HOLD YOUR WILD HORSES

Wayne McCrory originally thought wild horses were an invasive feral species. But one night he dreamed of a giant stone horse and everything changed.

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JUDY LEBLANC
Three generations of Acadian women. P 26

EMELIA SYMINGTON-FEDY
A memoir of her girl gang and 90s rape culture in a small BC town. P 10

GINGER GOODWIN
Playwright Elaine Ávila on the union activist. P 20-21
We Wished. We hoped. We Dreamed.

“We’re Happy You’re Here”

Julie Wilkins
Illustrated by Bendi Saito

“An inclusive epistolary debut.”
—Publishers Weekly

“With a realistic style and crystalline colors, the pictures convey the happy anticipation of new babies.”
—School Library Journal

It takes many special people to help a child grow, and every journey is unique!

Recently my best friend became a father to the most wonderful small human through a whole lot of wishing, planning and saving. Curt and Avery’s journey involved friends, family, a surrogate, an egg donor, healthcare specialists, a financial adviser, doctors, nurses, lab technicians and many others. Their beautiful story continues within a community of shared wisdom and love.

The path to (and through) family life isn’t always easy. And while I set out to create a book that shows the care, tenacity and expertise I witnessed along Curt and Avery’s journey, I sure hope it resonates with small humans of all sorts—and their many special people.

—Julie Wilkins

More Stories to Share with Little Ones
Novel motherhood

When we meet Frida in the hospital, finding ways to coconct memories of a happy childhood, whether truthful or not. Having lost her memory, Frida looks to others for answers including a nurse. “Your name is Frida Frank Brooke,” says the nurse. “Named Frida either after the Mexican painter or a rich old aunt, not quite sure which. Your mother, Luisa Frank, is quite famous and you are both artists. Does any of that ring a bell?” Frida isn’t sure and thinks, “Not what I am hoping for, but it’s a start. And truth be known, the sound of her voice is more comforting than the words.”

But it’s Frida’s lawyer who draws out most of her story in Loaves, Small Breads, and Other Plant-Based. That’s the path taken by Whistler-based Ed Tatton with his wife Natasha for BRD: Sourdough, Small Breads, and Other Plant-Based Baking (Penguin $50), a vegan cookbook. The couple moved from the UK to Canada in 2013 to snowboard and work in hospitality. Ed eventually began making sourdough bread for the restaurant where he worked, which he also sold in small batches to his friends. Word spread, more people wanted Ed’s bread, and the couple opened their own bakery to maintain their vegan lifestyle and values (sourdough is naturally vegan). Their cookbook shares techniques and 100 recipes for making naturally leavened sourdough loaves, small breads and vegan small-baked goods.

Bye Black in a white culture

As an early creator and proponent of Black literature in Vancouver, Wayne Compton found he was on a lonely path—although he was supported by other white colleagues who “made space” for his sensibilities, they were so influenced by the dominant white culture and blind to the overwhelming power of it, that it was hard for them to relate to Compton. “I could see in the way that my hip hop interests simply did not fit anywhere that there was a centralization of a singular lineage. I felt it. It was there in the silences,” Compton writes, “and engaged with it by bending their way outside it.”

For artists from outside white culture, they either held on to the dominant “white centre,” says Compton, “or you made your lonely way outside it.” Compton argues for unseating white universalism in art and shows how a more collective poetic approach makes space for diversity.

Being Black in a white culture
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BC BookWorld • Spring 2024
Born in BC’s Cariboo region in 1888, Mary Augusta Tappage Evans (known as Augusta) could remember when travel was by horse-drawn stagecoach—indeed, she knew stories of stagecoach robberies. The granddaughter of a Soda Creek hereditary chief on her maternal side, and on the paternal side, a Métis who came west after internal side, a Métis who came west after post-war, sunny, dry southern Italy to Lake Cowichan where it rains more than the sun shines, Tina Biello writes of her upbringing in The Weight of Survival (Caitlin $20), a combination of poetry, short prose, Italian curses and blessings, and even a recipe. “Church every Sunday, pasta three times a week,” she writes. Her father becomes a logger, her mother a housewife in a poor but loving household with seven children. Hot chocolate from a vending machine living her queer life and “The women who came home was her wife.”

Poet, playwright and actor, Biello was a fluent Shuswap speaker despite having spent her early years at a residential school where she was only allowed to speak Italian curses and blessings, and with the Ts’mysen inhabitants—indeed, a trading hub. Beginning Prince Rupert has always been a trading hub. Located on Kaien Island, Prince Rupert has always been a trading hub. Beginning with the Ts’mysen inhabitants and their many Indigenous trading partners, and the later arrival of European fur traders as well as European and Asian settlers, the city is also ethnically diverse. Compiling a series of historical events that are illustrated with archival photographs, Mirau doesn’t shy away from uncomfortable truths even as he celebrates how the city has grown. Mirau was a former Prince Rupert city councillor before the age of 49, the age of 49, he writes. “Logger-shamed” at the age of 49, Hornidge later worked as a security guard. He admits “the logging industry was not blameless. Yes, a careless approach was adopted by many as the forestry industry picked up speed during what was an era of largely unrestricted logging.” But in his defence, Hornidge adds, “there were those among us proactively seeking a more environmentalist approach that would conserve, even while we harvested.” This is his story.
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N 6 BC BOOKWORLD • SPRING 2024
Biologist Wayne McCrory has published more than ninety scientific reports on wildlife and conservation, including reports on wild horses in BC and Alberta.

Wayne McCrory originally thought wild horses were an invasive feral species. But one night he dreamed of a giant stone horse and everything changed.

In 2001, Wayne McCrory visited the Chilcotin to research grizzly bears and other creatures. He came with prejudices about the wild horses in the area. McCrory notes that many had been eradicated. He couldn’t have been more wrong.

After a few days of survey work during which McCrory and his study group encountered bands of large, handsome wild horses, he saw that the wild bunchgrass meadows where they grazed were free of degradation. McCrory began to question his previous assumptions.

Following an intense dream one night about climbing a cliff that morphs into a giant stone horse that for a moment becomes alive, he became inspired to study these wild horses and thus began documenting their numbers and mapping their locations and range.

After two decades of rigorous field work, McCrory makes the case that the wild horses in this part of BC are a resilient part of the ecosystem in his book, The Wild Horses of the Chilcotin, and must be protected.

McCrory isn’t the only one seeking to save wild horses. The Xeni Gwet’in/Tsilhqot’in First Nation view the wild horses—or qiyus in their language—as an integral part of their lives, a spiritual horse—or qiyus in their language—as an integral part of their lives, a spiritual tradition in 770,000-hectare land base be fully protected as the “Eagle Lake Wild Horse Preserve.”

The original goal of McCrory’s research project was to collect data for the Xeni Gwet’in to help support their goal to halt logging plans and create a massive wilderness preserve. A big part of the area they fought to save is known as the Brittanys Triangle. The only reason that Britannys Triangle remains a wilderness area today is because of the tenacity of the Tsilhqot’in, with help from conservation organizations, to do so. When loggers were ready to move equipment into the region in 1992, the Tsilhqot’in blocked the only entrance at Henry’s Crossings bridge. This protest action resulted in a promise from the then-Premier Mike Harcourt that no loggers would have place without the consent of Xeni Gwet’in First Nation.

Two years later, land use planning resulted in the creation of parks in the region including the large Tsilhqot’in Provincial Park, but the wild grasslands were not included due to pressure from cattle ranchers and the Britannys Triangle remained mostly unprotected. After Wayne McCrory completed his initial research, he presented his results to the Xeni Gwet’in community in 2002 and recommended that the Brittanya Triangle be fully protected as Western Canada’s first wild horse preserve. As a result, the community’s leader, Nits’än (Chief) Roger Williams, recommended that the entire Xeni Gwet’in traditional 770,000-hectare land base be fully protected as the “Eagle Lake Henry Elegesi Qiyus (Cayuse) Wild Horse Preserve.”

Following his initial study, McCrory continued to do more research to determine where the horses originated, how they survived the harsh winters, how they coped after a massive wildfire had burned through the region and how they interacted with other species, including the wolves and cougars that prey on them. When he heard how the peat was still burning after the wildfires, he joined others with the difficult task of putting these fires out by digging trenches by hand. When he seriously burned his ankle after stepping into hot coals, McCrory was forced to leave on his ATV alone in the night. When he got to Williams Lake where he checked into a hotel, he had to clean the wound himself. Fortunately, it was only a serious second-degree burn which finally healed after a few months, despite a throbbing infection.

Certainly, a real treat for readers are the amazing photos and the many stories about the wild horses, including those so well known by the locals that they have names. Most often, the horses remained aloof and were difficult to observe, but McCrory describes one field day when a group called the black stallion band “…descended upon us from about 100 metres away. Chunks of turf flew as if flocks of little black cowbirds were flitting out of the way. The foals kept pace alongside, as close to their mothers as they could get. At the last minute about 20 metres away, the herd veered off in an amazing unison as one sees in flocks of birds when they turn. They passed so close we saw the twitches of their eyes and the pink insides of their flared nostrils.”

Thanks to McCrory’s impeccable research, we learn about the origins of these wild horses and how they ended up in the Chilcotin. Genetic testing of hair samples, along with physical traits that the primary bloodline for most of the wild horses in the Brittanys Triangle is from the Spanish Iberian horses that arrived in Mexico in the sixteenth century with the conquistadors as well as from the Canadian horse that originated from the horses that arrived from France in the seventeenth century.

