Cast Out of The Garden

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Prudence Emery has published her mostly show-biz memoirs in Nanaimo Girl ($24.95). After working for five years as a press secretary for the Savoy Hotel in London—and getting a kiss from Paul McCartney—she became a Hollywood publicist working with the likes of Jodie Foster, Beau Bridges, Rob Lowe, and Raymond Burr. She has 80 credits as a unit publicist on IMDB.

Prudence Emery graduated from Crofton House Private School in Vancouver in 1954 and attended UBC for two years before taking a secretarial job at the naval base in Esquimalt. She earned enough to attend the Chelsea School of Art in London, England in 1957. She returned to Canada in 1962 at age 25 and taught handicrafts to veterans at Shaughnessy Hospital in Vancouver in 1964. She finally faced hearing loss and trained to teach deaf and hard of hearing students. The MacLeods left the North in 1987. He and his wife Mariette now live in North Vancouver where MacLeod is active in the North Shore Writers’ Association and the Gulf Yacht Club, splitting time between his passion for sailing and writing. — Mark Forsythe

When his sister gave him 15,000 bees as a Christmas present, Dave Dorogy developed a fascination for the insects. After many mishaps—like getting stung multiple times, losing bees to wasps and mites, even the queen bee twice—he continues to raise bees and blogs about it at housebeathoney.com. Now, he has published Show Me the Honey: Adventures of an Accidental Apiarist (TouchWood $25). Dorogy lives on a houseboat outside of Vancouver.

Tracing his dating history in Vancouver to find the love of his life, Kevin Spensit simultaneously probes historical England’s love sonnet in his new collection of poems, Hearts Amok (Anvil Press $18). Journeying from the Middle Ages to contemporary times, Spensit intermixes hobo slang with the diction of an ancient troubadour to describe the capricious woes, and triumphs of the human heart.

Doug MacLeod has published his memoir, On The Edge of Wilderness: Tales From Hazelton and the Kispayox Valley ($15.70) about leaving Vancouver in 1976 with his wife (both young teachers) to work in Hazelton. The MacLeods built their dream log home in the nearby Kispayox Valley, bought horses and enjoyed the rhythm of the seasons. Local ranchers taught the greenhorns how to (safely) fell trees, keep lambs alive, and what rules to ignore. MacLeod’s sense of awe, adventure and humility comes through in the writing. He eventually faced hearing loss and trained to teach deaf and hard of hearing students. The MacLeods left the North in 1987. He and his wife Mariette now live in North Vancouver where MacLeod is active in the North Shore Writers’ Association and the Gulf Yacht Club, splitting time between his passion for sailing and writing. — Mark Forsythe

Dari Bysouth’s characters in Lost Boys (This-tiedown $20) face losing what they hold most dear in a world crumbling around them. This debut collection of 18 tales includes Hold about a grieving widow who thinks she has found a glimpse of hope in the dark waters of a childhood lake; Sacrifice in which a violent incident reveals the treachery within a lonely woman’s relationships; and The Heartbreaks about a teenage girl whose naivety in a brother is ruined when a road trip to a rock concert goes awry.
The seeds of time

Dan Jason, known for popularizing beans as an important North American diet choice, has written a new guide, *Saving Seeds: A Home Gardener's Guide to Preserving Plant Biodiversity* (Harbour $14.95). It promotes the household production of seeds as a way to regain power over biodiversity from big industrial companies that have replaced heirloom varieties with genetic engineering and expensive trademarks. This corporate attack on biodiversity can be challenged by returning to the centuries-old tradition of farmers and communities saving seed stocks. Over half of Canadian households grow fruits, herbs, vegetables or flowers for personal use according to Stats Can. Each of these home gardens has the potential to become seed savers. But they have to let some of the plants go to seed, and harvest and preserve them. *Saving Seeds* is a call to help ensure a more secure future for seeds and our food security. Jason lives on Salt Spring Island where he founded a mail-order seed company. He has written many popular books including *The Power of Pulses* (D&M, 2016). 978-1-55017-900-2

The human-animal condition

Vancouver-based author Laiwan is described as reticent and modest, “shying away from the spectacular.” Raised in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and taught by German nuns, she immigrated to Vancouver with her family and attended Britannia Secondary School where “she stumbled into poetry” and became interested in printing. After studying at Emily Carr College of Art & Design and being influenced by local musicians, she gained an M.F.A. from SFU and founded the OR Gallery in 1983. She was Chair of the Grunt Gallery’s board from 2010 to 2014. Laiwan’s debut collection of poetic inquiry into our shared human-animal condition, *TENDER* (Talon $18.95), offers “a radical and decolonizing cleansing of all that oppresses and alienates.” 9781772012514

Eden in our midst

The Fraser River is B.C.’s largest, most diverse waterway. Between Hope and Mission is a meandering section that is some of the river’s most productive—called the “Heart of the Fraser”—and it’s under threat. Director of BCIT Rivers Institute, Ken Ashley has edited a book of essays, *The Heart of the Fraser River* (fernandolessa.ca $33.50) with photography by Fernando Lessa, about the devastating impact of a century of development. Included is Canadian river conservationist, Mark Angelo’s story of first coming upon this area while on a summer paddling expedition.

“I was unexpectedly taken aback by the sheer beauty and obvious productivity of this lower part of the river,” Angelo writes. “I found myself exploring narrow channels, lush back eddies, immense gravel bars, and numerous beautiful islands.” He goes on to describe this area, only an hour’s drive east of Metro Vancouver as “an Eden in our midst.” 978-1-9990103-17

Accidents will happen

When Canadian foreign policy critic Yves Engler’s new book, *House of Mirrors: Justin Trudeau’s Foreign Policy* (Black Rose Books $21.95) came back from the printers, he was shocked to find that the book jacket cover art had been altered. The graphic caricature of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as Uncle Sam had been removed, leaving a politically ‘sanitized’ image. The printer immediately pulped the defective books but Engler kept some of them for future reference. He had initially wondered if darker forces, such as Liberal Party operatives or CSIS agents had a hand in the mysterious change. But the printer admitted to the mistake.

“I really don’t know what happened,” said Engler. “But I prefer to believe the printer’s ‘smart’ computer couldn’t reconcile the image with all of Trudeau’s progressive sounding statements.” Although now living in Montreal, Engler was born and raised in Vancouver. 978-1551647494
A little cloud with big dreams.

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—Booklist

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—Booklist

"Truly a book for today and our changing future."

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978-0-88922-259-7  •  $16.95  •  96 pages  •  Poetry
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“An impressive feat.” — Starred review, Kirkus Reviews

Inspired by the writing of internationally renowned BC artist Emily Carr, When Emily Was Small is a gorgeous celebration of freedom and the mysteries of nature.

Available June 23, 2020
Oh, Henry

He earned a high profile for her calm and empathetic broadcasts about COVID-19 in B.C. Then she sparked a flurry of Fluevog shoe-buying when the Vancouver shoe designer, John Fluevog, launched a limited edition shoe called ‘The Dr. Henry’ inspired by her prediction for wearing his brand. Now you can buy a paperback version of provincial health officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry’s guide to fighting viruses and other diseases, Soap and Water & Common Sense: The Definitive Guide to Viruses, Bacteria, Parasites, and Disease (Anansi $18.95). First published as a hard cover in 2012, it was updated this year with a new introduction on protection against the novel coronavirus that has caused a pandemic.

Dr. Henry’s three simple rules have struck a chord: wash your hands, cover your mouth when you cough, and stay at home when you have a fever. It was lucky timing for B.C. when they gave Dr. Henry the provincial health officer position, the first woman to fill that role, in 2018 as she is an expert in epidemiology having spent the better part of the last three decades fighting viruses such as Ebola, polo, SARS and the H1N1 flu bug.

Laments for Lost Lagoon

Having visited Vancouver’s iconic Lost Lagoon for decades, Betsy Warland finally came to live near it, which drastically changed her relationship to this much-managed natural landmark and inspired a prose poem, Lost Lagoon/lost in thought (Caitlin $20). Speaking through an individual she calls ‘The Human,’ Warland engages in a deep meditation on our role within the natural world through the microcosm of Lost Lagoon’s flora and fauna. She befriends swans, crows and bears; notices ivy and trees such as the dawn redwood that sheds its needles every year; and gives other Lost Lagoon frequenters names like ‘Swan Lady’ and ‘Beaver Lady.’ She mourns the loss of bird diversity; the losing fight between beaver that made the lagoon their home for generations, and the park authorities; and a swan, wings clipped so it couldn’t escape, that was eaten by otters. Warland comments on the cycle of life, philosophers like Henry David Thoreau, other poets, Google, The New York Times Magazine, and TV. She wonders, “While The Human has written this tale, has elation for Lost Lagoon become elegy?”

Bruce Kirkby

Once a common sight in Lost Lagoon, swans no longer make their home there after the last three were relocated in 2018.

Bruce Kirkby

In the 1960s, a group of men built a three-masted, tall sailing ship in North Vancouver. The construction was expensive, with a hull of mahogany planking on heavy fir frames with spars of Sitka spruce. The story of how the ship, first named Monte Cristo and later Endeavour II, sailed down the western United States and later across the Pacific Ocean to Australia for a bicentenary re-enactment of Captain James Cook’s landing at Botany Bay is told in the book, In a Cloud of Sails: Monte Cristo/Endeavour II, Canada’s Forgotten Lady of the Sea (Rutherford $27.95), co-authored by George Opacic and Ron M. Craig. The original crew, mostly young men from the prairies who had helped build this reincarnation of centuries-old sailing ships, got as far as San Francisco before being replaced by a new skipper. The second crew successfully weathered storms and hurricanes to their destiny ‘Down Under,’ to be feted by Queen Elizabeth II on April 28, 1970. After the ship left Australia and set sail for New Zealand in what was to be its last voyage, it ran into bad weather in the Tasman Sea and was wrecked.

North Van to the Tasman Sea

A moment of clarity led travel writer Bruce Kirkby to jump a freighter with his wife, Christine and their two young sons, and head for the Himalayan Mountains. With seven-year-old Bodi and three-year-old Taj in tow, they went by sea, rail and foot. Their destination was a thousand-year-old Buddhist monastery in the Zanskar valley, one of the last places where Tibetan Buddhism is still practiced freely in its original setting. Kirkby shares their story in his upcoming book due in August, In Blue Sky Kingdom: An Epic Family Journey to the Heart of the Himalaya (D&M $34.95). Kirkby is the author of two previous books and regularly writes for The Globe and Mail, as well as contributing to the New York Times, Outside Magazine, and Canadian Geographic. He has won several National Magazine Awards. Kirkby makes his home in Kimberley.
Liliane Leila Juma’s memoir of the family home she lost in the Congo is for young adult readers, old souls and anyone interested in recent African history.

