YOUR FREE GUIDE TO BOOKS & AUTHORS

CHARLOTTE GILL

Uncovering secrets in a mixed-race family memoir while ending a 20-year silence with her father.

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GRANT BUDAY
Women in colonial Victoria. P 17

HIGH SEAS DANGER
Early European sailors & the first woman to circumnavigate the earth on a sailing ship. P 20-21

PERRY BULWER
20 years in the Child of God cult. P 9

JASON JOBIN
Grit, humour and incurable cancer. P 12
The idea for Doppelganger started with Klein’s experience of being frequently mistaken for her own doppleganger, US author Naomi Wolf. It was disconcerting for Klein because Wolf had converted from her nineties feminist icon role to becoming a promoter of right-wing conspiracy theories and alliances, and a frequent pundit on Fox News. “This book is a departure for me,” Klein says. “It’s more personal, more experimental, and while it’s not about my doppleganger in any traditional sense, it does explore how it feels like to watch one’s identity slip away in the digital ether, an experience many of us will have in the age of AI. Mostly, it’s an attempt to grapple with the wildness of right now— with conspiracy cultures surging and strange left-right alliances emerging and nobody seeming to be quite what they seem. Doppelganger is my attempt at a usable map of our moment in history—but to make it, I had to get lost a few times.”

For good measure, Lee also writes about one of his own bad Christmas tales. When he thinks his mother and her boyfriend are off on a vacation he leaves the comforts of a white, middle-class neighbourhood in Vancouver and a Dakelh region of BC. But James is a Cree boy living in a potently poor, socio-cultural condition. His Dakelh culture, James struggles with disruption and abuse. While he finds a Dakelh culture, James struggles with disruption and abuse. While he finds

The story revolves around a Nehiyaw (Cree) man named James, who leaves the comforts of a white, middle-class neighbourhood in Vancouver to reconnect with his roots when he accepts a job as a school principal in a Dakeulh region of BC. But James is unprepared for the poverty, cultural disruption and abuse. While he finds some of what he is looking for in the Dakelh culture, James struggles with some of his own past demons. His resolution involves a compromise that might or might not work.

We gratefully acknowledge the unobtrusive support of the Canada Council for the Arts, a federal agency of the Government of Canada, and the Government of British Columbia through its CreativeBC, a provincial partner since 2014.

W what’s life like on a typi- cally “Indian Reservation” in Canada? That’s what Darrel J. McLeod set out to depict in his debut novel A Season in Chezhg’un (D&M 224.95) set in 1989. Chezhg’sun is a fictional north- ern BC community of 250 people in what McLeod calls “Indian land.” Known for winning the Governor General’s Literary Award for his first memoir Mamaskatch (D&M, 2018), which McLeod followed up with another memoir, Peyakow (D&M, 2021), his move into fiction was driven by a desire to “get to wilder and unfath- omed places,” he says.

Darrel J. McLeod lives in Sooke and divides his time between writing and singing in a jazz band.

IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Two years after joining UBC as an associate professor in 2021, New York Times bestselling author and activist Naomi Klein has published Doppelganger: A Trip into the Mirror World (Knopf Canada 39.95). Klein’s new treatise veers from her usual Big Idea books to blending memoir with political and cultural insights as she delves into what she calls the “mirror world”—our destabilized present that is ripe with doubles and confusion; where far right movements playact solidarity with the working class, A-generated content blurs the line between genuine and spurious; and so many people are projecting their own carefully curated digital doubles into the social media sphere. Klein unravels it all.

Author Naomi Klein. Credit: Ken Reid, Acculogix Consultants.

It was just so horrible and beautiful,” he says. Then when more blue yule tide stories kept coming his way, Lee admits to becoming a collector of these “woeful true-life tales.” 

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A Season in Chezhg’un: A Promising Young Native’s Struggle with Addiction and Culture (Macmillan Canada 2018)

A Season in Chezhg’un is a fictional novel by Darrel J. McLeod, depicting a story of life on an Indian reserve in British Columbia, Canada. The novel highlights the challenges faced by a young man named James, who struggles with addiction and culture clashes. The book was shortlisted for the Governor General’s Literary Award in 2018.

The Winter Market Gardener: A Lane Winslow Mystery (Talonbooks 19.95)

The Winter Market Gardener is a mystery novel by Liam Belson and Dylan MacPhee, set in a small town in British Columbia. The book follows the adventures of Lane Winslow, a market gardener who becomes embroiled in a murder mystery. The novel is part of the successful grower’s series and explores the world of urban farming and community gardening.

Ho Ho Humbug

Ho Ho Humbug is a collection of Christmas stories by various authors, including JJ Lee, who has previously been shortlisted for the Governor General’s Literary Award, Hilary Weston and Charles Taylor prizes for non-fiction. The stories in the collection explore the holiday season through different perspectives, including those of Native Americans, First Nations, and urban dwellers.

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Francine McCabe
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A heady skill quilting
when she moved to a rural coastal area
in the late seventies, Kristin Miller not only
exhibited her work at art galleries, she
bartered quilts like they were money, and
drew together large networks of people
through communal quilting projects.
Her first glimpse of North Coast
nautical life was in 1977 when Miller
visited Function Junction on the Prince
Rupert waterfront, which she describes
as “a dilapidated tugboat base taken
over by sea-struck hippies” in her memoir,
Knots and Stitches: Community Quilts Across the Harbour
(Caetlin $26).

FASHION

“The wool blanket draped over the couch,
the cashmere sweater warming your shoulders, the cotton bedding you’ll climb into
tonight—they all started from the ground somewhere,” writes fibre artist Francine McCabe of Chemainus in Fleece and Fibre: Textile Producers of Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands (Heritage House $34.95). “Do you ever wonder where the fibre grew and how it was processed to become the useful item it is today?” McCabe asks, a question she grappled with while trying to avoid the damaging environmental footprint of micro fibres and “fast fashion” (cheaply made clothing from synthetic materials, usually made overseas) before researching the small-scale fibre producers within a day’s drive of her home.

McCabe discovered over 40 plant and animal fibre producers, including: Flax to Linen (Victoria), Rabbit Hole Farm (Cowichan Bay), Spring Valley Farms (Deermond Island), Islandia Farm (Gabriola Island), Swallows Keep (Galiano Island), Yellow Point Farm (Ladysmith), Mountain View Icelandics (Merville), Up A Creek Farm & Fibre Mill (Qualicum), and Millstream Miniature Llamas (Victoria).

Clearly, we have an abundance of raw fibre in BC. The problem, maintains McCabe, is that Vancouver Island used to have several small family-run fibre processing mills but no longer does. That is about to change as McCabe and others are working to build a regional textile economy—called a fibreshed. For wool lovers, anyone wanting to meet and support members of BC’s fibre farming community and localize their wardrobes, or for those who love the beauty and integrity of rural life, this book is for you.

Victoria Book Prizes

Confections with Keith: From the Journals of Vita Glass (Biblioasis $22.95), is a novel about a mother and writer going through a midlife crisis at the same time as her husband, which she humourously chronicles in her journal, has earned Pauline Holdstock the City of Victoria Butler Book Prize. The winner of the City of Victoria Children’s Book Prize was illustrator Julie McLaughlin for Little Pine Cone: Wildfires and the Natural World (Orca $21.95) featuring detailed art that integrates science with storytelling by meteorologist, Johanna Wagstaft.

The Victoria Book Prizes started 20 years ago with the City of Victoria Butler Book Prize that is awarded to a Greater Victoria author for the best book in the categories of fiction, non-fiction or poetry. The City of Victoria Children’s Book Prize recognizes exceptional literature for children and young adults and is awarded to a Greater Victoria author or illustrator. The prize was established in 2008 by the late Mel Bolen of Bolen Books.
The Hul’q’umi’num’ language is spoken by many First Nations on the east coast of Vancouver Island and along the Salish Sea in British Columbia. The language is guttural, precise and fun once you get the hang of a few sounds not used in English. My auntie Sally Norris used to say that if you didn’t grow up speaking the language, you might not be able to say some of the words properly, “but that should never stop you from trying!” Hul’q’umi’num’ is meant to be spoken, shared and experienced as part of a broader cultural journey—a journey that brings you closer to those who came before you, those who discovered what there was on our land and how to talk about it.

In reading this book and doing your best to learn the new-to-you sounds of the Hul’q’umi’num’ language, you are starting your own journey toward understanding how knowing something’s name connects you deeply with that thing. Thuqi’ swims the oceans and rivers to help feed us, and she also shows us ways that we can be better in our own lives. We can face our fears, be kind to those around us and remember that having family and friends to support us makes life easier. Knowing the names of Thuqi’ and Tumus will help you meaningfully talk about them and the lessons they teach us with those in your life.

Remember what Auntie Sally says: You won’t get everything right, but that’s okay. What’s important is connecting to the story and passing on what you learn to those around you. Huy tseep q’u—thank you to each and every one of you.

—Andrea Fritz

“A heartwarming tale that encourages readers to persevere despite uncertainty...A gem of Coast Salish storytelling” —Kirkus Reviews

Author and artist Andrea Fritz uses Indigenous storytelling techniques and art to share the culture and language of the Hul’q’umi’num’-speaking Peoples

Let kindness and bravery lead the way

More books by Indigenous storytellers
Charlotte Gill’s memoir details growing up as the daughter of a Jat Sikh father and an English Catholic mother and, after a long painful separation, reconnecting with her father and her biracial identity.

This led to a disconnect for Gill: “I lived semi-gratefully in the gap, if not purely Caucasian, then sufficiently off-white to be lumped in with my peers in the majority. I didn’t protest or correct.” Gill describes sun tanning with her white friends, applying sunscreen needlessly. “It took me quite a while to realize that I wasn’t a white girl, at least not all the way through—a painfully slow epiphany that wouldn’t resolve for quite some time, if it ever did at all.”

Undercurrents are unspoken and curious children will seek truths in their own way. “We destroyed our things almost as quickly as they came in the door,” says Gill. “We cut them to ribbons, hungry to understand how things worked beneath the surface.” Similarly, children will also express discord in one way or another, and Gill and her siblings were no different. “We ripped heads off dolls and bashed our Rubik’s cubes with hammer handles. These objects were inadequate substitutes for the things they were meant to make up for,” writes Gill. “We maced our belongings as a form of protest, a response to something brewing in our house like a bad ferment, if only we had the words to describe it.”

Gill grows up to claim those words, and in this memoir, she includes details that she later revisits to get a clearer view; a watchful tone is a constant presence in her writing. As a young girl, Gill notes her father’s weekends away in passing. These absences, however, are made concrete when she later describes her mother sitting through the family credit card statements. Secrets are uncovered and her parents separate; after their divorce, a deepening silence emerges between Gill and her father.

Her own path bends firmly away from his expectations—pursuing degrees in writing, not wanting to “see colour” can be a convenient conditioning, to sidestep what’s the point of lamenting one’s identity? That’s the main subject of the vignette and a broader scope is introduced when Gill gives a concise history of how the partition of India has affected Indian diaspora.

In the sixth chapter, a broader scope is introduced when Gill gives a concise history of how the partition of India has had intergenerational impacts on her family. Gill describes sun tanning with her white friends, applying sunscreen needlessly.

Charlotte Gill, father and brother: “In my family, we seldom talked about race.”

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Socks and mittens and licks and clicks, Foxes loves everything in his box. But when he realizes he can no longer fit inside, Fox decides he must take action! He discovers the warmth he feels when he gives his best friend a hug. This heartwarming story reminds us happiness is not found in the accumulation of stuff, but in the joy of giving and the people we love.

