
Y A A C I N G

W I N T E R 2 0 0 8

The Newsletter of the Young Adult & Children's Services Section of BCLA

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CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

We would love to hear from you!

YAACING is published four times a year and is always looking for submissions that might interest our membership. If you have tried something new at your library, would like to write a column, report on a conference session, or know of an upcoming event for the calendar, please share it with us. Mail, email or fax your material to:

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Deadlines are as follows:

Spring issue for March/April – Feb 1st

Summer issue for May/June – April 1st

Fall issue for September/October – August 1st

Winter issue for December/January – November 1st

Next Deadline:

Spring Issue: Feb. 1, 2008

Message from the Editors

I would like to thank Phillippa for the previous two editions of YAACING. They were excellent and included the minutes of the YAACS 2007 AGM, some news from the 2007 conference, relevant conference reports, and a selection of excellent booktalks, book reviews, articles, and programs written by professional story-tellers, librarians, and library school students. Some of you may have already initiated a new provincial program called the Reading Link Challenge, which was featured in the fall edition of YAACING and announced at last year's BCLA conference.

This issue of YAACING begins with an invitation to Serendipity 2008, which will spotlight our many wonderful First Nations authors and illustrators of children's books. The Serendipity organizers offer a First Nations resource list and the Books for BC Babies Committee proudly introduce their recently published 2008 boardbook written by Richard Van Camp. There are a host of excellent articles on topical issues. As ever, there are practical programs and tips for storytime success. Finally, there is a short article about the Canadian Children's Book Centre and an application form.

Thanks for the wealth of wonderful submissions that help make YAACING such a valuable resource. I wish everyone a peaceful holiday and a blessed New Year.

Take care and enjoy!

Joanne Canow
Co-editor of YAACING





Mark your calendars for *Serendipity 2008*
Saturday, February 23, 2008

A Celebration of First Nations Writers and Illustrators of children's books
George Littlechild, Richard Van Camp, Leo Yerxa, Julie Flett and Earl Einarson
will be held at Sty-Wet-Tan (First Nations Longhouse)
at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver,
on February 23, 2008.

Special guest; *Jan Thornhill*, author of *I found a Dead Bird*, Maple Tree Press.
Winner of this year's CLR Information Book Award

Vancouver Children's Literature Roundtable
<http://www.library.ubc.ca/edlib/table/index.htm>



Aboriginal Voice and Vision in Canadian Literature

Linda Dunbar, a Librarian at the UBC Education Library, is a steering committee member of the Vancouver Children's Literature Roundtable. **Catherine Howett**, a recent MLIS graduate, is a Research & Resource Centre Coordinator and advocate for school libraries. They share a passion for Children's and Young Adult Literature.

The Vancouver Children's Literature Roundtable event, *Serendipity 2008*, to be held at UBC First Nations Longhouse in February 2008 is a showcase of some of the amazing Aboriginal authors and illustrators currently publishing in Canada.

Over the last twenty five years, due in no small part to First Nations publishers like Theytus Books, Pemmican Publications, and more recently Eaglecrest Books, there has been an increase in Aboriginal Children's and Young Adult Literature. Publishers such as Groundwood and Kids Can Press have also contributed to this growing list. These books serve as an antidote to outdated materials that perpetuate stereotypical aboriginal characters and to some extent mitigate the too numerous picture books which appropriate Native myth.

This body of work is reaching 'critical mass', both in terms of quantity and quality - a necessary point to move aboriginal authors beyond tokenism and into an acknowledged literature. Following the groundbreaking *My name is Seepeetza*, by Shirley Sterling, the focus is now on stories which reflect experiences of First Nations children involved in everyday life at home and school. Depictions of modern cultural identity, issues and realities, presentations of the near past from the aboriginal perspective, and re-tellings of oral materials from our many aboriginal groups give a wider perspective on the Canadian experience.

Non-aboriginal authors, such as Andrea Spalding and Sylvia Olsen, are very aware of the ownership of the stories and work closely with First Nations contacts to authenticate the material. Curriculum support is growing as well, with the introduction of books such as *I am Sto:lo: Katherine explores her heritage* and *B.C. First Nations Studies*. These provide a link between contemporary Aboriginal society and traditional culture and represent a First Nations voice. This is still an area of opportunity for authors, illustrators and publishers.

The Education Library at UBC has a representative collection of Aboriginal fiction, non-fiction and curriculum materials. In the summer of 2007, while creating a display of materials, we had the opportunity to assess the collection, prepare an annotated bibliography, and peruse online resources.

