

**SASKATCHEWAN YOUNG
READERS' CHOICE AWARDS**



**THE WILLOW AWARDS
ANNUAL REPORT
2025-2026**



WILLOW AWARDS

2025
SASKATCHEWAN
YOUNG READERS'
CHOICE

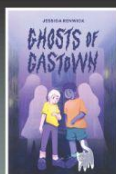
Snow Willow Finalists



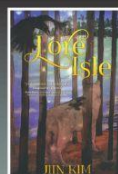
Age 16
by Rosena Fung



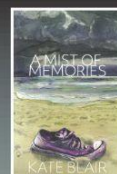
By Chance Alone:
Young Readers' Choice
by Max Elsen with
Kathy Kacer



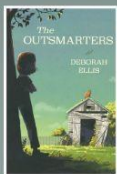
**Ghosts of
Gastown**
by Jessica Renwick



Lore Isle
by Jilin Kim



**A Mist of
Memories**
by Kate Blair



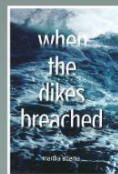
The Outsmarters
by Deborah Ellis



**Simon Sort of
Says**
by Erin Bow



**When It All
Syncs Up**
by Maya Arneyaw

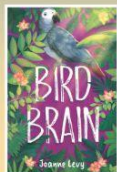


**When the Dikes
Breached**
by Martha Attema

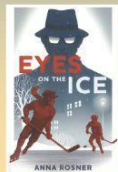


**Who We Are In
Real Life**
by Victoria Koops

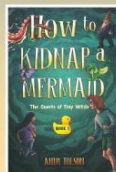
Diamond Willow Finalists



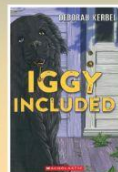
Bird Brain
by Joanne Levy



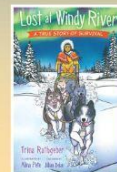
Eyes on the Ice
by Anna Rosner



**How to Kidnap
a Mermaid: The
Quest of Tiny
Wilde**
by Andy Tolson



Iggy Included
by Deborah Kerbel



**Lost at Windy
River: A True
Story of Survival**
by Trina Rathgeber
illustrated by Alina
Pete, coloured by
Jillian Dolan



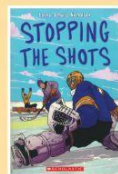
Picture a Girl
by Jenny Manzer



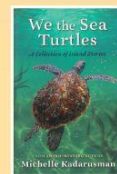
Plague Thieves
by Caroline Fernandez



Slugfest
by Gordon Korman

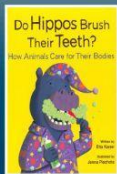


**Stopping the
Shots**
by Lorna Schultz
Nicholson

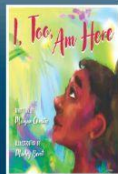


**We the Sea
Turtles: A
Collection of
Island Stories**
by Michelle
Kadarusman

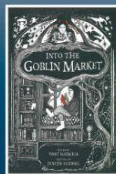
Shining Willow Finalists



**Do Hippos Brush
Their Teeth?:
How Animals
Care for Their
Bodies**
by Etta Kaner
illustrated by
Jenna Piechota



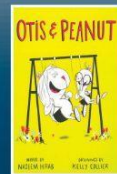
I, Too, Am Here
by Morgan Christie
illustrated by
Marley Berot



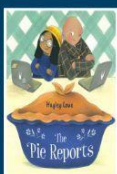
**Into the Goblin
Market**
by Vikki VanSickle
illustrated by
Jensine Eckwall



**Let's Go! /
haw êkwa!**
by Julie Flett



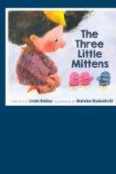
Otis & Peanut
by Naseem Hrab
illustrated by
Kelly Collier



The Pie Reports
by Hayley Lowe



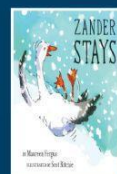
Still My Tessa
by Sylv Chiang
illustrated by
Mathias Ball



**The Three Little
Mittens**
by Linda Bailey
illustrated by
Natalia Shaloshvili



The Weedflower
by Elizabeth Davaze
illustrated by
Marianne Ferrer



Zander Stays
by Maureen Fergus
illustrated by
Scot Ritchie

SILVER PATRONS (\$3000 - \$4999)

