

THE WILLOW AWARDS



Annual Report
May 30, 2008



Mission

The mission of SYRCA – Saskatchewan Young Readers' Choice – The Willow Awards, Inc. is to promote reading by granting a "Willow Award" to the Canadian and/or Saskatchewan book(s) voted by students to be the best of those nominated in designated categories for a specific year.



Objectives

In order to achieve its Mission, the Corporation will:

- develop an annual list of Canadian and Saskatchewan books nominated to receive a Willow Award;
- maintain a web site to inform the public of the list of nominated books, and to conduct the voting electronically;
- present Willow Award(s) to the author(s) of the winning book(s);
- promote reading of Saskatchewan and/or Canadian books by conducting the award, and by developing incentives for young readers to participate;
- develop and ensure implementation of SYRCA – Saskatchewan Young Readers' Choice – The Willow Awards, Inc. policies;
- encourage community involvement in all levels of SYRCA – Saskatchewan Young Readers' Choice – The Willow Awards, Inc. activity;
- cooperate with other organizations and groups in order to maximize the use of limited resources
- ensure that SYRCA – Saskatchewan Young Readers' Choice – The Willow Awards, Inc. is managed in a financially responsible, prudent and ethical manner.



Board Members 2007-2008

Past President	Marion Perry, Regina, SK
President	Claire Isaac, Regina, SK
Vice President	Deb Mervold, Shellbrook, SK
Vice President	Ann Atchison, Saskatoon, SK
Treasurer	Margaret Steger, Regina, SK
Secretary (SLA Rep)	Cheryl Smith, Saskatoon, SK

Directors At Large

Gloria Antifaiff	Regina, SK (January 2008)
Florence Barton	SSLA Rep, Saskatoon, SK
Annie Beaumier	Prince Albert, SK
Wilfred Burton	Regina, SK
Donna Koch	Regina, SK
Naomi Kral	Regina, SK
Arwen Rudolph	Moose Jaw, SK
Mary Saso	Regina, SK
Debbie Wagner	Kindersley, SK (Resigned September, 2007)

President's Report: The Willow Awards' Year, 2007-2008

The 2007 SaskEnergy Gala was hosted by Swift Current Public Library and Art Gallery on May 25. For the first time, it was held in the evening. Classes from different schools presented dramatic interpretations of some of the nominated books. Due to financial constraints, we were only able to invite one winning author to the Gala. Lucy Falcone, Diamond Willow Award winner was presented with her Willow Award and also did readings in Swift Current.

Winners of the 2006-2007 Willow Awards

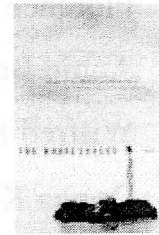
Shining Willow Award: Georgia Graham for *A Team Like No Other*



Diamond Willow Award: L.M. Falcone for *Walking with the Dead*



Snow Willow Award: Sheree Fitch for *The Gravesavers*



The day after the Gala, the Willow Awards AGM was held, and new Board members and Executive were elected.

Requests for submissions from publishers were sent in the summer, and preliminary lists of books eligible for the 2007-2008 Awards prepared.

The official 2007 Willow Awards Launch was hosted jointly by Elizabeth School and Westberry School in Kindersley on October 18. Elizabeth School has participated in the Willow Awards since 2003 and each year their involvement and enthusiasm has increased. In 2006, several classes in another Kindersley school, Westberry School, also became involved in the Willow Awards. "O Canada" was both sung and presented by a group of students in sign language. Then pairs of students from different grades introduced the nominated books for each Award. Choral speaking, songs and readings of their own works by student authors entertained the audience between groups of books. The two student MC's did an excellent job of hosting the program. The young audience and presenters retired to their classrooms for well-deserved refreshments, while adult guests took some time to extend congratulations and take a closer look at the art on the walls.

A very important full-day Strategic Planning meeting was held in Regina on September 29. With the help of facilitators Marg Delainey and Rita Priestley, we identified our strengths and concerns, and brainstormed ways we might build on the former and address the latter. There is still a lot of ongoing work necessary, but we have laid the framework for future developments.

The Saskatoon Fund-Raising Dinner, Buffet and Books, was held in a new location on November 2. Having the Saskatoon Dinner in the fall and the Regina Dinner in the spring means that there is a more even distribution of funds raised throughout the year, which is very useful to SYRCA Inc. The Regina Dinner, Books at the Bistro, was held March 19, 2008. Both events were very successful at raising funds and the participants seem to enjoy themselves. They also provide an important social venue for Willow Awards friends and supporters to get together. Many thanks for the hard work to the Board members and volunteers who make all the arrangements.

The selection committees presented their lists of titles nominated for the 2008-2009 Awards at the January 2008 Board meeting. Once they were formally approved, the work of notifying publishers and authors, and producing posters and bookmarks begun.

The deadline for voting was February 29, 2008. Again, most votes were received electronically resulting in a much faster vote counting process. To our delight, we had a record number of votes, nearly reaching 10,000.

The Willow Awards had a table at the Saskatchewan Reading Council Conference and the Aboriginal Literacy Conference in Regina and the Saskatchewan School Library Association Conference in Saskatoon. The Saskatchewan Library Association Conference was a joint conference with the Manitoba Library Association Conference. Since it was felt that a large proportion of the delegates would not be interested in the Willow Awards, we did not have a table. However, Willow Awards posters and bookmarks were included in the conference kits. Thanks to the people who volunteered to set up and man the tables at these conferences.

Extensive fund-raising efforts had some success this year with new patrons Conexus, TD Waterhouse and PotashCorp. In addition new sponsors included SaskTel and Dr. Jacqui Shumiatcher. We have continued to watch expenses very carefully. Membership retention and recruitment is a priority and plans will be discussed in the near future.

The Willow Awards web-page and electronic voting required renovation and after discussing options presented by Past-President Marion Perry, the Board voted to hire a consultant to undertake the process. The work is being done in stages as we can raise funds to improve these areas and make them easier to use and less time consuming for our volunteers.

I wish to thank my hard-working colleagues on the Board for all their support. Thanks also to the many volunteers who worked in various capacities throughout the year. Our

Patrons: The Book and Brier Patch, SaskEnergy, Regina Leader Post, Saskatoon Star Phoenix, SaskSmart, Conexus, TD Waterhouse, PotashCorp; and our Sponsors: Saskatchewan School Libraries Association, SaskTel and Dr. Jacqui Shumiatcher, make the Awards possible and to them we extend our grateful thanks. I also wish to thank the teachers, teacher-librarians, public librarians and parents who encourage children to read and participate in the Willow Awards.

