



THE  
WILLOW  
AWARDS

# Willow Winds

Volume 7, Issue 2, June 2010



## Message from the President

Year-end for SYRCA “The Willow Awards” is wrapping up and summer holidays are just around the corner. Our annual meeting was held May 29, 2010 at the beautiful Riverside Country Club in Saskatoon, a wonderful setting even in the pouring rain. The annual report presented at the meeting reflects a very productive and successful 2009–2010 year for SYRCA “The Willow Awards” Inc. Highlights include the creative and enthusiastic launch entries in October, the increased voter participation, the wonderful Gala celebration in Saltcoats, attended by our Lieutenant Governor and two of the winning authors and the successful fundraising that allowed us to distribute many sets of 2010 Willow nominees to lucky schools whose names were drawn from those who participated in the 2009 voting. All of these activities are made possible because of the wonderful support of our patrons, sponsors, friends and members.

I would like to thank our board of directors for the many hours they committed to SYRCA this year, enabling us to fulfill our mission of connecting children with great Canadian and Saskatchewan books. Much of the work takes place behind the scenes but the evidence is very visible – our website is exceptionally well used, our fundraising surpassed our expectations and allowed us to increase our programming, and we had many positive comments about the excellent selection of nominees.

At the annual meeting the board said good-bye to two long-time SYRCA board members. Margaret Steger has been the treasurer of SYRCA since the beginning and her expertise has left a strong legacy. Claire Isaac served as Director, President and Past President and her history of organization and dedication will be missed.

We welcomed new board members Dr. Margaret Lipp of Regina, Tammie Latimer of Yorkton, Elsbeth Dormuth of Saskatoon and Amanda Hassen of Moose Jaw and look forward to the new ideas and enthusiasm they bring to the board.

The SYRCA Board eagerly anticipates the 2010–2011 SYRCA year and our continued commitment to finding ways to inspire Saskatchewan children to read. Thank you again to everyone who supports SYRCA “The Willow Awards” - the teachers and other adults who encourage kids to read and be involved, the volunteers who read for selection committees and

help with fundraisers, our members, friends, sponsors and patrons and the dedicated members of the SYRCA Board of Directors.

For all the latest news about “The Willow Awards”, including the annual report, check the website <http://www.willowawards.ca>.

Happy summer, everyone. Take time to relax and enjoy a good book.  
Florence Barton



## Membership

### **SYRCA Saskatchewan Young Readers' Choice - The Willow Awards Inc.**

- We are a volunteer-run, non-profit, registered charity formed in 2001. (charity number: 87530 3919 RR0001)
- **Our mission:** to promote reading by granting a "Willow Award" to the Canadian and/or Saskatchewan book(s) voted by Saskatchewan students to be the best of those nominated in the categories of Shining Willow Award (Gr. K – 3), Diamond Willow Award (Gr. 4 – 6), and Snow Willow Award (Grade 7 – 9).
- SYRCA publishes posters, bookmarks, and awards stickers, and manages a website to promote reading and provide activities and information related to the nominated books and authors.
- SaskEnergy Willow Awards Gala is held annually where authors of the students' favourite books are presented with their Willow Awards.
- Your membership donation helps ensure the continuation of The Willow Awards.
- Tax receipts are issued for donations of \$25 or more and for donations under \$25 upon request.

Please go to our website for more information and a membership form  
<http://www.willowawards.ca/ballots-and-forms>



## Bonus Books!

Because of the generosity of our donors, the Willow Awards was able to purchase some sets of the newly nominated books for distribution to recipients selected from those who voted for the 2009 winners.

The books were purchased from our long-time patron and supporter, the Book and Brier in Regina, and included 30 sets of Shining Willow nominees, 19 sets of Diamond Willow nominees and 13 sets of Snow Willow nominees. The sets were then sent to 59 schools and 2 public libraries throughout the province to encourage children to begin reading the 2010 nominees.

This project was completed by Willow Awards board members Donna Koch, Naomi Kral and Margaret Steger with the help of volunteers Marion Perry, Darla Stroeder, Kerry Armbruster-Barrett and Monte Barrett.