BRONZE PATRONS (\$1000 - \$2999)



www.willowawards.ca

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Board Members 2023-2024

President and Diamond Committee Chair:

Erin Walton, Regina

Vice-President & Awards:

Rhonda Wills, Regina

Vice-President, Treasurer, Sticker Manager, Publisher Liaison & Snow Committee Chair:

Darrelle Downs, Saskatoon

Secretary & Publisher Liaison:

Nicole Joyce (née Downs), Saskatoon

Director: Communications & Social Media:

Renee Trenaman, Saskatoon

Director: Publication & Distribution of Promotional Materials:

Charmaine Stouse, Regina

Director: Shining Committee Chair & Gala Liaison:

Wenona Gedir Lundsten, Saskatoon

Director: SLA Rep:

Riane LaPaire, Saskatoon

Director at Large:

Roseanne Dery, La Ronge

Co-Director: Sponsorships & Grants:

Katrina Matt

Co-Director: Sponsorships & Grants:

Morgan Carter

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 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 Communication • Conferences	Sustainability • Membership • Board Memberships, Human Resources, Volunteers Programs • Book Selection • Gala- winning authors' attendance, reading at host schools • Launch • Educational Activities
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President's Report

The Board of Directors of the Saskatchewan Young Readers' Choice Awards (SYRCA), The Willow Awards Inc., met five times during the 2025-2026 year.

We bid farewell to board members Annah Merasty (née Gullacher) and Joanne Patron, who stepped down at the close of the 2024–2025 year after making significant contributions to the board and organization through their dedication, leadership, and service. We were pleased to welcome Katrina Matt and Morgan Carter as Co-Directors of Sponsorships and Grants, taking over from Joanne Patron. Following Annah Merasty's departure, Darrelle Downs and Nicole Downs were appointed to fill the vacant role. Darrelle Downs also undertook the additional appointment of Vice-President B for the year. Katrina and Morgan both resigned from the co-director role in June 2026 after fulfilling their duties. The board operated this year with eleven members for the majority of the year.

We saw a slight increase in our voting numbers in the Diamond and Snow categories; however, those categories still need increased participation. In an effort to support the budget constraints in schools, acknowledge the changing reading patterns of young readers and hopefully better reflect the actual reading of Willow finalists, the board met and voted to adjust our reading requirements for the Diamond and Snow categories to say “encouraged to read 2” titles. It is our hope that this change will allow more students to have a voice in selecting our finalists during our voting window.

Our promotional activities continued to include a presentation to education students at the University of Regina and we would like to thank Pam Wenger, a friend of The Willows, who has been a co-presenter for many years.

For the first time in The Willow Awards history, the gala was hosted by a high school, and Outlook High School did a lovely job as host. A new gala contest was also added to our list of promotions. Viewers who watched the gala live stream or the recording within the week of the live event were able to scan a QR code to indicate how many people were watching, and be entered into a draw to win a collection of books. The purpose of the contest was two-fold: to provide a gift to one of our gala viewers through a draw and to gauge the number of gala spectators.

At the time of our June meeting we recorded 212 views of the gala and 11 entries to the draw, with 349 online viewers registered. Our number of gala views was up from last year, and while our number of entries was small, the discrepancy between registered viewers and entries suggests that many additional viewers may have watched without submitting a response. We are encouraged by this growth and hope that with increased familiarity of the draw and initiative, we will see a continued rise in recorded gala viewing numbers in the future.

Our fundraising efforts have exceeded our financial goals this year. The Board extends heartfelt gratitude to our longstanding sponsors and friends for their continued support, and warmly welcomes new sponsorship partners. Thank you for joining us in our mission to share the joy of reading with children and youth across Saskatchewan—your support makes a lasting difference.

As we continue to move forward, we are actively seeking new board members and supporters who share our passion for literacy and a commitment to empowering youth across our province.

Thank you, too, to our dedicated board of volunteers. It is a pleasure to work alongside you, and I deeply appreciate your commitment, leadership, and readiness to step up and take on whatever is needed to move our work forward. Together, we shine a spotlight on Canadian authors and publishers, fostering a love of great books among children and youth across Saskatchewan.