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How a BC teen was ensnared for 20 years by the infamous Child of God cult.

Perry Bulwer in his cult days.

MISGUIDED: My Jesus Freak Life in a Doomsday Cult by Perry Bulwer (New Star $26)

By John Moore

Perry Bulwer's account of his 20 years as a "Flower Power freak" in an apocalyptic cult should be required reading for those whose children are undergoing the baptism of fire euphemistically described as "young adulthood" in parenting manuals.

The combination of adult emotions and ideas with an almost total lack of adult experience is as pleasant to be around as a carafe of nitroglycerin.

So when an idealistic yet listless, unmotivated, young person comes home one day, no longer unpredictable but not angry but smiling serenely as if they've come through the rapids and hit calm water, parents are inclined to heave huge sighs of relief. Unfortunately, it may mean your child has either discovered heroin or been "fished" by a cult and you should seek help from mental health professionals at once.

Like many late boomers, Bulwer missed the 1967 Summer of Love and got stuck with the hand-me-down, tie-dyed, Be-In t-shirt. Growing up in a small Vancouver Island city, Port Alberni, where a stable future meant a good job at the mill, Bulwer was sixteen in 1972 and the vaguely inclusive idealisms of universal love, peace and goodwill of the Now Generation were starting to spin into a hedonistic crash dive of careless sex, harder drugs and mindless heavy metal music.

Despite his Catholic upbringing and a secondary education that failed to provide him with critical thinking skills, Bulwer was intelligent enough to realize Flower Power had been wilting in something much uglier than an intellectual hangover. Tattered copies of I Ching, the faux-Tibetan fictions of spiritual hangover. Tattered copies of I Ching, the faux-Tibetan fictions of spiritual hangover. Tattered copies of I Ching, the faux-Tibetan fictions of spiritual hangover.

BORN IN 1959, DAVID BERG HAD BEEN INFLUENCED with that subculture as it evolved from gypsy tents to regular Sunday morning radio broadcasts to televised "crusades" that filled stadiums where self-appointed apostles of God smashed shills planted in audiences on the forehead to cast out demons and demand they throw away their crutches and rise from their wheelchairs and praise Jesus. It was the age of bogus faith-healing theaters of mouth-sapping frauds like Jimmy Swaggart (subject of three scandals involving prostitutes in the late 1980s and early 90s), and Oral Roberts (who parlayed his tax-free status into a financial empire including a university).

Disgruntling the risks of celebrity (no doubt he'd seen the film Elmer Gantry), David Berg chose the darker path of the reclusive prophet. Despite being in his forties in the 1960s, he sensed his moment had come. The most numerous and potentially wealthiest generation of the 20th century were waking up from the Swinging Sixties/Now Generation/Flower Power party with an apocalyptic spiritual hangover. Tattered copies of I Ching, the faux-Tibetan fictions of spiritual hangover. Tattered copies of I Ching, the faux-Tibetan fictions of spiritual hangover. Tattered copies of I Ching, the faux-Tibetan fictions of spiritual hangover.

DESPITE HAVING WASTED TWENTY of the best years of his life, Perry Bulwer was lucky. He had just enough of the right stuff to walk away at the age of 36. Smart enough to grasp Socrates' assertion that the first step toward wisdom is to realize you know nothing, he started educating himself at the library and developing critical thinking that might have truly saved him twenty years earlier. He went to university and became a lawyer advocating for cult survivors, especially children born and raised within cults.

Numerous accounts by survivors of the Children of God have been published, some more lurid than others. Bulwer's mostly avoids sensationalism to deliver a true account of the spiritual journey of a lonely soul who took the wrong path but had the sense to recognize it, turn around and survive the long hard walk back to sanity.

John Moore writes and rants from Garibaldi Highlands.
Cold out? Five good reasons to stay inside!

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Svetlana Ischenko

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— STELLA HARVEY, author of Finding Callidora

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Make your holidays picture (book) perfect!
It didn’t come as a big surprise that the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize winner was Billy-Ray Belcourt’s A Minor Chorus (Hamish Hamilton) as Belcourt seems to have been making a sweep of so many awards of late. He was modest in his response, expressing hope that his work might serve to “intervene” towards Reconciliation.

The Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize was awarded to Otoniya J. Okot Binek’s A is for Acholi (Wolsak & Wynn) a book the jury praised for being “ambitious, playful, funny and at times oracular” with “...a quiet but confident feminism.” As Otoniya recently moved out of the province, the acceptance speech was given by her sister, Cecilia.

The third award announced, the Hubert Evans Non-Fiction Prize, provided one of the saddest moments of the evening, as Karen Bakker, author of the winning title, The Sounds of Life: How Digital Technology Is Bringing Us Closer to the Worlds of Animals and Plants (Princeton University Press) had died over the summer. Her husband, Phillippe LeBillon offered a beautiful speech, describing his wife as a scientist and poet who explored the world of sound, whether the songs of whales or the peeps of high-flying bats.

He announced that the second book in the proposed trilogy, Guia’s Web: How Digital Environmentalism Can Combat Climate Change, Restore Biodiversity, Cultivate Empathy, and Regenerate the Earth (The MIT Press), would still be published, but bemoaned the fact that the third volume will not see the light of day.

The book that won the Roderick Haig-Brown Regional Prize was Kwandrû (Conundrum), a collection about Dene and Arctic Peoples by Cole Pauls who is a comic artist, illustrator and printmaker. Pauls was unable to attend, but sent thanks to many, especially those who had translated his work.

Vancouver’s Rachel Hartman took the Sheila A. Egoff Children’s Literature Prize for In the Serpent’s Wake (Penguin Teen), a tale the jury called “A storm of a book, capable of breaking open our cherished labels and containers.” In her thanks, Hartman spoke of our collective “responsibility to the place where we live”—a theme that proved to echo over the course of the evening.

And then came the prize for pictures books, along with a dare from Jillian Christmas to shout out the name of our favourite such book from childhood—a wonderful exercise in the middle of a rich meal—to hear adults shouting out titles, so many of them sly ones.

Winner of the Christie Harris Illustrated Children’s Literature Prize was That’s My Sweater! (Scholastic) by Jessika von Innerebner who was unable to attend. However, educator Karen Hao read out a statement sent to her by the author. She got a good laugh when, in response to the author’s “Thanks to the kind soul who is reading these remarks” she burst in with her own, “You’re welcome!”

One of the newer awards is the Jim Deva Prize for Writing that Provokes. Deva was instrumental in leading the fight against censorship in BC, especially as it relates to sexual expression and identity. The winner, What a Mushroom Lives For: Matsutake and the Worlds They Make (Princeton University Press), by Michael J. Hathaway, a professor at SFU, caused the jury to remark that the book “…changed our understanding of our planet,” and “We’ll never look the same way at fungi again.”

When Hathaway spoke, he reminded us that “we’re breathing fungal spores.” Much to think about regarding a book that definitely provokes.

Winner of the Bill Duthie Booksellers’ Award was Namwaysut: We Are All One: A Pathway to Reconciliation (Page Two), which met with huge cheers even when it was only announced as a finalist. The author, Chief Robert Joseph got the biggest laugh of the night by saying, “Good thing I won. I’m not a good loser!” But beyond that, his words of wisdom may well be the ones that resonate the longest among those of us who heard him speak about the importance of story and truth.

That theme of Reconciliation carried on in words from Adeline Weber, Commissioner of the Yukon, and the Honourable Janet Austin, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia. Austin announced that the prolific Robin Stevens of Victoria was winner of this year’s Lieutenant Governor’s Award for Literary Excellence. Winner of the Yukon’s Borealis Prize was haloo writer and community activist, Katherine Munro (who writes as kjmunro).

The only element missing from the evening’s celebration was a public acknowledgment—a brief round of introductions, perhaps some applause—of the publishers who were in attendance.

For without them and their willingness to take on the work of authors, often unknowns, there’d be no need for an awards ceremony such as this, as there are many awards of late. He was modest in his response, expressing hope that his work might serve to “intervene” towards Reconciliation.

A room full of writers and publishers at the UBC Golf Clubhouse on September 26, most in their best finery—what an exciting place to be on a rainy Sunday evening. And with spoken-word poet Jillian Christmas as our enthusiastic emcee, we were ready to celebrate the 2023 BC & Yukon Book Prizes presentation gala.

Celebrating the BC publishing community at the BC Book Prizes.
by Sonja Pinto

The Wild Mandrake
by Jason Jobin (Dundurn $23.99)

“There’s just something to hospitals, like you’re living inside the walls of a house, and there is a family living in the actual house, and you hear them and see parts of their lives through old nail holes where paintings used to hang, and feel the vibrations of their steps, but they never realize you’re there.”

Jason Jobin

How Jason Jobin lives with (a bad case of) incurable cancer—some days with humour, other days with grit.

Jason Jobin earned an MFA in writing at UVic. His stories have been published in the Writers Trust/M&S Journey Prize anthology and he was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Prize in 2020.
“Jigsaws as metaphors, speak to our continual efforts to solve the miraculous puzzle of our own lives and to the questions these puzzles pose.”

—M.A.C. Farrant
(pictured with Bill Bovine, aka Bill Farrant, her son)

M.A.C. Farrant on how a jigsaw dropout became a Master Puzzler and how a herd of cows began wandering through her book.

MF: I came to my current interest in jigsaw puzzles as a jaded innocent. That one experience years before had killed my interest in them. Then, midway through the pandemic, friends loaned me two Wentworth Wooden puzzles, the elite of jigsaw puzzles with their “whimsy” pieces, inviting images, and smaller piece-count: 250, or 500. My friends thought the puzzles would help take my mind off case counts, death tolls, and variants. And they were right! Not only that, I enjoyed doing them.

So that is how it started, how jigsaw puzzles found me again. This curiosity and playfulness about jigsaw puzzles are what propelled me to write Jigsaw.

Now, I’ve become a happy assembler. I enjoy the fabulous sense of completion when I finish one. It’s called the “puzzler’s high,” I’m told.

BCBW: What is the most insightful thing you learned from puzzling?

MF: There are several:

Jigsaw puzzles are something we can control, unlike most of life, and most definitely, unlike time.


Friends had given Farrant and her husband a jigsaw puzzle during the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic to help cope with stress. “I wasn’t looking for them. But if a door opens, I always figure walk through it. You might end up in a closet, but you might also end up heading in a playful new direction, one you hadn’t considered before,” she adds. Farrant’s 93 short stories, inspired by her “puzzling,” are full of humour, irreverence and insights into the puzzle that is life.

If you want to know why there is a cow lounging on a sofa on the book jacket cover, read story #22, “With Reference to Cows.”

BC BookWorld: Was the Covid lockdown really the first time you attempted a jigsaw puzzle?

M.A.C. Farrant: No, the Covid puzzles weren’t the first. There was one other, an ill-fated jigsaw years ago of a bear holding a salmon. It was Christmas and I had a Christmas card image in my head of a happy family working together on a jigsaw puzzle over the holidays. When the kids saw the pile of unsorted pieces on the card table, they balked, then laughed and said: “No way, not ever!” Terry (my husband) and I carried on with the puzzle but managed to only piece the sky, the head of the fish and a few trees. By then it was nearly March and the puzzle had become a burden. You could spend hours and hours working on it and find only one matching piece so that soon enough night would be falling with no supper in sight. It was a revelation when I told myself that some things in life could go unfinished and Terry agreed. Actually, pretty much everything could go unfinished, we decided, and especially this jigsaw puzzle, which we had come to hate.