Although these wild horses are deemed by some to be feral horses, we learn they could also be seen as a species that has returned to where it originated. Palaeontologists have long determined that the original horses first evolved in North America, then migrated across the Bering Strait to populate Europe and Asia, while the first horses here went extinct. The genetic testing also shows traces from the East Russian (Yakut) horses that have evolved to withstand extreme cold winters, which may explain how the Chilcotin horses have adapted to survive in this northern region.

Still, many of the wild horses of West Chilcotin are only partly protected, as an estimated 2,200 of the total population of 2,800 survive outside the Eagle Lake Henry Elegesi Qiyus (Cayuse) Wild Horse Preserve in heavily logged areas. Negotiations between the Tsilhqot’in and the province are ongoing. In the meantime, wild horses are still subject to outdated provincial laws. In the past, bounties were placed on wild horses and many were killed. The province also hasn’t recognized the wild horse preserve created by the Xeni Gwet’in.

Overall, The Wild Horses of the Chilcotin is a fabulous read about a fascinating topic that should be of great interest to horse lovers, to those interested in conservation and to those who love stories about First Nations that remain close to their lands. In this part memoir, part history, part research, Wayne McCrory is a back-to-the-lander and environmentalist who lives with his wife Kathi in a log house they built decades ago. He is currently working on a book about the wildfire that devastated their community in 2023.
As the mining industry seeks riches from Mongolia to the Pacific Islands and new territory on the ocean floor, the methods remain the same: secure the terrain, steal the resources and clear out, leaving a terrible mess behind.

And with that in mind, I'd like to propose a fourth option for puzzled booksellers: True Crime.

What may be surprising to many—although probably not to those of us who, like Pollon himself, have family history with the mining industry—is that the rapacious greed of the Gilded Age robber barons such as Robert Dunsmuir lives on a century later. The scene of the crime has shifted from the coal mines of Northumberland, Kentucky and Vancouver Island to the so-called “global south,” but the methods remain the same: secure the terrain, steal the resources and move on, leaving a terrible mess behind.

In places like New Guinea, the corporate thieves are abetted by politicians who contend that since Western nations grew rich by despoiling their own terrain, they have a moral duty to take a second chance on the planet by living on unceded Snuneymuxw territory.

But move on to where? As there is no Planet B, the answer to that question can be found under Science Fiction.

Alexander Varty is a senior West Coast arts journalist living on unceded Snuneymuxw territory.
Building a Brighter Future for the Generations to Come

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MIKAELA CANNON
Foreword by NANCY J. TURNER
If you have one field guide, one cookbook, one mushroom manual, and one foraging calendar, make it this one!
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TIFFY COOKS is available now.
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Train tracks snake through Emelia Symington-Fedy’s hometown of Armstrong—the town where she grew up and where she has returned in the wake of a murder.

In this gritty memoir, a woman faces the rape culture she grew up in.

Emelia Symington-Fedy moved to Armstrong at the age of thirteen, where she fell in with a group of unruly girls who regularly met on the train tracks. They “acted like how I imagined sisters would be,” writes Symington-Fedy in her memoir, Skid Dogs, which she narrates alternately from vantage points of midlife in the early 2010s, and the earlier 1990s as she entered high school.

“The girls,” as Symington-Fedy often calls her new friends, provide solace from the stresses of school and home life. Raucous and feisty, the “skid dogs,” a derogatory name they called themselves, includes Em, Cristal, Bugsy, Aimes and Max. The girls casually banter about “bush parties” and “blowjobs” at their railway hangout spot. “None of us are allowed to wear makeup in public yet,” writes Symington-Fedy. “Bugsy and I are the only ones to have bled so far.” Her narrative is filled with references to armpits and crotches, and other hallmarks of puberty’s awkwardness.

Symington-Fedy writes with a biting wit that shines through her recollection of the 90s, but her humour is darkened by tragedy. At the heart of the memoir is the 2011 murder of 18-year-old Taylor Van Diest on Halloween night. Returning to Armstrong to take care of her ill mother, Symington-Fedy hears residents speculate about the motives for Van Diest’s murder: “If the man had got what he wanted, he wouldn’t have beaten her so badly,” is one particularly jarring comment. Symington-Fedy remarks dryly, “everyone knows, a girl has to be killed before she’s taken seriously; anything less is just called growing up.”

It is Van Diest’s sexually motivated murder that prompts Symington-Fedy’s reflection on her own adolescent sexual experiences. Skid Dogs reveals the constant pressure on teen girls to perform for men. “Some nights before bed, I’d get on my hands and knees in my favourite flannel nightie to practice in front of the mirror,” recalls Symington-Fedy, “simulating the different positions I might find myself in—what angle to keep my neck at so there was no...
double chin, and how much I needed to suck in my stomach to show off my ribs—so I’d know what I’d look like before it happened.”

The girls navigate questions about their bodies—“the dick hole and pee hole are two separate holes?”—while combating the ruthless rape culture of the 90s that they face. They dodge boys in the hallways, who suck up time that could be spent on the railway tracks—their “sanctuary.” But when Em and her friends do begin exploring relationships with boys at school, they unlock feelings of both annoyance and fear: “He scared me, in the way nothing was off limits to him, how he so easily looked at me and thought of me as an object.”

In the face of these pressures, Em and her friends can always go to escape. “The hallways were where we’d been happiest. Tracks were where we’d been happiest.”

This burgeoning sexuality also becomes an intoxicating power for Em: “If all I had to do to feel this good was give them my body, the decision was easy.” The exchange also brings a sense of safety: “If we gave the boys what they wanted before it was demanded of us, we stayed safe.”

As Em reflects on her experiences of sexual assault and the pressures to endure the advances of boys despite the pain they caused her physically, she says, “Van Diest’s spectre looms as Symington-Fedy wraps up her narrative, an unspoken permission picking over of our bodies.”

Van Diest’s spectre looms as Symington-Fedy attempts to reconcile the events in adulthood, asking “What happened to us, back then? What had they done? Was there a single sexual encounter that felt mutual, shared?”

There is one place Em and her friends can always go to escape. “The tracks were where we’d been happiest. Where we came to escape the boys’ tedious picking over of our bodies,” says Symington-Fedy.

Van Diest’s spectre looms as Symington-Fedy wraps up her narrative, an unspoken permission picking over of our bodies. “It could have been me.”

Sonja Pinto is a writer, photographer and printmaker. They reside on the unceded territories of the hən’q̓əmin̓ people (Victoria, BC).
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In the 1980s, Vancouver grew up. This sleepy resource town was discovered by international investors. Hong Kong émigrés were the first to spot the potential of a city set in a landscape so stunning that it brought tears to one’s eyes. Luckily for Vancouver, it had city officials who knew an exciting opportunity when they saw one. Uniquely, they set up a system to capture as much of this influx of new capital value for public benefit as seemed possible. Derelict industrial sites blessed with incredible water views were reasoned for homes. With some sage advice from Hong Kong investment experts, city officials annexed these areas for very high-density housing, depending on towers to deliver the bulk of this new density. This approach was the secret to their success. Because British Columbia’s laws allowed it, city staff and other stakeholders could, in effect, bargain with developers for amenity payments as a condition of project approval. The payments were to be negotiated, not imposed.

This model will get a city into trouble in many parts of the world and often for good reason. In some places, this process, poetically called paying for zoning, is illegal. Decades later this strategy got Vancouver into trouble—even if, for a few decades, it all worked out.

In the 1980s and 90s, city staff and political leaders collaborated with talented designers and accommodating developers to evolve what became known worldwide as “Vancouverism.” When it emerged, Vancouverism was unique, an unprecedented model of high-density living in the midst of an amenity-rich urban environment where all the lessons of urban-planning theorist Jane Jacobs and other late-twentieth-century urbanists could be executed. And it was all paid for with land rent. Most important here was the term “land lift.” When developers negotiated with the city for how much higher density they could build, they calculated the difference between the value of the land—its allowable density increased. Doubling the allowable density increased the land’s value when rezoned for much higher density (which added vast new amounts of value to the land that buildings are erected upon—in the business, called “land lift”). This money was then used for amenities such as community centres, daycare, parks and, most importantly, affordable housing. It worked … at least for a while.

In the following excerpt, Condon writes of a period when Vancouver found a way to remain a truly livable place as the City bargained with developers to take back a healthy portion of the increase in land values when land was rezoned for much higher density (which added vast new amounts of value to the land that buildings are erected upon—in the business, called “land lift”). This money was then used for amenities such as community centres, daycare, parks and, most importantly, affordable housing. It worked … at least for a while.
The people, machines and global events that shaped the Royal Canadian Air Force in its first hundred years.

Some may find that coverage is a little unbalanced: a mere 12 pages out of 211 are devoted to pre-Second World War stories. But after all, it was the RCAP's performance in that war that really brought it into its own. With some downright unimaginable stats such as the fact that out of every hundred pilots in Bomber Command, 45 were killed.

Not all of the RCAP major units are covered: but then the tome doesn't purport to be a comprehensive history. For example, despite its importance, RCAF's performance in that war that really brought it into its own. With some downright unimaginable stats such as the fact that out of every hundred pilots in Bomber Command, 45 were killed.

And who knew about the RCAF connection?—starring in both Olympic and NHL competition? Three players for the Boston Bruins who later joined the RCAF, left winger Woody Dumart, centre Milt Schmidt, and right winger Bobby Bauer (dubbed the "Kraut Line") finished in the top three consecutive spots in NHL scoring in the 1939-1940 season and won Stanley Cups in 1939 and 1941. Then, after enlisting, they played on the Ottawa RCAF Flyers that won the Allan Cup in 1942 (the senior ice hockey championship of the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association). The hockey experience continued when the RCAF Flyers won Olympic Gold in 1948, reeling off six straight victories. And did it in fine style: five shutouts in eight games.

