “We Recommend” sections, which I hope you will seek out for the children in your lives.

In our opinion piece, Serah-Marie McMahon shares a chat she had with industry professionals about what they take into consideration before deciding to buy or sell a book for translation. Publishers, editors, rights directors and translators contributed their thoughts and opinions in what turned out to be a fascinating conversation.

Rachel Seigel catches up with Sheree Fitch, one of Canada’s most renowned poets, as she embarks on another chapter of her life — the opening of Mabel Murple’s Book Shoppe and Dreamery. It’s been a busy year for Sheree, as she and her partner embark on this exciting adventure together. Sheree also shares the story of her journey to publication, her thoughts on writing and rhyming, and a little advice for would-be writers.

And be sure to read Marylyn Miller Oke’s “Voices of the True North: Strong and Unrestrained” as Christy Jordan-Fenton talks about her mother-in-law Margaret Pokiak-Fenton’s experiences growing up in the High Arctic and how those experiences have impacted their writing. This writing duo have created books that share how important Inuvialuit culture and cultural identity are to young people.

Finally, I invite you to enjoy our photo spread of TD Canadian Children’s Book Week 2017, our “Keep Your Eye On” column featuring YA author Michelle Krys, and our “Bookmark” column in which we share mystery titles for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

Venture into a new book this fall!

Sandra O’Brien

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More Than Words
Translating a Path to Global Awareness

BY SERAH-MARIE MCMAHON

There is an Italian adage, traduttore traditore, which means something close to translator is traitor. It’s funny because, aside from the questions it raises about the fidelity of translation, it puns on the similarity of the words. Translated to English, of course, the pun disappears. On the other hand, it becomes an autology — a perfect example of itself.

You can learn a lot about a culture by how they tell a story. However traitorous it may be, translation offers a glimpse into cultures and viewpoints that would otherwise remain unavailable. If we in Canada truly value diversity and inclusivity, books (and particularly those for children) must be important early exposures to the spectrum of cultures, values and storytelling.

To find out more about contemporary considerations of picture book translation, Canadian Children’s Book News spoke with the following publishers, rights directors, editors and translators. We discussed books translated for the Canadian market (buy-ins), Canadian books translated abroad (selling rights) and what it takes to be a great book in translation (that can travel).

Sheila Barry (SB) is the publisher at Groundwood Books.
Karen Boersma (KB) is the publisher at Owlkids Books.
Yvette Ghione (YG) is the editorial director at Kids Can Press.
Barbara Howson (BH) is Vice President of Sales and Licensing at House of Anansi and Groundwood Books.
Chantale Lalonde (CL) is Vice President of the French Division at Scholastic Canada.
Susan Ouriou’s (SO) translations for children and young adults have won numerous awards.
Adrienne Tang (AT) is the Rights Director at Kids Can Press.

What changes has the translation market seen recently?

BH: Groundwood is a bit of an anomaly, because our publisher is very strong-willed and gets to do whatever she wants! [laughs] However, when I worked for other presses we were consulted a lot, because so much of the income story. However, when a book is good, it needs to be broadcast around the world. How many languages is Harry Potter in? Translation from another language is not a valuation of quality.

YG: We’ve increased translation buy-ins in the last seven years, certainly. I think the market is more receptive to voices from away, “own voices,” stories that are not typical of what we’ve previously seen in the North American landscape, different illustration styles. I don’t know if that’s down to the tastes of the few loudest voices, the bigger blogs in the States. I don’t know that we can call them tastemakers, but certainly they’re highlighting creators who may not have received the same attention. I honestly don’t know if amazing authors like Aikiko Miyakoshi had been published in North America 10 years ago, if people would have responded. I hope so. There’s nothing too radical about her illustration style. But there is sort of an other-worldliness about it.

SO: There seems to be a willingness to tackle darker subjects. I see it as a way of acknowledging the challenges that children in modern society are often forced to face, whether it be mental illness, a family’s break-up, a parent losing a job, physical and cyber bullying, less contact with the great outdoors or technology’s invasion of time for play. Not to mention young people’s exposure to news of major stressors in the larger world — climate change, international tension and wars, inequality, poverty, the truth about Canada’s treatment of First Peoples… the list goes on. Children need literature to feel less alone, to find their own path through it all.

KB: Technology has changed. We can send samples by PDF, everything moves more quickly. It’s easier to reach a wide variety of people, to find a publisher I might not otherwise have found, or one I would not have expected to be interested in that particular book, in that particular territory. It works both ways; we’ve had publishers find us who might not have before.

When you acquire a new book, how much do you consider its potential to be translated elsewhere?

BH: Groundwood is a bit of an anomaly, because our publisher is very strong-willed and gets to do whatever she wants! [laughs] However, when I worked for other presses we were consulted a lot, because so much of the income
would come from foreign rights. Selling in Canada is very small. We would publish more for an international market. Groundwood doesn’t do that, the sales team doesn’t have much input.

**SB:** The argument I would use, and Barb would agree, is that it’s best if you have a house with a strong vision of the kinds of books you do. Do the best books of that type, and you will find a market internationally. Or you won’t, international sales are not for every book. Some books will not travel, maybe because of the illustrations, even if the universal story is there.

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**Who is the most interested in translating Canadian books right now?**

**BH:** We’ve had more success in France than we’ve had in a while, though that probably has less to do with aesthetics than finding like-minded small publishers who, in a few cases, took books I’d never dreamed they would have taken.

**KB:** China is very strong at the moment; we’ve seen significant growth in the last couple of years. We do a lot with the UK, especially non-fiction picture books. Korea is still strong, probably not as strong as it was four years ago. They’ve had a tumultuous year politically, and you see that when you’re selling rights. But it’s still a good market.

**AT:** Turkey is hot. China is really hot. China just has a huge appetite for foreign books. Though we’ve been notified by the Association for Canadian Publishers that the Chinese government is concerned that there are too many foreign books in China, and they will be limiting how many they will allow in.

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**Do you think China scaling back will affect Canadian books?**

**KB:** I’m sure they are looking at how many books they’re bringing in, but I think it’s too soon to tell what the effect will be. I don’t think it’s for the kind of books that we are doing, not for good-quality trade books. Our Chinese agents are not overly concerned. But, it’s a big market, a complicated market. It’s one of the only ones where we work with an agent, because it’s so complicated. But it will probably still be good. I’m not particularly worried.

**AT:** It’s still being sorted out. We’ve talked to our Chinese agents on the ground and they don’t think it’s going to affect us, for the time being. What they are really concerned about is having a lot of books that are not high quality, that are not strong stories and that are not illustrated very well. Mostly it’s the very commercial stuff they are looking to limit now.

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There has been a lot of recent attention paid to diversity in North American publishing. How does that affect books in translation?

**YG:** Cultural sensitivities are something we keep a watchful eye on. So often I’ll be flipping through a book...and everybody’s white. That’s not really going to fly. We have, in a few cases, gone back to publishers and asked that, if it doesn’t affect the story in any way, could the illustrator introduce more diversity? We have done that. Some things just don’t occur to the originating publisher. Whether that’s because of the country, or society, or culture, I can’t tell you.

**CL:** There has been a big change, a good change. For so long, it was just pages filled with these little white faces. No. At Scholastic I can very honestly say the French division pushed other divisions. We needed more representation. We sell a lot of books to English Canada, to the immersion market. They’re not just white, they’re from all over the world. I remember years ago, when we did the Franklin books, we couldn’t call him Franklin. It’s not a French name. The translator suggested Benjamin, and the team went for it. Today there is no way I would change his name. We used to say that the French Canadian market won’t know a name like Amal, they won’t be able to pronounce it. But kids figure it out, and they are better for it. Multi-ethnicity and diversity is extremely important.

**AT:** In the past, most international publishers would say absolutely not if there was a Black character on the cover. I couldn’t sell it. It’s partly the publisher — they have to pave the way — but it’s an economical decision, too. If they don’t think they can sell the book, they can’t make money. Asian territories like Asian characters, but they are very wary of stereotypes. The story can include Asian characters, but not be a story about being Asian. Those stories don’t always make sense — being Asian in North America is very different than being Asian in China.
BH: Five years ago, publisher after publisher would tell me that they didn’t have people of colour in their country, so they couldn’t have multicultural books. Now, they are much more open to it. They are interested in difficult subjects. Take Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress — I would never have thought it could be sold in Turkey, but we did (sell it). You can’t look at books from too much of a political viewpoint, you have to keep an open mind. In any country, even many conservative countries, there are progressive publishers. Finding those like-minded publishers is part of my job. You can go to book fairs like Bologna and you’ll have Northern Europeans telling you they only have blond children. It can feel as though that’s what every publisher is saying to you. But on some level it means you’re not trying hard enough.

Is diversity something your market is specifically asking for?

CL: Yes. Canadian schools, libraries, bookstores and parents are all asking for it. Our French division does about five or six original titles a year, and the rest are all translations we buy from other publishers. Diversity can be hard to find. Right now, for example, I am looking for an amazing picture book about being autistic. Or about a child who knows they are gay from a very early age. There are some books that touch on these topics, but none that are quite right for us, like Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress. It’s a truly great book, but the ending was too vague for our market.

AT: Foreign markets are not asking for diversity. No territories, no general publishing from around the world, are asking for it; this is not something we are being asked for. Even still, we are striving to be more diverse all the time. There are organizations that we work with that are encouraging us. Canada is quite progressive, but everywhere else is taking a bit more time to catch up. Eventually I think they will get there. The fact that they no longer voice objections to me I see as progress. They used to just say no, the colour of that person is just not going to work for them. Now they don’t say anything. But they are not asking for it.

How does a book change when it is translated?

YG: In The Way Home in the Night, we follow a little bunny and his mom, and there are scenes in the windows of certain things that he doesn’t actually see, but he’s hearing or smelling, for example, of someone baking. It’s not in the text. Later in bed he’s recalling memories of his walk home, things that he’s observed. We made the suggestion to specify in the text that he’s remembering scent, “Mmmmm… something smells good.” To remind the reader that it wasn’t all about things he was seeing, but also smelling and hearing, so kids can make the connection a little more easily. We made our case to the original publisher and the author, and they were open to it. Sometimes it works, it’s well received. Other times it takes a little time, a little back-and-forth before we hit on what will work for both of us.

SO: I never rewrite text. Most of what I do is to try to understand the original author, what their intention was, what emotions they meant to evoke. Appropriate language is important. Nothing that becomes too difficult for children to follow, while also realizing that they like to be challenged. They are often able to understand much more than you would think at first. You want to speak to their emotions and use language as play. Because, of course, language offers wonderful opportunities for play. More or less, we want the reader to have the same experience in both languages. If there’s a cultural reference that doesn’t need to be spelled out in the original, because it’s something that everyone in that culture knows, often just a word or two will make a reader who isn’t from that culture understand what the special significance is. I don’t see it as an addition, because it’s information that was already there for anyone who knows the original language and culture. So it should be found in the translation.

What makes something ideal to translate for the Canadian market?

YG: We’re looking at the same things generally as we are when we’re acquiring an original manuscript. We need to feel confident it will appeal to our market and makes sense with our list. There are glorious books out there, different, humorous books, but they may not have quite the right sensibility. It has to be the perfect package. With non-fiction, there’s a little more leeway. If the topic is really interesting, really well-handled, but maybe the amount of text is a little more than what our North American audience’s threshold might be, we might look at redesiging it. We would have to feel very strongly, though; ideally buy-ins are nice little parachuted-in projects. We’re looking to make as few changes to the original as possible.

CL: We publish three catalogues per year, and we have what I call ‘the grid’ to be filled. We know we need seasonal titles, like back to school, Christmas, Halloween, that kind of thing. We know we need books that are universal stories; like going to the farm, or about being afraid of the dark. A bestseller like the Chris Hadfield book Plus noir que la nuit was a no-brainer, it fills that slot. And then we have themes that are popular. Emotion is a big theme right now. Diversity, especially First Nations. We also have to make sure we have a balance of genders. In the end, a parent will look at our list for the month of September, and they’ll find something they like.

SB: I’m generally not looking for universal stories, I’m more likely to be interested in something very specific to a time, to a place, to an event, to a particular experience, even if it’s quite regional. Because that’s what our whole list looks like. I feel it makes for stronger books. We’re not homogenized. We would never take out a place reference to make it more generic. That’s the opposite of what we do.

Sarah-Marie McMahon founded WORN Fashion Journal and edited The WORN Archive, published by Drawn & Quarterly. She sells and writes about children’s books in Toronto.

She once yelled the French word for ‘seal’ in front of Hervé Tullet. He thought it was funny.
The Canadian Children’s Book Centre

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IN MEMORIAM

Born in Rochester, New York, John Bianchi came to Ottawa, Canada, in about 1968, after a stint in the US navy. Unable to find a job, he survived as a sidewalk artist until he found work at Crawley Films as an animation background artist and later as an illustrator with CJOH TV. He met his wife, Margaret Cameron, an Ottawa native, and they eventually moved to the country to start a family.

By the mid-1980s, John started illustrating children’s picture books for Groundwood Books, but his dream was to illustrate his own stories. When he couldn’t find a publisher for his first book, he co-founded his own company. Bungalow Books' first title was The Last of the Tree Ranchers, which became a surprise success. Over the next 16 years, John and his partner, editor/publisher/author Frank B. Edwards, created 38 children’s books together.