BCBW: How often do you work on jigsaw puzzles?

MF: I come to a number interest in jigsaw puzzles as a jaded innocent. That one experience years before had killed my interest in them. Then, midway through the pandemic, friends loaned me two Wentworth Wooden puzzles, the elite of jigsaw puzzles with their “whimsy” pieces, inviting images, and smaller piece-count: 250, or 500. My friends thought the puzzles would help take my mind off case counts, death tolls, and variants. And they were right! Not only that, I enjoyed doing them.

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Jigsaw puzzles are something we can control, unlike most of life, and most definitely, unlike time.

The picture on the jigsaw puzzle box

BY BEVERLY CRAMP

Jigsaw: A Puzzle in Ninety-Three Pieces
by M.A.C. Farrant
(Talonbooks $17.95)
is your guide to solving the puzzle. In life the guide is seldom as clear.

Working on a jigsaw puzzle is like riding on a train; it’s a single-track experience. Over and over you are sorting through and then interlocking puzzle pieces. This can be an exciting thing to do because your journey has a destination. Unlike your life, you know exactly where the journey ends.

In assembling a jigsaw, start with the edges then everything will fall into place.

As a beginner, never attempt a puzzle that has over 250 pieces. Once you have completed the requisite ten thousand hours of puzzle labour and are now a Master Puzzler, you can you move onto the larger puzzles.

Working on a jigsaw puzzle is an act of devotion.

BCBW: How long did it take you to recognize the metaphor for art in jigsaw puzzles?
MF: This happened pretty quickly, after my initial research into the history of jigsaws, that is, and coming upon some astounding facts such as, the global dollar value of jigsaw sales in 2019 was 9.96 billion and that in North America seven jigsaw puzzles are sold every minute. Every minute! The jigsaw puzzle industry is an enormous one. What, I began wondering, is going on?

Jigsaws as metaphors, speak to our continual efforts to solve the miraculous puzzle of our own lives and to the questions these puzzles pose. For example, The Puzzle of Good and Evil, Of Staying Sane, Of Discord, Of Love, Of Raising Children, Of Beauty, Of Why Are We Here? Of What Happens Next? These puzzles are endless!

A jigsaw as a metaphor can also be a mystery, a conundrum, a riddle, an enigma.

BCBW: When did you get the idea to tell your short stories about people, jigsaw puzzles and the puzzle that is life?
MF: As I leaned into the subject of jigsaws, both actual and as metaphors, many subjects presented themselves. Besides art as guides to the ineffable, roads and pathways, other things appeared: Buddhism, faith, bits of memoir, science, the universe, haiku poems, surrealism, and chickens. Even cows beckoned and found a place in the book.

BCBW: Not everyone becomes as enamoured with puzzles as you did (your husband, for example, became a “jigsaw dropout” after completing his first puzzle). What is it about your personality that makes you a “puzzler”?
MF: I, too, was a jigsaw dropout but, really, that state of mind can change. Jigsaws can enter your life as a source of meditation, pleasure, even joy. For me, curiosity, perseverance, focus, and the need for play in my life, (and the need for occasional distraction from the world scene) are what I now bring to a puzzle.

BCBW: Anything else you want to add?
MF: Yes, I’d like to return to the cows. They began wandering through the book as I was writing it like a herd of friendly muses and were such a delightful presence that I had to include them. There was something earthy, solid and grounding about them and I hope some of these qualities entered the book. Cows are why there’s an image of one on the cover—a painting by American artist Ethan Harper.

They took such a hold of me that, in support of Jigsaw’s release, I created several videos about a fictional Literary Cow Festival, which are posted online at thinairfestival.ca. My “interview” with Artistic Director, Bill Bovine (aka Bill Farrant, my son), is my favourite of the three I did. Here’s a bit of that interview:

Bill Bovine: I was quite taken aback by the cow on the book cover. It’s a fine representation of my friend, Larry, may he rest in packaging. Did you have any contact with his family? Were they aware of his likeness being portrayed on the cover?

Author: No, uh, this is an artistic, uh, endeavor, uh, the painting. I think it’s a generic cow. Any, uh, likeness to your friend, Larry, is, I, I, believe, purely accidental.

Bill Bovine: Fair enough, fair enough.
After 15 years in the Royal Navy which he joined as a lad of 13, Philip Hankin decided to leave his native England in 1864 to return to a bucolic land he had enjoyed during his service. The journey back to Vancouver Island took weeks.

He endured third-class passage to Panama aboard a West India packet steamer, arriving to discover he had just missed the steamer to San Francisco. Twelve days of tropical heat and insect misery passed. Conditions were little better when he finally steamed north. Steerage passengers ate while standing at a swinging table to which knives and forks had been chained to avoid thiev- ery. Robbery and pickpocketing were constant threats aboard ship.

Hankin eventually arrived in Es- quimalt, then made his way to nearby Victoria, which he had left several years earlier. Friends greeted him warmly, though he realized “there was a differ- ence between being a lieutenant in the Navy and a working man trying to make a living.” He was determined not to become one of the city’s dissolute failures. “I would never be seen in a gaming house or standing at a swinging table to which knives and forks had been chained.”

Unable to find work, he took the last steamer to Colombo, arriving to discover he had missed the steamer to San Francisco, where real money was to be made, the senior officer thought him mad to resign a commission as a Royal Navy lieutenant for a task so menial as food service. To keep him in the navy, the admiral set off a series of favourable appointments where Hankin wound up as first lieutenant of the paddle steamer HMS Heelee, which was to be the pri- mary surveying vessel for the Colony of Vancouver Island (at that time not joined with the Colony of BC).

The unlikely rise of an English sailor

From Royal Navy lieutenant to failed gold miner, chief of police and colonial administrator, Philip Hankin lived through the nascent days of BC before it became a province.
A MURDERESS, HER DAUGHTER
& the budding Real Wives of Colonialist Victoria

Caroline Woodward reviews In the Belly of the Sphinx by Grant Buday (TouchWood / Brindle & Glass $25)

It is 1874 and sixteen-year-old Florence boards the 3rd class train bound for Chicago from New York City in a coach reeking of smoke, beer and unwashed humanity. We readers sidle in alongside the nervous, young thief—and accused murderess, as she was called in that era—and in short order, we learn she likely began her journey in Montreal.

Florence eventually lands in Victoria after a long boat ride north from San Francisco. I do so love a gripping historical mystery wherein the author grants you by the neck, holds you up against the wall for the urgent and necessary telling of an incredible story and finally lets you go, dazed. The reader of In the Belly of the Sphinx, emerges from a fully-imagined “other world,” one populated with Pinkerton detectives, a gallant bus- sar in uniform, an oily police officer, a most wonderfully precocious little girl called Pearl, a blowhard imperialist editor who never doubted a word he wrote, malicious private school girls in training to become the Real Wives of Colonialist Victoria, and an Irish maid called Carpy (for Carpenter), who attends Theosophist meetings and speaks of her hus- band, who perished in a Cumberland coal mine, thusly: “We shouldn’t have gone to Pittsburgh... There were plenty of coal mines there to die in. He weren’t strong. He tried barbering, but his feet hurt and his hands went numb. He thought he might be a cowboy but hurt his spine. He tried wheat but got the vomits.” These were desperate times for making a hardscrabble living and yet many strains of mysticism, complete with seances, a fascination with ex- otic rituals and images from India and Egypt, tea leaf and tarot card reading otic rituals and images from India and Egypt, tea leaf and tarot card reading and evocation of early years in the city of Victoria keeps us firmly ensconced in the colonial version of the Victorian era. His own familiarity with a wide variety of blue collar work, like mass production bakeries in Vancouver as told in White Lung (Anvil, 1999) or his memoir about moving to Mayne Island from Main Street, Vancouver, Stranger on a Strange Island (New Star, 2011) wherein he becomes the king of the Recycling Depot, add delicious veracity to this novel as well. So when Pearl falls into a compost bin from the roof of a three-storey rooming house in mid-winter and finds it pleasantly warm, earthy yet pragmatic, with coffee grounds most predominant, we accept this to be a highly credible description without the need to replicate her ad- venture! One is inevitably reminded of a modern-day Charles Dickens.

While the genteel are hosting se- anses to expand the perceptions of the Recycling Depot, add delicious veracity to this novel as well. So when Pearl falls into a compost bin from the roof of a three-storey rooming house in mid-winter and finds it pleasantly warm, earthy yet fragrant, with coffee grounds most predominant, we accept this to be a highly credible description without the need to replicate her ad- venture! One is inevitably reminded of a modern-day Charles Dickens.

Through the muddy new civic streets fringed by giant Douglas firs on the outskirts, to the groomed grounds of Craigdarroch and the social event of the year hosted by a famously cranky Dame Dunsmuir, skips our picoresque Pear, the little girl who becomes a tall and no less audacious teen. She climbs, leaps and finally, weary and disheartened, plods these city streets. But not for long! She chafes at her lot in life, longing to be a pirate, a poet, or some form of dashing rogue, instead of tetering on the edge of respectable behaviour, forever wondering about an absent and possibly fictitious fa- ther. She reads a great many books (“I thirst for knowledge,” she says) and then makes one life-altering decision, which is where the belly of a sphinx enters the plot, no thanks to over- indulging in rum-spiked punch at the Dunsmuir gala.

Grant Buday has contributed yet another smart, impeccably researched, highly literate yet never stuffy, slyly li- harious and thoroughly engaging book for his fans. May the latter increase exponentially as this writer deserves a wide readership.
A DAY ABOARD THE PRINCESS MAQUINNA, C. 1924

Elegant white-jacket waiter service and comfortable cabins for some, cramped four-bed bunks or outside on the deck for others. Despite colonial class divides, the good ship Maquinna’s whistle was often, “the most welcome sound on the West Coast.”

The Maquinna departed Victoria three times a month. Her route north could make up to 40 stops at diverse locations, some now well-known—Port Renfrew, Bamfield, Port Alberni, Ucluelet, Tofino, Clayoquot and the pulp mill at Port Alice. Others less so—Cloose, the thriving whaling stations at Sechelt and Cachalot, Kakawis with its residential school, Ahousaht, Ninstin Bay and Captain Cook’s old shelter at Nootka Sound. A working cargo vessel, the Maquinna hauled everything from unrefrigerated sides of beef, fruit and vegetables, to construction and domestic staples, oil, gasoline, livestock, feed and machinery. Skipped masterfully for 16 years by Captain Edward Gillam, what she lugged on her return was a blueprint of BC’s colonial economy—sawn lumber, coal, whale oil and bone meal, tons of canned salmon, metal ores, pilchard oil, pottery clay and millions in gold bars from Zeballos. She was the west coasters’ indispensable courier for medicines, liquor and the Royal Mail (as it was known in those days).

Unpredictable environments compelled an informal shipboard democracy, but Kennedy notes it was still a colonial era and class distinctions prevailed. Fifty first-class cabins were available for those who could afford them. Second-class passage got you the share of a four-bunk, lower deck berth. Thrifty souls could sit out their journey in the main lounge, while, as the fare schedule announced, “Indians and Orientals” who worked the coastal fish plants in large numbers were compelled to remain outside on the forward deck in makeshift shelters at half the first-class fare; heaven help you with the weather.

