INDIGENOMICS

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HIKE NOT NIKE

In her preceding book, Angie Abdou gave us a truthful account of her experiences as a hockey mom, frankly describing her young son’s sporting experiences on and off the ice in Fernie.

Now, over the course of the summer holidays, she takes to the great outdoors with her daughter, Katie. Their peak-a-week adventures are shared in This One Wild Life: A Mother-Daughter Wilderness Memoir (ECW $21.95).

“Writing this book taught me the value of a simple life, the restorative powers of nature, the serenity to be found in a simple walk in the woods and the happiness of spending as much time as possible with my immediate family,” says Abdou.

Yes, Katie and Mom bonded. And an important lesson was learned. Abdou, herself a serious athlete, has a passion for the great outdoors with my immediate family,” says Abdou.

Trent, of course, is my son and hiking; Katie does not. Abdou says she is excited to hike with her daughter next summer.

Politics and fatal love

Shaena Lambert’s novel Petra (Random House $22.95) is inspired by the life of German Green Party co-founder Petra Kelly, who was murdered in 1992. Petra explores love, jealousy, and the power of social change. It also explores Kelly’s unlikely romance with a Nato general who converted to her cause.

New Brighton Hotel makes a fictional comeback

Wayne Sawchuk

Crossing the Divide: Discovering a Wilderness Ethic in Canada’s Northern Rockies (Sandhill Book Marketing $21.95)

Claudia Carnavall

British Columbia in Flames: Stories from a Blazing Summer (Harbour $26.95)

Julia Zarankin

Field Notes from an Unintentional Birder: A Memoir (D&M $24.95)

Patrice Dutil

(illos by Fool’s Gold: The Life and Legacy of Vancouver’s Petra Kelly (1947-1992) (Random House $22.95) is inspired by the life of German Green Party co-founder Petra Kelly, who was murdered in 1992. Petra explores love, jealousy, and the power of social change. It also explores Kelly’s unlikely romance with a Nato general who converted to her cause.

New Brighton Hotel makes a fictional comeback

Canadian Island author, Grant Buday has turned his social critic’s eye on the early settler days of Vancouver in Orphans of Empire (TouchWood $22), in which he brings to life three characters whose lives converge at the site of the historic New Brighton Hotel in the late 1880s. Having grown up and spent his early adult years in East Vancouver, Buday says he frequented New Brighton Park (the site of the long-gone hotel), swam in its pool and walked past the park toward the Alberta Wheat Pool.

Buday imagines to life Colonel Richard Moody, whom the British government sent to found British Columbia (and establish a “second England”). “Great things are expected of you,” a fellow traveller taunts Moody.

The second character introduced is Frisadie, a Hawaiian who arrives in Victoria at the age of seven after her father dies on the voyage leaving her and her mother destitute. Frisadie grows up and buys the New Brighton Hotel, making it the toast of the settlement.

And finally, there’s Henry Panini, orphaned in London, England but makes his way to New Brighton where he becomes an embalmer and finds happiness.
Ekstasis Editions
celebrating 39 years of publishing:
a milestone for the imagination!
Neo-noir in perilous times

After receiving award nominations for his first two books of short stories, retired journalist Don McLellan has released his third collection, Ouch: 20 Stories (Page Count Press $20), equally worthy of notice. Each story encapsulates a slice of the lives of characters sparely drawn who are usually stuck in troubling if not downright perilous situations. Like the fireman and his wife, a nurse, who are about to have a child while living in a neighbourhood terrorized by homeless people in The Denswelling.

McLellan injects humour, mostly black, which enlivens his dark tales. He also adds sharp perceptions of contemporary issues, such as this backdrop in Neighbours, about a diverse collection of people who come together to help a homeless woman (the homeless are a major feature in McLellan’s book).

Also included in this scenario is a family from Hong Kong, so successful that the mother can stay home to raise their kids. And there is also Augie, an Indigenous, sometime longshoreman who lives in a basement rental. “He’s always happy to lend a hand to their kids. And there is also Augie, an Indigenous, sometime longshoreman who lives in a basement rental. “He’s always happy to lend a hand to their kids.

A major theme runs throughout McLellan’s neo-noir: wounded people struggling to make their way in a difficult world.

Dr. Bonnie Henry has gone from being a faceless bureaucrat to a well-known, well-trusted health officer in her handling of the Covid-19 health menace. Her approach caught the attention of people far away from B.C. including the chief editor of Polestar, a B.C. publisher founded in 1981 that was eventually bought by Raincoast Books. "I had the good fortune to work at one of B.C.'s most innovative independent literary houses, alongside two wonderful colleagues, Michelle Benjamin and Emiko Morita," says Lynn Henry. "We were three dedicated people running this crazy dream of a press on a shoestring, and we published books I'm still proud of today."

It so happened that Lynn Henry was visiting her sister Bonnie in March 2020, just as the Covid-19 virus was identified as a pandemic. Lynn witnessed first-hand the whirlwind that became her sister’s daily life. With her knowledge of Bonnie Henry’s personal and professional background (that includes fighting SARS in Toronto in 2003 and the Ebola outbreak in Uganda in 2000 among other crises), Lynn Henry teamed up with Bonnie to write Be Kind, Be Calm, Be Safe (Allen Lane/Penguin $26.95). Including Dr. Bonnie Henry’s recollections of how and why decisions were made, the book delves into the delicate balance between individuals, society and the value placed on keeping everyone safe.

The Fraser has remained a big part of the Blacklaw’s life. For example, when most wives are getting jewelry and a candlelit dinner for their tenth wedding anniversary, Carol Blacklaws was getting the name of their oldest son? It’s Fraser.

Carol Blacklaws and Rick Blacklaws

Covering the wild upper reaches of the Fraser (land of the lodgepole pine), through the dry rangelands of the Cariboo and down the treacherous canyon, and finally the fertile delta of Metro Vancouver, the book provides insights into the landscapes of the river and the people who live on its banks.

There is another talented sibling in the family: Bonnie Henry’s sister Lynn Henry, publishing director of Knopf Canada. Some may remember Lynn Henry as the chief editor of Polestar, a B.C. publisher founded in 1981 that was eventually bought by Raincoast Books. "I had the good fortune to work at one of B.C.’s most innovative independent literary houses, alongside two wonderful colleagues, Michelle Benjamin and Emiko Morita," says Lynn Henry. "We were three dedicated people running this crazy dream of a press on a shoestring, and we published books I’m still proud of today."

So it happened that Lynn Henry was visiting her sister Bonnie in March 2020, just as the Covid-19 virus was identified as a pandemic. Lynn witnessed first-hand the whirlwind that became her sister’s daily life. With her knowledge of Bonnie Henry’s personal and professional background (that includes fighting SARS in Toronto in 2003 and the Ebola outbreak in Uganda in 2000 among other crises), Lynn Henry teamed up with Bonnie to write Be Kind, Be Calm, Be Safe (Allen Lane/Penguin $26.95). Including Dr. Bonnie Henry’s recollections of how and why decisions were made, the book delves into the delicate balance between individuals, society and the value placed on keeping everyone safe.

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The New Corporation reveals how billionaires are using the rhetoric of serving nature and the public to further manipulate our bodies and minds.

Joel Bakan credits Bruno and his staff at the Corner Cup Café in Vancouver’s Kitsilano for providing writing fuel (coffee) and a welcoming place to write. He says frauder Bern- nie Madoff and thousands of other Wall Street swindlers regimented the lives of millions of Americans, big corporations did nothing to bail out the poor folks who lost their homes. Instead, President Obama bailed out the banks.

Empowered by the following presid- ential administration of Donald Trump, who rejected the Paris Accord, U.S.-based corporations mostly failed to protect the general populace from a plague far more deadly than the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2002. Big business in North America kept those meat packing plants open where Covid-19 was easily spread, sacrificed next to nothing and accepted government bailouts whatever needed or not. When the Dow Jones Industrial Average Index reached a record high, most Americans believed that was a good thing. Meanwhile, it was the dreaded boogeyman of Socialism—government bailouts—that kept North American society functioning.

This all comes as no surprise to Joel Bakan. His 2003 documentary and television mini-series called The Corporation provocatively explained why and how corporations are, by their very design, akin to psychopaths. Corpor- a tions, he discerned, are constructs invented to absolve their managers and investors of responsibility for their failures and transgressions.

Now Bakan’s The New Corpora- tion: How “Good” Corporations are Bad for Democracy examines the role of posturing that is currently in vogue with corporations that want to per- suade you they are now suddenly and with thirty times as much in 1980. Bakan echoes the words of Robert Weissman, president of Ralph Nader’s Public Citizen (a consumer rights ad- vocacy group), who notes there are no limits in the Paris Accord on continued exploration and drilling on the Alberta tar sands. “Thanks to big oil’s help in crafting it,” Bakan says, “the Paris Ac- cord is toothless.”

The list of corporate entities who have ab- sorbed multi-billion dol- lar fines is astonishing (Volkswagen tops the list at $25 billion) but companies continue to weigh the probabilities of getting caught; Google, Apple, Amazon and Mi- crosoft continue to evade taxation. Corporations are breaking the law “on a grander scale than any- thing we’ve seen,” says Weissman.