Growing up in the Congo, in Uvira, on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, bordering Rwanda and Burundi, was at first idyllic. Her family home, called Maison Rouge was surrounded by green mountains, palm trees and fruit trees (mango, pomegranate, date, fig, orange and lemon). Her well-to-do father worked with theatre and musical groups; her mother designed clothes and held women's meetings. It was a lush and nurturing environment for the little Muslim girl.

In Juma’s memoir, *Maison Rouge: Memories of a Childhood in War*, she describes how her parents provided kitchen and bathroom facilities for those who were less fortunate. Juma’s father built special outbuildings for other people who didn’t have a place to stay. “While we were much better off than our neighbours, my father taught me to appreciate our good fortune and be humble,” said Juma.

“We came to this world empty-handed and will leave empty-handed,” her father told her. “Only our good deeds will outlive us. That’s what we will be remembered for.”

There were dangers, of course. One day she was nearly killed by a hippopotamus while swimming. And there were restrictions. One day Juma’s father saw her playing soccer with boys near the Catholic school she attended. “If an imam sees you, he would complain to me about giving my daughter too much freedom,” he warned.

Juma assured him that she would be careful. “But being rebellious by nature, I didn’t stop playing soccer with the boys.” Her spirit was strong; her manners were sophisticated; her future was bright.

But those glory days were soon to end.

In October of 1993, refugees from Burundi were streaming into Juma’s hometown, Uvira, and Maison Rouge became overcrowded with desperate, homeless people. “The tap water was now reserved for drinking and for strict household necessities. There were so many people now living at our home, all the bathing and washing of dishes and clothes had to be done at the lake.”

Six months later, Juma’s father heard that the new president of Burundi and the president of Rwanda were killed when a plane they were flying in was shot down. At her Catholic school, the headmaster, Father Dunia told the classroom that the war which had started between Rwanda and Burundi could soon spill over into Uvira.

By age thirteen, Juma’s idyllic life in Maison Rouge was buffeted by strife.
Burundi, the terrible genocide in Rwanda, and civil war in Congo. A refugee, Tayabo, who sought help at Maison Rouge, became a traitor, bringing in rebel soldiers to stay overnight with her. “Eventually she and her daughter were asked to leave our compound,” Juma writes, “later she would turn out to be the one who betrayed my father to the rebel soldiers who took him away and out of my life forever.”

Some nights, Juma couldn’t sleep in her own bed as refugee children crowded onto it. Their garden became an outdoor kitchen. One of Juma’s best friends remarked, “Maison Rouge is a refugee camp now. It’s not an elegant mansion anymore.”

Eventually, Juma’s family made the decision to become refugees themselves, eventually ending up in a United Nations refugee camp in Zambia. When the fighting temporarily died down, the family traveled back to the Maison Rouge.

Back at home, Juma was horrified and broken-hearted to see a former school friend, Amani, marching down the street with other crazed, boy soldiers, armed to the teeth. The military tactic of rape becomes a threat.

Bombs sporadically fell on Uvira. The United Nations delivered food. Other trucks were loaded with dead bodies. “The sun was no longer shining warm and clear. The air felt cold and smelled of blood.”

Maison Rouge is shelled and destroyed in a blaze of fire. Her mother goes looking for her husband. Juma gets her sisters and brother safely out of the rubble and they walk to a nearby village. The next day, bombs and bullets rain down on them as they walk south along Lake Tanganyika. Juma resorts to harvesting green mangos that taste like lemons to feed her siblings.

“Our people spent weeks fleeing from the war but the war kept following us,” Juma remembers. Eventually reunited with their mother, they are robbed, held hostage and brutalized until government soldiers rescue them and put them on a boat to Tanzania and a UNHCR refugee camp.

From there, they emigrated to Canada along with other French-speaking refugees from Congo, Rwanda and Burundi. Juma now works as a women’s support worker in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. This is her first book.

An Overview of conflict in the Congo

Excerpted introduction by Kambole Musavuli, spokesperson for Friends of the Congo, from Maison Rouge: Memories of a Childhood in War.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has experienced the deadliest war in the world since World War Two. An estimated six million Congolese perished between 1996 and 2007 as a result of two Congo wars. Half of the victims of the war were children under the age of five. Women have also paid a terrible price with hundreds of thousands of women being raped as a war strategy. The conflict is a product of two invasions led primarily by Congo’s neighbours Rwanda and Uganda, first in 1996 and again in 1998. The initial rationale for the invasion was the pursuit of rebel militias who perpetrated the 1994 genocide in Rwanda; however, it quickly became evident that Congo’s neighbours were intent on plundering Congo of its riches.

Congo is endowed with precious and strategic minerals such as gold, diamonds, copper, tin, coltan and a host of other natural resources worth an estimated $2.4 trillion. Congo’s riches have long attracted global corporations, particularly those in the minerals industries. Two key minerals that directly tie consumers to the Congo are coltan and cobalt, which is vital to the functioning of electric modes of transport. Cobalt and coltan are needed for cell phones and laptops.

Congo unstable and insecure. Recent elections in the Congo held high expectations of stabilizing the country. In a country with a median age of 17 years old, Congolese youth are determined to take the lead in transforming their country from a conflict-ridden nation to one of peace, stability and prosperity.
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or the Dene and Inuvialuit in the Northwest Territories (NWT) in 1928, “the white man introduced them to a new way to die” when an unknown infection was brought from the south, on a steamship, killing those with little immunity.

A mysterious virus—possibly the vestiges of the so-called Spanish Flu—was brought to the NWT on the steamship S.S. Distributor according to Dene filmmaker, Raymond Yakeleya, who interviewed a number of Sahtu and Gwich’in Dene elders for his 1978 film for CBC North, We Remember.

Those filmed interviews have been transcribed into English and in the Gwich’in Dene language for a new book, We Remember the Coming of the White Man: Dene Elders tell the history of their times by Elizabeth Yakeleya and Sarah Simon et al, and edited by Sarah Stewart. [The First Nations of British Columbia have similar stories of being devastated by disease. Particularly hard hit were the Haida on what was then known as the Queen Charlotte Islands. Travel to Haida Gwaii is now severely restricted during the current, international pandemic.]

The chapters of We Remember the Coming of The White Man are the transcripts of ten elders, including Raymond Yakeleya’s grandmother Elizabeth, recalling major events in their lives. They tell of the early days of fur trading and missionaries; dismay about the way oil and uranium discoveries and pipelines were handled on their land; and a flu pandemic that ravaged their communities, eerily similar to today’s COVID-19 pandemic.

In those days, the major form of transportation was the steamship and in the summer of 1928 the Hudson’s Bay paddle steamer S.S. Distributor sailed its annual supply route down the Mackenzie River. At each stop, along with the delivery of supplies, a virus was unleashed.

For the Dene and Inuvialuit along the waterway who hadn’t built up an immunity, the illness was new. Previously, their deaths were by old age, accidents, and violence but never the flu says Yakeleya.

With the spread of flu, “the white man introduced them to a new way to die,” Yakeleya recalls his uncle Johnny Lennie telling him. “That’s what (my) Uncle Johnny said. For that whole week as a young man, all he did was dig graves and all the young boys and men would do that as they were bringing more bodies to the graveyard.” Johnny Lennie was age 13 at the time of the deathly scourge.

When the illness arrived in Yakeleya’s home community of Tulita (formerly known as Fort Norman) 50 elders died in seven days. The disease seemed to hit the community slowly, then all at once as the illness multiplied. Yakeleya’s grandmother, Elizabeth recalls: “In 1928, after the steamboat left, we weren’t expecting sickness. An old man had it first but we didn’t realize the flu had started.”

Elizabeth Yakeleya says that they were just getting ready to leave one of their summer hunting camps when suddenly, “everyday people died.” “The flu didn’t last long, not even two weeks, but it wiped us out. Some people came here from Franklin to trade at the Hudson Bay here. On their way back home, some of them died too.”

Another elder from a different community, Jim Sittichini, remembers, “It was almost a week after the boat left that people started to get sick. I think about 50 people died in Fort McPherson within a week. There was no doctor. Towards the end, people were dying too fast and only a few people were able to dig graves. It was during July and they had to bury them right away. You can’t leave them out.

“We used to dig a grave for six people and we had to bury them without a coffin. We put two coffins, one at each end, and put the ones with no coffins in the middle and put lumber over them. We buried them that way.”

We Remember the Coming of the White Man contains 100 black and white photographs as well as a DVD of the 1978 film We Remember, remastered with the director’s commentary.

As Raymond Yakeleya says in the foreword to the book, “Extra footage shot for the film has been lost, but the transcriptions of the Elders’ words in this book remain a precious chronicle of their times.” “No wonder NWT has closed its borders due to COVID,” says the book’s publisher, Lorene Shyba.
IN A CLOUD OF SAILS
The Monte Cristo should not have been able to sail. Built in North Van in 1968, she looked beautiful. Dedicated builders and sailors sweated to keep her afloat, but under the decks were disasters, and between decks were mutineers. Yet, she did sail to Australia to see the Queen! ISBN 978-0-9951743-7-5

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MEMOIR

REVIEW

Every Little Scrap and Wonder: A Small-Town Childhood by Carla Funk (Grystone $29.95)

BY PORTIA PRIEGERT

A s its title sug-

gests, Every Little Scrap and Wonder: A Small-Town Childhood gathers a goody share of memo-
y's odd rags and remnants, stitching them into a warm quilt that evokes a Mennonite childhood in Vanderhoof.

"Pluck one memory from the album and the story doesn't hold, won't bear up," Carla Funk writes. The single part won't speak the whole. But honour the fragments, all those broken pieces, and see them find a true design, fitting to the patterns of a bigger story, no matter how small the town, the life, or the child.

Growing up in Vanderhoof, Carla Funk learned to type by following lessons on a vinyl record.

It's the first non-fiction book by Funk, who has published five collections of poetry, most recently 2016's Gloriland (Turnstone Press). Based in Victoria, she taught writing for 15 years at the University of Victoria and was the city's first poet laureate from 2006 to 2008.

This latest offering, a memoir, has a structure as formal as a patchwork quilt: four sections with six vignettes, each grouping linked to one of the four seasons. They are topped and tailed by two additional texts that provide context and reflect on the core values of her childhood—including thrift, tradition and, above all, faith. The metaphor of the quilt as memory-holder is not incidental—the theme is underlined in the book's opening, "Patchwork Crazy Quilt," and the closing, "Taking Up the Remnants."