Below is a short bibliography of some of our favorite materials by aboriginal authors, affiliated authors, or about aboriginal issues that may be of interest to both younger and older readers.

PICTURE BOOKS

As long as the rivers flow

Larry Loyie with Constance Brissenden. Illustrated by Heather D. Holmlund.

Toronto, ON: Groundwood, 2002.

Reviewed in CM: <http://www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol9/no3/aslongastheriver.html>

The moccasins.

Earl Einarson. Illustrated by Julie Flett.

Penticton, BC: Theytus Books, 2005.

Reviewed in CM: <http://www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol13/no12/themoccasins.html>

Morning on the lake

Jan Bourdeau Waboose Illustrated by Karen Reczuch.

Toronto, ON: Kids Can Press, 1997.

Reviewed in CM: <http://www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol4/no4/morningonthelake.html>

Shi-shi-etko

Nicola Campbell. Illustrated by Kim LaFave. Translated by David Unger.

Toronto, ON: Groundwood, 2005.

Reviewed in CM: <http://www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol12/no9/shishietko.html>

Songs of the Wind Trilogy

Caribou song= Atihko nikamon

Tomson Highway. Illustrated by Brian Deines.

Toronto ON: HarperCollins, 2001.

Dragonfly kites= Pimiha_kanisa

Tomson Highway. Illustrated by Brian Deines.

Toronto ON: HarperCollins, c2002.

Fox on the ice = Mahkesi_s mi_skwami_hk e-ci_patapi_t

Tomson Highway. Illustrated by Brian Deines.

Toronto, ON: HarperCollins, 2003.

Reviewed in CM: <http://www.umanitoba.ca/cm/vol11/no2/foxontheice.html>

Secret of the dance

Andrea Spalding & Alfred Scow. Illustrated by Darlene Gait.

Victoria, BC: Orca Book Publishers, 2006.

Reviewed in CM:

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol13/no4/secretofthedance.html>

What's the most beautiful thing you know about horses?

Richard Van Camp. Illustrated by George Littlechild.

San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press, 1998.

YOUNG ADULT

Métis spirits.

Deborah L. Delaronde.

Winnipeg, MB: Pemmican Publications, 2006.

Reviewed in CM: <http://www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol13/no21/metisspirits.html>

Good for nothing

Michel Noël. Translated by Shelley Tanaka.

Translation & compilation of: 1) Hiver indien, 2) Le coeur sur la brais, 3) Journal d'un bon a_rien

Toronto, ON: Groundwood, 2004.

No time to say goodbye: children's stories of Kuper Island Residential School

Sylvia Olsen with Rita Morris and Ann Sam

Victoria, BC: Sono Nis Press, 2001.

The 'Tobanz

Edgar Danny Desjarlais.

Winnipeg MAN: Pemmican Publications, 2003.

NON-FICTION

I am Sto:lo: Katherine explores her heritage

Keith Thor Carlson with Sonny McHalsie.

Chilliwack, BC: Sto:lo Heritage Trust, 1998

I have lived here since the world began: an illustrated history of Canada's native people

Arthur J. Ray.

Toronto, ON: Lester Publishing Ltd. and Key Porter Books, 1996.

Reviewed in CM: <http://www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol3/no21/worldbegan.html>

The Imaginary Indian: The image of the Indian in Canadian culture

Daniel Francis

Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992

The kids book of Aboriginal peoples in Canada

Diane Silvey. Illustrated by John Mantha.

Toronto, ON: Kids Can Press, 2005.

Reviewed in CM:

<http://umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol12/no5/thekidsbookofaboriginalpeoples.html>

Mohawk Girls

Tracey Deer (Writer & Director).

Joanne Robertson & Christina Fon. (Producers). Adam Symansky (NFB Producer).

Montreal, PQ: National Film Board of Canada, 2005.(dvd)

Reviewed in CM: <http://www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol13/no16/mohawkgirls.html>

A Sto:lo-Coast Salish historical atlas

ed. Keith Thor Carlson

Vancouver, BC: Douglas & McIntyre; Chilliwack, BC: Sto:lo Heritage Trust, 2001.