The Willow Awards board thanks the over 11,000 voters for the 2009 winners and encourages even more children to read the nominees and vote for the 2010 winners.

### Shining Willow Books went to:

Minahik Waskahigan School	Pinehouse
Brunswick School	Lake
Ecole St. Margaret School	Melfort
Bready Elementary School	Moose Jaw
Alameda School	North
Vincent Massey School	Battleford
Davidson School	Alameda
Jubilee Elementary School	Saskatoon
T.D. Michel Community School	Davidson
Henry Janzen School	Meadow Lake
St. Patrick School	Big River
Kincaid Central School	Regina
Pelletier Hill School	Swift Current
Wheatland Regional Library - Eston Branch	Kincaid
Bjorkdale School	Admiral
Frontier School	Eston
Lake Lenore School	Bjorkdale
Central Park Elementary School	Frontier
Caroline Robins School	Lake Lenore
Arthur Pechey School	Nipawin
Kennedy Langbank School	Saskatoon
Maymont Central School	Prince Albert
Preeceville School	Kennedy
Pense School	Maymont
	Preeceville
	Pense

### Diamond Willow Books went to:

Dinsmore Composite School	Dinsmore
Burstall School	Burstall
Macdonald School	Stockholm
Kelliher School	Kelliher
Fort Livingstone School	Pelly
Carrot River Elementary School	Carrot River
Eastend School	Eastend
Invermay School	Invermay
Christ the King School	Shaunavon
Abbey School	Abbey
Wymark School	Wymark
Fox Valley School	Fox Valley
St. Michael School	Moose Jaw
Hoffman School	Langenburg
Silverwood Heights School	Saskatoon
Grassy Hill Colony School	Gull Lake
Norquay School	Norquay
Ecole Sr. O'Brien School	Saskatoon
Henry Braun School	Regina

Victoria School	Kamsack
Stobart Elementary Community School	Duck Lake
Leader Composite School	Leader
St. Dominic School	Humboldt
Outlook Elementary School	Outlook
Cardinal Leger School	Saskatoon

Snow Willow Books went to:

Craik Palliser Library	Craik
Imperial Community School	Regina
Churchbridge Public School	Churchbridge
Pleasantdale School	Estevan
Montmartre School	Montmartre
South Shore School	Regina Beach
John Diefenbaker School	Prince Albert
St. Henry's Sr. School	Melville
McLean School	McLean
Columbia Elementary School	Yorkton
Kamsack Comprehensive Institute	Kamsack
Whitewood School	Whitewood
Balgonie Elementary	Balgonie



Students from Caroline Robins School in Saskatoon

I wanted to pass on the appreciation expressed by Dreyton's family in regards to being chosen to receive a book by the SYRCA Willows:

Dreyton is a grade one student at James L. Alexander School and has recently suffered a tragic loss in his family. The book was a source of joy to him in this difficult time. When presented with the book, he exclaimed, "A hockey book! I love it!" Thank you for making a young boy very happy!

Carlene Walter  
Teacher-Librarian



On behalf of Whitewood School, Whitewood School Staff and Students, teacher-librarian Brittany Penner and teacher Brenda Pollock, and myself Wendy Paquin Library Assistant, we would like to thank you for the gift of the 2010 Snow Willow set of books. We were very excited the last day of school to receive the letter and the box of books - I took home the five I hadn't read and read them over our Easter Break!!!

Thank you again.

Wendy Paquin  
Whitewood School Library Assistant

# Another Great Success!!!

## Eighth Annual BOOKS AT THE BISTRO

Regina's 8<sup>th</sup> annual Books @ The Bistro was a fun filled evening of lively conversations and competitive bidding for silent auction items. As Willow Awards supporters arrived they were given the opportunity to purchase raffle tickets and given a popsicle stick for an activity that carried on through the evening. Prior to dinner being served, Treasurer Margaret Steger announced the voting number results for this year. **At 11,134 votes cast**, this is the highest voting participation to date. The audience was in awe. Margaret also recognized some of SYRCA's corporate sponsors who had representatives at the dinner:

Trevor Cunningham – Web Developer  
Jennifer Dominguez – Conexus  
Nannette Spencer and Audrey Sentes – Book & Brier  
Trish Watier and Traci Holoboss – SaskEnergy  
Regan and Linda Wagner – Hi-Tec Profiles

After the dinner, raffle prizes were drawn for and the popsicle stick activity winners were chosen. Also announced were the names of the 48 lucky bidders for silent auction items. The evening drew to a close with Margaret thanking Reza and Tracy from Alfredo's Eastgate.