Funk's move to prose from prosaic poetry is more a step than a leap, and similar themes recur in both. For instance, "Secrets," a poem in The Sewing Room (Turnstone Press, 2006), one of Funk's earlier books, is here transformed into the humorous account "Every Hidden Thing." It tells how her grandfather secretly salvaged several pallets of still-frozen ice cream from the dump and distributed the windfall to family members. After Carla divulges the secret of the ice cream's origins to a friend, her mother spanks her with a wooden spoon, fearful of the ice cream's origins to a friend, her mother spanks her with a wooden spoon, fearful the neighbours will label the family "as dirty, as dump-rats."

The delicious irony, of course, is that Funk's childhood lesson about preserving the dump and distributing the remnant will label the family "as dirty, as dump-rats."

"Funk largely takes a child's-eye view, with all the foreshortening that implies, a strategy with both strengths and challenges. The flip side to the rich language borne by the immediacy of a child's experiences is less perspective and context. The book cannot fairly be described as a portrait of Vanderhoof as it mostly describes the circumscribed territories of childhood—her family's home and the nearby bush where she played, as well as visits to her grandparents, the Sunday trips to church, and the like. As she says at the outset: "I knew nothing of my hometown's history."

A motley array of neighbours and family friends weave their way through her pages, their eccentricities sketched as a child might see them. Sometimes it's easy to read between the lines and draw conclusions, but I also found myself wondering about deeper issues, like the Indigenous land on which the community was built or how tensions between Carla's devout mother and her truck-driving father, who generally took a pass on church, would play out.

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Ode to Avon lotion & spearmint gum

The scent of a mother's hug and memories of her father's workshop are vividly recalled in Carla Funk's childhood reminiscences.

Who, for instance, can resist this opening: "In the musty heat of the canvas tent, I sat brushing Malibu Barbie's shiny blonde hair, wishing for a gun."

Like a patchwork quilt, the book points to specific memories while remaining impressionistic in the ways they are juxtaposed. The chronology is murky, and Carla's age seemingly mutate through different accounts from early childhood to a girl whose awareness of the growing rift between boys and girls points to the imminent changes of the teen years.

The book's rural setting, traditional ways and biblical parables further encourage temporal drift. At times, I found myself slipping back further than the 1980s, presumably the era of most of the story given that Funk was born in 1974. Pop culture references to things like warped 8-tracks, Agent 007 or Rambo would then wrench me forward to a more recent past.

And what of writing? In "The Typewriter," Funk describes hugging books home from the library, and her first diary, where "every lie, every black thought and harsh word, every pig, jerk, stupid-face, idiot, loser, bugger-off, moron—they sang on the page." Along the way, she learned to type by following lessons on a vinyl record. As she punches the typewriter's keys, she feels her body "shift into someone smarter ... someone who might write a book, the kind real people would actually read."

Portia Priegert is the editor of Galleries West magazine. She spent ten years as a journalist at the Ottawa bureau of Canadian Press, and has also worked as an art gallery director.

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In 1907, he instituted a form of health insurance for the Hazelton community. In the thirty-six years, he became widely respected not only as a doctor but also as a Methodist minister, farmer, magistrate, and surgeon. While in the Legislature, he championed publicly funded health insurance. When he died in 1939, the Hospital Association and a two-term Liberal Member of the Provincial Legislature, he built the first hospital in the northern interior, serving both the Gitxsan and Wet’suwet’en peoples.

Service on the Skeena
Geoff Mynett
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Peter Sehrin & Alan Twigg
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Firebird
Glen Huser
A YA novel about a Ukrainian boy during WWI who learns that his artistic brother has been sent to an internment camp. Will he find his brother in time to rescue him from the camp’s deadly conditions?
Land of Destiny: A History of Vancouver Real Estate

BY JOHN MOORE

THE MOD CON GAME OF REAL ESTATE IN VANCOUVER

The mod con game of real estate in Vancouver

The mod con game of real estate in Vancouver

In the summer of 1882, Jesse Donaldson dressed as Mr. Moneybucks to promote his history of Vancouver real estate.}

264A, Ward Five, prior to embarking for Japan from the CPR dock on the Empress of India on April 4, 1892. Kipling later wrote in American Notes: “He that sold it to me was a delightful English boy. All the boy said was, ‘I give you my word it isn’t on a cliff or under water, and before long the town ought to move out that way.’ And I took it as easily as a man buys a piece of tobacco. I became owner of 400 well-developed pines, thousands of tons of granite scattered in blocks at the roots of the pines, and a sprinkling of earth. That’s a town lot in Vancouver. You or your agent hold onto it till property rises, then sell out and buy more land farther out of town and repeat the process. I do not quite see how this sort of thing helps the growth of a town, but the English boy says it is the ‘essence of speculation’ so it must be all right. But I wish there were fewer pines and rather less granite on the ground.”

Kipling was duped. When he returned in 1907, he learned that he’d been paying taxes on property legally owned by someone else.

Privately, Kipling wrote, “All the consolation we get from the smiling people of Vancouver was, ‘You bought that from Steve, did you?’ Ah-hah, Steve! You hadn’t ought to ha’ bought from Steve. Not from Steve! And thus did the good Steve cure us of speculating in real estate.”

FAIR WARNING: IF YOU READ THIS BOOK in the closet-sized ‘den’ of your 700 square foot Yaletown loft, or on the rooftop, you are warned not to knock.

This concise and incendiary chronicle of more than a century of land values—inflicted by speculation, back-room insider deals, unmitigated greed, blatant nepotism and shameless conflicts of interest—is enough to provoke wailings, gnashing of teeth and the demented laughter of the damned.

“Before Vancouver was a city, it was—first and foremost—a real estate investment,” Donaldson says in the introduction. The reader is invited to substitute “swindle,” “hustle,” “con game” or “boodoggle” for the word “investment” at almost any point in Donaldson’s blood-boiling exposition of why taking out a crippling mortgage to buy into the Vancouver property market should be sufficient cause to get you pink-sheeted under the Mental Health Act and confined in an appropriate facility until you recover your wits.

The main title, Land of Destiny, is an ironic mockery of the kind of platitudeous post-imperial hype used by property speculators in late 19th and early 20th century to market land all over the planet as the mania for building railroads opened up the ‘dark continent’ to questionable exploitation. I do not quite see how this sort of thing helps the growth of a town, but the English boy says it is the ‘essence of speculation’ so it must be all right. But I wish there were fewer pines and rather less granite on the ground.”

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The Trials of Albert Stroebel: Love, Murder and Justice at the End of the Frontier by Chad Reimer (Caitlin Press $24.95)

April 20, 1893. The body of pioneer John Marshall was found on his cabin veranda by a neighbour, trapper Ira Airheart, who had come to check on him. Shocked by the sight of a gruesome murder in Sumas prairie, Airheart ran two miles to the nearby town of Huntingdon, south of the Fraser River, to raise the alarm.

Before the authorities could arrive, townspeople were traipsing around the cabin hunting the crime scene. Once the authorities did eventually arrive, they immediately ordered an on-site autopsy and a coroner’s inquest. The ensuing investigation moved quickly and soon led to the arrest of one of John Marshall’s friends, a handyman and part-time barber, Albert Stroebel, thought by many to be “a harmless boy who seemed much younger than his twenty years.” Arrested within a few days and put in jail, Stroebel is described as a gentle soul, and “an unlikely killer; short, lean and crippled in the right leg and foot.”

So begins the whodunnit, *The Trials of Albert Stroebel* by Chad Reimer.

Chad Reimer then describes Sumas Prairie, a low-lying landform shared by B.C. and Washington State, forty miles from Vancouver. At the beginning of the 1890s it was still a frontier settlement where immigrants wandered freely back and forth across the border, giving little thought to the fact that they were moving from one country to another.

We learn Stroebel’s background and how he came to be living in a room at the City Hotel in Sumas City owned by Margaret Bartlett, matriarch of the Bartlett family. Margaret, a strong woman who held her family together, ran the hotel while her husband Charles spent many nights away from home “drinking the night away.”

Comfortable living with the Bartletts, young Albert had fallen in love with one of the Bartlett daughters, 13-year-old Elizabeth. Any relationship between a man of twenty and a very young teen would be frowned upon today, but in those days many young women were married at fourteen.

Other possible suspects are thrown into the mix and include a passing tramp and a young boy named David Eyely who had delighted in teasing Albert Stroebel and getting him into trouble. Eyely later confessed to having helped Stroebel commit the murder—but was he lying?

Stroebel’s trial was set for June 7 in the New Westminster Spring Assizes to be presided over by the legendary Judge Begbie, a somewhat theatrical man in court. Begbie was the province’s most distinguished judge, but he surprised everyone by postponing two other murder trials, dismissing a third through lack of evidence, and then postponing Stroebel’s case until the Fall Assizes in November. Eyely would also be tried alongside Stroebel but Eyely later retracted his confession, having simply only injected more confusion into the case.

The trial would be presided over by Judge Theodore Davie, the crown prosecutor who presided over both of Stroebel’s trials, and was brilliant throughout, despite a lingering illness which eventually took his life in 1898.

As a lawyer of 22, Theodore Davie’s first wife was a girl of fourteen, Blanche Baker, and their nuptials had caused a scandal at the time. Davie might well, therefore, have had some understanding of the relationship between Albert Stroebel and Elizabeth Bartlett.

Without modern day pathology and forensics such as DNA and finger printing, lawyers did the best they could to defend or prosecute defendants. Stroebel was finally found guilty and sentenced to hang on January 31 of 1894, but the story was far from over as Stroebel awaited his fate on death row.

The remaining surprising twists and turns in Stroebel’s case are superbly portrayed by Reimer and one is left to wonder “was justice finally served for John Marshall or not?”

This work of creative non-fiction would have benefited from the inclusion of an index but it is impeccably researched and told in an electrifying, attention-grabbing way by Reimer who is also the author of *Before We Lost the Lake: A Natural and Human History of Sumas Valley* (Caitlin, 2018).

Valerie Green has written more than twenty non-fiction historical and true-crime books. Her debut novel *Providence* (Sandra Jonas Publishing, 2020) will be the first in a series of four novels called The McBride Chronicles, a family saga set in early B.C. valeriegreenauthor.com

The only known photograph of Albert Stroebel, Victoria Gaol, January 9, 1894. He wore a faded tuxedo jacket, lent to him by one of the guards, over his regulation prison uniform.

