

# **SASKATCHEWAN YOUNG READERS' CHOICE AWARDS**



**THE WILLOW AWARDS  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2022-2023**



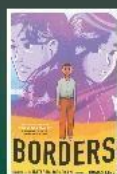
# WILLOW AWARDS

**2022**  
SASKATCHEWAN  
YOUNG READERS'  
CHOICE

## Snow Willow Finalists



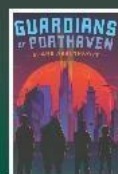
**Barry Squires, Full Tilt**  
by Heather Smith



**Borders**  
by Thomas King



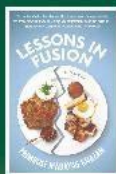
**Given**  
by Nandi Taylor



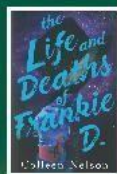
**Guardians of Porthaven**  
by Shane Arbuthnot



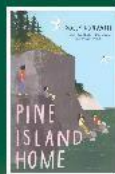
**Homewrecker**  
by Deanna Cameron



**Lessons in Fusion**  
by Primrose Madayg Khazan



**The Life and Deaths of Frankie D.**  
by Colleen Nelson



**Pine Island Home**  
by Polly Horvath

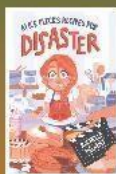


**Sisters of the Wolf**  
by Patricia Miller-Schroeder

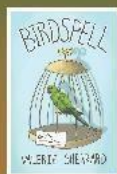


**Under the Iron Bridge**  
by Kathy Kacer

## Diamond Willow Finalists



**Alice Fleck's Recipes for Disaster**  
by Rachelle Delaney



**Birdspell**  
by Valerie Sherrard



**Burying the Moon**  
by Andrée Poulin



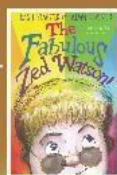
**Children of the Fox**  
by Kevin Sands



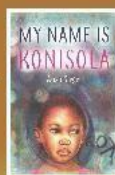
**Clan**  
by Sigmund Brouwer



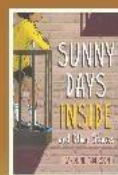
**Elvis, Me, and the Lemonade Stand Summer**  
by Leslie Gentile



**The Fabulous Zed Watson**  
by Basil Sylvester and Kevin Sylvester



**My Name is Konisola**  
by Alisha Siegel

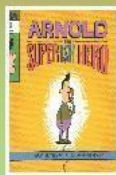


**Sunny Days Inside and Other Stories**  
by Caroline Adderson

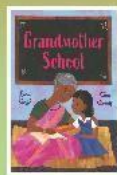


**The Undercover Book List**  
by Colleen Nelson

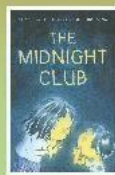
## Shining Willow Finalists



**Arnold the Super-Ish Hero**  
by Heather Tekavec



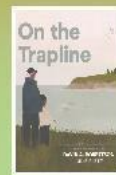
**Grandmother School**  
by Rina Singh



**The Midnight Club**  
by Shane Goth



**No More Plastic**  
by Alma Fullerton



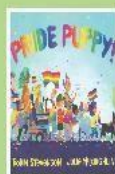
**On the Trapline**  
by David A. Robertson



**Out Into the Big Wide Lake**  
by Paul Horbridge



**Poem in my Pocket**  
by Chris Tougas



**Pride Puppy**  
by Robin Stevenson



**Race with Me**  
by Andre De Grasse and Robert Budd



**The Strangest Thing in the Sea**  
by Rachel Poliquin



### GOLD PATRONS



### SILVER PATRON



### BRONZE PATRONS



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

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## **BOARD MEMBERS 2022-2023**

### **President and Diamond Committee Chair:**

Erin Walton, Regina

### **Past President:**

*Vacant*

### **Vice President – Publisher Liaison:**

Annah Gullacher, Humboldt

### **Vice President- Communications and Social Media:**

Rhonda Wills, Regina

### **Treasurer and Snow Committee Chair:**

Darrelle Downs, Saskatoon

### **Secretary and Awards:**

Terry Wood, Regina

### **Director - Fundraising:**

Joanne Patron, Regina

### **Director – Publication & Distribution of Promotional Materials:**

Leanne Holstein, Regina

### **Director - SLA Rep:**

Robin Berg, Regina

### **Director – LEARN Rep and Sticker Manager:**

Pam Foy, Moosomin

### **Director – Communications and Social Media:**

Renee Trenaman - Saskatoon

### **Director – Shining Committee Chair:**

Wenona Gedir Lundsten

# 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.

<b>Organizational Structure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Task &amp; Responsibilities</li><li>• Board Meetings</li></ul> <b>Fiscal Responsibility</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Budget</li><li>• Fund Development</li></ul> <b>Communications</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Website</li><li>• Posters, Bookmarks</li><li>• Internal Communications</li><li>• External Communications</li><li>• Conferences</li></ul>	<b>Sustainability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Membership</li><li>• Board Memberships, Human Resources, Volunteers</li></ul> <b>Programs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Book Selection</li><li>• Gala– winning authors’ attendance, reading at host schools</li><li>• Launch</li><li>• Educational Activities</li></ul>
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# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Board of Directors of the Saskatchewan Young Readers' Choice Awards (SYRCA), The Willow Awards Inc., met four times during the 2022-2023 year.