Many have heard of Canada's world-leading Avro Arrow supersonic intercep- tor design, way ahead of its time when it was developed between 1955-1959 (but scantly outlined before it could be implemented). But have you heard of the RCAF's SIS Plan, for Physical Fitness? In the same late-1950s era, it wasn't cancelled like the Arrow but instead went on to worldwide fame despite the RCAP's rapid adoption of the Plan. The SIX booklet was a worldwide bestseller. Translated into 13 languages, it's philosophy resembles today's high-intensity interval training adapted by King Charles III, Prince William, and Catherine, Princess of Wales. Another of the book's stars is Lance-Corporal Steven Deschamps who was a victim of the "Gay Purg." During the Cold War (1947 to 1991), paranoia prompted the federal government to identify and remove suspected LGBTQ2+ military personnel because they were thought to be potential se- curity risks through their vulnerability to blackmail. Deschamps fought it and, following a successful Federal Court challenge, in 1992 became the first known homosexual to be re-accepted. There are so many more stories, too numerous to mention. From in- volvement in world hotspots such as Rwanda, Kosovo, 9/11, UAE, Afghani- stan, Iraq, Syria, Libya and Romania; to tamer topics like the origin of the RCAF Tartan and tracking Santa Claus through NORAD each Christmas Eve.

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Another Order
Selected Works
JUDITH COPITHORNE
Gathers the previously inaccessible works of Judith Copithorne, the groundbreaking writer and artist.

Canoes
MAYLIS DE KERANGAL
TRANSLATED BY JESSICA MOORE
Eight stories from “one of contemporary fiction’s most gifted sentence builders,” the author of Birth of a Bridge and Mend the Living.

Lha yudit’ih We Always Find a Way
Bringing the Tšilhqot’in Title Case Home
LORRAINE WEIR & CHIEF ROGER WILLIAM
A vital oral history of the first case in Canada to result in a declaration of Aboriginal Rights and Title to a specific piece of land.

No Town Called We
NIKKI REIMER
“Bipedal fuck-ups R us. Nikki Reimer brings grief and snark to the crises of late-stage capitalism.”
—Tanis MacDonald
Life in Canada’s Arctic is hard. But it was made harder for Inuit by the federal government’s actions in the twentieth century to relocate them from where they had lived for generations, to places they had never seen. The outcomes were disastrous and reverberate to this day. Inuit Relocations: Colonial Policies and Practice, by Frank James Tester and Krista Ulujuk Zawadski (James Lorimer $34.95)

...and artworks to tell of what happened. BC BookWorld presents the following book excerpts.

Canada’s history of relocating Inuit communities to lands they did not know.

Inuit Relocations: Colonial Policies and Practice, Inuit and resourceful, incredibly skilled and hunting caribou. Inuit were created for summer and fall to hunt caribou. Some winter and spring, they hunted seals,...
his can’t have been an easy book to write. No Letter in Your Pocket describes the long and difficult process by which writer and editor Heather Conn gradually realizes that she was a victim of incest, and how she comes to terms with that awful reality.

Nor is this an easy book to read. The subject of incest is obviously an uncomfortable one. While Conn spares readers most of the disturbing details, her story at times makes for a toe-curlingly intimate account of how her father abused her—physically and emotionally.

But Conn’s soul-baring honesty and writing skills compel you to keep reading and keep learning. The arc of her narrative—how she denied and masked her trauma, her attempts to find the human connections and love she needed, and how she was able to deal with the past and get on with her life—is one that anyone with the slightest amount of empathy will be drawn in by.

The first half of No Letter in Your Pocket recounts Conn’s travels through Asia with her father, and then solo. She is on a quest for self-knowledge, healing and love. Interspersed throughout her narrative are memories of growing up in a strict household dominated by her sexist, alcoholic, workaholic father, a leading Toronto anesthesiologist. At this stage of her life, Conn is still not consciously aware that her father committed incest with her when she was a child growing up in a comfortable, upper middle-class household, but she is increasingly aware that something in their relationship isn’t right.

Recounting her travels, Conn weaves her struggle with her inner demons and her search for a romantic partner to whom she can commit with evocative descriptions of the people and places she encounters in India, Ladakh and Nepal. The second half, titled “Healing at Home,” describes the long and harrowing process whereby Conn gradually realizes how she has repressed the memory of being abused by her father, and how she eventually finds the courage to confront him with that painfully acquired knowledge.

“To heal meant releasing my anger,” Conn writes, “but I had no idea how much debilitating grief lay beneath it … On too many days, I found myself sobbing without prompt.” Heather Conn tells a compelling, deeply emotional story—and a controversial one, because she decided that ending the trauma that had plagued her for decades meant forgiving her father.

“That wouldn’t work with a sociopath or psychopath,” Conn writes, “but at least it acknowledges the potential for good in someone … by denouncing my dad’s actions, I don’t have to hate or obliterate him … Although I will never dismiss what he did to me, I can still choose to forgive him for it.” Not all of us are victims of incest, but we all have our traumas and psychic wounds, which is why Conn’s book is so engaging and inspiring.

Forgiving an abuser

How Heather Conn overcame her childhood trauma.

Stephen McClure is a freelance writer and editor who divides his time between Vancouver and Tokyo.

9781771837873

Heather Conn with Rhubarb on the pier in Roberts Creek on BC’s Sunshine Coast.
“Distinctly urban, with a twist!”

**NEW THIS SPRING**

**STASIO: A NOVEL IN THREE PARTS**
TAMAS DOBOZY
From the author of the award-winning Siege 13 comes an engrossing detective novel told in three distinct novellas, each one tracing the ever-deepening involvement of detective Anthony de Stasio in a series of political nightmares.

“Stasio’s story possesses a weird magic, weighted by old world history, yet surging like lava.”
— Mark Anthony Jarman, author of Burn Man: Selected Stories

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**MONSTER**
JOWITA BYDLOWSKA
From the bestselling author of Drunk Mom and Possessed comes Monster, a mesmerizing, brave new work of autofiction.

Monster is a shattering, feminist manifesto exploring sexual awakening, motherhood, immigrant trauma and the power of female rage.

$22 | NOVEL | 256 PAGES | 978-1-77214-224-2

**A BOUQUET BROUGHT BACK FROM SPACE**
KEVIN SPENST
A Bouquet Brought Back from Space subverts and sublimates traditions of religious poetry, love poetry, and song. Playful in form, this fourth book of poetry by Spenst explores love, loss, faith, mental health, and poetic friendships.

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**AFTER WE DROWNEO D**
JILL YONIT GOLDBERG
After an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico explodes, everything in fifteen-year-old Jesse’s life deep in rural Louisiana is derailed. After We Drowned is a Southern Gothic coming-of-age novel that deals with environmental crisis, poverty, and the power of secrets.

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**NEW THIS SUMMER**

**PLAYLIST: A PROFUSICITY OF YOUR LEAST-EXPECTED POEMS**
MICHAEL TURNER
Playlist: a Profuscity of Your Least-Expected Poems documents the life and practice of a writer who grew up in a musical household, spent his early adult years as a touring musician and his later years programming nightclubs, hotels, galleries and festivals.

$20 | POETRY/MEMOIR | 128 PAGES | 978-1-77214-228-0

**THE TENANTS**
PAT DOBIE
Winner of the 45th Annual 3-Day Novel Contest
In the city of Vancouver, even dirt costs. In The Tenants three of its residents are struggling with their homes — whether that’s grappling with real estate prices, simmering resentments, or an uneasy co-living arrangement with the local wildlife.

$18 | NOVEL | 96 PAGES | 978-1-77214-229-7

AVAILABLE TO THE TRADE FROM PGC/RAINCOAST
Jessica Johns’ debut novel about a traumatized Cree millennial who is followed by a crow is beyond labels of horror or magical realism.

When Mackenzie shifts their perspective an inch, we can smell the snow of their home in Treaty 8 territory. Johns, like their protagonist, is from northern Alberta where Johns says lakes are “watchful,” and lands and waters are sacrificed to the appetite of extractive industries.

Mackenzie has known “darkness dreams” before, when as a child, they experienced dreams of connection, forewarning and the protection of their sister. Dreams can be tools to fix moments we’re forced to remember. Mackenzie is fighting a dark being while unravelling feelings of guilt and incomplete grieving. A sense of loss seeps in, and in this way the stalking spirit in Bad Cree feels like an allegory for the weight of grief and the unresolved.

Recognizing spirit is part of this protagonist’s self-discovery, and things ramp up with Mackenzie’s archetypal return home to multifaceted relationships. Mackenzie’s circle of Indigenous women and queer characters bring warmth as a counterpoint to the atmosphere of silent keening. Indigenous readers know these aunties—we’ve sat at that table, felt the love of teasing jokes. With complicated and interesting characters, Johns introduces readers to the strength of our women without cliché or romance.

Part of the rising tension is Mackenzie’s need for repaired relations and reconnection with their family. Estrangement as a coping mechanism has done harm, and this needs to be healed so they can rally together “like two pieces of skin on either side of an open wound, considering how to reconnect again,” writes Johns.

This novel has been tagged as horror, and I’m not sure I agree. There are too many things in our families’ lived experiences that are horrific to use the label for anything that involves violence, mystery or darkness. Bad Cree holds all of those things, while still being poetic and loving.