Respectfully submitted
Claire Isaac
President
May 4, 2008

Past President's Report 2008

Over the past year, my activities have focused on several areas.

Website

Activities are reported separately.

Posters & Bookmarks

The 2008 posters and ballots were printed and ready for distribution by the first week of March. 15,000 posters, 15,000 Diamond and Snow Willow Bookmarks and 30,000 Shining Willow Bookmarks were printed by Allied Printers and Promotions of Regina. This year posters and bookmarks were packaged in 50 boxes containing: 300 posters, 600 Shining Willow bookmarks, 300 Diamond Willow bookmarks, 300 Snow Willow Bookmarks. Thanks to the Selection Committees who submitted the annotations punctually and in the prescribed format, and to all who assisted in the distribution of posters and bookmarks,

Books at the Bistro: Regina Dinner and Auction

Thanks to Naomi Kral for coordinating the dinner, to Reza and Tracy of Alfredo's Bistro for their support for the 6th year in a row, and to all the Regina people who donated items, sold and bought tickets and participated in the auction. The event was once again a great success. More than \$4,000 was raised.

In conclusion I wish to thank all Board Members and volunteers for their efforts on behalf of the Willow Awards during the past year.

Respectfully submitted by
Marion Perry
Past President
April 17, 2008

Vice-President's Report – Deb Mervold

As I complete my fifth year on the SYRCA board I am reminded of why I joined the Board in May of 2003. I remembered my own love of reading and what my weekly visits to the library meant to me as a child. Now, I watch my nieces and nephews and their love of reading and books. As a teacher-librarian and teacher of English, I loved the ah-ha moments when the magical literary light went on for a child as he or she clutched a book that opened a door into the imagination and provided joy, laughter, information, knowledge, insight or experiences shared by the author.

I was fortunate to share my love of reading and books with my community of Shellbrook, as we provided the selection committee for the Snow Willow for two years and the Shining Willow for one year. Many volunteers, of all ages, shared in the experience.

The SYRCA board, past and present, and the various volunteers who work so tirelessly for the love of reading and promotion of Canadian books are to be commended for their dedication. It has been my privilege to be part of this project. The people I have met, the books I have read, the galas I have enjoyed, the sessions I presented at conferences, the fund raising dinners I have attended, all bring happy memories. Saskatchewan children and literacy are richer for SYRCA and the Willows. As I leave the board, I wish you every success in your worthwhile mission.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Mervold

Vice-President's Report - Ann Atchison

This year the role of Vice President has taken over the responsibility of being the contact person for the publishers, authors and illustrators, a responsibility previously undertaken by the Secretary.

In early June our Call for Submissions was sent to publishers requesting submissions for the 2008 Willow Awards. Keeping an up-to-date contact list of Canadian publishers and a contact person at each is somewhat challenging. I have endeavored to keep the database as current as possible.

After the Launch last October, a poster, a set of bookmarks, and a copy of the article that appeared in the Kindersley *Clarion* was sent to each of the authors and illustrators nominated for the 2007 Willow Awards. A letter thanking them for their contribution to Canadian children's literature was also included. Each author was asked if they would be willing to donate a signed copy of their book to be given to a student attending the Gala at North Park Wilson School. I had positive responses from almost all the authors and, as

a result, we received a number of books. I also received a number of notes and emails from the authors thanking us for all the work that we do.

In early February the publishers of the 2008 nominees were contacted to inform them of the nomination and request biographies, photographs and contact information for the authors and illustrators. A congratulatory email was sent to each of the authors and illustrators. All relevant permissions from publishers, authors, and illustrators were gathered. During the past number of years since our inception we have compiled an impressive database of contact information for Canadian authors and illustrators.

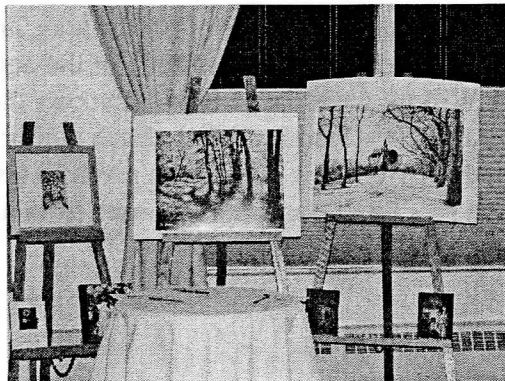
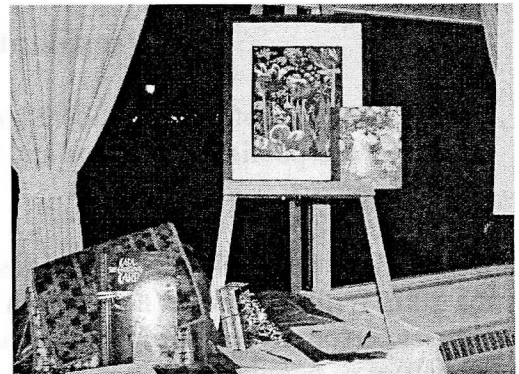
In mid March I had the privilege of contacting the winning authors to inform them that their book had been selected for the 2007 Willow Awards. Being in contact with the many wonderful Canadian authors and illustrators, makes this part of my job truly rewarding.

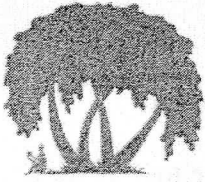
In addition to this I have worked on the organizing committee for Buffet and Books, served as co-chair of the Diamond Willow Selection Committee and assisted Debbie Mervold as the Board Liaison with the Gala committee.

I would like to thank all of the SYRCA board members for their work during the past year. We are a working board and every director has contributed in number of ways. I would also like to thank all of our members, friends, patrons and sponsors for without you, SYRCA – the Willow Awards Inc. would not be viable today.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Atchison

Books and Buffet Silent Auction Items





**SYRCA - SASKATCHEWAN YOUNG READERS' CHOICE -
THE WILLOW AWARDS INC.
FINANCIAL STATEMENT
YEAR ENDING MARCH 31, 2008**

Bank Balance at March 31, 2007

\$9,566.44

INCOME

Grants	\$6,500.00
Sponsorships	\$9,500.00
Memberships	\$7,495.80
Fundraising	\$13,840.55
Stickers	\$1,882.00
GST Rebate	\$586.82
Convention speakers	\$75.00

\$39,880.17

DISBURSEMENTS

Meeting Expenses	\$3,001.17
Office Expenses	\$655.71
Award Expenses	\$364.18
Award Function Expenses	\$1,067.75
Corp/Rev. Canada/ Audit Expenses	\$110.00
Marketing	\$116.87
Fundraising	\$5,105.12
Poster/Ballots	\$4,729.20
Stickers	\$22.00
Author Expenses	\$1,387.53
Web Site expenses	\$7,479.63
Evaluation workshop	\$1,835.46

\$25,874.62

Bank Balance at Mar. 31/08

\$23,571.99

Checked and verified by:

S. Dishington

May 10, 2008

Fundraising Report – Willow Awards 2008

This year began with a bit of a challenge after we did some strategic planning for Saskatchewan Young Readers' Choice Awards - Willow Inc. At the planning sessions it was evident that we needed to do some serious fundraising to cover the operational expenses for the board and to find some extra capital to add a database to the website to make it more interactive as well as to archive some of the previous content.