The board said good-bye to Jara Langill, Elann McChesney and Judy Nicholson, who stepped down at the end of the 2021-2022 year, and welcomed Renee Trenaman as a social media director, Wenona Gedir Lundsten as the Shining Reading Committee Chair and Robin Berg as the SLA representative, creating a board of eleven members.

The Covid years and the significant cuts to teacher-librarians across the province have had a major impact on our voting numbers and so our focus moving forward is on building new relationships and promotion. The Literacy Educators' and Resources Network (LEARN) held a conference in November and The Willow Awards had an information table at the event, which allowed us to make new connections. We were again privileged to promote The Willow Awards to future educators at the University of Regina and University of Saskatchewan. We are pleased that the United Way Summer Slide Reading Success Camp, in Regina, acknowledged the quality and educational value of our finalists and chose to use the 2022 finalists as the books for their programming this summer. The highlight of our year was the creation of two promotional videos, with Strategy Lab Marketing, using Saskatchewan staff and students that we will unveil for the upcoming voting season to help encourage excitement and educate about our program.

Along with our regular yearly events, we had an author visit contest with Colleen Nelson, who graciously offered two online visits, related to her two books that were nominated in the Diamond and Snow categories. The Willow board is grateful to Colleen for her generosity to us over the years and the schools are always so excited to win the visits and meet her.

We held our biannual Mystery Book Bag fundraiser in May. It was wonderful to see donors excited about the books they received and as a board we are glad to know that these books will support home, school and public libraries across the province. The Willow Awards main fundraising initiative was successful and we raised funds beyond our yearly goal. The Willow board is so appreciative of all our long-time and new sponsors, patrons and friends that recognize the importance of celebrating and promoting quality Canadian literature in Saskatchewan.

I would like to thank our industrious current board who work tirelessly on the general and special operations of our non-profit, volunteer run organization and are passionate advocates for the engaging, diverse and educational opportunities The Willow Awards provides to children and youth participants across the province.

The SYRCA Annual Report reflects the ongoing work and successes of the 2022-2023 operating year. Minutes of the 2021-2022 Annual General Meeting will be available at the September 16, 2023 Annual General Meeting, which will be held via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

**Erin Walton**  
**President**

# FUNDRAISING REPORT

## MONETARY SPONSORSHIPS

Saskatchewan Young Readers' Choice Awards, The Willow Awards Inc. (SYRCA) is a non-profit, volunteer-run, charitable organization that relies solely on donations to cover expenses. Currently, The Willow Awards recognizes five financial supporter levels:

Gold Patron: \$5,000 or more

Silver Patron: \$3,000 - \$4,999

Bronze Patron: \$1,000 - \$2,999

Sponsors: \$500 - \$999

Friends: \$100 - \$499.

Thanks to the generosity of our devoted donors, SYRCA, The Willow Awards, Inc. was able to meet and exceed our fundraising goals this year. We raised a total of **\$15,100.00** through sponsor donations. We again want to extend a special thank you 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 SaskEnergy Gala " since 2004, and a representative has been asked to speak at each event.

We are grateful for the continued support of the United Library Services (ULS), 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. All donors are greatly appreciated for their commitment to the Willow Awards.

## DONATIONS IN-KIND

Notable in-kind (non-cash) support of The Saskatchewan Young Readers' Choice Awards - The Willow Awards Inc. includes:

Company/Organization	Contribution	Estimated Value
Hi-Tec Profiles Inc.	Authors' Awards Toppers/	\$100.00
*Saskatchewan Rider Foundation	Gainer Promo poster ✓	\$30,000.00 -items unfulfilled (see note)
Strategy Lab Marketing	Portion of promo video production costs/	\$1000.00
United Library Services(ULS)	Full set of books for Gala host/	\$500.00

*\*The pilot year of collaborative literacy support with the Saskatchewan Rider Foundation was launched in late spring of 2022 (end date; June 1, 2023), with SYRCA Gold Patron recognition during 2022-2023 term. The Letter of Understanding outlined our agreement. Communication was difficult. The arrangement has been discontinued.*

# FUNDRAISING REPORT (cont.)

## SARCAN

We're pleased to again benefit from community support via the SARCAN Virtual Bottle Drive. Donors visit the Drop & Go centre, then opt for the deposit to be donated to the Willow Awards. Thanks to the generosity of friends and family, we raised **\$208.55**.