Our youngest Willow reader!!



## Willow Award Book Stickers

\$12.00 for a complete set (includes three gold winner stickers)

The stickers help students quickly identify Willow nominees on the library shelves.

Order information is on the website

<http://www.willowawards.ca>

under Ballots and Forms.

# New Look for the Willow Award!



Because of production constraints, Jacqueline Berting of Berting Glass was no longer able to produce the sand cast Willow Award. A new Willow Award has been produced with the suggestions and help of the artistic talent of Jacquie.

The new award consists of a laser-cut metal version of the Willow Award Logo set in a glass base. The 2009 awards, presented at Saltcoats School on April 30, 2010 are the first presentations of the new award.

The laser-cut metal was produced by Hi-Tec Profiles Inc. of Regina and the base was produced by Berting Glass.

The Willow Awards is very pleased to be able to continue to present an award produced by Saskatchewan artists. We think the new award is as stunning as the retired award.

We extend our thanks to Jacky Berting and to Regan Wagner of Hi-Tec Profiles who facilitated the laser-cutting. Their talents and support have been invaluable.



## SaskEnergy Willow Awards Gala

Saltcoats School was the host of a wonderful gala celebration to announce and honour the winners of the 2009 Willow Awards. Despite the downpour outdoors, the school gym and halls were sunny and bright, decorated with wonderful art reflecting the thirty 2009 nominees. The addition of several pieces of willow furniture, made by a local artist, completed the picturesque setting. As we waited for the program to begin, the chairs in the gym filled with parents and community members eager to watch the students celebrate The Willow Awards. Soon the students of Saltcoats School filed into the gym.

The program began with the dignitaries being piped in. The Honourable Dr. Gordon L. Barnhart, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan and his Aide-de-Camp were joined by Mr. Walter Farquharson, Mayor of Saltcoats, Mrs. Lois Smandych, Trustee for Good Spirit School Division, and members of the SYRCA Board of Directors. Masters of Ceremonies were Jenelle



Hutchings, Sara Hunt and Tyson Sass. Following the Royal Salute and O Canada students who created posters of the thirty nominated books paraded them around the gym before displaying them on the gym wall. The kindergarten class then sang a welcome song.

School principal, Mrs. Donna Kriger, welcomed everyone to the school. His Honour the Honourable Dr. Gordon Barnhart spoke to the gathering about his journey to becoming a reader and also noted that Saltcoats is his home community. Dr. Barnhart's address was followed by greetings from Mayor Farquharson, Trustee Smandych and Mrs. Florence Barton, President of SYRCA "The Willow Awards".



Several presentations based on Willow nominees entertained the audience. Jessica and Katelyn Farquharson, accompanied by their grandfather Walter, performed a play based on the Shining Willow nominee *Rosie and Buttercup*. The Shining Willow Awards was presented by the Grade 3 class. The envelope was opened and the winner announced. *Mechanimals* by Chris Tougas was the winner. Cheers and a huge round of applause greeted the announcement. Chris Tougas was there to accept his award. Chris's response was followed by a choral reading of his book *Mechanimals* performed by Grade 1 and 2 students.

The Diamond Willow books were presented by the Grade 4 class. The Diamond Willow envelope was opened and the winner announced. The winning book was *Swindle* by Gordon Korman. Gordon was not able to attend the gala but he sent an email to express his delight at winning this "children's choice" award.

A special treat was a performance by student and guest fiddler Scott Cornelius. His performance had everyone's toes tapping.

The Snow Willow envelope was opened and the winner announced – *Dear Jo* by Christina Kilbourne! Christina was present to accept her award. Her response was followed by a dramatized scene from the book. Community member Mrs. Joan Wilson assisted senior students who created this play.