It is imperative that we balance the funding from all areas of the province not just the major cities, since students benefit from all over the province. I think the Willow Board has done a good job in the manner of doing launches and galas for the awards in various regions of the province.

I made a concerted effort to obtain patrons and sponsors from various interest groups, banks, mining associations, agricultural, Aboriginal and industrial groups. Over 30 letters were sent on an ongoing basis throughout the year. Claire and I applied to the Bill Gates, Foundation, and Literacy Network who receive funding from Raise-A Reader for grants to no avail!

Funding was obtained from the following people:

Conexus (Fall 07)	\$1000
TD Waterhouse (Fall 07)	\$1000
Leader Post (Fall 07)	\$500
Star-Phoenix (Fall 07)	\$500
Potash Corporation Sask Fall (07)	\$1000
Sask Smart (Feb.08)	\$2000
Anonymous Donor (Mar.08)	\$2500
Book and Brier (Apr.08)	\$1000
Sask Tel	\$500
Sask Energy(Spr.08)	\$2000
National Car Rental (Spr.08)	\$500
Individual Sponsors	\$2000

In addition to writing letters and applying for funding grants in the fall Saskatoon held a dinner (buffet) and Silent auction at the Willows Golf Course one evening and in Regina for the sixth year at Alfredo's a dinner and Silent Auction were held in March to cover board expenses, poster costs and money to add the database to the website. The two events are major fundraisers for the awards and having them in different areas of the province and at a different time of the year help support the cause.

Work on the database is a one-time expense and very worthwhile to promote the Willow Awards. The board has been very frugal and cut back on a board meeting to save money and many decisions have been made electronically in the interests of economics.

After the strategic planning meeting it was suggested that we have a fundraising committee to mentor other members and to prevent someone from working in isolation. Since this is a provincial initiative funds should come from all areas of the province. I would be willing to chair a committee to help continue the cause for literacy for children in Saskatchewan. I think that SYRCA has taken some big steps this year and continued success is imperative to promote this wonderful project.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Naomi Kral and Claire Isaac
April 28, 2008

Sticker Sales Report

The following is the report on sticker sales from April 07-March 08

Graphic Mixed	\$1440
Shining	5
Snow	42
Winner Stickers	<u>103</u>
Total Sales	\$1590

Respectfully submitted
Mary Saso

Buffet and Books – Saskatoon Willow Award Fundraiser

Saskatoon's 4th annual fundraising dinner "Buffet and Books" was held on Friday, November 2, 2007 at the Willows Golf and Country Club. This was Saskatoon's second fundraising dinner for the year. We wanted to try a fall dinner because the one in February seemed to conflict with people's winter holidays. We also changed venues and chose the Willows because of sharing the same name. For this fundraiser we offered tax receipts with each ticket sold. The tickets were \$35.00, with \$15.00 going towards a tax receipt, which included dinner, coffee and gratuity. We sold 120 tickets for the dinner, which was quite an increase from last three fundraisers. Each fundraiser has increased in attendance each year.

We had Anna Nissen playing the grand piano at the entrance to welcome people. There was a cash bar at 6:30 pm with the dinner beginning at 7:00 pm. We also added a guest speaker, Beverley Brenna, which gave a very enjoyable talk after dinner. One of Beverly books was in the Snow Willow category for this past year.

The silent auction was successful. We had 25 pre-packaged gift baskets, each of which included various items as well as several books. We cut our gift baskets by about half from our last fundraiser, but made each basket a little larger. We raised \$1683.00 from

the silent auction. We had two quilts that were donated that we raffled off. The raffle brought in \$526.00. Tickets were sold at \$2.00 each or 3 for \$5.00.

Instead of giving books away during the evening as we had done in the past. Anyone who bought a membership or renewed their membership was given a book of their chose. We sold \$500.00 in memberships during the evening.

The evening was a success. We brought in around \$4300.00 not including the memberships.

Thanks to all who helped make this venture a success.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Sharman



Beverley Brenna and John Barton



Carol Thiessen, winner of the quilt raffle



Guests

Planning And Expenses Books At The Bistro 2008

Booked Alfredo's East in November- Deposit of \$250 to hold date

Committee: Naomi, Marion, Margaret, Donna, Mary, Wilfred, Claire and Arwen.
All board members in Regina and area asked to try and get 5 auctions for the Silent Auction.

Volunteers: Eleanor Matz, Michelle Howland and Lorie Volk

Eleanor and Michelle asked and obtained a number of items for the Silent Auction.

Meal: Two Choices – chicken parmesan and eggplant (vegetarians)

Meal Cost \$20 plus GST \$1.00 Plus gratuity (10%) of \$2.10 = \$23.10

Ticket Prices \$35 plus tax receipt for \$12 for income tax

Need to get people's addresses with postal code and e-mail for the receipts.

Alfredo's donates 10% from the bar tab.

Division of Labour:

Form letter and donor form to committee in December, people can request when convenient

Person to design and distribute the tickets (November- December)

Everyone on the board in this area sells tickets

Chairperson collects items at house at least 3 weeks before plus donor sheets to write receipts and thank you (Some people from committee elected to write the thank you for the item they collected)

Committee Meets and organizes Items for Auction (List in advance was helpful) and picks books to go with the items- for 2008 we had 46 items to auction- works for the space available to display

One person needs to be in charge of the program

Two weeks before the meal or a week before, the restaurant asks for a deposit of 75% of the meal

Setup of auction at 2:00 cocktails at 5:30 and meal at 6:30

Expenses:

Programs (Allied Printers)=\$25

Dollar Store (Cellophane Wrap and Plastic Tablecloth, Bags) = \$13.20

Michaels (Ribbon) = \$21.62

Canada Post (Stamps) = \$16.38

Entertainment 1 ticket of \$35- the other ticket was donated.