## PATRONS, SPONSORS, & FRIENDS

We wish to acknowledge the generous support from our patrons, sponsors and friends. Supporters have enabled 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 appreciative of **all** for their contributions and support of literacy in Saskatchewan.  
This year, recognition is as follows:

### **SYRCA Gold Patrons (generously contributed \$5000 or more)**

Access Communications Children's Fund

### **SYRCA Silver Patrons (generously contributed \$3000 - \$4999)**

SaskEnergy  
Sasktel Pioneers

### **SYRCA Bronze Patrons (generously contributed \$1000 - \$2999)**

Cameco  
ULS  
Strategy Lab Marketing

### **SYRCA Sponsors (generously contributed \$500 - \$999)**

McNally Robinson  
Literacy Educators' and Resources Network (LEARN)

### **SYRCA Friends (generously contributed \$100 - \$499)**

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



## FUNDRAISING REPORT (cont.)

### CONCLUSION

After an exciting year of teamwork and projects, our fundraising goals were met and exceeded. We are very grateful for the kindness and generosity of many.

2022-2023 SUMMARY			
SUPPORT	Monetary Sponsorships	In-Kind Donations	SARCAN Profit
ANNUAL TOTALS	\$15,100.00	\$31,600.00 (includes items 2022-2023 unfulfilled - see note above)	\$208.55

As a result of the hard work of volunteer board members and the dedicated sponsors, The Saskatchewan Young Readers' Choice Awards, The Willow Awards Inc. experienced a successful year of fundraising. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I extend our gratitude to all who have contributed.

Respectfully submitted,

**Joanne Patron**  
**Director of Fundraising**

## MYSTERY BOOK GRAB FUNDRAISER

Back by popular demand, SYRCA held the second mystery book grab fundraiser, and it was a great success! The books we had were a surplus from publishers' book submissions that we wanted to get into the hands of many eager readers. For a donation of \$20.00, supporters of The Willow Awards could fill out an online form indicating which category of Shining, Diamond or Snow mystery books they would like to receive. Each bag contained ten books.

The fundraiser took place on May 4th and 6th in both Regina and Saskatoon. A big thank you to Terry Wood and Darrelle Downs for the use of your houses for this fundraiser. Also a thank you to Erin Walton and Wenona Gedir Lundsten for helping pack and hand out the books. We were supported by 63 people representing over 30 communities across Saskatchewan.

The total number of bags distributed was 82 bags of Shining Willow books, 47 bags of Diamond Willow books, and 34 bags of Snow Willow books. Each bag contained 10 books for a total of 1,630 books. The donations given were \$3,550.00. Donors for this fundraiser were very excited to get new books at such a great deal and are looking forward to similar events in the future. Thank you to everyone who participated in this fundraiser.

Respectfully submitted,

**Darrelle Downs**  
**Treasurer**

## TREASURER'S REPORT

This year we have to say goodbye to our accountant, Sandra Jackson. She has been a great help to us over the past couple of years and has decided to retire. We wish her the best in this new chapter of her life. We have found a new accountant, Mike Gauthier from Lizée Gauthier – Chartered Professional Accountant, and we are so very happy to have him do our Notice to Reader this year.

Because of Sandra retiring and having to find a new accountant, the Notice to Reader is not done yet, but will be posted as soon as it is done and signed. Thank you everyone who has made this year as successful as it was.

Respectfully submitted,

**Darrelle Downs**  
**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	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Sales	\$740.00	\$1072	\$657	\$509	\$468	\$798	\$384

Our sticker sales for 2023 are less than half the sales that we had last year with more outstanding payments than usual.

Respectfully submitted,

**Pam Foy**  
**Sticker Manager**



# 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 this year! Here are a few ideas that were shared with us as part of our launch contest:

- Using Willow titles in an extracurricular book club
- Incorporating Willow titles in Battle of the Books programs
- Holding a “fall Gala celebration” with music, dancing and reading of Willow titles
- Creating displays for book titles with the pdf book covers from the Willow website
  - Keep Looking for Your **Diamond** in the Rough
  - Your Favourite Book May Be **Shining** Right in Front of You
  - Look Out For An Avalanche of Great **Snow** Books
- Special bins to hold the current Willow finalist titles
- Incorporating Willow titles in an English As Second Language program
- Holding a “Battle of the Books” or “Book Bracket” school-wide
- Inviting guest readers to read Willow books on “Willow Wednesdays”
- A Gallery Walk introducing Snow titles to readers
- Using Willow titles as classroom read-alouds

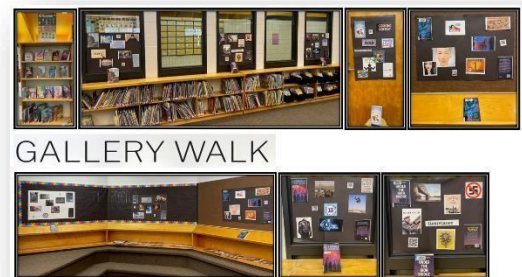
The constant that is always so good to hear about is the excitement and enjoyment that classes and students are experiencing through their exposure to the Willows, regardless of how it is done.