This SYRCA Annual Report reflects the ongoing work and successes of the 2025-2026 operating year. Minutes from the 2024-2025 Annual General Meeting will be available at the September 11, 2026 Annual General Meeting, to be held via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,
Erin Walton
President

Sponsorships & Grants Report

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 kindness of our devoted donors, SYRCA, The Willow Awards, Inc. was able to meet and exceed our sponsorship goals. We received a total of **\$12,700.00** through generous sponsorships, including in-kind support. No grant applications were submitted. 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.

All sponsors are appreciated for their commitment to the Willow Awards.

DONATIONS IN-KIND

This year, the notable in-kind (non-cash) support of The Saskatchewan Young Readers' Choice Awards - The Willow Awards Inc. includes:

Company/Organization	Contribution	Estimated Value
Riverbend Co-op	Refreshments for Gala	\$ 200.00
Total In-Kind Support		\$200.00

PATRONS, SPONSORS AND 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 appreciate all sponsorships as we strive to support literacy for children and youth throughout Saskatchewan.

This year, recognition (in-kind and monetary) 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)

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

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

Riverbend Co-op

Saskatchewan Library Association

Sharon Konanz

Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan - Regina Chapter

CONCLUSION

We are pleased to report our sponsorship goals were met and exceeded.

2025-2026 SUMMARY	
Monetary Contributions	\$12,500.00
In-Kind Donations	\$ 200.00
ANNUAL TOTAL	\$12,700.00

On behalf of The Saskatchewan Young Readers' Choice Awards, The Willow Awards Inc. - Board of Directors, we extend our immense gratitude to all valued sponsors.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin Walton, President and Darrelle Downs, Treasurer

Sticker Report

Invoice Number	Invoice Date	Amount	Payment Received	Payment	Outstanding	
2026-01	Aug 29	\$24.00	Yes	\$24.00		
2026-02	Sept 9	\$12.00	Yes	\$12.00		
2026-03	Sept 9	\$24.00	Yes	\$24.00		
2026-04	Oct 29	\$12.00	Yes	\$12.00		
2026-05	Nov 13	\$12.00	Yes	\$12.00		
2026-06	Dec 8	\$12.00	Yes	\$12.00		
2026-07	Dec 20	\$12.00	Yes	\$12.00		
2026-08	Jan 26	\$12.00	Yes	\$12.00		
2026-09	Jan 26	\$12.00	Yes	\$12.00		
2026-10	Feb 12	\$16.00	Yes	\$16.00		
2026-11	Mar. 2	\$12.00	Yes	\$12.00		
2026-12	Mar. 15	\$10.00	Yes	\$10.00		
2026-13	Mar. 21	\$5.00	Yes	\$5.00		
2026-14	May 28	\$24.00	Yes	\$24.00		

		\$199.00		\$199.00	\$0.00	
Less sales than last year by \$382.00.						

Treasurer's Report



**SYRCA - SASKATCHEWAN YOUNG READERS' CHOICE -
THE WILLOW AWARDS INC.
FINANCIAL STATEMENT
June 30th, 2026**

Balance at June 30th, 2025	\$39,966.22
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INCOME

Sponsorship	\$12,500.00
Fundraising	\$169.40
Stickers	\$199.00
Total Income	\$12,868.40

DISBURSEMENTS

Posters/Bookmarks	\$5,588.10
Awards	\$587.94
Launch	\$22.11
Gala	\$3,208.33
Office	\$128.18
Authors	\$750.00
Miscellaneous	\$1,877.49
Website	\$1,479.51
Total Disbursements	\$13,641.66

Balance at May 31, 2026	\$39,192.96
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Term Deposit

Balance at January 31, 2026	\$18,647.77
Interest from March 31, 2026	\$540.79

Total balance at June 30, 2026	\$19,188.56
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TOTAL ASSETS	\$58,381.52
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Communications Report

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

As the Publisher Liaisons, Darrelle Downs and Nicole Joyce correspond with publishers across Canada. They contact publishers with a call for submissions in the fall and communicate with them regarding finalist choices and winners as this information becomes available. From the publishers, they also gather biographic information about the authors and permissions to use this, their pictures and the book covers on our website.

This year, there was extra contact with both publishers and authors as we, once again, were able to finance four virtual author visits in the 2026 #winwithWILLOWS contest. You can find more information about the #winwithWILLOWS in the Author Contest report.