In 1993, John and his family moved to the outskirts of Tuscon, Arizona, where he regularly cycled, hiked and painted landscapes. For more than a dozen years, John travelled extensively across Canada and the United States, encouraging thousands of students a year to get active reading, writing and drawing.

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

Janet Lunn (1928–2017)
Born in Dallas, Texas, Janet came to Canada in 1946, to attend Queen’s University and married fellow student, Richard Lunn. Janet and Richard had five children and she became a Canadian citizen in 1963.

Many of Janet’s books were historical novels and she wrote The Story of Canada with Christopher Moore. Her 60-year writing career was marked by numerous awards, including two Governor General’s Literary Awards for Children’s Literature, the Vicky Metcalf Award for Literature for Young People and the Matt Cohen Award: In Celebration of a Writing Life. Janet was also the recipient of the Order of Ontario and a Member of the Order of Canada.

From 1984 to 1985, Janet was the first children’s author to serve as chair for The Writers’ Union of Canada and during that year she fiercely advocated for the reversal of federal government cuts to the budget of the Canada Council for the Arts. In 2002, she was made a Lifetime Member of The Writers’ Union of Canada, in recognition of her long and dedicated service to the organization.

Janet Lunn authored 18 books for young readers, including novels, non-fiction works, reference books and picture books and, in 2002, delivered the Margaret Laurence Memorial Lecture. We would like to extend our condolences to Janet’s family and friends.

Gisela Tobien Sherman (1947–2017)
On April 23, 2017, Gisela Tobien Sherman was out hiking near her home in Dundas, Ontario, when she suffered a heart attack. As an active member in the Canadian kidlit community, Gisela served many roles in the Canadian Society of Children’s Authors, Illustrators and Performers (CANS-CAIP) and was the author of five books for middle grade and teen readers. She twice won the Hamilton and Region Arts Council Best Children’s Book Award and was shortlisted for the Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People for her most recent novel, The Farmerettes.

At the age of six, Gisela moved from West Germany to Hamilton before settling in Dundas. She became a teacher-librarian but left the classroom after 13 years to pursue a career in writing and editing. She worked for The Globe and Mail and reviewed books for Canadian Children’s Literature. Gisela became a published author in 1994, when her early-reader novel, King of the Class, was released by Scholastic. In recent years, Gisela discovered a love of acting and appeared in small roles on TV.

Gisela is survived by her husband Frank, their daughters, Becky and Jaima, and son Charlie and his wife, Alexandra. Our condolences go out to Gisela’s family and friends.

Canada Hosts Kids’ Lit Quiz Final
June 30 – July 7, 2017
The best young readers in the world competed in the ‘Sport of Reading’ at the Kids’ Lit Quiz World Final in July. Teams of readers from eight countries vied for the coveted trophy and title of World Champion. Corporate sponsors and Canada’s literary community helped make this a memorable week for these students. Jonathan Auxier, Kenneth Oppel, Kevin Sylvester, Linda Granfield, Sang Kim and Ruth Ohi imparted wise words.

Individual sponsors also treated the teams to a trip to see Treasure Island, the CN Tower, Niagara Falls, Bata Shoe Museum, canoeing on the Grand River, Native Storytelling and soapstone carving. The students were thrilled to have a session viewing some of the treasures of the Osborne Collection at the Toronto Public Library as well as chance to try a game of Quidditch!

The Gala Dinner in Celebration of Young Readers, held at the Palais Royale, hosted many members of Canada’s children’s literary community. Among the 200+ guests were sponsors from TD Bank Group and adjudicators Dr. David Booth and Dr. Larry Swartz from OISE.

Canada was well represented by the Lee Academy. South Africa’s St. John’s College won the world title with a convincing lead. This year an extraordinary 80% of participants were boys. Kids’ Lit Quiz Canada is a Canadian registered charity run entirely by volunteers. Visit www.kidslitquiz.ca or email kidslitquizcanada@gmail.com for more information.

TD Canadian Children’s Book Week 2018 | The Tour Roster
The next TD Canadian Children’s Book Week will take place from May 5 to 12, 2018. Thirty authors, illustrators and storytellers will visit schools, libraries and bookstores in communities across Canada to share a love of reading, stories and books. To find out who will be visiting your province or territory, visit www.bookweek.ca. Applications to host a reading/workshop open at the end of September.
1. Marianne Dubuc entertains young readers with sketches during her Manitoba tour during TD Book Week.  
2. Edmonton author Natasha Deen visits Inuvik Centennial Library in the Northwest Territories.  
3. Schools in Prince Edward Island warmly welcome author / illustrator Caroll Simpson all the way from Granisle, BC.  
4. Author Mahtab Narsimhan prepares for her visit at Roberts Creek Elementary School in BC.  
5. Elementary students at Kullik Ilihakvik School in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, examine cones and birch bark during a visit with author Joan Marie Galat.  
6. Students at Mount Pleasant School in Hudson, Quebec enjoy a visit from Regina author Judith Silverthorne.
Tell us about your newest book. Dead Girls Society is about a group of girls who receive anonymous invitations to join a high-stakes game of dares, but soon the promise of a prize is replaced by a fight to stay alive. It’s a fun, fast-paced thriller along the lines of Pretty Little Liars meets The Skulls.

Tell us about the process of writing. I have two young children and I work part-time as a NICU nurse, so I squeeze writing in when I can, which is usually during the week when my oldest is at school and my youngest is napping. I like to set a goal of at least 1000 words a day to keep myself accountable and to prevent me from getting too distracted by the Internet. And then I just sit down at the kitchen table and do it. Not very glamorous, but it gets the job done!

How did you first get published? The old-fashioned way — through the slush pile, which is basically the email version of cold calling. I sent out a query letter and a sample of my novel to a number of literary agents, one of whom was Adriann Ranta. She liked the book, and after a phone call, I accepted her offer of representation. She submitted the novel to publishers, and shortly afterward we got an offer from Penguin Random House. That book ended up being my debut novel, Hexed.

What do you like about writing for young people? I love that YA novels get to the point. Don’t get me wrong — I like the occasional 700-page literary tome from time to time. But what’s so fun about reading and writing for teens is that the action typically happens fairly soon into the story, usually by the end of the first chapter, and it doesn’t stop from there. In short, it’s just fun.

Tell us about writers who inspire you. I’m forever inspired by my critique partner, Ruth Lauren, who wrote four novels before finally landing a book deal. She never quit in the face of rejection and ended up getting a fantastic deal with a great publishing house for her debut middle-grade novel, Prisoner of Ice and Snow. Her drive and determination is truly something to behold.
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Available at your favourite bookstore or order from PGC/Raincoast
www.ronsdalepress.com
Born in Ottawa to a Nova Scotian father and a New Brunswick Acadian mother, Sheree came to New Brunswick with her parents when she was just eight months old. Growing up, Sheree spent every summer in Nova Scotia, which is where she now lives.

It was during these summers that Sheree the writer was born. While Sheree was sitting under the oak tree in front of her grandmother’s house overlooking the ocean in Chester Basin, Nova Scotia, the works of A.A. Milne first ignited the spark in her. After reading The House at Pooh Corner, Sheree almost immediately wanted to start writing her own stories, and she often wonders if that was why she gravitated toward nonsense and stories in verse. At seven years of age, Sheree wrote her first poem. As she recalls, “It was a nonsense tongue-twister kind of poem. To know that something I wrote could make somebody smile! It was like I had discovered fire!”

Anne of Green Gables was also a huge inspiration for Sheree. Her teacher, sensing the writer in her, suggested that her parents take her to visit Green Gables. When they finally did make the trip, Sheree was eight or nine, and it changed her life. It showed her that she could live where she did, be a girl and still be a writer. A year or two later, her father also introduced her to a female American cousin who wrote articles for publications like Reader’s Digest. To this day, she remembers the meeting and still has the article. “She was exotic to me — also so kind, asking me about my own writing. That respect — the experience of meeting a real writer instead of just knowing about a dead one was crucial in continuing the dream.” Sadly, by the time Sheree got to high school and thought about pursuing writing, the advice was to become a journalist. Knowing that wasn’t the path for her, she entered a nursing program instead.

At 18, Sheree left nursing to have her first child, and explored several other jobs before returning to writing. She worked in the federal government processing family allowance and old-age pension applications. She also worked as a front-desk receptionist at the unemployment insurance office. At 26, Sheree took a big leap and entered university full-time to study English literature. By the age of 30, she not only graduated, but published her first book, Toes in My Nose and Other Poems. She then went on to complete her Masters, and became a full-time writer and storyteller. She has also taught children’s literature at St. Thomas University and worked one year as a CBC broadcaster.

Sheree would later draw on those jobs in her writing. As a young woman dealing with old-age pensioners, she learned what it was like to be as vulnerable as an aged person. Seeing what happened when people didn’t get their family allowance cheque helped her understand how much poverty existed where she lived, and how illiteracy could create such pain and hardship in people’s lives. As a single parent, taking her children to school and childcare every morning and then meeting people at the front desk of the unemployment office, she related more to the people on the other side of the desk than to her co-workers. “I was NOT the person who had their life together behind the desk,” she notes. “They were really hard years.” By the time she went to university, Sheree was hungry for anything she could learn about writing. In the spaces between jobs, she would steal away to the library to find every book she could on writing.

Every author she’s ever read has had an impact on her writing, but Sheree has been influenced especially by Canadian literature of the last 50 years, and by British poets from her childhood. She particularly likes the natural storytelling and speaking voices of Shakespeare and Chaucer. In Sheree’s mind, the early texts of childhood picture books demand
that we also become spoken-word poets. When she started writing, she wanted to be the kind of writer that Alice Munro was, or to write tales like Oscar Wilde’s *The Selfish Giant*, or the stories of Hans Christian Andersen. Because of the way picture books are formatted now, she hasn’t had much chance to explore the form, but in her latest book (*Polly Macauley’s Finest, Divinest, Woolliest Gift of All: A Yarn for All Ages*) with Running the Goat Books & Broadsides, she was able to play with the traditions of folklore, legend, fairy tale, whimsy and poetry together.

When asked about her writing process, Sheree was quick to state that she is not one of those writers who has a rhythm and a method or a favourite place to write but she does have a staircase leading up to a book loft. She says something magical happens when she climbs the stairs and goes up there. She also likes writing outside. Part of the dreamery space she is creating in the store is because of her love of literature and literacy in nature — going outside with a book or a notebook to read and write.

**The Journey to Publication**

After 10 years of rejection, Sheree received the phone call that ended up launching her publishing career. It was from an editor at Doubleday Canada. They were just starting to think about publishing a children’s line, and as Sheree puts it, she got lucky. She believes she is one of those writers who has good timing, and got the right editor at the right moment. Her big break truly came when she was interviewed for *Sleeping Dragons All Around* on Peter Gzowski’s *Morningside*. She often says that the only reason she has a career today is because of the exposure she received on a national radio show. At the time, if Peter liked your book, and people heard about you, they’d go and look for that book. When Doubleday Canada stopped publishing picture books, she was fortunate that Nimbus Publishing in Halifax decided to keep some of her original books in print. What this has meant, is that she now has a second generation of readers growing up with her books, and she is keenly aware of how lucky she is.

**Writing and Rhyming**

Known largely for her poetry and rhyming stories, Sheree does see a distinct difference between writing picture books in verse and writing poetry. “One is playing with word music and sounds of the clash and clang of syllables, where poetry is often being quiet, listening very deeply and then reflecting upon whatever it is you would write about.” She explains. “If I wanted to do a tongue twister about a tree, I might play with the word poplar and puppet and purple people and popular. See what I’m doing? I’m playing with the l’s and p’s and spills of syllables and sounds. If I wanted to write a poem, I would sit in front of the tree. I’d look and listen and I might start instead to work through my senses to describe the sound of the leaves — so you see one is a more meditative process in which I will score word music and sounds, and the other one is a more technical acrobatic playing with words.”

As to the challenges of writing a picture book that rhymes? “I’m pretty persnickety about this — too often the text becomes contrived — or the form of rhyming couplets iambic pentameter is carried to a relentless beat, or there’s a lazy attempt at Seussian imitation. A rhyme does not a poem make!” As Sheree points out, “Every word matters and so the words have to be juicy and taste delicious! If you’re going to write a picture book in rhyme, then write for the ear and lip slipperiness. The word music and musicality is paramount. Every word should have a reason for being there — you cannot contrive the line to fit form and lose the authentic voice or logic of plot if there is one.” When people send her their poems, thinking they would make a good picture book, she says they are often artificial and wooden, and an unreviewed first attempt. Her response is they should first write the story not in rhyme, and if they do want to make it rhyme, keep it as close to their authentic speaking voice as possible.

Ironically, rhyming and poetry are not Sheree’s favourite genres to write in. For her, these are wordplay at their hardest, most challenging and finest, and they also keep her heart happy. She longs to write a solid collection of short stories and she loves sentences as much as words. Free-verse adult poetry is something she loves to sit quietly and reflect upon. She’s also been approached to write a collection of essays, which she’s considering. Novels are the most challenging for her, and *The Gravesavers* took her a long time to write. Right now, she’s working on another novel that’s almost done, but novels are “a different emotional landscape from the simple exercises of sitting down and playing with the sound of words.” What really “tickles her sensibility and her tongue” is the “rambunctious mess of nonsense and the word music that’s involved in it”. Sheree still doesn’t think that she’s written the perfect nonsense poem, and she believes she will likely go to her grave not having done so. She sees a lot of ‘sense’ underneath the form of nonsense, and looks at it as a folk-art form.