Income approximately \$4000

Popular items: wine baskets, drill, homemade items, gift certificates for restaurants and other businesses, baskets of products. Items around \$50 or \$60.

Called Alfredo's to tentatively hold March 18, 2009.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Naomi Kral

2007 SaskEnergy Willow Book Awards Gala

And the winners are...

Shining Willow: ***A Team Like No Other*** by Georgia Graham

Diamond Willow: ***Walking With the Dead*** by L.M. Falcone

Snow Willow: ***The Gravesavers*** by Sheree Fitch

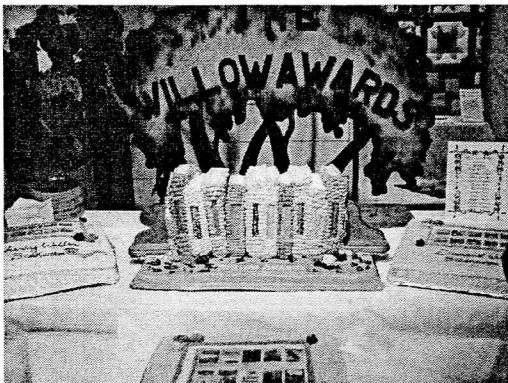
The SaskEnergy Willow Book Awards Gala for 2006/2007 was held on Friday, May 25 at Swift Current Public Library. Guests were greeted and welcomed at the door by students in various costumes. Classes from several schools were then "stationed" throughout the library, much like a trade fair. The Swift Current Comprehensive High School jazz band "Thursday Night Jazz" began the night with a variety of musical numbers. The guests were then directed to different areas by the "town crier".

St. Pat's Grade Five class at the first station performed the book "Mile High Apple Pie" and followed it with a comical rendition of making an apple pie. We then journeyed to the far North, the setting for the book *A Team Like No Other*. Ashley Park School's Grade One students read the story, and held up pictures based on the book. Then they sang a song highlighting all the nominated Shining Willow titles. We finished with a dramatized selection from *Prairie Dogs* a Diamond Willow nominee, performed by Central School. A large wood "Willow Awards Tree" created by the Swift Current Comprehensive High School wood working class presided over some imaginative (and delicious!) "Willow Awards" cakes. The superb refreshments were provided by the high school Home Ec. class.

Guests then gathered for the formal SaskEnergy Willow Book Awards ceremony in the Art Gallery, where children's art work based on the nominated books graced the walls. After greetings were given by several dignitaries, and the official Willow tree and plaque were presented to local schools, the winners were announced. Lucy Falcone was thrilled that her book *Walking with the Dead* had won the Diamond category and was pleased to be able to attend the Gala ceremonies. She thanked all the children who had read her book and encouraged everyone to keep reading. Thank you to the staff and volunteers of Swift Current Public Library, and the teachers and students of the Swift Current schools for a memorable evening.

Taken from Willow Winds Newsletter

Willow Awards Cakes and Sign



Lucy Falcone accepts Diamond Willow Award



2007 Launch in Kindersley

The 2007 Willow Awards Launch took place on October 18th at Elizabeth School in Kindersley. Elizabeth School has been an eager participant in the Willow Awards since 2003 and each year their involvement has increased. Their enthusiasm was catching, and in 2006 several classes in another Kindersley school, Westberry School, also became involved in the Willow Awards. The two schools hosted the 2007 Launch jointly.

Two impressive, scarlet-clad Mounties led special guests into the Elizabeth School gymnasium, where posters of the thirty nominated books decorated the walls. O Canada was both sung and presented by a group of students in sign language to begin the program, then pairs of students from different grades introduced the nominated books for each Award. Choral speaking, songs and readings of their own works by student authors entertained the audience. The young audience and presenters then retired to their classrooms for well-deserved refreshments, while adult guests took some time to extend congratulations and take a closer look at the art on the walls.

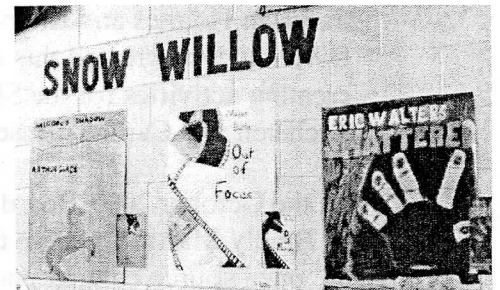
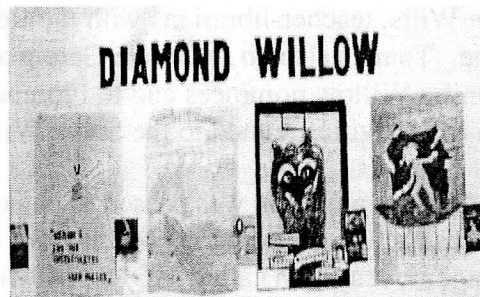
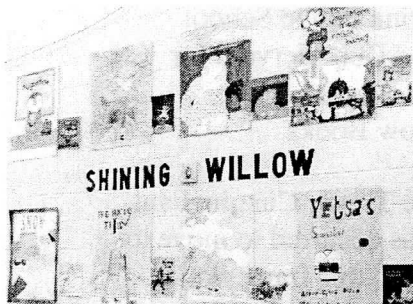
Many thanks to Principal Larry Wagner, Westberry School; Principal Chris Oscar and School Librarian Debbie Wagner, Elizabeth School; and the staff and students of both schools for such a great event.

Taken from Willow Winds Newsletter.

Choir welcomes the Willow Awards



Dignitaries at the Launch



<u>Voting Statistics</u>					
Willow Award Participants	2004	2005	2006	2007	% Change
Teachers/ Adults	129	151	204	185	-10%
Schools	84	132	207	148	-40%
Libraries	5	4	3	1	
Communities	73	65	74	68	-9%
Voters	5523	7262	8087	9708	+17%

Total Votes 2007-2008

Snow Willow 237

Diamond Willow 783

Shining Willow 8,688

Total 9,708

Willow Awards' Web Page Committee Report, 2007-2008

www.willowawards.ca

In 2007, the Willow Awards' website provided excellent resources related to the nominated books. Full-text booktalks were added for most of the nominated books. Thank you to Chris MacLennan for all her hard work creating these. Some of the nominated books also had a link to the "Comprehending the Willows" website. Thanks to Susan Holmes and Rhonda Wills, teacher-librarians with the Regina Public School Division, who created this site. Thanks also go to Darcie Gerein and Deb Mervold for creating activities for the Shining Willow nominees and to Florence Burton, Ann Atchison and Carol Thiessen for activities related to the Snow Willow Books.