When the explosive 1897 discovery of gold in the Klondike galvanized every available ship for northern runs to the Yukon, at the urging of Victoria’s business community the CPR invested $531,000 and bought 14 ships. Its new superintendence Captain James Troup quickly set about constructing additional vessels, including the proudly Esquimalt-built SS Princess Maquinna.

Troup echoed European tradition in naming the vessel after a princess. However, he proposed the daughter of Chief Maquinna, who had dominated the west coast of Vancouver Island from Nootka Sound when Captain George Vancouver arrived. Remarkably, Troup’s empire-minded CPR bosses agreed. Perhaps the proverb “money talks” lent a hand; already the company was planning for a new phase of coastal business—tourism. What better magnet than echoing BC’s own historic nobility? It proved a brilliant stroke of frontier respect from the outset.

Kennedy’s account details daily life among remote coastal settlements. Rainshackled whales were a constant
challenge to Gillam’s crew, and loadings and discharge of freight and passengers were commonly conducted by rowboat, Indigenous dugout canoe, and whatever floatables arose. Shipboard life in the dining room, lounge and among “deck class” outsiders in the racially segregated times is depicted with an honest appreciation of BC society of the day. We learn of biological expeditions by American scholars that include young women wearing the outlandish garb of men’s trousers! Other reports detail the founding of the Dominion Life Saving—later called “the West Coast”—Trail, along the jagged “Graveyard of the Pacific” stretch for shipwrecked mariners.

The Maquinna spawned new ventures like George Fraser’s world-renowned horticultural gardens at Ucluelet and early visitor coach tours to Long Beach. At Bamfield’s “All Red Line” station, the trans-global British telegraph service could send a message around the world at the blinding speed of 10 to 14 hours. Its Christmas dances offered bachelor staff the chance to mingle socially with female passengers. Similarly, coastal marriages “were often timed so the newlyweds could leave on the southbound trip of the Princess Maquinna.” Indeed, the good ship Maquinna's whistle was often, “the most welcome sound on the West Coast.”

After WW II, the steady growth of roads linking Port Hardy and other northern Vancouver Island towns began the slow demise of the West Coast cargo service. Growing air traffic shaved off passenger trade and the Princess ships couldn’t compete. By 1953, the aging Maquinna’s boilers were clapped-out. Decommissioned, she was stripped down and sold as an unglamorous ore-barge to haul copper ore from Alaska. Ten years later she was broken up for scrap. But what a story Kennedy spins of the grand old Princess Maquinna. Like reading Ethel Wilson, we’re given a slice of life from a formative, more rugged time in BC that for history hounds is unforgettable.

9781990776403

For a time, Trevor Carolan’s family co-owned another venerable BC coaster, the tug Florence Filberg.
Early European explorers and sailors braved the dangers of the Pacific Ocean lured by myths of a continent with untold wealth. The reality was much different.

There Luxton met an adventurous sailor named John Voss, who was looking for work. Just three years earlier, the legendary Joshua Slocum had circumnavigated the globe in a small sailboat; and ever beere Voss and Luxton made a sizeable bet—do the same but in a smaller boat. Voss pulled it off in Tilkum and made history.

It’s a swashbuckling story capping off what Gordon Miller sums up as his book’s broader theme: "...the story of the European discovery, charting, exploitation and occupation of the Pacific Ocean, mostly in small wooden ships, with only wind and human muscle for power."

It starts with Ferdinand Magellan more than 500 years ago, whose ship Victoria was the first to circumnavigate the world. His armada of five small armed ships set sail from Spain on September 20, 1519 aiming for what were then called the Spice Islands.

But before we go much further, be advised this volume is far from being just a history book. Miller brings its stories alive with descriptions so vivid you can almost feel, see and smell the often-unbelievable conditions the interpid sailors endured on so many of those voyages.

Like Magellan’s story, where mid-trip, their food had run out and the crews resorted to “eating a mixture of biscuit crumbs and rat droppings, then ate the rats, until they too were gone,” writes Miller. “They caught the occasional shark, but were finally reduced to eating sawdust, and boiling and chewing leather chaffing gear from the rigging just to put something in their stomachs.” When the armada finally limped back into harbour nearly three years later, Magellan was dead and Victoria was the only surviving ship. And of the original 250 sailors, only a weakened 18 were left.

GORDON MILLER INCLUDES BOTH THE WELL-KNOWN and the lesser-known. Many readers will be familiar with names like James Cook, Charles Darwin, or the mutiny on the Bounty saga. But likely not others, like France’s La Pérouse in 1786 who was anxious to capture some of the prestige Cook had gained for Britain. His expedition surveyed unmapped areas of the northwest coast, Kamchatka, and Australia, and anthropological data on Indigenous populations—achievements Miller calls “considerable...precise and beautiful charts and drawings, and extensive observations...”

Another of the lesser-known Pacific sailing adventures is the sad but entertaining War of Jenkins’ Ear, declared by the British against Spain in October 1739. Under it, the plan was to dispatch a fleet of six men-of-war ships and a company of 500 soldiers to the Pacific “to take, burn, sink, or otherwise destroy the ships and vessels belonging to Spain.” One Commander George Anson was given the job to prepare and lead the force. He dutifully proceeded to Ports- mouth only to find a navy utterly unprepared for war. To top up his crew numbers, Anson engaged press gangs to kidnap farm boys, scour local jails, and draft old, sick and crippled soldiers. Of those unsuitable 259 so recruited, the average age was 55, all were disabled in some way, and nearly all died from disease or injury before they even reached the Pacific.

Miller calls it “one of the most terrible and costly voyages in British maritime history.” Nonetheless, four years later, after vanquishing the Spanish, Anson returned a hero with three treasure-laden ships.

But at what cost? Just 188 original members were aboard as nearly 1,400 had died, mostly from disease and starvation. It didn’t matter to the “higher-ups”: Anson was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty.

Closer to home, readers will enjoy the extensive coverage of the BC coast including: Nootka Sound, Juan de Fuca and Georgia Straits, Hastings Mill, Friendly Cove (where the first ship on the northwest coast was built), and much, much more.

The 19th century saw a new era in commercial sailboats: the clippers, known for their speed alone.
The remarkable Frances Barkley

The first woman to circumnavigate the earth on a sailing ship.

Frances Barkley: Eighteenth-century Seafarer by Cathy Converse (Heritage $12.95)

BY BEVERLY CRAMP

Fresh out of convent school in France where she had studied French, history and culture, seventeen-year-old Frances Trevor was back with her British family in 1786 when she met twenty-six-year-old sea captain Charles Barkley. Frances fell in love and married the seagoing merchant after a six-week courtship. This was a time when large parts of the world were still being explored, and many parts of North America were uncharted. Yet the appeal of making fortunes by buying goods from remote places and selling them for huge mark-ups where such goods were in demand, took sailors on long sea voyages that often meant leaving their families behind for years at a time. It was unheard of for a wife to accompany her merchant mariner husband on the high seas, but Frances was hellbent on joining Charles. “I had only been on a ship once before,” Frances says in Frances Barkley: Eighteenth-century Seafarer by Cathy Converse, which references Frances’ written recollections called Reminiscences, compiled in the years before her death in 1845. “I was both excited for the adventure that lay before us and sad, for I knew that it would be a long time before I saw my family again.” Admitting she was naive, Frances nonetheless was determined, declaring: “I did not want to be separated from my dear husband.” Thus began Frances Barkley’s journeys from November 1786 to December 1794, as she became the first known woman to openly circumnavigate the earth on a sailing ship, and also the first European woman to visit the Pacific Northwest (there are stories of women disguised as men aboard ships in previous years). She gave birth to two children during this period, one of whom died and was buried at sea near what is known today as Sulawesi, Indonesia.

Sea otters from the Pacific Northwest were worth a fortune in China where they could be traded for goods such as tea, silk and porcelain that were highly sought after in Britain. Although there were already many ships in the merchant sea trade, few had voyaged around the world. It was risky and expensive. If successful, the Barkleys would be rich. But they also faced hardship, disease, fierce seas that could have taken them to a watery grave, and capture by pirates as well as imprisonment by enemy forces during war. There was also the beauty and awe of new lands and social high times in the homes of rich foreigners.

The Barkley’s descendents later scattered around the world including Vancouver Island, which is why Frances Barkley’s original Reminiscences ended up in the BC Archives. A previous book The Remarkable World of Frances Barkley (Gray’s, 1978) was written by Beth Hill (1954–1987), and later reissued and expanded with the help of Victoria’s Cathy Converse as The Remarkable World of Frances Barkley (Heritage, 2003). Converse has continued to do more research by interviewing marine historians and ship’s masters to fill in extra details and more context for Frances’ story in Frances Barkley: Eighteenth-century Seafarer.

9781772034417

BY BEVERLY CRAMP

Fresh out of convent school in France where she had studied French, history and culture, seventeen-year-old Frances Trevor was back with her British family in 1786 when she met twenty-six-year-old sea captain Charles Barkley. Frances fell in love and married the seagoing merchant after a six-week courtship. This was a time when large parts of the world were still being explored, and many parts of North America were uncharted. Yet the appeal of making fortunes by buying goods from remote places and selling them for huge mark-ups where such goods were in demand, took sailors on long sea voyages that often meant leaving their families behind for years at a time. It was unheard of for a wife to accompany her merchant mariner husband on the high seas, but Frances was hellbent on joining Charles. “I had only been on a ship once before,” Frances says in Frances Barkley: Eighteenth-century Seafarer by Cathy Converse, which references Frances’ written recollections called Reminiscences, compiled in the years before her death in 1845. “I was both excited for the adventure that lay before us and sad, for I knew that it would be a long time before I saw my family again.” Admitting she was naive, Frances nonetheless was determined, declaring: “I did not want to be separated from my dear husband.” Thus began Frances Barkley’s journeys from November 1786 to December 1794, as she became the first known woman to openly circumnavigate the earth on a sailing ship, and also the first European woman to visit the Pacific Northwest (there are stories of women disguised as men aboard ships in previous years). She gave birth to two children during this period, one of whom died and was buried at sea near what is known today as Sulawesi, Indonesia.

Sea otters from the Pacific Northwest were worth a fortune in China where they could be traded for goods such as tea, silk and porcelain that were highly sought after in Britain. Although there were already many ships in the merchant sea trade, few had voyaged around the world. It was risky and expensive. If successful, the Barkleys would be rich. But they also faced hardship, disease, fierce seas that could have taken them to a watery grave, and capture by pirates as well as imprisonment by enemy forces during war. There was also the beauty and awe of new lands and social high times in the homes of rich foreigners.

The Barkley’s descendents later scattered around the world including Vancouver Island, which is why Frances Barkley’s original Reminiscences ended up in the BC Archives. A previous book The Remarkable World of Frances Barkley (Gray’s, 1978) was written by Beth Hill (1954–1987), and later reissued and expanded with the help of Victoria’s Cathy Converse as The Remarkable World of Frances Barkley (Heritage, 2003). Converse has continued to do more research by interviewing marine historians and ships’ masters to fill in extra details and more context for Frances’ story in Frances Barkley: Eighteenth-century Seafarer.

BY DAVID LESTER


The Bund was founded in Vilnius in 1897 by a small group of Jewish workers and intellectuals from the “Pale of Settlement” areas in tsarist Russia. The group organized against industrial exploitation and fought against the murderous Soviet and Nazi regimes. Through all this, The Bund kept secular and progressive ideas alive. Prominent Bundists included Pati Kremer (1867–1943), a Russian revolutionary socialist, and Bernard Goldstein (1889–1959) who helped smuggle in arms in preparation for the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

The Bund was co-written by Sharon Rudahl, a graphic novelist in her own right, and a key figure in the groundbreaking feminist Wimmen’s Comix, an underground comics anthology published from 1972 to 1992, and Paul Buhle, a veteran of work on almost 30 non-fiction graphic novels.