The program ended with two presentations to Saltcoats School. Ms. Leslie Gosselin presented a willow tree to the school on behalf of the gala sponsor, SaskEnergy. This tree will be planted on the school grounds. Mrs. Donna Koch, a SYRCA Director, presented a basket filled with the new Willow nominees and a plaque for the school.

The program was followed by treats in the classrooms for the students and refreshments for the guests. A cake beautifully decorated to display all thirty 2009 Willow nominees was a tasty centerpiece.

This gala was made special by the involvement of the Saltcoats community and the inclusion of every student in Saltcoats School. Special thanks go to the staff, led by Mrs. Marilyn Herron and Ms Charlotte Raine. Bravo, Saltcoats School and community! Congratulations to the winning

authors for being voted best of the nominees in your category by the young readers of Saskatchewan. This is also the first time the new “Willow Award”, a laser-cut metal version of the Willow Award Logo set in a glass base, has been presented. WE hope you display it proudly as a reminder that Saskatchewan young readers think your books rock.



## From Gordon Korman

I'm so thrilled that the readers of Saskatchewan have chosen another one of my books. Reviews and acclaim are great, but the awards that matter the most are always the ones selected by kids themselves. To me, those are the honors that count.

The idea for SWINDLE has been brewing for a long time. While doing research for my adventure series, I kept coming across these great books and movies about robberies, which started me thinking about writing a good old-fashioned heist story for a younger audience. The problem was always the same: Robbery is a crime. How can I expect readers to sympathize with kids who are engaged in a criminal enterprise? The reason for the heist had to be so compelling that people would forgive my characters for breaking – no, shattering – the law. That's a tall order – unless the protagonists aren't so much stealing something as stealing it *back*. Presto – kids who have been conned out of a valuable Babe Ruth baseball card by an unscrupulous collector launching an elaborate operation to take it back.

There could not have been a more perfect object for the robbery than a baseball card. On the one hand, it's a totally common kid-friendly item. On the other, everybody knows that certain rare

cards can be worth spectacular amounts of money. One recently sold at auction for more than two million dollars.

The most fun part of SWINDLE was putting together the ‘team,’ a collection of misfits who just so happen to have exactly the right special talents to outflank the enemy’s defenses, sidestep the burglar alarm, contain the guard dog, distract the nosy neighbor, foil the traitor in their midst, get inside the safe, and make off with a million-dollar baseball card. For a writer who enjoys coming up with quirky characters, that was the ultimate caper.

I wish I could be at the gala to accept the award in person, but I've committed to my publisher's summer reading webcast, which is that very day. But as I'm in front of the cameras, broadcasting to school classes all around the world, my heart will be in Saltcoats, cheering right along with you. I could not be happier about this award - and that's no swindle.

Thank you once again!  
Gordon Korman



## Selection Committee News

### **Snow Willow Report** - Submitted by Ruth Garnett, Snow Willow Chair

The Snow Willow committee consisted of 15 members who chose 10 titles from books submitted, which were published in 2008/2009. We read and considered 222 titles in all: 140 titles published in 2008, and 82 titles published in 2009.

The group had meetings in September, November, December and January, with a majority of the group able to attend all meetings. Again this year we used the online wiki to facilitate sharing of opinions and reviews of titles. We found this to be an excellent format to allow members from throughout the province to participate in all book discussions. Many submissions were worthy of nomination, which resulted in lively and heated discussions.

I would like to thank all group members for the many hours spent reading books and for their thoughtful contribution to the discussions.

Many thanks to: Kelly Gibson, Jane Glen, Suseia Gordon, Kim Johnson, Kathy Sharman, Lori Trischuk, Carlene Walter (Saskatoon Public Schools); Tamzen Kulyk, Tracy Woodward (Prairie Spirit School Division); Jocelyn Mark (LaRonge – Public Library); Ann Atchison (retired), Florence Barton (retired), Naomi Kral (retired), Liz Roberts (retired).