At the October 2007 Board Meeting, a motion was passed to engage Trevor Cunningham of Bradly Martin Creative to restructure the website. Much work has occurred to move to an open source content management system called MODx. Moving to this framework will allow for web-based editing of the content (updating pages from right within the web

browser), a search function for the website, the ability to schedule publishing, and will make it much simpler to facilitate the forms and desired voting functionality. The system itself is template driven, which makes it easier to implement changes while ensuring consistency in layout and presentation. The new site should soon “go live”. The design is simple; the most dramatic changes are behind the scenes – updating will be much simpler, and results will be consistent with established pages. There is potential for a much more interactive site. It is my hope that we will continue to have funds to improve the site and that we pursue a partnership with Bradly Martin Creative to take it even farther.

Again this year, the majority of votes were received via the online vote summary form. Thank you to Mary Saso for managing the vote@willowawards.ca e-mail and for collating all the e-mail results.

The 2008 statistics for our webpage are skewed by the activities related to the restructuring, but I have included them for your information.

Month	Average Daily Hits 2004- 2005	Average Daily Hits 2005- 2006	Average Daily Hits 2006- 2007	Total Monthly Hits 2004- 2005	Total Monthly Hits 2005- 2006	Total Monthly Hits 2006- 2007	Total Monthly Hits 2007- 2008
	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007	2008
April	863	759	865	12,090	22,580	21,634	*168,493
March	733	1174	1083	22,726	36,405	33,590	*218,144
February	904	1026	1374	25,338	28,745	38,492	*50,970
January	616	680	979	19,111	21,095	30,358	*57,733
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006	2007
December	289	347	709	8,965	10,757	21,985	*66,775
November	544	769	743	16,327	23,088	22,308	33,144
October	477	710	969	13,836	22,019	30,048	32,061
September	442	505	776	13,272	15,179	23,291	30,524
August	186	320	528	5,795	9,940	16,378	17,895
July	233	318	418	7,249	9,858	12,962	17,283
June	391	515	803	11,730	15,453	24,119	26,171
May	297	828	941	9,221	25,684	29,177	22,893
Total				165,660	240,803	304,342	*742,086
<i>*inflated numbers reflect work being done on website</i>							

I would like to thank Ann Atchison for her assistance with permissions and author information, and Kathy Stedwill, Val Gerrard and Arwen Rudolph for their work on the website.

Respectfully submitted
Marion Perry
April 17, 2008

Selection Committee Annual Reports – 2007

Shining Willow Selection Committee Report

Selection Committee Members

- Wilfred Burton (chair)
- Mary Quickfall (classroom teacher – special needs)
- Donna Koch (retired teacher)
- Sharon Hamilton (parent/children's author)
- Michelle Howland (retired librarian)
- Karen Lind (University Instructor)
- Wendy Willis (University Instructor)
- Kim Kovacs (GDI Librarian)
- Mary Saso
- Naomi Kral

One hundred and thirty five books were read by the Shining committee between August and December. There was a nice assortment of fiction and non fiction text.

The committee brought their favorite book (s) to the meeting in December. Each person read their pick to the group out loud. After each reading, we placed the books in order from most liked to least liked. This determined a ranking of our favorite choices. The top ten choices were then checked to see if there was a variety of content, genres and levels of sophistication.

We were pleased with the number of picture books with Aboriginal content, boy/girl content, extraordinary illustrations and prominent Canadian writers. A good number of publishers submitted their recent publications for consideration.

The following is a list of books selected:

Shining Willow Nominees 2008

AlphaBETTER by Dan Bar-el & Graham Ross. Orca Book Publishers, 2006, ISBN 1 55143 439 3. *AlphaBETTER is a clever alphabet book full of humour and hidden letters that will surely amuse readers of all ages. Twenty six boys and girls find themselves in alphabet predicaments, and each then finds the solution on the next page.*

Reviews:

<http://umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol13/no2/alphabetter.html>

Ancient Thunder by Leo Yerxa, Groundwood, 2006, ISBN 0 88899 746 9. *Leo Yerxa's poetic perception of horses shows the strong connection horses have with First Nation's cultures. Each illustrated piece of clothing was designed on homemade paper resembling real leather. Beautifully illustrated and written.*

Reviews:

<http://www.canlit.ca/reviews-review.php?id=13031>

<http://umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol13/no2/ancientthunder.html>

A Sack Full of Feathers by Debby Waldman, illustrated by Cindy Revell, Orca Books, 2006, ISBN 1 55143 332 X. *Yankel, a boy who spreads stories, learns a lesson from the local rabbi: not to listen to stories in his father's store. The rabbi instructs him to leave a feather on the doorstep of every house in the village and then tells him to collect them all. However, the wind has blown all the feathers away and Yankel can not collect them. Much like the gossip he spread in his stories, no one knows where they end up.*

Reviews:

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol13/no3/asackfulloffathers.html>

<http://www.amazon.com/review/product/1551438631?showViewpoints=1>

Beyond The Northern Lights by Lynn Blaikie, Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2006, ISBN 1 55005 123 7. *The vivid batik designs bring this poem about Raven to life. Raven takes a young girl on a magical journey through the sky, in the sea and on the land, and then back to her bed and her dreams.*

Reviews:

http://www.quillandquire.com/books_young/review.cfm?review_id=5272

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol13/no7/beyondthenorthernlights.html>

Creatures Great and Small by Karen Patkau, Tundra Books, 2006, ISBN 0 88776 754 0. *This book will satisfy the curious with factual information about different species that are either immense or tiny.*

Reviews:

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol13/no3/creaturesgreatandsmall.html>

Grumpy Bird by Jeremy Tankard, Scholastic Press, 2007, ISBN 978 0 439 85417. *This cumulative tale will make you laugh. Bird wakes up grumpy and decides to walk. As he walks he passes by many of his animal friends who follow behind him. He finally realizes he is being followed and then starts antics that the others mimic. Bird forgets he is grumpy in the end. If you are grumpy this book will put a smile on your face.*

Reviews:

http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/447166.Grumpy_Bird

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/cm/vol13/no15/grumpybird.html>

Please Louise! by Frieda Wishinsky & Marie-Louise Gay, Groundwood Books, 2007, ISBN 978 0 88899 796 8. *Louise loves to bug her older brother, Jake. He tries to hide from her but she follows. When he goes outside, he closes his eyes and wishes she were a dog. When he opens his eyes Louise is gone. While looking for her, a little dog appears and he wishes his sister back. Fortunately, Louise has not turned into a dog but has found a friend to play with. She doesn't need his company and tells her brother to go away so she can play with her new friend.*

Reviews:

http://www.chapter-and-verse.org/index_files/Page6042.html

The Queen's Feet by Sarah Ellis, illustrated by Petricic Dusan, Red Deer Press, 2006, ISBN 0 88995 329 1. *Queen Daisy's feet won't keep still. They don't behave in a royal way. They get especially troublesome when they get dressed up and kick the neighbouring king. Luckily, the problem is resolved in this delightful, humorous story.*

Reviews:

<http://www.curledupkids.com/queensft.htm>

http://www.chapter-and-verse.org/index_files/Page481.html

Scaredy Squirrel by Mélanie Watt, Kids Can Press, 2006, ISBN 9781553379591.