**The Winner of a full set of the Willow finalist books (Shining, Diamond, and Snow) was:**

- Archerwill School

**Runners-Up Winners of a set of Shining, Diamond, or Snow Willow Books were:**

- Kincaid Central School - Kincaid
- St. Mary's School - Yorkton
- Ethel Milliken School - Regina
- Ruth Pawson School – Regina
- Englefeld School – Yorkton
- Dr. Brass School - Yorkton



Thank you to all who took the time to send us an explanation and/or pictures!

Respectfully submitted,

**Rhonda Wills**  
**Communications & Social Media**

# COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Communicating information about the Willow Awards across the province continues to be a team effort by the Willow Board.

As Publisher Liaison, I liaise between the board and publishers across Canada. I contact publishers with a call for submissions in the fall and communicate 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, Joanne Patron, 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, managed by Rhonda Wills, 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. 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.

To help promote each of the Willow books, PDFs of the book covers are available to print. There are ideas for ways to celebrate the Willow Awards, and activity ideas for each book. The website also includes an online form for submitting votes and printable ballots for use by voters.

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).

We were very pleased to be able to hold an in-person Gala for the first time since 2019. The tech team from the Prairie Spirit School Division recorded and live-streamed the Gala event on our website so that all Saskatchewan children could watch as the winners were announced in real time. The Gala videos for this year and past years can be accessed through our website or YouTube channel.

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.

Social Media director Renee Trenaman has been very active on our Instagram, Facebook and Twitter accounts as they work to increase our social media presence. Our social media presence has skyrocketed compared to last year, and this year we managed to add Instagram as a main platform for communication on top of our currently existing Facebook and Twitter to disseminate information. We had a 7% increase in Facebook followers, 17% increase in Twitter followers, and a massive 138% increase in Instagram followers compared to September 2022, meaning that we're reaching a phenomenal amount of the literacy community throughout the province. It's such a joy to be able to share from our Willow Awards Facebook and Instagram pages, and to reach people through Twitter @willowawards, to promote both the Willow Awards and literacy.

One notable campaign this year was the countdown to vote closing, where we showcased each book that was up for nomination this year, not only gaining us a mass amount of engagement but also allowing us to promote each author individually and showcase the best parts of Canadian literacy. It's been a delight to be able to connect with educators, libraries, authors, and parents online, and hearing how much they love the Willow Awards.

Respectfully submitted,

**Annah Gullacher & Renee Trenaman**  
**Publisher Liaison & Social Media Director**

## 2022 WILLOW 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:

St. Michael's School, Yorkton, Saskatchewan (Early Bird)

Saltcoats School, Saltcoats, Saskatchewan

Christ the King School, Shaunavon, Saskatchewan

Respectfully submitted,

**Rhonda Wills**

**Communications & Social Media**

## 2022 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.

This year, voting closed on March 31st. This allowed time to contact winning authors and make arrangements for them to travel and participate in the in-person Gala celebration near the end of May.

Despite the easing of difficulties around COVID-19 restrictions and illnesses, we, once again, saw fewer vote submissions in all three reading categories. We put out a request for information from those who subscribe to our website for their thoughts about why this might be happening. We welcomed the feedback that they gave and appreciated the time and effort they took to share their thoughts. Many have been long-time promoters of The Willows in their schools and libraries. Several cited budget constraints that didn't allow for the purchasing of all 30 books or sometimes only the Shining level books. Others mentioned changing staff dynamics and the loss of personnel such as teacher-librarians and library technicians who could co-ordinate the purchase and promotion of The Willows. Teacher-librarians were once our biggest proponents. The loss of these positions is definitely a factor in our lower voting numbers. We continue to seek new ways to promote The Willows with educators and public libraries.

Although we are concerned about our lower voting numbers this year, it is truly exciting to see the votes coming in from all across the province. We are inspired by the participation of teachers, teacher-librarians, librarians, library technicians, and parents in encouraging children to read these great books! Their positive comments to us let us know that The Willows make a difference in the reading lives of children!