“The real danger,” said Greta Thun- berg at the 2019 UN climate conference in Madrid, “is when politicians and CEOs are making it look like real ac- tion is happening, when in fact almost nothing is being done, apart from clever accounting and creative PR.”

If you feel virtuous about using your blue box and putting papers in a yellow bin, you might want to consider why corporations love to promote recy- cling. It shifts the responsibility onto the shoulders of private citizens and government. According to New York Times reporters Tala Schlossberg and Nayeema Raza, the re- cycling movement is “the greatest trick corpora- tions ever played.”

Marriott Hotels happily reduces laundry costs by asking customers to reuse towels and “Help Save The Planet.” Meanwhile, Bakan maintains there is overwhelming evidence that recycling doesn’t work. “Much of what goes into recycling bins ends up in landfills and is burned, causing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions,” he says.

“It’s the same for climate change, where corporations deflect blame by insisting we are all responsible for the problem.” He points out that Petro- Canada has stickers on its gas pumps: “Play your part on helping reduce climate change by using our products responsibly.” This is a rare Canuck reference. Bakan shows a tendency to overlook or avoid distinctly Canadian perspectives possibly in favour of count- ing a much larger American audience.

The Next Corporation is published with a distinct new-indie imprint formed by the German media group Bertelsmann.

Essentially, corporations are work- ing hard to convince you that profit is not their primary purpose—but Bakan declares it’s a smokescreen. For start- ers, the collusion of large corporations with repressive regimes around the planet is rarely deemed newsworthy. He notes these corporations “escape blame, quietly slipping out the back door while they bemoan the dysfunc- tional state of affairs they’ve helped create.”

In the so-called “free world,” Bakan writes that corporations are “leverag- ing their new personas” to replace government in providing public goods and services. (In December, Canada’s federal government announced it would rely on FedEx to deliver its vaccines, not Canada Post.)

He notes the “new” corporations looked “distinctly less noble” as they lined up during the coronavirus pan- demic for bailouts despite record prof- its, tax dodging and stock buybacks while pushing for more tax cuts, de- regulation and privatization.

“The decades-long refrain that cor- porations are our friends and govern- ments our enemy rings hollow now,” Bakan writes. “It’s telling that even presidential contender [now president], Joe Biden, has veered toward a pro- gressive stance, invoking Roosevelt’s New Deal.”

Echoing Bernie Sanders, the new U.S. president has insisted “that big corporations, which we’ve bailed out twice in twelve years, step up and take responsibility for their workers and their communities.”

And 42% of the Americans who voted in 2020 failed to repudiate Trump. Joe Biden and the Democrats are now stuck with a crumbling econ- omy due to an unchecked pandemic that will give rise to multi-dimensional social insecurity equal to The Great Depression of the 1930s.

We can now expect to see Joel Bakan’s third volume, perhaps entitled The Next Corporation, ten years from now, to once more lay bare the unjust fault lines of our corporate-led society.
This essential background information establishes Hilton as a culturally-rooted person. It tells us that she comes from a noble family and is a person that I should pay attention to. With the release of her first book, now others can do the same. Hilton is the founder of the Indigenomics Institute and, as such, works and serves as an advisor to business, governments and First Nations particularly with regards to economic development. She is part of a select group of Indigenous economists who are working at the forefront of an estimated 100-billion-dollar Indigenous economy. As this economy emerges, Bill Gallagher, Don Richard- son, Dara Kelly, JP Gladu, Shawan Metawabin and Clint Davis are some of the business leaders who are interpreting and shaping a new economic landscape in favour of Indigenous economies. Their combined years of experience in community development are helping to forge new horizons to stimulate Indigenous wealth. It’s been a long time coming. The federal government imposed so many roadblocks to eco- nomic success and com- munity development that it has taken a plethora of court cases to break the shackles of exclu- sion set up by Cana- dian governments. In 1969, for exam- ple, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and then Minister of Indian Affairs Jean Chretien pro- posed the White Paper Policy on Indig- enous people. Had they been successful in passing this policy they would have fulfilled the Canadian dream of eliminating the “Indian Problem” in Canada by getting rid of the special status of Indigenous people. Their efforts were defeated by the outrage and protests led by Indigenous people across Canada. It is important to remember the extent to which British Columbian politics and activism have long been at the forefront of progress. As Wendy Wickwire’s recent biography of the Scottish-born translator James Teit reiterates, in her acclaimed At The Bridge: James Teit and an Anthropology of Belonging (UBC Press, 1999) delega- tions of BC’s Indigenous leaders made articulate presentations in Ottawa to assert their rights, with Teit as their writer, as early as 1912. The crucial game-changer was the Nisga’a victory in the Supreme Court of Canada in 1971 spearheaded by Chief Frank Calder and several other Nisga’a leaders. While it was not an outright victory, this now-famous decision paved the way for not only independent First Nations governance, but also a social climate to stimu- late Indigenous commerce. The long-sought agree- ment confirmed the band’s right to a measure of self- government and nearly 2,000 square kilometres of land, while paying the Nisga’a $890 million in com- pensation for the release of the rest of their traditional territory. In that case, all judges agreed that Aboriginal Title and Rights had existed at the time of Confederation. These three agreed that those rights continued to exist. Three judges said the rights were extinguished at the time of Confederation. The seventh judge would not make a ruling because of a technicality. So, it was a draw. But the Supreme Court of Can- ada did mention to the prime minister that he must address the concerns of Indigenous people and negotiate fair settlements of grievances.

In his inimitable style, Trudeau the First responded, “Apparently, they have more rights than I thought.”

The next major step forward was also a struggle. Neil B. Boole, a member of the House of Gitxsan- daashlaw, served as president of the Gitksan-Wet’suwet’en Tribal Council from 1981 to 1987, key years leading up to the precedent-setting Aboriginal rights case known as Delgamuuk’w v. BC. This decision set important precedents of the 1987-1990 court case, Srettir was on the stand for 34 days during the Delgamuuk’w trial. He later wrote extensively on Aboriginal rights and governance and served as a consul- tant to many Aboriginal organizations around the world. In her co-authored Tribal Boundaries in the Nisus Water- shed (UBC Press, 1999),

Indigenous peoples’ economies have also depended on natural resources. Hilton adds, so do Canada’s. But there is a marked difference in world views between settlers and First Nations. Indigenomics reiterates and examines how and why Indigenous peoples place a high value on spirituality, fairness and sharing versus the Canadian val- ues of commerce, non-religious state and personal accumulation of wealth.

This clash of values has hurt Indig- enous economic development. But as Indigenous rights are being clarified and verified by the Canadian Courts, ideally social progress will lead to a more socially equitable distribution of wealth.

In Indigenomics, Hilton asserts that Canadian and international re- source development corporations are now learning just how important it is to recognize the power of Indigenous rights and title. Working together as equal partners should be the aim of reconciliation between settlers and First Nations. We are now in an era of consultation when it comes to the use of natural resources.

Indigenous peoples have finally given rise to Indigenous policies have finally given rise to a new era of hope concerning Indig- enous enterprise in the 21st century, led by articulate leaders such as Carol Anne Hilton, who speaks for herself, and for Indigenous people everywhere, in Indigenomics. 

Carol Anne Hilton
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Available at your favourite bookstore or order from PGC/Raincoast www.ronsdalepress.com
Memoir asserts feminism can arise from polygamy.

Mary Jayne Blackmore is the fifth child of Winston Blackmore—the former Mormon Bishop of Bountiful in Creston Valley, B.C. who was convicted of polygamy in 2017, who married 27 times, and who fathered at least 150 children. During his trial, B.C. Her memoir, Balancing Bountiful: What I Learned about Feminism from My Polygamous Grandmothers revisits and explores growing-up in a closed-off, fundamentalist Mormon community.

“I grew up in the glory days of Bountiful,” she proudly states. She sets out to explain how the guidance of her polygynous grandmothers, as well as her education and travel, have influenced her understanding of faith, community, family—and—wait for it—feminism.

In the prologue, Blackmore explains, “Writing this book has never felt optional. Claiming this narrative has been an essential part of my healing and growth and stepping into my own story as a woman on the planet. This book is about me. It’s my story and I speak only for myself, but my motivation in writing it has never been about me. I wrote this book for the ones who don’t remember the story—for those dearest loves in my life, especially the beautiful, powerful young women who come through this proud legacy of mothers and grandmothers... Empowering my own feminist voice and adding to the collective voice for women has compelled me to keep asking the big questions of womanhood and humanity.

“What is the right kind of woman, the right kind of family and the right kind of feminism?”

Underlying Blackmore’s personal journey are the stories of her father and mother. It is well-known in the news that Winston Blackmore was sentenced on July 24, 2017 to serve six months in a house arrest for his bountiful unions. It is far less known that Jane Blackmore, a registered nurse and midwife, left Bountiful with her youngest daughter in 2003, moved to nearby Cranbrook, and divorced her husband.

Jane Blackmore is the only wife who testified against him. Her influence on her daughter is clear in the text: encouraging education, providing a strong, compassionate role model and support. Clearly, the mother-daughter bond, forged under what most people would assume were complex and difficult circumstances, has triumphed over a constrained father-daughter relationship.

