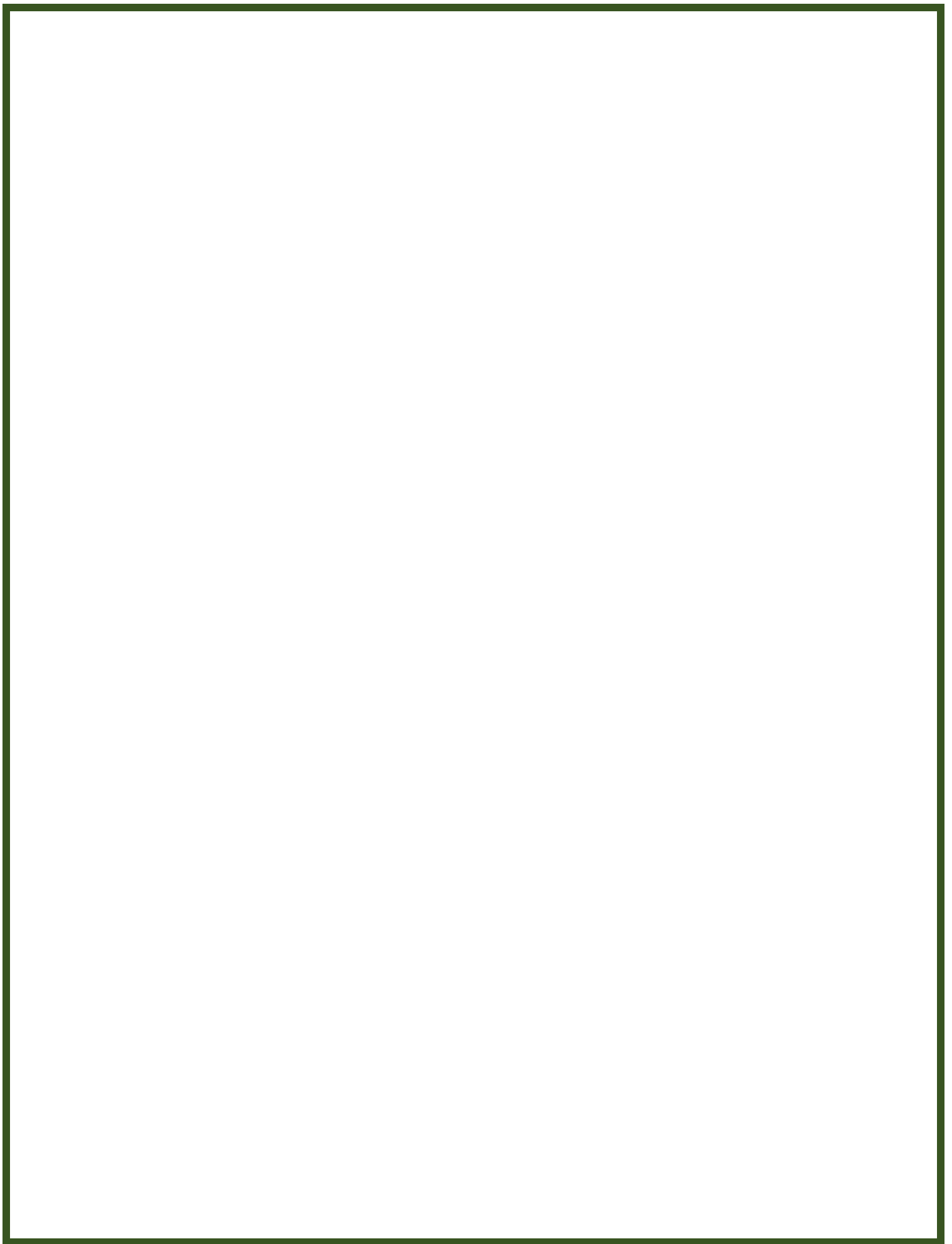


# **SASKATCHEWAN YOUNG READERS' CHOICE AWARDS**



## **THE WILLOW AWARDS ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022**

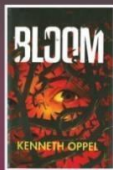




# WILLOW AWARDS

**2021**  
SASKATCHEWAN  
YOUNG READERS'  
CHOICE

## Snow Willow Finalists



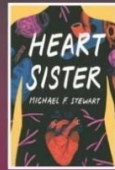
**Bloom**  
by Kenneth Oppel



**Feral**  
by Nicole Luiken



**He Must Like You**  
by Danielle Young-Ullman



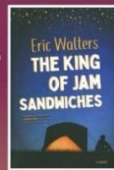
**Heart Sister**  
by Michael F. Stewart



**Hunted By The Sky**  
by Tanaz Bhattacharya



**If I Go Missing**  
by Brishna Jonnie with Nahanni Shingoose



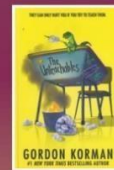
**The King of Jam Sandwiches**  
by Eric Walters



**Qaqavii**  
by Miriam Körner

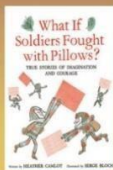


**Spin**  
by Colleen Nelson



**The Unteachables**  
by Gordon Korman

## Diamond Willow Finalists



**What If Soldiers Fought with Pillows? True Stories of Imagination and Courage**  
by Heather Camlot



**No Vacancy**  
by Tziporah Cohen



**The Brushmaker's Daughter**  
by Kathy Kacer



**The Stray and the Strangers**  
by Steven Heighiton



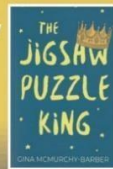
**Notorious**  
by Gordon Korman



**Fish Out of Water**  
by Joanne Levy



**Mya's Strategy to Save the World**  
by Tanya Lloyd Kyi



**The Jigsaw Puzzle King**  
by Gina McMurchy-Barber



**The Ghost Collector**  
by Allison Mills



**The Barren Grounds**  
by David A. Robertson

## Shining Willow Finalists



**Fast Friends**  
by Heather M. O'Connor



**When We Are Kind**  
by Monique Gray Smith



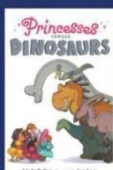
**AAALLIGATOR!**  
by Judith Henderson



**Bobby Orr and the Hand-Me-Down Skates**  
by Bobby Orr and Kara Kootstra



**The One with the Scraggy Beard**  
by Elizabeth Withey



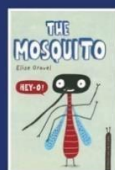
**Princesses Versus Dinosaurs**  
by Linda Bailey