## 2022 WILLOW FINALIST VOTING REPORT (cont.)

Votes by Category	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
SHINING	13,898	11,144	11,213	3652	5728	6700	6856
DIAMOND	1,230	941	1061	448	440	626	539
SNOW	396	181	320	247	144	208	89
TOTAL VOTES	15,524	12,266	12,594	4347	6312	7534	7484

Respectfully submitted,

**Rhonda Wills**  
**Communications & Social Media**

## #WINWITHWILLOWS CONTEST

Once again, the Willow Awards teamed up with Snow and Diamond finalist author Colleen Nelson to provide readers with the chance to win a Skype visit with her. Because she had two books that were Willow finalists this year, she generously offered to host two skype sessions! Colleen is the author of the 2022 Diamond Willow finalist title, *The Undercover Book List*, and the 2022 Snow Willow finalist title, *The Life & Deaths of Frankie D.* The #winwithWILLOWS contest opened on December 1, 2022 and closed on January 31, 2023. To enter this year, participants filled in an entry form and entries were submitted into a random draw. Alicia Richels, from Leroy School, Leroy and Blake Scherle, from George Lee School, Regina, were the lucky winners.

Respectfully submitted,

**Rhonda Wills**  
**Communications & Social Media**





## 2022 WILLOW AWARDS WINNERS



### Shining Willow

#### The Strangest Thing in the Sea

By Rachel Poliquin

Illustrated by Byron Eggenschwiler

### Diamond Willow

#### Children of the Fox

By Kevin Sands



### Snow Willow

#### Under the Iron Bridge

By Kathy Kacer

# PROGRAM: SHINING WILLOW SELECTION COMMITTEE REPORT

The Shining Willow Award Reading Committee for 2023 was made up of ten dedicated readers from a variety of backgrounds, including current, past and retired teachers and an administrator, teacher librarians, school division reading, learning and strategic facilitators and a public library programmer.

This year, we received and considered 198 titles. We physically exchanged books approximately every three weeks and used a Google spreadsheet to document our reading and reviews. So we could include our readers living both in and outside of Saskatoon, we met virtually on Zoom three times to discuss the titles read to date. For our finalist selection meeting, however, we met in person in a rented meeting room at Alice Turner Branch Library in Saskatoon. We found the in person setting very helpful for open and enthusiastic discussion as we made our final selections. All in attendance also appreciated being able to look through and/or reread the books being considered.

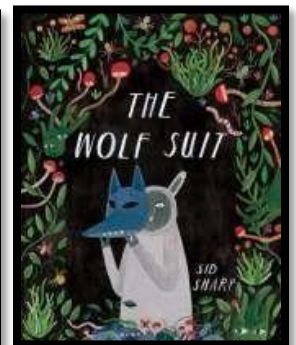
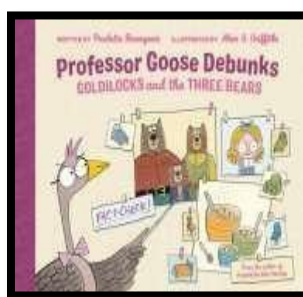
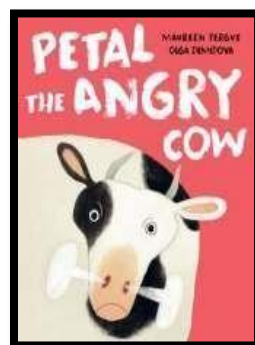
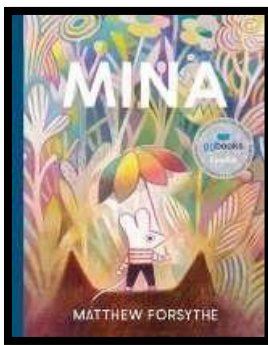
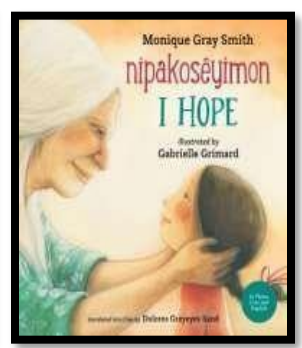
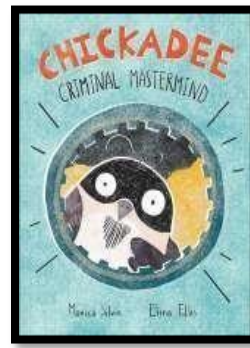
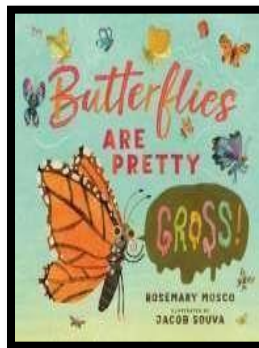
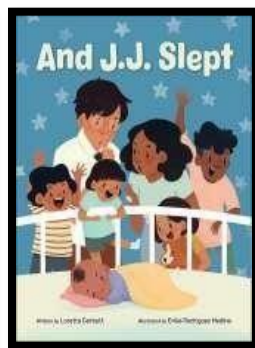
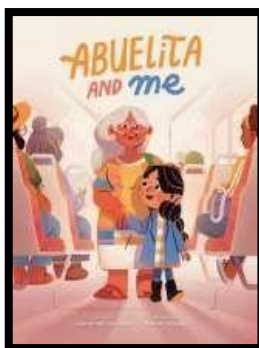
I was honoured to be asked to chair this year's Shining Willow Award Reading Committee. I learned a lot and look forward to applying what I have learned as I continue to chair the next year of reading. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all of this year's readers: Wilfred Burton, Susan Ens Funk, Annah Gullacher, Hali Hamel, Heidi Linford, Joeline Linner, Twyla McNeil, Cameo Rempel, Kelly Stoddart, and myself, Wenona Gedir Lundsten.