The background of Blackmore’s narrative is shrouded by events that threatened her community’s survival over the last twenty years as her Mormon enclave was instructed to prepare for the prophesied, millennial apocalypse or ‘Great Destruction.’ After her father’s official leadership status was revoked, half of Bountiful chose to remain loyal to her father while the other half followed Warren Jeffs in Utah.

We learn more about Warren Jeffs’ oppressive hold on his followers, both in Canada and the U.S; the Texas raids on the Yearning for Zion Ranch in April 3, 2008, where 400 children were taken into state custody; and the arrest of Warren Jeffs on August 28, 2006 and his sentencing on August 9, 2011 to life in prison on two counts of sexual assault of a child.

Balancing Bountiful is written in the first person, through differing viewpoints in accordance with the narrator’s age as events unravel. With 65 diary entries, spanning life from age six in 1989 to thirty-seven in 2020, the narrative is tied together with a prologue written in April 2020 and an epilogue completed in July 2020. There are three sections:

CHILDHOOD 1989 – 2000 includes passages: Baptism, Keep Sweet, Ten Weddings, Perverts, Awaiting Placer’s Arrested Again, Families and—wait for it—feminism. These chronicle her idyllic childhood, as well as strict grooming customs, hints of abuse and worry about the apocalypse.

MARRIAGE 2000 – 2011 includes passages: God Gives Life (And Takes It Away), A Round Belly and Troubled Heart, Dad’s Arrest, Feminist Fire and I’m Broken. These passages detail her feelings about her church-assigned marriage at sixteen, moving to Alberta and giving birth to her first child, being whisked away to live with her husband’s family in Colorado City, Arizona, and moving back home after realizing she can’t raise children in Warren Jeffs’ oppressive church. She completes her high school education and teaching degree, suffers a miscarriage and divorces her husband.

WARDENING BUT NOT LOST 2011 – 2018 includes Arrested Again, Families not Felons and I am Not a Mormon. These entries document personal growth as she travels to Mexico and Turkey, follows a boy she meets at the Shambhala Music Festival to New York City, New Zealand and attends Burning Man festival. Just prior to the pandemic lockdown, she also travels to India.

This is not the cloistered lifestyle that one assumes would be de rigueur for the daughter of Canada’s most renowned polygamist.

Blackmore now puts her faith in people, community and nature. She dreams of a world peace where we live in balance, creativity and abundance. She lives in a cabin, on her father’s land, with her two teenage children. She is vice-principal of Mormon Hills School where she also teaches. She ran for mayor of Creston in 2018. And she claims to now have an improved relationship with her father due to her redefined faith and a shared love of writing.

You can’t judge a book by its cover. And you can’t judge an author by their father.
Man at the Airport: How Social Media Saved My Life — One Syrian’s Story by Hassan Al Kontar

It all started when Hassan Al Kontar left his home country, Syria, for well-paying work in the United Arab Emirates in 2006. When the Syrian civil war broke out five years later, he did not want to be part of it.

“I did not exist in this life to kill anyone, no matter what,” he says in his memoir Man at the Airport: How Social Media Saved My Life — One Syrian’s Story, due out this June. “If I could not stop it, I will not be part of it. As simple as that, I thought at the time.”

Eventually, Al Kontar is arrested in 2016 and kept in jail on trumped up charges. Here, his hope begins to fade. “I was no longer the young guy who wanted to travel the world and meet people, could no longer pretend I was the professional in a nice suit, meeting customers, with big dreams and a bright future. I was a criminal in handcuffs.”

With a purpose, he says. “To tell the story and show the world who the man with a purpose,” he says. “To tell the story and show the world who the man living in an airport for six months, was trapped in the arrivals zone with only a cellphone.

“After many months and several jails, Al Kontar manages to get some of the charges dropped and travels to Malaysia believing he can get legal status in that country. But upon arriving there, he is denied entry. Next, he tries to gain access to, first Ecuador and then Cambodia. No success. Sent back to Kuala Lumpur International Airport, the authorities keep his passport and he is trapped in the arrivals zone with no official papers.

Not one to give up, Al Kontar still has his cell phone. He concocts a plan to use social media to attract worldwide attention to his plight and get refuge in another country while managing to survive in the airport (a feat unto itself).

On March 11, 2018, Al Kontar tweets for the first time:

“What does it mean to be a Syrian? My name is Hassan and this is my story. I am from Syria. I just want to explain to people what it means to be Syrian. To be lonely, weak, unwanted, rejected. No one is accepting us.”

At first, there are few Twitter followers. But soon, his tweets gain momentum and go viral. BBC TV does a news feature on him. The Washington Post and The Guardian newspapers pick up his story as do other media.

A vlogger, Nuseir (Nas) Yassin, with 33 million followers, who travels the world making videos, discovers Al Kontar. “I read this crazy story of a man living in an airport for six months and facing arrest in his own country because he refused to participate in a war,” writes Yassin in the introduction to Man at the Airport. “I thought to myself, Wow, I have to make a video about him.”

Yassin’s video about Al Kontar gets 18 million views the first day it’s posted. The video reaches the Canadian government and Al Kontar’s refugee application is expedited in two months rather than the two years claims usually take.

Living in Canada, Al Kontar decides to write his story. “I am once again a man with a purpose,” he says. “To tell the story and show the world who the real Syrians are.”
Watermelon snow, also called snow algae, pink snow, red snow, or blood snow, is a phenomenon caused by unicellular algae.
How the lure of gold drew settlers to inadvertently create British Columbia, often in ignoble ways.

Barkerville, 1865

Gold in British Columbia: Discovery to Confederation by Marie Elliott (Ronsdale Press $24.95)

**BY MIKE SELBY**

I never thought of a smallpox epidemic as a major factor in the gold rushes of British Columbia. But it's well-documented in黄金在British Columbia: Discovery to Confederation by Marie Elliott. It's an amazing story.

**Gold in British Columbia: Discovery to Confederation by Marie Elliott**

By keeping the place unsanitary and the population decimated, smallpox left a vacuum that was filled by the influx of settlers. It was a short-term solution, but it allowed the future province to avoid the federal government's gold resources from the American invaders. Speaking of invaders, Elliott shines an historian's light on what she calls the "Tailspit'Up Uprising." Sometimes in the late spring of 1864, conflict erupted between a road crew and the Tailspit'up people, resulting in the deaths of 21 road workers. After a large manhunt, six Tailspit'up'ins' chiefs were arrested and executed. Elliott is one of the first to explore events from the Tailspit'up.
It is time. It is time to increase the visibility, role, and responsibility of the emerging modern Indigenous economy and the people involved. This is the foundation for economic reconciliation. This is Indigenomics.

“Indigenomics is the path for the future ...” —Winona LaDuke, executive director, Honor the Earth

Carol Anne Hilton

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See Carol Anne Hilton’s profile in this issue of BC Bookworld

Available at fine bookstores and online retailers, or www.newsociety.com.
The customer is always right, but in David Giblin’s case, the fishing guide gets the last word. The author of The Codfish Dream: Chronicles of a West Coast Fishing Guide (Heritage, 2018), Giblin began guiding in the summer of 1978 at Stuart Island, one of the Discovery Islands between northern Vancouver Island and the mainland, about 40 miles east of Campbell River.

Giblin worked fifteen summers as a freelance guide for area lodges; some of his high-rolling clients arrived aboard luxury yachts with helicopters on the back deck. Many clients didn’t know what they were in for, as Stuart Island is surrounded by some of B.C.’s most dangerous tidal rapids, whirlpools and currents. In 1972, four Americans attempted to run the Arran Rapids in an outrigger canoe and write about it for Life magazine. They didn’t survive.

It requires great skill to stay afloat, hook salmon and keep clients smiling. “It was quite useful to know how to change bait with one hand while you steered the boat with the other,” writes Giblin.

The Codfish Dream distilled all those years into one memorable summer—names, dates and places were changed to protect the guilty. Various people can reside in one character, or as Giblin says, all can be “treated with a certain artistic license.”

A self-described ‘world class’ fisherman ignores Giblin’s advice about local fishing methods, only to watch his wife (who was paying attention) haul in a boatload of salmon.

Gilly the Ghillie: More Chronicles of a West Coast Fishing Guide by David Giblin (Heritage $19.95)

Gilly the Ghillie: More Chronicles of a West Coast Fishing Guide is a new collection of tales (42 of them) laced with wry observations. Gilly is the first woman to enter the bastion of male guides in the 1980s.

“Gilly’s boat was much cleaner and more organized. It even smelled better,” writes Giblin.

Gilly is a whiz at running her boat. She catches fish; she consoles a multi-millionaire who loses a trophy-sized tyee to dogfish; and she deftly saves the life of another arrogant know-it-all who manages to get his boat sucked into a massive whirlpool.

David Giblin introduces a woman into the 1980s bastion of male fishing guides that populate his fictionalized tales.
By summer’s end almost everyone wants to be aboard Gilly’s boat. The other guides are wising up, hosing down their blood-stained boats. Troutbreath returns with a snorkel and mask to retrieve high-end fishing gear, expensive watches and designer sunglasses that have vanished overboard from boats and docks. After cleaning them, he sells them back to clients. Resourcefulness personified.