Jessica Johns identifies as non-binary, as does the protagonist, Mackenzie, in Bad Cree.

**Odette Auger, journalist and storyteller, is Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxw浦lfxilxw (Klahoose), Omena qaym (Tla’amin) and Hup qaym (Homalco) territories.**

**Jessica Johns by Jessica Johns (HarperCollins 124.99)**

**Where a crow’s eyes see right into YOU**
In her two new plays, Elaine Ávila portrays people who risked their well-being for labour rights and environmental protection.

The Ballad of Ginger Goodwin & Kitimat: Two plays for Workers
by Elaine Ávila (Talonbooks $19.95)

BY BEVERLY CRAMP

Ávila’s second of the two plays, Kitimat, is concerned with another kind of social justice and is about the period in 2014 when Kitimat residents had to decide between economic prosperity and environmental protection as they voted on a proposed oil pipeline. Many of the workers in the town were descendants of European immigrants who had come to Kitimat to find work and the good life in the early 1950s as the “instant town” sprang up to support an aluminum smelting industry.

How did a person like Ginger Goodwin decide to risk his life for the good of others? Is it safer to be a land defender, or engaged in a labour action? Anna is actively engaged in both Goodwin and Anna’s employer, Selwyn Blaylock (1879–1945), a celebrated Canadian geologist, gardener and smelter manager, helps Anna in her quest to read and write. BC BookWorld: The managers and owners of smelters don’t come off well in your play (including Selwyn Blaylock). You paint a picture of entitled and arrogant upper classes who manipulate and mistreat working people. Was this borne out in your research?

EA: In this particular play, I don’t presume to represent all managers and owners of mines and smelters, or the upper classes. My play focuses on the history of the working people in our province, and yes, it is borne out by extensive research.

Selwyn Blaylock’s main actions in the play are well documented, including his refusal to meet the labour mediator from Ottawa, and that he served on the draft board which, during the strike, suddenly switched Goodwin’s status from Category C (unfit for duty because of ill health as a coal miner and years of strikes, ulcers, terrible teeth) to Category A, ready for the front lines. The poisons from the smelter Blaylock managed are also well documented: the airborne toxins disintegrated leaves, made holes in laundry if it was on the clothes line and killed dogs.

During Blaylock’s leadership, this toxic smoke led to a landmark trans-boundary pollution case: the “Trail Smelter Dispute,” settled in 1941, in which citizens in both the US and Canada complained that their crops were dying due to the fumes from the smelter.

BCBW: You incorporate old labour songs in the play about Goodwin. What was the purpose? Or do you just like to have music in your productions?

EA: Because Goodwin and his friend, Joe Taylor (featured in the BC Labour Heritage Centre’s new podcast series) were from Yorkshire and the Petronis were from Southern Italy, I instinctually felt I would know them better if I learned to sing the songs they sang. Folk songs from Yorkshire (like “Old Griny”) and Calabria (like “Tarantella”) were in their hearts, minds and mouths, so I included them in the play. Adding the labour songs became a natural extension of this impulse. People sang much more then than they do now, and they drew great inspiration from music.
Albert "Ginger" Goodwin was a delegate for the British Columbia Federation of Labour and an organizer for the Socialist Party of Canada. Goodwin rallies the spirits of workers during the 1917 smelter strike in Trail.

Having new shoes was a sign of achievement and the family's rise out of poverty. Kitimat is my first play inspired by the events in Kitimat issue of the first municipalities in North America to vote on whether or not they wanted an oil pipeline. Both plays brought me closer to communities in our province. Kitimat is my first play inspired by my ancestral islands, the Azores (Kitimat's population was 40-50% Portuguese), which is why many residents opened up to me during the process of writing the play. Eighty-year-old Robin Holcomb (who came to Kitimat from the University of British Columbia, joined the late Bill Clark Sr. and I discussed the pivotal role women played in the "Trail Smelter Dispute" and from my other play in the book, Kitimat, these issues quickly became intertwined. Recently, David Dodge, former Bank of Canada governor, said of the Trans Mountain Pipeline: “There are some people who are going to die in protesting the construction of this pipeline. We have to understand that.” This is why Goodwin’s story is inspiring now. This is why I wrote the play inspired by the events in Kitimat issue of the first municipalities in North America to vote on whether or not they wanted an oil pipeline. I approached Talonbooks and my fabulous editor Charles Simard with these plays because they are epic and based on true events which happened in BC with international implications. For example, Nobel Women’s Initiative, founded by women who’d won the Nobel Peace Prize (including Rigoberta Menchú Tum of Guatemala, Shirin Ebadi of Iran, Leymah Gbowee of Liberia) made a point of travelling to Kitimat before the vote took place to hear directly from women impacted by the project. This delegation was led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Jody Williams and included Kenyan environmentalist Dikal Angelei, corporate executive Chris Page and climate scientist Marianne Douglas from the University of Alberta, and went from the oil sands in Northern Alberta to the coast of BC. News outlets across Canada, the US and Britain covered the story of the vote in Kitimat.

I hear the branches crack. It's time I must surrender. I would rather face a prison term than a bounty hunter’s gun.”

—Ginger Goodwin’s last note to his mother before he was killed in 1918

Beautiful Beautiful: A Novel
by Brandon Reid
(Highwood Editions $24.95)

BY ODETTE AUGER

In a brilliant debut, Brandon Reid’s Beautiful Beautiful is a coming-of-age story about twelve-year-old Derik, who shares the mixed Heiltsuk background of the author.

Derik is returning to his ancestral hometown, Waglisla, which is also known as Bella Bella (Beautiful Beautiful) for his grandfather’s funeral. Reid uses the archetypal device of a sea journey to indicate that a major change in Derik’s life is underway as he travels by boat with his father, George. Also along on the trip is Derik’s shaman Raven—yes, Derik is closer to things beyond the conscious and half the novel is narrated by his inner spirit guide who is named Redbird.

Although we see Redbird as a falcon type bird on the cover of Beautiful Beautiful, it’s important to note the trickster element of shape-shifting that Redbird represents. Redbird also describes himself as “Thunderbird” and draws connections to Quatsino Coast, an Aztec deity in the form of a feathered serpent that figured in the creation of mankind. Raven, Redbird and Thunderbird become interchangeable.

On the boat trip north, conversations between shaman, father and son weave in and out, moving from social issues (white people using blackface, abuses at residential schools) to finding paths beyond “how to adapt to the Western way...not that they need to,” explains Raven.

Self-sovereignty and decolonization are not talking points, but are intrinsic to the tone, voice and structures of the writing itself.

Often, coming-of-age novels move the protagonist through development from a self-centered thinker to a wider, other-focused lens. For Derik, finding his place in the world happens on a few levels including a broader concept of family and a larger community. It also includes validation of the non-linear family and a larger community. It also includes validation of the non-linear levels including a broader concept of family and a larger community. It also includes validation of the non-linear levels including a broader concept of family and a larger community. It also includes validation of the non-linear levels including a broader concept of family and a larger community.

Poetry and visions enter early in this novel, and deconstructing Western narratives begins from the onset. By the third page “they enter a new world, a world of spirit (sure enough) but also that of true Earth, where Nature has her course, where the living gods breathe through her and the deeds of evil men are absorbed, taken apart and reassembled for the greater good,” writes Reid.

Derik pauses at a piano, “by feel he goes, striding across sonic landscapes, raising cities from sand, then letting them fall from his hands. Their sketches fade in resonance; the end alters the start.” With writing like this, Reid’s story circles, rather than moving on a timeline. It’s a book where the towering cliffs holding gull eggs intermingle with ebon worms of video games and magic. Reid’s characters gift us with the teaching that life is full of magic. Raven goes even further, stating: “Life is magic.” “Magic is causing change to occur according to will,” Raven teaches Derik. “So aligning anything with your true will and causing it to happen is considered magic.”

When Derik first steps onto the dock at Waglisla, he orients himself by looking at his father’s face. “His eyes are wide with the spirit now flaming within him, fuelled by the coming home, rising with the past.”

That’s when Derik hears his first eagle. “The call of an eagle cools through Derik’s one ear and out the other, resonating within him, bringing him to joy,” writes Reid. “He bathes in the melodies of the happy, healthy, thriving birds, unlike those scavengers down south fighting over refuse and hand-outs. Here, they are mighty. Here, they are worthy.”

Like most families, there are dynamics to navigate, both for Derik and his father. Coming to terms with the loss of his grandfather and the ongoing impacts of inter-generational trauma are real, not buzzwords. Derik’s fresh eyes on old patterns teach him more about his father, and how he responds to family members’ shifts. As a twelve-year-old, he still mourns the loss of a loved pet companion and feels frustrated by a cousin’s acting out. We witness him stepping into his adult self through compassionate gestures that we can all learn from.

Truth-telling starts from the first page, and part of that is seeing how our relatives are coping—and not coping. With a background in both journalism and Indigenous education, Reid navigates the truth-telling with clear-sightedness and grace.

I’ll be sharing this book with my own children—young ones who need to know they’re not the only ones disconnected from some family; and older ones I left gaps with, because I was uncertain how to share.

Holding those truths doesn’t need to interfere with how we can reconnect with elements and spirit. Interrupting a conversation about orca and crow dialects, Reid writes: “The wind pushed past, saying, ‘We know you. Follow us.’”

Derik hears this, and asks, “When can I start fishing?” Beautiful Beautiful fills an essential need for sophisticated and genuine Young Adult novel readers, but I reluctantly place a “coming-of-age” genre tag on this beautiful, beautiful book of brilliance because it is a story for every-everyone—an insightful teaching tool for those learning about reconciliation, and a powerful sharing of Indigenous guidance.