A brutal murder, an unlikely suspect, and a society with appetites whetted for grisly crimes set the scene for this fast-paced frontier whodunnit.
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In Nature’s Realm: Early Naturalists Explore Vancouver Island
by Michael Layland
(TouchWood Editions $40)

BY CAROLINE WOODWARD

In Nature’s Realm is a trove of plant, fishing and hunting knowledge, much of it gathered by early botanists on Spanish, English and Hudson Bay Company expeditions to Vancouver Island.

For his third book, Michael Layland has gathered 139 colour and black and white illustrations by onboard artists who visited Vancouver Island (previously cited as Vancouver’s and Quadra’s Island) during the late 1700s and the 1800s, as well as paintings by artists who settled in Victoria during the city’s early years.

Artworks by women, in particular, are a revelation. Emily Carr’s childhood notes about her drawing lessons with the pioneer artist Emily Woods are a charming example.

Vintage and contemporary photographs of flora, fauna and human subjects also enhance the context of the history.

The multi-faceted approach of this book will not come as a surprise to fans of Layland’s first two books of early B.C. history, both handsomely published by TouchWood Editions. The Land of Heart’s Delight: Early Maps and Photographs of Vancouver Island (2013) and A Perfect Eden: Encounters by Early Explorers of Vancouver Island (2016) were both nominated for multiple awards.

The front cover of this coffee-table book features an especially lovely and appropriate E.J. Hughes painting, An Island in Bird’s Eye View of Nootka Lightstation for several years, attesting having been a lightkeeper at all directions, to which I can certainly language that means ‘as wind comes from every direction,’ to which I can certainly attest having been a lightkeeper at Nootka Lightstation for several years, in all seasons.

The artist Cardero began his career as a cabin boy running errands for the officers who noticed and encouraged his talent for drawing. He also learned what he could from one of the official artists on board while docked in Buenos Aires. He soon found himself on a hasty, two-ship expedition with Captain Vancouver in Chilean waters in 1791, charging romances of the Northwest Passage gleaned from a just-published French map.

The Spanish made it as far as 59 degrees 15 minutes North in late August before the cold drove them south to Nootka Island. Thanks to the wide-ranging research and the conversational flow of the writing, we can well imagine the secret order of events and the nautical dangers encountered.

Along the way we learn of the power struggles between gentlemen botanists and ship’s captains who were sometimes turfed from their own more comfortable quarters to accommodate the wealthy sponsors of the voyage. I can only applaud superb writing like this, an act of synthesis combining meticulous research, which never slows the pacing with the weight of centuries, and a compelling narrative voice which unerringly hits just the right tone, a high-wire non-fiction feat to pull off.

Cardero & Co.

Michael Layland has won the “Bazzie,” the Basil Stuart-Stubs Prize.

Readers feel as though we have overheard tense exchanges behind the captain’s closed door or have just noticed the ship’s surgeon and botanist (Archibald Menzies) quietly pocketing the nuts served at a banquet held by Ambrosio Bernardo O’Higgins, a flamboyant Irish soldier of fortune who somehow became the governor of Santiago, Chile.

Menzies planted those nuts (the Chileans liked them roasted, which makes me wonder if Menzies had a chat with the cooks, asking them to set aside a few raw nuts for him...) in his live specimen container on the quarterdeck of Captain Vancouver’s ship, Discovery. Five of them survived the stormy voyage around Cape Horn and were successfully transplanted in London’s Kew Gardens.

Now, of course, these prickly, show-stopping Chilean pine trees (which can live as long as one thousand years) flourish in the rainforest climate of the entire B.C. coast, including Haida Gwaii. While the names of Captains Cook and Malaspina, or botanists Archibald Menzies, David Douglas, and John M’Caeun, will be known to most readers, countless other talented people made important contributions to our natural history. Layland directly addresses the fact that even though Indigenous people used “the natural world around them to provide their food, housing, clothing, transportation, tools, and weapons, while respecting and protecting its bounty”, the new museum received “one shawl’s head, piece of lava, collection of ancient coins, one hippocampus (seahorse), and a piece of pavement from Rome.”

There is never a dull moment in this beautiful and thoroughly enjoyable book. It will appeal to Indigenous elders, armchair adventurers, Island hikers and coastal sailors, student and professional historians, artists, botanists and photographers, museum and art gallery curators—and everyone who appreciates a well-written, beautifully illustrated book.

Cardero & Co. is a high-wire non-fiction feat to pull off. Layland directly addresses the fact that even though Indigenous people used “the natural world around them to provide their food, housing, clothing, transportation, tools, and weapons, while respecting and protecting its bounty”, the new museum received “one shawl’s head, piece of lava, collection of ancient coins, one hippocampus (seahorse), and a piece of pavement from Rome.”

The book is nothing if not diverse. It offers a useful definition of the difference between botanical art versus illustration and floral painting; it tells us the story of the failed attempt to introduce English songbirds to Vancouver Island; and it includes the studies of pioneering entomologists.

The formation of the Provincial Museum of Natural History and Anthropology in Victoria on October 25, 1866, was a pivotal moment for all the collectors of flora and fauna specimens in the province. Along with superbly preserved items, the new museum received “one shawl’s head, piece of lava, collection of ancient coins, one hippocampus (seahorse), and a piece of pavement from Rome.”

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That’s why it has been awarded the 2020 Basil Stuart-Stubs Prize which “recognizes outstanding contribu- tion by scholarly individuals to the academic and cultural fabric of British Columbia.”

Caroline Woodward and her photographer husband Jeff George have offered to stay on as keepers of the Lennard Island Lightstation, rather than take their planned retirement, until they feel truly ready to leave one of the safest places to be in quarantine on the planet.
In the early 1900s, at the Victoria Fair and Exhibition, the tent of the Political Equality League was vandalized when someone removed the first two letters from the "Woman's Suffrage" banner so that it read "Man's Suffrage."

In response, the group took out three more letters; that way their sign stayed up but read "Man's Rage."

In 1917, B.C.'s women were finally allowed to vote—after women in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta got the franchise in 1916.

Here Beverly Cramp interviews Lara Campbell, author of A Great Revolutionary Wave: Women and the Vote in British Columbia (UBC Press $27.95), part of a series, Women's Suffrage and the Struggle for Democracy, edited by Veronica Strong-Boag and launched by UBC Press to present the history of women and the vote across Canada.

BCBookWorld: I was amused to find this quote in your book from an anti-suffrage speech by Mrs. Roman Childe, reported in The Champion magazine, in 1913: "Woman's place is in the home and every woman should have one. It is her business to get one. They can all find some kind of man to make a home for. Anyway, the more I see of the new God put into the world, the more convinced I am that God did not intend us women to be too particular."

Lara Campbell: The Champion was a leading suffrage journal based in British Columbia, and one of the few such journals in Canada. Writers for the magazine loved to poke fun at anti-suffrage men and women by writing satirical plays, short stories, jokes and columns. They sometimes performed these original pieces at suffrage meetings, as well. They clearly loved to laugh and poke fun at their opponents. They knew the issue of political equality was serious, but laughter was one way to appeal to working-class women. There were also some vocal, anti-suffrage politicians who consistently voted against suffrage bills even as the movement became more popular around the world. Conservative MLA A.E. McPhillips warned that politically empowered women would destroy society and blamed them for atheism, infidelity and laziness. Surprisingly, his wife, Emily Sophina, was an active suffragist and a member of the Political Equality League.

MLA Major James Mutter claimed that women's brains were smaller than men's and that voting would cause them harm. But the leading anti-suffrage politician was Premier Richard McBride who remained opposed to suffrage over the course of his career. McBride stubbornly claimed that women did not truly want to vote, and that if they were given this right, they would take too much power away from men.

There were also some vocal, anti-suffrage clergy in the province: for example, Father O'Boyle who delivered an infamous anti-suffrage sermon at Vancouver's Church of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in which he denounced suffrage as destroy- ing womanhood and encouraged women to be obedient housewives like the Virgin Mary.

Some women were also anti-suffrage. A group of about 12 women in Vancouver created the Dolce Donum Club which published an article in a local newspaper stating that men could not get involved in politics without "neglecting" the important duties of motherhood and the home.

Mrs. Rocke Robertson of Victoria helped host a leading British anti-suffrage activist at the Women's Canadian Club in 1909 and agreed with him that women did not need the vote. The leading anti-suffrage socialite (and novelist) Julia Henshaw claimed that she'd rather stick her hand in a "hornet's nest" than join the movement.

Not skirting the issue

B.C. finally allowed women to vote in 1917, after Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Here we interview Lara Campbell about B.C.'s role in the suffragist movement.

Cody were educated members of the University Women's Club, but when Helena Gutteridge immigrated to Vancouver in 1911 from London, England, she made her living as a skilled tailor.

Bertha Merrill Burns was one of Gutteridge's colleagues who moved to Nelson with her widowed mother, where they opened a boarding house. She became a Socialist Party member and journalist, and married Ernest Burns, a socialist labour organizer from Birmingham. Burns wrote for numerous newspapers and helped found the Social Democratic Party of British Columbia in 1907.

Quite a number of suffrage women were involved in labour or socialist politics—people like Helen Christopher who was married to a shipyard machinist and joined the Political Equality League (PRL) with her daughter and daughter-in-law. Victoria's Ada Clayton was an active member of the PRL and the Socialist Party of Canada.

The only one many people have heard of is Helena Gutteridge. Lara Campbell wrote an organization designed to appeal to working-class women. The first such organization was the Evening Work Committee, established as a caucus of the more mainstream Political Equality League. It became so successful that Gutteridge declared autonomy and created the first working-class women's suffrage league in Canada, the B.C. Women's Suffrage League (WSSL), followed by a sister organization, the Mount Pleasant Women's Suffrage League. Both organizations held weekly evening meetings, welcomed children and supported not only suffrage but government interventions to lower the cost of living, a minimum wage, workplace safety regulations and increased unionization for working-class women.

BCWL: What kind of tactics did B.C.'s suffragists use?

LC: They tried to persuade politicians and the voting public by organizing petitions, writing newspaper columns and letters to the editor, and holding public talks and debates. They started their own suffrage journal called The Champion published out of Victoria. It is now available to view at the British Columbia Archives. They also lobbied male politicians and convinced sympathetic MLAs to introduce private members bills in the legislature.

BCWL: Who were the B.C. suffragists' major opponents?