**On Being a Writer**

As William Steig once said, children’s literature is a literature of optimism, so being a children’s writer makes Sheree’s heart glad, and she hopes it gladdens the hearts of others. For Sheree, there’s really no way to put into words what happens between the teller and the receiver in the doing of poetry and stories in classrooms and libraries, and she’s grateful for it. It’s the people, the teachers and the children that she’s met that she cherishes. It’s seeing how work travels and is used beyond the borders of the page. It’s not just about fuelling her ego, (which of course it does) and feeling good. She realized early on that writing was more about her heart and her spirit being nourished and even healed. Storytelling and poetry are healing arts for both doers and listeners, and have a lot to do with love!

Over the last few years, she’s done fewer school presentations (unless it’s convenient or somewhere she wants to go), but she loves doing storytelling at storytelling / literary festivals (if it’s somewhere her husband wants to go). Having published for all age groups, she likes the idea of working with an entire community for a few days rather than doing a single reading. Now she’s hoping that people will come and visit her in the book shop during the summers.

**Advice for Writers**

Sheree’s advice for would-be writers and poets is to read and write, and be prepared for rejection. Persistence pays off, and
if they persist, they will most likely get the book that’s meant to be. She also suggests having a day job because making a living as a full-time writer in Canada is challenging. There are exceptions, of course, but she certainly had to do a lot of teaching and other things to put food on the table.

On Canadian Children’s Publishing
Canadian publishing, according to Sheree, has reached a point where there is so much excellence, and Canada should be proud of the varied genres that stand tall on a world stage. She is in awe of the quality and beauty and depth of works by both established and emerging writers. She also thinks that in a world of so many books, it can be harder to get published and be discouraging, but the cream will rise, and readers will become more discerning. Canadian children’s publishing is where it is today because of the hard work of people in the early days. She sees the publication of *Alligator Pie* by Dennis Lee in 1974, as landmark, and thanks to those pioneers, the quality and respectability of Canadian children’s literature grew, and continues to evolve.

Opening Mabel Murple’s Book Shop
In the rural Nova Scotia community where Sheree and her husband live, they saw the bank close, and then the grocery store, and then the school. They asked themselves what they could do in the face of closure, and the solution was simple — open something up! Luckily, they were at a point in their lives where they could afford to invest in something, and they decided to offer an experimental kind of tourist experience — literacy in nature! In an era where people are worrying about the fate of print books and bookstores, Sheree is taking a bold step and opening a bookstore! The property is 100 acres, and her hope is that people will go through the book shop, get a book and then go out to the dreamery to picnic, to read or to write.

When Sheree was first published, booksellers — especially independent booksellers, and the local Coles in her region — took an interest in her book and hand sold it. From her own experience, she knows how crucial booksellers are in promoting and supporting young, emerging writers, and if she can spend the next 10 to 15 years doing that, she sees it as a meaningful way to spend her time. “You find out really quickly in the world of children’s books that it’s not about you. It’s about a whole bunch of people who care enough about children to put extra books in their hands. That sense of community has never changed for me. I still believe there are ‘Book Angels’ who figure out how your book gets on the shelves of libraries and in the hands of children.” She can’t guarantee that she’ll be there 100% of the time, but she loves books and authors of Canadian literature, and she wants to get books she loves in people’s hands.

Sheree’s biggest hope for the store is that people will come there and have an experience either by themselves or with their families. She wants it to be a chance for them to step away from the busy, to breathe, and hopefully to make as lasting a memory as visiting Green Gables did for her so many years ago.

Rachel Seigel is the Adult Fiction Specialist at Library Services Centre.
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Voices of the True North
Strong and Unrestrained

BY MARYLYNN MILLER OKE

The Northern writing duo, Margaret Pokiak-Fenton and her daughter-in-law, Christy Jordan-Fenton, export the true North experience to all points of the compass through raw emotion and unfettered storytelling. Christy explains what telling the universal truths about life way up there can teach us all.

Stories inspired by a young Margaret

The relationship between Margaret and Christy extends far beyond the usual in-law dynamic. The co-authors of gripping award-winning memoirs and accompanying picture books, including *Fatty Legs: A True Story* and *A Stranger at Home*, are deeply connected through compelling storytelling that was years in the making.

Margaret grew up in an Inuvialuit community on Banks Island in the High Arctic. Storytelling was an integral part of culture, distribution of traditional knowledge and everyday life, especially during long, inescapable, landlocked winters.

As for Christy, who is a poet and author in her own right, she was inspired to write about Margaret’s colourful childhood, including her harrowing experiences in residential schools of the 1940s. Christy felt an intrinsic desire to share these stories with her own children to build their self-esteem and instill a sense of pride about their heritage.

The visual and visceral art of storytelling

“Margaret comes from a culture of storytelling… very visual storytelling,” explains Christy. “String games, shadow puppets and dancing. For far northern peoples, the winter is a time for exploring story, travelling by dogsled, hunting wolves, and frozen oceans that limit shopping to once a year. Her experiences are very different because she comes from the High Arctic.”

Their co-authored books, *Fatty Legs: A True Story* and its sequel, *A Stranger at Home*, spawned picture books for younger children, including *When I Was Eight* and *Not My Girl*. The vivid works paint contrasting pictures of Margaret’s life as a young girl. One, as a free-spirited and determined Margaret growing up in a vibrant Inuvialuit community rich with tradition, who can’t wait to go away to learn to read. The other, as she struggles to preserve her identity and spirit while enduring the harsh and often cruel realities of residential school. The life-altering legacy of her experience lives on in *A Stranger at Home* and *Not My Girl*. Ultimately changed, she struggles to re-adjust to life with her family in Tuktoyaktuk, NWT, after living away for two years.

“Of course, Margaret’s stories are coloured with tales of travelling by dog sled and by schooner, which were unique experiences shared only by those in the Far North,” reveals Christy. “Her stories also explore the pain of losing a traditional name, a language and skills necessary for daily life, and what it takes to reclaim them. She has been able to share how important Inuvialuit culture and cultural identity are to youth in general, because of her experiences. And so, while the books are written in English, we have used some words in Inuvialuktun throughout, and have framed them with elements of her cultural perceptions.”

The vulnerable path to empowerment

According to Christy, no matter the subject, the story is most important. In addition to sharing residential school history, Christy and Margaret wanted to take the most human approach possible in their work and share deeply personal moments that delve far below the surface.

“I think, in a way, every artist seeks to find the universality through the unique, and that can only be done by exposing the very core emotions of a situation,” shares Christy. “The ones that everyone feels alone in having, but then they read about someone living a life very far removed from their own life, and they can still connect to the feelings and share in that experience.”

For Margaret, the process of writing about her painful journey proved to be a very vulnerable, yet ultimately empowering, experience for her.

“Taking the risk of being deeply personal and sharing your truth can be very freeing in a personal sense, but can also create good medicine for others and where they are with their own personal stories,” reflected Christy. “It took immense courage for Margaret, and the way audiences have held her and her story is a very beautiful thing.”

Revealing the diversity of the North

Within their storytelling, Margaret and Christy also want to emphasize that the diversity found within Canada also extends into the Far North. They want to emphasize that not all northern communities are the same.

“In Canada we are always talking about diversity, but so often that takes place in an urban context, and northern voices and rural voices get marginalized,” states Christy. “What literature there is out there about the Inuit often takes place in the Eastern Arctic. The distinct traditions of the
Western Arctic and its peoples gets lost. So it is important to give voice to these experiences. It is also important for children to have stories that reflect their own culture."

Christy feels literature plays a key role by demonstrating that northern peoples like the Inuvialuit do exist today, and that many are still living in traditional ways.

"The more children are exposed to northern stories, the more they realize that the culture is still alive, and the High Arctic is not just a big empty space," she said.

Bearers of tradition, knowledge and life lessons
Christy adamantly feels that northern storytellers, including Richard Van Camp, Alootook Ipellie, Mindy Willet, Margaret’s brother James Pokiak, Johnny Issaluk and Michael Kusugak, are as diverse as the work they produce reflecting and examining northern experiences.

She believes that northern storytellers are very articulate when delving into themes important to the northern experience, including connection to the land, community and overcoming adversity. She also feels their perceptions yield "something very profound."

"We could just name so many authors who are some of the finest in Canada, and the world for that matter. The North is so deeply connected to storytelling. And for urban readers, a lot of the experiences being written about could seem like sci-fi, except they are real, or could be real. Open their books, whether they are fiction or non-fiction, traditional stories or reference books. Children can’t help but get lost in worlds that stimulate their wildest imagination. And they can go to the places the stories and the knowledge come from. They’re real."

Christy and Margaret also love to share life lessons embodied by the Inuvialuit, including resilience and the ability to thrive, with their young readers.

"Anyone can find inspiration from how adaptable, strong and vibrant the Inuvialuit are. All those characteristics people love about the character of Margaret in the stories are inherent to her people. What child doesn’t need stories of adventure and adaptability and thriving through adversity?"

Life now for the Fentons
After working for the Hudson’s Bay Company, Margaret met her husband, Lyle, in the 1960s. They now live on a farm near Fort St. John, British Columbia, with Christy’s family alongside horses, pigs and wildlife. Most summers, however, Margaret still heeds the call to her northern home where she likes to participate in traditions such as preparing whale. According to Christy, Margaret loves life here and enjoys quiet time to sew, work as an artisan and create traditional crafts.

However, storytelling seems to follow them no matter what place they call home.

"We are still very much influenced by the nature that surrounds us, but we also belong to a community where storytelling is important," said Christy. "There are fewer distractions and options for entertainment in our community, and so people still gather to share stories as a main source of entertainment."

As for Christy, she likes the quiet life on the farm. Having previously enjoyed a wide variety of global experiences, including the infantry reserve, foreign study, working with disadvantaged youth and teaching wilderness survival, she is planning a trip to India to write children’s books about stories of empowered Dalit women.

Both Christy and Margaret have become frequent travellers. It is a role that Margaret enjoys as she loves meeting and speaking with children. Although Margaret could never imagine leaving her beloved home, Christy admits that she can envision living in a locale without winter.

Going forward, they hope to take the art of their unique storytelling to film.

"We’re hoping to make a documentary about her life and her stories,” said Christy. “But first we will have to slow down long enough to catch our breath.”

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.
“BOOKMARK!” Highlights books for a variety of grade levels around a particular theme. CCBC’s Library Coordinator, Meghan Howe, has compiled a list of mystery books that are perfect to read this fall. Some titles will make you laugh, some will intrigue you and some will have you reading well into the night.

Mystery, Mayhem and Magic!

PICTURE BOOKS AND NON-FICTION FOR PRESCHOOL TO GRADE 6

An Armadillo in New York
written and illustrated by Julie Kraulis
(Tundra Books, 2016)
A winsome armadillo goes to New York, accompanied by his grandfather’s journals, to meet the mysterious Lady Liberty. Along the way, he sits in Central Park, visits the Guggenheim and walks across the Brooklyn Bridge, all while following his grandfather’s path to Lady Liberty... but who is she?

Mitzi Tulane, Preschool Detective in What’s That Smell?
written by Lauren McLaughlin
illustrated by Debbie Ridpath Ohi
(Random House Children’s Books, 2016)
Mitzi Tulane may be only three years old, but she knows how to follow a trail of evidence and solve tough mysteries. From strange happenings in the kitchen to the arrival of every family member she’s ever met, Mitzi pieces together the clues and (finally) realizes that she’s... in the middle of her own surprise birthday party!

The Queen’s Shadow: A Story About How Animals See
written and illustrated by Cybèle Young
(Kids Can Press, 2015)
Based on the science behind the way animals see, this intriguing “surrealist whodunit” details the quest for the Queen’s stolen shadow. The Royal Detective, Mantis Shrimp, questions the guests — Chameleon, Shark, Lancehead Snake, Goat, Dragonfly, Colossal Squid, Pigeon and two sea urchins — to solve the mystery.

Who Broke the Teapot?!
written and illustrated by Bill Slavin
(Tundra Books, 2016)
Mom is very angry. Her very favourite teapot is broken, and no one is ‘fessing up.’ Was it Dad, sitting in his underwear reading the paper? Was it Cat, who was all tangled up in a ball of yarn? Maybe it was Baby perched in his highchair?

The Case of the Snack Snatcher
(The West Meadows Detectives, Book 1)
written by Liam O’Donnell
illustrations by Aurélie Grand
(Owlkids Books, 2015)
Meet Myron: a third-grader whose unique perspective from the autism spectrum makes him a top-notch sleuth. Myron doesn’t love new things and now he’s starting his first day at a new school. But when the school kitchen is burgled, Myron is on the case!

The Griffin of Darkwood
written by Becky Citra
(Coteau Books, 2016)
Will Poppy, 12, has always thought writing was magical. But when his author mother dies, he stops writing. He is sent to live with his nasty aunt, who moves them into Sparrowhawk Hall — a haunted castle that holds the key to a centuries-old mystery that only Will can solve.