Scaredy Squirrel is afraid to leave his nut tree because he might get germs on himself. He is well prepared for all the dangers in the world with his extensive emergency kit. One day, when his kit falls from the tree, Scaredy finds himself flying out of the tree. Scaredy finds that the world out there isn't so scary after all.

Reviews:

<http://www.jackson.lib.la.us:8000/kcweb/kcContent?isbn=9781553379591&type=review&controlnumber=cao05903572&referredby=titlelist>

http://www.educationoasis.com/ch_book_reviews/reviews3/scaredy.htm

Wake Up Henry Rooster! by Margriet Ruurs, illustrated by Sean Cassidy, Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2006, ISBN 1 55041 952 8. *Henry, the rooster, is not a morning chicken. He loves to have fun and stay up late. This poses a problem when he is left with the responsibility of waking up everyone in the morning. Henry doesn't do his job well, until a wise old goat helps Henry find a great solution. Now he can still have fun at night and fulfill his duties in the morning. The illustrations in this book will make you giggle.*

Review:

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol12/no15/wakeuphenryrooster.html>

It was a pleasure chairing the 2007 Shining Committee. We think there are delightful, child pleasing books for this upcoming year.

Respectfully submitted by:

Wilfred Burton

Diamond Willow Selection Committee Report

Selection Committee Members

- Co-chair - Cheryl Smith (Children's Librarian, Saskatoon Public Library)
- Co-chair – Ann Atchison (retired Teacher-librarian)
- Ruth Garnett (Teacher-librarian, Saskatoon Public School Division)
- Tim Gulutzan (Teacher, Saskatoon Public School Division)
- Kim Hebig (Branch Manager/Assistant Director Wheatland Regional Library)
- Cheryl Hedlin (Teacher-librarian, Saskatoon Public School Division)
- Candace Mann (Library technician, Saskatoon Public School Division)

- Dawn Morgan (Teacher-librarian, Saskatoon Public School Division)
- Brenda Nissen (Teacher-librarian, Saskatoon Public School Division)
- Shannon Swekla (Children's Librarian, Saskatoon Public Library)

Our committee previewed two hundred and four books in total this year. Fifty-three of the books were published in 2006, two were republications, one was published in 2005 and the remainder were published in 2007. We received books from thirty-one publishers. A number of books were considered inappropriate for this level and were passed on to either the Shining or Snow Willow committees. We had a strong selection of nonfiction books this year. Very few books with Aboriginal content were submitted. In addition to books received from the publishers, members of the committee suggested several titles. Claire Isaac assisted us by compiling a list of eligible books.

Our committee met four times beginning in late June. Cheryl was able to make arrangements to have the books stored at J. S. Wood Public Library so that the committee would have easy access to them. A spreadsheet of the books was compiled as they arrived and emailed to the committee members. After each meeting the list was amended to assist the readers in their reading. A rubric was used as part of the evaluation process.

In mid January the committee met to make their final decision. Care was taken to ensure that books had a wide appeal to both boys and girls. We believe that the list offers a variety of reading levels and genres. We would like to thank our committee for all their hard work reading and evaluating the books. Their insightful comments and experience working with children played a critical role in the decision making process. Without their able assistance we would not be able to continue.

Diamond Willow Nominees, 2008

The Big Snapper by Katherine Holubitsky, illustrated by Samia Drisdelle.

Orca, c2006. ISBN 1-55143-563-2(pbk)

Ten-year-old Eddy, who lives on the Queen Charlotte Islands with his Mother and grandparents, loves to go fishing with his Grandfather. After listening to his Grandfather's stories about "the one that got away" Eddy starts to think that catching the "big snapper" will help solve his family's problems.

Review: <http://www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol13/no6/thebigsnapper.html>

Chocolate River Rescue by Jennifer McGrath Kent. Nimbus Publishing, c2007. ISBN-13 978-1-55109-600-1 (pbk)

Tony, Craig and Shawn are trapped on a piece of ice in the middle of a river - a river that is swiftly carrying them toward the ocean. But wait, here comes a boat driven by a bear - a bear? Can't be, but their rescue is far from over.

Review: <http://www.resourcelinks.ca/excerpts/Oct2007excp.htm>

http://www.canadianteachermagazine.com/reviews/young_adult/Chocolate_River_Rescue.shtml

Dancing Through the Snow by Jean Little. Scholastic Canada, c2007. ISBN 978-0-439-93823-5 (cl)

Min has nothing, no mother, no birth certificate, and now no home. Her current foster mother is returning her to Children's Aid a week before Christmas. Will anyone give her a Christmas to remember? And then there is the small injured dog that needs her help too.

Review: <http://spica.cc.umanitoba.ca/cm/vol14/no3/dancingthroughthesnow.html>
<http://www.resourcelinks.ca/excerpts/Dec2007excp.htm>

Gold Medal for Weird by Kevin Sylvester. Kids Can Press, c2007. ISBN 978-1-55453-021-2 (pbk)

You hear all about the winners at the Olympics, but there's more to the story. Now read about the oddball events, the cheaters and the goofiness that has happened in the many years of the Olympics.

Review:

<http://spica.cc.umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol14/no6/goldmedalforwierd.html>

Jakeman by Deborah Ellis. Fitzhenry & Whiteside, c2007. ISBN 978-1-55041-573-5 (cl)

Jake, a budding artist and the creator of a comic book superhero, "Jakeman" and his sister Shoshona, join other children on a bus trip to visit their mothers in a New York prison. Although the trip there is long, and the visit brief, the trip back spirals out of control.