Odette Auger, a member of Sgamgot’em Anishnaasikwet through her mother, lives as a guest in toq qaym (Fraser), ʔamsx̱am qaym (Tla’amin) and Ḫa’xam qaym (Homalco) territories.

Brandon Reid, a member of the Heiltsuk First Nation with a mix of Indigenous and English ancestry, works part-time as a teacher and in his spare time enjoys cooking, playing music and listening to comedy podcasts.

A Heiltsuk teen learns about visions and spirit life from his shaman Raven on a trip to Bella Bella.

Brandon, who shares his mediumship and medicine knowledge through workshops, says: “Today, we can all learn from.”

As Reid’s characters gift us with the teaching that life is full of magic, Raven goes even further, stating: “Life is magic.”

Margaret Sadler, author of The Great Race of the Animal People and winner of the Western Canada Book Prize People’s Choice Award, notes: “I’ve longed for just this kind of story—a journey back into a way of seeing the world that included the spiritual lives of the ancestors.”
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Hot Topics

Sex in Canada
The Who, Why, When, and How of Getting Down Up North
TINA FETNER
What do we do in the bedroom? Guided by the results of a one-of-a-kind survey of adults aged eighteen to ninety, Tina Fetner pulls the covers off of sex among singles and couples, marriage and monogamy, hooking up and committed relationships, cheating, desire, risk, and pleasure.

Broken City
Land Speculation, Inequality, and Urban Crisis
PATRICK CONDON
Broken City argues that skyrocketing urban land prices drive our global housing market failure, and offers real solutions to reclaim land wealth from speculators and individuals for the common good.
In Last Woman (M&S $24.99) Carleigh Baker navigates a helloscopic world, addressing concerns including the ozone layer's deterioration, toxic cultures and pandemics and wildfires. Through 13 stories, Baker's characters grapple with modern anxieties, revealing a world askew. From a young woman finding sisterhood in a strange fertility ritual to an emerging academic suddenly choosing institutional violence, the tales explore intergenerational misunderstandings, fear for the future and the complexities of belonging. Baker's irreverent style and empathy offer a fresh perspective on our troubled world, blending humour, heartbreak and startling insight.

In Stewart Goodings' debut, My Friend, My Enemy (FriesenPress $23) two childhood friends reconnect in adulthood. Nadezhda and Alla had spent their childhood summers together near the Caspian Sea, becoming "almost sisters." Fate re-unites them after Alla loses family in the Russia-Chetchya war and is secretly recruited for a revenge mission. Nadezhda knows nothing of this subterfuge, although she shares a Moscow apartment with Alla after the Chechnya war and is secretly recruited for a revenge mission. Nadezhda knows nothing of this subterfuge, although she shares a Moscow apartment with Alla. In the present, the two childhood friends reconnect near the Caspian Sea, becoming "almost sisters." Fate re-unites them after Alla loses family in the Russia-Chetchya war and is secretly recruited for a revenge mission. Nadezhda knows nothing of this subterfuge, although she shares a Moscow apartment with Alla. However, Ines has to confront the challenges of her past, Max's mental health and the other her lowly employee? The tale's exploration of self-love, trauma and mental health.

In the summer of 2000, grief-stricken Ines (Nightwood $22.95) by Amy Mattes unfolds Ines' exploration of self-love, trauma and mental health.

In a surreal exploration of queer love, Myrram Lapacek's debut novel, How It Works Out (Doubleday $14.99) deals with alternate realities. Myra and Allision's relationship unfolds through a series of hypothetical scenarios. What if they became mothers by finding a baby in an alley? How would their dynamic be affected if one were a powerful CEO and the other her lowly employee? The narrative delves into the promises and perils of love, blending dark comedy with tender moments.

During the Second World War, small-town singer, Molly, craves a lavish lifestyle and dreams of escaping her working-class life in Louis Druehl's wartime tale, Bamfield Posh (Granville Island Publishing $23.95). After a brief encounter with a Canadian soldier, Molly gets pregnant. She's sent to isolated Bamfield on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Amid refugees, misfits and fishermen, Molly adapts to a new life. Her husband's abuse and death test her "poshi" dream, but she perseveres, hoping to find love. Molly eventually learns resilience and redeems her identity against the backdrop of a diverse community.

A Whistler Independent Book Award Winner, Tom Stewart's Immortal North (Lucy Dollar Media $23.99) follows the story of a man and his son navigating a rugged life in a remote forest. They face familiar threats in the wilderness: harsh weather, predators and the intrusion of civilization at odds with their lifestyle. One day, their woodland life is shattered, prompting a quest for justice. This narrative explores the profound bonds of human love while grappling with the dueling forces of life: joy and suffering, good and evil, compassion and vengeance.

Shashi Bhat delves into the everyday absurdities faced by women in her collection of stories, Death by a Thousand Cuts (M&S $24.95). A writer is confronted by her ex's novel about their breakup. An uncomfortable woman falls in love, but is betrayed by her body. A man's habit...
In 1952, a young man, Kail, from Punjabi seeks to escape the suffocating grip of caste and moves to Britain with his family to seek dignity. England’s promise of respect for crustaceans as he realizes that caste prejudices persist among expatriates. Having endured brutal oppression in India—expulsion from a rally and denial to enter temples—Kalu now faces a determined struggle abroad.

Ujjal Dossanjh’s debut novel, The Past Is Never Dead (Speaking Tigers/Sandhill $30) reveals the Punjabi family’s quest for a better life and struggles shaping Sikh immigrants’ lives in Britain.

It’s 1964. Daisy Shoemaker dreams of life beyond her strict Mormon community in the town of Redemption. While boys are taught to work in the lucrative sawmill that supports their enclave, Daisy and her female friends are instructed to wait for the day the bishop will choose a husband for them. Leslie Howard narrates Daisy’s feminist and counterculture urges to flee with a man forty years her senior in The Celestial Wife (Simon & Schuster $17.99). Can Daisy truly escape her past?

A 2018 ReLit Award winner, The Father of Rain (Anvil $22.95) follows the journey of Odile living in an isolated town with a unique heavily-guarded border. The town, repeating in a time loop, is mirrored 20 years ahead in time to the east and 20 years behind to the west. When Odile spots the grieving parents of her friend Edme in town, having crossed the border from the future, she grapples with her growing connection to the boy who is about to die. Will Odile imperil her entire future to save a doomed Edme?

Women’s relationships—violent labour strikes, predatory insurance agents, and estranged siblings. 9781772142105

Available Spring 2024 from Aevo UTP

“Solved offers a wise, practical, and essential path to genuine balance with the natural world on which we remain dependent.”
—DAVID SUZUKI

Environmental Activist

“Breaking Canadians is a rallying call to ensure we fix what is broken in our public health care system.”
—CATHY CROWE

Long-Time Street Nurse, C.M.
After more than two and a half centuries, descendants of Acadian settlers still wrestle with the historical mass trauma of losing their homes and livelihoods. My grandfather died before I was born, though his fiddle has rested against the wall near Grand-Mère’s bed my entire life and no one, not even Papa, was permitted to touch it. I’ve never known music in the house and yet there it sits, a reminder that it was not always this way.

The third section, Acadia, 1755–1763, The Starving Time, is narrated by the grandmother herself, who survived the crisis as a young woman. This is the book’s most dramatic part with its combination of suspense and action as the Acadians flee through the forest avoiding the redcoats. “I lost track of how many days we walked, how often we returned to where we’d started that morning. We were slower each day and our food supply dwindled. We ate eels when we were near enough to the marshes and when the night was light enough that the men could spot and spear them in the shallow waters.”

Their trek culminates with the narrator killing not an eel but an Englishman. “I loaded my gun again and fired just as he reached his. It had become a game to keep him from his gun. I kicked it farther up the bank as he moaned and held a bloody hand to his chest. The creek swirled red, the colour of his infantry jacket.”

The rifle she uses is a Charleville, a five-foot-long flintlock French infantry musket. Like the Acadians themselves, this particular specimen survives, and we meet it in all three sections of the book, including the first: Victoria–Halifax, 2001, The Charleston. The Broken Heart of Winter is about endurance, hope and survival. Though generally gloomy in tone, the third section ends on an upbeat note with Grand-Mère saying: “Shouts of ‘Je suis Acadien’ ride high above the clamour and throng. A daughter of a time I’ve not yet known will be swept into the motion of the crowd, not quite of the people that flow around her and yet affected with their lightness and energy. My memory is a rich country.”

Rich in domestic detail and personal emotion, The Broken Heart of Winter will enlarge any reader’s appreciation of Acadian history in particular, and Canadian history in general.

Grant Buday’s historical fiction novels, Orphans of Empire (Brindle & Glass, 2020) and In the Belly of the Sphax (Brindle & Glass, 2023) tell of the late 19th century lives of settlers in Vancouver and Victoria respectively.

**YA novel of the Expulsion**

The Expulsion of the Acadians is also the subject of a recent YA novel, Nathalie: An Acadian’s Tale of Tragedy and Triumph by Debra Amirault Camelin (Ronsdale $23.95). The tale follows Nathalie as she escapes the expulsion from Grand-Pré, Nova Scotia after being separated from her family. She walks 150 kilometres to Cape-Sable and is taken in by the Amirault family until further, more brutal, deportations are carried out by the British. Based on the real lives of two Acadian families.