Communicating with past and potential sponsors was the job of the Fundraising Co-Directors, Morgan Carter and Katrina Matt, and is outlined in the Fundraising report.

Coordinating the distribution of posters and bookmarks to schools and libraries across the province has been a collaborative effort led by several Board members. Our Director of Promotional Materials, Charmaine Stouse, took the lead, with support from Treasurer Darrelle Downs, Director Roseanne Dery, and President Erin Walton. We were also pleased to have the support of students from George Lee school, whose help with stuffing envelopes brought meaningful youth involvement to a youth-centered award program. The posters and bookmarks are an important visual communication piece and one that we hope all children in the province see at some point during the year.

The Willow Awards website continues to be the primary communication tool for everyone who needs information about the Willows. Renee Trenaman has taken over as the primary manager of the site, assisted by Rhonda Wills. 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 for easy displays. 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.

We were very pleased to be able to hold an in-person Gala this year at Outlook High School in Outlook with the guidance of this year's Gala Liaison, Wenona Gedir Lundsten, assisted by Renee Trenaman. The tech team from the high school 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. We have had 236 views of the gala video from Outlook's site. This includes multiple classrooms viewing it together and individuals. The Gala videos for this year

and past years can be accessed through our website or YouTube channel. More information about the Gala can be found in the Gala Report.

We also hosted a draw for those watching the livestream to submit the number of viewers within their household, classroom, or library and provided a bundle of books to the winner. A total of 349 viewers registered using this form, making our rough estimate of gala livestream viewership 585. The winner of the draw was George Lee School in Regina. Based on the success of this program, we hope to run it again next year.

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 and the “Subscribe to Willow Updates” link. We currently have 316 recipients of these email connections.

Social Media director Renee Trenaman has been very active on our Instagram, Facebook, X and Bluesky accounts as they work to increase our social media presence. Our social media presence this year has been similar to previous years, with numbers beginning to regulate with regular posting. This is a good sign of consistency, and we’re getting increased engagement throughout the year from our many authors, educators, and bookish friends throughout the internet space! This year we continued our existing Facebook, Instagram, X, and Bluesky platforms, aiding in our engagement with some authors. We repeated our #WinWithWillows author visit contest this year, and had a great turnout for that, as well.

This year was fairly quiet for new developments within the website and social media, and our main focus was connecting with sponsors, authors, and educators.

Respectfully submitted by Renee Trenaman

Director Communications & Social Media

Launching of 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 or partial set of the 30 finalist books. To enter, they can submit a photo(s) and/or a description of their local launch, such as bulletin boards, guest readers, book talks or a special project.



(Grenfell High School)



(Valley Centre Colony School)



(Hudson Bay Community School)

We would like to extend a huge thank you to all who contacted us with their plans for introducing this year's Willow finalist titles to their readers! As always, we are inspired by the creativity and dedication that everyone shows in promoting literacy in our province! We wish that we had books for everyone who entered! We always have many creative entries, make sure to check out our Launch page for inspiration.

The winner of a complete set of Willow finalist titles this year is:

- Hudson Bay Community School

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

- Valley Centre Colony School
- Outlook High School
- Fort Qu'Appelle Elementary Community School
- Victoria Elementary School, Kamsack
- Kincaid Central School
- Grenfell High School

Respectfully submitted by
 Renee Trenaman
 Director - Communications & Social Media

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 on May 28th, 2026.

Voting numbers are still not what they once were before COVID. We know that budgetary constraints at the division and school levels are a factor. We also feel the loss of key personnel ie. teacher-librarians, library technicians, and others who have co-ordinated the purchase of the Willow books for the library and promoted their reading. They were instrumental in drawing attention to the Willow finalists with both teaching staff and students. We have started to see some increase in the urban centers compared to previous years, but the decline is heavily felt. Numbers are slowly recovering from last year.

Speaking with and hearing from those who have been able to participate this year, we know the tremendous value of the Willow Awards program! We continue to seek new ways to promote The Willows with educators and public libraries.

Although we continue to be 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 let us know that The Willows make a difference in the reading lives of children!

