MIKAELEA CANNON
A year of foraging for food in the wilds of British Columbia. P 13

STEVE BURGESS
Rome, Tokyo & Tana Toraja: Why do we travel? P 17

MARION MCKINNON CROOK
More stories from a country nurse in the Cariboo, circa 1970s. P 10-11

PETE MALOFF
Memoirs of a Doukhobor pacifist. P 22-23

ANDREA BENNETT
Their ode to nonbinary life. see page 7
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THURSDAY

1 8:00 pm • Thursday, August 15
Naomi Klein
In Conversation with Mo Amur
Naomi Klein’s new book, Dying to Know, deals with issues of identity in a polarized and polarizing society. She will be in conversation with Mo Amur, host of This is VANCOUVER.

FRIDAY

1 9:00 am • Friday, August 16
Catherine Hernandez
Award-winning author Catherine Hernandez’s bestselling novel, The Story of Us, was shortlisted for the Scotiabank Giller Prize and longlisted for a Toronto Book Award.

1 10:30 am • Friday, August 16
Sarah Cox
Author and journalist Sarah Cox features as Figures of Light, stories from the front lines of biologists, conservationists, and ordinary people who save hundreds of species before it’s too late.

1 1:00 pm • Friday, August 16
Charlene Carr
Charlene Carr’s new novel, Why I’m the World’s Apart, is a sweeping multi-generational story about motherhood, race and secrets in the lives of three women.

1 2:30 pm • Friday, August 16
Sam George and Jill Yonit Goldberg
The Fire Hill Bums is the powerful story of Sam George’s experiences at St. Paul’s Indian Residential School in North Vancouver. Sam will be in conversation with co-author Jill Yonit Goldberg.

1 6:00 pm • Friday, August 16
Kyo Maclear
In Conversation with Naomi Klein
Unveiling writer of a Governor General’s Literary Award, Kyo Maclear’s prose into family and History, a journey prompting when she discovered her dad is not her biological father. With Naomi Klein.

1 7:00 pm • Friday, August 16
Waubgeshig Rice
Sequel to the national bestseller, Waubgeshig Rice’s bestselling novel, Moon of the Tundra was a story of survival, millennium, Indigenous identity, and hope.

1 8:10 pm • Friday, August 16
Brent Butt
Fiction writer Brent Butt of Corner Gas fame gets serious in his debut novel, Shage, a dark and twisted thriller that became an instant #1 bestseller.

SATURDAY

1 9:00 am • Saturday, August 17
Coast Writes
David Roche and Marion McKinnon
David Roche’s essay collection, Sundays at the Back Door of Happiness, explores the beauty found in normal places while award-winning author Marion McKinnon’s Crosswords with Alphonse on Call, a stunning portrait of the heroic life of a news reporter.

1 10:30 am • Saturday, August 17
Susan Juby
Buddhist Ndutsu Helen Thuret returns in award-winning author Susan Juby’s newest mystery, A Meditation on Murder.

SUNDAY

1 9:00 am • Sunday, August 18
Harbour Publishing’s 50th Anniversary
Join us as we celebrate five decades of excellent books from Harbour Publishing. Howard White, Geoff Lawrenson and Terry Fuller look at their unique perspectives to the inner workings of this independent Canadian publisher. Moderated by Andrea Schroeder.

1 1:00 pm • Sunday, August 18
Shelley Wood
Author of The Quietlands, an instant #1 Globe and Mail bestseller—Shelley Wood returns with The Leap Year Girl, hailed by Lawson Littlehill as “astoundingly beautiful, wonderfully odd.”

1 2:30 pm • Sunday, August 18
New Voice: Carly Butcher and Tara Siddow Fraser
Carly Butcher’s memoir, Apocalypse Child, tells of her experiences living in a cult and the struggle to find her true self. Tara Siddow Fraser’s memoir, When My Ghost Sings, recounts her quest to avoid and regain her life after a stroke left her with amnesia. Moderated by Megan Cole.

1 4:00 pm • Sunday, August 18
Wade Davis
In his latest collection of essays, Wade Davis, the author of the New York Times bestselling book, The Spirit Molecule, explores the unique cultural perspective to a variety of topics, including the endless conflict in the Middle East.

1 7:00 pm • Sunday, August 18
Jill Barber
Three-time Juno nominated singer-songwriter Jill Barber closes the Festival with her critically acclaimed repertoire of folk, jazz and pop.
Turner returns

Six years after his last collection of poems, 9 X 11 (New Star, 2018), Michael Turner is back with the playfully titled, Playlist: A Prodigy of Your Least-Expected Poems (Anvil 820). Followers of Turner will know that he got his start as a touring musician in a band he co-founded in 1987 called the Hard Rock Miners, which inspired his second book, the memoir/documentary fiction Hard Core Logo (Arsenal Pulp, 1993), made into a popular film of the same name in 1996.

Michael Turner, 1985

Playlist, some twenty years later, follows Turner’s early musical beginnings in childhood, through early adulthood as a touring musician, and into later years programming nightclubs (such as Vancouver’s long-gone, lamented Railway Club) as he investigates his poetry writing practices. Publicity for this book states, ‘Modelled after the American folk music revival songbooks of the 1950s and 60s, Playlist fiddles with a two-part writing system that begins with the songbooks’ contextual introductions and ends with the songs—or in this instance, poems—to which they refer.’

It will be up to readers to determine if Turner is parodying himself or looking more seriously into his life’s work to date. A hint might be found in Turner’s quote from a 2018 interview for Read Local BC: ‘I have come to trust poetry, but for so long I had a distingusihng relationship with it.’

9781772142380

Sarah Leavitt

hen graphic novelist Sarah Leavitt’s partner, Donimo, died with medical assistance in 2020, Leavitt wrote, “I continued living, which surprised me. We had been together 22 years.”

Leavitt turned to writing a month after Donimo’s death as a way to cope with grief. At first, she made small sketches, which grew into abstract images. Some were layers of watercolour, others coloured pencil; some with text, others without text. “What is this anyway?” Leavitt asks. “It’s not anything I’ve seen before or walked through ever. It’s nothing I would have thought I could walk through.” She concludes, “It’s grief is what it is.”

Leavitt’s experimental works have been compiled into the graphic memoir, Something, Not Nothing: A Story of Grief and Love (Arsenal Pulp $27.95), which will be released in Autumn 2024. “I think of them as a kind of travel diary, a record of my exploration of the unfamiliar new world I found myself in,” says Leavitt who took comfort in the writing of a rabbi who had watched many people die. “[The rabbi] began to believe in the olam habah, the world to come,” writes Leavitt. “The rabbi said I have learned that there is something—not nothing—out there waiting for us, something wonderful and loving and peaceful and joyous.”

Sarah Leavitt’s earlier, much-acclaimed graphic memoir, Tongues: A Story About Alzheimer’s, My Mother and Me (Arsenal Pulp, 2010), is being made into a feature-length animation. Seth Rogen (who is from Vancouver) and Lauren Miller Rogen, founders of the Alzheimer’s organization, Hilarity for Charity, are both producers on the film. The cast includes Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Bryan Cranston, Samira Wiley, Wanda Sykes and Sarah Silverman.

9781551529516

Sarah Leavitt

Teresa Heartchild, artist, self-advocate and author with Down syndrome.

Teresa Heartchild, who was placed in a nursing home. Heartchild, born with Down syndrome, had been raised by her parents in a nurturing environment including enrollment in a private school for 12 years. But then Heartchild’s mother died and her father became ill and frail. Two other siblings, acting as guardians, decided Heartchild was “incapable” of making her own decisions and put her in a home for elderly patients. “The nurses at the home told me Teresa cried every day and did almost nothing,” says James who fought her siblings to free Heartchild and bring her to live in Vancouver. Teresa now lives with James and her husband in Vancouver, where she writes every day, makes art and celebrates her freedom. James, the author of three other books dealing with environmental activism, free expression and ethical decision-making, tells their story in Freeing Teresa (The James Gang $19.99), which is also coming out as an audiobook later this year, narrated by a cast of actors including Lauren Potter, who was also born with Down syndrome.

9781999406103

Sarah Leavitt

Teresa Heartchild and her brother Garry Heartchild.
Bob Kronbauer, B.C. journalist, storyteller and founder of Vancouver Is Awesome

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Confronting uncomfortable truths

While trawling through bookshelves at a cottage she was renting in Scotland, Marilyn Bowering found a book describing a historic Gaelic poet: “Mary MacLeod of the seventeenth century, whose songs live on as memorials more lasting than stone.”

It wasn’t the first time Bowering got caught up with Mary MacLeod, that rarest of bards in the 1600s — a female. Bowering paid tribute to this rebel poet in Threshold (Leaf Press, 2015), so named because Mary MacLeod was banned from composing any song indoors or outdoors, so she defiantly wrote a song on her threshold instead.

In her much longer book of memoir, poetry and literary investigation, More Richly in Earth (McGill-Queen’s Univ. Press $34.95), Bowering revists this important bard who wrote during a time of war and colonization in Gaelic Scotland, who was both honoured and marginalized in her lifetime (at times referred to as a jewel and other times as a witch).

Sooke-based Bowering has received many awards for her writing including the Pat Lowther Award, the Ethel Wilson Prize and several National Magazine awards. She grew up in Victoria and has lived in the United States, Greece, Scotland, Spain and Canada.


The jewel & the witch

While trawling through bookshelves, Wade Davis found himself suddenly grounded at his Bowen Island home during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. It proved a fruitful time for writing and reviewing past essays, culminating in Beneath the Surface of Things: New and Selected Essays (Greystone $36.95). Davis’ insights range from the Great War and the birth of modernity, the demonization of the coca plant, fear of climate change, to the never-ending conflict in the Middle East. One of his most notable essays is “The Unraveling of America,” a grim picture of contemporary US society which was exposed during the pandemic. “Covid-19 didn’t lay America low; it revealed what had long been forsaken,” writes Davis. “As the crisis unfolded, with another American dying every minute of every day, a country that once turned out fighter planes by the hour, could not manage to produce the paper masks or cotton swabs essential for tracking the disease.” First published in Rolling Stone magazine in 2020, this essay attracted five million readers and 362 million social media impressions in less than a year. Davis’ critique isn’t so much an indictment as a call to confront uncomfortable truths in the hopes of sparking a path towards rehabilitation and recovery.