RESOURCES OF INTEREST

Association of Book Publishers of BC. Canadian Aboriginal Books for

Schools; 2007-2008 catalogue. http://www.books.bc.ca/view_catalogue.php?id=11

National Book Service Specialty List: Aboriginal Resources JK-8 Resources

<http://www.nbs.com/catalogue/index.asp?num=4&art=1>

Oyate

<http://www.oyate.org/>

VPL First Nations, First Peoples Resource List

(Created by: Linda Allen of the [Xwi7uwa Library, First Nations House of Learning](#) Lyn Daniels and Laura Ridland, Aboriginal Education Curriculum Consultants, with the Vancouver School Board. Dr. Christianne Hayward-Kabani of Vancouver Kidsbooks)

<http://www.vpl.ca/branches/LibrarySquare/chi/booklists/FirstNations.html>



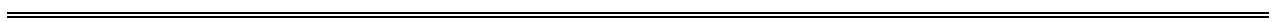
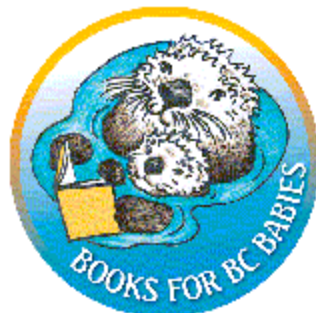
Books for BC Babies Boardbook, 2008

Books for BC Babies has a new "first" to celebrate in 2008. This special board book celebrating our diversity and written by one of our First Nations authors, Richard Van Camp, will be distributed in 2008 Books for Babies kits. *Welcome Song for Baby: A lullaby for newborns* was commissioned and published specifically for our program.

Those libraries which have already received Richard van Camp's *Welcome Song for Baby: A lullaby for newborns* will know already why we are so proud of this book. [The rest of you will be receiving your shipments in the coming weeks!].

We welcomed our own pride and joy with a special book launch at UBC's House of Learning Longhouse on Saturday, November 10th, 2007. This was a truly wonderful event celebrating Richard's new board book with guest speakers, guest musicians, his amazing storytelling, snacks, and a book signing.

Jim Looney & The Books for BC Babies Committee



Boys and Literacy

An edited sample of work written by Jonathan Scop, MLIS SLAIS student

Boys are falling behind

While it is well-known that success in school is influenced by socio-economic levels, and that students do better if their early years were filled with caregivers who read to them, talked to them, played with them, a new factor is emerging: girls do better in school, especially in reading and writing. Canada has one of the most educated and literate populations in the world. Statistics Canada and the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada regularly examine various educational trends. In 2006, the following statistics about Canadians were released:

- Among 4-year-olds, 78% of girls look at books daily. 64% of boys do.
- Among 5-year-olds the figures are 75% for girls, 62% for boys.
- In 2002, results of the School Achievement Indicators Program in writing were released. Educators have determined that 13-year-olds should reach “level 2” and 16-year-olds should reach “level 3.” The reality is that at age 13, 88.5% of the girls and 78.1% of the boys reached level 2. At 16, 69.4% of the girls and 52.9% of the boys reached level 3.
- Between 1992 and 2001, the percentage of undergraduates who were male dropped from 47% to 42% (Statistics Canada).

Boys not being that “into” school has become an accepted part of the culture. Spiderman’s alter ego Peter Parker struggles to keep up in the classroom, and although the Harry Potter series is set in school, it isn’t Harry or Ron who excels there, it’s Hermione Granger, the female, the “brain” (Gurian & Stevens 11). While it is now unheard of to explain the poor performance of an English class on the basis of race, class or ethnicity, linking failure to a preponderance of boys is met with knowing glances (Smith & Wilhelm 1). Elementary-age boys are twice as likely as girls to be diagnosed with learning disabilities and placed in special classes (Tyre). One commentator analogizes the disparity in boys’ and girl’s literacy levels to that traditionally found between whites and racial or ethnic groups which have suffered systematic social and economic discrimination (Smith & Wilhelm 2).

Biological differences, cultural dilemmas

For the past few decades, there has been a move to emphasize the innate abilities of children, regardless of gender (Gurian & Stevens 41). This is a much needed improvement over “traditional” concepts, characterizing girls as being inferior to boys in many aspects, leading to rationalizations for historical and current inequalities in most societies, some of which are beginning to be corrected, but with a very long way to go. The focus has been a conscious and well-deserved turning away from concepts which attribute certain qualities as gender-based.

However, as noted above, girls and women have, quickly, not only demonstrated that they can equal boys and men in academic achievements when even a few shackles are removed, but that they easily surpass males in any number of areas. Now we are beginning to look at the way boys and girls learn, and to acknowledge major differences between the two. The aim is not to diminish opportunities for females through a return to the archaic assumptions of most of our shared history, but to examine the learning styles of boys and girls, to differentiate between what is innate and what is a product of the social environment, and hopefully to discover ways of

teaching which resonate with and nourish the markedly different ways boys and girls learn (Sax 28). It is important to keep in mind that the following generalizations may not apply to many individual males and females.