### **Snow Willow Award Nominees 2010**

Descriptive annotations, links to reviews, and author information by be found at <http://www.willowawards.ca/nominated-books>

## **Shining Willow Report** - Submitted by Wilfred Burton, Shining Willow Chair

The Shining Willow Selection Committee consisted of ten members with a range of teacher-librarians, retired teachers & librarians, university professors, writers, consultants & parents. We met twice in person, fall and January. At the fall meeting we narrowed down our selections to be considered again in the winter. When we met in the winter we considered fall choices along with the most popular winter choices to come up with our final list. The wiki was used for communication throughout the process.

We considered 142 titles (89 picture books, 20 non-fiction books and 33 beginning chapter books). Several titles were sent to the Diamond committee and several were received from the Diamond committee. Twenty two publishers submitted titles. The publishers included: Scholastic, Crazy About Books, Kakwa, Your Nickel's Worth, Fitzhenry & Whiteside, Kids Can Press, Tradewind, Orca, Creative Book Publishing, Key Porter Books, Tundra, Pollywog, Acorn Press, Northwinds Press, Annick Press, Gabriel Dumont, Lobster Press, Owl Kids, Harper Collins, Greenwood, Tuckamore Books and Simply Read Books. We had an excellent choice of books that would appeal for girls and boys in our age range. We also had some Saskatchewan book choices this year. There were several titles with Aboriginal content to be considered. There were many books with outstanding illustrations too. In all, it was an excellent year for children's book publishing in Canada.

I wish to thank the best committee one could ask for: Donna Koch, Margaret Steger, Kim Kovacs, Diane Diebel, Courtney Dalrymple, Carolyn Yaskowich, Wendy Willis, Karen Lind and Sharon Hamilton. A special thanks to Donna Koch for preparing the annotations.

### **Shining Willow Nominees 2010**

Descriptive annotations, links to reviews, and author information by be found at <http://www.willowawards.ca/nominated-books>

## **Diamond Willow Report** - Submitted by Claire Isaac, Diamond Willow Chair

The Diamond Willow Selection Committee met five times. There were many good books to examine, including some excellent non-fiction.

- A total of 189 books were submitted for consideration
  - Titles sent to Shining Willow Committee: 3
  - Titles sent to Snow Willow Committee: 12
  - Titles determined to be ineligible: 7 (3 were by American writers, 3 were graphic novels based on previously published titles, and one non-fiction title was a reprint.)
- The committee actively considered 168 titles
- Books were submitted by 21 publishers
- The committee recommended that 36 titles published in 2009 be reconsidered next year.

### **Diamond Willow Award Nominees 2010**

Descriptive annotations, links to reviews, and author information by be found at <http://www.willowawards.ca/nominated-books>

# Tribute to Claire Isaac

I am honoured to have the opportunity to say good-bye and thank-you to one of the longest serving members of our board.

Claire has served on the SYRCA Board since its inception in 2001. She was the very first Vice-President and served in that capacity for four years. In 2005 Claire was elected President and she served as President from 2005 to 2007. She has served as our Past President for the past two years.



In addition to her Executive responsibilities Claire has also served on a wide variety of committees that have furthered the work of The Willow Awards. She has chaired both the Shining and Diamond Willow selection committees, co-chaired Books at the Bistro, counted votes, looked after the sending out the stickers, and has written grant applications. She has also represented SYRCA at various conferences and has done book talks at the Reading Council Conference and the SLA Conference. There are probably lots of other things as well!!

Behind the scenes Claire has provided assistance to the selection committees by providing them with a list of newly published material. I know from personal experience what a help it is to have this list. It certainly saves the Selection Committee chair hours of work. She has also always been willing to make books available to the various selection committees through her work at the Regina Public Library.

Thank you so much Claire for all your hard work over the past 9 years. You and Margaret are the last of the original Board members. With your resignations from the Board we lose a bit of our corporate “memory”. I hope that you will continue to be involved, as your time allows, with SYRCA activities. I know that you will always be a staunch supporter of the Willow Awards. We wish you all the very best in the future. You will be missed!!

We would like to thank the following for their support:

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LEADER-POST