Placing himself in the story as narrator, Giblin is an experienced guide who is often paired with the most difficult and demanding clients. But he wisely holds his tongue. Better to be tipped, than not.

Then again, some folks do pose odd questions, like: “What’s the altitude here, anyways?” After being told they’re actually floating on the ocean, a cigar-chomping blowhard (nicknamed Heck) says it looks more like a lake. “I knew from experience that guys like Heck never really cared about the answers once they had their minds made up,” writes Giblin. It also explains why some people piloted yachts using gas station road maps and wondered why the “river” flowed in both directions.

Giblin also dabbles in dreams and a little time travel. One episode sees Troutbreath encounter Captain Vancouver’s Royal Navy crew. “The man stood there with his hands on his hips. He was used to issuing orders to people. Troutbreath understood this guy at once. He had just spent the summer dealing with people like him.”

Giblin’s second chronicle is less about chasing fish and more about colourful characters who inhabit the islands or work at the lodges. They include friends that live aboard a float home who ask visitors to wear gumboots because their home is slowly sinking. An elaborate plan is hatched to lift and reposition the house on a new float. A hair-raising finale has neighbours coming to the rescue.

Indeed, these sparsely populated islands do have an abiding sense of community, which is clearly at the heart of many of Giblin’s stories. Ultimately though, any attempts to sift truth from these tales or uncover identities would be a waste of good fishing time.

Mark Forsythe is co-author with Greg Dickson of From the West Coast to the Western Front (Harbour, 2014).
Chalice, 1998. Lithium compound, raku, by Mary Fox

Surviving chronic fatigue syndrome, Mary Fox triumphs with a life of art and a memoir.

My Life as a Potter: Stories and Techniques by Mary Fox (Harbour $44.95)

Mary Fox uses a needle tool to slowly angle cut through the clay to the wheelhead. Before removing this excess clay, she runs her cut wire under the bottom of the piece to release it.

Mary Fox examines her latest pieces as she removes them from the kiln.

Turn of the Potter’s Wheel

Vancover Island potter Mary Fox is known for her textured glazes and the elegant chalices and vases she has made for decades in her Ladysmith studio. The full-page photographs of her exquisite creations are a highlight of her memoir, My Life as a Potter: Stories and Techniques.

Another strength is her frank, matter-of-fact voice as she recounts her story—discovering clay in 1973 as a 13-year-old student in Victoria and finding the love of her life, Heather Vaughan, only to be felled in 1989 by myalgic encephalomyelitis, a mysterious illness that can cause severe chronic fatigue.

Fortunately, Fox recovered enough after five years to continue her work at a reduced and carefully managed pace. Vaughan, a social worker, had more virulent symptoms. Bedridden for years, she relied on Fox as her main caregiver until her death in 2007 ended their 25-year relationship.

The couple’s 1991 relocation from Vancouver to an old coal miner’s cabin in Ladysmith, an hour’s drive north of Victoria, was a survival strategy—it provided an affordable place to live and, eventually, a way for Fox to resume work in her own studio and pottery shop.
Mary Fox (with her dog Amy) uses the pugnitol to mix fresh clay.

My Life as a Potter allows Fox to pass on her hard-won wisdom. She discusses things she wishes she had known when she was starting out, offers a list of “disciplines” she follows in her studio, and sets out some of the techniques she developed over the years.

In the book’s foreword, Carol E. Mayer, head of the curatorial department at the UBC Museum of Anthropology, notes the dwindling number of senior potters in British Columbia, many of whom have not left written records.

“There is a dearth of autobiographies by potters that cover the scope reached in this book,” says Mayer. “Some do provide useful technical information, but the pickings are slim.”

In recent years, Fox has turned her mind to mentoring a new generation of potters. She has launched what she calls her “legacy project”—a residency program in her home that helps emerging potters develop practical skills as studio potters. A charitable society has been established to oversee the house after her death, along with an endowment fund that welcomes donations through the Vancouver Foundation and the Craft Council of British Columbia.

“I have been a potter all my working life, earning my living from what I create with my hands,” Fox writes. “Although I have never regretted my career choice and all the challenges that came with it, I wish I had known when I was starting out, offers a list of “disciplines” she follows in her studio, and sets out some of the techniques she developed over the years.

From a young age, Fox was keenly aware of the value of creative work and its importance in society.

“Beauty is everywhere in the act of creation, and it is humbling to be embraced by it. It fills me with surges of joy and delight.”

Mary Fox, circa 1996, trims a torn edge, and works to protect the delicate edge of a tall bottle vase.

Studio Disciplines of Mary Fox

- **Change positions:** Get up and move every 20 minutes or so to minimize body fatigue.
- **Break Things Up:** Do heavy work for only part of the day, then turn to other lighter tasks.
- **Keep studio notes:** Tracking helps you remember what you did last time.
- **Clean daily:** You will feel better when you start work the next day.
- **Take your time:** Life is not a race. Enjoy the moment.
- **There is joy in repetition:** Growth can happen by refining serial work.

Victoria-based Portia Priegert is the editor for Galleries West and a former reporter for the Ottawa bureau of the Canadian Press.

Mary Fox, circa 1996, trims a torn edge, and works to protect the delicate edge of a tall bottle vase.

Watercolour by Michael Kluckner best known for Vancouver paintings of Emily Carr (Whitecap 1990, 2012). Michael Kluckner has published his first set of new watercolours and drawings in nine years, Here & Gone (Mid-town $19.95), along with musings about the images of the people and places he has captured. “Why am I still painting and drawing the city after 35 years?” Kluckner asks. “I see myself as a witness, certainly not an activist anymore or a serious historian... but I am still a moth drawn to a candle flame when I see a place about to disappear.” Some of the locales in the “Here” section, are already gone. The “Gone” section includes paintings from places Kluckner travelled to in Europe, Australia and Japan.

Continuing with a series of books about one of B.C.’s quintessential painters, Victoria’s Robert Amos’ latest is The E. J. Hughes Book of Boats (TouchWood $22). If the work of Emily Carr summons to mind images of B.C.’s lush forests, Hughes does the same for maritime scenes. Not surprising then, boats were frequently featured in Hughes’s work. Although not much of a sailor himself (he couldn’t swim and often got seasick), Hughes was aware that these pictures were well-liked, writing to his sister in 1966, “Perhaps I am being noted for my boats.”

Meichi Ng created the comic, Barely Functional Adult, which she began posting on Instagram from her Vancouver apartment in 2015. The comic caught on and Ng built a following of 130,000 fans. Now she has released a collection of short stories for a graphic novel of the same name, Barely Functional Adult: It’ll All Make Sense (Harper Collins $35).

“I had never identified as an adult, despite having an ID that proved otherwise,” Ng writes. “The notion of being an adult just seemed like such a dreary badge to slap on. It also carried this connotation of being someone imminently stuffy and incapable of having fun, neither of which I was inclined to relate to. Ng’s newly-published stories are about exes, murder, friendship, therapy, anxiety, sucking at things, calming down momentarily, wrinkles, pettiness and other topics that speak to a wide audience. 9781059135355

Meichi Ng

M e ichi Ng

N g, A m os ,

K l u c k n e r

M e ichi Ng

N g, A m os ,

K l u c k n e r
BC BookWorld: In simple terms, what do you mean by ‘the juggling mother’?

Amanda Watson: By the juggling mother, I mean the mother who is busy keeping up with her many responsibilities. She is also busy with good deeds that demonstrate both her service as a productive and efficient paid worker and her respectable devotion to her family. She is striving in both realms: her job as a professional or entrepreneur seeking to climb the ladder and break glass ceilings, and doing everything possible to set her kids up for financial success and happiness.

So, I’m arguing that there’s a performative element to the juggling mother as she keeps herself and her family together. She may be unfairly burdened with work, and she may even be burnt out and depressed as a result, but she is also complicit in how labour is organized. She is willing to be overworked and she is unwilling to disrupt the way work and family life are organized unfairly. The juggling mother is not an activist.

Mothers also have the emotional responsibility to keep their families feeling good in the face of highly uncertain futures. I argue that the responsibility to make things feel all better when things clearly aren’t (with respect to climate change, the economy, global conflict, racism, Covid-19) is the sort of glue that sticks women to all of this work.

BC BookWorld: Do we take it for granted that mothers not only take on responsibility for most of the chores in the household, they can also do paid work on top of everything?

Amanda Watson: That’s a helpful way to think about it. We take for granted the fact that women will pivot to fill whatever gaps in labour emerge, paid or unpaid. Even though most women work for pay in Western societies, it is still the default expectation of women and girls to provide for the needs of family and community with their unwaged labour. While we now take many of our care needs to market, relying on low-waged workers who are disproportionately women of colour and immigrant women, we still hold gendered expectations of family and household management. When Covid-19 hit, women made themselves economically vulnerable when they left the paid workforce to care for and educate children. We take for granted that women and girls will comport themselves in such a way that families and communities thrive, even if they themselves are feeling overwhelmed or sad.
Rather than aiming to have it all, we might consider fighting for shorter workweeks, accessible childcare and pay equity.