LC: The most powerful opponents of women's suffrage were male legislators who consistently voted against suffrage bills even as the movement became more popular around the world. Conservative MLA A.E. McPhillips warned that politically empowered women would destroy society and blamed them for atheism, infidelity and laziness. Surprisingly, his wife, Emily Sophina, was an active suffragist and a member of the Political Equality League.

BCWL: Why wasaddle to the movement become more popular around the world. Conservative MLA A.E. McPhillips warned that politically empowered women would destroy society and blamed them for atheism, infidelity and laziness. Surprisingly, his wife, Emily Sophina, was an active suffragist and a member of the Political Equality League.

MLA Major James Mutter claimed that women's brains were smaller than men's and that voting would cause them harm. But the leading anti-suffrage politician was Premier Richard McBride who remained opposed to suffrage over the course of his career. McBride stubbornly claimed that women did not truly want to vote, and that if they were given this right, they would take too much power away from men.

There were also some vocal, anti-suffrage clergy in the province: for example, Father O'Boyle who delivered an infamous anti-suffrage sermon at Vancouver's Church of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in which he denounced suffrage as destroying womanhood and encouraged women to be obedient housewives like the Virgin Mary.

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“They clearly loved to laugh and poke fun at their opponents. They knew the issue of political equality was serious, but laughter was one way to relieve the burden of oppression and to enjoy themselves while they continued the political battle.”

— LARA CAMPBELL

European men framed suffrage arguments until 1916.

BCBL: Who did the early suffragists leave behind in their fight for political equality?
LC: This is an important question because it asks us to take seriously the fact that suffragists left many people behind in British Columbia and all across the country. Very few suffragists seriously considered the possibility of political equality for racialized women and men, and actively attempted to restrict Asian immigration.

The way that suffragists excluded Chinese women was especially frustrating. After 1900, B.C. women were really interested in the women’s movement in China, and some of those leaders travelled in B.C. and spoke to wide audiences: reformer Kang Youwei, for example, and his daughter Kang Tongbi. Suffragists deeply admired how Chinese women pushed for political equality, access to professional work and higher education. Yet B.C. suffragists did not extend that admiration and respect to the Chinese Canadian women and men living in the province and consistently viewed women and men from China, Japan and South Asia as potential threats to the integrity of the nation.

Suffragists also left behind Indigenous people. Although many Indigenous women shared concerns about maternal and child welfare with suffragists—advocating for access to mothers’ pensions, for example, or criticizing male power over women and children, suffragists did not try to understand the consequences of colonization or attempt to reach out to Indigenous women and their organizations.

BCBL: Is there anything else you want to add that is particularly important in the history of women’s suffrage in B.C.?
LC: British Columbia was the only province in Canada to put the question of women’s suffrage to a referendum. Referendums were quite common in the United States but not so in Canada.

After the referendum entirely, claiming that it was an affront to democracy. But most decided to fight hard during the summer of 1916 and convince the majority of male voters to support women’s suffrage. Women and men across the province set up special referendum committees, took out ads in newspapers, travelled to give speeches and spoke at political rallies.

Suffragists were hopeful but not sure how deep the support for suffrage actually was. The referendum did pass with the needed majority and legislation followed in April of 1917, though it was restricted by race and did not guarantee women the right to vote federally.

This interview has been condensed and edited.—Ed.
Yoka is reading &
recommends:
After Life:
Ways We
Think About
Death
by Merrie-Ellen
Wilcox
(Orca Books).
ISBN: 9781459813885
www.yokascoffee.com

The book that launched the world’s largest tragedy playwriting competition, hosted by Langham Court Theatre (risktheatre.com)

“Beautifully written, original, and compelling . . . an Aristotle for the 21st century.” David Konstan, Brown University

“Insightful and compelling . . . A bold, inventive new model of theatre through the lens of risk.” Broadway World UK

“The author’s diagnosis and remedy for the current state of theatre are imaginative and persuasive . . . An ambitious, thought-provoking critique of tragedy in the 21st century.” Kirkus Reviews

“If you love literature—theater, film, novels, history, biography, opera, whatever—you need to read this extraordinary work . . . Read it—twice. You will never read another work of literature the same way.” Charlie Euchner, Columbia University

“The idea of ‘tragedy’ was wrapped in the mystique of motivations and nobility and flaws that put it out of reach for me as a playwright. This book strips away the mystique and makes the form available to me.” Donald Connolly, playwright and two-time Academy Award nominee

Inaugurating a new tragic age in storytelling, drama, and literature. Ask your library to carry this book and read it today. Audiobook launch spring 2020, read by Greg Patmore of Coronation Street.

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Royal BC Museum
Although never having attended a residential school, Nisga’a poet and Indigenous scholar Jordan Abel suffered from the aftershocks of these colonial institutions.

The Nisga’a are a distinct society based on the teachings of their ancestors. There is also the story of a people determined to live in their homeland. And many returned to their extended families where they began to relearn their culture and language. Leaders such as James Gosnell, Frank Calder and Rod Robison, upon returning to the Nass, became part of a generation who would win the first modern treaty in B.C. They too attended the Coqualeetza institution.

However, Abel’s grandparents did not return to the Nisga’a homeland. They moved to Vancouver. This change of trajectory would prove to be a devastating turning point for the family. Abel’s parents split apart soon after he was born. This resulted in Abel moving to Toronto where he was raised by his single mother and cut off from his Indigenous roots.

I can imagine what it was like for Jordan Abel being raised so far from his homeland by his mother. Her experience with Indigenous people and Indigenous culture was limited and negative. Abel also had to contend with being in an urban center like Toronto, where, if you looked different from other children, questions arise about what your ethnicity is! When you don’t know, it is difficult to answer. Abel’s school years were marred by racism.

At the time of this writing, Abel was completing his doctoral degree. He is in the top intellectual percentile of the Canadian population. He is an anomaly in many senses of the word. He identifies as Nisga’a because his father is Nisga’a. Since the Nisga’a are famous for their landmark treaty victory, he unwittingly becomes a target of many inquiries.

The Nisga’a are among the few celebrity First Nations in Canada. People are curious about the Nisga’a. From the 1980s until the signing of the treaty, they were big news and covered regularly in print and broadcast media. I was a journalist during this time and I wrote about their struggle to get a treaty. Closer to home, I married a Nisga’a; her name is Delgama. Her father is hereditary chief, Simoeogit Hymas. He was one of the main negotiators of the treaty. So, I learned firsthand about the Nisga’a people and their amazing culture.

One troubling aspect of Jordan Abel’s NISHGA is the lack of research on available Indigenous sources. In 1993, Nisga’a (Douglas & McIntyre) was published with the assistance of hereditary leaders. It is the compelling story of a people determined to live in a distinct society based on the teachings of their ancestors. There is also the Nisga’a court case known as Calder v. British Columbia (Attorney-General) which is available to the public. And there are dozens of news articles and TV documentaries. I did a Google search and found many interesting facts about the Nisga’a. In short, there are sources of scores and written documents by and about the Nisga’a. And yet I find none of them referenced in Abel’s book. He does, however, quote John A. MacDonald and anthropologists such as Marius Barbeau (1883–1969). These are not reliable sources.

The pain and suffering of thousands of displaced Canadian Aboriginal people is illuminated in NISHGA. Much has been invested in getting rid of the “Indian problem” in Canada. More funds need to redirected to working collaboratively with Indigenous people to provide the best possible life for everyone. This is not the “Indian problem;” it is every-one’s problem. Canada is a land that is rich in resources. There is wealth that can be more equitably distributed for the benefit of all Canadians.

Injustice for one, is injustice for all.
Almost half the residents of Metro Vancouver identify as people of colour but only one percent call themselves Black according to Statistics Canada’s 2016 data. It makes being African-Canadian challenging according to UBC professor Gillian Creese in, Where Are You From? Growing Up African-Canadian in Vancouver.

Children of African migrants stand out as a highly visible yet small minority and rarely see other people like themselves in a population dominated by people of European and Asian origin. Combine that with the deluge of African-American pop culture streaming across the border and it is understandable that African-Canadians struggle to establish their own identities.

Creese interviewed African migrants in Vancouver to find how they are distinguishing themselves from African-Americans, while also being faced with everyday racism and frequently asked, “Where are you from?”

She discovered that some second-generation African-Canadians reject Canadian identity, while others strongly assert being Canadian. She also found that boys had it easier than girls growing up in Vancouver. Frequently, teenage boys experienced popularity as “the cool Black guy,” while girls in contrast found much less popular Black female imagery, making it harder for them to fit in.

Gillian Creese is a sociology professor at UBC and the associate dean of Arts, Faculty and Equity. She is also the author of The New African Diaspora in Vancouver: Migration, Exclusion, and Belonging (UTP, 2011). 978-1-4875-2456-2

Not a ‘white boy’

Jive, as the protagonist of Jivesh Parasram’s comedic play about identity, Taste of Milk. Nah? (Playwrights Canada $17.95), is a Canadian. And an Indian. And a Hindu. And a West Indian. And a Trinidadian. He’s not the “white boy” he was teased as in his immigrant household, especially since his Nova Scotian neighbours seemed to think he was Black. Except for the Black people—they were pretty sure he wasn’t. He had to start claiming he was not an Arab or a Muslim after 9/11. 978-0-369-10-098-6
27th GEORGE WOODCOCK LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD for an outstanding literary career in British Columbia.

George Bowering, OC OBC (born December 1, 1935) is a novelist, poet, historian, and biographer of more than 100 books. He was born in Penticton, B.C. and raised in Oliver. He has served as Canada’s Parliamentary Poet Laureate.

Since 1995, BC BookWorld and the Vancouver Public Library have co-sponsored the Woodcock Award and the Writers Walk at 350 W. Georgia St. in Vancouver. This $5000 award is also sponsored by Dr. Yosef Wosk, The Writers Trust of Canada, and Pacific BookWorld News Society.
THE BASIL STUART-STUBBS PRIZE for Outstanding Scholarly Book on British Columbia

In Nature’s Realm: Early Naturalists Explore Vancouver Island (Touchwood Editions) by Michael Layland

Michael Layland’s book explores the richly diverse flora and fauna of Vancouver Island through the records of explorers, settlers, and visitors, and with due respect to the wealth of Indigenous traditional knowledge of the island’s ecosystems. Trained as an officer and mapmaker in the Royal Engineers, Layland was president of the Victoria Historical Society, the Friends of the BC Archives, and is an amateur naturalist.