JUNIOR & INTERMEDIATE FICTION AND NON-FICTION FOR GRADES 2-9

The Blackthorn Key
(Blackthorn Key, Book 1)
written by Kevin Sands
(Aladdin, 2015)
Christopher Rowe, 14, is happy, learning how to solve complex codes and creating powerful medicines and potions as apprentice to Master Blackthorn. But when his master is murdered, Christopher must use every skill he’s learned to discover the key to a terrible secret.
Guardian
written by Natasha Deen
(Great Plains Teen Fiction, 2014)

For 17-year-old Maggie, transitioning the
dead isn’t hard. What’s tough is surviving
Serge, high school bully. When she finds
him dead and discovers his trapped spirit,
she must help Serge cross over and, as
she digs into the circumstances of Serge’s
murder, she’ll uncover dark secrets.

Masterminds
written by Gordon Korman

Eli lives in the most perfect town in the
world: Serenity, New Mexico. He has never
left until the day he cycles to the town
limits and everything changes. Eli and his
friends uncover a shocking secret con-
necting Serenity to some of the greatest
criminal masterminds ever known.

The Sandwich Thief
written by André Marois
illustrated by Patrick Dayon
translated by Taylor Norman
(Chronicle Books, 2016)

Marin loves the sandwiches his parents
make for him. One Monday, someone steals
his favourite sandwich: ham-cheddar-kale.
Furious, Marin begins a famished,
fevered investigation to unmask the thief.
But days go by, and sandwiches continue
to disappear… will Marin ever eat
lunch again?

Vanished: True Tales of
Mysterious Disappearances
written by Elizabeth MacLeod
(Annick Press, 2016)

This book presents six compelling true
stories about some of the world’s most
bewildering disappearances, such as the
escape of three prisoners from Alcatraz
prison and the disappearance of the SS
Mary Celeste. This irresistible combination
of suspense and history also serves as an
introduction to the advances in technology
that may help to uncover what really
happened in each unsolved mystery.

SENIOR FICTION FOR
GRADES 7 AND UP

Along Comes a Wolfe
(A Shepherd & Wolfe Mystery, Book 1)
written by Counios & Gane
(Your Nickel’s Worth Publishing, 2016)

When his girlfriend disappears, Tony
Shepherd joins forces with troublemaker
Charlie Wolfe to find out what happened.
But Charlie’s investigations aren’t always
legal, so when another missing girl is
found dead, Tony learns that doing right
sometimes means doing wrong.

Endangered:
A Death on a Deadline Mystery
written by Kate Jaimet
(The Poisoned Pencil, 2015)

Hayley, working as a cub reporter for her
dad’s newspaper, is pulled off her first scoop
and sent on a research trip to study a rare
sea turtle. The voyage takes a sinister twist
when a fishing boat appears, intent on
capturing the turtle at any cost. What is the
link between murder and a rare sea turtle?

Howard Wallace, P.I.
written by Casey Lyall
(Sterling Children’s Books, 2016)

Howard Wallace, 12, runs his detective
agency from a makeshift office behind the
school and wears a bathrobe for a trench
cloth. When a hot case of blackmail lands on
his desk, he’s ready to take it on himself…
until the new kid convinces him to take her
on as a junior partner.

Trial by Fire
(A Riley Donovan Mystery, Book 1)
written by Norah McClintock
(Orca Book Publishers, 2016)

When Riley’s neighbour’s barn catches
fire, with him in it, she helps save him.
But instead of being hailed as a hero, Riley
finds herself a target of harassment. Her
neighbour, a Kurdish immigrant, is accused
of arson. Determined to prove his inno-
cence, Riley investigates, uncovering the
depth of the town’s prejudice and making
some powerful enemies.

Trouble Is a Friend of Mine
written by Stephanie Tromly
(Kathy Dawson Books, 2015)

Philip Digby is rude, annoying, brilliant
and somehow… attractive? And when it
comes to Digby, Zoe Webster just can’t say
no. Before she knows it, Digby has dragged
her into a series of hilarious and dangerous
schemes all related to the kidnapping of a
local teenage girl.
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 TO GRADE 6

I Am Canada: A Celebration
written by Heather Patterson
illustrated by Jeremy Tankard, Ruth Ohi, Barbara Reid, Jon Klassen, Marie-Louise Gay, Danielle Daniel, Ashley Spires, Geneviève Côté, Cale Atkinson, Doretta Groenendyk, Qin Leng, Eva Campbell, and Irene Luxbacher
North Winds Press / Scholastic Canada, 2017
978-1-44316-304-0 (hc) $19.99
for Kindergarten to Grade 3

In this free-verse poem, originally published in 1996, Heather Patterson takes a unique approach to celebrating what it means to be Canadian by exploring concepts such as freedom, space, diversity, the outdoors, exploration and imagination. Now her poem has been beautifully re-imagined in this new and updated edition of I Am Canada.

This charming book is a celebration of both Canada and Canadian illustrators from across the country, with varied backgrounds, styles and perspectives. Lines of Patterson’s poem are set in double-page spreads, each illustrated by a different artist. The result is an inspired interpretation of this lovely poem, a cohesive vision of what it means to be Canadian, created by 13 remarkable illustrators. The diversity in illustration styles fittingly reflects the diversity of our home and native land — its landscapes, flora and fauna and, of course, its people.

Each illustration is a joy to behold and will captivate readers young and old. The cheerful, buoyant children who dance across the pages are explorers and dreamers; they are sharing, playing, learning and contemplating. Within the larger themes, there are many subtle Canadian touches — Ruth Ohi includes Canada geese and even a couple of beavers, a polar bear races across the sky in Marie-Louise Gay’s work, while Cale Atkinson incorporates a hockey scene and a nod to Wayne Gretzky.

Also available in French as Le Canada, c’est moi, this is a perfect book for our sesquicentennial, a wonderful resource kindling discussion about the deeper meanings of being Canadian.

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

A Pattern for Pepper
written and illustrated by Julie Kraulis
Tundra Books, 2017
for Kindergarten to Grade 3

Pepper needs a new dress for a special occasion. There is no better place to find one than at her family’s favourite tailoring shop where Mr. Taylor can create a special garment just for her. After Pepper’s measurements are taken, Mr. Taylor introduces her to a variety of fabric types: “The word seersucker comes from the Persian shir o shakkar, which means ‘milk and sugar,’ because of its smooth and bumpy textures... This is tartan. It comes from Scotland and is woven with wool in checked patterns.” The young fashionista politely rules out the fabric selections (more colour, too plain, too busy) until Mr. Taylor finally reveals a pattern that she loves. The dressmaking then begins in earnest, with Pepper involved every step of the way — designing, sewing, fitting and alterations — until her fabulous dress is finally ready to wear.

Not only is craftsmanship, fashion and design recognized in this marvellous picture book, but Julie Kraulis also highlights the special and respectful relationship that exists between a kindly tailor and his young customer. When Mr. Taylor says, “I’m pleased to meet you, Pepper. You’ve come to the right place!”, we know that he means it, thereby empowering the child to voice her opinions in her quest to find the perfect pattern.

Kraulis cleverly incorporates a spectrum of pattern styles, such as herringbone, seersucker, tartan, houndstooth, ikat, argyle, pinstripe, dotted swiss, toile and paisley, in her inspired illustrations, which are rendered in oils and graphite on board. As readers are transported from the cozy confines of the tailor’s shop to an array of foreign countries and back, the fabrics seem so real that one can almost feel their textures.

Senta Ross is a former elementary teacher and teacher-librarian in Kitchener, Ontario.
Thornhill’s well-researched, readable history is engaging from known pair being killed in June 1844. Overhunting and egg harvesting, reproduction could not sustain land. Because mating pairs laid but one egg per year, between the adapted quickly enough when confronted by an increasing influx of and numbering in the hundreds of thousands, the species could not evolved for survival in its harsh, cold North Atlantic environment. Her illustrations, all double-page spreads, add both visual information and emotional impact to the tale. Particularly effective is the concluding spread in which ghost great auk haunt an island now inhabited by other nesting seabirds, including the more recently arrived Atlantic puffins, whose burrow nests were only made possible by the soil created from the decomposed bodies of discarded auk carcasses — from death, life. Thornhill concludes by encouraging readers to participate in the conservation movement, underlining the important need by listing 50 species rendered extinct since the great auk’s disappearance.

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

**Sam Sorts**
written and illustrated by Marthe Jocelyn
Tundra Books, 2017
978-1-101-91807-4 (eBook) $11.99
for Preschool to Grade 2
*Picture Book | Concept Book | Sorting | Categorizing | Counting*

Who knew that cleaning up a messy room could be so much fun? Young Sam finds 100 of his things in a heap on the floor, so what better way to clean up the clutter than by sorting? “First he finds Obo the robot, one of a kind. Then two snarling dinosaurs, three little boxes and four fake foods. How many things is that?” But wait! How about sorting these objects by colour or shape? Do they come in pairs... or do they rhyme? What about things that are soft, noisy, smoky, pointy, fuzzy or bumpy? And then there are things without wings that fly, things with wings that fly and things with wings that don’t fly. The possibilities seem to be just endless! Marthe Jocelyn has created yet another inventive concept book, this time focusing on counting and categories. Through her animated and colourful hand-cut paper-collage illustrations, skilfully photographed by Ian Crysler, young readers can’t help but become engaged as they join Sam in the sorting process while being encouraged to invent their own categories in the process. “What else comes in twos?” “What else floats?” “Are there other sets to add?” From alligator to zipper, *Sam Sorts* celebrates the joys of active learning in a most creative and innovative manner.

Senta Ross

**The Tragic Tale of the Great Auk**
written and illustrated by Jan Thornhill
Groundwood Books, 2016
978-1-55498-866-5 (hc) $18.95
for Grades 3 to 6
*Non-fiction Picture Book | Extinct Species | Conservation*

The word “tale,” frequently associated with fiction, can also be used to describe a true story being told in an imaginative way. Thornhill narrates the path to extinction of a seabird species with a tragic flaw: the great auk, through evolution, had become flightless. Though perfectly evolved for survival in its harsh, cold North Atlantic environment and numbering in the hundreds of thousands, the species could not adapt quickly enough when confronted by an increasing influx of Europeans who found the clumsy, slow-moving birds easy prey on land. Because mating pairs laid but one egg per year, between the overhunting and egg harvesting, reproduction could not sustain the birds’ numbers, which then declined precipitously, with the last known pair being killed in June 1844.

Thornhill’s well-researched, readable history is engaging from its opening page in which she invites her audience to go with her on a journey, whose ultimate destination readers can anticipate. Her illustrations, all double-page spreads, add both visual information and emotional impact to the tale. Particularly effective is the concluding spread in which ghost great auk haunt an island now inhabited by other nesting seabirds, including the more recently arrived Atlantic puffins, whose burrow nests were only made possible by the soil created from the decomposed bodies of discarded auk carcasses — from death, life. Thornhill concludes by encouraging readers to participate in the conservation movement, underlining the important need by listing 50 species rendered extinct since the great auk’s disappearance.

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

**Wolf Island**
(My Great Bear Rainforest)
written by Nicholas Read
photographs by Ian McAllister
Orca Book Publishers, 2017
978-1-4598-1270-3 (hc) $19.95
978-1-4598-1272-7 (eBook) $4.99
for Kindergarten to Grade 3
*Non-fiction Picture Book | Photography | Wildlife | Animals | Rainforest | Seasons*

Stretching along the Pacific coast from Vancouver Island to southeast Alaska, the Great Bear Rainforest is the largest intact temperate rainforest left anywhere in the world. It’s home to more than 230 species of birds and 68 species of mammals. Four of these mammals — wolves, grizzly bears, black bears and spirit bears — are the subjects of *Wolf Island* and *A Bear’s Life*, the first two books in Ian McAllister and Nicholas Read’s *My Great Bear Rainforest* series.

Bringing together stunning photographs by McAllister, an award-winning photographer and environmental leader, and captivating prose, the photographic non-fiction picture books in the *My Great Bear Rainforest* series explore the rainforest’s majestic landscapes and the wildlife that inhabits them. The photographs of ‘wild animals in wild circumstances’ are never digitally altered, giving readers an up-close look at wolves and bears in their own habitats, whether they’re munching on berries, playfully catching salmon or searching the lush terrain for a mate.

Despite their value as informational texts, filled with facts about animal families, habitats, eating habits and animal senses, each book in the series also features a narrative arc. *Wolf Island* tells the story of the first wolf to arrive on a secluded Great Bear Rainforest island after leaving his family one spring in search of a new life. The second book in the series, *A Bear’s Life*, follows multiple bear families through a year in their lives, examining how bears interact with seasons in the Great Bear Rainforest.

Visually spectacular, *Wolf Island* and *A Bear’s Life* work best as a pair, showing how different types of animals navigate the vast and ancient rainforest in both different and similar ways. Read together, these books — and undoubtedly any others that will be added to the
series in the future — provide opportunities for readers to compare and contrast the habits, homes and personalities of some of their favourite animals in a highly engaging and informative way. Full of universal themes — among them teamwork, friendship and the importance of a family unit — the books in the My Great Bear Rainforest series will delight readers of all interests and abilities.