Votes by Category	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
SHINING	11,213	3652	5728	6700	6856	6794	5831	6422
DIAMOND	1061	448	440	626	539	498	485	595
SNOW	320	247	144	208	89	98	101	110
TOTAL VOTES	12,594	4347	6312	7534	7484	7390	6417	7127

Respectfully submitted by
Renee Trenaman
Director - Communications & Social Media

Voting Draw Results

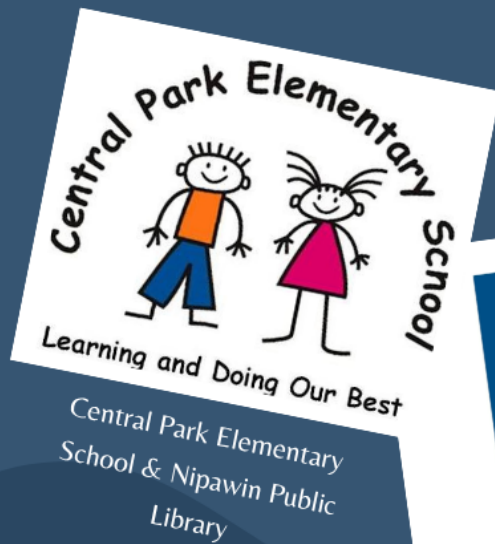
This year, voting draws were held to encourage and to thank those participants who submitted votes for the Willow Awards finalists. Three draws were made following the closing of the voting.

Congratulations to the following schools and libraries who were the lucky winners:

- Central Park Elementary School & Nipawin Public Library
- Regina Public Library Sunrise Branch
- Dr. L. M. Hanna School, Regina

Respectfully submitted by
Renee Trenaman
Director - Communications & Social Media

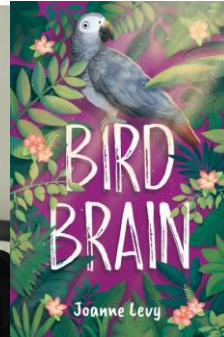
Congratulations DRAW WINNERS



Dr. L. M. Hanna School,
Regina

Regina Public Library Sunrise
Branch

#winwithWillows Author Contest





Our #winwiththeWillows contest was another success this year, inviting authors to participate in our draw once again so we could provide visits to as many readers as possible. This year we were able to have four authors again, drawing randomly from those interested. We then asked for entries into a draw for their school or library to have a visit on behalf of their readers. Our winners this year were...

- Sylvia Fedoruk School, Saskatoon met with Hayley Lowe, Shining finalist for *The Pie Reports*
- Davidson School met with Joanne Levy, Diamond finalist for *Bird Brain*
- Dr. A.E. Perry School, Regina met with Trina Rathgeber, Diamond finalist for *Lost at Windy River*
- Melfort & Unit Comprehensive Collegiate met with Jessica Renwick, Snow finalist for *Ghosts of Gastown*

Thank you to all of the authors who offered to do these virtual sessions! We hope that we can do this again next year!

Respectfully submitted by Renee Trenaman

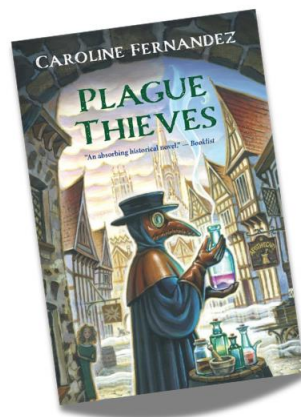
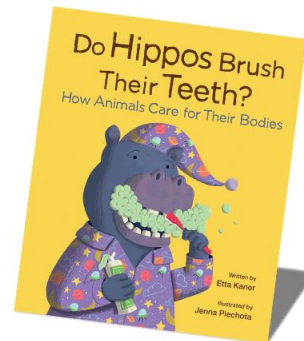
Director - Communications & Social Media

2025 Willow Awards Winners

Shining Willow

Do Hippos Brush Their Teeth?

By Etta Kaner



Diamond Willow

Plague Thieves

By Caroline Fernandez

Snow Willow

Simon Sort of Says

By Erin Bow



Program: Shining Willow Selection Committee Report

The Shining Willow Award Reading Committee for 2025-2026 was made up of six readers from a variety of backgrounds, including current and past teachers and school administrators, a past teacher librarian, and public library programmers.