SHORTLISTED TITLES
At the Bridge: James Teit and an Anthropology of Belonging (UBC Press) by Wendy C. Wickwire
Against the Current and Into the Light: Performing History and Land in Coast Salish Territories and Vancouver’s Stanley Park (McGill-Queen’s University Press) by Selena Couture

The Basil Stuart-Stubbs Prize was established in memory of Basil Stuart-Stubbs, a bibliophile, scholar and librarian who passed away in 2012. Stuart-Stubbs’ many accomplishments included serving as the University Librarian at UBC Library and as the Director of UBC’s School of Library, Archival and Information Studies. Stuart-Stubbs had a leadership role in many national and regional library and publishing activities. During his exceptional career, he took particular interest in the production and distribution of Canadian books and was associated with several initiatives beneficial to authors and their readers, and to Canadian publishing.

Pacific BookWorld News Society co-sponsors this award with UBC Library.
George Bowering is the 27th recipient of the province’s prestigious award for an outstanding literary career, named for the prolific anarchist George Woodcock.

Bowering’s career, named for the prolific anarchist George Woodcock.

Bowering had been scheduled to receive the coveted Woodcock Award—co-sponsored by Yosef Wosk, The Writers Trust of Canada, Vancouver Public Library and Pacific BookWorld News Society—at the Vancouver Public Library, on June 25, at 7 pm. but that event will likely be cancelled for the sake of social distancing.

Like George Woodcock (George the First), an anarchist philosopher who never voted or drove a car, George Bowering (George the Second) has long considered himself to be a British Columbian first and a Canadian second.

George Bowering, as Canada’s first Parliamentary Poet-Laureate (2002-2004), is an easy choice on paper. A member of both the Order of Canada and the Order of B.C., he has won Governor General’s Awards for both poetry and fiction.

Bowering is second to George Woodcock in terms of rivaling him with productivity, having published eighty books of his own along with having editorial roles in thirty others. George Woodcock’s biographer, George Fetherling (George the Third), currently comes third in the productivity race with approximately forty books.

Since overcoming a cardiac arrest on the sidewalk outside the Point Grey Library in 2015, George Bowering has been the subject of a biography by former Vancouver Sun book page editor Rebecca Wigod and he has produced at least ten more books.

For those whose sense of B.C. history does not include the 20th century, Bowering might now be looked upon as an old, white guy who loves baseball—but he was unquestionably a seminal figure in the proliferation of the experimental TISH poetry movement that arose from Warren Tallman’s classes at UBC and his presence has definitely helped put B.C. writing onto the national literary map.

Born in Penticton in 1935, George Bowering was mostly raised in nearby Oliver as the son of a high school chemistry teacher. He was officially made a citizen of Oliver by a municipal decree passed in early 2000. He began living in Oliver in 1943 and graduated from Oliver’s Southern Okanagan High School in 1953. Later he worked in three packinghouses and about twenty orchards in the area. He wrote for the Oliver Chronicle for many years and was once offered its editorship.

George Bowering was a Royal Canadian Air Force photographer (1954-57) after he had attended Victoria College (Victoria, B.C.). He would later attend UBC and the University of Western Ontario.

Bowering taught at SFU for 29 years (1972-2001). He was the most opinionated and outspoken writer to emerge from the UBC-based TISH poetry newsletter, founded by students in 1961. The writing game is competitive and Bowering has been a hard-working and bright force publishing in various genres.

His approach to making books is irrevocably experimental. “I just want readers to notice the writing,” he once wrote, as editor of the fiction anthology And Other Stories (Talonbooks, 2001). But one of Bowering’s most enduring books might be one of his least flamboyant. His Bowering’s B.C.: A Shaking Out the History (Viking, 1996) proves he knows B.C. as much and as well as anyone. This is one of the best books ever written about his home province—the sort of history book they wouldn’t allow in schools because it says too much.

...people in B.C. have to be taught to be Canadians,” he writes. “This is done by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the Globe and Mail. But most British Columbians don’t listen to the CBC or read the G&M.”

More conventional histories by Jean Barman, Terry Reksten, George Woodcock and Geoffrey Molynieux have tended to overshadow Bowering’s B.C. That personalized title didn’t help either. But Bowering’s shrewd, sometimes cynical take on human nature and politics is undeniably provocative as an educational force.

Bowering is fascinated by, and dedicated to, uncovering and discussing what might be original about B.C. There are precious few writers in Bowering’s league when it comes to a comprehensive understanding of the maverick characters and odd stories that are unique to B.C. Howard White of Harbour Publishing might be his only peer in this regard.
2020 GEORGE RYGA AWARD FOR SOCIAL AWARENESS IN LITERATURE

Passion & Persistence: Fifty Years of the Sierra Club in British Columbia
by Diane Pinch

Diane Pinch will receive $2500 for the award but due to COVID-19, a public reception at the Vancouver Public Library to celebrate the George Ryga Award has been postponed until further notice.

Passion & Persistence: Fifty Years of the Sierra Club in British Columbia (Harbour) is an appreciation of the West Coast environmental organization Sierra Club, founded in 1969. Diane Pinch joined the Sierra Club in 1975.

FINALISTS

• 1919: A Graphic History of the Winnipeg Strike (Between the Lines) by The Graphic History Collective & David Lester

• At the Bridge: James Teit and an Anthropology of Belonging (UBC Press) by Wendy Wickwire

• Song of the Earth: The Life of Alfred Joseph (Creekstone Press) by Ross Hoffman with Alfred Joseph

• The Forbidden Purple City (Goose Lane) by Philip Huynh

Judges for the George Ryga Award were author & poet Trevor Carolan, VPL librarian Jane Curry and BC BookWorld publisher Beverly Cramp.

With the sponsorship of Yosef Wosk, VPL and Pacific BookWorld News Society, the annual George Ryga Award is given to a B.C. writer who has achieved an outstanding degree of social awareness in a new book published in the preceding calendar year.
"Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything." — George Bernard Shaw

The Sierra Club has been the number one game-changer in B.C. when it comes to preserving our wilderness.

The story of the Sierra Club goes back to northern California in 1892 when a Scottish-born shepherd and outdoorsman named John Muir, keen to protect his beloved Sierra Madre mountains, generated the Sierra Club in San Francisco. With its credo “to make the mountains glad,” this was one of the world’s first organizations designed to undertake conservation and environmental preservation campaigns.

Two years after Muir escorted President Theodore Roosevelt through Yosemite in 1903, the Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove were preserved as America’s second national park, after Yellowstone, which had been created in 1872.

Fast forward to 1968. In the spirit of John Muir, an ad hoc group of citizens in the Lower Mainland known as the Save Cypress Bowl committee was rallying to prevent the development of a commercial resort in the North Shore Mountains. To augment that campaign, the first B.C. chapter of the Sierra Club was formed in 1969, spearheaded by Terry Simmons, an American graduate student at Stanford who would later sail on the Phyllis Cormack to Anchita. Among the fifteen people at the inaugural meeting were Irving Stowe, Jim Bohlen and Bill Darnell—the pioneer later credited with giving rise to the term Greenpeace.

The good times didn’t last. The administration of Dave Barrett designated the Cypress Bowl area as a provincial park soon after they were elected in 1972.

Concurrently, in 1969, approximately 7,000 people blocked the Peace Arch border crossing at Blaine to protest a proposed underground nuclear test near Anchita Island, Alaska. They carried signs saying, “Don’t Make A Wave. Do Your Turbines or Fault Goats.” This movement gave rise to the Don’t Make A Wave Committee, led by Irving Stowe. Its outgrowth was Greenpeace, formed three years after SCBC in 1972.

A second major catalyst for the growth of the SCBC was the preservation of the West Coast Trail on Vancouver Island, leading to the formation of another Sierra Club chapter on Vancouver Island. This occurred after a journalist at The Vancouver Sun, John Twigg, decided to take the six-day trail and write about it for The Vancouver Sun. He subsequently wrote one of the province’s all-time bestsellers, The West Coast Trail and Nittan Lake, co-sponsored by SCBC mainstay Ken Farquharson.

Due to the frequency of shipwrecks and other maritime accidents on the turbulent West Coast of Vancouver Island, a rudimentary trail had long been required for emergencies. Originally known as the Dominion Lifesaving Trail, the path runs from Port Renfrew, on the south end, to Bamfield, on the north end. In 2015, the 77-kilometre West Coast Trail was ranked as the world’s No. 1 hike by bestolive.com Canada’s famous John Muir Trail was ranked second.

When Twigg later became secretary to Dave Barrett during his premiership, he was instrumental in the preservation of the West Coast Trail by lobbying the then Water Resources Minister Bob Williams of the NDP who negotiated the deal. The Sierra Club guidebook has since been updated and reprinted many times without credit to its original author—a fact that is absent from Pinch’s text.

The Sierra Club fought opposing shipping oil in Juan de Fuca Strait in 1973. SCBC opposition to the Trans Mountain pipeline continues.

Ken Farquharson, a civil engineer who had worked on BC Hydro dams, was part of a 14-year, cross-border struggle with SPECl, the Alpine Club of Canada and the BC Wildlife Federation to successfully prevent flooding of the Skagit Valley, resulting in the Skagit River Treaty in 1984.

It was Farquharson who inspired Ric Careless, Gordon Price (later a Vancouver City Councillor) and members of the UVic Outdoors Club to form their own upstart chapter in Victoria, soon confronting Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Jean Chrétien and Princess Anne at a ceremony in Tofino with Save the Nittan Triangle banners in 1971. Only eighteen months later—working with the BC Wilderness Federation, SPEC and the BC Federation of Naturalists—they succeeded in preventing BC Forest Products from logging the Nittan area.

Careless claimed this cooperative result was “the first environmental victory for wilderness in Canada.” He went on to form and expand the Tashmooreshini-Alscek, Spatsizi Plateau, Stikine River and Height of the Rockies wilderness areas, writing his own book, To Save the Wild Earth, in 1997.

A quarterly newsletter, the Sierra Report, first appeared in 1973, produced by volunteer editor Geraldine Irby for twenty-five years. Sierra Club BC’s first paid professional, Bob Nixon, has described the organization as a policy-oriented, advo- cacy-type organization, dealing largely with government and related industries.

“That’s also called lobbying,” he says. “We provide the best possible information on a subject, say a land use situation, and let the policy we believe ought to be followed. Second, the Sierra Club is committed to looking at the whole picture of environmental issues, which means the economics and social and labour aspects.”

There are so many successful campaigns that they can’t all be listed here. Here is a mere smattering of concerns from the Seventies and Eighties:

— Prevent logging on South Morebys.