SWASHBUCKLING TALES

Sebastien de Castell developed a fan base with his sword ‘n’ sorcery fantasy novels in his series, The Greatcoats about the noble but disbanded Greatcoats, specifically Falcio Val Mond and his “fellow magistrates” Kest and Brasti. He followed this with a YA fantasy series, Spellslinger, which was nominated for the Carnegie Medal and is published in more than a dozen languages. Now de Castell has launched a new fantasy series, Court of Shadows with Play of Shadows: Book 1 (Mobius $35), about the grandson of two renowned Greatcoats named Damelas Shademantaigne who flies a duel by hiding out in a theatre. Trouble follows Damelas as he begins channeling the spirit of a dead villain, which causes him to reveal his country’s long-buried, dark secrets while on stage.

Tamar Griggs was a young woman in 1968 studying art and dance in New York City when she accepted an invitation for a short sailing holiday in the Mediterranean. It was a time of exploration and also coming to terms with personal demons. “I was confident in my physical body, showing a happy face to the world, but deep down I was terrified, hiding disturbing information … which I did not understand,” she writes in Tamar at Sea (Still Wild 4 Life $38.50). Little did Griggs know that this brief respite would lead to a year at sea. Carried by three different boats across thousands of nautical miles, her memoir narrates her experiences with a shipwreck on the coast of Spain and hitchhiking across the Atlantic Ocean on her way back to America with two Englishmen she didn’t know. Griggs is a photographer, writer and naturalist based on Salt Spring Island.
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6 BC BOOKWORLD • SUMMER 2024
recent encounter with work by andrea bennett was an article they wrote for The Tyee. The piece was about a “ghost trestle”—an old wooden bridge that was once used to transport newly-felled logs to the water, which then (in the early 1900s) was the standard means by which timber was moved. Part of that article dealt with some history regarding the issue of how to rename the town of Powell River, where some of the citizens were having problems with their home being named after Israel Powell, a provincial superintendent of Indian Affairs.

Israel Powell was a man who’d played a role in sending Indigenous children to residential schools and in enforcing laws in the townsite that severely restricted access for the local First Nation people. Since then, not surprisingly, the town has had an official name change and is now known as qathet.

Those of us in the settler population have grown more accustomed to these place name changes, just as those of us remaining in the cis-gendered populace are learning more about what it means to be non-binary like bennett.

Some of the prose poems in their new poetry collection address bennett’s life experiences and speak directly to this:

Food serves as the predominant metaphor, not surprising from a book with berries on its cover. The imagery is most evocative in the pieces that track their pregnancy, with “…the embryo… likened to food: sesame seed, chickpea, kidney bean” and later to lime, or fig; then “Bell pepper, half a footlong, a small cantaloupe.” Those berries on the book cover provide substance for a poem that’s too long to cite, but one that describes how blueberries grow from “a bloom that looks like a proto-berry” and that the berry later resembles its predecessor. They extend this descriptor to the role of parent and child where “…the daughter is the blueberry and the mother is the bloom who came before it.” Yet that is not the case here, with bennett addressing in another piece what seems like a “non-relationship” with their mother:

They want me to love my mother but I nothing my mother. Despite the many uses of food in bennett’s poems—melons, eggs, chickens, pigs, pineapples—the pivot for these is the counterpoint of hunger. And along with hunger comes its contemporary baggage, our obsession with weight: “I can tell you how many calories are in an apple and how many calories make up a pound,” bennett writes. But they also acknowledge hunger beyond those of physical cravings when they write of anger as a kind of appetite that can get stuck inside, and conclude one poem with the line, “I swallowed it all and I was still hungry.”

In addition to their work as a reporter and a creative writer, bennett is a skilled graphic artist. Their artwork graces the covers of a number of books that I love—poetry collections by Jennica Harper and Arleen Paré, and a wonderful novel from the Québeçois author, Christian Guay-Poliquin. Interspersed between the sections of this book are a few of bennett’s fine line drawings. Their skill in so many artistic pursuits, not all that uncommon in many who write, seems to be yet another aspect of the freedom implied by the non-binary “label” (if the term “label” can be applied)—a freedom to explore, to avoid being pigeon-holed into any one genre or mode of expression.
Helen Knott takes inspiration from the matriarchs who came before her — “women who carried families and communities on their backs.”

After losing her mother and grandmother in short succession, Helen Knott steps into bigger moccasins.

By Odette Auger

I come from strong women.

After losing her mother and grandmother in short succession, Helen Knott steps into bigger moccasins.

The multiple lenses needed to understand her journey are reflected in Knott’s choice to blend memoir, poetry, interludes and dreams.

I am the black bear.
I am the spectator.
I am the oblivious child eating ice cream.
I am all these things.
I am named Helen, after my kohkum who raised my dad.
My middle name is June, after Asu.
I carry the names of the women who came before me.
I was aged with memory the day I was born.

Interlude #2 introduces readers to dream maps—dreams drawn out on animal hides. “The dreamers would travel outside of their bodies to see what was to come,” Knott writes. She then shares a family story in which her grandmother’s matriarch is praying on a rooftop with a dream map in hand. It’s a view into the power of her matriarchs, and what continues. Careful protocols are required as “the dream map is so powerful it can drain the people who care for it.”

The maps held spiritual strength to assist the dreamer into the next world and were usually buried with them. “Sometimes, though, they would leave pieces of the maps to help those they left behind.”

This is the beauty of Becoming a Matriarch—a glimpse of a map to those of us still finding their heart strength.

Odette Auger, award-winning journalist and storyteller, is Sagamok Anishnaabe through her mother and lives as a guest in tla’amin (Klahoose), t’l’um’m (Ts’ul’um’ils), and Tla’amin (Homalco) territories.
Congratulations to the 2024 finalists!

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on the heels of her bestselling memoir, *Always Pack a Candle: A Nurse in the Cariboo-Chilcotin* (Heritage House, 2021), Marion McKinnon Crook has crafted another engaging memoir of her life as a community health nurse in Williams Lake and the surrounding Cariboo area. *Always on Call* is a fine follow-up.

Crook's first memoir depicted the beginning of her professional career as a novice in community nursing. At the age of 21, she arrived in Williams Lake by Greyhound with her newly minted Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree from Seattle University. Crook was immediately faced with navigating the steep learning curve of putting theory into practice and boots to the ground in a broad, unfamiliar landscape.

Spin forward a dozen years and *Always on Call* offers a new, mature nursing perspective. Like her previous memoir, it depicts a year in her life, from March 1975 to March 1976, with some artistic license thrown in for good measure.

The author is now 34 and married with three kids, ages 10, 8 and 3, and her husband is a lawyer. The family lives on rural acreage just outside of Williams Lake where they keep cattle, sheep, chickens and a 500-pound mama pig—their oldest child, Janice’s 4-H project. Their two youngest children, Glen and David, are adopted and have Indigenous ancestry.

So the scene is set with Crook balancing her life as a mother, wife and public health nurse. Janice and David, the two oldest kids, both have 4-H projects and the usual ups and downs in school. Three-year-old David is shuttled back and forth to daycare, then to preschool.

As in her previous memoir, Crook is careful not to disclose the identities of most people in her narrative. Her kids’ names are accurate but her husband’s is made up.

There is good reason for this discretion. Perhaps the most poignant aspect of her writing is the author’s capacity to speak to social issues: racism, sexism, medical malpractice, transgender questions and moral dilemmas—both in the office and in the community as a whole.

She does name a few individuals as signposts of the community and the times: Rancher Freddy Westwick, a larger-than-life sawmiller in Miocene; the colourful Pan Phillips from the Blackwater; and prominent educator June Streigler.

The reader gains insight into the inner workings of office politics and the stresses of a government agency like the Cariboo Health Unit, where a manager retires and the government drags its heels replacing her. The nurses chip in to rotate the supervisory work, until they say enough is enough.

While Crook is acting administrator, a young woman shows up demanding to see a nurse. “I’ve got the clap,” she confides.

Crook sets out the procedure: provide some antibiotic medication for the infection, take a swab of the infected area, and get a list of sexual contacts from the woman. When she discloses the names of a dozen or more men, including some prominent citizens, it’s obvious she is a sex worker. A young nursing student questions whether the woman shouldn’t be reported since she is probably “charging for her services and that’s illegal.”

Crook cools her off. “If we reported women who were charging for sex, they...
wouldn’t come to us for treatment. If they didn’t come for treatment, we’d be failing them and the community because the diseases would spread.”

Crook advises the young intern not to put her personal prejudices ahead of good nursing practice. “That means whatever your private opinion, treat the patient with respect.”

One of the strengths of the book that keeps the narrative lively is the juxtaposition of the author’s professional life at the health unit with her family life as a mother and wife and the always busy demands on the farm.

“Parenting is such an imprecise vocation,” Crook admits.

The issue of Crook and her husband adopting two Indigenous children comes up. Remember the Sixties Scoop?

When the author and her son, David, (now four years old) head over to nearby T’exelc (Williams Lake First Nation) to meet with a woman who has a boar to breed Crook’s daughter Janice’s sow, the woman asks if the child belonged to a local T’exelc family. Crook is caught off guard because she doesn’t know the origin of her son thanks to the enshrouded secrecy of the adoption process.

She says the T’exelc woman seemed both surprised and resentful. Crook explains how the adoption took place: “When the social worker told us she had a baby for us, she added, ‘Oh, and he’s Native. Is that alright?’”

Crook says she and her husband looked at each other. “It didn’t matter to us. We didn’t think it would matter to others. Or that it might matter to his clan, his band, his tribal community, and one day that it might matter to David. We had been incredibly naïve.”

The author’s personal honesty in these reflections is refreshing.