This year, we received and considered 198 titles. As we started doing last year, we began this year's reading with a brief in-person meeting so we could meet one another, share information and go over expectations. At this meeting, readers picked up their first books for reading as well and we agreed to continue exchanging books on flexible dates, when individual readers were ready to do so, through Round Prairie Branch Library in Saskatoon. We documented our reading and reviews in a shared Google spreadsheet and communicated with one another via email and text messages throughout the reading period. Our committee did not meet in-person again until our finalist selection meeting at the beginning of February in a rented meeting room at Round Prairie Library. Our readers continue to appreciate this in-person setting for our finalist selection meeting so they can look at and reread the books being considered and for how it allows open discussion and negotiation.

Due to many different and some unforeseen circumstances, our reading committee lost six of our past members this year, and so recruitment and coaching of new committee members was necessary. Despite the challenge, the change in membership was great in the way it infused our committee with fresh perspectives. I look forward to continuing to recruit more new members for our committee next year as well.

In my fourth year in the role of chair, I feel like I am finally finding a rhythm in leading the Shining Willow Award Reading Committee. As always, I am very grateful for the effort and support of all of the readers I feel privileged to learn from and work with. This year's readers included the following: Carey Blatchford, Shauna Cheriyan, Peter Cown, Twyla McNeil, Brenna Millard, and myself, Wenona Gedir Lundsten.

As a committee, we are proud to present the finalists for the 2026 Shining Willow Award.

Submitted by Wenona Gedir Lundsten

Shining Willow Finalists For 2026



Program: Diamond Willow Selection Committee Report

This year the 2025 Diamond reading committee had 101 titles submitted for consideration. Fourteen titles were rollovers from the previous selection round, seven titles were passed down to the Shining committee and five titles were passed up to the Snow committee for consideration. Once the finalists were chosen, eleven titles were rolled over for consideration for the 2026 awards.

Erin Ursu, Heather Walton, Heather Parker, Pam Wenger, Charmaine Stouse, Susan Holmes, Rhonda Wills, Kelli Collver, Carole Carman, Brenda Geres and Erin Walton, returned again this year to read for the committee and we welcomed Meghan Carman as a new reader. It was a pleasure to work with this insightful and committed group, and I thank them for their dedication to creating a finalist list that we hope will inspire young Saskatchewan readers to discover a new favourite book.

The Diamond Willow Committee is pleased to present the finalists for the 2026 Diamond Willow Award.

Respectfully submitted by,
Erin Walton
Diamond Willow Chair

Diamond Willow Finalists For 2026



Program: Snow Willow Selection Committee Report

This year the Snow Committee received 71 books. Of those received, 5 were from the Diamond committee and we rolled over 2 books for the 2024 considerations.

A huge thank you to our 6 committee readers. Once again joining us was Amanda Irvine, Katherine Fiander, Katrina Matt, Nicole Downs, Renee Trenaman and Darrelle Downs. Thank you for joining and putting in so much of your time and effort to our Snow Willows. It was such a pleasure to have all of you read for us.

The Snow Willow Committee is pleased to present the finalists for the 2025 Snow Willow Award.

Respectfully submitted by,
Darrelle Downs
Snow Willow Chair

Snow Willow Finalists for 2026



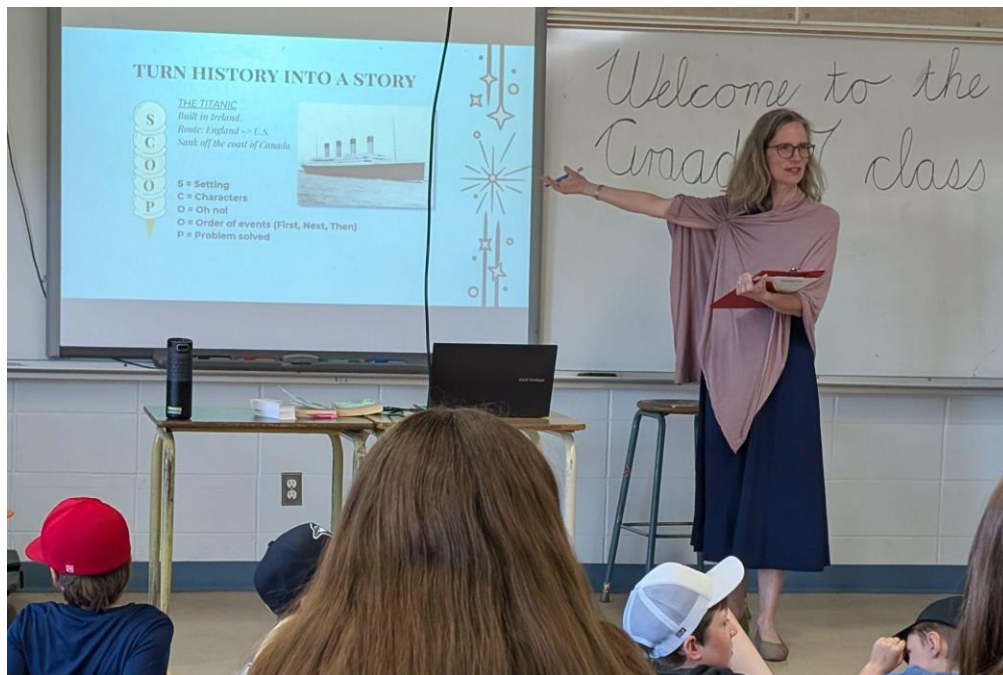
THE ANNUAL SASKENERGY WILLOW AWARDS GALA 2024-2025