Diane Pinch deserves collective thanks from all British Columbians along with a myriad of Sierra Club activists and writers such as Elizabeth May, Vicky Husband, Rosemary Fox, Terry Glavin, Scott Wallace, Sarah Cox, David Levy and hundreds more.

Mostly the Sierra Club does not endorse or engage in civil disobedience—sit-ins or blockades—or any form of violence or harassment. (One exception was sanctioning civil disobedience to protect the Keystone Pipeline in 2013 at the White House.)

Passion & Persistence reads that the Sierra Club of BC has been enormously successful because it is committed to credibility.

You gotta do your homework.

Diane Pinch was scheduled to receive the George Ryga Award for Social Awareness, sponsored by Wes King, at the Vancouver Public Library, 7 p.m., on June 25, but it has been cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions. Ryga judges were author Trevor Carolin, VPL librarian Jane Curry and RCBS publisher Beverly Cramp.
Sharks, Skates, Rays and Chimera of British Columbia
by Gordon McFarlane and Jackie King
(Royal BC Museum, $24.95)

Sharks play a crucial role in the ecosystem, being apex predators feeding at the top of the food chain. There are exceptions, like the basking shark that feeds on plankton. With its large mouth for filtering plankton, the basking shark can suck in the equivalent of 10,000 bottles of plankton-filled seawater in one hour.

Prior to the 1960s, basking sharks were plentiful until they started getting tangled in commercial fishers’ nets and became the subject of a directed eradication program. With fishery policies, basking sharks have been shown to have a cascading effect through the ecosystem as their prey populations expand explosively and deplete other animals lower in the ecosystem such as scallops, clams and oysters.

This book therefore goes a long way to presenting sharks and their relatives as important creatures of the Pacific Northwest coastal waters, “worthy of respect, study, admiration and protection.”

Proceeds from this book are going to a conservation project, Predators in Peril. Because thousands of sharks are killed everyday for their meat, liver, oil, cartilage and fins, the Predators in Peril project involves working with shark fishermen and scientific researchers to obtain live images and video footage of rare, endangered or simply overlooked elasmobranchs (sharks and rays) both in their natural habitats and in the process of being captured.

Community History Award ($500)

Local and community history often provides the most sought-after information by historians researching a particular area.

Kyle Kusch, Our Coloured Past: The Arrow Lakes in the Age of Colour Photography (Arrow Lakes Historical Society)

Honourable mentions (alphabetical)

• Jennifer L. Butler, Boom & Bust: The Resilient Women of Historic Telegraph Cove (Touchwood Editions)
• Carolyn Parks Mintz with Andy Chelsea and Phyllis Chelsea, Resolve: The Story of the Chelsea Family and a First Nation Community’s Will to Heal (Caitlin Press)
• Diane Pinch, Passion and Persistence: Fifty Years of the Sierra Club in British Columbia, 1969-2019 (Harbour Publishing)
Road Trips: Journeys in the Unspoiled World
by Trevor Carolan
(Mother Tongue Publishing $21.95)

It took me awhile to figure out that the book I was reading during tea breaks had subtly rearranged my attitude. I often recall the Taoist saying I first encountered there: Tao resides in the heart.

Carolan has a knack of sneaking up like the Ancient Mariner, telling a story out of the side of his mouth that changes your life, then vanishing in the crowd. His secret is that he never preaches purely but remains remotely ecumenical, on the side of whatever works for the betterment of the world and the sense of community among its inhabitants.

He follows the ancient spiritual practice of ‘deep journeying’, dodging the trap of glib all-inclusive resorts, accepting discomfort, disease, bugs, officious commissars and cops with equal aplomb to seek out and befriend people wherever he goes.


Road Trips is a book about the timeless-centered lives of people, whether they are French artists or Irish farmers, who live beyond the frenetic glare of neon lights and digital monitors, preserving values and skills that might actually save the world if the shit really does hit the fan.

Quite simply, it is time to give Carolan his due.

If you don’t know him; let me introduce you.

Trevor Carolan has been a roadrunner since he was 17 in the mid-1960s. In those days he wangled an assignment from his hometown New Westminster Columbian newspaper to report on the mysterious ‘hippie’ movement in San Francisco. A fan of Beat Generation writers who emerged on the map and many that aren’t.

The route of Carolan’s own writing was set by his first two books; Closing the Circle, a collection of poems published in 1985 by Heron Books, followed by The Book of the Heart: Embracing the Tao with Bella Chen (Heron, 1988), reissued by Shambala Publishing in 1990.

The freewheeling Celtic poet, descendant of famed itinerant Irish bard Turlough O’Carolan, as well as the philosopher-student of Buddhism, with its tradition of monkish mendicant road-work, are parallel rails on which the Carolan train rides—a milk-run that stops at every out-of-the-way halt on the map and many that aren’t.

I read his Return to Stillness: 20 Years with a Tao Chi Master (Marlowe & Co, 2003), while painting my house in bright sunshine and a spring wind. What could have been a dreary chore enchanted by sunburn and hypothermia was somehow transformed into a pro- found expression of the love I felt for my wife and children.

Marrakesh is a red city, baked brick walls, bustling, the minarets, the call to prayer, Hamdullilah. On the boulevards it feels as if you haven’t shaved for days; always there’s a little grit under your nails. This is a place of curious dreams, coffee, clouds of strong tobacco. We hire a Jeep to take us into the Atlas Mountains. South of the city where things turn dry quickly, Ali our driver veers off the road and pounds across rugged country. “I will take you where no tourist ever goes,” he says, hammering the motor along a terrifying precipice cut above a sheer-dropped gorge of great height. We are in a mystic landscape, ashen with fear. Ali relishes our terror. Finally, we emerge from the chasm and surge higher yet with a massive white range of peaks behind us. A day later we mount camels. The males are bad-tempered beasts with an attitude. You roll along, wobbly with the flow, seated on a hard saddle. The females are gentler. The route of Carolan’s own writing was set by his first two books; Closing the Circle, a collection of poems published in 1985 by Heron Books, followed by The Book of the Heart: Embracing the Tao with Bella Chen (Heron, 1988), reissued by Shambala Publishing in 1990.

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Writers are, by necessity, nosy and often listen in on other people’s conversations, later jotting down snippets for future use. Writing good dialogue is one of the trickiest things they do. Bad dialogue can, and usually does, turn off a reader no matter how good the plot or scenes. Documenting authentic speech for literary use is one way to write dialogue that has the ring of truth.

The question is, how to use ‘found’ dialogue? Leave in all the ‘ums and ‘ers; the starting, stopping, and restarting of sentences; the slang; the obscenities?

Victoria writer, Charles Tidler’s latest book, Seventy Seven: 77 Found Micro Dramas shows he’s been listening. His micro drama dialogues contain philosophizing, debates and relationship psychology in everyday language.

Charles Tidler’s ‘micro dramas’ have the ring of real-life conversations he’s overheard and written into dialogues.

“[R.M. Greenaway] has created a couple of cops who stand out in a crowded crime fiction field for their absorbing personas.”
— Kingston Whig-Standard

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One of his male characters says, “Call my ex-wife if you want.” She replies, “I already did.”

Some of the dramas are complex and puzzling. His ‘young woman at bistro’ tells her male companion, “You’re not going to sit beside me.” The man moves to a seat across from her, asking, “Did you have anything in mind?”

With 77 micro dramas in 100 pages, Tidler’s dialogues are quickly read, entertaining and thought-provoking. His playwriting skills, developed over several decades, are evident in his scenes that engage the imagination with seeming effortlessness.

Charles Tidler grew up in Indiana, moved to the West Coast in 1969 and now lives in Victoria. He has won National Radio Awards and was a finalist for the Governor General’s Literary Award for Drama. His second novel was Hard Hed (Anvil Press, 2011).
One-night stands

Katherine Fawcett’s stories are zany and fun—until they’re not.

As her follow-up collection of stories to her debut volume, The Little Washer of Sorrows (Thistledown, 2015), Katherine Fawcett’s The Swan Suit contains a story called “East O” in which we are introduced to the last egg to hang out in East Ovary. We discover how eggs pass their time while they await their turn to go down the chute.

In the title story, “The Swan Suit,” we get to know a troll, a few witches and a remarkable black cat called Thunder who communicates with the witches. Pass the time with the beautiful maiden who emerges from her swan suit for a daily dip, just don’t fall in love with her.

And while we’re on the subject of love, in “The Devil and Miss Nora” we wonder if the devil can really be so easily fooled by the coy marketing skills of an attractive woman.

In “Ham,” Fawcett also introduces us to Ham. His Chinny-Chin-Chin ‘natural foods’ enterprise has paid off. And now this porcine protagonist is about to make dumpster diving his next commercial venture.

Diverse as these characters or creatures are, all Fawcett’s stories share an affinity of liveliness, inventiveness and quirkiness. It’s not all sweetness and light.

In “Nasal Cannula,” we hang out with Carmen and her ailing father, Anton, master of the corniest jokes you ever heard. Although this story resonates with real-life dilemmas (those heart-rending decisions about what to do when ageing parents can’t live independently anymore and don’t want to recognize it), there are smiles along the way, too.

Still darker... in “Crumble,” we seemingly become acquainted with an abused wife and mother, Karina, as well as her diary entries, her friend, and her two children whom she is trying to protect. Readers may experience a chill as the story unzips to reveal another Karina.

Fawcett’s characters and plots may seem whimsical with fairy-tale characters like Rapunzel and the Three Little Pigs—but invariably there are transformations afoot. A swan becomes a maiden and then a wolf. A man steps out of his skin to become a sheep on a day when his hot shot mother is craving lamb.

These stories are zany and fun—until they’re not.

Whereas stories such as “The Swan Suit” made me laugh out loud and “The Devil and Miss Nora” had me smiling, “Nasal Cannula” cut to the bone and “Crumble” made me shudder.

“The Pull of Old Rat Creek” appeared in Zule’s annual short fiction anthology, “Happy?” appeared in Grain. “Maternal Instinct of Witches,” “What the Cat Coughed Up,” “Mary Wonderful’s New Grimoire” and “Fluidity” (under the title Warm Fluids) were published in Pique.

Katherine Fawcett describes short fiction in terms of “one-night stands.”

In a blog called ‘Why Short Stories Matter,’ she writes, “The short story is an intense, passionate love affair. Every word counts, every sentence must be perfect and purposeful. It is a narrative that won’t last—the author damn well better make each fleeting moment count.”

The title story, “The Swan Suit,” is a good story to head up the anthology because it contains elements that comprise her distinctive style: humour, disguises, fantasy, fate, irony and sudden intakes of breath.