Each chapter takes the reader on a unique journey of discovery. Home visits to rural communities where numbered addresses were nonexistent. “Half a mile past the end of the snake fence, then turn right and cross two cattleguards” were often the only directions.

Always On Call is both informative and entertaining, and an insightful look into how things were in the Cariboo and the healthcare system nearly 50 years ago.

“It was all one giant, complicated, satisfying, balancing act,” Crook concludes. “It was enough. I was content—for now.”

Author of nine books, Sage Birchwater of Williams Lake is one of BC’s essential historians and journalists.

“Sticky, Sexy, Sad is an essential guide for anyone navigating the complexities of relationships in the digital age.”

—SHEILA WIJAYASINGHE
Physician and medical expert on The Social

“ToFic is an emotionally rich, stylistically compelling ethnographic wonder that illustrates the complexities, joys, and tragedies of fighting extractivism.”

—ERNESTO SCHWARTZ·MARIN
University of Exeter, UK
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Michael Kluckner
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Linda Gabris
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Foraging as a Way of Life: A Year-Round Field Guide to Wild Plants by Mikaela Cannon
(New Society $44.99)

Review by Alexander Varty, an amateur forager, finds new tips from a dedicated wilderness plant hunter.

The family that forages together...

Swedish-born Mikaela Cannon lives on a small organic farm in Armstrong, BC, where she and her family raise chickens, sheep and vegetables. Cannon also facilitates classes, workshops and hikes focused on foraging and wildcrafting. One of her aims is to pass on the next generation the skills and knowledge required to harvest and prepare wild foods. It led Cannon to take her own children along with her on forest excursions.

“I set about writing of the foraging we do as a family with the hope that our children, when they are older, will have a record of the knowledge gleaned, and a glimpse into how they spent their childhood,” Cannon writes. Other people found out about Cannon’s project and expressed interest in having copies of their own. Voilà! the idea for her book was born.

Foraging as a way of life? I am, admittedly, a rank amateur. But in my British family, foraging goes far back, well beyond any written accounts. A maternal great-grandmother was the resident herbalist in her Scottish village while on the paternal side, my father taught his sons to pick fiddleheads from the New Brunswick mud, although we did not inherit his taste for dandelion wine.

So when it comes to foraging, amateur or otherwise, Mikaela Cannon and I are pretty much on the same page, and in her pages I’ve already learned some useful tips. Who knew, for instance, that nettle seeds are a powerful stimulant, although doses of more than 30 grams a day “can prevent you from sleeping”? The next time I need to pull an all-nighter, and that might come soon, I’ll head to the weed patch first. I was similarly unaware that catnip, should you be able to keep your furry friends from raiding the pantry, has an analgesic effect on humans.

There are more than a few such snippets of knowledge to be gleaned here. To do so in the modern world would require unbelievable luxuries of time. For instance, Cannon recommends harvesting, roasting and grinding cleaver seed to make a caffeine-free coffee substitute. The operation, she cautions, is “tedious.” I’m going to stick with the nettle seeds, which at least promise a bit of a high.

There is something to be said, however, about any book that encourages people to put down their phones, head outdoors and pay close attention to what grows where and when. The real reward of foraging, I’d argue, lies not in being able to reduce your grocery bills but in establishing a stronger connection with the ground beneath your feet, honouring the Indigenous people who actually did live off the land in a sustainable fashion, and communicating with the more-than-human world that sustains us in more-than-material ways.

Readers should note that Cannon lives in Armstrong and her book is geared towards the flora of the Okanagan and the Kootenays. Residents of southwestern BC would be advised to investigate Luschiim’s Plants (Harbour, 2021) a collaboration between Coast Salish knowledge keeper Luschiim Arvid Charlie and ethnobotanist Nancy Turner [Turner wrote the forward to Cannon’s book]. Foraging as a Way of Life’s heft and seasonal organization diminish its usefulness as a field guide; for that it’s best to turn to Jim Pojar and Andy MacKinnon’s smaller but invaluable Plants of Coastal British Columbia (Loie Pine, 1997, 2004). And whether you come home with a bucket full of spruce tips or a basket full of pine mushrooms, the recipes in The Deerholme Foraging Book (TouchWood, 2014) penned by chef Bill Jones, will guarantee that your taste buds will be even more gratified than your wallet.

Happy foraging … but if you raid my nettle patch, please take only the tender leaves. 9780865719972

Senior West Coast arts journalist Alexander Varty lives and forages on unceded Snuneymuxw territory.
It is no surprise that freeing ourselves from the shame that it is all too easy to intuit from cultural messages and internalize, leads to knock-on effects. Taking up space in the world, saying no, defining our own needs rather than waiting for a partner or boss to magically understand and provide for them: all these things become newly possible when we slow down and deeply understand our own embodied experiences.

Teng sees our relationship with our bodies as a relationship with the world writ small, and it’s hard to argue with her. If we prioritize relationships that feel right in our bodies, maybe we won’t search for distraction and a cure for our ennui by browsing big-box stores, but will instead enjoy more meaningful purchases, ones where we are able to meet the makers. Perhaps we will start to understand our relationships with other humans and with the earth as sacred. Heck, we might even tear ourselves from the almighty screens that currently define our lives.

"What if we could return to the way we felt before we learned to judge ourselves, to decide what we deserved and to punish ourselves for not measuring up to society’s body ideals? This is the revolution..."

This is not a breezy read, although it is written simply and clearly. Teng’s book contains some hard and haunting stories from her advocacy for sex trafficked women, work she took up after her Miss Canada gig. It links our current physically-distanced, emotion-ally-muted “normal” with capitalism, colonialism, slavery and other ills of the world where we live — probably not news to anyone who has ever fought for social justice, but worth restating nonetheless.

What if, this book asks, we could return to the way we felt before we learned to judge ourselves, to decide what we deserved and to punish ourselves for not measuring up to society’s body ideals? This is the revolution Tara Teng has in mind. And if honouring our own pleasure and focusing on joy is the key to that revolution, I suspect many readers will be eager to come along for the ride.

Carrellin Brooks lives in a settler’s albied and cisgender lesbian body on the un-ceded territories of the xʷməθəkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səl̓ilwətaɁɬ (Tsleil-Waututh). Her most recent book of poetry, Learned, contrasts her mid-1990s education at Oxford University and the lessons of the body she learned concurrently with London’s leather dykes.

Your Body is a Revolution: Healing our relationships with our bodies, each other, and the earth by Tara Teng (Dundurn $23.99)

Y
ears ago, the facilita-
tor of a commu-
nications group I attended gave us an exercise: Every night for a week when you get into bed, thank the different parts of your body for the specific things they do for you.

On the first night, I did the obvious: thanks to my legs for holding me up, to my arms for hugging my loved ones, etcetera. What else, I wondered, could I possibly thank my body for in the nights that followed?

As I persevered with the exercise, I discovered that my body didn’t just help with physical tasks — it enabled me to perform every single act in my day. This should’ve been blindingly obvious, but when I lay down to consider it, I realized I’d been unthinkingly treating my physical self as, at best, a beast of burden. If it didn’t perform as I wanted, I got angry. If it did, I ignored it until the next time I needed something. I wish I could say that this distanced and transactional relationship to my body was unique to me, but Tara Teng, a former Miss Canada, knows otherwise. Raised in a conservative Christian household and church community, Teng and her young female peers were eyewatched by older women in the church to make sure their bodies weren’t exposed in ways that might cause boys to sin.

Experiencing her body only in terms of how it might lead males astray is only one of the harms that Teng describes in Your Body is a Revolution. “Othered” bodies — the ones we don’t see onscreen or on the page — can internalize their invisibility. Racism and other forms of societal harm have, as we know from research, real effects on bodies, such as the doubled maternal mortality rate for Indigenous versus white mothers in Canada. Those who experience trauma in their bodies can turn to substance abuse, overeating or other forms of destructive self-soothing to shut out the painful reality of what they felt.

How can we defuse the effects of harms like these in a healthier way? The common answer is to reexperience those feelings physically, which is easier said than done. Teng, now a somatic practitioner, encourages her clients, and us through this book, to explore, experience and more deeply understand our physical bodies. Yes, this means bringing out the mirror and taking a good look at our vulvas, if you didn’t catch the second wave of femi-
nism. It also includes embodied medi-
tation, comprehensive sexual consent (including with ourselves) and other self-guided practices Teng includes at the end of each chapter.

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The enlightened VOYAGER

Steve Burgess explores whether satisfying our wanderlust is worth the havoc it wreaks on the environment.

Flying doesn’t let you off the hook. Burgess notes that aviation’s contribution to carbon dioxide emissions and consequent warming range from 2.5 to 3.5 percent. “Like many devoted wanderers, I like to think technology will ride to our rescue,” he writes.

He lays siege to so-called eco-tourism, too in a chapter with the somewhat self-explanatory title, “Ice and Plastic.” Tourism’s negatives extend beyond the environmental. Look at Airbnb, for example, that began innocently as an affordable alternative to hotels for budget travellers. “The company grew into a largely unregulated, room-devouring colossus,” says Burgess. “Airbnb re-moves units from the long-term rental market as landlords go for the higher profits of short-term tourist stays. The result is scarcity and higher rents.”

Burgess devotes two full chapters to Japan’s geisha culture, which at first I thought was a bit much. But re-reading these chapters, I see that we learn a lot about geisha life and that’s worthwhile for an enlightened traveller.

This book begs the question: what really is tourism anyway? The annual pilgrimage to Mecca, which certainly qualifies as a major travel event, is entirely religious in nature. Falling somewhere in the middle of the religious event-bucket-list attraction spectrum is Spain’s Camino de Santiago and many of the world’s great cathedrals.

An overarching message is to strive to become a caring and connected traveller rather than a sightseeing tourist. Burgess recognizes that isn’t always easy. He has cultivated his love for a few countries with repeat visits, but still experiences dislocation and a sense of being an outsider.

Read this book before your next holiday—or, better yet, before you plan your next holiday. You might just end up contributing in a small way to rescuing our cratering environment. It’s more than informative and serious; Burgess’ fun and entertaining style makes it an easy, flowing read.