BCBW: What does this mean for women who want to have children and have a professional life? And is this related to the second part of your book title: Coming Undone in the Age of Anxiety?

AW: This means that most women will be taking on an enormous load of work. We expect so much of mothers. While women can of course resist their distribution of unpaid work if they are partnered, they have little power to resist pressures like workplace stigma and pay inequity. I think it is sadness that I am describing in the second part of the title. How sad that we have designed family life to be impossible, especially in the midst of widespread popular feminism.

BCBW: Ultimately, is it really possible for women to ‘have it all’?

AW: We have organized society in such a way that career and family come at the sacrifice of each other, one way or another. As I say in the book, I don’t think we want to have it all anymore. It’s too much! Certainly, a balance of both is more accessible to families with financial privilege, but even affluent professional women, and women of colour in particular, face extra demands on their work and behaviour in order to be valued as competent. Rather than aiming to have it all, we might consider fighting for shorter workweeks, accessible childcare and pay equity.

BCBW: Certain high-earning women with families (e.g., Facebook CEO, Sheryl Sandberg) put the onus on individuals to “lean in” to be successful. Is this a reasonable approach?

AW: This approach is to be expected in a society that puts ultimate value on individuals pulling themselves up by working hard and making good, responsible choices. Rather than aiming to have it all, we might consider fighting for shorter workweeks, accessible childcare and pay equity. BCBW: Certain high-earning women with families (e.g., Facebook CEO, Sheryl Sandberg) put the onus on individuals to “lean in” to be successful. Is this a reasonable approach?

AW: This approach is to be expected in a society that puts ultimate value on individuals pulling themselves up by working hard and making good, responsible choices. Rather than aiming to have it all, we might consider fighting for shorter workweeks, accessible childcare and pay equity. BCBW: Where do you look for answers and what gives you hope?

AW: Even though I’m critical of the systemic barriers that mothers face, I’m optimistic when I am talking to other mothers and parents. Instead of the competitiveness between mothers and families that we see satirized in media, I see solidarity and empathy. Witnessing that sense of allyship gives me hope. I really feel that women are thirsty for a collective break from shouldering so much work and worry, and I am hopeful that with enough solidarity and allyship across genders and classes, this will translate to changes in how we organize work. I am also heartened when I see what an impact small policy changes can make on redistributing work and resources. The task of shifting labour across genders and classes seems infinite, but there is a lot we can do.
.Fontainebleau: Stories by Madeline Sonik (Anvil Press $20)

BY HEIDI GRECO

Fontainebleau should come with a warning—not the one we so often see at the start of a tv show, though violence and coarse language certainly play a part in these stories. The warning should be a caution that you won’t be able to put this book down, because these characters and their complicated lives will get into your head and won’t go away.

We’ve become familiar with volumes of linked stories, though it’s rare to find one where the links are as unconventional as these. And it’s worth noting that this book works best by reading it from front to back, something that isn’t always the case with such collections. Dropping in on a story in the middle of the book could leave you gasping, or at least confused, though some will likely leave you gasping anyway.

Victoria-based Madeline Sonik has a raft of degrees: an MFA in Creative Writing, a PhD in Education, and no less than two distinct MAs. But that doesn’t keep her from writing characters who speak in a down-home vernacular, like Hal, in “Transition.”

“Yeah,” Hal says... “It was real fun til’ this dip-stick got on my case for jumping the line at Space Mountain.” “Y’all know where the end of the line is?” he asked. “Sure do,” I said and showed him.

“Everyone knew Hal had a spur-of-the-moment temper. He never let on what he might do next. Even way back in grade school, he scared all the teachers.”

Hal isn’t the only character in the fictional town of Fontainebleau who can get hot under the collar. Violence and abuse seem to be the standard way of the moment temper. He never let on what he might do next. Even way back in grade school, he scared all the teachers.”

Sonik offers a disclaimer at the beginning of the book, explaining that this creation is not the subdivision in Windsor where she grew up, even though like that place, it’s situated on the banks of the Detroit River not far from the Ambassador Bridge with the city of Detroit just across the water.

Even the river plays a role in these stories, carrying some of the town’s dirty secrets in its swirling brown currents. “Margaret waded out from the grainy shore and set the boat afloat. The water was sticky and opaque with effluent, and although Margaret attempted to scrutinize its depths, her feet inevitably scraped against sharp metal and other vestiges of life’s wreckage, deposited in the river’s bed.”

Like so many subdivisions that sprang up in the mid-twentieth century, this one seems to have been built in a hurry, with projects and houses popping up helter-skelter. Fields and wild spots still prevail—hiding places for frightened girls, dreamers, deviants or rogues.

Fontainebleau is a town where itinerant carnivals stop, their ill-tended rides an attractive distraction. When children experience the death of a peer, the pain and confusion long endure, leaving a distinctive scar.

The people in these stories bear such scars, left by their experience with the hardships of the world. There’s a woman who takes refuge in a metal cup filled with booze—a talisman, her link with small possibilities. These are people who argue about crop circles and UFOs—men who hide in darkness, or host at toposc dancers. Crowns with shining wings abound and are often the only witnesses to crimes.

Characters we’ve met in one story will show up in another, disjointed as broken Barbie dolls, yet recognizable—and above all, interconnected.

“An amusing and very relevant cautionary tale” — Kirkus

$19.95USD

Ask for it at your local independent bookseller. For more information, visit www.runningthegoat.com
When Istanbul Was Constantinople

A witch time-travels with her midwife niece and their two cats to solve a mystery

Maureen Thorpe: “Yorkshire grit has allowed me to stay sane.”

The description of the running of rapids or portaging around them, the constraints of campfire cooking and cautious dealings or bloody skirmishes with other tribes in the lands they are passing through all make for a gripping page-turner.

This ‘day-in-the-life’ of sheer survival is later enriched when we meet Princess Olga who supports their efforts and mentions her wish to bring Christianity to Russia, which she eventually does in ‘real life.’ We also go to the great bazaars of Constantinople and practically touch the fabrics and soft leather shoes and smell the spices and delicious foods there.

The action ramps up even more as Annie must work a major feat of magic in front of a crowd of thousands and the rulers… and two hungry lions.

So, if you’d love to escape the woes of the present day and enjoy historical mysteries and archeological detective work, you’ll have come to the right place and time with Sailing to Byzantium.

Caroline Woodward is the author of nine books in five genres for adults and children. She writes from the Lennard Island Lightstation.

Artists’ rendering of Constantinople, the capital city of Byzantium, circa 11th century.

The bereft family, with the two wise-woman and their cats (which, of course, also have certain magical abilities), petition the local Viking King Eiric BloodAxe and his two wives for help.

There is a wealth of authentic detail about the rigours of the sea and river voyage which takes the group of would-be rescuers from York, England to Birka, an island near Sweden, with its busy trading town and active slave market. Then the group carries on across the Baltic Sea and then down major rivers in shallow lightweight river boats to get to Kiev and finally across the Black Sea to Byzantium. There, an eccentric and very wealthy man is rumoured to have bought the exotic blonde twins for his collection.
Fake It So Real
by Susan Sanford Blades
(Nightwood Edi.tions $21.95)

Though much of its action takes place in a downbeat world of dingy clubs, cramped apartments, and squallid camper vans, Susan Sanford Blades’s Fake It So Real, ends on a strangely upbeat note.

At a wake. A wake, more specifically, for former punk-rock singer Damian Costello, whose disembodied foot has washed up on a beach somewhere in the Salish Sea.

And at this wake the mother of Costello’s children, Gwen, has uncharacteristically taken control. Snapping out of her book-long trance of agoraphobia, alcoholism and need, she’s climbed to the stage where her late partner’s band has been shambling through its pre-show rituals and corralled the microphone.

“I am punk rock,” she declares—and so she is, in this glorious but long-delayed moment of sonic self-affirmation.

And although Gwen’s creator downplays her own instrumental talents—”I tried to play bass, or I did play bass for a bit in high school, but I don’t think I’m a very musical person,” says Sanford Blades in a telephone interview from her Victoria home—music certainly played a major role in her own creative awakening.

“For me,” Sanford Blades explains, “it’s been about listening to music, and about feeling, and about the broader social messages with music. I came of age in the ’80s, so for me it was riot grrrl. That was my big thing, and it meant a lot to me, especially as a teen-age girl—just how these women who were just screaming about everything, all these things that you encounter and you don’t know how to react to. Like older men staring at you in the street… you don’t know how to react to. Like

All these things that are just starting to happen now that you’re becoming a woman. So, to have all of these women older than me who’d dealt with it and were screaming about it, that was really empowering for me.

“My music is definitely a way of connecting with the world, and of feeling your own power,” she adds. “Like reading books, too: it’s a way of feeling a connection with somebody else who’s going through the same thing as you, or connecting with a character that you can relate to.”

Although the power of music to both liberate and seduce animates Fake It So Real, which takes its title from grunge icon Courtney Love’s song Doll Parts, it would be a mistake to consider it a “punk rock novel.” It’s more a novel of family dysfunction centered around the always contentious mother-daughter relationship, and it also touches on the psychologically crippling effects of economic precarity and addiction.