“It was also one of the most fun to write,” Fawcett told BC BookWorld, “I like how The Swan Suit takes on the concept of attraction, betrayal, truth, beauty, transformation and identity. These are all concepts that are explored further in other stories.”

Born in Montreal, raised in Calgary, Fawcett now lives in Squamish and has taught music in Whistler. The University of Calgary graduate has also played the violin with the Sea to Sky Orchestra. She has lived in Japan, Canmore and Yellowknife before coming to B.C.

“I like the ‘what if?’ prompt,” she says of how she begins her stories. “I like to take things to the extreme.”

Fawcett is now playing around with writing a novel based on the idea of the various ways we are held prisoner, and what it may take to become free. “But I’m constantly distracted by shiny things that I like to polish into short stories,” she says. “At this rate, a novel could take a long time.”

“I think short fiction will always be my first love.”

Katherine Fawcett

Katherine Fawcett

Katherine Fawcett

Cherie Thiessen reviews fiction from Pender Island.
Desertification poems

Writing and pictures that speak to alienation and dispossession in the time of nuclear weapons proliferation.

Pots and Other Living Beings by annie ross (Talonbooks $19.95)

FU professor of First Nations Studies, annie ross’s debut collection of poems, Pots and Other Living Beings combines her poetry with selected photographs to describe postmodern life—with an emphasis on disillusionment, failed utopias and disposessions.

Ross gathered the photographs, along with field notes, while on a research trip to the southwest United States where she explored the foundations and proliferation of nuclear weapons since the 1940s. The resulting poems are a condemnation of the bleak after-effects of the impact of the West’s industrial military complex.

In her poem fix it, ross writes of a desert highway: “swarm of grasshoppers / looking for dinner, yes? / if i had anything, i would give it to you / no one planted, i didn’t / how hot can it be / did we do this? / mercilessly, we did this. / the long meandering highway / stares blankly at the Sky / what, here for a Wolf to eat? / the sign reads, good beef jerky, thirty-four miles ahead / everything is / somewhere else”

Ross’s writing also reflects on the material and cultural world that could have been, if only efforts had been focused on life-giving efforts rather than war and overdevelopment.

On her SFU website entry, ross describes herself as the, “daughter of a strong traditional Maya mother and auntie and WWII veteran storyteller father (Sydney Mines, Nova Scotia).” She adds that she, “began education at home with plants, animals, art, Indigenous hand work, storytelling, and history in Compton, California, from parents dispossessed of their traditional lands.”
A transgendered boy finds acceptance and friends at a boxing gym.

By Tash McAdam

**My Long List of Impossible Things** by Michelle Barker

Katja is a 16-year-old German girl and an aspiring concert pianist with her dreams still intact; her sister Hilde is 18 and holds two boxes of belongings—the only things she owned—Jason discovers she had been collecting reports of missing girls. Jason also finds a shadowy Polaroid picture of a boxing gym, Ray’s Place. He believes this will help him solve his sister’s murder.

Jason tracks down the gym and gets invited in. He hasn’t boxed before but he’s been in lots of fights. “Being trans usually means someone wants to smash your face in,” Jason says. Even his parents fought about his transgendered state before his mom died and before his dad became an alcoholic and overdosed. After that, no one cared about Jason’s split lips and black eyes except Becca.

In the group home, Derek, along with workers. Now one of the biggest bullies have overdosed. “She never did drugs, has died of an overdose. He turns 18, the police inform him she

They are family

“Make yourself invisible”

Blood Sport by Tash McAdam

(Orca Soundings $9.95)

Jason is on his best behavior, attending classes every day and going to the gym in the evenings. He wins gold at the tournament and, for the first time in his life, the black eye and bruised jaw he sustains feels good—“The marks feel like medals.” But his real name, Jane, has been discovered. And the gym manager has figured out who stole Becca’s USB and confronts Jason in the change room. Jason uses his fighting skills to get away. His friends come to his assistance and eventually get the police involved who arrest the gym manager. Not only does Jason help discover Becca’s murderer and a human trafficking gang, in the end he realises he has a new ‘family’ and a surprising new home.

Blood Sport author Tash McAdam identifies as trans and queer and uses the neutral pronoun they. They teach high-school English (and knows how to defend that grammar). They also have a couple of black belts in karate.

In 1945 Germany, two sisters must find their way to safety in the mayhem of bombed-out cities and Russian occupying forces.

Michelle Barker

In such a world of hardship, Katja begins making lists in her head of what she really wants, such as: “my piano, obviously; to go home again; a new pair of shoes; rabbit stew, oh rabbit stew—the way Mutti made it, turning it into a feast, with sauces and braised and sautéed and that. I imagined us sitting at the dining room table with her favourite Schumann Lieder playing on the radio and the midday sun shining right on her pretty coffee set. Eat your fill, girls, she would say. We would eat so much we’d have to nap afterward.”

In a fit of anger one day, Katja makes some bad decisions that imperil those around her. Can she protect her sister Hilde and still do the right thing? Or will she have to betray friends closest to her?

**MICHELLE BARKER** says, “there are no simple answers in Katja’s situation; there are not meant to be.” Barker adds that her heroine’s viewpoint is coloured by both how she was raised and her limited understanding of what actually happened during the war. “I believe it is easy to read history with the benefit of hindsight and insert ourselves into roles of hero and heroine. Easy, but not honest. I could have made Katja more heroic, but then I believe she would not have had as much to say to us.” Barker’s mother grew up in Germany during the war and her stories influenced this novel. Barker’s mother converted to Judaism, married a Jewish man, and raised Barker and her brothers in the Jewish faith. “To me that is a beautiful symbol of the impossible becoming possible,” says Barker.

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**List of Impossible Things**

Michelle Barker

978-1-77321-364-4

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**Blood Sport**

Orca Soundings $9.95

Tash McAdam

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- Emilie Buchwald

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Motivated by her need to understand how her father and her ancestral home of Germany could have supported Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime, Heige Boehm has written *Secrets in the Shadows* from a German boy’s perspective.

Heige Boehm and her little sister, Cecil in Germany.

Heige Boehm today (above right).
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QUICKIES:
 Love throwing

I just finished reading Sage Birchwater’s review of Resolve: The Story of the Chelsea Family and a First Na-
tion Community. I will to Head (Caritas Press) and thought it was such a good review I had to throw some love his way. I might be on a bit of a roll here, but John Moore’s review of Primary Occupation (DOM) is also well writ-
ten. Congratulations. John Hamilton

Go digital

I absolutely LOVED your paper when I grabbed it for the first time on the BC Ferries last year. I’ve been holding onto it constantly since. I’d love to have more but I live in an RV and have so little space to keep my books, just two cupboards. (You can imagine that’s a challenge for a reader.) I keep referring back to your issues for information, and there’s too much good in it for me to write lots of notes, I’d have to copy so much of the paper.

I was wondering if you could please consider publishing a PDF edition of it as well? That way I could get access to all your issues if I live very remotely on the West of the Island so I can only get a copy when I get out, once in a very long while and I could keep all of them! Since they take up no physical space on my computer. Will you please consider it?

Thank you so much and looking forward to hearing from you, stay safe and healthy at this time,

Coral L.
Vancouver Island

BC BookWorld is available digi-
tally at BCBookLook.com (back issues at abcbookworld.com)

Literary treats

I left my copy of BC BookWorld on my porch for a week, just in case. I just brought it in yesterday. Such a treat! Alan Twigg’s new book looks great! I was reading the article on Dr. Louise Aail with interest and then realized he had written the book, not the article. Can’t wait to read it. Also loved Alice Munro and Margaret Atwood piece, and that feature about hotels along the EH line... and more!

EL Hurst
Gabriola Island

Indigenous essentials

I am a longtime, avid reader of BCBookWorld. I have been delighted over the past few years over your increasing coverage of titles by In-
digenous authors and Indigenous subjects. To me, who published Belford’s fifth collection of poetry, ecologique (Harbour, 2005), White adds that Belford, “reworded and polished his poems tirelessly, striving for a gem-like concentration of expression.”

Poet and anthologist Gary Geddes compared Belford’s poems about be-
ing in and out of work to Milton Acom’s, “[combining] intelligence and an awkward, almost lumbering grace.” While I found Belford intimidating in person, White says among his friends, “he was a great conversationalist who could drink, tell stories and hang in there.

Neil Sterritt (1941–2020)

Neil J. Sterritt, winner of the BC Book Prizes’ 2017 Roderick Haig-
Brown Prize for the best book to contribute to the understanding and appreciation of British Columbia for, Mapping My Way Home: A Gitx-
san History (Creekside 2016), died in Williams Lake on April 9, 2020.

Born and raised in Hazelton, Sterritt’s hereditary name was Ma-
digam Gyaam, from the Gitxsan House of Gyaam. He earned a mining diploma from BCIT and worked for various mining companies; and later for the Gitxsan-Wet’suwet’en Tribal Council, Assembly of First Nations and with countless First Nations communities and organizations throughout B.C. and the Yukon.

During the precedent-setting aboriginal rights case, Delgamuukv v. The Queen, 1987-1990, he spent 34 days on the stand as an expert witness defending the knowledge of Gitxsan Elders and leaders. In Mapping My Way Home, Sterritt traced the history of the area at the junction of the Skeena and Bulkley Rivers, the resiliency of the First Na-
tions residents who have maintained the villages of Gitmanmaax and Hazelton, as well as his own personal story of growing up in Hazelton and helping his people fight the Delgamuukv court case. His overview stretches from the creation tales of Wiigyet and the adventure of oil and gas pipeline proposals, including tales of the Madigam T’suw’i Aks (supernatural grizzly of the waters), the founding of Gitmanmaax, Kispiox and Hagwilget and the coming of the fur traders, miners, packers, missionaries and telegraphers.

Stephen Hume calls Sterritt’s account “remarkable, unique and articulate...a powerful, ac-
cessible and cultural tour de force. It deserves to be on every British Columbian’s bookshelf.”

Ken Belford (1946–2020)

Poet and environmentalist, Ken Belford died on February 19 in Prince George. Belford published ten books of poetry and more than a dozen chap-
books. His relationship to the land deeply informed his poetics.

Ken was a self-taught poet, like the Purdy, Patrick Lane and John Newlove who forged his art outside the academy and drew on the experience of work and the life of the street for his inspiration,” says Howard White, who published Belford’s fifth collection of poetry, ecologique (Harbour, 2005). White adds that Belford, “reworded and polished his poems tirelessly, striving for a gem-like concentration of expression.”

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