Kluckner’s previous graphic novels are Julia (Midtown Press, 2018); 2050: A Post-Apocalyptic Murder Mystery (Midtown Press, 2016) and Toshiko (Midtown Press, 2015).

BC BookWorld caught up with Kluckner to talk about The Bund.

BC BookWorld: Quite a leap from the West Coast in the Seventies to tsarist Russia, Michael Kluckner; talk about The Bund.

MK: The book is haunted by our knowledge of the pending Holocaust. The Warsaw ghetto scenes were difficult, as was the page almost at the end where the women and children in Vilna (in Lithuania, now known as Vilnius), in sorrow and with dignity, are being forced onto a truck at gunpoint to be driven to an extermination camp. And, of course, Russia had invaded Ukraine (yet again) just a few months before I began work on the book. Learning more about Imperial Russia and the oppression over centuries of its neighbours, Jewish as well as every nationality nearby, was disturbing. I think the couple of pages I enjoyed drawing most were about Japan beating up on Russia in their 1905 war.

BCBW: Your previous graphic novels were black and white. How was it to work in full colour?

MK: I had been playing around, adding some flat watercolour to black-and-white ink drawings like the “woodcuts” in The Rooming House—colouring them in with patches of watercolour rather than really “painting”—and it worked out very well. I used a kind of “poverty palette” of umbers and ochres, with a couple of dull greys, for the Bundists and peasants, and a brighter palette of blues and reds for the panels of the aristocracy. I also drew quite a number of cartooned maps using digital colour, for example to show the Pale of Settlement in Ukraine / Poland / Russia where Jews were confined. Showing the geography of their oppression was one of the tasks I wanted the book to accomplish.

Another thing was figuring out Polish, Yiddish and Russian placards and signs for a few of the pages. I didn’t want any English in the graphics. The publisher had a linguist check all of them, I believe!

BCBW: You normally write and illustrate your own books. What was it like collaborating with the legendary Sharon and Paul?

MK: Both were very supportive and Sharon’s script was easy to follow. It became a question of splitting it out into about 100 pages, with the inevitable need to start a chapter on a right-hand page and stage the narrative so that I could use a two-page spread for some important and dramatic moments. Devil Clancy, the production designer at Between the Lines, picked up a few vignettes from drawings and repeated them, even reversed them, on a few pages to enrich the layout. All in all, it was a great collaboration, and so 21st century: Paul’s in the eastern US, Sharon’s in LA, BTL in Toronto. The first time I saw them was in a Zoom presentation at a San Francisco library in October.

BCBW: Is there a particularly profound moment in the book that stood out to you as a historian and artist?

MK: The book is haunted by our knowledge of the pending Holocaust. The Warsaw ghetto scenes were difficult, as was the page almost at the end where the women and children in Vilna (in Lithuania, now known as Vilnius), in sorrow and with dignity, are being forced onto a truck at gunpoint to be driven to an extermination camp. And, of course, Russia had invaded Ukraine (yet again) just a few months before I began work on the book. Learning more about Imperial Russia and the oppression over centuries of its neighbours, Jewish as well as every nationality nearby, was disturbing. I think the couple of pages I enjoyed drawing most were about Japan beating up on Russia in their 1905 war.

BCBW: Any future graphic novels or book projects in the works?

MK: I’m going back to the future, as it were, with a book called Surviving Vancouver that will be out next spring. It is like my old works of watercolour illustrations and a text mixing historic and current information. Then I may work on a sequel to The Rooming House—I received so many fascinating emails from people recounting their own lives and adventures in the ’70s and thereafter. There are more stories to be told, and the graphic novel format works well.

Twenty-five years in the making, What’s Fear Got to Do With It? by Ivana Filipov-ich (Conundrum $16) is set during a single evening at the Richmond Night Market, North America’s largest night market. Two women, Eva and Mia, share the same boyfriend, Max—a feared member of the city’s criminal underground. It is not love that motivates this triangle, but power, money and fear. BC-based Filipovich has had her work published in Slovenia, Sweden and Serbia.

Edited by Bev-an Thomas and Hannah Myers, Through the Labri-thysts of the Mind ($30) is a graphic novel anthology of 11 stories that tackle depression, anxiety, PTSD, OCD and other mental health issues with empathy and understand-

Couches Get Lonely Too (Lulu.com $26) by Sima Elizabeth Shefrin is her entirely embroidered graphic account of living through the Covid-19 years. The book promises humour and wisdom. Gabri-ola Island-based Shefrin runs a website called Stitching for Social Change, where you can learn about her quilts, community projects, illustrations and workshops, all of which are interfaced with her vision for a better world.

Mr. Block: The Subversive Comics and Writings of Ernst Rube (Between the Lines $34.95) is a remarkable collection, both as labour history, and comics history. Mr. Block, a bumbling,
Keeping it real for ages 6 to 9, Pup and Dragon: How to Catch an Elf (Sourcebooks/Wonderland $12.99) by Alice Walstead and illustrated by Vancouver’s Paul Gill tells a charming story of two best friends, Pup and Dragon who are trying to catch one of Santa’s little helpers on Christmas Eve—only they have no idea what a Santa is, let alone an elf. Their adventure leads to an understanding of Christmas.

Third in the “Paws” graphic novel series for middle graders is Priya Puts Herself First (Razorbill $12.99) by Nathan Fairbairn and illustrated by Michele Assarasakorn. The story revolves around the Baby-Sitters Club for pets, and this time, the team of best dog-walkers in town must overcome personal challenges—Priya’s family is being evicted and Gabby wants to be internet famous. Fairbairn is an Eisner-nominated comic creator. Assarasakorn has worked for Marvel and DC. Both live in Vancouver.

Hockey Girl Loves Drama Boy by Faith Erin Hicks (First Second $17.99) tells Alix, a hot-head who is desperate to play in the Women’s U18 team, but she must first learn to control her temper. To help, she enlists the calm and poised Ezra, a boy from the drama club. The two become close, but will it be more than just a friendship? Hicks is a Vancouver-based Eisner Award winner. Ages 14-18. 9781250838728

Though not BC-based authors or illustrators, Arsenal Pulp Press has issued English translations of Can Dundar and Anwar’s Erdoğan: A Graphic Biography: The Rise of Turkey’s Modern Autocrat ($28.95) and 40 Men and 12 Rifles: Indochina 1954 ($32.95) by Marcelino Truong, about love, beauty and war in 1950s Indochina.

Mystery and magic for ages 8-12 in Doña Quixote: Rise of the Knight (Henry Holt $14.99) by Rey Terciero and illustrated by Monica Magaña. A middle-schooler in a small Texas town, Lucia, wearing her grandfather’s magical helmet discovers the town mayor is secretly a shapeshifting beast of Mexican lore. Her parents think she’s imagining things. But that won’t deter her from stopping the mayor from unleashing evil on their town. Magaña lives in Vancouver.

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“Celebratory but also blunt and critical, this collection marks the centenary of the RCAF by focusing on its golden age.”

—J.L. GRANATSTEIN
Author of Canada’s Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace

“Pathway to the Stars takes readers on a remarkable journey spanning one hundred years of the Royal Canadian Air Force.”

—KEVIN NEWMAN
Journalist
Since the invasion of Ukraine, Svetlana Ischenko’s focus on Ukrainian culture, language and literature has intensified.

As the invasion of Ukraine careens onward, poet Svetlana Ischenko dives deep into the literary landscape of identity. With deeply-held Ukrainian sensibilities, she optimistically writes about life in Canada as an immigrant using sonnets and lyrical poems.

In her introductory essay to Nucleus, Ischenko examines the adage “Poetry is what gets lost in translation.” Does a person’s identity get lost when that person becomes an immigrant and tries to translate their self into a new self, in a new country? And if a person writes poems and is deeply attached to their original country, its language and culture, how will that “translation” work, exactly?

Ischenko is an award-winning poet, translator, actress, playwright, artist and teacher. She lives in North Vancouver. BC BookWorld asked Ischenko to reflect on the themes of Nucleus in the following interview.

BC BOOKWORLD: Nucleus tackles the creative tensions you have encountered as a Ukrainian immigrant in Canada. Can you describe those tensions?

Svetlana Ischenko: When I first came to Canada, I saw myself as a Ukrainian in Canada, but after a while, I thought of myself as a Ukrainian-Canadian. I haven’t been able to return to Ukraine since the invasion (and am desperate to, as my mother is alone in my home city of Mykolaiv), but I’ve gone back to Ukraine every couple of years since I came to Canada, and while there, I’ve noticed I’ve acquired a Canadian “flavour.” At first, I thought this might mean I was losing my sense of being Ukrainian. That brought a certain tension which I sometimes expressed in poetry. But the longer I’ve lived in Canada, and the more I’ve learned about Canada’s history, its cultures, and the
There are a gull’s feathers on the waters of the Pacific like bright white boats —
no Ottoman-Turk hordes,
no blood in the Cossack’s wound.
The new world —
history from scratch.
We aren’t ashes and dust.
What are we here, in this edge-of-the-world place?
A gull’s feathers in the ocean.

— Svetlana Ischenko, from Nucleus: A Poet’s Lyrical Journey from Ukraine to Canada
Thought provoking books available on

**Selected by BC BookWorld**

**Grizzlies & Elders & Wildlife & Bompa**

Stewards of Splendour: A History of Wildlife and People in British Columbia by Jennifer Bonnell (RBCM $34.95)

Duncan-raised Jennifer Bonnell conducted over 80 interviews and drew upon a rich body of literature to examine the changing values BC people have towards wildlife. She began in 1774, exploring the ways that Indigenous communities, and later government and stakeholder groups, have sought to manage wildlife practices and wilderness resources in the province.

Bompa’s Insect Expedition by David Suzuki and Tanya Lloyd Kyi with illustrations by Qin Leng (Greystone $23.95)

Inspired by David Suzuki’s adventures with his grandson, “Bompa” (Flemish for grandfather) takes his twin grandkids on an adventure into nature. At first, they are dis-appointed as Bompa goes no further than outside the house door. But what wonders he shows them! Art by Qin Leng highlights a world we often overlook.

From a coiled rattlesnake to dangerous father figures, Rodney DeCroo relives encounters with nightmarish creatures.

**Fishing for Leviathan**

By Heidi Greco

A gigantic fish, its mouth full of pointy teeth, peers out from the cover of Rodney DeCroo’s third published collection of poems.

Looking at the image more closely, one discovers a tiny diver suspended by a rope that I can only hope is also a source of oxygen. The metaphor of the little dangling man in precarious straits is not at all unreasonable for the contents of the book.

In the poem that shares the book’s title, the narrator and his brothers manage to fish a bunch of fishing supplies at the hardware store before heading to the river where they toss their lines. When one of them pulls in a catfish, they marvel at its size and ugliness, comparing it to a “sea monster” something “like the Leviathan Pastor Bob preached about / last Sunday!” Yet despite their exaggerated descriptions and bravado, while the fish still struggles, the scene turns to one of tender caring:

Picking the catfish up, crudely slick against my arms, I placed it in the shallow water where, listing on its side, we thought it dead; until it wildly thrashed with life as we yelled it back into the river.