BY GRAHAM CHANDLER

 freelance writer Graham Chandler has visited 53 countries—some admittedly bucket-listers—but still finds great pleasure in exploring Vancouver’s West End, which he calls home.
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John and Bea Dowd’s affectionate retrospective of their decade spent living off the grid in a coastal paradise.

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poor,” he writes. His father was political; his “family was both rural and India. He was raised in a small village; his “family was both rural and poor,” he writes. His father was politically involved and passed on to his son Gandhi’s vision of a just, non-violent, progressive society, a vision fading in India’s subsequent decades, but one that Dosanjh valued and brought to Canada.

Dosanjh joined the large tide of Punjabis emigrating to Great Britain, arriving on the last day of 1964. While he lived in the Midlands and worked at a succession of menial jobs, he strengthened his facility with the English language. But British race and class relations left him “angry and discouraged.” In 1968, passing by the Canadian High Commission in London, he resolved to emigrate to Canada, where some relatives already lived.

There, in South Vancouver, Dosanjh toiled in nearby lumber mills, including work on the green chain. He found his political landscape of British Columbia,” wrote Paul Martin, which had just a four percent South Asian population, he eventually became NDP caucus leader. Later, he was the first person of Indian origin to become both Attorney General and, finally, Premier in 2000-2001. In 2004 he was recruited and elected as a Liberal MP for Vancouver-South until defeated in 2011, and he became Minister of Health in Paul Martin’s federal government. Dosanjh describes many of the causes of equality and equity he promoted as Premier and in Martin’s cabinet.

Because his autobiography was first published in India in 2016, apparently as an Indian readership, there is much detailed content on the politics of India and the personalities of BC’s South Asian community. Readers intrigued by the BC NDP may find much of interest, along with elements of score-settling and the courageous struggle against caste continues in England. 9789354474958

How Ujjal Dosanjh, a fighter for social justice and equity from a poor Punjabi town, rose to become Premier of BC.

Ujjal Dosanjh resting at home in Vancouver with his wife, Rami, February 1985 after being attacked and almost killed by an Indian Sikh man with a metal bar. The beating came after Dosanjh publicly denounced those who advocated violence to secure an independent Sikh homeland in India.

candid. He talks about his early, foolish flirtation with revolutionary Maoism in Vancouver (that later came back to haunt him) and his marital tensions. Twice as a young man he became embroiled in allegations of assault and twice he was acquitted. Following Dosanjh’s election to NDP MLA in 1991 in Vancouver-Kensington, which had just a four percent South Asian population, he eventually became NDP caucus leader. Later, he was the first person of Indian origin to become both Attorney General and, finally, Premier in 2000-2001. In 2004 he was recruited and elected as a Liberal MP for Vancouver-South until defeated in 2011, and he became Minister of Health in Paul Martin’s federal government. Dosanjh describes many of the causes of equality and equity he promoted as Premier and in Martin’s cabinet.

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Ujjal Dosanjh’s novel, The Past is Never Dead (Speaking Tiger/Sandhill $19.95) starts with the well-known quote from William Faulkner: “The past is never dead. It is not even past.” Based on some of Dosanjh’s own youthful experiences, the novel relates the story of a rural Sikh Punjabi family’s resistance to caste. Emigration to Bedford in the English Midlands (where Dosanjh stayed in the 1960s) does not solve the privations of caste, and the courageous struggle against caste continues in England. 9789354474958

Indian and replace the Punjab state with a “theistic country” opposed to secular values. Using violence and intimidation to oppose the right to free expression, the separatists “threatened to take us back into the dark ages” for “a pipe dream supported by a fanatic fringe,” says Dosanjh. He paid dearly for his opposition: an assassination attempt put him in the hospital where a doctor told him he was lucky to be alive. But he continued to advocate publicly for non-violence and liberal-democratic secular values, placing himself solidly in the Canadian mainstream.

Much of his autobiography is focused on the divisive politics of Indian immigrants in both BC and India. Dosanjh argues against what he considers the petty, bitterly fractious relations within the Indian community, riven by regional, religious and political schisms. He denounces the growing conflict between Sikhs and Hindus, worsened by the Indian government’s military approach to Sikh militants in Punjab in 1984. Bloodshed inevitably followed. Dosanjh’s reflections on violence have currency given recent events surrounding Khalistani separatism and Hindu-Sikh conflicts in Canada as well as in India.

The internal politics of Canadian ethnic groups “are often quite ruthless,” Dosanjh says. Arguing for open, democratic votes in Sikh temples, he denounces “the pandering by Canadian politicians to faith groups at their places of worship.” His memoir is at times surprisingly candid. He talks about his early, foolish flirtation with revolutionary Maoism in Vancouver (that later came back to haunt him) and his marital tensions. Twice as a young man he became embroiled in allegations of assault and twice he was acquitted. Following Dosanjh’s election to NDP MLA in 1991 in Vancouver-Kensington, which had just a four percent South Asian population, he eventually became NDP caucus leader. Later, he was the first person of Indian origin to become both Attorney General and, finally, Premier in 2000-2001. In 2004 he was recruited and elected as a Liberal MP for Vancouver-South until defeated in 2011, and he became Minister of Health in Paul Martin’s federal government. Dosanjh describes many of the causes of equality and equity he promoted as Premier and in Martin’s cabinet.

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Gene Homel has been a faculty member at universities, colleges and institutes since 1974.
Untold Tales of Old British Columbia
by Daniel Marshall
(Cherrystone Press; $24.95)

By Mark Forsythe

British Columbia is something of a whistleblowner among provinces. When eastern Canada was getting its act together in 1867, we remained a colony of the Crown. It wasn’t until 1871 that BC took the bait of a national railway. (Newfoundland was the final province to join in 1949.) The Rocky Mountains were a formidable barrier for East-West connections, which meant a natural North-South flow of commerce, people and culture.

The gold rush of 1858 deepened those ties to the South. More than 30,000 miners roared in from the US in a single year with most of the food, supplies and tools—not to mention whiskey—arriving on steamers from San Francisco or on the hoof along pack trails from the south. It looked like “Manifest Destiny” would sweep the entire Pacific Slope. “54-40 or Fight!” In no time, BC would slide into the US. So, why didn’t this happen? What kind of BC emerged? What did all of this mean for Indigenous people?

Dive into Untold Tales of Old British Columbia for some answers, an eclectic mix of vignettes from historian Daniel Marshall. The Victoria-based author of the award-winning Claiming the Land: British Columbia and the Making of a New El Dorado (Ronald Press, 2018) draws on 40 columns crafted for the online magazine, The Orca. His timeline spans the fur trade and gold rush eras, through confederation (and BC’s threat of secession), finally touching briefly on the Great War and Spanish Flu era. This “Old British Columbia” includes intersections with the much deeper history of Indigenous people with whom Marshall has worked and collaborated for many years.

Marshall dubs his new collection, a “cabinet of curiosities,” and there’s also a sense that he’s sharing the family photo album. His ancestors travelled north after the California gold rush to chase the golden butterfly on the Fraser River; one farmed on the Saanich Peninsula, another built roads and trails to open up interior gold fields. A seasoned bushwhacker, Marshall revels in locating these routes or a long-forgotten battle site in the Fraser Canyon. Childhood travels with family elders forged a keen interest in BC history, from the ground up.

Untold Tales of Old British Columbia uncovers important contributions by Indigenous guides and interpreters, regales readers with tales of miners defying death and documents fortunes won and lost (including an American financial empire built from Fraser River diggings). There are also bridge-building stories—both the metaphorical and physical senses. BC was a multicultural place in 1858 during what Marshall calls “the third biggest mass of gold seekers in human history.” Most people living on the land were Indigenous and were soon to be pushed onto reserves. Some joined the new economy as miners or transporting other gold miners by canoe—some canoes even carried steel and iron for the iconic Alexandra Bridge.

James Douglas, of mixed heritage (Scottish & West Indian), had forged strong relationships with Indigenous people during the fur trade era for the Hudson’s Bay Company and had married Amelia Connolly, the Metis daughter of a fur trader. Douglas had witnessed firsthand the American march westward and watched British trading territory dissolve into what is now Washington, Oregon and California. On orders from the Colonial Office, he worked to preserve this remote area as British territory, looked out for the welfare of Indigenous people and at the same time, encouraged settlement. He created alliances with Chinese miners and invited Blacks to escape slavery from the US, to be considered equal under British law. He also began to sign treaties with First Nations. Marshall writes, “Queen Victoria’s paradoxical policy of protecting Indigenous people while promoting progress presented colonial administrators like Douglas with an onerous task: to interpret and implement two mutually exclusive imperial goals.” The consequences are still with us today.

A true Vancouver Islander, Daniel Marshall reminds us that the preferred route of the future Canadian Pacific Railway was actually to Bute Inlet, which involved island-hopping along multiple bridges to Vancouver Island that would include a toehold on Ripple Rock. (His grandfather lamented this lost opportunity for years.) A rail line from Campbell River was to end at salt water in Esquimalt. Marshall details why it didn’t work out that way, with some fascinating speculation about Joseph Trutch’s conflict of interest that steered the railway to the south: his toll bridge in the Fraser Canyon. “Vancouver Island was not needed as a western entrepôt, nor was the Island essential to the larger Canadian national dream,” writes Marshall. In the end, Canada was prepared to say goodbye to Vancouver Island if it didn’t like the final port choice of Burrard Inlet.

Peering through the lens of history can reveal much about the here and now. Marshall says this narrative is always changing, as are our points of view. An engaging storyteller with a gift for digging up long-hidden stories (many buried in American archival collections), his collection goes a long way toward revealing how BC emerged from a period of chaos and transformation. He is something like a miner panning gravel for nuggets and flakes before they’re swept downstream forever.

Mark Forsythe is author/co-author of four books and a former host of CBC Radio’s BC Almanac.