**The Girl with the Cat**  
by Beverley Brenna



**Violet Shrink**  
by Christine Baldacchino



**The Mosquito**  
by Elise Gravel



**The Barnabus Project**  
by The Fan Brothers



**SILVER PATRON**



**BRONZE PATRONS**



[www.willowawards.ca](http://www.willowawards.ca)

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# BOARD MEMBERS 2020-2021

## **President:**

Erin Walton, Regina

## **Past President:**

*Vacant*

## **Vice President - Communications:**

Elann McChesney, Regina

## **Vice President- Website:**

Rhonda Wills, Regina

## **Treasurer:**

Darrelle Downs, Saskatoon

## **Secretary:**

Terry Wood, Regina

## **Director - Fundraising:**

Annah Gullacher, Saskatoon & Joanne Patron, Regina

## **Director – Print & Posters:**

Leanne Holstein, Regina & Jara Langill, Regina

## **Director - SLA Rep:**

Judy Nicholson, Regina

## **Director – LEARN Rep:**

Pam Foy, Moosomin

## **Director – SSLA Rep:**

*Vacant*

## **Directors at Large:**

Lindsay Shawarski, Warman

# MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of SYRCA –Saskatchewan Young Readers’ Choice –The Willow Awards, Inc. is to promote reading and celebrate Canadian literature. Each year, Saskatchewan children and youth vote for Willow Award recipients from finalists nominated in three award categories.

## OBJECTIVES

To achieve its Mission, the Corporation will:

- develop an annual list of Canadian and Saskatchewan books nominated to receive a Willow Award;
- maintain a website 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 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.

## SYRCA – THE WILLOW AWARDS STRATEGIC PLAN

Effective strategic planning requires us to focus on a few key priorities, while at the same time continuing to attend to all the important areas that relate to our mandate as outlined in our mission statement. A priority is often carried out over more than one year.

### Organizational Structure

- Task & Responsibilities
- Board Meetings

### Fiscal Responsibility

- Budget
- Fund Development

### Communications

- Website
- Posters, Bookmarks
- Internal Communications
- External Communications
- Conferences

### Sustainability

- Membership
- Board Memberships, Human Resources, Volunteers

### Programs

- Book Selection
- Gala – winning authors’ attendance, reading at host schools
- Launch
- Educational Activities

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Board of Directors of the Saskatchewan Young Readers' Choice Awards (SYRCA), The Willow Awards Inc., met five times during the 2021-2022 year.

The board said good-bye to Heather Dolmage and Hannah Patterson who stepped down at the end of 2020-2021 year and welcomed Joanne Patron as a co-fundraising director, creating a board of twelve members.

This year was an exciting year for The Willow Awards organization as we commemorated our 20th Anniversary. The board's focus was to look back at how the organization reached this achievement, promote this celebratory year and provide commemorative contests to engage our readers.

Along with our regular online and mailout communications and promotions, a main priority for the board in our anniversary year was to create a historical overview and archive our journey thus far through a variety of documents posted on our website for posterity. In addition to chronicling the past, The Willows was also able to promote our achievements through a CBC radio interview and print ads. We were again privileged to promote The Willow Awards to future educators at the University of Regina and University of Saskatchewan.

As well as our regular yearly events, two anniversary contests were created to celebrate and encourage participation. We held a 20th Anniversary Author Contest, and a 20th Anniversary All-Star Contest with a special online poster created to highlight past winners in all three awards categories. Authors generously gave of their time and nine contest winning schools from across the province were able to enjoy visits with Willow authors.

Another highlight for the anniversary year was The Willow Awards receiving the Saskatchewan Library Association's first Distinguished Service Award at their annual conference. The Willow Board was honoured to be acknowledged for our 20 years of promoting quality Canadian literature to the young people of Saskatchewan.

This was our third year dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. As a non-profit volunteer run organization, fundraising continues to be critical to keeping The Willow Awards operational. We are extremely grateful to all our sponsors, patrons and friends for their support in helping us achieve our fundraising goal in spite of all the difficulties that Covid has caused. The Willow Awards also relies heavily on book lovers both young and old across this province for our continued operation and success and the board truly thanks everyone for their support in the midst of upheaval.

From the awards inception, there have been many volunteer board and reading committee members who have been instrumental to ensuring The Willow Awards was able to reach this important milestone. I would like to sincerely thank everyone who has had a hand in helping us attain this accomplishment. I would also like to thank our talented and magnanimous current board who put countless hours into making this 20th anniversary celebration year a success as we strove to highlight the past, celebrate with our readers and carry The Willow Awards into the future.

The SYRCA Annual Report reflects the ongoing work and successes of the 2021-2022 operating year. Minutes of the 2020-2021 Annual General Meeting will be available at the September 17, 2022 Annual General Meeting, which will be held through Zoom this year.

Respectfully submitted,

**Erin Walton**  
**President**



# FUNDRAISING REPORT

Saskatchewan Young Readers' Choice Awards is a non-profit, volunteer-run, charitable organization that relies solely on donations to cover our expenditures. Currently, The Willow Awards has five different supporter levels: **Gold Patron** \$5,000 or more; **Silver Patron** \$3,000 - \$4,999; **Bronze Patron** \$1,000 - \$2,999; **Sponsors** \$500 - \$999; and **Friends** \$100 - \$499.

Thanks to the generosity of our long-time donors, the SYRCA - The Willow Awards, Inc. was able to meet and exceed our fundraising goals this year. We raised a total of \$14,549.65 through sponsor donations. We want to give a special thanks to our longest-standing donors.

SaskEnergy has been supporting the Willow Awards as a Silver Patron since 2003. In recognition of their generosity, the Gala has been called "The Willow Awards Sask Energy Gala" since 2004, and a representative has been asked to speak at each event.

We are grateful, too, for the support of the United Library Services, who have been donating books and financial support to the Willow Awards since 2004. ULS has provided a full set of Willow Award books to the school or library that hosts the Gala each year. Each of our donors, long-standing and recent, are greatly appreciated for their commitment to the Willow Awards.

Our team also put together a Virtual Bottle Drive through SARCAN. Donors could drop off recycling at the Drop & Go centre, then opt for the funds to be donated to the Willow Awards. Thanks to the generosity of friends and family, we raised \$49.65.

The generous support from our patrons and friends has enabled the SYRCA- The Willow Awards to continue providing children an opportunity to read quality Canadian literature, feel empowered by voting for their favourite book, and celebrate their choices at the annual Gala. We are sincerely grateful to all our patrons for their part in supporting literacy in Saskatchewan.