Gwen, who’s trying to raise her daughters Sara and Meg on a coffee-shop waitress’s income, self-medicates with vodka while the kids find their own means of escape: Sara by splitting town, her boyfriend by playing education, as she pursues a degree in gender studies. Both repeat their mother’s romantic mistakes by looking up with reckless men—but for them, at least, there is some future. Gwen, however, takes the “no future” ethos of punk rock literally—not as a call to shape one’s own life outside society’s lines, but as an excuse for surrender.

Sanford Blades’s unflinching treatment of her older protagonist might suggest that she’s working out some of her own mother-daughter issues in her fiction, but the author says that’s not entirely the case.

“They say that if it’s 100 percent my real life, and no,” says the mother of three. “But yes, for sure, I started writing this book after I separated from my husband, which was almost ten years ago, so a lot of that went into these stories for sure. What I like to say is that the actual events that take place in the book are not real, but all the feelings in the book come from real feelings that I was experiencing or working through.”

She allows, too, that she’s had to discard most of it. “As I was writing it,” she continues, “I wanted the main character’s mother to be absent in some way, and I thought ‘Oh, she’ll be adopted.’ And now, as I write the second draft, it’s becoming a novel about a girl trying to find her birth mother.”

Zine culture, toxic masculinity, sexual awakening and the cult TV show My So-Called Life also figure in the as-yet-untitled book, Sanford Blades reveals, suggesting that even if there really is no future, the past can still be mined for fresh revelations.

978-0889713888

Alexander Varty is a musician and writer living on unceded Sḵwx̱wú7mesh territory.
Verses for a departed mother

Linda Gane wrote poems out of necessity, an integral part of grieving a parent’s death.

Mary Gane (nee Kurylo) age 17 in 1941
blue sky.” Her mother is relieved that Gane can also see the figure. “I’m glad, you say. I didn’t want you to think I was seeing things,” writes Gane of her mother’s response.

Linda Thompson grew up on a farm in the Pemberton Valley, later moving to Vancouver Island where she still lives on a farm. Her writing has been published widely in Canada, the U.S. and the U.K. and now her debut poetry collection, Black Bears in the Carrot Field (Mother Tongue $19.95) celebrating small town characters, will be released this July.

There’s Eddie, who rolled his skidder in ’68, Kirk buying a house on a Visa credit card, Verna who sneaks back from the dead and Ethyl Peach hammering out tunes on a mildewed piano. There’s plenty of farm imagery with cows, horses and old cars, and dreaming about black bears in the carrot field. There’s even Jesus, come to town driving a Chevy Chevelle (or was it a Dodge Dart?) later spotted at the Stawamus Chief looking way up. Described as country songs crossed with dark lyricism and wit, Thompson’s poems humorously tell of people full of imperfection and guts.
Junie Désil comes to Vancouver at the age of nineteen to attend the University of British Columbia. As a student, she says she was “unused to a thirty-two-thousand-plus student body, isolated, and one of the few Black students.” She struggled, and a fellow student in an African American history class who, “noticing my struggle (sobbing openly in class, etc.),” facilitated a connection with their professor. That led to Désil being hired as a research assistant and sparked her interest in “examining and following the ‘colonial trace.’”

While still at UBC, Désil became involved with a group called Colour Connected Against Racism UBC. It was through this association that she was encouraged to publish a poem in a special race issue in *The Ubyssey* and started “what looks to be a lifelong passion for writing angry and impassioned poetry,” says Désil.

It all culminated in a debut collection of poems, *eat salt | gaze at the ocean* exploring Désil’s experiences growing up “Black on stolen Indigenous lands” combined with her personal narrative about slavery, Black sovereignty and contemporary Black lives. Désil probes the meaning of a zombie, often used as a metaphor for the treatment of Black bodies. Indeed, the book’s title is a reference to a supposed cure for zombification.

“feel but not too much / don’t look up” writes Désil in the poem, *zom-bie | / ‘zambi / ‘don’t feel [because] we can’t feel [ourselves] / hearts eyes / dulled do/what/we’re/told/to so we do / what we’re told.”

Désil weaves in historical documents, newspaper articles and other ephemera as she probes the lives of Black slaves in Haiti and their fight for freedom, including a newspaper report of a slave revolt on March 13, 1792. She writes of America’s occupation of Haiti from 1915—1934 and links it to an American company that exploits Haitian workers.

“bring bodies / more / bodies / harvest bitter / sugar” she writes in *gon-zo | / ‘ganzou / “those dead folks working the sugar-cane fields like it’s 1820.”

Désil continues up to the present times and the Black Lives Matter movement. In one extended poem she writes, using lower case letters: “i took a snapshot of 2016. i counted, over two hundred deaths in one year. if we’re being comprehensive, this right here does not include the dead from the transatlantic slave voyage, those who leapt to their deaths, who died beneath the cargo hold, once stolen from their ancestral lands. those who died in violent capitalist servitude, who died in violent encounters with white holders of enslaved Black people… Black trans folks. they will need another page… this list is a list of names of Black people who have died south of this ‘border,’ so you might almost want to say this list is not Comodo – i dare you… this is a piece that will go on for a while till you feel as paralyzed as i continue to be.”

Her last verse is poignant: “i look at the ocean / it breathes loudly / i stare at the ocean and wonder / when will i feel alive”
When Meg met Greg

How two sisters came together to write a series of books for children with reading difficulties.

Meg and Greg: Frank and the Skunk by Elspeth Rae and Rowena Rae; illustrated by Elisa Gutiérrez

(Orra $14.95)

When Meg met Greg: Frank and the Skunk by Elspeth Rae and Rowena Rae; illustrated by Elisa Gutiérrez

(Orra $14.95)

Elspeth Rae and Rowena Rae on Pender Island in 2019 (above) and in 1980 (top right).

“Going on holiday for two weeks usually meant bringing along a separate suitcase dedicated to books” says Rowena. While Elspeth and their father loved books and stories too, they found reading more challenging. Elspeth enjoyed being read to, and used to lug cassette-taped books around before the days of Audible.com.

Eventually, at the age of eight, Elspeth was diagnosed with dyslexia, which led to her receiving Orton-Gillingham instruction during her school years, an approach developed by Samuel Torrey Orton (1879–1948) and Anna Gillingham (1878–1963) for teaching literacy to those for whom reading, writing, and spelling does not come easily.

“Our father was never diagnosed, probably because testing wasn’t prevalent in the 1930s when he was a child,” says Rowena. “But I remember him saying that his mother read his medical textbooks out loud to him in university.”

But their father did eventually become a confident reader and he went on to write for his job. “He always had reading material in his back pocket, usually a news magazine,” says Rowena. “Both of our parents wrote extensively in their healthcare careers and our father continued to write articles and stories throughout his retirement, virtually until the day he died.”

Elspeth went on to earn a B.Ed. from Simon Fraser University and become a certified Orton-Gillingham teacher for children with dyslexia and other language-learning difficulties in Vancouver.

Rowena worked as a biologist in Canada and New Zealand before becoming a Victoria-based freelance writer, editor and children’s author of both fiction and non-fiction. It was Elspeth who had the idea to write books for struggling readers after she became frustrated with the books available for her students. She decided that writing her own stories was the best solution for meeting her students’ needs.

As Rowena already had experience writing books, Elspeth approached her with the idea to work collaboratively on books for special needs children. They spent nearly three years developing their concept, writing stories, testing them with students, and revising the concept, guiding principles, text and design. The final result was a book with graphic stories featuring the characters Meg and Greg, two ten-year-old best friends.

The stories begin at the stage where a child reader recognizes the individual letters of the alphabet and knows their most common sounds (all the basic consonant sounds, including consonant blends, and the short vowel sounds). The plan was for a series of books such that each story introduces one letter combination or phonogram (like th or ck) in a particular sequence derived from Orton-Gillingham.

“We initially submitted a book proposal to half a dozen Canadian and U.S. publishers,” says Rowena. “We received rejections across the board, but several of the publishers replied to us with encouraging comments about our book concept. We then decided to self-publish.”

They teamed up with Vancouver-based illustrator Elisa Gutiérrez who brought our stories to life on the page,” says Elspeth. “After a learning about book production, we launched our first book, A Duck in a Sock, in 2017. We got a phenomenal response from teachers, parents and students.

“One eight-year-old boy told us he loved the stories so much that he slept with the book under his pillow; and another girl cabled the book all around Europe on a family vacation.

“With this type of response, we connected with Liz Kemp, a fiction editor at Orca Book Publishers, and signed a contract for Orca to reprint the first book and then to continue the book series with three additional titles.”

Rowena and Elspeth have followed up their first book with the publication of Meg and Greg: Frank and the Skunk (Orca $14.95), in which Meg and Greg go to a summer camp and have a run-in with a skunk, sing a silly song about a king, go on a canoe trip that has one glitch after another, and make a mess in the lodge with a fresh batch of fudge. These words were chosen as they focus on the phonograms: nk, ng, tch and dge.