James Dunsmuir
(1851 – 1920), the 14th premier of British Columbia, from 1900 to 1902.
ver the years I’ve had more than a few occasions to travel from British Columbia down the I-5 Highway to California, and there is one small town that always captures my interest—just by mere mention of its name. “Dunsmuir, California, you say?”

My fellow traveller, a British Columbian who had recently moved to San Jose, raced by the historic railway town that clings to a mountainous edge along the upper Sacramento River, with Mount Shasta looming above. I wanted to stop, but admittedly it can be rather tiresome driving with a historian who demands to halt at each and every corner of historical significance! “We don’t have time—we have to reach the B.C. border tonight,” he snapped.

I was a bit peeved, though his reaction was understandable, having already detoured through many small-town wonders of California’s northern goldfields.

But Dunsmuir! From that point on I was determined to see this intriguingly named town for myself and subsequently had the pleasure of staying twice in future years.

Who has not heard of the wealthy Dunsmuir family of British Columbia? Rarely is one of the greatest rags-to-riches stories found along the North Pacific Slope. Coal baron Robert Dunsmuir, initially in the employ of the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC), became famous (some say infamous) for the development of the Nanaimo coal mines, for building the historic Esquimalt & Nanaimo Railway and particularly for erecting a promised home for his wife Joan—today’s magnificent Craigdarroch Castle in Victoria.

But why was this Californian town called Dunsmuir? Having taken a room at a cozy, converted railway carriouge, I set out the next day for a bit of exploring, wandering the streets and outskirts. The locale was once called Upper Soda Springs. It was a Hudson’s Bay Company camp stop on the trail system that once extended from B.C. to HBC’s post in Yerba Buena (San Francisco). When the railway was built, the locale became known as Pusher, a name that described the need for additional locomotive force to literally push trains up the steep railroad.

One day Robert Dunsmuir’s son Alexander Dunsmuir (1853–1900), came whistling into town, marvelling at the scenic beauty and pristine waters. It was then that he apparently offered to build the town a fountain if the community officially changed its name to Dunsmuir. The fountain he donated was dubbed “Lady of the Fountain.”

Alex had been in charge of the family’s business operations in San Francisco since 1878. Away from the watchful eye of his mother, Joan Dunsmuir, Alex started an affair with his favourite bartender’s wife, Josephine Wallace. The couple subsequently lived together for many years, along with Josephine’s two children, William Wallace and Edna Wallace Hopper, who later became well-known actresses.

But the couple did not marry until 1899, delaying the wedding until his father’s death, when Alexander and his older brother, James, finally took control of the family business—and therefore were now free of their mother’s “disapproving eye and financial control.” Alexander and Josephine selected New York for the honeymoon as it coincided with his celebrated stepdaughter’s performance on the New York stage. Just like his father before him, Alexander promised his newlywed wife a mansion, and construction was completed during their absence.

Until the marriage, Alexander had not only been “living in sin” but had also become an incurable alcoholic. The secretive life he adopted apparently also encouraged companionship with the whiskey bottle. The immense wealth of the Dunsmuir family could not save him, as his whiskey habits got the better of him and he died during their honeymoon to New York in January, 1900.

The plan once they returned to California had been that Alexander would cross the marital threshold with his new wife into the Greek-revival mansion—but with his death in New York, Josephine was left to return to the new home on her own. Just imagine waiting over twenty years to get married, then travelling back across the continent to a grand mansion that had been promised you—only now it was empty.

Josephine’s occupation of the California mansion came to a quick end, just a little over a year later in 1901, when she followed her husband to the grave. Enter the Flapper and the Premier, the B.C. court case that scandalized the public.

Alexander Dunsmuir’s famous stepdaughter, Edna Wallace Hopper (1872–1919), was an American actress and dancer as well as a former host of CBC Radio’s Pusher, a name that described the need for additional locomotive force to literally push trains up the steep railroad.

James Dunsmuir entered the B.C. legislature in 1898 and in 1900 became the fourteenth premier—though he resigned in 1902, apparently disliking politics. One wonders whether his departure was influenced by the dramatic court cases brought against him during his premiership.

Big crowds followed the court cases, which involved alcohol abuse, inappropriate behaviour and a Broadway star looking for a piece of the Dunsmuir fortune. The case not only thrilled British Columbians but increasingly also scandalized the Dunsmuir courts as action dragged on for four years. Witnesses were called throughout, testifying either for or against the state of Alexander Dunsmuir’s mental capacity. The case was considered one of the most complicated and expensive in the annals of British Columbia history.

At the trial’s end in 1906, the Privy Council in London, England—then Canada’s highest court of appeal—decided in favour of James Dunsmuir and against both Edna Hopper and Joan Dunsmuir. With the closure of the dramatic trial, the premier, following the example of both his father and younger brother, used the windfall to build his own mansion, Hatley Castle— which still stands, part of Royal Roads University.

Today, Alexander Dunsmuir’s “Lady of the Fountain” is located in a remote and somewhat forgotten corner of California, but in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the town attracted many visitors, like Alexander, to the pristine waters and soda springs for their reputed health-restoring properties.

Indeed, the Dunsmuir fountain poured “the best waters on earth” (the official city slogan)—a veritable fountain of youth. And so, it is fascinating that his stepdaughter, increasingly known as the Eternal Flapper, would later build on the success of her acting career to lend her name to a range of age-defying cosmetics. Hopper never did reveal her true age, always maintaining that her birth record was destroyed in the great San Francisco fire of 1906.

While Dunsmuir’s fountain was something of a conceit for a man doomed to die at an early age, his stepdaughter—though defeated by the premier—would ride her own fountain of youth to further fame and fortune.
son of the Canadian prairie, Pete Maloff (1900—1971) was born with wanderlust. After taking an apprenticeship with a printer in San Francisco at the age of 15, he heard the great Caruso sing, thrilled to the violin of Fritz Kreisler, marveled at prima ballerina Anna Pavlova’s “dying swan” dance. He then went on the bum, joining hobos in catching freight trains in California. In time, Maloff would travel the world visiting fellow pacifists and vegetarians.

For all the masters he saw and heard, though, Maloff was most affected emotionally by the singing of ten members of the Sons of Freedom, a splinter group of the Doukhobors, as they eased their burden of pushing and pulling a cart on rutted roads without benefit of horses or oxen by singing ancient hymns in their native Russian. “I was under the spell of their singing,” he wrote in They Called Him a Radical: The Memoirs of Pete Maloff and the Making of a Doukhobor Pacifist, “and I felt these people represented something really great. But exactly what this greatness was, I could not understand.”

Maloff became a noted Doukhobor figure who wrote an extensive history of the group’s time in Canada. In They Called Him a Radical, his granddaughter, Vera Maloff, intersperses Pete’s memoir with her own observations and reflections on researching his background, making this a living history.

The result is a fascinating look at a fractious community whose contributions to British Columbia have been more often overshadowed by disputes with authorities. The Russian-speaking Christians were soon in conflict with officials. As pacifists, they refused military service. A few years after their arrival, the federal government insisted homesteads had to be registered individually, not collectively, meaning the Doukhobors would also have to swear allegiance to the Crown, including taking up arms.

Peter Verigin, known by some of his followers as The Lordly, led followers to British Columbia, where some, including Maloff’s parents, lived apart as Independent Doukhobors.

“Even in my earliest days,” Maloff wrote, “I felt an extreme aversion to all cruelty, licentiousness and other moral decadence into which those who had left the community had begun to fall. In this category were my own parents.”

At the same time, a splinter group of radical orthodox believers, known as the Sons of Freedom, burned their own homes and possessions, as well as those of others. In 1924, Verigin was killed when his railcar exploded. Whether the incident was an accident or, more likely, assassination is debated to this day, as is the identity of any possible perpetrator. Soon after, police and armed vigilantes in the Kootenays seized Doukhobor property, beginning several decades of strife.

Maloff published a pamphlet in 1930 during a period of turbulence. He wrote: “It seems to me that this policy of assimilation, especially when done by violence, coercion and intimidation,
Sometimes ... the community appeared to me to be the realization of world brotherhood, the highest symbol, but at other times the community appeared to me to be a spiritual prison where one was obliged to obey orders and where even the shadow of freedom was absent.

— PETE MALOFF

is one of the chief causes of Doukhobor unrest.”

The Sons of Freedom engaged in further acts of arson and bombings as well as such civil disobedience as nude protests. In the 1950s, the Social Credit provincial government forcibly removed children from their parents and communities. Some were kept in a former sanatorium where they were only allowed to meet adult relatives through a chain-link fence. Earlier this year, Premier David Eby apologized for the British Columbia government’s action.

Maloff was a thinker and a questioner, not simply a follower. He balked at restrictions on his personal philosophic and religious explorations.

“Sometimes Peter Vasilievich [Verigin] and the community appeared to me to be the realization of world brotherhood, the highest symbol,” he wrote, “but at other times the community appeared to me to be a spiritual prison where one was obliged to obey orders and where even the shadow of freedom was absent.”

World peace was Maloff’s cause, which he pursued from his home in Thrums, a hamlet along the Koootenay River. After selling rare pieces of Doukhobor literature to the library at the University of British Columbia, he used the proceeds to finance a trip to visit several far-flung correspondents. He would die at 71, sitting beside his wife, Lusha, on a bus while traveling to visit a friend in the United States, his wanderlust sated only by death.

IN 1929, PETE MALOFF WAS ONE OF SEVERAL Doukhobor men who led a peaceful march through the streets of Nelson to protest the use of tax money to purchase armaments. The marchers were hosed down by the fire department and the leaders, including Maloff, were sentenced to six months of hard labour at Oakalla. Later, while under house arrest, he wrote this memoir, so wonderfully placed in context by granddaughter Vera Maloff, the author of Our Backs Warmed by the Sun: Memories of a Doukhobor Life (Caitlin Press, 2021), an insightful collection of reminiscences, social history and oral history.

Last October, Vera joined other Doukhobors in reciting prayers and singing hymns and psalms in honour of Peter Verigin, a memorial service conducted now for 99 consecutive years. A series of monthly lectures are being held at the Brilliant Cultural Centre and streamed online to mark the pending centenary.