As a committee, we are excited to present the finalists for the 2023 Shining Willow Award.

Respectfully submitted,

**Wenona Gedir Lundsten**  
Shining Committee Chair

## SHINING WILLOW FINALISTS FOR 2023



# PROGRAM: DIAMOND WILLOW SELECTION COMMITTEE REPORT

The 2023 Diamond Willow reading committee received 124 titles for consideration, including 7 titles rolled over from last year. Thirty-one titles were either passed up or down to the Snow Committee and Shining Committee. After the finalists were selected, 6 titles were rolled over for consideration for the 2024 awards.

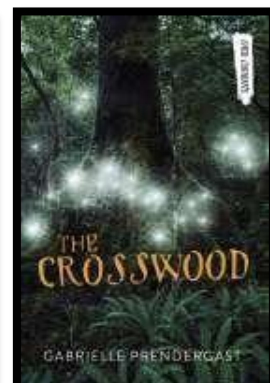
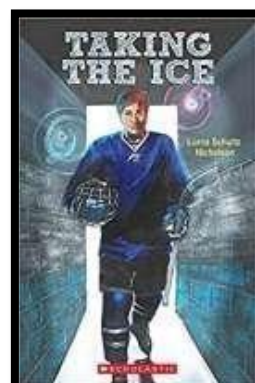
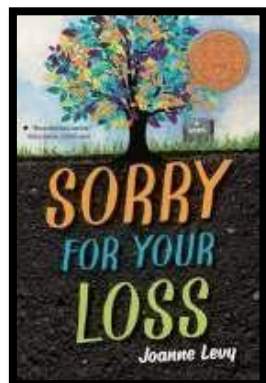
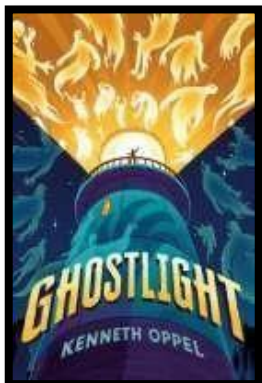
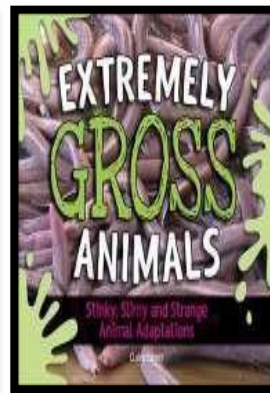
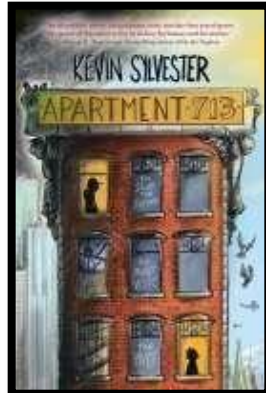
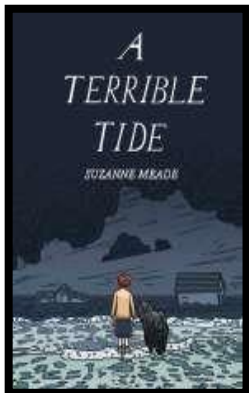
Thank you to the 12 Diamond Willow Committee members: Erin Ursu, Heather Parker, Gail Zerr, Pamela Wenger, Susan Holmes, Rhonda Wills, Charmaine Stouse, Heather Walton, Carol Carman, Kerri McKay, Kelly Collver and Erin Walton whose knowledge of and enthusiasm for children's literature along with thoughtful discussions culminated in the selection of the 2023 Diamond Willow Finalists.

The Diamond Willow Committee is pleased to present the finalists for the 2023 Diamond Willow Award.

Respectfully submitted,

**Erin Walton**  
Diamond Committee Chair

## DIAMOND WILLOW FINALISTS FOR 2023





# PROGRAM: SNOW WILLOW SELECTION COMMITTEE REPORT

We finally did it! After what seemed like way too many years, we were finally able to have one of our Snow Willows meetings in person! Though the majority of our meetings are still being held on ZOOM, we were able to get together for our very last and most important meeting in person. A great supper was had, great discussions were held, and we were able to choose the best 2023 nominees possible!