Jessica Rose is a writer, reviewer and editor in Hamilton, Ontario.

My Wounded Island
written by Jacques Pasquet
illustrated by Marion Arbona
translated by Sophie B. Watson
Orca Book Publishers, 2017
978-1-4598-1565-0 (hc) $19.95
978-1-4598-1567-4 (eBook) $4.99
for Grades 2 to 5

My Wounded Island

The Alaskan island of Sarichef is being devoured by the sea, and a little girl named Imarvaluk is concerned. The story, told from her perspective, is a worrisome tale of creeping loss in a changing world. Imarvaluk’s people, the Inupiat, have lived on Sarichef for a long while, but the island itself is being lost to rising sea levels and erosion. Imarvaluk feels that the sea has been bewitched, changed into a monster that is hungrily eating away at her home. It is an invisible creature that haunts her dreams. Her grandfather worries not only for Imarvaluk, but for her people, the Inupiat, and the invisible creature that haunts her dreams. Her grandfather worries that as the island disappears so too will the Inupiat culture.

Jacques Pasquet has created a character with whom young readers can identify. In doing so, he successfully cultivates empathy not only for Imarvaluk, but for her people, the Inupiat, and the terrible predicament in which they find themselves. Marion Arbona’s illustrations are both beautiful and haunting. She depicts Imarvaluk’s monster as an enormous, ghostly jellyfish-type creature that eats away at the island. Its tentacles reach for Imarvaluk’s home. It is an invisible creature that haunts her dreams. Her grandfather worries that as the island disappears so too will the Inupiat culture.

This picture book represents a slice of reality that evades our expectations of a happy ending. But as a story, it is important and it is timely. While this story does not resolve itself in any satisfying way, it will immediately provoke questions and discussion among young readers — which is satisfying in itself. This book would make an engaging introduction to the subject of climate change and the real consequences it has for communities around the globe.

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

Innocent Heroes: Stories of Animals in the First World War
written by Sigmund Brouwer
Tundra Books, 2017
978-1-101-91846-3 (hc) $21.99
978-1-101-91847-0 (eBook) $11.99
for Grades 5 to 8

Innocent Heroes: Stories of Animals in the First World War

Sigmund Brouwer’s new book, Innocent Heroes, is an interesting mix of fiction and non-fiction. The fictional chapters tell the story of a friendship that develops between three...
Canadian soldiers in the time leading up to the Battle of Vimy Ridge and the brave and loyal animals that assist them. At the end of each chapter, a non-fiction section tells the story of the real-life animal hero that inspired that chapter.

The Storming Normans are a fictional Canadian platoon in the First World War, preparing for an attack on Vimy Ridge. As an unlikely friendship develops between Charlie, Thomas and Jake, we get a close-up look at the hardships faced by soldiers in the trenches and we see how bonds developed between the soldiers and the animals they encountered. We meet dogs that warned of gas attacks, cats that saved soldiers from rat bites, pigeons that carried life-saving messages to troops behind the lines and more.

In the non-fiction sections, we learn about the real-life animals that played such an important part in the war. Brouwer has also included other factual information about World War I and Vimy Ridge and many archival photographs to further enlighten the reader.

While this book’s main purpose is to celebrate the animal heroes of the First World War and the Battle of Vimy Ridge, it can also be used to teach students about the horrors and hardships of trench warfare, the contributions of Canada’s First Nations soldiers to the war and the unfair treatment they received upon their return to Canada. It will be a valuable resource for history teachers and a must for schools and public libraries.

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

Macy McMillan and the Rainbow Goddess
written by Shari Green
Pajama Press, 2017
978-1-77278-017-8 (hc) $17.95
978-1-77278-017-8 (pb) $12.95
for Grades 3 to 6
Fiction | Verse | Change | Family | Friendship | Intergenerational Friendship | Story

Each time Macy McMillan sees the ‘For Sale’ sign on her front lawn, her heart sinks. Why do things have to change? When Macy’s mom marries Alan, suddenly their team of two will cease to exist and their small-but-perfect-as-it-is family will grow to include Alan and his twin daughters. Macy is just not ready to embrace this change, especially since it will mean leaving their house to move in with Alan and the twins. Then, to make matters worse, Macy snaps at her best friend, Olivia, and now they are no longer speaking. With so much going on in her life, Macy yearns for a friend. But when she begins helping her elderly next-door neighbour, Macy makes some wonderful discoveries about friendship, family, the power of stories, the importance of loving (and living) extravagantly and the messages that can be sent in cookies (especially if you happen to be a Rainbow Goddess).

Shari Green’s beautifully crafted and affecting novel-in-verse provides a sensitive depiction of a young girl wrestling with change and learning some important life lessons in the process. The unlikely friendship that develops between Macy and her neighbour Iris (who is facing some major life changes of her own) as they bond over books and fresh-baked cookies, is heartwarming and inspiring. Even once Macy and Olivia reconcile, both girls are increasingly struck by the need to help Iris and her friend Marjorie to remember and to tell their stories. This book is a thoughtful reflection on what makes a family, the power of friendship and the sacredness of stories (our own and others).

Lisa Doucet is Co-Manager of Wookzes in Halifax.

Nanuq: Life with Polar Bears
story contributions by Inuit Elders
photographs by Paul Souders
Inhabit Media, 2016
978-1-77227-124-9 (hc) $27.95
for Grades 6 and up
Non-fiction | Canada | Arctic | Polar Bears | Inuit | Photography

In our collective imagination, the Arctic and polar bears are nearly synonymous — the word arctic is derived from the Greek word ἀρκτικός (arktikos), “near the Bear, northern.” For most of us, though, the far north remains an elusive realm. Likewise, few will ever see polar bears in their natural domain of ice and snow. The close relationship between land and animal is superbly demonstrated in Nanuq: Life with Polar Bears, and this book may be the next best thing to experiencing polar bears up close and in person.

Prepare for a stunning visual journey onto the ice with the ‘Kings of the Arctic.’ This beautiful book offers an immersive photographic experience, a window onto the life of polar bears as they prowl, swim, hunt, feed and laze with cubs. The spectacular full-page images by photographer Paul Souders, whose work has appeared in National Geographic, Time and Life magazines, are accompanied by a variety of evocative vignettes — first-person accounts and childhood recollections of encounters with bears, as well as traditional stories told by Inuit who share the landscape with this most majestic and ferocious of beasts. These stories and recollections reflect the deep connection the Inuit have with the polar bear and add an emotional core to the photographs.

This intimate portrayal of the polar bear will inspire and enthral readers of all ages. A wonderful gift idea for young wildlife or photography enthusiasts, and a welcome addition to school, home and library bookshelves.

Tracey Schindler

SENIOR FICTION FOR GRADES 7 AND UP

The Fashion Committee
written by Susan Juby
Penguin Teen Canada, 2017
978-0-14-319620-4 (eBook) $11.99
for Grades 9 and up
Fiction | Fashion & Beauty | Humour | Romance

Susan Juby is a riot and does not disappoint with this book. Told from the perspectives of rotating narrators, Charlie-Dean, fashionista, and John Thomas-Smith (JTS), a let-me-work-with-my-hands kind of a guy, the story follows them as they compete for a scholarship to their dream
art school, Green Pastures. Too bad for JTS that the scholarship is for the fashion program and he’s not the least bit interested in clothes…but if it’ll get him in the door, he’s going to suck it up and go for it.

Juby has the wonderful ability to create truly likeable characters going through some seriously hard stuff, while keeping it light enough with off-the-wall humour and a bit of romance. I think teens will really be able to see themselves in Charlie-Dean and JTS and will relate to what the protagonists are struggling with as well as the situations they are navigating. And for adult YA readers, it will take you back! Reading through Charlie-Dean’s experiences at her soul-sucking part-time job at the SaladStop had me laughing out loud and remembering my own first experiences with working while in school.

This is a truly charming read.

Erin Grittani is the Education Manager at Mabel’s Fables Bookstore in Toronto.

**Saints and Misfits**
written by S.K. Ali
Salaam Reads / Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2017
978-1-4814-9924-8 (hc) $25.99
978-1-4814-9926-2 (eBook) $13.99
for Grades 9 and up

In Janna’s world, there are three kinds of people. There are the saints, the special people who are so ‘there,’ they’re hardly noticeable. Then there are the misfits. They are the people like Janna, and like her crush Jeremy, who inhabit completely different worlds and belong nowhere. There are also monsters who pretend to be saints, like the boy at her mosque who assaulted her at a party. A supposed pillar of the community, nobody sees beneath the mask, but if Janna can help it, soon the mask will come off and everybody will know who he really is.

In her debut novel, author S.K. Ali perfectly captures the challenges of being a teenager and feeling caught between two worlds. Janna Yusuf, a high school sophomore and a Muslim, feels like she fits in nowhere. Her parents are divorced and she’s stuck with her devout mother and her mama’s-boy brother, Muhammad. Her father is non-practising and has a new family, and she feels out of place there, too.

Through the online Muslim Q&A Janna curates, and the elderly man she helps care for, readers gain a lot of insight into Muslim faith and culture. The strength of Ali’s characterizations makes this book shine, and readers will find a likeable and relatable character in Janna. While some of the subplots could have been more fully explored, overall, this is a highly engrossing and emotionally weighty novel about one teen’s struggle to figure out what kind of person she wants to be, and how that fits with her faith.

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

**The Way Back Home**
written by Allan Stratton
Scholastic Canada, 2017
978-1-4431-4838-2 (hc) $19.99
978-1-4431-4840-5 (eBook) $19.99
for Grades 7 and up

Fiction | Family | Family Conflict | Intergenerational Relationships | Loss | Transformation | Bullying

Zoe’s parents don’t understand her. They think she’s a troublemaker who needs to be brought under control by whatever means necessary. They also don’t understand what Zoe’s grandmother really needs. When Zoe learns that her ‘dead’ Uncle Teddy is still alive and living in Toronto, she risks everything to get to Toronto to find him, positive that he will be the answer to their problems. During the journey, Zoe comes face-to-face with some painful truths, and discovers a strength she never knew she had — one that might help her find a way back home.

Families are complicated, and unresolved conflicts make up the core of the novel. Zoe and her grandmother share a special bond. Her granny understands her in a way that her parents don’t. The only thing that matters to her parents is what everybody else thinks. Zoe knows that her grandmother is eccentric and needs help, but she can’t see how putting Granny in a home will improve things. Zoe’s parents don’t even believe her when she tries to tell them about her cousin Maddie’s relentless bullying.

Zoe’s voice is authentic, and readers will be sympathetic to her struggle. She is lonely and angry, and all she wants is to survive school, protect her granny and be treated fairly. There are so many things that feel out of Zoe’s control, and Stratton does an excellent job of bringing these conflicts to a head. The dialogue is funny and true to life, and reflects Stratton’s playwriting background.

Funny, raw and heartbreaking, this emotional story about family, loss and transformation will touch readers and raise questions about loyalty, justice and forgiveness.

Rachel Seigel
Three NEW books to put you in a GREAT MOOD!

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The Walking Bathroom
Text by Shauntay Grant
Art by Erin Bennett Banks
Hardcover/$22.95/Ages 3-7

Maud Lewis 1 2 3
Text by Carol McDougall and Shanda LaRamee-Jones
Art by Maud Lewis
Board book/$19.95/Ages 0-2

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The Walking Bathroom
Text by Shauntay Grant
Art by Erin Bennett Banks
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A young boy goes to the roots of his family tree in search of answers when he finds out his mother is transgender.

The Disappearing Boy
By Sonia Tilson
Paperback/$12.95/Ages 8-12

The celebrated Nova Scotia folk artist’s work helps teach baby to count.

Maud Lewis 1 2 3
Text by Carol McDougall and Shanda LaRamee-Jones
Art by Maud Lewis
Board book/$19.95/Ages 0-2

A fun holiday story following flying squirrels who choose the Boston Christmas Tree as their home.

The Flying Squirrel Stowaways
By Marijke Simons
Hardcover/$22.95/Ages 3-7

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We Recommend

NEW AND NOTED BOOKS FOR TODDLERS TO TEENS

An African Alphabet
written by Eric Walters
illustrated by Sue Todd
Orca Book Publishers, 2017
978-1-4598-1070-9 (board book) $9.95
978-1-4598-1072-3 (eBook) $4.99
for Infants to Preschool

Bedtime 123
written by Eric Walters
illustrated by Josée Bisaillon
Orca Book Publishers, 2017
978-1-4598-1073-0 (board book) $9.95
978-1-4598-1075-4 (eBook) $4.99
for Infants to Preschool

Carson Crosses Canada
written by Linda Bailey
illustrated by Kass Reich
Tundra Books, 2017
978-1-101-91883-8 (hc) $21.99
978-1-101-91884-5 (eBook) $11.99
for Kindergarten to Grade 2

What better way for young children to learn their alphabet and numbers than through board books? Eric Walters has written one of each.

Walters’ charitable work with orphans in Kenya has lent itself to An African Alphabet, which connects the 26 letters of the alphabet, in their upper- and lower-case forms, to a variety of animals found in Africa. Some creatures, such as lions and elephants, will be familiar to young children, while others, such as nandines and pangolins, will, perhaps, be new.