There are numerous ways in which boys' brains are physically different than those of girls. For example, boys have more dopamine in their bloodstream, impacting the cerebellum, which controls physical action. Thus, boys are typically not well-suited to learning as a sedentary activity, but thrive more in a "doing" mode (Smith & Wilhelm 5). Generally, male brains receive information through spatial-mechanical stimulation, such as pictures, maps, diagrams and movement, more quickly than they do from words or text alone (Gurian & Stevens 46, 52).

It is now well known, even in popular culture, that the brain's left hemisphere corresponds to verbal functions, and the right hemisphere to spatial functions like navigation and mental imagery. But now we know that while this is true for males, it applies very little or not at all to females. Neurologist Norm Geschwind theorizes that hormones cause the hemispheric specialization in male brains, and further research by Marquis Vawter suggests that these differences are genetically programmed (Sax 12, 15). There is a pronounced difference in the structure of male and female retinas, which may correspond to Connellan and Benardete's finding that newborn girls are attracted to a stationary human face, but boys prefer a dangling, moving mobile (Sax 19-22). William Overman found that both human and monkey girls are better at discriminating among objects ("What is it?"), and boys are better at locating objects ("Where is it?") (Sax 22). Boys' brains generally may not produce the same volume of descriptive words as girls (Gurian & Stevens 129). Hormones complicate the disparities in adolescence. Ann Moir and David Jessel have found that during puberty, boys have up to twenty times the testosterone than girls do, which enhances spatial-mechanical development of the brain, pushing boys even further away from verbal development generally associated with reading (Gurian & Stevens 140).

The inevitability of biological influences on boys' and girls' behaviour continues to be debated. Cultural attitudes and norms also play a crucial role in determining learning styles, and receptivity to learning associated with literacy. According to Susan Gilbert,

"Biological differences may endow boys and girls with different strengths and weaknesses to start with, but experience shows that they don't close doors. Boys and girls achieve the same overall scores on several different intelligence tests. It is estimated that a child's general IQ is 30 to 40 percent inherited genetics. The remainder is shaped by the quality of life experiences." (Booth 23)

In school, girls are generally more concerned than boys are at pleasing the teacher and following his or her example (Sax 80-81), whereas boys want to impress their peers (Booth 37). This dovetails with the validation girls get in early literacy experiences in kindergarten (Sax 95). Since girls' fine motor skills are usually far more developed than boys' at age five, more girls succeed in tasks such as writing letters of the alphabet, and more boys are likely to perceive, notwithstanding the teacher's attempts to show sensitivity, that they are in the "non-achieving," or not-quite-ready-to-read group. Deborah Stipek, School of Education Dean at Stanford University, states that such boys' kindergarten associations of reading with failure are likely to colour their negative attitudes toward reading and school in general for years to come (Sax 96).

Smith and Wilhelm's *Reading Don't Fix No Chevys* is a thoughtful, complex and sophisticated work which starts with the author's in-depth, structured interviews and exercises with 49 high school boys in four locations in urban and rural United States. Synthesizing past research and applying the study's findings, the authors point out an almost "perfect storm" of variables which contribute to boys' disinterest in reading, including:

- The focus on character development, emotional response and expressiveness in the teaching of literature runs counter to boys' attraction to action and the linear;
- The teaching of reading is overwhelmingly predominated by females; and
- The lack of male role models who read for pleasure (Smith & Wilhelm 16).

Booth points out factors contributing to males' distance from reading fiction, into adulthood:

- A perception that reading and physical activity are mutually exclusive;
- A rejection of fictional narrative as "feminine";
- A characterization of reading as drudgery, akin to homework; and
- A view that interest in science and math is in opposition to fictional narrative (Booth 18).

What do boys value?

Author John Wilson suggests, with tongue in cheek, that what boys want in a book is "a whole bunch of dead guys," and playfully asks what sound a Teletubby makes when it is stepped on (Wilson). In a more serious vein, he tells what he feels is crucial for boys' literature:

"Books for boys must be strongly plot driven. Boys don't want or need long sections of character development. There are two reasons for this. One is that it interferes with the excitement (see above). The other is not specific to boys. Kids bring much more imagination to reading than most adults. Adults enjoy having characters defined in detail. Kids will create a fully rounded character from a single good descriptive sentence. From a boy's perspective, too much character development gets in the way." (Wilson).