The 2026 SaskEnergy Willow Awards Gala was held on Thursday, May 28th, hosted by Outlook High School in Outlook, Saskatchewan. Grade 6 teacher, Tanya Ellis, supported by other teachers, the school principal, and Sun West School Division staff, organized this year's gala.

Our Diamond Willow Award winning author, Caroline Fernandez, fellow board member Renee Trenaman, and myself, travelled together from Saskatoon to Outlook High School the morning of the gala.

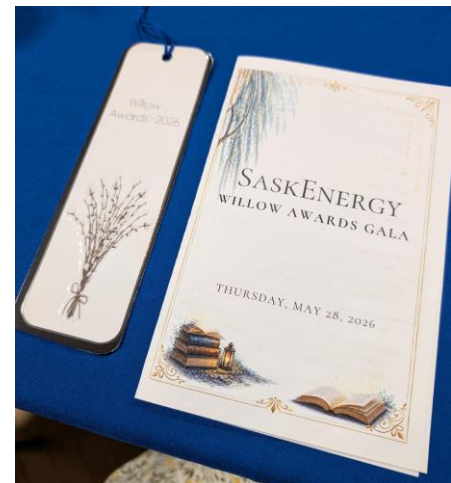
We began the day with the two Grade 6 classes, as well as a Grade 5 class from Outlook Elementary School, attending a virtual visit with this year's Shining Willow Award winning author, Etta Kaner. The students enjoyed interacting with Etta, asking her questions and listening to her talk about and read from not only her winning book, *Do Hippos Brush Their Teeth?*, but from some of her other entertaining nonfiction books about animals as well.

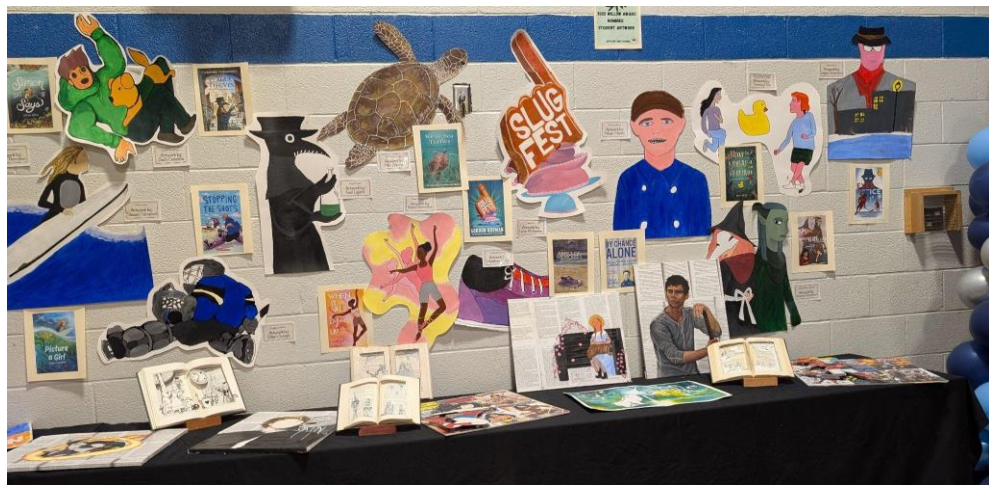
Following the virtual visit, the two Grade 7 classes met in-person with Caroline Fernandez. Caroline captivated the students with her engaging nature and presentation about her winning book, *Plague Thieves*. The students and their teachers were especially excited when Caroline revealed how she chose the names for the characters in the book, which the teacher and the students from one of the Grade 7 classes had just guessed the previous day.