## **SYRCA Gold Patrons generously contributing \$5000 or more:**

Access Communications Children's Fund

## **SYRCA Silver Patrons generously contributing \$3000 - \$4999:**

SaskEnergy

## **SYRCA Bronze Patrons generously contributing \$1000 - \$2999:**

Cameco

Sasktel Pioneers

Sasktel

ULS

## **SYRCA Sponsors generously contributing \$500 - \$999:**

McNally Robinson

## **SYRCA Friends generously contributing \$100 - \$499:**

Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan - Regina Chapter

Saskatchewan Library Association

Sharon Konanz

Hi-Tec Profiles Inc.

Respectfully submitted,

Annah Gullacher & Joanne Patron

Fundraising Co-Chairs



## TREASURER'S REPORT

This year I have the rare opportunity to talk about two financial years instead of just one. That is because we changed our financial year end and in order to make that work, we had to run a mini financial year that went from April 1st, 2021 to June 30th, 2021. The big reason for this change is that going forward the Gala will now be in the same financial year as all the work that goes into picking finalists and supporting it.

So our fiscal year from now on will run from July 1st to June 30th. It used to be awkward because all our fundraising for the year was done in the fall and early winter but the Gala that all the fundraising was for happened in May which was in the next fiscal year. Changing our year end will help by putting each Gala in the same year as the fundraising events that supported it.

Once again, a big thank you to Sandra Jackson, our accountant, who prepared our Notice to Reader and helped tremendously with our change of year end. Your help and guidance to me is graciously appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,

**Darrelle Downs**  
**SYRCA Treasurer**

## STICKER REPORT

Finalist stickers are circles, one inch in diameter. The green graphic on white, shown here, is for finalist books; a similar sticker with the green graphic on gold foil background is for winning books. Many schools and libraries identify Willow Award Finalist books in their collections by placing a Willow sticker on the spine or front cover of the books. Stickers are another way that we raise funds.

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total Sales	\$564.00	\$740.00	\$1072	\$657	\$509	\$468	\$798

Respectfully submitted,

**Pam Foy**  
**LEARN Rep**



# LAUNCHING THE WILLOW FINALISTS

Each year, every school and library in the province is encouraged to launch the new Willow Award finalists. They introduce these great books to their reading communities in many creative ways! We want to share the wonderful work teachers, teacher-librarians, librarians and the staff of schools have done to promote this quality literature. During October and November, participants can enter a competition to win a complete set of 30 nominated books by submitting a photo(s) and/or a description of their local launch, such as bulletin boards, guest readers, book talks or a special project.

It was exciting to see so many schools promoting the reading of the Willow finalists in our 20th year! We recognize the challenges that many have been facing during this past year and have been encouraged by the positive messages that we have received about the current titles, our 20th anniversary contests and the Willow Awards in general. The constant that is always so good to hear about is the excitement and enjoyment that classes and students are experiencing through their exposure to the Willows, regardless of how it is done.

Here are a few of the ideas shared with us this year:

- Setting up a race car track to showcase student's reading of the Willows
- Sets of Willow finalists traveling from classroom to classroom
- Book "tastings" to create interest in the Diamond and Snow Willow finalists
- Booktalks and readings through zoom chats and posted through QR codes
- Partnerships between schools and public libraries
- Judging a book by its cover and comparing the pre-reading vote to a post-reading vote
- Using Willow titles as part of a "Battle of the Books" program
- Setting up book brackets continue to be popular and get many classes excited throughout a school
- We received wonderful pictures of displays and bulletin boards.

## The Winners of a full set of Willow books (Shining, Diamond and Snow):

- Yorkton Regional High School
- Bulyea Elementary School

## Runners Up Winners of a set of Shining, Diamond or Snow Willow Books:

- Kincaid School
- Archerwill School

## Honorable Mentions winning a selection of titles at various levels:

- Outlook Elementary School
- St. Kateri Tekakwitha, Saskatoon
- Harbour Landing School, Regina
- Schell School

The Willow Board would like to thank all that is done by librarians, teachers, teacher-librarians and parents across the province to promote reading and the Willows!

Respectfully submitted,

**Rhonda Wills**  
**Website Director**



*Bulyea Elementary School*

# COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Communicating information about the Willow Awards across the province is a team effort by the Willow Board. To help coordinate this, our Saskatchewan Library Association rep, Judy Nicholson, has continued to work this past year on a communication strategy that will provide a guide for future members of the board to follow. We are striving to make sure that the message that reaches everyone about the Willows is widespread and consistent.

Representatives from two organizations have members on the board. The first is the Saskatchewan Library Association (SLA). The second is the Literacy Educators' and Resources Network (LEARN), an amalgamation of two organizations, the Literacy Educators Network of Saskatchewan (LENS) and the Saskatchewan School Library Association (SSLA). These people are instrumental in sharing information about the Willows with leading literacy promoters in our province.

Our Communications Director is our liaison between the board and publishers across Canada. She contacts them asking for submissions early in our yearly cycle and communicates with them regarding finalist choices and winners as this information becomes available.

Communicating with past and potential sponsors is the ongoing job of the Fundraising Director and is outlined in the Fundraising report.

Co-ordinating the distribution of posters and bookmarks to schools, and libraries across the province falls to two members on the Board. This is an important visual communication piece and one that we hope all children in the province see at some point during the year. This year 60 000 bookmarks and 3000 posters were sent out to 317 libraries and 851 schools across the province.

The Willow Awards website continues to be the primary communication tool for everyone who needs information about the Willows. On the website, visitors can find information about books, authors, illustrators and publishers. Also included are activities to promote literacy through the use of the Willow titles. To help promote each of the Willow books, pdf's of the book covers are available for printing to aid in making displays, there are printable versions of the bookmarks and a smaller version of the poster, as well as pictures showcasing ideas used to promote the Willows. The website also includes an online form for submitting votes and printable ballots for use by voters. There are links to past Gala celebrations as well as an archive of past Willow titles. Additions were made this year to celebrate our 20th anniversary including the uploading of all of our previous AGM reports, pdf's of past posters and a document that outlines the history of The Willows. A contact form that allows participants to easily communicate with the board is managed by the President and fields many inquiries about the Willows, both specific and general. Our website is hosted by Blacksun Design Inc. and we are appreciative of their continued support. We continue to receive positive comments from individuals using the site and hope that visitors find it a useful tool. People can visit our website at [willowawards.ca](http://willowawards.ca).