Sue Todd employs linoleum carving as her medium for action-packed illustrations that portray these creatures going about their daily routines. Witness a kingfisher diving for fish, a cheetah stalking dik-diks, a hippo lounging in the water, and much more. What a creative way to introduce young children to the richness of African wildlife!

In Bedtime 123 “When the sun goes down / One moon rises / Two stars come out / Three owlets rest high in the treetops...” and night falls on the farm as the baby animals nod off to sleep. Young readers will witness the nighttime rituals of owlets, fawns, cubs (baby foxes), puppies, kittens, chicks, bunnies and ducklings.

Walters’ soothing descriptions of bedtime rituals involve snuggling, piling up, nestling, cuddling, huddling tight and tucking beneath.

Josée Bisaillon’s pastoral illustrations, rendered in cut paper, pastels, watercolour, pencils and digital collage, portray the farm animals resting safe and secure in their locations, be it a treetop, den, bed, basket, nest, burrow, soft grasses or beneath a wing. And be sure to note the changing colours of her nighttime sky.

Bedtime 123 culminates with a slumbering infant inside the farmhouse. “Good night, babies.”

Senta Ross

Carson and sprightly Annie Magruder pack their car: squeaky chicken and dog food for him, tent and baloney sandwiches for her. Starting in coastal British Columbia, they head across Canada to Newfoundland, where Annie’s sister lives and where there is a surprise for Carson when they arrive.

They camp in the Rockies with Carson watching for bears. Carson drools over dinosaur bones in Alberta and catches grasshoppers on the prairies while Annie admires the sky. They paddle in Lake Winnipeg and Carson takes a mud bath in the Bay of Fundy. Annie buys souvenirs in Niagara, whereas Carson leaves some in the grass. They enjoy tourtière in Quebec and lobster in PEI before arriving at Elsie’s house where the promised surprise awaits!

This charming, original picture book combines a whimsical story with an introduction to Canada as our heroes navigate each province. The humour is delightfully understated with both travellers being practical, cheerful and adventurous. The text and dialogue reflect an easy relationship as well as the pleasure each finds in transit, depending upon their canine or human perspective!

The mischievous illustrations perfectly complement the text. The composition and balance of each double-page spread captures the vastness of Canada and the feel of each province. The humour is delightfully understated with both travellers being practical, cheerful and adventurous. The text and dialogue reflect an easy relationship as well as the pleasure each finds in transit, depending upon their canine or human perspective!

The mischievous illustrations perfectly complement the text. The composition and balance of each double-page spread captures the vastness of Canada and the feel of each province. Vibrant endpapers provide a map clarifying locations visited. Figures are full of expression and the sheer joy of living, and children will chuckle aloud at the plentiful detail and humour. This is a wonderful read-aloud and a perfect book for Canada’s sesquicentennial that introduces the variety of flavours that make up Canada.

Aileen Wortley is a retired children’s librarian from Toronto.
Renné Benoit uses a soft and watery palette to paint a quiet yet heartwarming tale to life. Nina and her Lolo demonstrate that boundaries can be crossed and doors can be opened, inspiration for anyone who might be hesitating at the threshold.

Set in a small Filipino fishing village, Warble, a small yellow warbler, is a devoted human watcher on the isle of Icy Land. Yet his observations of such curious specimens as the ‘Behatted Bibliophilic Female’ are interrupted when a mysterious fog rolls in to cover the island. No one else seems to care about the fog; even Warble begins to question whether there was a time before the fog, that is, until the appearance of ‘Red-Hooded Spectacled Female (Juvenile),’ a girl who not only understands him but also is concerned about the fog. They send out messages to others in the world, and as more and more characters acknowledge the fog’s existence and the problems it has created, the more it dissipates.

In this tale about the environment, Maclear’s text flows nicely, the pacing is wonderful and the words read as a fable while weaving poignantly between splashes of humour and hints of menace. Warble’s journey from contentedness to concern to despair, followed by near acceptance and then hope, is one of special significance, and his relationship with the girl is particularly touching. Pak’s digitally worked pencil and watercolour illustrations beautifully complement the story; the artwork is expressive and engaging. Of particular note is the wordless spread showing bird and girl viewing each other through binoculars, as well as the endpapers full of assorted species of humans.

Ken Kilback is a writer and primary teacher in Vancouver.

How Nivi Got Her Names

written by Laura Deal
illustrated by Charlene Chua
Inhabit Media, 2017
978-1-77227-137-9 (pb) $10.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 2

Picture Book | Inuit Culture | Naming Practices | Adoption

Niviaq Kauki Baabi Irmela Jamesie, a young Inuit child, ponders why her toys have only one name when she has so many. So her mother gently explains the reasons and the significance of each name. Niviaq is her chosen name. For her as an adopted child, another connects her to her biological family. Others are links to close friends and family members who exemplify wisdom, strength, resourcefulness and kindness. Nivi, therefore, learns the traditional Inuit practice of assigning names that honour relationships so individuals are not forgotten and whose characteristics will live on in her.

This is a story demonstrating the warmth and love surrounding Nivi but also the eternal respectful connections to ancestors and dear ones, past and present. Nivi learns she is loved as an individual and through the spiritual ties associated with her names. As a result of this custom, she feels a sense of identity and connection.

Laura Deal has created an endearing story from her own experiences, but a detailed introduction and explanation of Inuit kinship and naming customs is also provided. This touches on the practice of Inuit adoption, wherein a mother willingly gives her child to a childless person. A glossary of Inuit terms and short biographies of those Nivi is named for are included.

Cheerful, bright illustrations capture Nivi, large-eyed and eager, tempered by her empathetic mother. Respectful, endearing portraits of those she is named for are included.

This is a loving and respectful story that can be enjoyed by children alone, but it also contains significant subject matter for discussion.

Aileen Wortley

Hand Over Hand

written by Alma Fullerton
illustrated by Renné Benoit
Second Story Press, 2017
978-1-77260-015-5 (hc) $16.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 2

Picture Book | Philippines | Fishing |
Gender Roles | Intergenerational Relationships

When Nina asks her grandfather (Lolo) to take her fishing with him, he is not so sure. A girl’s place is on land. Her job is to dry the fish. But Nina insists, and her grandfather eventually agrees. That day, Lolo teaches Nina how to bait a hook, how to attract a fish and how to pull in a fish on the line, hand over hand. Nina waits for a bite all day but without any luck. Just when she is about to give up hope, there is a strong tug on the line.

Set in a small Filipino fishing village, Hand Over Hand tells the tale of one persistent little girl and the bond she shares with her loving grandfather. Alma Fullerton’s free verse brings this heartwarming tale to life. Nina and her Lolo demonstrate that boundaries can be crossed and doors can be opened, inspiration for anyone who might be hesitating at the threshold.

Renné Benoit uses a soft and watery palette to paint a quiet yet important day in the life of a little girl. On the last page, we see Nina and her grandfather together by the shore. In the background, it looks as if other fishermen are following Lolo’s example, taking their daughters and granddaughters out fishing as well.

One does not come across many picture books set in the Philippines, and Alma Fullerton has written Hand Over Hand to help fill this void. It would make a welcome addition to any diverse book collection.

Ildiko Sumegi
Ira Crumb has the relatable problem of being anxious about making friends in his new school. His reasonable solution is to befriend neighbourhood kids, depicted in Holinaty’s drawings as a colourful mix of children and anthropomorphized animals, prior to school’s start. Ira’s strategies of setting up a local meet-and-greet, challenging a child to a dance-off and playing it cool backfire because his emotional neediness, zeal and occasional social cluelessness repel his peers. It is his lack of emotional intelligence that differentiates Hrab’s story from the many other ‘first day of school’ picture books.

Strengths of the book include the frequent comic-book-style lay-outs and the expressive menagerie of characters. I thought the decision to make the food speak was odd, especially as the sandwiches express pain when eaten and seem to function as companion characters, but others may not think so. Also, though Ira does find a friend on the first day of school, an empathetic classmate who was similarly overzealous the year before, some readers may be savvy enough to know that this is not how life usually plays out.

Ira Crumb would be an appropriate selection for five-to-eight-year-olds during the first week of school or when a new face appears in class. It might also be a gentle starting point for parents similarly overzealous the year before, some readers may be savvy enough to know that this is not how life usually plays out.

Ira Crumb Makes a Pretty Good Friend
written by Naseem Hrab
illustrated by Josh Holinaty
Owlkids Books, 2017
978-1-77147-171-8 (hc) $18.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 2

Picture Book | Making Friends | First Day of School | Anxiety | Emotional Intelligence | Humour

My Canada: An Illustrated Atlas
written by Katherine Dearlove
illustrated by Lori Joy Smith
Owlkids Books, 2017
978-1-77147-264-7 (hc) $18.67
for Kindergarten to Grade 3

Canada | Geography | Maps | Landmarks

Inspired by her own hand-drawn map of PEI and just in time for Canada’s sesquicentennial, illustrator Lori Joy Smith, together with author Katherine Dearlove, has created a whimsical pictographic atlas of Canada. My Canada is a joyful depiction of our home and native land — a wonderful way to introduce geography and maps to youngsters. Each double-page spread is devoted to a province or territory with a brightly coloured map depicting native wildlife, geographical features, iconic landmarks and noteworthy sites or objects. The province or territory’s flag, bird, flower and tree are illustrated on the side or top of each map. The map of New Brunswick includes minke whales, Magnetic Hill, Hopewell Rocks and the Shediac Giant Lobster, while the map of Nunavut features the muskox, the Arctic Circle, Dewey Soper Migratory Bird Sanctuary and an inuksuk.

Dearlove begins the atlas with a short did-you-know-style introduction offering a few fun facts about Canada. Lori Joy Smith’s maps are coloured a vibrant yellow-green, and populated with cheerful animals, smiling geographic formations and jaunty people, offering a fun and informative pictorial representation of Canada’s diverse geography, flora and fauna.

Perfect for the kindergarten or primary classroom, this book is an ideal resource for teaching early mapping skills or to spark discussion about the various parts of Canada children live in, come from or have visited. Older primary children might use it as a springboard for more in-depth learning about a province or native Canadian wildlife. Its simple style may even inspire youngsters to draw and populate their own maps.

A wonderful addition to any home, library or school bookshelf, this delightful map book is a celebration of Canada from sea to sea to sea.

tracey schindler

What fun! Text is not required for these two clever board books, just a spark of creativity. In One Red Button, a red button falls off a coat and changes into an assortment of objects: a balloon, a firetruck’s wheel, a doorknob, a pig’s snout and more. When a single piece of string becomes untied from a package in One Piece of String, it changes into a clothesline, a snail’s shell, spaghetti, a spider web and other visual delights.

Wouldn’t young children, as they begin to investigate their surroundings, be fascinated by the transformation of these supposedly ordinary objects? Imagination will come to life! The diversity of colours, shapes and textures in Marthe Jocelyn’s inventive paper-collage illustrations, artfully photographed by Ian Crysler, will prove to be irresistible to those who thrive on viewing their surroundings in new and exciting ways.

Senta Ross

REVIEWS

RECOMMENDED BOOKS
DIFFERENT
—AND PROUD OF IT!

I LOVE MY PURSE
Charlie takes his bright red purse everywhere, no matter what people say.
Ages 4–7
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**The People of the Sea**

Told by Donald Uluadluak
Illustrated by Mike Motz
Inhabit Media, 2017
978-1-77227-138-6 (pb) $10.95
For Kindergarten to Grade 2

*Picture Book | Inuit Culture | Mythology | Sea | Arnajuinnaq (People of the Sea)*

The *People of the Sea* is the product of Elizabeth Issakiark’s efforts to record the knowledge and memories of her father and Inuit elder Donald Uluadluak. It recounts one of Uluadluak’s childhood memories of a day in Nunavut spent playing at the water’s edge with two of his friends. A normal day suddenly takes a mysterious turn when young Donald spots a woman in the water staring at him. He calls out to her, but she does not respond. Frightened, the three friends take off, running away from the water and back to their camp. Later, they recount their tale to their parents and grandparents, who tell them that the woman was an *arnajuinnaq*, one of the people of the sea.

This picture book is a valuable contribution to the preservation of Inuit knowledge and culture. Children who may not have had the opportunity to sit and listen to an Inuit elder are given just that chance. And from the very first line — “What I am about to share is a true story” — they will be intrigued. Mike Motz paints that memorable day near Arviat, Nunavut. His illustrations contrast the perfectly ordinary day with young Donald’s encounter with the *arnajuinnaq*, successfully bringing to life the magic and mystery of that moment. Readers (both young and old) are sure to have questions, and they will wish Donald Uluadluak were there to answer. This is a book that is sure to pique the interest of young readers who might like to learn more about Inuit culture and mythology.

—Ildiko Sumegi

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**The Snow Knows**

Written by Jennifer McGrath
Illustrated by Josée Bisaillon
978-1-77108-441-3 (hc) $22.95
For Kindergarten to Grade 2

*Picture Book | Poetry | Snow | Natural World | Animals in Winter | Discovery*

The *Snow Knows* reveals what Robert Frost might have seen had he entered those lovely, dark and deep woods on that snowy evening: the busy, mysterious and often dramatic lives of the forest animals. These lives are known to the snow, which floats over everything, blankets the forest floor and keeps ephemeral records of the lives that pass through it. In McGrath and Bisaillon’s book, what the snow knows becomes known by a child (and us as readers) who ventures outside to discover what is normally hidden to the human eye.