Review: <http://umanitoba.ca/cm/vol13/no21/jakeman.html>
<http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA6484389.html?industryid=47067&q=jakeman>

Ryan and Jimmy: And the Well in Africa that Brought Them Together by Herb Shoveller. Kids Can Press, c2006. ISBN 1-55337-967-5 (cl)

This is an inspiring story of how Ryan Hreljac raised enough money to build a well in Uganda; then became friends with a courageous young Ugandan, Akana Jimmy. A true story of friendship and compassion, where the dreams of one person made a difference.

Review: <http://www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol13/no4/ryanandjimmy.html>
<http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA6387633.html?q=jimmy+and+ryan>

The Last Flight of the Birdman by Dave Glaze. Coteau Books, 2007. ISBN 978-1-55050-373-9 (pbk)

Excitement fills the air, when the Birdman brings his biplane to Saskatoon's Exhibition. Mackenzie really didn't need another mystery to solve as well, but when the Birdman's silver model plane is stolen and his friend's house is robbed, he and Jin are caught deep in trouble.

Review: <http://www.umanitoba.ca/cm/vol14/no8/thelastflightofthebirdman.html>

Too Many Men by Lorna Schultz Nicholson. James Lorimer, c2006. ISBN 987-1-55028-949-7 (bound), ISBN 978-1-55028-948-0 (pbk)

Sam was the star player of his hockey team before he had to move to Ottawa. Now he has to try out for 3rd goalie, as well as fit into a new school, and keep the household running when his mom breaks her leg.

Review: <http://umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol13/no12/toomanymen.html>

The Uncle Duncle Chronicles, Escape from Treasure Island by Darren Krill. Lobster Press, c2006. ISBN-13 978-1-897073-31-5 (pbk), ISBN-10 1-897073-31-5 (pbk)

When Sage Smiley's "Uncle Dunkle" points his World War II Supermarine spitfire plane straight down, he's glad he has a magic amber stone to whisk him away to any place he wants to go. Why then did he wish for Treasure Island, home of murderous pirates and man-eating sharks?

Review: <http://umanitoba.ca/cm/vol13/no7/theuncleduncle.html>

<http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA6404361.html>

Very Serious Children by Caroline Adderson. Scholastic Canada, c2007. ISBN 978-0-439-93751-1 (pbk)

Nicky's parents are clowns by day and by night. He lives in a camper, rides a unicycle whenever he wants and eats marshmallows and popcorn for supper. Why then does he want to runaway to go to school?

Review: http://www.quillandquire.com/books_young/review.cfm?review_id=5772

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Smith

Ann Atchison

Snow Willow Selection Committee Report

The 2007 Snow Willow Committee considered 164 titles this year, most of which were submitted by publishers. The readers met several times to discuss the books and exchange them and through these discussions created a list of our 30 top picks. When making our final selection, we worked diligently to choose books that meet the needs of a variety of young adult readers and to include a variety of genres. We created a blog where readers could comment on the short list of potential nominees. This was an effective tool for sharing at the end of the process.

The 2007 Snow Willow committee members were as follows

Florence Barton, chair – Teacher Librarian, Saskatoon Public Schools (SPSD) and SSLA Rep to SYRCA

Joe Geary, Saskatoon Public Library

Jane Glen, Teacher Librarian, SPSP

Susiea Gordon, Teacher, SPSP

Shona Iverson, Teacher Librarian, SPSP

Kim Johnson, Teacher Librarian, SPSPD
Michelle Pantel, Teacher, SPSPD
Rita Priestly, retired teacher,
Kathleen Sharman, Library Technician, SPSPD, former SYRCA board member
Carol Thiesen, retired teacher, former SYRCA board member
Susan Voitka-Seager, Teacher, SPSPD

Snow Willow Nominees, 2008

A is for Angst by Barbara Haworth-Attard. Harper Collins, 2007. ISBN-10: 0002008203 ISBN-13: 978-0002008204

This is the teen alphabet according to 14 year-old Theresa who shares her angst(A) about the complications of growing up. Every letter of the alphabet brings a new challenge for Theresa and many laughs for the reader.

Reviews: http://www.harpercollins.ca/global_scripts/product_catalog/book_xml.asp?isbn=0002008203 No peer reviews currently available

Nightwalker by K. V. Johansen. Orca, 2007. ISBN 978-1-55143-481-0.

Maury, left alone in the world, becomes the target of bullies and tormenters who believe he is related to the sorcerers who once inhabited the island. An unfortunate event causes Maury's relationship to the sorcerers to be revealed and he is sentenced to be burned alive. He and his unexpected rescuer flee for the Nightwalkers' hidden kingdom.

Review: <http://umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol13/no17/nightwalker.html>

Baboon by David Jones. Annick Press, 2007. ISBN 978-1-55451-053-5 (pbk.), ISBN 978-1-55451-054-2 (cl.).

14-year-old Gerry has mixed feelings about going back to Africa with his scientist parents to study baboons. When their small plane crashes, Gerry is shocked to wake up in the body of a baboon. He learns how to be a baboon as he struggles to let go of his human needs.

Review: <http://umanitoba.ca/cm/vol13/no18/baboon.html>

Schooled by Gordon Korman. Scholastic Canada, 2007. ISBN 978-0-545-99990-8.

Cap is home schooled on an isolated commune farm by his grandmother. When an accident forces her to spend time in the hospital, Cap finds out what town life and school are all about through many hilarious encounters with his fellow students.

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol14/no3/schooled.html>

The Mystery of the Martello Tower by Jennifer Lanthier. HarperCollins, 2007. ISBN 978-00-0-639523-2.

When Hazel and Ned's father disappears without saying good-bye, their summer plunges into chaos. As the siblings work to untangle this and other mysteries and learn who they can trust, they find family they didn't know they had and learn of a second, darker secret surrounding their mother's death.

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol14/no7/themysteryofthemartello.html>

The Smell of Paint by Sheryl McFarlane. ISBN 978-1-55041-457-7

Jess is balancing family, school, track practice, friends and an artist mother who doesn't understand her. When her mother is diagnosed with cancer, Jess avoids telling anyone. Her attempts to keep everything "normal" influence her relationships with her friends, coaches and family.

<http://www.bookcentre.ca/news/archives/top/000126.shtml>

<http://www.bpl.on.ca/kids/books/reviews/2007/q1.htm#smell>

A Perfect Gentle Knight by Kit Pearson. Puffin Canada, 2007. ISBN 978-0-670-06682-7.

The five Bell children are each coping in their own way with their mother's death. Their rich fantasy life both helps and hinders loneliness and growing up. 15-year-old Sebastian still needs the Round Table game while Roz is ready to give the fantasy up.