As a result of our fiscal year changing, highlights for the 2021 and 2022 Gala celebrations are included in this annual report. For both these Galas, COVID-19 restrictions prevented us from hosting the Gala celebration with the winning authors. In the past, we have live-streamed the Gala event on our website so that all Saskatchewan children could watch as the winners were announced. In 2021, students and staff at Wilfred Hunt School, Regina, Saskatchewan introduced and celebrated the winning authors virtually. Their video messages were posted on our website, after the event, to announce the winners to the province. In 2022, Regina Public Library's Regent Place Branch hosted a combined virtual and in person celebration, with the authors participating virtually. Willow enthusiasts were able to watch the Gala live or a recorded version posted on our website.

Another tool used to communicate Willow Awards news includes emails via Mailchimp, which individuals can subscribe to during the voting process or from our website. Facebook and Twitter also continue to be platforms where we disseminate information about The Willow Awards. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter @willowawards. Use #willowawards when "tweeting" about The Willows. We appreciate feedback from our users regarding improvements we can make in any of these areas.

Respectfully submitted,

**Rhonda Wills**  
**Website and Social Media Director**

# THE 20<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS



2021 has been a special time for SYRCA as we have been celebrating our 20th anniversary of bringing quality Canadian children's literature to the children and youth of our province. Over 20 years, there have been a total of 600 nominated books, and 60 winners – all quality Canadian children's literature. The thousands of children and youth involved in reading and voting for their favourite books over this time is huge!

To help commemorate this milestone, we wanted to encourage schools, classrooms and libraries to engage in a variety of student opportunities for enrichment associated with this special event. The current board of SYRCA, (2021-2022), collaborated over the last 2 years to bring together resources and activities to mark this important milestone in the history of The Willow Awards in our province. These include:

**Branding/marketing** - A special 20th anniversary logo was created to be used throughout the year as well as a poster for each award that showcased the winners for the past 19 years. These posters were available to download as a PDF on the Willow Awards website. See pictures of the anniversary posters at the bottom of this article.

**Honouring the history** – An article recapping the history of the awards was circulated and posted on the website along with documents from the past 20 years. The annual report as well as the posters for each year were also posted there.

**Promotions** - Regular articles, press releases, and ads were published to highlight the events of the anniversary year. This included an advertisement in the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation publication, *The Bulletin* and an interview on CBC radio's Saskatchewan Weekend hosted by Shauna Powers.

**Two Contests** - With the help of many of our 2021 Willow finalist authors, one of the most exciting opportunities we provided this year were our two contests, running from September - March. For both contests, we received entries from across the province. It was

exciting to see them come in! The first contest was the **20th Anniversary All-Star Contest** where we asked Willow promoters to send us pictures of the Willow books that they have in their library collections. Many thanks to everyone who took the time to find these great titles and bring them to the attention of their library patrons! Each picture sent was an entry to win a zoom visit with one of our 2021 finalist authors who have won a Willow Award in the past, our Willow All-Stars.





## THE 20<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS CONT.

Our All-Star Authors were:

- Linda Bailey, author of *Princesses vs. Dinosaurs* (Shining finalist 2021) and *If Kids Ruled the World* (Shining winner 2015). Robert Southey School, Southey was the winner of a zoom visit with her.
- Gordon Korman, author of *The Unteachables* (Snow finalist 2021), *Swindle* (Diamond winner 2009), *Masterminds* (Diamond winner 2016) and *Schooled* (Snow winner 2008). St. Kateri Tekakwitha School, Saskatoon was the winner of a zoom visit with him.
- Kathy Kacer, author of *The Brushmaker's Daughter* (Diamond finalist 2021) and *I Am Not A Number* (Diamond winner 2017) George Lee School, Regina was the winner of a zoom visit with her.

The second contest was the **20th Anniversary Author Contest**. Six more 2021 Shining, Diamond and Snow finalist authors offered to provide teachers a chance to win a virtual visit or reading. Here are the featured authors and winners:

- October's featured author was Heather M. O'Connor, Shining Award finalist for *Fast Friends*. The zoom visit was won by Jack Mackenzie School, Regina.
- November's featured author was Tziporah Cohen, Diamond Award finalist for *No Vacancy*. The zoom visit was won by James Hamblin School, Qu'Appelle.
- December's featured author was Mike Stewart, Snow Award finalist for *Heart Sister*. The zoom visit was won by Chief Little Pine School, Paynton.
- January's featured authors were The Fan Brothers, Shining Award finalist for *The Barnabus Project*. The zoom reading was won by Spruce Home Public School, Prince Albert.
- February's featured author was Gina McMurchy-Barber, Diamond Award finalist for *The Jigsaw Puzzle King*. The zoom visit was won by Davidson School, Davidson.
- March's featured author was Colleen Nelson, Snow Award finalist for *Spin*. The zoom visit was won by Ecole Community School, Regina.

We would like to extend a huge thank you to the authors who gave so freely of their time. Many teachers and teacher-librarians shared the excitement of their students with us. Your time was greatly appreciated!

**Gala** - This year's gala included additional anniversary celebrations which can be viewed in the gala report.

The purpose of these anniversary activities has been to celebrate The Willows' longevity with our readers and to acknowledge all of those who have made The Willows possible over the years. This longevity can be attributed to a variety of factors. Our volunteer network is incredible! It includes our hard-working board members who have created a stable and sustainable organization since its visioning in the fall of 2000. This has included ongoing involvement of the Saskatchewan Library Association, (SLA), and the Saskatchewan School Library Association (SSLA) and the Literacy Educators Network of Saskatchewan (LENS) joined now into the Literacy Educators and Resources Network (LEARN).

We have also had many volunteers serve on our three reading committees. Over 20 years, they have read between 300 and 500 nominated titles each year, approximately 10,000 books since our inception. We have also appreciated the tremendous support our organization has received from teachers, teacher-librarians, librarians, and families that have engaged students with the finalist books. This has happened through displays, in-school and library programs, launch and gala events, and voting for their favourites.