After our busy morning, Caroline, Renee, and I, along with special guests Allix Schweitzer from our longstanding gala title sponsor, SaskEnergy, Blaine McLeod, MLA for Lumsden-Morse, and select school staff, were treated to lunch prepared by Outlook High School's Commercial Cooking class. It was wonderful to be able to eat the great student-prepared food together and get to know one another a little bit better before the gala ceremony.

The gala ceremony took place in the school gymnasium. Outlook High School's new principal for the 2025-2026 school year, Kari Alford, decorated the space beautifully, with the highlight being the artwork created by Grade 9 Art students to showcase this year's Willow Award finalists.





The ceremony program was student created and led, including pre-ceremony student performances, student MCs and awards presenters, a land acknowledgement by the 2026 graduating students, PowerPoint presentations of this year's finalist books created by Grade 8 students, poetry performances by the Grade 6 classes, and a performance by the school choir.



The following also offered greetings and messages during the ceremony: Outlook High School Principal, Kari Alford, Mayor of the Town of Outlook, Ryan Husband, and MLA for Lumsden-Morse, Blaine McLeod, on behalf of gala title sponsor SaskEnergy.

The highlight of the ceremony is always the award presentations. This year's Shining and Snow Willow Award winning author's, Etta Kaner and Erin Bow, accepted their awards for *Do Hippos Brush Their Teeth* and *Simon Sort Of Says* in well-prepared and thoughtful pre-recorded videos. By graciously being at the ceremony in-person, however, Diamond Willow Award winning author, Caroline Fernandez, stole the show as she accepted her award for *Plague Thieves*.



For the benefit of our readers across the province, the gala ceremony was once again recorded and live-streamed on YouTube. Thank you to Terry Epp, Technology Coach with Sun West School Division, for making this happen this year. Further, I continue to be extremely grateful for the support my fellow board member, Renee Trenaman, provides in not only navigating and troubleshooting the technical aspects of live-streaming and recording the gala program, but also in setting up and leading virtual author visits, and photographing the gala day from start to finish. The gala could not happen without you!

On behalf of our board, I would like to congratulate everyone at Outlook High School, led by Tanya Ellis, for hosting a successful gala. Your efforts to include as many students and staff as possible in preparing for, putting on, and taking part in the gala was commendable. You should be very proud of what you achieved.



Report submitted by Wenona Gedir Lundsten, 2026 Gala Liaison

Saskatchewan Library Association (SLA) Report

In 2025–2026, the Saskatchewan Library Association continued to strengthen Saskatchewan's library sector through advocacy, professional development, and collaborative partnerships. SLA delivered the Saskatchewan Libraries Conference, the One Book One Province reading initiative, the Regional Park Pass Lending Program in partnership with the Saskatchewan Regional Parks Association, and province-wide grant programs supporting family literacy, Indigenous Peoples Day, Culture Days, Saskatchewan Library Week, and summer library programming. Members also benefited from peer mentorship, continuing education grants, and webinars on topics including anti-racism, cultural appreciation, copyright, artificial intelligence,

and literacy. Through partnerships with libraries, cultural organizations, government, and community sponsors, the Association continued to advance equitable access to library services, lifelong learning, and vibrant communities across Saskatchewan.

More detailed information about programming, committees, and operations can be found in [SLA's Annual report](#). (page 45).

Respectfully submitted by,
Riane LaPaire
SLA Representative

SYRCA WILLOW AWARDS PATRONS, SPONSORS, & FRIENDS

Gold Patrons (\$5000 +)

Access Communications Children's Fund



Silver Patrons (\$3000 - \$4999)

1) SaskEnergy



2) SaskTel Pioneers



Bronze Patrons (\$1000 - \$2999) -none

Sponsors (\$500 - \$999)-none

Riverbend Co-op (no reply for logo)

Friends (\$100 - \$499)

- 1) Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan - Regina Chapter
- 2) Saskatchewan Library Association
- 3) Sharon Konanz