McGrath’s text is a lulling chant, a seemingly simple poem with wordplay that includes onomatopoeia; end, slant and internal rhymes and alliteration. “The snow knows” repeats throughout, creating a pattern that is matched and extended by Bisaillon’s pastel, pencil and cut-paper illustrations. Bisaillon’s art makes a circular story, where we begin and end with the human world and, in between, are pulled along, left to right, by her dynamic depictions of animals scampering, trotting and cavorting in the snow. She adds a search-and-find element where each animal mentioned in the text can be spotted in the background of the previous page. Both author and illustrator pull their weight to create a playful, dreamy, calming story.

*The Snow Knows* makes a fine bedtime read for four-to-eight-year-olds, can be used to introduce North American wildlife to little ones and encourages curiosity about the majestic, mysterious outdoors.

—Aliki Tryphonopoulos

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**Stop Feedin’ Da Boids!**

Written by James Sage
Illustrated by Pierre Pratt
Kids Can Press, 2017
978-1-77138-613-5 (hc) $18.95
978-1-77138-889-4 (ebook) $9.99
For Preschool to Grade 2

*Picture Book | Humour | Birds | Urban Life | New York City*

When Swanda moves to New York City, she misses the wildlife she used to see in the country. Captivated by the little birds gathered outside the window of her top-floor apartment, she decides to get a bird feeder for them. Swanda is overjoyed at first with the bird feeder’s success, but she soon becomes concerned as huge numbers of pigeons arrive and refuse to leave. Her neighbours are annoyed with the pigeons and the birds’ constant cooing and inevitable messes and they suggest Swanda seek “some Sound Practical Advice.” While none of the experts Swanda visits offers much help, her neighbours come up with a solution — “Stop feedin’ da boids!”

Sage lived in New York for several years, and here pays homage to the city and its multiculturalism. His text is simple and light, and the story moves along at a good pace. Swanda’s dog, Waldo, is portrayed as more aware of things than Swanda herself, but his attempts at suggestions and warnings to Swanda are thwarted by both her obliviousness and his lack of human speech. Pratt’s artwork, rendered in pencil and then digitally worked in Photoshop, is lovely, filling the pages of multiple spreads with characters and architecture reminiscent of New York life, and with varying amounts of humour sprinkled throughout. The final illustration reveals just how much Swanda does not understand the warnings of Waldo, or learn her lesson about the birds.

—Ken Kilback
Triangle
written by Mac Barnett
illustrated by Jon Klassen
Candlewick Press, 2017
978-0-7636-9603-0 (hc) $22.00
for Kindergarten to Grade 2
Picture Book | Friendship | Humour

Meet Triangle, a rather crafty three-sided character who wishes to play a devious trick on his friend Square. Knowing how frightened Square is of snakes, Triangle emits hissing sounds outside the door of Square’s home. “Oh dear dear dear!” said Square. “How many snakes are out there? Ten? Ten million? Go away, snakes!” When Square realizes that the hisses are coming from Triangle, he chases the miscreant back to his house, only to get stuck in the doorway. With him blocking the light, it is now too dark inside Triangle’s house. “It was Square’s turn to laugh. I know you are afraid of the dark. Now I have played a sneaky trick on you! You see, Triangle, this was my plan all along.” But was it?

In this first book in their new trilogy, author Mac Barnett and illustrator Jon Klassen have once again joined forces, this time to create a tale about the ups and downs of a quirky friendship. Although Barnett’s text is straightforward and succinct, a wry sense of humour pervades throughout, especially when combined with Klassen’s Spartan, yet evocative, watercolour, graphite and digitally created illustrations.

Triangle leaves us wondering: What will happen next?

Senta Ross

You Are One
written by Sara O’Leary
illustrated by Karen Klassen
Owlkids Books, 2016
978-1-77147-072-8 (hc) $15.95
for Infants to Preschool

You Are Two
written by Sara O’Leary
illustrated by Karen Klassen
Owlkids Books, 2016
978-1-77147-073-5 (hc) $15.95
for Infants to Preschool

You Are Three
written by Sara O’Leary
illustrated by Karen Klassen
Owlkids Books, 2017
978-1-77147-074-2 (hc) $15.95
for Infants to Preschool

Picture Book | Children | Growing Up

Sara O’Leary’s You Are series celebrates the ages and stages of a child during each year of life from infant through preschool age. You Are One opens with the newborn babe in arms and ends with the child taking shaky first steps into toddler-hood. It introduces the many milestones in between, such as eating (and wearing) new foods, teething, playing peek-a-boo, gesturing and playing with toys. You Are Two takes the child from toddler to preshooler. This is where the youngster learns to run, climb stairs and, more importantly, begins to use words to sing, make plans and indicate choices. You Are Three moves from the running tot to the busy, playful and now quite talkative preshooler. It is about the little kid who engages in make-believe play, makes friends, recognizes shapes and colours, sings ABCs, draws pictures and has conversations.

A cupcake with (the appropriate number of) candles greets the reader on the first page of each book and helps to give readers the feel that these books are about celebrating the milestones of early childhood. Many books about toddlers focus on the terrible twos and threes, but instead of mourning the loss of infant-hood, this series of books honours and celebrates children growing and gaining independence. The author addresses the child directly throughout the books and always ends with “So much can change in just a year. But what will never, ever change is our love for you.”

Mixed-media illustrations show a diverse group of children engaged in play and quiet contemplation. The art is fun and vividly illustrates the expressions on children’s faces, while at the same time offering readers a few surprises. Adults and children will notice that these books depict real play situations — the sorts that don’t always conform to gender stereotypes. In one spread, a boy has a tea party with trucks, a robot and a flowery teapot. In another, a girl carries a sudsy dinosaur rather than a baby doll to the bath.

This series would make a great gift to share with a child each year on his or her birthday from ages one through three, and will be enjoyed still when the child is four and wants to remember and celebrate all that has been learned over the previous years. Both adults and children will enjoy sharing the books in this series to celebrate the milestones of early childhood.

Krista Jorgensen is a former public librarian currently residing in Richmond Hill, Ontario.

Alison’s Fishing Birds
written by Roderick Haig-Brown
illustrations by Sheryl McDougald and Jim Rimmer
Caillt Press, 2017
978-1-987915-19-8 (hc) $21.95
for Grades 2 to 4
Fiction | Non-fiction | Birds | Wildlife | Environmentalism

Alison liked to watch birds visiting the river beside her house and would sometimes tell her dolls about them. She wasn’t a “naturalist or a bird watcher or anything dull like that,” but was quiet and observant. Sometimes she talked to the birds and would ask the dipper and kingfisher questions about their lives. She witnessed the obstacles an osprey faced in catching his prey, marvelled at eggs laid by the merganser and was mesmerized by the speed with which a heron caught and swallowed a fish.

This manuscript, originally written around 1940, by environmentalist and award-winning writer, Roderick Haig-Brown, was discovered by his daughter after his death and published subsequently as a limited edition. The five stories are quiet and graceful, written in Haig-Brown’s inimitable style. Despite an apparent simplicity, the complex intricacies of nature are deftly portrayed with authenticity and charm. The gentle text invites
re-reading, as the lessons provided on the natural world and its need for conservation are pondered.

Each chapter is introduced by delicate lino-cuts from the earlier edition. Stunning drawings and paintings reveal aspects of the wildlife mentioned in the text and provide a beautiful extra facet. Combined with the pleasing dimensions and layout, the illustrations add to the physical attractiveness of the title.

With a preface by Valerie Haig-Brown that provides context, and an inspiring foreword by the environmentalist Andrew Nikiforuk, this singular book has several layers of appeal as literary history, environmental delight, charming story for children and as an artistic pleasure.

Aileen Wortley

Since time began, people have sought to improve their lives through migration, commerce, exploration or pilgrimage. Routes that evolved as a result are the focus of the fourth book in The World of Tens series. Some, like the deadly Alaskan Chilkoot trail or Route 66 are well known; others, like the tragic Ho Chi Minh trail or the Khyber Pass are less familiar. Whether they are migratory routes like the Bering Land Bridge and Serengeti Trail or superb engineering feats like the Inca and Roman Roads, or Trans-Siberian Railway, each is a testament to the tenacity, inventiveness and current status. Depending on the route, further description could be used to discuss issues such as sexual or emotional abuse, in addition to the reasons her chosen family left their own homes. Busker Boy’s choice in leaving the reserve could also serve as a way to learn about the issues of missing and murdered Indigenous women. Cher’s sad backstory could lead to a history lesson about what it meant to be gay in a small, religious town in the 1980s, and then one could ask readers if the stigma has been lifted for people living with HIV.

This book is an excellent choice for exploring a wide range of topics, from emotional crippling, to socio-political and racial topics that surround marginalized people. It doesn’t sugar-coat issues, but does give the characters the chance to achieve a happier ending than they might find in real life.

Naomi Szeben is a Toronto-based writer and blogger.

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Naomi Szeben is a Toronto-based writer and blogger.

Dingus

written by Andrew Larsen

Kids Can Press, 2017

978-1-77138-661-6 (hc) $16.95

978-1-77138-880-1 (eBook) $4.99

for Grades 3 to 6

Fiction | Friendship | Coming of Age | Responsibility | Family | Humour | Pets | Middle School

What is a dingus? Well, a dingus is NOT a stupid person, but they may make you laugh or upset you. A dingus is like a goof, but not an idiot and not to be confused with a doofus. And it looks like Henry is going to have to spend the summer figuring out how to embrace his inner dingus.

With grade five nearly over and an empty summer looming, Henry is feeling forlorn. “Everyone was excited about their summer. But not me. I’m a dingus.”

Naomi Szeben is a Toronto-based writer and blogger.
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Everyone but me... I could feel myself being pulled by the gravitational force of nothingness.” While most of his classmates have plans for the summer, Henry’s parents have not signed him up for anything. His best friend, Max, is changing and hanging out with new friends, leaving Henry feeling adrift. His stay-at-home dad’s plans for a ‘staycation’ are not living up to Henry’s expectations. Henry is provided with a golden opportunity to shine, however, when asked to dog-sit his grandfather’s dog Rupert. But Henry does something irresponsible and finds himself caught in a web of his own lies. Now Henry must make some important choices about the kind of person he wants to be.

In this lighthearted and gentle novel, Andrew Larsen deftly captures the awkwardness and confusion of a boy on the brink of adolescence. Henry is straddling two worlds, and it is an uncomfortable place to be. His struggles are not dire, however, and the story offers plenty of humorous moments that keep the tone light and engaging. Many young readers are sure to identify with Henry, and relate to his trials and tribulations. A thoughtful read that will appeal to many middle graders!

Tracey Schindler

**From Ant to Eagle**
written by Alex Lyttle
Central Avenue Publishing, 2017
978-1-77168-111-7 (pb) $14.95
978-1-77168-112-4 (eBook) $7.99
for Grades 7 and up

Fiction | Family | Siblings | Friendship | Terminal Illness | Grief

Eleven-year-old Calvin Sinclair is not happy about moving from his hometown of London, Ontario, to middle-of-nowhere Huxbury an hour away. Summer vacation is in full swing, and there’s not one thing to do for fun among the endless cornfields and dirt roads — except torture his little brother, Sammy. And that Cal does with creative flourish. The Level System — from ant to eagle — is Cal’s way of getting Sammy to do anything, like attack a wasp’s nest. Then Cal meets Aleta Alvarado, a fellow Goosebumps fan with a secret, and pushes his brother aside for the new friendship. Then Sammy is diagnosed with a devastating and terminal illness as the school year begins, and Cal is wracked with guilt and blames himself when is brother dies.

Debut author Alex Lyttle has crafted a powerful and heartbreaking novel about life, death and brotherly love. A pediatrician with experience in oncology, Lyttle doesn’t shy away from or sugar-coat the issues that arise from having a terminal illness; rather, he clearly describes how the disease attacks, how the treatments available work and how ravaging the effects can be on the body, and the family.

The characters are relatable and well drawn, their words and actions genuine: Cal’s desire to grow but feeling trapped with a little brother in tow, followed by his inner turmoil and desire to do right by Sammy, are palpable; Oliver — a hospitalized teen waiting for his irreversible cancer to take him — becomes a sort of confidant and mentor to Cal, providing perspective, hope and even a bit of levity at just the right moments. Readers who have lost a loved one will no doubt be struck hard, but also reassured that everyone needs to deal and grieve in their own way — and that is absolutely okay.

Heather Camlot is a writer, editor, translator and the author of *Clutch*.

**Goth Girl**
written by Melanie Mosher
Nimbus Publishing, 2017
978-1-77108-468-0 (pb) $14.95
for Grades 7 and up

Fiction | Broken Homes | Graffiti Art | Self-Expression | Halifax

Victoria Markham, or “Vic,” lives with her mother in Halifax. Vic is frustrated and upset by her mom’s breakup with her long-time artist boyfriend, James. Now, mother and daughter are having a difficult time getting along. Vic deals with her emotions through her persona ‘Goth Girl’ who cloaks herself in black clothes and heavy makeup. Goth Girl also enjoys painting as a form of expression — except her forms of art take place on the side of public buildings, at night and with spray cans. When Vic is charged for her graffiti, she must do community...
service with other likeminded teens who don’t see eye to eye. The group will have to pull it together to get their community project done — the opportunity to create a reputable piece of graffiti art.