In addition to our wonderful volunteers, we wanted to acknowledge our financial supporters who have been an integral part of The Willow Awards. Thanks go to all individuals, companies and organizations that have provided funds each year to support our work. A special thanks goes to SaskEnergy for their ongoing support of the annual Gala event. Also, the Willow Awards would not have been successful without the aid of publishers that submit

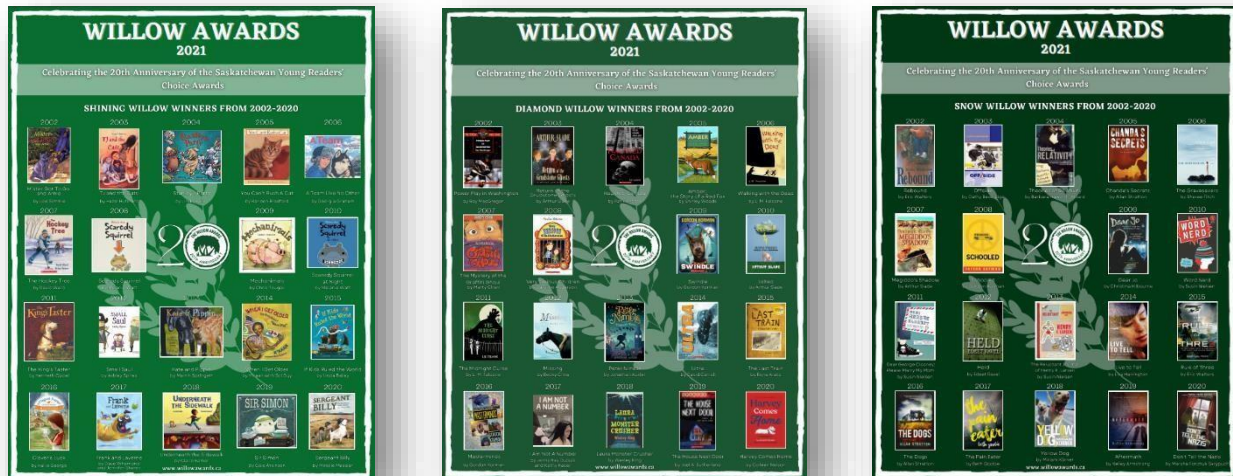
## THE 20<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS CONT.

books to be reviewed or the communities across the province that have supported our fund-raising events. The Willows could not have had such a sustained impact without these individuals, businesses and corporate entities.

We are most thankful that, for twenty years, students throughout the province have been able to read and vote for their favourite books. Young readers are the motivation and core of the Willow Awards!

Respectfully submitted,

**Judy Nicholson**  
SYRCA Member



## 2021 VOTING DRAWS

This year, voting draws were held to encourage and to thank those participants who submitted votes for the Willow Awards finalists. An early bird draw and two more draws were made for a selection of books, following the closing of the voting.

Congratulations to the following schools who were the lucky winners:

Yorkdale Central School, Yorkton, Saskatchewan (Early Bird)  
Canora Junior Elementary School, Canora, Saskatchewan  
Sidney Street School, Maple Creek, Saskatchewan

Respectfully submitted,

**Rhonda Wills**  
Website and Social Media Director

# 2021 WILLOW FINALIST VOTING REPORT

The main purpose of the Willow Awards is to promote reading and great Canadian Literature among Saskatchewan children and youth. We gauge our success through the voting that occurs in the spring each year. Voters embrace the role of literary critic. They are excited to know that what they think matters and they eagerly await the announcement of the winners at the spring Gala.

In the past, voting closed on March 31st. This allowed time to contact winning authors and make arrangements for them to travel to participate in the Gala celebration near the end of May. This last year, our voting timeline was again affected by circumstances around the COVID-19 pandemic. Both last year and this year, promoting the Willows in schools was challenging with COVID-19 protocols in place. Students were not able to access the Willow books as easily when they were at school and not able to take books home to read. With many staff and students dealing with illness, interruptions to learning meant that promoting and reading of the Willow finalists was difficult. As the March 31st voting deadline approached, the number of votes that we had received was significantly lower than previous years. A decision was made, once again, to extend voting until April 14th.

COVID-19 isn't the only challenge that we have faced in recent years. We are seeing fewer vote submissions made by teacher-librarians across the province. At one time, TL's were our biggest advocates, spearheading the purchase, promotion and reading of the Willows in their schools. Recent years have seen a significant reduction in the number of teacher-librarians and library support personnel in the province as well as the amount of time they are assigned to work as TL's. We fear that this may also be a factor in our reduced voting numbers and are seeking further ways that The Willows can be introduced and promoted in schools.

Through all of the challenges that this year has brought to our communities, we are awed by the continued participation of teachers, teacher-librarians, librarians, library technicians and parents in encouraging children to read these great books! Votes were submitted from across the province, from rural and small-town schools as well as schools in the larger urban centres. We had votes submitted from public libraries and from parents who are homeschooling their children. Once again, our voting numbers were lower than we would like to see. We are hopeful for the future when the pandemic isn't dominating our lives.

Votes by Category	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
SHINING	9,901	13,898	11,144	11,213	3652	5728	6700
DIAMOND	883	1,230	941	1061	448	440	626
SNOW	307	396	181	320	247	144	208
TOTAL VOTES	11,040	15,524	12,266	12,594	4347	6312	7534

Respectfully submitted,

**Rhonda Wills**  
**Website and Social Media Director**



## 2021 WILLOW AWARDS WINNERS

### Shining Willow



**The Barnabus Project**

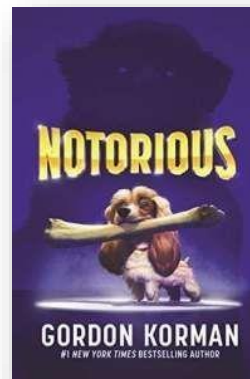
**By The Fan Brothers**

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### Diamond Willow

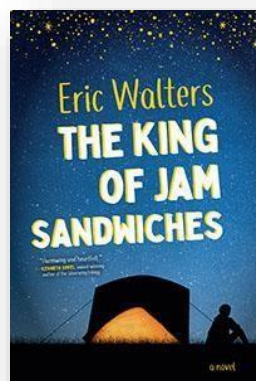
**Notorious**

**By Gordon Korman**



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### Snow Willow



**The King of Jam Sandwiches**

**By Eric Walters**

# PROGRAM: SHINING WILLOW SELECTION COMMITTEE REPORT

The Shining Willow Selection Committee for 2021 continues to be made of enthusiastic, and passionate current and retired teachers, teacher librarians, library technicians, and children's programmers. This year, we considered approximately 180 books. As usual, our meetings were filled with passionate and insightful discussions. During the Covid 19 global pandemic Zoom was used at our meetings to include all members who lived in and outside of Saskatoon. We continue to use google documents to share comments and reviews about the books read by various members to help frame our discussions.