**Review**

**The Broken Heart of Winter**

BY GRANT BUDAY

When wayward son, Daniel, runs away from his Victoria home at the age of sixteen to explore his Acadian roots in Nova Scotia, he leaves behind his bewildered and grieving parents. Although his mother, Lise, is descended from the French settlers who were exiled by English armies in the mid-18th century during what is now called the Expulsion of the Acadians, she is not at first aware that this tragic event still affects her so many generations later. But Daniel feels the impact and he seeks some answers in Judy LeBlanc’s novel, The Broken Heart of Winter, an exploration of how historical trauma is passed from generation to generation.

The Expulsion of the Acadians, or the Grand Dérangement, dates to 1755, when Britain gained control of Acadia, which included parts of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Maine. Over the following decades, tensions flared between France and England, who were competing for control of North America. Refusing to sign an oath of loyalty to the British Crown, an entire people—farmers, fishers, hunters—were brutally uprooted.

Of the approximately 14,500 Acadians, 11,000 were relocated, nearly a third of whom died of disease, while some 3,000 managed to hide or make it to safety in Quebec. Those sent by ship to Louisiana became known as Cajuns. In 1764 an order was given allowing them to return. Such is the book’s backstory.

The Broken Heart of Winter does not deliver epic sea voyages, military heroics or naval battles. LeBlanc focuses instead on family life and what she describes as the mass trauma that caused “patterns of deep disruption [that] repeat themselves generation after generation.” This is an exploration of stress that persists through the centuries like a virus.

Composed of three sections, the first and longest one focuses on Lise and Daniel. The latter two sections, set in 1832 and 1755–63 respectively, take us into the lives of those who emigrated from France to North America and were subsequently persecuted.

Certainly Lise, her husband Dick and Daniel are stressed, particularly when Daniel suddenly leaves at such a young age. “For the first two years Daniel was gone, Lise looked for him through the police, his friends, the obituaries,” writes LeBlanc. “She and Dick blamed one another; they made vicious accusations.” And later, “All those years of conflict with Dick didn’t amount to anything resembling resolution.” Fortunately they divorce.

Section two, titled Isle Madame, 1832, Contrary Winds, is narrated by Appoline, the backbone of a multi-generational family composed mostly of women. The dour and dutiful Appoline negotiates between her exhausted mother, her nearly one-hundred-year-old grandmother and a wild younger sister. “My grandfather died before I was born, though his fiddle has rested against the wall near Grand-Mère’s bed my entire life and no one, not even Papa, was permitted to touch it. I’ve never known music in the house and yet there it sits, a reminder that it was not always this way.”

The third section, Acadia, 1755–1763, The Starving Time, is narrated by the grandmother herself, who survived the crisis as a young woman. This is the book’s most dramatic part with its combination of suspense and action as the Acadians flee through the forest avoiding the redcoats.

“Lost track of how many days we walked, how often we returned to where
Suffering as a blessing

Poetry that sees a grandfather who can still wallop young males, and petals in the morning light.

A Bouquet Brought Back From Space by Kevin Spenst (Anvil Press $18)

BY TREVOR CAROLAN

Public reader, event organizer, moderator and columnist for subTerrain magazine where he tracks chapbooks, poet Kevin Spenst has authored, or collaborated on, thirteen of these himself. In addition to his chapbooks, his latest title, A Bouquet Brought Back From Space, is his fourth collection with Anvil Press in less than ten years. Clearly, he’s an energetic, hard-working writer.

These new poems resonate throughout with Spenst’s Mennonite and family history. Memory is critical and Spenst’s father, who struggled with mental illness, surfaces repeatedly. There are meditations on Spenst’s ancestral origins, on poverty, on old-school Mennonite pacifist discipline—and on a grandfather who could still wallop the faces of unwary young males. This tough love is juxtaposed in the book’s latter half with the joy of Spenst’s own intimate partnership, and gratitude flows through his many love poems which, strangely, is a genre we don’t see much of anymore.

Spenst is also a technician. His poems are wide-ranging and employ phrasings from Low German and multiple languages: keep your Google Translate function handy.

A prose-poem, “A Post Mennonite Preface…” articulates Spenst’s concerns: “I can’t stop thinking of petals in the morning light, trying to imagine their wholeness heralded by beauty in the morning light, trying to imagine their wholeness heralded by beauty in the morning light, trying to imagine their wholeness heralded by beauty in the morning light. Yet there’s empathy, too, for a father who’d “gone lunar.” You’d need a heart of stone not to appreciate “Kneeling by the Side of the Bed, He Taught Me to Pray” with its beautiful image from childhood: a father, guiding Spenst years to travel back “with what I know/ now and work on the mechanics of our awk/wardness, to stop mid-prayer and tell my dad/ he wasn’t a sin-wracked failure… just different.” That’s a hard moment of recollection. This is what poetry can give us. A small shot at something like redemption, of compassion.

As Spenst’s fellow Fraser Valley Mennonite poet, Robert Martens, has reminded us, you don’t come from the Bible Belt and not know about angels. “I can’t stop thinking of petals in the morning light,” Spenst hopes, that may be shared—of “concocted angels,” of “reprieve,” or of a sacredness that “he can hold out to the inner sanctuary of/ my scream” to let it go and understand. Think Gaza, Ukraine. It’s not all edgy relevance. There’s fun as well in Spenst’s surrealist lyrics. “It Will Rain Like Rods on the Hillside in Sweden” showers geographically appropriate precipitation—“frogs’ legs rain down in France, plums plummet in Taipei, frontal systems of bamboo fall on Tokyo. Why not? Poetry is a way of looking at the world, something between blarney and prophecy.

The book’s title arrives via the old Mennonite capacity to regard even suffering as a blessing. Depicting a winter’s indisposition, “Another Gift of a Migraine” portrays its creeping aura as “a psychedelic porcupine,” “a jagged halo” that shades “the border of consciousness” between light and darkness. But there are moments, Spenst hopes, that may be shared—of “concocted angels,” of “reprieve,” or of a sacredness that “he can hold out to others.” From such exhaustion may come, he affirms, “a bouquet brought back from space.” Even anguish, we see, can have value if we trust.

Trevor Carolan writes from North Vancouver.
The desire was to learn more about the grizzly diet. The gathered scat didn’t answer all their questions, so another step was to feed captured bears a diet of their favourite foods before checking the scat. Data in, data out. The challenge: Bears eat a lot. In exchange for a nutrient analysis of grizzly bear food samples, McLellan agreed to gutter glacier lily bulbs, cow parsnip stalks and buffalo berries from sites foraged by tracked bears. Digging out the roots was a lot of work and he learned what to expect from the angle of the slope, other vegetation and soil textures. “Doing what bears do,” he writes, “is a good way to learn the minute-by-minute challenges they face.”

Wildlife research ecologist Bruce McLellan has spent 42 years studying grizzlies. He has an intimate knowledge of their eating and mating habits as well as poop, having sent 1,190 dried chunks to be analyzed.

High-tech science eventually showed a path beyond being knee-deep in scat. Isotope ratios provided the best picture of a grizzly’s diet. Another black bear he tracked, a female, managed to locate a big, dead, hollow larch tree in the middle of the forest. She climbed up and in to kipper down for a six-month snooze, free from four of attack from wolves, cougars and grizzlies while hibernating. Her ability to walk through a thin snowfall to the location of the hollow tree offered anecdotal evidence of bears possessing spatial memory.

While a general reader, like me, learns much about British Columbia’s bears, McLellan’s book will be particularly useful for those interested in wildlife ecology and related fields, who can better appreciate such concepts as minimum convex polygon and marginal value theorem.

The author has included in the text the latitude and the longitude of described events which can be typed into the search box of Google Earth. That is most helpful, as is an index which includes such entries as: “Mitch (grizzly bear), 62, 63, 191.”

Tom Hawthorn is the author of The Year Canadians Lost Their Minds and Found Their Country (D&M, 2017) and Deadlines (Harbour, 2012). His anecdotal history of baseball in Vancouver will be published next year.
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DEADLINE
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Walls: The Long History of Human Barriers and Why We Build Them
by Gregor Craigie and art by Arden Taylor
(Orcas $29.95) 9-12 Years

BY SENURI WASALATHANTHRI

As a child, I hardly understood the importance of learning about world history and how things came to be. It wasn’t until adulthood that I realized history possesses a tendency to repeat itself. It became evident that understanding significant historical events was a way to arm ourselves against repeating the mistakes of our ancestors.

Consider this: How would our perspective of the world evolve if we possessed knowledge and understanding about major historical events during our formative years? Radio journalist, Gregor Craigie, has willingly embraced the challenge of educating children about walls and human barriers erected across the globe—a neglected detail in world history conversations. He meticulously categorizes all the crucial walls built throughout history based on the most significant purposes they serve.

The act of keeping people out of a particular territory has been the primary motivation for countries and kingdoms to construct barriers along their borders for thousands of years. From the Great Wall of China to Ukraine’s ancient walls, the current United States-Mexico border wall, and the border wall in Hungary, these structures were erected with the sole purpose of restricting entry by people from other nations. Craigie delves into the efficacy of each of these barriers and explores what they are intended to protect. However, he also cleverly shares his perspective on what these walls could potentially harm or destroy.

These physical barriers often serve as painful separations for family members living in different countries, making it difficult for them to frequently see their parents, siblings and loved ones. “Is this a compassionate response to people in need? Or is it a cruel divide between people who should be allowed to come together?” Craigie writes. “Like so many questions about barriers, the answer depends on who answers and on what side of the wall they stand.”