Review: <http://www.umanitoba.ca/cm/vol14/no3/apperfectgentleknight.html>

Speechless by Valerie Sherrard. Boardwalk Book/Dundurn Press, 2007. ISBN 978-1-55002-701-3.

Griffin's teacher announces that it is time for the yearly class speeches and Griffin's past experience was so humiliating he knows he can't do it again. His best friend comes up with a plan for Griffin to take a vow of silence that has consequences far beyond Griffin's imagination.

Review: <http://www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol14/no4/speechless.html>

Bifocal by Eric Walters and Deborah Ellis. Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2007. ISBN 978-1-55455-062-3 (pbk.), ISBN 978-1-55455-036-4 (hc.).

A student is arrested on suspicions of terrorism and a high school is torn apart by racism. Two boys are forced to choose sides. The issues in this story are told from two different points of view, Haroon, a serious Afghani Canadian student devoted to his family and Jay, a football star devoted to his team.

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol14/no7/bifocal.html>

Where Soldiers Lie by John Wilson. Key Porter Books, 2006. ISBN 1-55263-790-5.

This is a thrilling tale of mutiny and rebellion set in Colonial India in 1857. 16-year-old Jack has been sent to live with his aunt and uncle following the death of his parents. He soon finds himself in an inadequate entrenchment fighting for survival alongside the British colonists.

Review: http://www.quillandquire.com/books_young/review.cfm?review_id=5334

Respectfully submitted

Florence Barton

Thank You To All Our Volunteers!

Your dedication and support are helping us to provide opportunities for many Saskatchewan children and youth to experience the pleasures of reading.

2007 SYRCA Distinguished Service Awards

The Distinguished Service Award is to recognize extraordinary service, effort or example by an individual, which resulted in outstanding benefit to a program or project important to SYRCA – The Willow Awards. A suggested minimum of five years distinguished service must have been rendered to qualify for this award. Award winners receive a Berting paperweight containing the SYRCA logo and a certificate.

Carol Thiessen

Carol Thiessen has provided extraordinary service to SYRCA -The Willow Awards. She has been a Board Member for 5 years beginning in 2002. For the first three years, Carol served as the SSLA representative, acting as channel for information and support between the Willow Awards and the Association. From 2005 to the present day, she has served as Vice-President. Over the years, Carol has been active in the annual selection committees for all three Willow Awards: Shining, Diamond and Snow, and has chaired or co-chaired many of the committees. She has also presented the Willow Awards books at numerous library and teacher's conference sessions.



Carol Thiessen (left) with Lynn Gilbert



Chris MacLennan

Carol co-hosted the very first SaskEnergy Willow Awards Gala in 2003 at Dr. John G. Egnatoff School in Saskatoon, setting the stage and literally writing the "handbook" for all future Galas. The successful Saskatoon fundraising dinners, "Buffet and Books" would not have been possible without Carol's leadership, dedication and sheer hard work. For these reasons and many others, Carol Thiessen is a worthy recipient of the SYRCA Distinguished Service Award.

Chris MacLennan

Starting in 2002, Chris MacLennan has served on the SYRCA Inc. Board for six years. One of her major contributions over the years has been coordinating the Shining Willow Education Kits: finding and directing the volunteers, collating and checking the information gathered, formatting and "publishing" the final product. This immense annual task was always undertaken under the pressure of a very tight deadline.

Chris has tirelessly promoted the Willow Awards with teacher-librarian colleagues and her students. The children eagerly read and vote each year, waiting with excitement until she can tell

them the winning books! Recently Chris embarked on a mini-membership drive, offering colleagues a draw for an enticing gift basket if they became Willow Awards members! This resulted in a number of brand new memberships for the Awards. Chris has also worked on the Regina fund-raising dinners, soliciting door prizes and selling tickets. For these reasons and many others, Chris MacLennan is a worthy recipient of the SYRCA Distinguished Service Award.

2007 SYRCA RECOGNITION AWARDS

This Award is available to an individual who has brought considerable benefit to SYRCA – The Willow Awards or who has assisted with a program or project important to SYRCA – The Willow Awards. A suggested minimum of three years significant service must have been rendered to qualify for this award. Award-winners receive an acrylic (or glass) memento in the shape of the province etched with the SYRCA logo.

Muriel Drew

Muriel Drew has contributed time and energy to the Willow Awards for a number of years. She has served on the SYRCA Board (2002-2003), served on the Snow Willow Selection Committee (2 years), was involved with Snow Willow Education Kit development, and played a key role in the success of the 5 Regina Willow Awards Fund Raising Dinners and Auctions. From the very first auction, she has generously shared her expertise and skill. Her talent for combining and displaying items to best advantage has benefited the Willow Awards at each auction and has been a major fact in the dinner and auction becoming a major fundraiser for the Willow Awards.

Eleanor Matz

Eleanor has been an enthusiastic supporter and worker for The Willow Awards since their inception. She has served as a Board Member and as Secretary of Board from 2003-2004, designed and edited the newsletter in 2004, worked as a member of the web page committee, contributed to the Shining Willow Education Kits, and designed and prepared Annual Reports. She was also involved in organizing all 5 of the Regina fundraising dinners and auctions (2002-2007). She has served as author contact and was involved with author visits for the 2004 SaskEnergy Willow Awards Gala that was held at St. Gabriel/Jack MacKenzie Schools. Eleanor has always encouraged classroom teachers to participate in The Willow Awards and volunteered in classrooms to promote Willow books.

Elsbeth Dormuth

Elsbeth was an excellent board member who served on the SYRCA board for four years. She worked on the education kits for the Diamond Willow nominees and has been instrumental in putting together the silent auction for the Saskatoon Fund Raising Dinner.

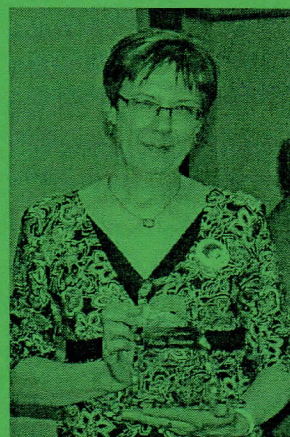
Kathy Sharman

Kathy Sharman served as a Director on the SYRCA Board for two years beginning in 2004. She served on the Shining Willow Selection committee for two years and is presently on the Snow Willow Selection Committee. She also played a key role in organizing and getting donations for Buffet and Books, Saskatoon's fundraising dinner and silent auction. She has a real talent for getting donations for our silent auction. Our tables would be pretty bare without her hard work.

Elsbeth Dormuth



Kathy Sharman



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