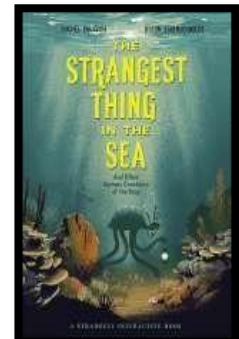
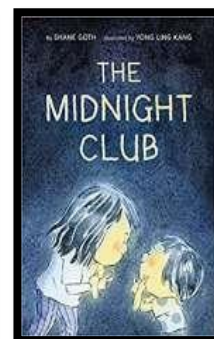
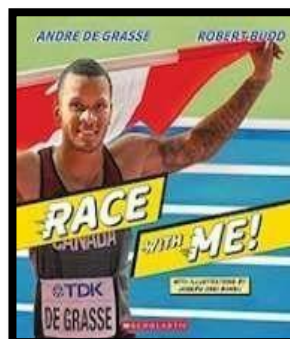
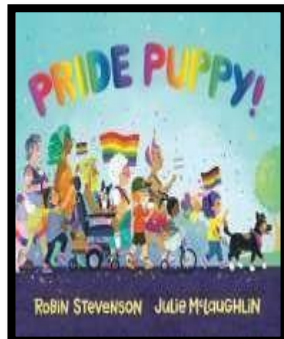
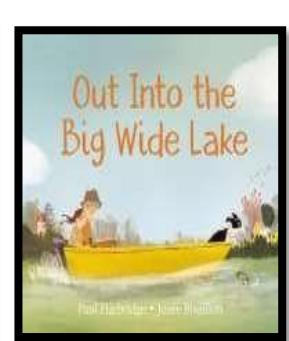
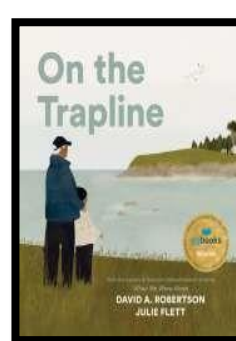
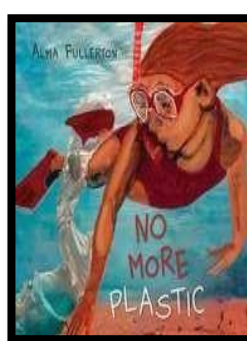
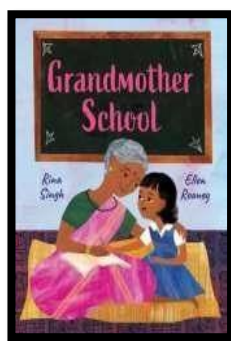
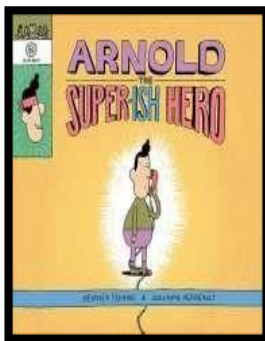
A huge thank you to our dedicated readers: Annah Gullacher, Lindsay Martel, Amiee Sipple, Susan Ens Funk, Laurie Hnatiuk, Hali Hamel, Twyla McNeil, Wenona Gedir Lundsten, Renee Treneman, Lindsay Shawarski.

The Shining Willow Committee is pleased to present the finalists for the 2022 Shining Willow Award.

Respectfully submitted,

**Lindsay Shawarski**  
**Shining Willow Chair**

## SHINING WILLOW FINALISTS FOR 2022



# PROGRAM: DIAMOND WILLOW SELECTION COMMITTEE REPORT

The 2022 Diamond Willow reading committee had 127 titles submitted for consideration, including 7 titles rolled over from last year. Seven titles were passed up to the Snow Committee and 10 titles were moved down to the Shining Committee. After the finalists were selected, 7 titles were rolled over for consideration for the 2023 awards.

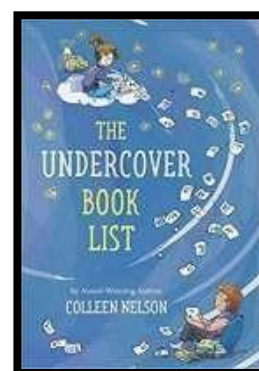
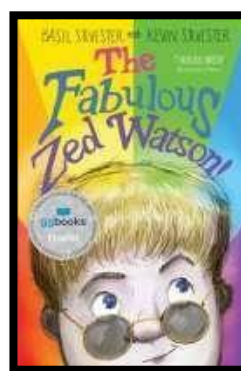
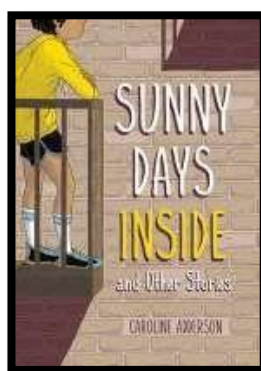
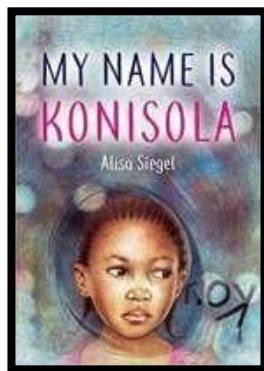
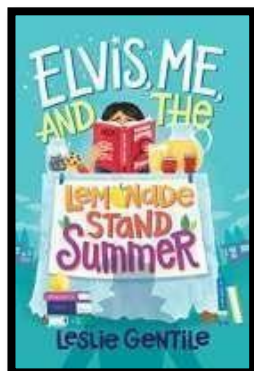
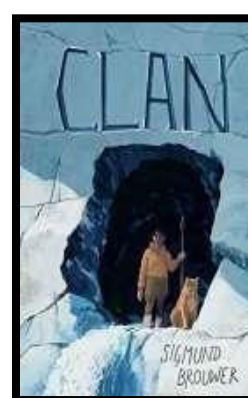
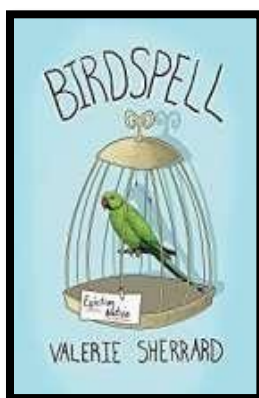
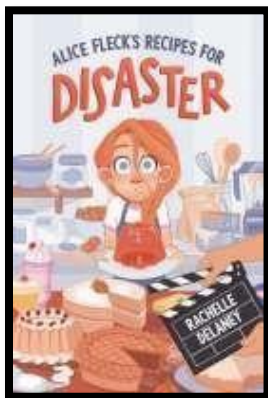
The Diamond Willow Committee was a group of 10 immensely dedicated readers whose love of children's literature is an integral part of their personal and professional lives. Thank you to the wonderful committee consisting of Erin Ursu, Heather Parker, Gail Zerr, Pamela Wenger, Susan Holmes, Rhonda Wills, Charmaine Stouse, Heather Walton, Joanne Patron and Erin Walton whose commitment and thoughtful discussions culminated in the selection of the 2022 Diamond Willow Finalists.

The Diamond Willow Committee is pleased to present the finalists for the 2022 Diamond Willow Award.