More books are already being planned in the Meg and Greg series. All are for shared reading between a child who is learning to read and a more experienced reader. The latter could be a teacher, tutor, reading volunteer, parent, grandparent, buddy reader or even a sibling. Shared reading means the stories have text at different levels of difficulty and this allows the stories to be more complex and more likely to interest an older child, while still giving a learning reader a chance to read part of the story.

Other “dyslexia-friendly” design elements in the Meg and Greg books include shaded paper to cut down on contrast, a font that mimics printed letters, extra spacing between words and lines, and illustration labels printed mainly in lowercase letters.

The stories have graphic novel/comic book elements as such features are popular with children. Book three in the series is in production and will be available in fall 2021. Rowena and Elspeth are currently writing book four.

“We have ideas about future books both in the Meg and Greg series and possibly for a “prequel” series for readers who are at the stage of learning the basic sounds of the individual letters of the alphabet,” says Elspeth. “Apart from the gratification of creating books that are making a real difference for many kids and their families, the best thing about the two of us working together is how much closer it’s brought us. We’ve always been close as friends and sisters but now we’re business partners and co-authors as well, and this has been truly phenomenal.”

978-1-4598249-3-5

Meg and Greg: Frank and the Skunk by Elspeth Rae and Rowena Rae; illustrated by Elisa Gutiérrez

(Orra $14.95)
Look up, way up

Robert Heidbreder turns his gaze to the sky and what’s up there

Catch the Sky by Robert Heidbreder with illustrations by Emily Dove (Greystone Kids $22.95)

AGES 3-8

Dragonsflies, butterflies and bees. Kites, balloons and helicopters. Stars and fireworks in the night sky. These are the wonders that children’s poet Robert Heidbreder finds when he looks upwards. His picture book Catch the Sky is full of pocket poems to these delights. It’s his way of celebrating nature with children around the world.

Heidbreder’s morning starts with the poem, Sunrise: Rosy, red arms / caress the sky, / smiling sun / waving HI!

He carries on through the seasons, starting with autumn when the wind blows and leaves fall; then winter when the snow flies and northern lights swirl; to summer when hot air balloons float; and spring when rain sprinkles, drizzles and downpours.

Heidbreder covers many topics for many countries, from the cold north to the hot equator. He rejoices in the earth’s creatures—fireflies, bats, squirrels, crows, trees and leaves, and elephants as imagined in clouds.

This diverse book ends with an invitation for good dreams in Good Night, Sky: Draw the curtains. / Into warm beds. / Sky’s treasures we shared / will dance in our head.

Heidbreder taught school for thirty years in Vancouver where he developed his love of wordplay. In 2002, he was awarded the Prime Minister’s Award for Teaching Excellence. His books have won many prizes including I Wished for a Unicorn (Kids Can, 2000) and Crocodiles Play (Tradewind, 2008).

9781771646314

by Sara de Waal
art by Erika Medina

Harry the hare & her beastly guest

Imagine being an only child and then your mom has septuplets? Easy to do if you are a hare — and a character in one of Bill Richardson’s books for kids.

Richardson’s new heroine, Harriet, nicknamed Harry, is pleasantly surprised with the arrival of seven new brothers and sisters. But it’s not all fun and games and one day when Harry takes her younger siblings for an outing, back home the parent hares are killed and eaten by a coyote marauding as an encyclopedia salesman.

Left on their own, the orphaned hare children must now learn to earn a living. They decide to run a bed & breakfast in Richardson’s Hare B&B. Of course, they advertise by twitter and their good bird friends are soon partaking in the hospitality. Other guests arrive, including a skunk and a squirrel.

Then an odd-looking, rather uncomely rabbit books a night at the Hare B&B. Harry is suspicious. Peeking through the unseemly guest’s keyhole, the smelly “rabbit” is revealed to be the coyote up to his old tricks by hiding in costume so that he can launch a surprise attack on them too.

Harry rallies her siblings and together they make a plan to save themselves. Will it work?

978-1927917381

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“De Waal’s rhythmic prose and cyclical storytelling are delightful, and Medina’s energetic characters and warm palette are charming. ... A cute meet-cute.” — Kirkus Reviews
gold and platinum albums, and been
enshrined in several Halls of Fame.

Francesca Ekwuyasi’s debut novel
Butter Honey Pig Bread (Arsenal
$23.95) about a multi-continental
family of Nigerian women dealing with
unspeakable tragedy, was longlisted
for the 2020 Scotiabank Giller Prize.
It also made this year’s CBC Canada
Reads list of finalists.

Having written a memoir about be-
ing the first confirmed case of a B.C.
resident with Lyme’s Disease, Van-
essa Farnsworth has produced two
more titles, including the recently
released The Haweaters (Signature
Editions $18.95) about a real-life
double murder in Ontario that pitted a
wealthy landowner against his impov-
erished neighbour, generating gossip,
innuendo and scandal.

A writer of Cree ancestry,
Michelle Good has written
Five Little Indians (Harper Perennial
$22.99), a novel about a group of residential
school survivors released from
their “detention,” barely out of
childhood. With no money or sup-
port, the five end up in the seedy
world of Vancouver’s Downtown
Eastside where their paths cross
and re-cross over decades as they
help each other reinvent their lives.

Elaine Alec’s Calling My Spirit Back
(Tellwell $22.99) addresses her views
on the current period of Canadian
history during which she says “con-
versations about systemic racism and
abuse of women and the historical and
ongoing trauma of First Nations are
finally resonating beyond their typical
boundaries.”

Francesca Ekwuyasi, Vanessa
Farnsworth, Michelle Good, Janie Chang,
Elaine Alec, Francesca
Ekwuyasi.

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Eastside where their paths cross
and re-cross over decades as they
help each other reinvent their lives.

Benjamin Isitt co-authored with: Ravi
Malhotra, Able to Lead: Disablement,
Radicalism, and the Political Life of
E.T. Kingsley (UBC Press $89.95) due
out in May. New York-born, double am-
putee E.T. Kingsley brought his radical
socialism across the border when he
founded the Social-
ist Party of Canada.
Kingsley went on to shape a generation
of Canadian leftists during a time when
it was rare for dis-
abled men to lead.

Grandfathered: Dispatches from the Trenches of Modern Grandparen-
thood (Heritage $22.95) chronicles
retired newsman, Ian Haysom’s ad-
ventures with his grandkids. Through funny anecdotes, Haysom explores the unexpected lessons they have taught
him (and those he has attempted to
 teach them). Haysom also investigates the changing role of grandparents in
the 21st century.

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socialism across the border when he
founded the Social-
ist Party of Canada.
Kingsley went on to shape a generation
of Canadian leftists during a time when
it was rare for dis-
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**Information:** subTerrain.ca

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**Who’s Who**

**J Is for Jarman**

In Czech Techno & Other Stories of Music (Anvil 2018) Mark Jarman’s five tales are built around music and travel. His subjects range from a tour through Napoli to a walk on Victoria’s inner harbor; music from ‘gentle Tunisian techno’ to tunes from Steppenwolf or The Youngbloods wafting from a car radio. Woven into each story are ever-present matters of the human heart.

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**K Is for Kawatski**

Deanna Kawatski’s eighth book, Magda’s Odyssey (Grapevine Collective $21.95) is a YA novel about a 14-year-old girl who sets off across Canada to find the twin sister she was separated from at birth. Magda hitchhikes, treks through mountains, eludes the law and even murderous thugs as she heads east with her faithful dog, Sky. Kawatski’s Clara and Me, The Story of an Unexpected Friendship (Whitecap, 1996) became a Book of the Month selection in 1994.

---

**L Is for LeBlanc**

Poet Curtis LeBlanc is unusual in that he not only writes for artsy journals, he is an occasional hockey columnist for NHL Numbers. His second poetry collection Birding in the Glass Age of Isolation (Nightwood $18.95) explores the implications of social illness and asks questions about the effects of anxiety on behavior.

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**M Is for McIlwraiths**

The McIlwraiths of Scotland emigrated to North America and Australia in the 1850s, becoming politicians, entrepreneurs and scholars. Now UBC professor emerita, Eva-Marie Kröller has combed through their letters, diaries and other sources to find how generations of McIlwraiths described being subjects of the British Empire and how that changed over time, in Writing the Empire: The McIlwraiths, 1853 – 1948 (UTP $82.50) with illustrations and a map.

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**Rahela Nayebzadah**

Monster Child (Wolsak & Wynn $20), a novel by Rahela Nayebzadah introduces three children of Afghan immigrants trying to find their way in a mostly uncaring society. A sexual assault causes tragedy and mayhem for the family. Nayebzadah’s first title Jeegareh Ma was an autobiographical novel based on her family’s migration to Canada from Afghanistan.

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**O Is for O’Brien**

Through Post-Atomic Eyes (MQUP $44.95) co-edited by UBC professor emeritus of art history, John O’Brien and Claudette Lauzon, assistant professor of contemporary art history, deals with the answers that photography and contemporary art offer to the question of what it means to live in a post-atomic world.