In stark contrast, some barriers were designed solely to prevent people from moving out of their home nation, trapping the unwilling inside without any possibility of escape. Craigie goes into detail about the events that led to the construction of the Warsaw Ghetto wall in Poland, the Berlin wall, the Western Sahara wall and the Israeli West Bank barrier. He meticulously provides details about Adolf Hitler and the Nazi reign, the Communist Party Alliance with the Soviet Union, the war between Western Sahara and Morocco, and the Israeli and Palestinian conflict—situations that brought about the erection of these walls.

Despite the challenging concept of war and conflict, Craigie writes with precision and care, ensuring to avoid language and details that may sensationalize or be too intense for young readers. To bring attention to economic and trade implications of human barriers, the book focuses on the Great Zimbabwe walls, the Great Green Wall of India and Pakistan’s Bonito walls that made money by controlling nations, sometimes bringing amounts as in the salt tax imposed by the British colonial government in India. “The tax was essentially a price that anyone transporting salt across India from the Punjab region, where it was produced, had to pay. The British collected millions of rupees from the Indian people through the salt tax. But it was an expensive fee for one of the essential elements of life, and millions of poor Indians had to pay, even during famines when many were starving and could not afford food,” Craigie writes.

On the other hand, some walls were erected for benevolent reasons. Craigie includes information about walls that are designed to protect nature, crops, livestock and ecosystems. The Walls of Jericho, Rabbit-Proof Fence and Dingo Fence in Australia were built to protect people from natural disasters such as floods, as well as protecting crops, endangered birds, reptiles and small mammals from other animals that cause ecological devastation.

Further, Craigie goes into detail about the Great Green Wall of Africa, Delaware Estuary Living Shoreline Initiative and the Delta Works Ocean walls in the Netherlands that are imperative for the growth of more trees and food sources, stabilizing the edge of marshland preventing erosion, and protecting communities from storms and other disasters caused by climate change.

“It’s been said that people build too many walls and not enough bridges,” says Craigie. “Looking back on hundreds of years of human history, it’s hard to argue with that. And looking into the future, it’s hard to imagine people stopping. Let’s hope that in the years and decades ahead, people will choose to build walls that protect all and exclude no one.”

Craigie writes, inviting young readers to ponder the different outcomes of barriers and solutions that promote inclusivity, unity and hope.

This thoroughly researched and well-written book will aid young readers in understanding how our society came to be, while looking at current systems from different perspectives. For any young person interested in learning more about the history of our world, exploring why humanity has put up barriers as we have evolved and why we continue this tradition, they couldn’t ask for a better resource.

Senuri Wasalathamthri is a Vancouver based publishing assistant, writer and student.
A IS FOR ANDERSON-DARGATZ

An old growth tree activist named Pip-er, in a BC town with plenty of un-employed lumber mill workers has her husband go missing when he searches for tree poaching culprits in a planned park area in Gail Anderson-Dargatz’s novel The Almost Widow (Harper Avenue $25.99). Not knowing if Piper’s husband is dead or alive, the town comes together to find him. A wilderness thriller, readers are drawn into the dangers of the forest, both natural and human.

B IS FOR BAILEY

When her children took up musical instruments, Courtenay’s J.P. Bailey took up writing picture books about music. Her latest title, There’s a Trombone In My Toolshed (H. Wilson Books $19.85) for ages 2-8 uses rhyming stanzas about a trombone that gets into a tool shed. No one knows why or how it got there, but it’s interacting with the tools and machines it encounters. With illustrations by David Thresher, this fanciful story references musical legends such as Glenn Miller, Urbie Green and Angela Wellman.

C IS FOR COX

Environmental journalist, Sarah Cox, looks into dilemmas such as dwindling numbers of spotted owls in Canada’s wild (only three known survivors), wolves hunting endangered woodland caribou, and housing developments for a planned park in a BC town. Her husband is dead or alive, the town comes together to find him. A wilderness thriller, readers are drawn into the dangers of the forest, both natural and human.

D IS FOR DEMEULEMEESTER

After being abandoned at birth by her father, Phineas, Effy finds a comfortable home with her great-aunt Ada, who is a women’s rights advocate. But when Ada dies, Effy’s relatives try to seize her trust fund. To prevent this, Effy seeks Phineas in the circus world. Her journey involves proving herself as a performer, saving an elephant and embracing equality that threaten a tiny frog in Signs of Life: Field Notes from the Frontlines of Extinction (Goose Lane $24.95). From military bases preserving eco-systems to Indigenous communities restoring ecological balance and the work of ordinary citizens, Cox finds fresh perspectives on conservation and hope. Included are examples of kids across the continent who are helping save the owls.

E IS FOR ELLIOTT

Lauren Elliott’s second book in her Crystals & Curses: TEARS mystery series, Murder in a Cup (Kensington Cozies $37.00), has seer and New Age tea shop owner, Shay Myers, facing problems when she begins blending herbs in her greenhouse. A deadly poison from the greenhouse claims a customer’s life. Shay holds a group reading only to have it take a dark turn when her assistant is accused of murder. Shay must quickly unravel clues to save her business and prove her assistant’s innocence.

F IS FOR FRANCES

There are 19 species of owl in Canada and the United States, all described and illustrated with colour photographs in Frances Backhouse’s Who Gives a Hoot? (Orca $24.95) for ages 9-12. Many of these predators are under threat due to the use of rodent poisons that also kill owls and other wild rodents-eaters. Backhouse includes examples of kids across the continent who are helping save the owls.

G IS FOR GILBERT

In her collection of linked poems, Lady Bird (Exile Editions $15.95), Kerry Gilbert addresses Amelia Earhart at the same age Earhart was when she disappeared more than 80 years ago. Gilbert explores Earhart’s fate, incorporating conspiracy theories surrounding her death. Beyond the historical context, the poem examines the contemporary theme of women’s erasure as they age, highlighting the ongoing societal challenges they face.

**GILBERT ELLIOTT**

**WHO’S WHO**

**BRITISH COLUMBIA**

**A IS FOR ANDERSON-DARGATZ**

**Gail Anderson-Dargatz**

The subject of Kerry Gilbert’s poetry collection, Lady Bird is Amelia Earhart (inset). In Linda DeMeulemeester’s novel, Ephemia Rimaldi: Circus Performer Extraordinaire (Red Deer Press $14.95), a historical adventure set in the early 20th century for ages 8-12.

**B IS FOR BAILEY**

**J.P. Bailey**

Environmental journalist, Sarah Cox, looks into dilemmas such as dwindling numbers of spotted owls in Canada’s wild (only three known survivors), wolves hunting endangered woodland caribou, and housing developments for a planned park in a BC town. Her husband is dead or alive, the town comes together to find him. A wilderness thriller, readers are drawn into the dangers of the forest, both natural and human.

**C IS FOR COX**

**Sarah Cox’s Breaching the Peace: The Site C Dam and a Valley’s Stand Against Big Hydro (UBC Press, 2008) won a BC Book Prize and was a finalist for the Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing and the George Ryga Award for Social Awareness in Literature.**
Art by Gordon Clover, from Sammy Squirrel and Rodney Raccoon: Far from Stanley Park.

**H IS FOR HART**

Mix Hart

A remote outpost on the Dempster Highway, the only all-season public road in Canada to cross the Arctic Circle, gives a new novel by Mix Hart its name, due out in May. Set in the 1980s, two city slicker sisters take live-in summer jobs at the hotel during a time when mining and other resource extractors are seeking fortunes in the North, whatever the cost to the land and its peoples. Both sisters find romance, although it might not be the kind they were hoping to encounter. An award-winning blogger, Mix Hart lives on a mountain top in BC.

**I IS FOR INVISIBLE**

**The Invisible Hotel** (Bond Street $34) by Yeji Y. Ham, who calls Coquitlam, BC and Seoul, South Korea her home-towns, is a gothic horror that speaks to the long afterlife of the Korean War, which technically ended in 1953 with an armistice although the two sides remain divided between north and south. Ham’s protagonist, Yewon, loses her job in a convenience store in a South Korean village where her mother continues to wash the bones of her ancestors—stark reminders of what they have lost to a war that never seems to end—-in the same bathtub in which she first discovered reading.

Yeji Y. Ham

**J IS FOR JUDE**

Chelene Knight

In a love letter to Bowen Island, poet Jude Neale and painter Nicholas Jennings have collaborated to produce Water Forgets Its Own Name (Ekstasis $28). Neale’s poetry set to Jennings’ art celebrates the island’s bays, beaches, and other scenic charms, and conjures memories of a life lived close to nature. Neale concludes in one of her poems, “...there is no other purpose / to living, than to / become / part of it all.” In previous years, Neale has also combined her poetry with music for an EP titled Places Beyond. 9781771715300

Yujei Y. Ham

**K IS FOR KNIGHT**

Chelene Knight has added a guide to her two memoirs and a novel with Let It Go: Free Yourself from Old Beliefs and Find a New Path to Joy (HarperCollins $27.99). Drawing on her personal experience and insights from Black community leaders, Knight provides tools for joy-discovery including saying no with love, re-approaching communication and learning to let go. The book offers a reflective examination of Black self-love and happiness, inviting readers to carve their own path.

