



The Canadian Children's Book Centre

The Canadian Children's Book Centre Book Awards celebrate the books that inspired us in 2020, with Julie Flett taking home the \$50K top prize

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Toronto (October 30, 2020) — The Canadian Children's Book Centre (CCBC) is delighted to announce the winners of its English-language children's book awards. Awarded tonight at a virtual event in Toronto hosted by CBC host Tony Kim, Julie Flett took home the title of most distinguished children's book of the year and \$50,000 — the largest cash prize in Canadian children's literature — by winning the TD Canadian Children's Literature Award. The winning title, *Birdsong*, is one of the first picture books published under Greystone's new children's imprint, Greystone Kids. The winning publisher receives \$2,500 for promotional purposes, and an additional \$10,000 is shared among the four remaining finalists for their contributions to Canadian children's literature.

The awards event was hosted through the Toronto International Festival of Authors (TIFA). Leading up to the awards ceremony, a series of three panels showcasing the awards took place as a part of TIFA. These videos will be available on [Bibliovideo](#), the CCBC's YouTube channel, permanently after the festival. On October 31 and November 1, each winner of the CCBC Book Awards will read from their winning book as a part of TIFA Kids! Register for these readings today and see the full schedule at our [events page](#).

This year marks the 15th anniversary of the Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award, which went to *Small in the City* by Sydney Smith, published by Groundwood Books. The John Spray Mystery Award celebrates its 10-year anniversary and was awarded to *The Starlight Claim* by Tim Wynne-Jones, published by Candlewick Press. Tonight's other winners include Serah-Marie McMahon, Alison Matthews David, Tina Athaide and Natasha Deen.

Six awards in total were given out:

- ***Birdsong*** by Julie Flett (Greystone Kids), won the TD Canadian Children's Literature Award (\$50,000)
- ***Small in the City*** by Sydney Smith (Groundwood Books), won the Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award (\$20,000)
- ***Killer Style: How Fashion Has Injured, Maimed, & Murdered Through History***, written by Serah-Marie McMahon and Alison Matthews David, illustrated by Gillian Wilson (Owlkids Books), won the Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children's Non-Fiction (\$10,000)
- ***Orange for the Sunsets*** by Tina Athaide (Katherine Tegen Books), won the Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People (\$5,000)

- ***The Starlight Claim*** by Tim Wynne-Jones (Candlewick Press), won the John Spray Mystery Award (\$5,000)
- ***In the Key of Nira Ghani*** by Natasha Deen (Running Press Teens), won the Amy Mathers Teen Book Award (\$5,000)

“It is fitting that this year’s winner of the TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award, *Birdsong* by Julie Flett, is all about the lasting impact of art and the people we love during a time of change,” says Rose Vespa, Executive Director of the CCBC. “This year’s events have reminded us of the power of books to connect us with others while we are apart and bring light and magic to days that may feel dark. Congratulations to all of the winners and nominees celebrated tonight. We know that young readers all across the country will be enthralled by these stories that take us through the crowded streets of Toronto, immerse us in the dark world of fashion, take us back in time to 1970s Uganda, keep us in suspense as we trudge through the Canadian wilderness, and readers will empathize with the story of a girl growing up between worlds in an immigrant household.”

"Congratulations to the winner of this year's TD Canadian Children's Literature Award, Julie Flett, and the other recipients and finalists," says Andrea Barrack, Global Head, Sustainability and Corporate Citizenship, TD Bank Group. "In a time of such uncertainty, *Birdsong* provides hope, friendship and life lessons to young readers across Canada. We are proud to support this award, along with the CCBC's mission of early learning through the TD Ready Commitment, the Bank's global corporate citizenship platform."

In total, \$107,500 was awarded tonight, and an additional \$67,500 will be awarded at a virtual event in Montreal on November 13 where the winners of the Prix TD de littérature canadienne pour l'enfance et la jeunesse and the Prix Harry Black de l'album jeunesse will be announced as a part of the Salon du livre de Montreal. Below is the full list of prizes presented, with comments from the jurors.

We are especially thankful to our sponsors for supporting and elevating Canadian books and their creators: TD Bank Group, A. Charles Baillie, the Fleck Family Foundation and John Spray. Tonight’s festivities would not have been possible without our partnership with the Toronto International Festival of Authors, who helped us bring the awards celebration to people all across the country.