The history told in They Called Him a Radical is part of a story not yet concluded.

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The entries are judged by a panel of writers and editors, which announces its winning selection in the spring of the following year. The winning novel is published by Anvil Press.

Here’s how it works:

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AT a hotel in St Andrews, New Brunswick, the federal government of Canada is plotting to turn Canada into a dictatorship. Four teens learn of the plot. One is from a country where such a plot was foiled. She and her fellow “secret agents” enlist the help of four adults, and together they set out to rescue Canada from dictatorship.

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At a hotel in St Andrews, New Brunswick, the federal government of Canada is plotting to turn Canada into a dictatorship. Four teens learn of the plot. One is from a country where such a plot was foiled. She and her fellow “secret agents” enlist the help of four adults, and together they set out to rescue Canada from dictatorship...

This book and two others, Pender Harbour’s Secret Agents and Secret Agents’ Dutch Treat are available across Canada through Red Tuque Books:

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Benjamin Perrin argues that Canada needs a new approach to its criminal justice system.

**BP: Trauma is pervasive throughout the criminal justice system. From victims of crime, to the people who harmed them, to the professionals working in the system who experience vicarious trauma. We can’t understand any interaction in the system without understanding trauma. The impact of intergenerational trauma, particularly impacting Indigenous and Black people, cannot be overstated either.**

**Someone who is victimized as a child is 50% more likely to harm others later in life and eight times more likely to be sexually abused again. Childhood trauma is an almost universal experience of people incarcerated. And the system compounds that trauma. At the same time, survivors experience “secondary victimization” or re-traumatization in a system never designed for them. It’s one of the reasons only one-third of crime is reported and only 5-6% of sexual offences are reported.**

**BCBW: How does restorative justice fit into the broader view of the criminal justice system and what are the key principles underlying the restorative justice approach?**

**Benjamin Perrin for the following Question & Answer session.**

**BP: In addition to publishing *Indictment: The Criminal Justice System on Trial*, Perrin received this letter. The key question was, “If you could design a new criminal justice system from scratch, what would it look like?”**

**BCBW: There are better ways to keep us all safer than discredited “tough on crime” policies or simply tinkering with the status quo.”**

**Benjamin Perrin**
The Ferguson brothers turn their humorous gaze to the fictional BC town, Happy Rock, where a death is investigated by a fading TV star.

I Only Read Murder by Ian Ferguson and Will Ferguson (HarperCollins $24.99)

BY JOHN MOORE

Ian Ferguson and Will Ferguson could be expected to whip up something as homely and comforting as scrambled eggs on toast without anyone mistaking the ketchup for the signature red sauce of murder.

As one of the main characters in I Only Read Murder observes, such mysteries are known in the trade as “cozies.” “You know, an amateur sleuth, female, usually plucky, with a small-town murder solved in the penultimate chapter and equilibrium restored. That sort of thing. They’re surprisingly popular.”

They have been since Agatha Christie’s Miss Marple, based her old body by exposing the bucolic English village of St. Mary Mead as the unlikely but leading candidate for “our paycheques are at stake”), helpless Harry is instantly replaced by Poe Regal. Pronounced “ReGAL,” Poe is a bloated former action star and ex-Miranda Abbott love interest who, even she admits, would have to be two hundred years old if he had spent as much time as he claims in secret Asian ashrams and dojos mastering obscure martial arts.

Between cataloguing the quirky resi-
dents of a tiny town composed almost entirely of eccentrics and sending up the pretentious duplicities of the entertain-
tainment industry, the Fergusons have themselves a field day in what the mili-
tary call a “target-rich environment.”

What saves I Only Read Murder from being just a satirical comic romp is that it’s genuinely a good mystery. Many of the characters are revealed to have motives not apparent at first and the plot has more twists than a gnomish knot. That said, place some pillows on the floor around your favourite reading chair or couch for when you fall out of laugh-
ing.

IAN AND WILL FERGUSON ALSO CO-WRITE How to Be a Canadian: Even If You Already Are One (D&M, 2001/2007). Individually, Ian Ferguson wrote The Survival Guide to British Columbia (Heritage, 2019). He is a creative direc-
tor in the film and television industry and lives in Victoria. 9781443470766

John Moore reads and reviews books in Gorbilad Highlands.
More Richly in Earth
*A Poet’s Search for Mary MacLeod*

MARILYN BOWERING

“Both grand in scale and gorgeously, lyrically intimate, *More Richly in Earth* holds readers close as they follow Bowering’s search for a myth-shrouded Scottish poet. Yet at its heart, it is something more powerful, more mysterious.”

—Patrick James Errington, author of *the swailing*

“*More Richly in Earth* has an intricate structure, weaving together memoir, conversation, poetry, and literary investigation. As we accompany Bowering on her search for Mary MacLeod, we are released with her into mystery’s delight.”

—Jan Zwicky

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The climate crisis is on Andrea Scott’s mind, winner of this year’s Raven Chapbooks poetry contest, yet she focuses not on woebegone thoughts, but instead offers something more akin to light and hope in her new chapbook, *In the Warm Shallows of What Remains* (Raven Chapbooks $22.95).

She begins with a prose poem referring to PK Page (1916–2010) whose poem *Planet Earth* was chosen by the United Nations in 2001 to be read simultaneously in New York, the Antarctic and the South Pacific to celebrate the International Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations. “Dear P.K. Page re: care instructions for our beloved Planet Earth,” writes Scott as she draws us in to think about the Earth and how “we haven’t loved it properly.”

A mother and teacher based in Victoria, Scott uses cheery images such as dreaming of flying while “thinking/happy things” with “echoes of Peter Pan.” One of Scott’s mentors and teachers, Susan Musgrave, who made such a splash with her latest poetry collection *Exculpatory Lilies* (M&S, 2022), says of Scott’s poems, “Plum trees, steakhouse neon, dolphins with gummy smiles, hailstones, sex with someone new. These poems surprise and delight at every turn, like a good energy bar chock full of umami for the soul.”

Scott seamlessly mingles catastrophe with humour in “While the World was Ending,” during which she says she “made soup to move along / three chicken carcasses in Ziplocs in the deep freeze.” Scott’s work has appeared in *The Dalhousie Review, The New Quarterly* and *The Humber Literary Review*. She was longlisted for the 2023 Room Poetry Contest and the 2023 CBC Poetry Prize. She won the 2022 Geist Erasure Poetry Contest and was a finalist for the FBCW 2022 Literary Contest.

Patrick Grace explores queer self-discovery from childhood to adulthood in his debut book of poetry, *Deviant* (U. of Alberta Press $19.99), moving between themes of love, fear, grief and violence in same-sex relationships. Grace’s confessional poetry captures intense emotions shaped by both beauty and brutality. His collection also describes coming-of-age identity struggles, highlighting queer love as a coping mechanism against fear and cruelty. Later poems probe psychological trauma, stalking and the justice system’s bias against gay men.

Grace divides his time between Vancouver and Victoria. His poems have been published in *EVENT, The Malahat Review and Prairie Fire*. He has published two chapbooks: a blurred wind swells back for you (2023) and *Dustland* (2021).

Chloe Cocking, who currently resides in Maple Ridge, has lived in Metro Vancouver for most of her life. After two short story collections, a novel and a debut poetry book, Cocking has released her second poetry collection, *world without end* (Filidh $19.46), which she was inspired to write during the height of the pandemic lockdown.

“It stayed inside, along with my person and my cat, in a very tiny apartment,” she says. “I worked from home. I had zoom meetings. I played scrabble with my person.” And she wrote 30 poems in 30 days.

“Some are very obviously ‘covid poems.’ Others are poems written during covid (rather than poems about covid).”

“What bubbles to the surface when you coop up a port during a pandemic?” muses Cocking. “They think about things, drilling deeper ever deeper into themselves. This book contains some of the results.”

Permission to Settle (Anvil $20) by Vancouverite Holly Flauto is a series of memoir-based poems on the anxiety of immigration. Written from the perspective of a modern-day settler coming from the US to Canada, the poems investigate the implicit biases of the application forms. The reality of a life lived does not tick boxes so easily.
Tom Wayman finds a contemporary rural paradise, including apples and snakes.

GOING UP THE COUNTRY

In 1989, Wayman moves to Winlaw, an area just northwest of Nelson, in search of a Henry David Thoreau-like escape into nature writing (Walden; or, Life in the Woods, 1854) and to take space from an unsatisfactory partnership. He purchases a modest cabin on a plot just under nine acres. His property, which he affectionately terms "Appledale," is named after a line from a poem combined with the name of a road adjacent to his home called "Appledore." Wayman's approach is pragmatic and practical, reflecting his systematic attention to detail with the repairs and maintenance of his home. This meticulousness, too, is a lesson imparted by Wayman recounting an expedition to fix a leaky smoke pipe. The tribulations of party-line phones and the worries of fire season smoke, to name but a few examples.

Wayman's approach is pragmatic and practical, reflecting his systematic attention to detail with the repairs and maintenance of his home. This meticulousness, too, is a lesson imparted by Wayman recounting an expedition to fix a leaky smoke pipe. The tribulations of party-line phones and the worries of fire season smoke, to name but a few examples.

Wayman's narrative is a contemplation of Wayman's relationship to home, and the humility, reverence and care needed to find that true sense of belonging. 9781990776632

Sonja Pinto is a writer, photographer, printer maker and book reviewer. They reside on the unceded territories of the Léyməq (Victoria, B.C.).
Afghan to Freedom

Shahnaz Qayumi sets her story in the aftermath of the Russian withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 as the country descends into civil war.

Eventually, Zia and his mother flee under cover of night. It’s a harrowing and dangerous journey out of Afghanistan but they make it to Pakistan. Even here, as vulnerable refugees, it is dangerous. Zia and his mother begin saving to get a visa to Canada. At one point, their savings are stolen and Zia’s mother falls into a depression. But Zia is persistent and eventually they arrive in Canada. After a brief one-night stay in Ottawa, they travel to Toronto and then Calgary, where they settle.