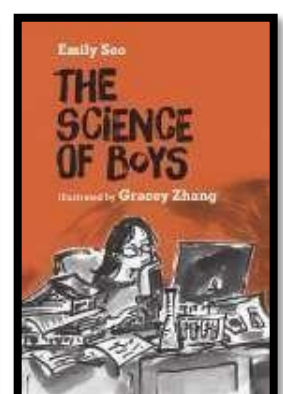
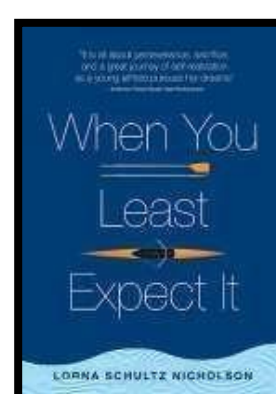
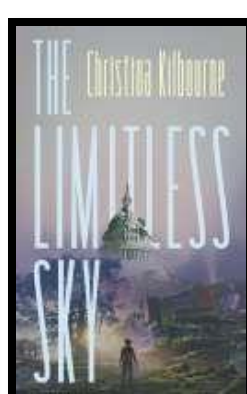
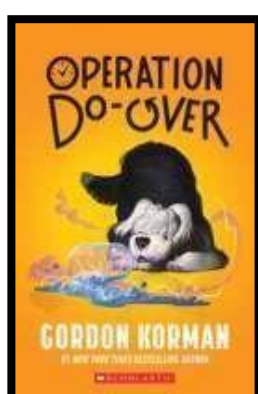
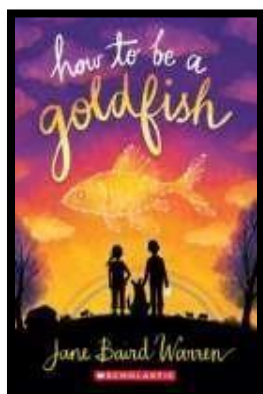
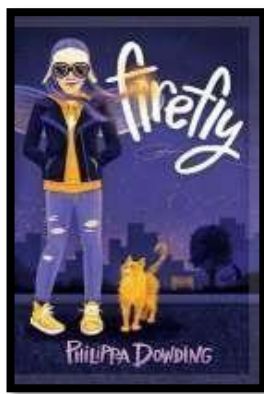
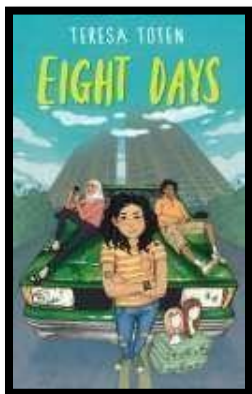
A huge thank you to our 10 committee readers. Once again joining us was Danielle Bergen, Amanda Irvine, Katherine Fiander, Nicole Downs, Renee Trenaman, Shelby Smith, Katrina Matt, and Darrelle Downs. We had 2 new readers joining us, Alyssa Karpinka and Tessa Jordan. Thank you for joining and putting in so much of your time and effort to our Snows. It was such a pleasure to have all of you read for us.

This year the Snow Committee received 53 books. Of those received, 10 were from the Diamond committee and we rolled over 4 books for the 2024 considerations.

Respectfully submitted,

**Darrelle Downs**  
Snow Committee Chair

## SNOW WILLOW FINALISTS FOR 2023



# THE ANNUAL SASKENERGY WILLOW AWARDS GALA 2023

This year, we were excited to be able to host an in-person Gala celebration on May 26, 2023 for the firsttime since the 2018-2019 season! **Perdue School** in Perdue, SK hosted the SaskEnergy Willow Awards Gala, with Hali Hamel, Kristal Mason, and Danae Blum chairing the planning committee.

The planning committee was assisted in their work by volunteers from the Perdue Wheatland Library Board, who helped with the reception. Rob Archibald and a tech team from the Prairie Spirit School Division recorded and live-streamed the event, sharing it with viewers across the province in real time. The Grade 5-6 class acted as MCs, and every other class put on a performance and/or created artwork in response to the nominated titles.





# THE ANNUAL SASKENERGY WILLOW AWARDS GALA 2023 (cont.)



We were very fortunate to have all three authors meet with Perdue School students. Winning Shining author **Rachel Poliquin** flew out from Victoria, BC, to spend the day with us in person. Students from Kindergarten to Grade 6 gathered in a room to hear her read and speak about her book, *The Strangest Thing in the Sea*.



**Kevin Sands**, winner of the Diamond Willow category, joined the Grade 5-6 class virtually, for a read aloud and discussion of his novel, *Children of the Fox*.