For the first time, the CCBC is partnering with the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) on a pilot project to provide accessible formats of all books nominated for the Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award, Amy Mathers Teen Book Award, TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award and the Prix TD de littérature canadienne pour l'enfance et la jeunesse. You can find them [here](#). For a complete list of the shortlisted titles, [click here](#).

Congratulations to all of the winners and finalists!

For more information, please contact:



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TD Canadian Children's Literature Award (\$50,000)

Sponsored by TD Bank Group

Birdsong

Written and illustrated by Julie Flett (Vancouver, BC)
Greystone Kids
for ages 3-8

"This gentle and affecting story is a tender tribute to the healing power of friendship, art and nature... Offering beautiful illustrations that are both calming and expressive, in addition to thoughtful, quiet and tender text, this book demonstrates the value of intergenerational friendships and of caring for others. Flett integrates the Cree worldview seamlessly... The total result is that Birdsong is a stunning picture book that is both touching and meaningful to readers of all ages and is a contribution to the canon of Canadian children's literature... Young and old will enjoy sharing this touching story together."

TD Canadian Children's Literature Award honour books include:

- *Broken Strings* by Eric Walters and Kathy Kacer (Puffin Canada)
- *It Began With a Page: How Gyo Fujikawa Drew the Way*, written by Kyo Maclear, illustrated by Julie Morstad (Tundra Books)
- *Small in the City* by Sydney Smith (Groundwood Books)
- *Stand on the Sky* by Erin Bow (Scholastic Canada)

JURY MEMBERS: Lisa Doucet, Co-Manager, Woozles; Sandra O'Brien, former Editor, *Canadian Children's Book News*, and former teacher; Colette Poitras, Manager, Indigenous Public Library Outreach, Government of Alberta.

Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award (\$20,000)

Sponsored by A. Charles Baillie

Small in the City

Written and illustrated by Sydney Smith (Halifax, NS)

Groundwood Books

for ages 4-7

"A subtle transition from a wordless story to a beautifully written piece of poetry that follows the journey of this child through this city... Wonderfully written in the first person, the reader is taken along on a bleak winter journey across a snowy city... The noise, hustle and bustle of people, the massive skyscrapers, and the snowstorm all envelope the child on their trek to find someone, or something, that they have lost... This story has one thinking of how we form a deep sense of belonging into the communities that we call home."

JURY MEMBERS: Jim Martella, principal, Toronto District School Board, and former teacher-librarian and literacy coach; Janis Nostbakken, children's media specialist; Sara Spencer, PYP teacher-librarian.

Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children's Non-Fiction (\$10,000)

Sponsored by the Fleck Family Foundation

Killer Style: How Fashion Has Injured, Maimed, & Murdered Through History

Written by Serah-Marie McMahon (Toronto, ON) and Alison Matthews David (Toronto, ON)

Illustrated by Gillian Wilson (Guelph, ON)

Owlkids Books

for ages 9-12

"Hats off to the writer, illustrator and editors who have created a super collection of facts and stories about the world of fashion... Brilliant layout of illustrations and photographs, captivating headings and 'just enough' information about such things as constricting corsets, restrictive skirts, and fatal footwear fiascos help to make this a macabre, entertaining and stylish creation... Easy and fun layout filled with juicy tidbits and stories, this book will draw in lovers of fashion and disaster alike."

JURY MEMBERS: Nancy Cooper, First Nations Consultant, Southern Ontario Library Service; Erin Grittani, Children's Consultant, Another Story Bookshop; Larry Swartz, Instructor, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, and author of *Teaching Tough Topics: How Do I Use Children's Literature to Build a Deeper Understanding of Social Justice, Equity, and Diversity?* (Pembroke Publishers).

Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People (\$5,000)

Sponsored by the Canadian Children's Book Centre's Bilson Endowment Fund

Orange for the Sunsets

Written by Tina Athaide (Temecula, CA)

Katherine Tegen Books

for ages 8-12

"The expulsion of Indians from Idi Amin's Uganda is the time and setting for this tale of race, friendship, nationalism and empathy. The well-developed characters, Asha and Yesofu, must decide what will happen to their friendship in a time and place torn by ethnic nationalism. The alternating narration, rich description, use of language and vocabulary make this difficult and disturbing tension and conflict accessible to young readers in Canada. The inclusion of photographs, bibliography and resources for additional interest offer further clarification and background... A powerful, thought-provoking and moving text."