And for me, it’s in lines such as these where DeCroo proves his mettle as a poet. Look closer for yourself: “cradled / slick against my arms”—an image clear as one from a film, slippery and wet. Or even stronger, the closing lines—“we yelled it back into the river” (where I inserted my own italicised)

He’s been compared by some to the famed Charles Bukowski, though aside from some shared themes and scenes—primarily those related to working and drinking—I don’t see a lot of commonalities in the ways the poems work. While Bukowski tends to favour short, choppy lines, DeCroo’s lines wander, often leaving me in doubt as to how he determines where a line break should occur.

But then even as I am having this thought, he calls me out (or it feels that way) when he writes about a woman who:

…asks me questions about line breaks using technical terms I don’t know. When I reply I just do what feels right—she looks away as if I’d said...
something left, clutches her wine glass to her chest, joins a knoll of guests discussing found poetry as disruptive practice undermining the fascist implications of the lyric poem.

And yet, as if to balance an outsider’s critique, in another piece he asks: Who can you trust if you can’t trust the voices in your head or your own poem?

And voice, whether inside or outside his head, is an element that’s part of Rodney DeCroo’s identity. In many circles he’s better known as a musician, a calling with more opportunities for paying gigs than that of a poet. It’s worth making a stop at YouTube and calling up some of his performances. I find them an odd combination of Dylan and maybe Tom Waits, while at the same time summoning the spirit of Leonard Cohen.

But back to the Bukowski comparison: there are similarities—most striking to me in the ways they both write about the ordinary aspects of life, especially its pains. Both men seem to have shared the credo espoused by the late Vancouver Downtown Eastside poet Bud Osborn, whose guiding principle was poetry as “fidelity to lived experience.” Such lived experience is, for most of us, not the same kind of experience. “Each poem is an elegy and an ode – to family, to the Ancestors, to the Land, to northern BC, to one’s own body … By the book’s end, I felt that I had hurt others: …he was a dangerous man, an ex-marine who said he enjoyed killing. He called it going into winter—a state of emotional detachment where anything was possible; where he said a man found himself. That’s why he worked in bars. There was always someone willing to fight.

Sadly, that man isn’t the only one in his life who relied on violence to get his way. Another of his mother’s husbands “…beat her on weekends when he’d get drunk watching war movies.” The action in the poem’s final line, occurring after a scene with a rifle, is sure to break your heart with the horror it conveys. Yet not all the pains he remembers are inflicted by family. It’s the viewpoint of the helpless child that he creates—again with wonderful language—in a piece called Serpent and I.

In Beaufort, South Carolina on the dirt road near the trailer a rattlesnake unravelled its long muscle, slid in dust between my small, bare legs and tore sneakers untouched by the spade-shaped head as urine ran down my thighs.

He isn’t bitten, and is rescued by his mother who wants him to rest, but he’s haunted by nightmare visions of the dry-skinned serpent, just the way the poems in this startling new book.

Heidi Greco not only reads poems but writes them. She currently has a manuscript making the rounds with publishers while she continues writing, albeit with fingers crossed.

NEW THIS FALL from TALONBOOKS

A Family of Dreamers
Samantha Nock

In this debut collection, Samantha Nock weaves together threads of fat liberation, desirability politics, and heartbreak while working through her existence as a young Indigenous woman coming of age in the city.

“Each poem is an elegy and an ode — to family, to the Ancestors, to the Land, to northern BC, to one’s own body … By the book’s end, I felt that I had witnessed something rare and beautiful.”

—Billy-Ray Belcourt

Perseverance
Japanese Canadians’ Journey to Justice
by Art Miki

This revealing memoir by the former president of the National Association of Japanese Canadians describes the long journey towards resolution for the historic injustice that deprived Japanese Canadians of their basic human rights during and after World War II.

“All Canadians, regardless of ancestry, will benefit by learning about Art and about an important part of Canadian history that may not be widely known.”

—Phil Fontaine

Former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations

A Dream in the Eye
The Complete Paintings and Collages of Phyllis Webb
Edited by Stephen Collis

Seventy-four paintings and eighty photocollages by the brilliant poet Phyllis Webb. Introductions by Stephen Collis and art historian and curator Laurie White, as well some of Webb’s own reflections on her visual work, and an essay by Betsy Warland.

Lha yudit’ih
We Always Find a Way
Bringing the Tl’etinqox Title Case Home
Lorraine Weir & Chief Roger William

A community oral history of Tl’etinqox Nation v. British Columbia, the first case in Canada to result in a declaration of Aboriginal Rights and Title to a specific piece of land. Told from the perspective of the Plaintiff, Chief Roger William, joined by fifty Xeni Gwet’ins, Tl’etinqox, and allies.

the berry takes the shape of the bloom
andrea bennett

the berry takes the shape of the bloom originated as a gesture towards optimism after loss and pain, difficulty and fear. These poems, which capture particular moments in time, may recur in any given present: sometimes what surfaces is anxiety or anger, sometimes love or eagerness.

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PERRY BULWER

MISGUIDED: MY JESUS FREAK LIFE IN A DOOMSDAY CULT

‘A detailed, heartfelt look inside the most notorious Christian sect to emerge from the spiritual counterculture of the 1970s.’
— Don Lattin, former religion writer at the San Francisco Chronicle and author of Jesus Freaks

‘Definitely a book you will want to read!’
— Janja Lalich, PhD, Author of Take Back Your Life: Recovering from Cults and Abusive Relationships

‘Informative and fascinating… an exceptional story.’
— Brett Josef Grubisic, Vancouver Sun

‘A deeply personal and richly informative study that shows how a shy but smart (and rather religious) working class kid gets drawn into an emotionally and physically abusive cult’
— Stephen Kent, Emeritus Professor, University of Alberta

The Hidden Zoo Inside You
An Illustrated Guide to Pesky Organisms and Pandemics
Hand-written and drawn by Dr. Allen Jones, M.D.
Ages 12 to 99 | Pub Date Nov 20th

“The content is surprisingly broad and detailed. The enlightening illustrations accompanied by ample humour make this volume much more interesting reading than cut and dried medical or scientific papers. It will definitely delight the lay public with any interest in these topics.”
Dr. Anthony W. Chow
Professor of Infectious Diseases UBC

Bamfield Posh
A novel by Louis Druehl, author of Pacific Seaweeds and Cedar, Salmon and Weed
a novel about Bamfield that was put on Allen Twigg’s literary map of BC.

British war bride and son find freedom from English elitism in a tumultuous west coast fishing village.
Pub Date Nov 20th

Luminous
An artist’s Guide to Radical Creativity
by Linda Dayan Frimer

Sammy Squirrel & Rodney Raccoon
far from Stanley Park
For young readers, rafting to Japan with animal’s help by Duane Lawrence

Plagues and pandemics are the constant companions of humankind. Everyone on the left is a bacteria. Everyone on the right is a virus. Let’s explore them to create context for what coronavirus is up to.

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in her debut poetry collection, Jess Housty explores themes of living fully—with luxuriant roots in home soil—with an unusual breadth and depth.

They create layered realities and worlds with their words. Even as a Haíłzaqv survivor of genocide, while mothering two young sons, they find a way to transform what they have been through, as they write in their poem “Breath” when they ask: “What if we howled roses?”

Housty, of Heiltsuk and mixed settler ancestry, lives in their ancestral home in the town of Bella Bella. They are a writer and grassroots activist serving their community as a herbalist and land-based educator alongside broader work in the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors.

Housty is a poet who knows the work of cleaning up an oil spill as well as what it’s like to spend their days growing food with, and for, Elders. Holding the causes of wounds and the wound itself in both hands, they ask, “how can we treat both things with gentleness?”

Blood memory and what carries forward through generations are universal themes haunting “Bowing to Yarrow I.” Speaking to our deeper ways of knowing, it is a poem about plant medicine and the art of honouring.

Energy of place fuels the poems, unfolding glimpses and pulling us into Housty’s world. They have a particular talent for communicating interconnection and respect. “mirror/touch synesthesia” deftly describes their experience when “hot blood is relieved by cool October air, and gutting an animal includes blessing.”

Time moves differently through this volume with ghosted gardens and voices from earlier times sharing teachings forward through Housty’s poems. Reading Housty’s words, the reader sees the little child who loved their grandmother, and who shares teachings forward, sometimes openly as in their poem “Gwani taught me” that reveals moments where berries intertwine with internalizing sacredness:

That the ways our bodies are nurtured and our fingertips stained are how we internalize sacredness.
That the motions of reaching, of bending, of delicately picking, are how we externalize love.

“Máɫuła (Haíłzaqv ḍa for two people walking together)” is an example of how the poet’s writing becomes a place where prayers weave in and out, gently guiding towards reorienting.

Less palm to palm and more palm to water, sole to shore, brow to sun, brow to rain.

The cover art by Angela Yea aptly captures the sense of bone and teeth grinding rose petals, crushing wild mint. The reader begins to see the earthy poet, writing with “motherland” beneath your nails and “deer’s wisdom compacted in your heels” in the poem “You are inseparable.”

Lines in “La! (ghost)” also serve to describe the space Housty has carved for readers:

What makes this space safe is love, who, with scarred and swollen knuckles, turns away harshness at the door and gently closes it behind us again.

By the end of the volume, we begin to feel the circle described in “Where does mercy exist?”:

The hum comes from all around me now: some of us are speaking to our neighbours, some to our lovers, some to our children and some to our ancestors, but we all talk low and slow to make the night into a ritual of connection.

Like the bowl of “sixty-eight golden plums” left at the door, Housty’s poems are a gift inviting us to walk with past, present and future.

Odette Auger, a member of Sagamok Anishnawbek through her mother, lives as a guest in toq qaymɩxʷ (Klahoose), ɬəʔamɛn qaymɩxʷ (Tla’amin), ʔop qaymɩxʷ (Homalco) territories.

Jess Housty
TEENS AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Our teens uncover an oil magnate’s mis-representation of scientific recommendations at a conference in Pender Harbour, on B.C.’s coast. Corporate profits overrule climate mitigation. He must be stopped! But how?

Readers will learn of corruption in high places. Pender Harbour’s Secret Agents and two subsequent books (Secret Agents’ Dutch Treat and Secret Agents Defang a Dragon) suggest ways to counter such fraudulence with imagination, courage, and ingenuity.

All three Secret Agent stories are available across Canada through Red Tuque Books: www.redtuquebooks.com

Suggested retail price $19.95

Hanako Masutani • Stéphane Jorisch

“...an unreservedly recommended pick for family, school and community library storybook collections for young readers.”
—MIDWEST BOOK REVIEW

“...a familiar tale of big changes and animal love that many readers will relate to.”
—SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL

Katarina Jovanovic

“A clever-eyed and artful view into the lives and dreams of two Romani teens.”
—KIRKUS REVIEWS (starred review)

“An endearing fictional story...with an ending that is beautiful, sweet, and heartbreaking, (that) reminds us that there are seldom easy solutions to complex problems.”
—QUILL AND QUIRE (starred review)
Teens tackling problems

YA novels that take on the death of a best friend, fighting injustice and rescuing a loved one.