On the first day at his new school, Zia sees pictures of Afghanistan hanging on the walls. “I stood in front of the first frame, with the full blue sky of Kabul. Scattered across the sky were the most beautiful, colourful dazzling kites. I imagined I could see my friends in Kabul. Scattered across the sky were the most beautiful, colourful dazzling kites. I imagined I could see my friends in Kabul.”

For his first homework assignment, Zia must write about his homeland. His confusion and loneliness are clear as Zia struggles to come to terms with what he has lost. “I don’t know how long I have been at my desk. In the first frame, I see daylight emerging from the dark. I can see the bright blue sky of Kabul. There are kites in the sky. I imagine I could see my friends.”

Writing for young readers about the impact of a battle-scarred country on families and communities is a delicate undertaking. The destructive nature of such a backdrop must be detailed in a serious way without falling into the use of overly violent descriptions that could traumatize an underaged reader.

Shahnaz Qayumi accomplishes this difficult balancing act in her debut novel Zia’s Story (Tradewind $14.95), with illustrations by Nahid Kazemi. The story is set in the aftermath of the Russian withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 as the country descends into civil war. Rule by the oppressive Taliban puts restrictions on women working outside the home and girls attending school. Many men disappear, never to be heard from again if they fall out of favour with the Taliban, or for no known reason at all.

We meet young Zia as he flies kites with his best friends. Kites are special playthings for Afghan children, but it will be the last carefree evening for Zia for a long time. Back home, just before he falls asleep, gun-toting soldiers appear at the door to take away Zia’s father. “You are now the man of our family, Zia,” his father whispers before he is forced out of the house. “Until I return home. Take care of your mother.” Zia and his mother will never see him again.

For a short period, Zia and his mother continue living in their Kabul home. Before long, she cannot work when the Taliban decree that women are not allowed outside alone. To make a living for their household, Zia drops out of school to sell food in the streets that his mother cooks.

Qayumi’s words are simple but powerful as she tells of the increasing oppression. “Soon there was no more public music or dancing. Instead, there was a curfew. Police stood at every public music or dancing. Instead, there was a curfew. Police stood at every power stop.”

AFGHANI FLIGHT to FREEDOM

Shahnaz Qayumi sets her story in the aftermath of the Russian withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 as the country descends into civil war.
e seventeen-year-old Lucy “Lucky” Graves is a determined rugby player, devoted to her championship team until a devastating ankle injury shatters her dreams of a scholarship and a pro career in Brooke Carter’s novel, Lucky Break (Orca $10.95) for ages 12-17. Lucky finds she is lost without her place on the rugby team. She also faces uncertainty about her future, which brings on anxiety, OCD and trauma from her past that re-emerges. But female friendship comes to Lucky’s rescue, sending her to her champion — and it is catching.”

“Learning about plants might seem like a waste of time when you have homework to do or a snap to send. But with an uncertain future due to climate change and a natural world that needs caring for, knowing about plants can change—and maybe even save—your life,” writes Philippa Joly in A Kid’s Guide to Plants of the Pacific Northwest: with Cool Facts, Activities and Recipes (Harbour $26.95) for ages 6-12. From digging up roots to crafting plantain salve, Joly illustrates the wonders to be found in nature while encouraging self-confidence in the wilds and inspiring environmental stewardship. With over fifty plant profiles, including coastal Indigenous uses and fun activities, Joly combines her expertise as a herbalist and outdoor educator to create an accessible guide to the natural world. Her title has attracted the praise of other plant gurus such as ethnobotanist, Nancy Turner, who describes Joly’s book as “a rich compendium of plant portraits and descriptions, personal stories, recipes, games and hands-on activities—like making tea from Yerba Buena or making a root-digging stick of Oceanaspray. Philippa’s obvious love of kids, plants and the natural world shines through—and it is catching.”

It’s easy to underestimate mushrooms but these small fungi have a lot to teach us in Kallie George’s Mushrooms Know: Wisdom from our Friends the Fungi (Greystone $23.95), for ages 4-8. With vibrant colour illustrations and engaging rhyme, George shows cases over fifty mushroom varieties and shares fun facts such as some mushrooms are so strong, they grow through concrete and others can light up in the dark (they’re bioluminescent). George, who has written 40 books for children, grew up on the Sunshine Coast where she loved exploring the woods and mushroom foraging with her family. Vancouver-based Gillingham has illustrated more than 25 titles for children.

It’s a They! (Greystone $23.95), for ages 4-8. With vibrant colour illustrations and inclusive photography of children from different ethnicities. Excited siblings narrate the story, expressing love and joy for the baby, regardless of their eventual gender identity. The book encourages conversations about gender while offering a departure from traditional binary perspectives. Herriot is a full-time special education teacher in Victoria and an adjunct professor in the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria.

Minnow: The Girl Who Became Part Fish (Medicine Wheel Publishing $22.99) for ages 6-10, follows a young Indigenous water protector named Minnow as she embarks on an underwater trip to learn lessons from those whom she calls her underwater relatives. When she resurfaces, Minnow rallies her community to enact positive change. Told in rhymes and illustrated by Nanaimo-based Bailey Macabre, Minnow introduces activism to young children and inspires respect for Indigenous water and land protectors. Bailey Macabre is an agender Cree, Métis and Ukrainian artist who is passionate about bright colours, Indigenous sovereignty and identity.

Dive into the scrum with rugby-playing girls, Pacific Northwest plants, Indigenous activism, mushrooms and nonbinary babies.

KID LIT / YA ROUNDUP

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A small but fast-growing community in Canada, Filipino-Canadians represent under 3% of the population (2021 census). Now their stories have been collected in *Magdaragat: An Anthology of Filipino-Canadian Writing* (Cormorant $29.95) co-edited by Vancouver-based Teodoro Alcuitas, the publisher of *Philippine Canadian News*, an online paper for the Filipino diaspora. (Magdaragat is a Filipino word meaning “voyagers of the seas.”) Alcuitas also founded Silangan, the first Filipino newspaper in western Canada, in 1976. The selected poems, essays, short fiction, plays and speeches feature a wide range of Filipino-Canadian experiences.

From the Governor General’s Award-shortlisted novelist, Shashi Bhat, *Death by a Thousand Cuts* (M&S $24.95) is a collection of her short stories about the daily tribulations and societal pressures experienced by women. From a writer grappling with her ex’s novel about their breakup to a woman embarking on a nightmare search for answers as she begins to lose her hair, Bhat explores themes of rage, longing, illness and bodily autonomy.

Michael Clague has released *In Search of Progress: Questions from a Life in Community Work in a Time of Fear and Disillusionment in Democracy* (self-published $10). Clague argues that people’s well-being is enhanced through inclusive, just and participatory socio-economic and political structures. His book underlines how community work acts as a catalyst for positive change, especially amid global challenges like climate collapse, asserting that it empowers citizens to collaboratively address crises and invokes hope in the human spirit.

Sheri-D Wilson has written fourteen books, three plays and created four short films. In the first volume of Sheri-D Wilson’s Rain trilogy, *The ONEIRONAUT Ø1* (Write Bloody North $20), a scientist escapes an oppressed society stripped of dreams by a totalitarian regime. Told in a narrative poem format, the protagonist, Rain, is chosen by the Willows to lead a rebellion against The Bureau, a dystopian power that enforces a dream-inhibiting drug. As Rain confronts the government and the Department of Dreams, the fate of the Oneironauts (who hold the secret to hope, healing and living together in harmony) hangs in the balance.

Step once again into London’s Savoy Hotel in the 1960s with *Princess of the Savoy* (D&M $19.95), the third volume of the cheeky bestseller series written by Prudence Emery with Ron Base. Miss Priscilla Tempest, a Canadian who works in the press office, navigates challenges from her boss, an American gangster and a Tarzan movie star. Then a fascist plot emerges from an English estate, threatening British democracy. Reluctant crime-fighter Priscilla teams up with Fleet Street writer Percy Huskisson to unravel the deadly conspiracy.
H IS FOR HAFTING
Known as “Birdergirl,” Melissa Hafting, a respected bird blogger and photographer, found solace in her ornithological passion following the loss of her parents. Dare to Bird: Exploring the Joy and Healing Power of Birds (Rocky Mountain Books $45) showcases her bird photographs and describes the positive mental health benefits of bird-watching. Hafting advocates for inclusivity in the birding community, especially for women, BIPOC, and LGBTQIA+ folks. Through her work, she also advocates for bird habitat protection.

J IS FOR J.T. SIEMENS
moved to BC, where she now lives in company in the early 1960s. Later she charter flying service and a fur trading (self-published adventures and misadventures in Canadian Arctic. McGhie recalls her protection. 9781771606547

K IS FOR KIRKPATRICK
Museum curator Margaret gets an unexpected inheritance of eight million dollars from her late sister Shirley, along with a whimsical request to revive an abandoned railway line. Despite skepticism, Margaret undertakes the adventure, which impacts her career, marriage, friendships, and personal identity. Gail Kirkpatrick’s novel, Sleepers and Ties (Now or Never $19.95), charts Margaret’s journey and the change it has on her life. Is it possible to take on a new challenge? 978-1-98885404-2

L IS FOR LOWE
Noor bonds with her grandfather over a shared love for pies during the summer holidays. Once school commences, they keep in touch through weekly video chats focused on life updates over a piece of pin, which they call “pie reports.” 978 Granddad faces health challenges andwithdraws, Noor preserves the tradition by documenting her reports until he’s ready to reconnect. The Pie Reports (Orca $21.95) for ages 6-8, written and illustrated by Hayley Lowe, emphasizes the connections between a child and grandparent who want to stay close across physical and emotional distances.

M IS FOR MALIK
Tarig Malik revisits Kothi, a millennium-old city in the Punjab province of Pakistan, where he spent his formative years in Blood of Stone (Caitlin $20.00), his second poetry collection. Malik’s descriptions point to the city’s tapestry of “secrets and yearnings,” shaped by his collective experiences of dislocation and migration. This personal exploration precedes Malik’s immigration to Canada, offering a reflection on his roots and identity. As the inhabitants of Kothi scatter in search of new homes, their journeys intertwine with those of Malik’s fellow mujahir, creating a diasporic narrative that explores themes of longing and adaptation.