Respectfully submitted,

**Erin Walton**  
**Diamond Willow Chair**

## DIAMOND WILLOW FINALISTS FOR 2022





# PROGRAM: SNOW WILLOW SELECTION COMMITTEE REPORT

We were once again faced with another year of Zoom meetings instead of seeing each other in person, but we persevered and did our very best to choose the greatest selection that we could. Even though none of the meetings were in person, it was nice to see our readers in the comfort of their homes. Many cute children and pets were showcased on Zoom for all of us to see and enjoy.

A huge thank-you to all of our readers. This year would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication that each one of them showed for the Snow Willows. The Snow reading group is a small, tight knit group that has some of the best readers. This year we had Katrina Matt, a student from the Library and Information Technology Programme join our group. Thank-you and welcome Katrina! Thank you once again to my fellow readers Amanda Irvine, Danielle Bergen, Katherine Fiander, Shelby Smith and Nicole Downs. Your dedication and love for the Willow Awards makes my job so much easier.

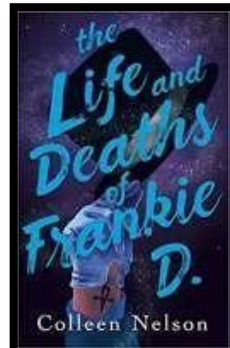
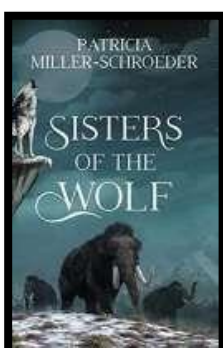
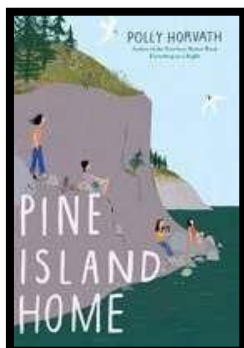
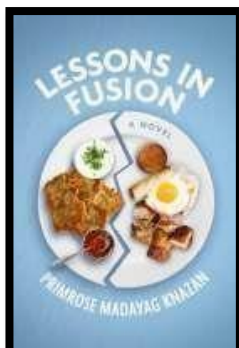
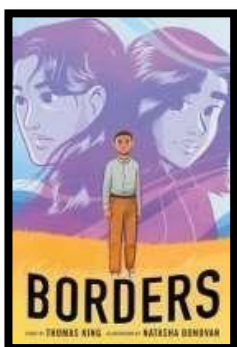
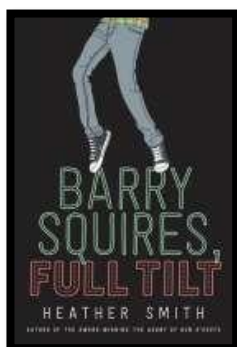
This year the Snow Committee received 62 books. This was a lower year for us, but we still had difficulty in narrowing it down to just ten books because they were all so good!

We proudly submit the 2022 finalists for the Snow Willow Awards.

Respectfully submitted,

**Darrelle Downs**  
**Snow Willow Chair**

## SNOW WILLOW FINALISTS FOR 2022



# THE ANNUAL SASKENERGY WILLOW AWARDS GALA 2021

On March 26, 2021, following pandemic guidelines, Wilfred Hunt School hosted the 2020 virtual Willow Gala. Wilfred Hunt School had been chosen the year before to host the Gala, however, with the COVID pandemic and schools closing in March, the school was given another opportunity to make up for the lost year.

To prepare for the Gala, students participated in a Shining Willow day. Students were treated to a reading of **How to Give Your Cat a Bath In Five Easy Steps** by the author, Nicola Winstanley, as well as their teachers reading aloud from Diamond and Snow nominated books. In addition, there were reading contests to encourage children to read the required number of books to vote and a coloring contest.

The day of the Gala, the winning authors, Mireille Messier (Shining), Colleen Nelson (Diamond) and Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch (Snow) were zoomed in and congratulated by the students. This short meeting was followed by virtual author visits for Wilfred Hunt students and other Regina Public Schools classrooms.

Meeting the authors was a memorable moment that inspires students to read, write and be creative. Many fond memories were created reading the novels and meeting the authors.



Mireille Messier



Colleen Nelson



Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch

Respectfully submitted,

**Elann McChesney**

Vice President of Communication and Gala Host

**We acknowledge that we have two galas in this Annual Report because of our change to a new fiscal year end. You will find details of that change in the Treasurer's Report on page 9.**

# THE 20<sup>th</sup> ANNUEL SASKENERGY WILLOW AWARDS GALA 2022

The 2021-2022 voting year was special as The Willow Awards celebrated its 20th Anniversary. The Regina Public Libraries, Regent Branch, hosted the 20th Anniversary of the SaskEnergy Willow Awards Gala on Wednesday, June 1st through a live virtual zoom event to culminate this milestone year. Regina Public Library staff, Robin Berg and Courtney Bates-Hardy planned and executed the online event along with support from Terry Wiest and Jo Sheppard.

The gala was privileged to have the Honourable Lieutenant Governor, Russ Mirasty attend and bring greetings on behalf of her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. His Honour emphasized the diversity that The Willow Awards highlights through the nominated authors and books and in the spirit of that diversity also brought greetings in his first language Woodland Cree. He addressed the children and youth of the province, spotlighting the importance of their participation and reading great literature and encouraged young readers to “continue to let your imagination lead you on fantastic adventures”.



Special guest, Allix Schweitzer, the SaskEnergy representative, expressed SaskEnergy’s pleasure to have partnered with The Willow Awards for more than 15 years in promoting literacy in schools. She particularly highlighted the fact that The Willows helps promote a “love of reading that lasts a lifetime”.

Jeff Barber, the Director and CEO of Regina Public Libraries, next brought thanks and congratulations, on behalf of the libraries, to The Willow Award organization for its many years of dedicated service to promoting Canadian literature and inspiring young readers.

The Willow Awards is all about giving voice to the young people of Saskatchewan, so it was wonderful to be able to have a number of students from various schools be involved in the gala. Janaye and Kyler, from George Lee School, in Regina, did a wonderful and professional job as the Masters of Ceremony.



Mrs. Gail Veikle’s students from the Huda School, in Regina, did an excellent job of presenting the 2022 Shining Willow finalists and announcing the winners of the Shining Willow Award, *The Barnabus Project* by The Fan Brothers, with a round of cheers.

The Fan Brothers shared how thrilled they were to be nominated and then to win and expressed their gratitude to the young people of Saskatchewan for giving them such a meaningful award because it was chosen by their readers. They explained how the idea for *The Barnabus Project* started over 30 years ago before finally becoming a published book. They thanked teachers and librarians for bringing Canadian books to children and their families, publisher, agent and Tundra Books for their support.