BY BEVERLY CRAIG

Being an unpopular, unflit girl at high school is difficult for Sienna but it got much worse when her best friend died in Melinda Di Lorenzo’s novel Racing Hearts. Overcome by grief, Sienna returns for the new school year. Readers are immediately plunged into Sienna’s vulnerable state of mind as she stands in line at the cafeteria: “My head is down. My eyes are on my tray. I’m doing my best not to look around,” says Sienna. “I don’t want to know if anyone is watching me. I don’t want to know if anyone is not watching me. That would be worse. The other kids pretending like they can’t see me. Like they don’t know who I am or what happened five months ago. Because five months ago is when Stacy died. No, says a voice in my head. That’s not quite right, is it? Five months ago is when Stacy killed herself.”

The only reason Sienna is back at school is because her father urged her to go. “He doesn’t want me to lie in my bed anymore,” says Sienna. “It is when her best friend died in five months ago is when Stacey died.”

It doesn’t get easier when a bully at school hits Sienna. “He doesn’t want me to lie in my bed anymore,” says Sienna. “It is when her best friend died in five months ago is when Stacey died.”

One day, Trissa disappears, leaving a sense of mystery and fear among those who knew her. Emily Pohl-Weary’s YA novel Racing Hearts (Orca $10.95) is a follow-up to her previous novel A Blinding Light (Nimbus $14.95), is set in the same period and place. The characters are different but the themes are similar: the divide between the rich and poor, locals and immigrants, as well as the human bonds that arise in times of tragedy.

F

Former creative director of Ricepaper magazine, Hanako Masutani has published the children’s book (ages 6-8), Emi and Mini (TradeWind $21.95), about a girl who wants a dog but instead settles for a hamster she names Mini. Emi has recently moved with her single mother to the big city and is missing the friends and family she left behind. Her cousins have a dog, which is what Emi wants for her birthday but because of the apartment’s pet rules, she must settle for a smaller animal in a cage. At first, Emi doesn’t tell anyone about her new pet but then Mini escapes from her cage. During her ensuing search Emi realizes how much she has learned to love and confide her daily difficulties in Mini. A story of change, resilience and the search for a hamster. Emi and Mini is illustrated by Stéphane Jorisch.

KIDS: 6-8

Hanako Masutani

One of BC’s, and Canada’s most prolific children’s authors, Julie Lawson has published more than thirty books for young people. Her latest, Out of the Dark (Nimbus $14.95), is a middle grade novel (ages 8-12) about a teenage girl enduring the aftermath of the Halifax Explosion in 1917, the First World War and the onset of the Great Influenza pandemic that killed millions of people around the world. It’s a follow-up to Lawson’s award-winning A Blinding Light (Nimbus, 2017) also set in the same period and place. The characters are different but the themes are similar: the divide between the rich and poor, locals and immigrants, as well as the human bonds that arise in times of tragedy.

Middle Grade

Emi and Mini (TradeWind $21.95), is a middle grade novel (ages 8-12) about a teenage girl enduring the aftermath of the Halifax Explosion in 1917, the First World War and the onset of the Great Influenza pandemic that killed millions of people around the world. It’s a follow-up to Lawson’s award-winning A Blinding Light (Nimbus, 2017) also set in the same period and place. The characters are different but the themes are similar: the divide between the rich and poor, locals and immigrants, as well as the human bonds that arise in times of tragedy.

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A IS FOR AUDAIN

“During the course of my life, instead of attending hockey or baseball games, I chose to spend my leisure time in art museums,” says developer and art collector Michael Audain in Pictures on the Wall: Building a Canadian Art Collection (D&M $60). Audain began collecting art as a teenager. Later, with his wife Yoshiko Karasawa, the collection grew to one of the most notable private collections in the country. Audain writes candidly about 75 significant paintings, sculptures, and works from his collection, and includes colour photographs of each artwork. Audain is the founder and chairman of Polygon Homes, and wrote the memoir, One Man in His Time (Harbour, 2021).

B IS FOR BROWN

“Because the spectacle of her murder overwhelms the entirety of her perfectly human and unremarkable existence, I lost my mother as a way of creating a human and unremarkable existence, ” states developer and art collector Michael Audain in Pictures on the Wall: Building a Canadian Art Collection (D&M $60).

B IS FOR BROWN

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C IS FOR COLBY

Colleen Brown is the General Manager of Vancouver Poetry House, a not-for-profit supporting spoken word artists.

E IS FOR EMILIA

Emilia Symington-Fedy exposes the oppression of 90’s rape culture and sexual coercion among teenagers in her hometown in Skid Dogs (D&M $26.95). A brutal murder on the railroad tracks of the small town of Armstrong in the 1950s and early 1960s when Canadian government purged hundreds of employees suspected of being communist sympathizers or homosexuals. Daniel Neil follows the fictional character Finn Kenny in The Sum of One Man’s Pleasure (NeWest $22.95) as he flees Ottawa for Vancouver Island. Here Finn works for a wealthy man he befriended in his previous life as a bus-repair worker. When that friend dies, Finn is thrust into an existential moment and must speak out for himself. Publicity states that in this, his sixth novel, Neil questions “the stories we make of our own lives, the versions of ourselves we show to those closest to us, and the ways we find common ground in this world.”

G IS FOR GRAMMY

Having lived and worked in a variety of BC places and jobs, from Creston where she was raised to nearby Trail and further away in Pleasant Camp (population: 11), Victoria and back to Creston, Paulette Francœur has turned to writing a family memoir, Landed: Oceans, Lakes, and Landry (Maa Press $25). It tells how her husband went from struggling to read to getting his degree at the University of Victoria; sacrifices the family made; and chaotic adventures that included homelessness, broken vehicles, tight budgets and even a Viking funeral. Francœur recently started a mobile bookstore business called Kootenay Authors.

H IS FOR HANSABE

Emilia Symington-Fedy exposes the oppression of 90’s rape culture and sexual coercion among teenagers in her hometown in Skid Dogs (D&M $26.95). A brutal murder on the railroad tracks of the small town of Armstrong in the 1950s and early 1960s when Symington-Fedy grew up, brings her back home to comfort her alarmed mother. As the media shifts focus on the young girl killed for being alone on the tracks, opposed to the murderer at large, Symington-Fedy is confronted with the scars that were left by the sexual violence she and her high school friends experienced. Symington-Fedy has over 25 playwrighting credits, co-founded The Chop in Vancouver, and has been an essayist at CBC radio for 20 years.

I IS FOR IRINA

Irina Nikifortchuk, a nineteen-year-old Ukrainian school teacher, was abducted to be a forced laborer in the Leica camera factory in Nazi Germany. The story of her life unearths mysteries concerning World War II, and how Irina was rescued by the heiress to the Leica factory, Elsie Kühn-Leitz, and eventually found her way to Canada. These tales of survival were discovered by Sasha Colby, Irina’s granddaughter, in The Matryoshka Memoirs: A Story of Ukrainian Forced Labour, the Leica Camera Factory, and Nazi Resistance (ECW $24.95).

K IS FOR KOOI

Emilia Symington-Fedy exposes the oppression of 90’s rape culture and sexual coercion among teenagers in her hometown in Skid Dogs (D&M $26.95). A brutal murder on the railroad tracks of the small town of Armstrong in the 1950s and early 1960s when Symington-Fedy grew up, brings her back home to comfort her alarmed mother. As the media shifts focus on the young girl killed for being alone on the tracks, opposed to the murderer at large, Symington-Fedy is confronted with the scars that were left by the sexual violence she and her high school friends experienced. Symington-Fedy has over 25 playwrighting credits, co-founded The Chop in Vancouver, and has been an essayist at CBC radio for 20 years.

L IS FOR LIZ

Colleen Brown is the General Manager of Vancouver Poetry House, a not-for-profit supporting spoken word artists.

D IS FOR DANIAL

In a sweeping saga set in the late 1950s and early 1960s when the Canadian government purged hundreds of employees suspected of being communist sympathizers or homosexuals, Danial Neil follows the fictional character Finn Kenny in The Sum of One Man’s Pleasure (NeWest $22.95) as he flees Ottawa for Vancouver Island. Here Finn works for a wealthy man he befriended in his previous life as a bus-repair worker. When that friend dies, Finn is thrust into an existential moment and must speak out for himself. Publicity states that in this, his sixth novel, Neil questions “the stories we make of our own lives, the versions of ourselves we show to those closest to us, and the ways we find common ground in this world.”

F IS FOR FRANCOEUR

Having lived and worked in a variety of BC places and jobs, from Creston where she was raised to nearby Trail and further away in Pleasant Camp (population: 11), Victoria and back to Creston, Paulette Francœur has turned to writing a family memoir, Landed: Oceans, Lakes, and Landry (Maa Press $25). It tells how her husband went from struggling to read to getting his degree at the University of Victoria; sacrifices the family made; and chaotic adventures that included homelessness, broken vehicles, tight budgets and even a Viking funeral. Francœur recently started a mobile bookstore business called Kootenay Authors.
Barry Gough has released his 21st title, The Curious Passage of Richard Blanshard (Harbour $38.95) about the first governor of Vancouver Island (it was not yet a province). No, not James Douglas—who rather it was Richard Blanshard (as it was called in those days) for what would be a three-year stint during which he clashed with the powerful Hudson’s Bay Company—run by Chief Factor James Douglas (who later became the first governor of the colony of BC). Blanshard gets his due here after being long forgotten for his important role in warning London of American border aggressions including a planned invasion of Haida Gwaii. While he had his failures, Blanshard’s time illuminates the difficulties of the clash between European and Pacific Northwest cultures. 

In Triumph and Solidarity: BC Communists in the Early Years of the Great Depression (Athabasca Univ. Press $34.99) Jon Bartlett follows the activities of BC communists from the onset of the Great Depression (and their opposition to the relief camps) to the coming of the Popular Front and involvement with workers’ efforts to resist wage cutbacks in mines, mills, and the logging and fishing industries. He also delves into the forms of cultural resistance practiced by communists, from newspapers to popular songs. With Rika Ruebsaat, Bartlett has sung and produced seven albums of traditional Canadian songs, and presented workshops and lectures in schools and universities.

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"...plenty of surprises."—Booklist
"...a concise, sharp tale."—Publishers Weekly
"Really entertaining."—Graphic Policy
"...compelling visual feast."—Cloudscape Comics

In 1824 to 2024. The book explores the story of the people, the technologies, and the events that shaped the RCAF and its historical involvement with workers’ efforts to resist wage cutbacks in mines, mills, and the logging and fishing industries. He also delves into the forms of cultural resistance practiced by communists, from newspapers to popular songs. With Rika Ruebsaat, Bartlett has sung and produced seven albums of traditional Canadian songs, and presented workshops and lectures in schools and universities. 

Jon Bartlett

Elders Share Their Stories

An 18th century Quaker’s heroic, lonely fight to abolish slavery in America.

"Lester captures the overlooked legacy of a fiery abolitionist..."—Publishers Weekly
"Moving images, a passionate script, and a compelling narrative in one."—Broken Pencil
"Lester’s raw, expressive visual approach perfectly delivers."—Nate Powell, artist of the Berlin trilogy

An 18th century Quaker’s heroic, lonely fight to abolish slavery in America.

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...compelling visual feast."—Graphic Policy

—Cloudscape Comics

Lester captures the overlooked legacy of a fiery abolitionist..."—Publishers Weekly
"Moving images, a passionate script, and a compelling narrative in one."—Broken Pencil
"Lester’s raw, expressive visual approach perfectly delivers."—Nate Powell, artist of the Berlin trilogy

...stunning artwork."—Jason Lutes, author of Berlin

Editions are forthcoming in the UK; Japan; Italy; Korea; Spain; Thailand and Catalonia.
Mysteriously, a father disappears from his family home. A few months later, the mother vanishes too. As police investigations drag on, the mystery remains unsolved. 13-year-old Cirrus now lives alone with his grandmother. Unsatisfied with the reports from Detective Fielding, he soon starts his own investigation into who his parents really were.