JURY MEMBERS: Shaula Corr, former middle school librarian; Matt McCarney, teacher (Grade 7/8 English and History), Selwyn House School, and PhD student, Integrated Studies in Education, McGill University; Dr. Eric M. Meyers, Associate Professor, School of Information, University of British Columbia; Gail de Vos (chair), author, storyteller and Adjunct (Associate) Professor, School of Library and Information Studies, University of Alberta.

John Spray Mystery Award (\$5,000)

Sponsored by John Spray

The Starlight Claim

Written by Tim Wynne-Jones (Perth, ON)

Candlewick Press

for ages 14 and up

"In this legacy sequel to his Governor General's Literary Award-winning novel The Maestro, Wynne-Jones balances a story of survival in a remote northern Ontario winter setting with a cat-and-mouse game between a teen and some ruthless criminals... The northern setting seems to also be a character, simultaneously providing danger and safety. Jam-packed with action and tension... The Starlight Claim follows Nate's nail-biting journey of self discovery that requires his tenacity and intuition, and some family, if he is to save himself."

JURY MEMBERS: Diana Krawczyk, Manager, Children, Youth and Popular Collections, Central Library, Mississauga Library; Helen Kubiw, writer, retired teacher-librarian and blogger at [CanLit for LittleCanadians](#); Maria Martella, owner of Tinlids Inc., a wholesaler of children's and teen books for schools and libraries.

Amy Mathers Teen Book Award (\$5,000)

Sponsored by the Canadian Children's Book Centre

In the Key of Nira Ghani

Written by Natasha Deen (Edmonton, AB)

Running Press Teens

for ages 12 and up

"Natasha Deen invites readers into the warm embrace of the community she so charmingly depicts in In the Key of Nira Ghani... In this contemporary coming-of-age story, Deen shines a light on the struggles of conforming to your parents' expectations while trying to forge your own path... Poignant and full of love, this is a story of family, friendship, and finding the courage to make your voice heard... A heartwarming story that will steal your heart."

JURY MEMBERS: **Kathleen Martin**, writer, editor and Past President, Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia; **Tracey Schindler**, reviewer and former teacher; **Joel A. Sutherland**, Silver Birch Award-winning author and Manager of Client Experience, Pickering Public Library.

About the Canadian Children's Book Centre

The Canadian Children's Book Centre is a national, not-for-profit organization founded in 1976. We are dedicated to encouraging, promoting and supporting the reading, writing and illustrating of Canadian books for young readers. Our programs, publications, and resources help teachers, librarians, booksellers and parents select the very best for young readers. For more information, please visit bookcentre.ca.

About TD Global Corporate Citizenship

TD has a long-standing commitment to enriching the lives of its customers, colleagues and communities. As part of its corporate citizenship platform, The Ready Commitment, TD is targeting CDN \$1 billion (US \$775 million) in total by 2030 towards community giving in four areas critical to opening doors for a more inclusive and sustainable tomorrow — Financial Security, Vibrant Planet, Connected Communities and Better Health. Through The Ready Commitment, TD aspires to link its business, philanthropy and human capital to help people feel more confident — not just about their finances, but also in their ability to achieve their personal goals in a changing world. For further information, visit td.com/thereadycommitment.

About the Toronto International Festival of Authors

The Toronto International Festival of Authors (TIFA) is Canada's longest-running literary festival, a charitable, non-for-profit cultural organization. It presents the finest of Canadian and international writers, artists and thinkers across the range of literary genres from fiction to non-fiction, poetry to plays, graphic novelists and illustrators. It enables audiences access and empowerment to meet, hear and learn from the finest contemporary writers and thinkers of our

time. For more information, visit festivalofauthors.ca.

About the Centre for Equitable Library Access

The Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) is Canada's comprehensive accessible reading service, providing books and other materials to Canadians with print disabilities in the formats of their choice. A national not-for-profit organization, CELA is fully funded to serve 97% of the estimated 3 million Canadians with print disabilities in partnership with member public libraries and we offer a digital-only service to those in non-funded areas. CELA provides access to 800,000 professionally produced titles to provide people with print disabilities with a quality library experience. For more information, visit celalibrary.ca.