**Kathy Kacer**, winner of the Snow Willow category, also joined virtually, reading from *Under the Iron Bridge* to the Grade 7-9 students and discussing her research process and personal connection to WWII history.



Respectfully submitted,

**Annah Gullacher, Renee Trenaman, and Wenona Gedir Lundsten**  
Gala Liaisons



## SLA REPORT

It has been a pleasure to serve on the Board of Directors of the Saskatchewan Young Readers' Choice Awards (SYRCA), The Willow Awards Inc. over the past year. SLA is a proud partner of The Willow Awards. Significant contributions have been made in the development of young readers and in celebrating Canadian Literature over the past 21 years. Congratulations on this incredible milestone and on the significant impact had on our youth province wide and their reading adventures.

As I step away, I wish to reiterate my gratitude for the opportunity to represent SLA as a Director of the Saskatchewan Young Readers' Choice Awards (SYRCA), The Willow Awards Inc. It has been a great privilege to have been part of an organization that has enhanced the literary landscape for young readers across the province.

Respectfully submitted,

**Robin Berg**  
SLA Representative

## LEARN CONFERENCE



The highlight of the 2022-23 year for the Literacy Educators' and Resources Network would have to be the LEARN Conference held on February 9 at the Delta Hotel in Regina. The keynote speaker was David A. Robertson, winner of the Governor General's Literary Award, the Beatrice Mosionier Indigenous Writer of the Year Award, and the John Hirsch Award for Most Promising Manitoba Writer. LEARN had several vendor and informational tables at this conference. The Willow Awards board member, Rhonda Wills, had an informational table at the event. In the fall before the conference, LEARN members and executive took part in a book club reading Robertson's novel "Black Water", winner of the Alexander Kennedy Isbister Award for Non-fiction and the Carol Shields Winnipeg Book Award.

Respectfully submitted,

**Pam Foy**  
LEARN Representative

## BOARD RECOGNITION

**Terry Wood** has dedicated six years to The Willow Awards board serving as a director and Secretary. During her time, Terry took on the role of coordinating the production of all awards given by the organization. She helped coordinate our biannual Mystery Book Bag fundraiser and graciously offered her home as the collection point in Regina. Terry has also been a support to the director of the production and distribution of our promotional posters and bookmarks and read for a year with the Diamond Reading Committee. For her last two years, she also took on the vital role of Secretary recording and preparing all The Willow Awards official documents. The Willow Awards board is pleased to award Terry Wood the **Long Term Distinguished Service Award** for her enduring commitment to the Willow Awards.

Respectfully submitted,

**Erin Walton**  
President

## PROMOTIONAL VIDEO

We are pleased to report the completion of two promotional videos, produced in collaboration with Strategy Lab Marketing of Regina, Saskatchewan. The first is a one minute production targeting children and youth. The second is approximately three and a half minutes in length and provides an overview of the Willow Awards for educators. Both videos will be officially unveiled in August of 2023, shared on social media and on our website. We also plan to reach out to public libraries, school divisions and other educational institutions to ensure the library staff and all educators are aware of these promotions.

The Promotional Video Committee began with goal setting and determined priorities to be:

To attract educators who can facilitate participation (school and library staff and administration).

- to increase voting
- to encourage community sponsorship (marketing - generate financial support)

We feel confident that the final products will meet these goals. The committee is looking forward to sharing these videos publicly in the fall of 2023 when we work to inspire educators, seek financial support from returning sponsors, and appeal to new donors.

Upon completion of the project, The Saskatchewan Young Readers' Choice Awards, The Willow Awards Inc. (SYRCA) made a payment of \$1000.00 to Strategy Lab. SYRCA acknowledges Strategy Lab as a Bronze level financial supporter for one year in recognition of their contribution in-kind, covering the remaining production costs. We're thankful for their generosity, patience and expertise. These two videos are welcomed additions to our marketing and sustainability plan. We are appreciative of the time, energy and talent of all who have had a hand in our planning and the creative process. We are especially grateful for the wonderful support of school staff, students, parents and administration involved. Both videos are sure to increase engagement and participation in the Willow Awards for years to come. That would be a win for Canadian literature and literacy learning throughout Saskatchewan!

Respectfully submitted,

**Joanne Patron**

**Director of Fundraising**

(on behalf of the Video Promo Committee)

-Erin Walton

-Rhonda Wills

-Annah Gallagher

-Renee Trenaman

## 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:**



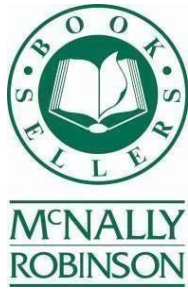
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### **SYRCA Bronze Patrons have generously contributed \$1,000 to \$2,999:**



## **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*

*“Reading is a passport to countless adventures.” – Mary Pope Osborne*

*“A child who reads will be an adult who thinks.” – Proverb*



# THE WILLOW AWARDS