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**About the Image:**

The image contains a collection of text excerpts from various articles and reviews, including book reviews and literary awards information. The text is arranged in a structured manner, with headings and subheadings clearly marked, making it easy to read and navigate. The content covers a range of topics, from literary reviews and awards to personal narratives and historical accounts. The text is accompanied by images of authors and book covers, enhancing the visual appeal of the document. The overall layout is clean and organized, ensuring that the information is presented in a clear and accessible manner.
WHO’S WHO

P IS FOR PERRIN

Benjamin Perrin takes a penetrating look at opioid drug addiction in Overdose: Heartbreak and Hope in Canada’s Opioid Crisis (Viking $32). He interviews those working on the frontlines such as undercover police officers, healthcare professionals and drug users. His findings challenge many assumptions about the crisis.

9780300237872

Q IS FOR QUALICUM

From Qualicum to Campbell River, never-before-seen historical photos showcase the wilderness areas of Vancouver Island’s Comox Valley as it was hiked, skied and enjoyed by new settlers in the early 1900s in Step into Wilderness: A Pictorial History of Outdoor Exploration in and around the Comox Valley (Harbour $39.95). Included is a photo of two men wearing nothing but kelp, cavorting at the beach.

9781551778907

R IS FOR RUSS WILLMS

Russ Willms has written and illustrated the picture book Elephants Do Not Belong in Trees (Orca $19.95) about an elephant who wants to live in a big bushy tree despite objections from the current residents: Bird, Squirrel and Monkey. For children aged 3-5, the story is ultimately about acceptance, making friends and being different.

9781551778907

S IS FOR SCHAUCh

After 20 years working in global investment, mountaineer Michael Schaub turned his attention to international mentorship and girls’ education in Nepal, which he describes in A Story of Karma: Finding Love and Truth in the Lost Valley of the Himalaya (RMB $25), due out in September. Schaub calls Spanish his “base camp.”

9781771604673

T IS FOR THOMAS-PETER

B.A. Thomas-Peter’s debut novel, The Kissing Fence (Caithlin $24.95) begins with two separate stories about Doukhobors dealing with their faith: two Russian children who rely on their Doukhobor teachings to get them through a cruel 1950s residential school; and a corrupt businessman who rejects his Doukhobor heritage until a cycling accident sends his life into turmoil.

9781771605227

W IS FOR WIGMORE

Gillian Wigmore explores the lives of rural veterans in three novels. Described as a cross between James Herriot and a “Canadian gothic sensibility,” Wigmore writes of the lives and loves of people in places as varied as small-town B.C., southern France and Fiji.

9780774865555

X IS FOR XI

Exporting Virtue? China’s International Human Rights Activism in the Age of Xi Jinping (UBC Press $89.95) by UBC law professor, Pitman B. Potter explores the efforts by China to export its human rights standards that, although couched in terms of virtue, are in practice authoritarian and oppressive.

9780771465555

Y IS FOR YU

Henry Yu has compiled the coffee table book Journeys of Hope: Challenging Discrimination & Building on Vancouver Chinatown’s Legacies (UBC Initiative for Student Teaching and Research in Chinese Canadian Studies $50) that tells the story of Vancouver’s early Chinese immigrants and their fight for justice against the City of Vancouver, which historically supported, and legislated for, white supremacy. Yu also outlines steps for reconciliation.

9780093659317

Z IS FOR ZARANKIN

The surprising bestseller: Field Notes from an Unintentional Birder (D&M $24.95) by Julia Zarankin is her story of finding meaning through birds when she turned to birdwatching after a divorce at the age of 35. Zarankin’s writing has appeared in Audubon, Canadian Geographic, The Walrus, Prism International, Antioch Review, Birding Magazine, and The Globe and Mail. She was shortlisted for the CBC Short Story Prize (2020).

9781771605244
Julie Flett
Discover all the ways that kids and animals play!
978-1-77164-607-9

Shoshana Chaim & Lori Joy Smith
Breathe in, breathe out—a book about mindfulness for kids.
978-1-77164-637-6

Beryl Young & Sakika Kikuchi
Fall asleep with this gentle story of a mother whale and her baby.
978-1-77164-573-7

Alfredo Soderguit
When the capybaras invade the chicken coop... can the chickens learn to live alongside their hairy new neighbours?
978-1-77164-782-3

Remy Marion
What's it like, being a bear? This book of science and natural history reveals the secret life of an iconic animal.
978-1-77164-698-7

Marc Hamer
A country gardener recounts his daily routine in this understated yet evocative memoir.
978-1-77164-768-7

Mai Thi Nguyen Kim
Brush up on your chemistry with this swift and fun read by a leading science YouTuber.
978-1-77164-748-9

Luke Turner
A young man investigates a salacious family rumor and his own coming-of-age in this riveting memoir set in London’s Epping Forest.
978-1-77164-722-9

Have a SUPER March Break with SIMON AND CHESTER, SUPER DETECTIVES!

Keep your kids laughing with this hilarious new graphic novel series for ages 6-9 from Kelowna’s own CALE ATKINSON
David Robinson

January 5, 1947 - November 24, 2020

W ith the encourage-ment of an exceptional English teacher named Harry Locke (also a formative influ-ence on several B.C. authors) the precocious David Robinson co-founded a literary magazine called David in 1963 while he was a student at Magee High School in Van-couver. It operated from his parents’ garage. In 1967, he had published Talon’s first book, flowered, by Ron Belford, while attending the University of British Columbia. In the same year, the first book of The Georgia Straight was produced by a collective. Similarly, Talonbooks emerged in conjunction with bill blissett’s bellowingpress and Jim Brown’s Very Stone House. Although he was the son of Lewis Robinson, head of UBC’s geography department (1953-1968), David was motivated by his contacts within the fields of literature and theatre. More importantly, he not only esteemed and respected artists, stroking their egos to gain their allegiance to his imprint, he was a sublime adjudicator of talent. He prided himself on his judgments as a literary impresario—and he proceeded to excel at publishing the country’s foremost playwrights, taking particular care with the design of their books. For this activity alone, he merits a place in Canada’s Publishing Hall of Fame, this activity alone, he merits a place in Canada’s Publishing Hall of Fame, simply put, David Robinson was an able and resourceful professional book publishers, in terms of cultural impact. The publishing company he founded now has more than 500 titles in print. Among the other authors he personally published were Marie-Claire Blais, George Bow- ering, Frank Davey, Roy Kiyooka, Mary Meigs, Vicki Rule and Audrey Thomas. In various ways, he was close to all of them. “I am so glad to have been in his world and to have had his stylish figure in mine,” says George Bowering. “David’s star shone brightly but briefly in publishing,” says veteran B.C. publisher and author Howard White. “I met David at UBC in 1965 before either of us published a book and remember him as a theatrical type always gushing about his latest passion. He was very conscious of literary fashion and eager to be part of the in-crowd, or what he described as the in-crowd. It was only when he teamed up with a local poet named Jim Brown that he got seri-ously involved in publishing. David turned out to be very good at convincing established writers like Jane Rule and Audrey Thomas to take a chance on a fledgling enterpries, and he immediately lacked the skill or interest to create a viable business. Ultimately, he had to be rescued by Karl Siegler and Mary Schendlinger, who put Talonbooks on course to become what it is today. But he was there in the early days of the West Coast scene and has remained as a cultural pioneer.” David Robinson is survived by his wife, Zonda Nellis; his daughter Alexandra Robinson and son-in-law Madhavan Sridhar, and his two grand-children Maya and Veda.

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Dukesang Wong

is all right

Thank you for the compelling review of The Diary of Dukesang Wong (as in I will now buy the book). I clipped it from BC BookWorld (Winter 2020) and put it inside my copy of Tales from Gold Mountain. I read this book aloud, along with Ghost Train, to the Grade 7 class at our school almost every year.

According to historical notes I studied inside Ghost Train, more than four men died for every mile of track laid on the CPR’s western section. Over 600 men died in total, working for less than half the salary of non-Chinese workers. Makes for good discussion in a class of 12 and 13-year-old students.

With sincere thanks for all you do to promote B.C. literature and provoke interest in our culture and history.

Susan Yates
Gabriola Island

Town Fool adventures

I was a friend of Kim Folks [The Fool’s Journey, BC BookWorld winter, 2020] and his wife Wendy from 1968 – 69. With Wendy as secretary, we formed the Save the Beach committee that organized a “Nude-in.” We stopped the dumping of landfill on the beach, which resulted in Canada’s first and largest optional clothing or nude beach. I also drove my Volkswagen camper with all The Fool’s company to recreate the Battle of Hastings by dancing, and giving out oranges and joints at Hastings and Carroll. Together, we organized many other 1960s “happenings”.

David Boehm
Gabriola Island

Grateful authors

Once again, thanks for taking an interest in my work and giving Notice a strong review in the winter issue of BC BookWorld. Including Hunter S. Thompson, George Orwell, Kafka in your review—not bad, not bad at all.

Jan Naylor
Pemberton

Bliss and icing

I always look forward to reading the latest issue of BC BookWorld. It’s like receiving a Christmas present each time your magazine is published. Following a move from the Lower Mainland, now more than ever, I look forward to picking up a copy of your newspaper to keep me apprised of new information with every issue.

Janice Cole
Pemberton

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