Melanie Mosher conveys strong, believable characters in this coming-of-age novel. Vic’s dry, satirical voice captures the edginess she portrays. However, her inner monologue shows the depth and complexity of her character, revealing a more vulnerable side.

Young teens will easily identify with this fast-moving plot. The language is as real as the situations the protagonist experiences: the ups and downs of having a father she doesn’t know, a mother she’s not getting along with, being bullied by peers and trying to stay true to her sense of self. A wonderful story that explores individualism and what it means to safely express oneself.

Mellissa Connolly is a Literacy Consultant in Brantford, Ontario.

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**I See London, I See France**

written by Sarah Mlynowski
978-1-4434-317-3 (hc) $19.99
978-1-4434-319-7 (eBook) $11.99
HarperCollins Publishers, 2017
for Grades 9 and up

*Fiction | Travels | Relationships | Romance | Mental Illness | Family *

When Sydney and her life-long best friend, Leila, are finally seated on a airplane bound for London, Sydney can hardly believe it is actually happening. True, she and Leila had always planned to go to Europe together one day, but when the time had come, Sydney couldn’t bring herself to leave her anxiety-ridden and agoraphobic mom. So Leila and her boyfriend Matt were going to go instead, until Matt cheated on Leila. Torn between wanting and agoraphobic mom. So Leila and her boyfriend Matt were going to go instead, until Matt cheated on Leila. Torn between wanting

Young teens will easily identify with this fast-moving plot. The language is as real as the situations the protagonist experiences: the ups and downs of having a father she doesn’t know, a mother she’s not getting along with, being bullied by peers and trying to stay true to her sense of self. A wonderful story that explores individualism and what it means to safely express oneself.

Mellissa Connolly is a Literacy Consultant in Brantford, Ontario.

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**It’s a Mystery, Pig Face**

written by Wendy McLeod MacKnight
Sky Pony Press, 2017
978-1-5107-0621-7 (hc) $23.99
978-1-5107-2280-4 (pb) $12.99
for Grades 2 to 6

*Fiction | Friendship | Siblings | Mystery | Bullying | Secrets | Humour *

Eleven-year-old Tracy Munroe has got spunk. She also has a little brother named Lester, a.k.a. Pig Face, whose allergies and anxiety always seem to get in the way of her fun. After a disappointing family trip to the ocean (it seems Pig Face is allergic to the seashore), Tracy and her best friend, Ralph, are looking for a summer adventure. When the friends stumble across a bag of cash under the dugout bench at the local baseball diamond, adventure seems to find them. With hopes of becoming local heroes — and maybe Internet sensations — they decide to secretly solve the mystery of the money.

Soon the quiet town of St. Stephen becomes a hotbed of suspects, while Tracy and Ralph’s not-so-subtle snooping leads to trouble. Lies and secrets complicate matters, and, when events spiral out of control, Tracy finds herself out of her depth. To fix her mistakes, Tracy must overcome her fears to save her brother, salvage her friendship with Ralph and return the money to its rightful owner.

The real strength of this debut novel is the captivating cast of quirky characters. Tracy herself is an independent thinker who creates her own style and tries hard to solve her own problems. Ralph, a budding Gordon Ramsey, is a food channel junkie. Even Lester misses very little and is full of clever surprises. Secondary characters such as mean-girl Jasmine, cool New Yorker Zach and Tracy’s nemesis Hazel McNutt, add depth to the story.

Intertwoven into this multi-faceted mystery is a kind-hearted tale about friendship, loyalty, first crushes, being true to oneself, and the strength of sibling bonds. While not a difficult read, this lengthy story has multiple plot lines and will appeal to dedicated young readers.

Tracey Schindler

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**Lines, Bars and Circles: How William Playfair Invented Graphs**

written by Helaine Becker
illustrated by Marie-Ève Tremblay
Kids Can Press, 2017
978-1-77138-570-1 (hc) $18.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 4

*Non-fiction Picture Book | William Playfair | Graphs | Infographics *

Infographics are so ubiquitous that it is difficult to imagine life without them. However, they did need to be invented. Helaine Becker’s *Lines, Bars and Circles: How William Playfair Invented Graphs* is a playful look at the inventor of graphs. Few readers will know of this inventor and fewer would guess that he was a schemer and a scoundrel. This picture book biography will have readers laughing while learning about graphs and the historical period during which Playfair lived. Sidebars on the scientific method,
Industrial Revolution and French Revolution expand on these aspects of the story. Supplemental biographical information and some of Playfair’s original graphs follow the story. This biography is enticing to readers, encouraging them to explore the topic and appreciate others with different ideas.

Marie-Ève Tremblay’s lighthearted, whimsical illustrations encapsulate the humour of the book. An image of Playfair lifting the roof and stepping out into the world accompanies the text “Meikle’s workshop felt too small to hold all Will’s grand dreams.” Another of him spying around a corner to see his sister’s reaction to a frog in her soup illuminates his family relationships. Even the graphs are illustrated with humour. In one he’s pushing the bar for America into place, and another image shows him serving a slice from a pie graph.

Troublemakers everywhere will relate to Playfair and delight in his story. This book would work well as a read-aloud and could be used to introduce historical, scientific and mathematical concepts. Children will be especially proud to master graphs, a concept that eluded people for nearly a century following Playfair’s death.

Krista Jorgensen

Road Signs That Say West
written by Sylvia Gunnery
Pajama Press, 2017
978-1-77278-023-9 (pb) $14.95
for Grades 7 and up
Fiction | Siblings | Abuse | Depression | Road Trips

Hanna returns home this summer and persuades her younger sisters, Claire and Megan, to take a cross-Canada trip while their parents are away in Europe. With their mother’s car, a guitar and some savings, they embark on a much-needed trip of bonding and revealing secrets that are holding them back. During the trip, it becomes clear that something happened to Hanna while she was away at school. Claire is suffering from nightmares and guilt over the recent suicide of her friend. Megan observes her sisters and begins to put some of the pieces together. As the adventures begin, they become aware that in order to continue their journey discovering who they are, they must share their secrets so they can navigate this path of adolescence, trauma, shame and fear of the future.

Sylvia Gunnery is able to show that the path through life has many bumps and turns along the way. She illustrates that, with good travel companions, the journey to healing and self-discovery can be very rewarding. Gunnery is sensitive, empathetic and insightful with these characters as they explore their paths.

Young teens will easily identify with the characters as they enjoy a youthful summer trip. They may also relate to the secrets the characters disclose, navigating who to trust, and the bonds of siblings and true friendship. It is an engaging story about what it means to let go of the past and align yourself with the path to your own journey in life.

Christine O’Sullivan is a secondary teacher-librarian in Brantford, Ontario.
Those Who Run in the Sky
written by Aviaq Johnston
illustrations by Toma Feizo Gas
Inhabit Media, 2017
978-1-77227-121-8 (pb) $13.95
for Grades 7 and up
Fiction | Inuit Culture | Shamanism | Survival | Northern Canada

Piturniak (Pitu) is a respected young Inuit hunter who discovers he has shamanic powers. He wonders if his path in life will make him a lesser hunter or bring trouble to his village. Those Who Run in the Sky is an excellent choice for teachers and parents who want more cultural diversity in their reading selection, without worrying about cultural appropriation or inauthentic Indigenous voices. The book, written by Aviaq Johnston, an Iqaluit-based Inuit author, features strong, three-dimensional Inuit characters. Though the story is set in an undated time before European colonists, Those Who Run in the Sky is timeless in its exploration of man against nature, and fighting real and personal demons. Pitu finds and saves the soul of a fellow shaman in an Arctic underworld, but the main focus is the use of empathy as a survival tool. Additional sub-themes of self-discovery and redemption are also explored; Pitu meets an almost comically grouchy shaman who trains him, but at the cost of possibly never seeing his family again. He faces the challenge of cracking the shaman’s hard surface in order to escape the underworld, but he’s unsure if his home and loved ones will be the same when he returns.

Teens will relate to the frustrations of a young man trying to survive and communicate with an ornery teacher and will be captivated by the stark black-and-white illustrations of creatures such as the qallupilluit, who live under the ice and snatch unaware children. Readers of all ages will appreciate the glossary, which defines Innu vocabulary, at the back of the book.

Naomi Szeben

Seeking Refuge: A Graphic Novel
written by Irene N. Watts
illustrated by Kathryn E. Shoemaker
Tradewind Books, 2016
978-1-926890-02-9 (pb) $18.95
for Grades 3 to 6
Graphic Novel | World War II | Kindertransport | Refugee Experience

Watts and Shoemaker revisit Marianne Kohn, a character first introduced in the graphic novel, Good-bye Marianne: A Story of Growing Up in Nazi Germany, published in 2008. Having escaped the growing tyranny of the Nazis through a rescue operation called the Kindertransport, Marianne, a young Jewish girl, arrives in London, England, at the end of 1938. Without a prearranged sponsor, Marianne comes under the care of a strict foster mother who attempts to introduce her to British traditions and hopes she will become a fine domestic servant. But Marianne feels out of place, continually disappoints her foster family and deeply misses her mother. With the threat of World War II becoming a reality, Marianne is evacuated from London and sent to Wales where she is forced out of a group home for being Jewish and accused of being a spy and then placed into a home where her foster mother treats her like a replacement for her deceased daughter. Seeking help from her original contact when she arrived in Wales, she is miraculously reunited with her mother who escaped Germany just before war was declared.

Seeking Refuge captures the essence of the refugee experience, especially through Marianne’s struggle to fit into a culture that is not her own. Marianne’s inner dialogue reflects this struggle, providing readers with a glimpse into her emotional experience of being isolated and alone. With few major dramatic moments in this graphic novel, Watt’s story feels authentic with its slower pace, successfully portraying the main theme of desperately looking for family but continually feeling unwanted. Shoemaker’s pencil illustrations with heavy shading convey the bleakness of the time period, but the lack of white space or variety in the shading creates a sense of repetitiveness. Characters are difficult to distinguish from one another, and more clarity and detail in facial expressions would deepen the emotional impact on the reader.

Marianne’s character adds to the long tradition of young females who survived the atrocities of World War II. Her story is endearing and will appeal to young readers who have a growing interest in the range of available Holocaust and World War II fiction.

Scott Robins

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RED LEAF LITERATURE
A Bear’s Life
(My Great Bear Rainforest)
Nicholas Read, Ian McAllister

The Fashion Committee
Susan Juby

I Am Canada: A Celebration
Heather Patterson, various illustrators

If Found... Please Return to Elise Gravel
Elise Gravel, Shira Adriance

Innocent Heroes: Stories of Animals in the First World War
Sigmund Brouwer

Macy McMillan and the Rainbow Goddess
Shari Green

My Wounded Island
Jacques Pasquet, Marion Arbona, Sophie B. Watson

Nanuq: Life with Polar Bears
Inuit Elders, Paul Souders

A Pattern for Pepper
Julie Kraulis

Saints and Misfits
S.K. Ali

Sam Sorts
Marthe Jocelyn

The Tragic Tale of the Greak Auk
Jan Thornhill

The Way Back Home
Allan Stratton

Wolf Island
(My Great Bear Rainforest)
Nicholas Read, Ian McAllister

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WE RECOMMEND
10 Routes That Crossed the World
(The World of Tens)
Gillian Richardson, Kim Rosen

An African Alphabet
Eric Walters, Sue Todd

The Agony of Bun O’Keefe
Heather T. Smith

Alison’s Fishing Birds
Roderick Haig-Brown, Sheryl McDougald, Jim Rimmer

Bedtime 123
Eric Walters, Joëlle Bisailon

Carson Crosses Canada
Linda Bailey, Kass Reich

Dingus
Andrew Larsen

Dominion
Shane Arbuthnott

The Fog
Kyo Maclear, Kenard Pak

From Ant to Eagle
Alex Lyttle

Goth Girl
Melanie Mosher

Hand Over Hand
Alma Fullerton, Renné Benoit

How Nivi Got Her Names
Laura Deal, Charlene Chua

Ira Crumb Makes a Pretty Good Friend
Naseem Hrab, Josh Holinaty

I See London, I See France
Sarah Mlynowski

It’s a Mystery, Pig Face
Wendy McLeod MacKnight

Lines, Bars and Circles:
How William Playfair Invented Graphs
Helaine Becker, Marie-Eve Tremblay

My Canada: An Illustrated Atlas
Katherine Dearlove, Lori Joy Smith

One Piece of String
Marthe Jocelyn

One Red Button
Marthe Jocelyn

The People of the Sea
Donald Uludluauk, Mike Motz

Road Signs That Say West
Sylvia Gunnery

Seeking Refuge: A Graphic Novel
Irene N. Watts, Kathryn E. Shoemaker

The Snow Knows
Jennifer McGrath, Joëlle Bisailon

Stop Feedin’ Da Boids!
James Sage, Pierre Pratt

Those Who Run in the Sky
Aviaq Johnston, Toma Feizo Gas

Triangle
Mac Barnett, Jon Klassen

You Are One
Sara O’Leary, Karen Klassen

You Are Three
Sara O’Leary, Karen Klassen

You Are Two
Sara O’Leary, Karen Klassen

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