“Sarah Gilbert writes of an old neighbourhood that is disappearing and being born anew. Her stories are as vibrant and intimate as drinking a cup of coffee on a stoop while gossiping with a neighbour in their housecoat.” — Heather O’Neill, author of When We Lost Their Heads

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Hilary Peach worked as a welder for 20 years in the male dominated trade of boilermaking. This is her story. “This is a wonderful book — not just funny but a rare, insider’s look at the life of a travelling welder — fascinating.” — Kate Brand, author of Hammer & Nail

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PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY | 208 PAGES | $22

EVENT celebrates 50 years of publication with a Notes on Writing anthology, featuring more than 70 personal essays with insights into the joys and struggles of the writer’s life and process, written by notable Canadian writers, including Jane Urquhart, David Bergen, André Alexis, Madeleine Thien, Eden Robinson, Jen Sookfong Lee, Zoe Whittall, Joy Kogawa, Souvankham Thammavongsa, Joshua Whitehead, and many others.

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**M IS FOR MENZIES**

Five years ago, activist Heather Menzies began exploring the Ipperwash crisis and the broken treaty behind it. Her ancestors, Scottish immigrants, had settled on Nishnaabe treaty land in the early 1830s. She visited Cully George and others to help them write a memoir Meeting My Treaty Kin: Transformation,” says Menzie and to change at a level deep enough to be called transformation,” says Menzie. She visited Cully George and others to help them write their collective stories. But there was a challenge to learn to listen, to their own big questions and explore the answers to their own big questions about the world, What Will I Discover (Greystone $22.95), 9781773861241

**MIS FOR MENZIES**

**N IS FOR NICK**

“My boss, a 16-year-old girl named Susan, was mad when I teased her about a guy, so she threw a dart at me, supposedly to scare me,” says Nick Marino, in East Side Story: Growing Up at the PNE (Arsenal Pulp $21.95). „She threw it a little too hard, however, and I caught it in the forehead that I’d instinctively raised to block it.” Marino survived this early “job hazard,” and recounts many other incidents from the six summers he spent working at the PNE as a teen in this humorous, captivating memoir. He also explores the history of the fair that started over a century ago, in 1910. Marino is a co-founder and elementary school teacher of the PNE in Vancouver, 1984.

**N IS FOR NICK**

**Q IS FOR QUOI!**

Inspiring children to ask and explore the answers to their own big questions about the world, What Will I Discover (Greystone $22.95), 9781773861241

**Q IS FOR QUOI!**

**R IS FOR ROUTLEY**

In her latest collection of short stories, This Unlikely Soil (Caitlin $24.95), Andrea Routley explores the relationships, politics and identity issues of queer women. Each story embraces complex worlds with enough emotion and depth to make readers care about these characters. Routley dissects loneliness, conflict, online dating, coming out as queer, and relationship problems that her characters encounter. Her debut collection, Jane and the Whales (Caitlin, 2013) was a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award.

**R IS FOR ROUTLEY**

**S IS FOR STONEHOUSE**

As I wrote, I became interested in the yawning gap between the word ‘home’ and the actual place my mother was then living,” writes Cathy Stonehouse in her latest poetry collection Dream House (Nightwood $19.95). “I also considered my own complex feelings about the house I grew up in, and how poetry and the imagination can work as a kind of home in the absence of one.” Stonehouse delivers a deeply personal investigation of female embodiment focusing on pregnancy, the aging mind and history. The book is comprised of a long poem in six sections that was finished in the wake of her mother’s death. The metaphors and figurative language will be relatable to anyone who has lost a parent and is rediscovering one’s own sense of home.

**S IS FOR STONEHOUSE**

**T IS FOR TANAKA**

Ichiro is about to turn seventeen in his senior year at high school. He’s got a crush on a girl called Lexie and has just started working part-time at a restaurant that proudly touts “inclusivity.” Ichiro also has a secret—he is tama (although he hasn’t had surgery or started hormones) and recently began experimenting with drag. He worries how his friends will react when they find out. Eventually all is revealed in C.A. Tanaka’s YA novel, Baby Drag Queen (Orca $10.95), for ages 12+. A graduate of The Writer’s Studio program at SFU, Vancouver-based Tanaka is a multimedia trans writer. They are the executive director for the Storytelling with Drag Queens Foundation.
The World Is But a Broken Heart
Michael Maitland
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U IS FOR RISE UP
In Rise Up and Sing! Power, Protest, and Activism in Music (Greystone $26.95), Andrea Warner introduces young teens to the impact music wields over social justice issues, and highlights contemporary musicians such as Beyoncé and Billie Eilish alongside iconic artists like Nina Simone and John Lennon. Warner explores how core messages spread through music can inspire social transformation. Rise Up! is illustrated by Vancouver’s Louise Reimer.
978/1771649839

Y IS FOR YOUTUBE
It was all because of a YouTube video that Peter Riley achieves Internet fame. Riley, a fictional character in Logan Macnair’s novel Troll (Now or Never $19.95) creates a right-wing conspiracy theorist character called “Petrol Riley” for a drama class assignment. Problem is that Petrol is taken seriously by thousands of YouTube viewers who idolize him. The more hateful Petrol is, the more loyal his followers grow. Eventually Peter must decide whether fame or truth is more important. Macnair is a Burnaby-based prof and researcher who investigates the online narrative, recruitment and propaganda campaigns of extremist movements.
978/1696585729

Z IS FOR VAN ZANTEN
The Imposter (Histria $39.99) by Johann van Zanten provides a sweeping overview of the war years in Europe through the tribulations of a young woman from a poor German family who accepts a job as the concession shop operator with the railroad. After travelling across northern Europe, she meets and marries a Dutchman. They move to a farm near her husband’s hometown in Holland to raise their family. Then the Nazis invade and the woman must decide where her loyalties lie. Van Zanten immigrated to Canada from The Netherlands in 1982. She divides her time between Canada and Mexico.
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QUICKIES
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Caught in the cookie jar

A blustery day in the Comox Valley! A time for me to stay inside, listen to branches cracking, and try to accomplish something of value. Have another cuppa tea.

I made all of the good help given to me to bring All the Bears Sing (BC BookWorld, Spring 2023) cover story to a full and glorious life... The reviews in several notable media are humbling indeed, reinforcing a feeling of being caught with my grubby paw in the jar of still warm chocolate chip cookies. Rosal Dahl suggests “...You have a degree of humility. The writer who thinks that his work is marvelous is heading for trouble.”

Harriette Mrevly

Ruby music karma

Thank you, Alex Varty for your fair comment [review of Ruby music karma: A Popular History of Music and Culture, BC BookWorld, Autumn 2023] and thank you David Lester for the incredible layout! ...Thank you so much for your sensitive and very creative work. Wow. David designed my first Ruby music poster back in 1981, so this brings it all up in such a fun way. And I don’t usually use that word!

Connie Kuhns
Salt Spring Island

GREystone turns 30

“For our anniversary in 2023, we’ve taken the year to celebrate our growth into an internationally renowned publisher of books about nature, science, health, and more, while also looking back on the incredible voices we’ve published in the last thirty years, including luminaries of environmental writing such as David Suzuki, Peter Wohlleben, and Candace Savage.”

— Greg Strege, Books publisher, Jen Gauthier.

At a time when Canada is facing the worst wildfire season on record, we’re looking forward to continuing our legacy: publishing books that show readers how we can respect, protect, and care for the environment—and how we can create a future with both ourselves and the planet in mind.”

Karen Bakker (1871-2023)

Hodies Schorar and UBC professor, Karen Bakker died suddenly on August 14, 2023. Bakker recently was the Hubert Evans Nonfiction Prize for The Sounds of Life: How Digital Technology Is Bringing Us Closer to the Worlds of Animals and Plants (Princeton Univ. Press, 2022), which was accepted posthumously by her husband, Phillippe LeBillon.

Bakker was born in Toronto and raised in Ottawa, Bakker joined UBC in 2002. With her husband and two daughters, Bakker split her time between their home in Vancouver and Brittany, France. Bakker wrote two popular science books for children under the pen name, Karen Le Billon. French Kids Eat Everything (HarperCollins, 2012) was published in 15 countries. Her follow-up title wasGetting to Yum: The 7 Secrets of Raising Happy Eaters (HarperCollins, 2014).

As an academic, Bakker published over 100 articles and seven scholarly books. She was the recipient of a UBC Killam Fellowship, Stanford University’s Annenberg Fellowship in Communication, Canada’s “Top 40 Under 40,” and a Trudeau Foundation Fellowship.


His son, Taras Greesco, based in Montreal, also came to prominence as a non-fiction writer in 2000. In a celebration of his father’s life in The Globe and Mail, Taras Greesco recounted his father’s last days: “On an unseasonable cold Saturday morning, Paul drove into Snug Harbour to pick up a newspaper. After trudging up his snow-covered driveway, paper in hand, he suffered a stroke, his third. After 15 days, during which friends and family came to his bedside, he slipped away. A newspaper to the end, he was cremated with a copy of The Globe and Mail tucked under one arm.”

A newspaper and magazine writer before he began authoring books, Paul Greesco of Bowen Island died after a stroke on March 12, 2023.

Born in Winnipeg on December 14, 1939 to immigrant parents from what is now Ukraine, Greesco got his start as a news reporter while still in his teens. He worked for a variety of newspapers across Canada before settling in the Vancouver area in the 1970s where he co-founded Vancouver Magazine with Ron Stern.

Greesco began his career as an author in 1985 with The Money Rustlers, Self-Made Millionaires of the New West (Viking, 1985), a study he wrote with David Cruise as a non-fiction writer in 2000. In a celebration of his father’s life in The Globe and Mail, Taras Greesco recounted his father’s last days: “On an unseasonable cold Saturday morning, Paul drove into Snug Harbour to pick up a newspaper. After trudging up his snow-covered driveway, paper in hand, he suffered a stroke, his third. After 15 days, during which friends and family came to his bedside, he slipped away. A newspaper to the end, he was cremated with a copy of The Globe and Mail tucked under one arm.”

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What happens when that person you thought you liked is still alive?

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The Wild Horses of the Chilcotin: Their History and Future

Wayne McCrory

The Chilcotin’s wild horses are under threat. Wildlife biologist and conservationist Wayne McCrory draws upon decades of research to show that these animals are a resilient part of the area’s balanced ecosystem and need to be protected.

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Decriminal: How We Decriminalized Drugs in British Columbia

Kennedy Stewart

Former Vancouver mayor Kennedy Stewart argues that recognizing the overdose crisis as a public health issue will help reduce stigma, increase access to health services, and decrease harms related to criminalization.

CURRENT AFFAIRS | PAGES: 212 | 5.5 x 8.5
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Ian Kennedy

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Tofino and Clayoquot Sound

A History
Margaret Hogsfield

and Ian Kennedy

This book tells the story of the people who lived and worked in the Clayoquot Sound area, from the First Nations to the present day. Includes maps and historical photographs.

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The Days of Augusta

Mary Augusta Tappage Evans

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The White Light of Tomorrow

Russell Thornton

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Commune: A Novel

Deirdre Kennedy

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FICTION | PAGES: 352 | 6 x 9
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Glenn Woodsworth and David Woodsworth

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