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—TORONTO STAR

**...stunning artwork.**
—JASON LUTES, author of BERLIN

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**IN THE WARM SHALLOWS OF WHAT REMAINS**
O is for Onjana

Joyfully (Figure 1 $22.95). Payne, an Inherent Energy and Live Life More Be a Dime: Unleash Your help book, Jill Payne says What is “diming?” It’s living a life that’s possible says in Coquitlam. Payne lives on Vancouver Island.

Q is for Quocksiser

When the Canadian government dismissed and outlawed First Nations cultural activities such as potlatches, many Indigenous people carried on underground to keep them alive. Some, like Elizabeth Quocksiser (1923–1981) openly and proudly carried on using her Indigenous language and culture as chronicled in Elizabeth Quocksiser: Keeper of History (Heritage $19.95) by Haley Healey with George Quocksiser Jr., a Hereditary Chief of the Laichwiltach Nation and son of Elizabeth Quocksiser. Illustrations are by Kimiko Fraser. Despite being a residential school survivor, Elizabeth Quocksiser continued to speak and teach Kwak’wala, and became a cultural teacher and leader for her Da’naxda’xw Nation. She also documented her people’s history under the Indian Act through photography.

R is for Richard

Part of the joy of a collection of short stories is the surprising range of characters and situations that can spring from an author’s imagination. Richard Kelly Kemick’s debut collection of character-driven stories, Hello, Horse (Biblioasis $22.95), range from the humorous to the bizarre. They include two teenagers seeking fame through a doomed exploration on a subarctic lake; a teenager mucking out stalls at a dog track whose co-worker takes up a new religion at odds with winning streaks; and two teachers at a convention in Cuba trying to decide if they should have an affair.

S is for Smith

Julia Smith highlights the gendered nature of the COVID-19 response—with a focus on women who bore the brunt of the pandemic’s impacts in Conscripted to Care: Women on the Frontlines of the COVID-19 Response (McGill-Queen’s University Press $34.95). Smith interviewed nearly two hundred women for her book. They described the inequalities of working at the pandemic’s frontlines with inadequate resources and limited decision-making power. These women juggled paid work, unpaid care, mental load and emotional labour, facing unsustainable workloads, moral distress and burnout.

T is for Tortell

As we shift from a fossil fuel-driven economy to a digital, carbon-neutral one, the question remains if mining the minerals needed for batteries and circuit boards can be done in an environmentally friendly way. Heavy Metal: Earth’s Minerals and the Future of Sustainable Societies (Openbook unpriced) edited by UBC prof, Philippe Tortell, is a collection of essays from diverse authors including scientists, cultural pundit Naomi Klein and business prof Werner Antweiler with artwork from Edward Burtynsky. Seeking to help readers “understand and reimagine our relationship with minerals,” the publishers allow this book to be freely downloaded from their website.
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WHO’S WHO

BC

X MARKS THE SPOT

Discover the buried treasures that make British Columbia special in Points of Interest: In Search of the Places, People, and Stories of BC (Greystone Books $24.95). Edited by David Beers and Andrea Bennett, this literary road trip is an anthology marking The Tyee’s 20th anniversary and features 30 writers including J.B. MacKinnon, Alisa Smith, Harrison Mooney, Michelle Cyca, Ian Gill, Steve Burgess and Chris Cheung, exploring the province where they live and write. The Tyee is an independent daily news website based in Vancouver.

9781778401381

Y IS FOR YOUNG

Maureen Young creates an imaginary world about an “Eastside Warren” of hares in Sunny and the Border Patrol (Friesen Press $12.49). The hares live comfortably until their source of food—an area of vegetable gardens—is walled off with a fence by humans (whom they call “Small-Ears”). Two of the Eastside Warren hares, Harrow and Arty, who are junior Border Patrolers, set off with a senior Patroler to get help from the Big River Beavers who live much farther west. But to get there, the three hares have to cross the dangerous inner city.

9781039163737

Z IS FOR ZEHRA

In her debut book of poems and prose, The Knot of My Tongue (M&S $22.50), Zehra Naqvi writes of characters such as a father struggling to articulate himself as an immigrant in Canada; a grandmother navigating loss during the 1947 Partition on the Indian subcontinent; and Philomela from Greek mythology, who finds language even after her tongue is cut off. Naqvi’s narratives are blends of the personal and the communal, memory and myth, and write. In her debut book of poems and prose, The Knot of My Tongue (M&S $22.50), Zehra Naqvi writes of characters such as a father struggling to articulate himself as an immigrant in Canada; a grandmother navigating loss during the 1947 Partition on the Indian subcontinent; and Philomela from Greek mythology, who finds language even after her tongue is cut off. Naqvi’s narratives are blends of the personal and the communal, memory and myth, and write. In her debut book of poems and prose, The Knot of My Tongue (M&S $22.50), Zehra Naqvi writes of characters such as a father struggling to articulate himself as an immigrant in Canada; a grandmother navigating loss during the 1947 Partition on the Indian subcontinent; and Philomela from Greek mythology, who finds language even after her tongue is cut off. Naqvi’s narratives are blends of the personal and the communal, memory and myth, and write.

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Alice Munro (1931–2024)

Alice Munro, the first Canadian accorded the Nobel Prize for Literature (2013), died on May 13, 2024. She also won the 2009 Man Booker International Prize, was twice the winner of the Giller Prize (Canada’s most glitzy literary prize) and was three times the recipient of the Governor General’s Award for Fiction (Canada’s most venerable literary prize). Her work gained her the distinction, accorded by The New York Times, of being “the only living writer in the English language to have made a major career out of short fiction alone.” In 2004, that newspaper also produced the oft-repeated compliment, “More than any writer since Chekhov, Munro strives for and achieves, in each of her stories, a gestaltlike completeness in the representation of a life.”

Born as Alice Laidlaw in Ontario on July 10, 1931, she married fellow student Jim Munro in 1951 and the couple moved to Vancouver in 1952, where Alice worked for a period in the Kitssuiano Library. They opened their first bookstore in West Vancouver, Pick-a-Pocket Bookshop. In 1963, the Munros moved to Victoria and opened Munro’s Books. In all, Alice Munro lived in Vancouver and Victoria for 22 years before her first marriage ended and she moved back to Ontario. For several years, Alice Munro maintained two residences: one in Clinton, Ontario and another in Comox on Vancouver Island. She received the news of her Nobel Prize at 4 a.m. while visiting one of her daughters in Victoria. “It just seems impossible,” she told the CBC. “It seems just so splendid a thing to happen, I can’t describe it, it’s more than I can say.”

Alice Munro’s dual status as a British Canadian and an Ontario resident is often overlooked. “I like the West Coast attitudes,” she said in 2004. “Winters [in B.C.] to me are sort of like a holiday. People are thinking about themselves. The way I grew up, of like a holiday. People are thinking about duty.” One can suggest the dichotomy between duty and exploration is a fundamental friction in her stories, and the geographical disparity between unry British Columbia and hidebound Ontario matches her character.


In all, Alice Munro wrote 17 books of short story collections.

Fred Braches (1930–2024)

Local historian and writer, Fred Braches, died on February 1, 2024, at the age of 93.

After his retirement in 1989, Braches began researching and writing books about Whonnock, a rural community in the eastern part of Maple Ridge, where he spent the latter years of his life.

In addition to several books on the local history of Whonnock, as well as nearby Ruskin community, Braches received attention for his book about the myth of Shumach’s gold, Searching for Pitt Lake Gold: Facts and Fantasy in the Legend of Shumach (Heritage House, 2019). He had been featured about this matter earlier in the TV series Curse of the Frozen Gold.

“Fred was an avid historian and researcher and Heritage House was proud to work with him on Searching for Pitt Lake Gold,” says Monica Miller, marketing and publicity assistant for Heritage House.

Braches also amassed materials, and wrote about, the life and times of the early Fraser Valley pioneer, George Godwin (1889–1974), who wrote two novels connected to Whonnock, one of which, The Eternal Forest (1929), is considered the great novel of the Fraser Valley.

Braches had been a historical columnist for the Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows News and also served as the editor of the B.C. Historical News (before it was renamed British Columbia History magazine).

Born on October 8, 1930 in Padang, Indonesia, Braches moved to the Netherlands in 1947, later starting a career in ocean transportation in Amsterdam that led to being stationed for many years in South America, Hong Kong and Mexico City. He immigrated to Canada in 1985 when he moved to Whonnock.

INDEX

Anvil Press...15
Banyon Books...37
BC & Yukon Book Prizes...9
BC Ferries Books...33
Books BC...9
Books On Mayne...37
Canadian Indie Booksellers Association...10
Caitlin Press...18
Demran Island Readers & Writers Fest...31
Douglas & McIntyre...6
EVENT Magazine...24
Festival of The Written Arts...2
Filth Publishing...34
Friensns Printers...39
Galiano Island Books...37
Granville Island Publishing...34
Greystone Books...27
Griggs, Tamar...23
Harbour Publishing...40
Heritage House...18
Island Escapes...28
James, Franke...24
Marquis Book Printing...39
McGill, Bonnie...36
McGill Queens University Press...27
Mermaid Tales Bookshop...37
Mother Tongue Publishing...38
New Star Books...15
Nightwood Editions...26
Penguin Random House...16
People’s Co-op Books...27
Printorium/Island Blue...39
Raven Chapbooks...34
Ronsdale Press...4
Sandhill Book Marketing...12
Symons, Philip...24
Talonsbooks...36, 39
Tanglewood Books...37
Tanner’s Books...37
Three-Day Novel Contest...23
UBC Press...34
University of Toronto Press...11
Vancouver Desktop Mountain for the Film Away From Her...32
West, Hope...24
Word Vancouver...10
Yeka’s Coffee...36

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