# THE 20<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL SASKENERGY WILLOW AWARDS GALA 2022 CONT.



Devin Fan



Terry Fan



Eric Fan



Krystal and Morgan from Anaheim School, in Anaheim, presented the 2022 Diamond finalists and Mr. Graham Brace's students, Olivia, Zoe, Alia and Thomas, from Ruth Pawson School, in Regina, announced the winner of the

Diamond Willow Award, *Notorious* by Gordon Korman.



Gordon Korman shared a taped acceptance speech expressing what an honour it was to receive an award decided by Saskatchewan students. He described how *Notorious* is a special book for him, not unlike the town in the book that straddles the Canada- U.S. border he experienced in his own life. He also had this book idea decades earlier. He explained that he wrote his first book at age 14 and over the last 44 years he has written 100 novels. The reason he is still writing "is because of programs like The Willow Awards" and kids "reading his stuff, enjoying it, laughing in all the right places- that means everything to me."

Janaye and Kyler, the Masters of Ceremony, announced the winner of the Snow Willow Award, *The King of Jam Sandwiches* by Eric Walters.



Eric Walters explained how *The King of Jam Sandwiches* is a special book as it is based on his own life and shared how children's choice awards are the most important awards he receives. He expressly shared his love for Saskatchewan and the contributions of its people to Canada and left the students of the province this inspirational message, "What I want you to remember more than anything else, is that you come from a place where great people come from. That you can become great. I hope our stories give you a little insight into other places, some other people, some empathy. Remember who you are. You are from Saskatchewan- Be proud!" (insert picture 11)



# THE 20<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL SASKENERGY WILLOW AWARDS GALA 2022 CONT.

Following the excitement of finding out the winners and the inspiring messages from the authors, Erin Walton, the President of the SYRCA- The Willow Awards gave the final closing remarks with a thank you to all those involved in the gala as well as to those who volunteer and participate in the Willow Awards without whose support The Willow Awards could not have reached its 20th Anniversary.

After the gala event, viewers could register to attend a virtual author visit with Eric Walters that afternoon and The Fan Brothers the following morning. For those registrants from across the province that registered ahead of time to watch the gala they were entered in a draw to win either a set of 2022 Willow Award Finalist books or an author visit in the fall. The following are the schools that were the winners:

Indian Head Elementary School, Indian Head- won the 2022 Shining Willow Books

MacNeill Elementary School, Regina- won the 2022 Diamond Willow Books

Southeast Regional Library, Weyburn- won the 2022 Snow Willow Books

Fox Valley School, Fox Valley- won an Eric Walters author visit

Ecole Massey Elementary School, Regina- won an Eric Walters author visit

Canora Junior Elementary School, Canora- won a Fan Brothers author visit

Davidson School, Davidson- won a Fan Brothers author visit

Respectfully submitted,

**Erin Walton**  
**President and Gala Liaison**

## SLA DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

On May 6, 2022 at the Awards Luncheon of the Saskatchewan Library Association (SLA), The Willows were presented with the first ever SLA Distinguished Service Award. To accept the award on behalf of SYRCA Inc. was board member Joanne Patron. The SYRCA Inc Board is grateful to have their work and that of their predecessors recognized for its impact in Saskatchewan.

When a group or organization is identified as having contributed significantly to literacy, life-long learning and fostering a love of reading in Saskatchewan, SLA recognizes that contribution with this award on behalf of the province's library community.

Celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary as an organization this year, The Willow Awards have been contributing to Saskatchewan libraries and youth literacy since its inception. One of its most significant contributions has been providing curated lists of high-quality literature accompanied by suggested activities that encourage youth in their reading adventures. This project has also brought together a community of adults who are passionate about children's literature.



The Willow Awards' programs have drawn participants from many communities and enhanced the literary landscape for young readers across the province, supporting Saskatchewan's public and school libraries in the process.

Respectfully submitted,

**Rhonda Wills**  
**SYRCA Board**

## BOARD RECOGNITION

**Judy Nicholson's** involvement with The Willow Awards has had a lasting impact. As secretary of the Saskatchewan School Library Association (SSLA), she agreed to strike a committee to look into creating a young readers' choice award in May 2000. When the award was created she sat on the inaugural board as a director for one year. Fast forward to 2020 and Judy once again joined the Willow board as the Saskatchewan Library Association (SLA) representative. She helped coordinate a successful fundraising project and spearheaded The Willow Awards 20th Anniversary plans. The Willow Awards board are pleased to award Judy Nicholson the **Recognition Award** for her service to the Willow Awards at two critical moments in its history.



**Elann McChesney** has dedicated six years to The Willow Awards board serving as Vice-President and Publisher Liaison. During her time, she has contributed greatly through organizing and streamlining her role, serving for a time on the Diamond Reading Committee and as a great ambassador for The Willows in her role as a Teacher-Librarian with Regina Public Schools. During two of our most difficult school years affected by Covid, Elann, and the schools she works in, stepped up to plan and provide online gala videos to share the finalist winners with the province. The Willow Awards board are pleased to award Elann McChesney the **Long Term Distinguished Service Award** for her enduring commitment to the Willow Awards.



Respectfully submitted,

**Erin Walton**  
**President**

## SYRCA – THE WILLOW AWARDS INC. PATRONS, SPONSORS, AND FRIENDS

The Saskatchewan Young Readers' Choice Awards grateful acknowledges our patrons, sponsors, and friends for the financial support. The generous contributions made by those listed below have made the Willow Awards possible.

### **SYRCA Gold Patrons have generously contributed \$5,000 or more:**



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### **SYRCA Silver Patrons have generously contributed \$3,000 to \$4,999:**



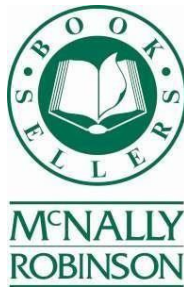
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### **SYRCA Bronze Patrons have generously contributed \$1,000 to \$2999:**



## **SYRCA – THE WILLOW AWARDS INC. PATRONS, SPONSORS, AND FRIENDS CONT.**

**SYRCA Sponsors have generously contributed \$500 - \$999:**



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**SYRCA Friends generously contributing \$100 - \$499:**

- Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan – Regina Chapter
- Saskatchewan Library Association
- Sharon Konanz
- Hi-Tec Profiles Inc

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*“In the case of good books, the point is not to see how many of them you can get through, but rather how many can get through to you.” – Mortimer J. Adler*

*“The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.” – Dr. Seuss*



# THE WILLOW AWARDS