Yeji Y. Ham

**L IS FOR LAWRENCE**

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Yeji Y. Ham

It was during a stroll in Vancouver’s Stanley Park that retired teacher Duane Lawrence decided to write about the animals there. The resulting book, Sammy Squirrel and Rodney Raccoon: A Stanley Park Tale (Granville Island Pub., 2007) for middle school readers, was one of the top 100 recommended books for BCTF’s 100th anniversary. It is now available as a picture book with simplified writing for pre-school children just beginning to read, or who enjoy being read to: Sammy Squirrel and Rodney Raccoon: Far from Stanley Park (Granville Island $14.95). 9781550016455

Yeji Y. Ham
Fiction Steamships Mining Textiles

Grazie: A Novel by Lucia Frangione
(Talonbooks $21.95)

Graziana (Grazie for short), traumatized by Ivan, takes a pilgrimage to Italy and leaves her dyslexic, ADHD, eight-year-old daughter, Hazel in the care of her stepfather, Herman. Hazel calls Grandpa Herman, "Grumpy," but he gives her the first stable home she has known. This violent, tender and funny story is told in turn by the four characters.

Pitfall: The Race to Mine the World’s Most Vulnerable Places by Christopher Pollon
(Greystone $39.95)

Investigative journalist Christopher Pollon takes on the international mining industry in his latest book. Pollon worries that as the industry seeks riches from Mongolia to the Pacific Islands, and new territory on the ocean floor, past methods will remain the same: secure the terrain, plunder the resources and clear out, leaving a terrible mess behind.

Fleece and Fibre: Textile Producers of Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands by Francine McCabe
(Heritage House $34.95)

Anyone looking for locally produced wool, linen, or “slow fashion” textiles will be interested in Francine McCabe’s quest to find the small-scale fibre producers within a day’s drive of her Chemainus home (she discovered over 40 plant and animal producers!). Her book explores the region’s vibrant fleece and fibre community, and rural life. Includes illustrations and photography.

The Best Loved Boat: The Princess Maquinna by Ian Kennedy
(Harbour $34.95)

In the early 20th century, 14 steamships plied BC’s coast, including the beloved SS Princess Maquinna. In a reconstructed summer journey, stop-by-stop, of a typical Maquinna voyage in her heyday, circa 1924, Ian Kennedy shows that despite the colonial class divides of the time, the Maquinna whistle was often “the most welcome sound on the West Coast.”

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M IS FOR MEADE

Karl Meade came across a term used to describe the 19th century Bronte sisters that became the title of his recent collection of poems: doom eager (Raven Chapbooks $22.95). “While I cannot trace its full etymology, for me every poem in this chapbook has doom eager at its core,” Meade writes in his preface. The deaths of beloved people central to his life are “precisely what I write for,” Meade adds. “That our lost loves are never entirely lost. They are right here, in my heart, on the page.” Meade splits his time between Salt Spring Island and New York.

H IS FOR NOWICKI

A collection of short nonfiction pieces by Cole Nowicki, Laser Quit Smoking Massage (NeWest $21.95) delves into the intricacies of Canada’s urban and rural West. Nowicki explores the dynamics of community, family and belonging in prairie towns and sprawling cities. The essays reflect a childlike curiosity, uncovering peculiarities like missing relatives, home-based businesses and even lasers, transforming simple events into complex yet relatable stories. His humorous examination of small-town life creates a nostalgic album of memories, capturing moments of love, grief and the passage of time.

P IS FOR PAYLOR

Kit McNair, a troublesome, non-binary changeling was nursed to health by their mother’s Celtic magic, after having fallen through the river ice and drowned. A daredevil in boy’s clothes, Kit finds themselves caught in a love triangle with Rebekah, a German-Canadian doctor’s daughter, and Kit’s brother, Landon, just prior to the Second World War. The three take separate paths when the conflict gets underway in The Cure for Drowning (Penguin $24.95), by Loghan Paylor in a narrative that explores identity, love and the impact of wartime experiences. Their reunion after the war brings unexpected twists.

Q IS FOR QUEENIE

Ten-year-old Queenie is on a mission to make friends at her new school after moving to Vancouver. But, even before the first bell rings, she’s in trouble. Queenie has a secret—she’s been diagnosed with ADHD. From always being late to never being able to focus, she struggles to navigate her new world as she figures out how to manage her ADHD as well as finding ways to impress the “cool” girls. Queenie’s funny and inspiring journey is told in Queenie Jean Is in Trouble Again (Heritage House $14.95) for ages 9 -12. Read lives in a rural seaside community outside of Vancouver.

R IS FOR ROCHE

Born with a facial vascular malfunction, motivational speaker David Roche shares a refreshing perspective on beauty, self-worth and finding happiness in his latest essay collection, Standing at the Back Door of Happiness: And Now I Unlocked It (Harbour $22.95). From a “seriously Catholic upbringing” to devoting twelve years to the Democratic Workers Party, Roche’s journey explores disability, activism, religion and family. Ultimately, his path led to receiving the Order of Canada for showing transformative power of embracing acceptance and love after realizing the importance of knowing one’s own soul.

T IS FOR TAIALIAKE

Renesowned Kanhawí:ke Mohawk activist, Taiaiake Alfred, exposes deep-seated racism in Canada’s Indigenous-settler relationships in It’s All about the Land: Collected Talks and Interviews on Indigenous Resurgence (Hevo UTP UTP $29.95). Highlighting flaws in the reconciliation agenda, Alfred argues it is a new form of colonization destined to fail. The book is a compilation of Alfred’s speeches and interviews spanning two decades, advocating for Indigenous resurgence as a radical response to the on-going cultural genocide. He traces the evolution of Indigenous struggle and urges a return to authentic cultures and values to counter annihilation.
WHO’S WHO

U IS FOR UIJAL

Born in rural India, Ujjal Dosanjh emigrated to the UK at 18, where he worked various jobs while attending night school and learning English by listening to BBC Radio. He moved to Canada in 1968 and became a lawyer and advocate for the rights of BC farm and domestic workers. Eventually, Dosanjh rose to be the first person of Indian descent to serve as Attorney General and then as premier of British Columbia. Dosanjh’s memoir, Journey After Midnight (Speaking Tiger Books $26.95) tells of that journey.

V IS FOR VARNER

Retired horticulturalist, Collin Varner, who worked at UBC’s Botanical Garden where he also taught courses in native plant studies, continues to follow his passion for BC’s flora and fauna as an avid photographer and author of guidebooks. His latest offerings are two pocket guides: 50 Keystone Flora Species of Coastal British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest (Heritage House $19.95); and 50 Keystone Fauna Species of Coastal British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest (Heritage House $19.95).

W IS FOR WUEST

Countless boys dream of being a cowboy. And for many who worked at the fabled Douglas Lake Ranch, that dream became reality. Douglas Lake Ranch: Empire of Grass (Harbour $55) by Donna (Yoshitake) Wuest with Joe J. Gardner chronicles the history of Canada’s largest ranch that started in the mid-1880s and now spans over a million acres. Drawing heavily from longitudinal manager Joe Gardner’s recollections, the book dives into the personalities central to the ranch, including Joseph Blackbourne Greaves (see above), while exploring the ranch’s environmentalism including responsible grazing, closure of public access and protection of native species. 9781970044729

X IS FOR MAX

Advocating a major role for art and culture in modern democracy, Max Wyman’s seventh book, The Compassionate Imagination: How the Arts Are Central to a Functioning Democracy ( Cormorant $19.95), aims to revitalize societal connections by emphasizing generosity and compassion expressed through art. He says that during the past four decades, art has been overshadowed by a utilitarian focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) in education. Wyman argues for including art at the core of decision making and education, envisioning a shift from STEM to STEAM.

Y IS FOR YOLANDA

“Poop can’t fight the climate crisis alone, of course. But the truth is that healthy ecosystems rely on poop-producing animals and the plants that benefit from their excrement,” writes Yolanda Ridge in her latest book for ages 9-12, What Poo Can Do: How Animals Are Fighting the Climate Crisis (Orca $21.95). From whales to dung beetles, Ridge educates children about animals fertilizing plants, storing carbon, preventing fires, reducing methane, and much more—one poop at a time. 9781486665412

Z IS FOR ZUKERMAN

In Have Bassoon, Will Travel: Memoir of an Adventurous Life in Music (Ronsdale $24.95), George Zukerman, a concert bassoonist who played with the Vancouver Symphony, humorously recounts his worldwide tours that elevated the instrument’s profile and freed it from obscurity. Zukerman describes his travels across Canada navigating diverse terrains, often with unconventional modes of transportation. As an impresario, Zukerman’s Overture Concerts left a lasting impact, inspiring new audiences and musicians. 9781553807131

The forced relocations and resistance of the Inuit people

A ground-breaking, highly visual account of the multiple forced relocations by the Canadian government of Inuit communities and individuals. Each has now been the subject of an official apology, but this history is little known beyond the Arctic.

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**BC BOOKWORLD • SPRING 2024**
Rebel bookstore turns 50

formed in 1973 to provide hard-to-find books about social change, Spartacus Books walks the talk. Run entirely by volunteers who make decisions on a collective basis, the book store is thriving as a purveyor of books that are “anti-capitalist, anti-oppression and anti-racist,” says Alexander Daughtrey, the longest-serving volunteer, who has been with the collective since 1976. “We started as a book table at Simon Fraser University but moved down from the mountain to West Hastings above a pool hall,” he says. “We were on the third floor that you got to by a narrow staircase. Later we moved to a second floor space in another building that had a wider staircase.”

After many years in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, in various locations (including one that burnt down), Spartacus found its current location at 1803 Commercial Drive where they sell new and used books, graphic novels, magazines, postcards, CDs, T-shirts and pins. They also hold book launches, poetry readings, film nights and concerts. “This is what we always wanted,” says Daughtrey. “We’re reaching a lot more people here.” And a new generation of twenty-somethings is joining the collective. He adds, “Social media may be killing newspaper and magazines, but we’re going stronger than ever with books.” —Beverly Cramp
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