In intensive interviews conducted across the United States by Smith and Wilhelm, adolescent boys talked about their favourite activities. They were generally drawn to activities that gave them a sense of control and competence, and which provided challenges requiring an appropriate level of skill. A corollary of these attributes is the need for clear goals and readily-available feedback. Unlike the traditional reading choices offered in school, emphasizing emotions and richness of language, reading for information can provide the definite feedback of reaching a goal: the answer is found, the problem is fixed. Goal-oriented activities provide experiences in sequential order (Smith & Wilhelm 40). Areas of literature which are frequently emphasized in the classroom, such as short stories and poetry, are usually lacking in any kind of meaningful sequence, although stories which are connected, e.g., in the form of a journal or diary, may provide a semblance of the linear order which boys seem to like (52).

Smith and Wilhelm stipulate that attention to the preferences of boys does not mean that all classroom reading will cater to their interests. Rather, an understanding of what motivates boys' interests and activities can help teachers, parents and librarians structure readings so that boys' needs for control, competence, appropriate challenge, feedback and sequential steps are engaged, creating the right conditions for a love of reading (Smith & Wilhelm 53).

One dilemma outlined by Smith and Wilhelm deals with the dichotomy between “enjoyable” activities and school. Boys expressed pleasure in favourite activities because they could get lost in them and experience them in the moment. They valued school, and reading assignments as well – but the value was with the future, with what school success could do for their lives. School is a means, a tool for the future, not the enjoyable “ends” provided by valued activities; there is a wide gulf between pleasure and necessity (Smith & Wilhelm 66). Although boys may enthusiastically engage in numerous activities involving literacy throughout the day – surfing the internet, reading instructions, looking at music and movies reviews – they often don’t perceive that as belonging to the same universe as the work they’re required to do in school (96).

What can we do?

Gurian states that both boys and men generally prefer literature which is action-packed (suspense, science fiction, sports, etc.), technical (instructional manuals, science and business books), or graphic (comics and graphic novels) (Gurian & Stevens 139). He suggests that curricula be changed to allow for these interests, not to narrow choices for girls but to expand possibilities to include material that would interest boys. He advocates increased use of visual media, and greater understanding of boys’ need for movement, even in the classroom (141). Dramatic reading can spark boys’ interest in books which they may have passed over when confined to the printed page (154). The ability to express personal identity when writing responses to literature usually sparks enthusiasm, unlike a more dispassionate view (Smith & Wilhelm 106). Exploring a work or topic in depth is more successful than jumping from one assignment to another, as it allows for the sequential process boys want (107). It is important that fictional characters are people boys can care about (175).

David Booth argues strongly that teachers and librarians need at their disposal a wide panoply of books and materials, because “finding one book he can’t put down can change a reader for life” (Booth 27). For example, since computer games are sometimes overtly built around classic myths, why not use these as springboards into the actual myths themselves, whether in classical or modern guise? (106). Knowles and Smith advise librarians and teachers to always have painless pathways into reading, such as the *Guinness Book of World Records*, within easy reach of teenage boys (Knowles & Smith xix). Other techniques include the use of readers’ theatre, as well as giving students the option to draw their reactions to a book, and then write about their drawing (xx). Since those who find the very act of reading to be challenging usually miss out on any kind of group discussion, Booth suggests letting certain students listen to a book on CD prior to the discussion, thereby giving them something to contribute, which in turn may provide motivation to master the skills needed to read successfully (Booth 44).

Smith and Wilhelm suggest a practice they call “frontloading,” which involves orienting boys to themes which can be addressed *prior* to reading the text. The themes can be tailored to get the attention of reluctant readers – such as boys – and make them relevant to their own lives (Smith & Wilhelm 85-87). Although this advice pertains most directly to teachers – along with the strong message that teachers’ manifesting a personal interest in their students makes a huge difference -- it might also apply to librarians. Interviews also suggest that boys prefer a lack of ambiguity, information in shorter portions, a “modern” English style, thorough preparation if a style is not familiar, and meaningful goals which can be monitored by feedback (115-118). They respond to what might be characterized as a *dialogue*, as opposed to the monologue-like way traditional literature is often presented (129). The concept of *inquiry* is crucial, empowering

students with a sense of control and competence, and involving social interaction, as is an emphasis on texts which might speak to students, particularly boys, more directly.

School curriculum, and possibly library emphasis, has traditionally emphasized nuanced interpretation, motifs, subtlety and detail, all aspects of classic literature. Smith and Wilhelm suggest that it might be time to re-examine these values (Smith & Wilhelm 195). Sullivan posits a slightly different dichotomy, that between “approved” internal struggles found in preferred literature, and the external struggles common to books which appeal to boys. (Sullivan 27)

It is worth noting that many ideas for improving boys’ literacy education would apply equally to girls, giving all the opportunity to benefit from choices which narrows the gaps between school and “real lives.” British Columbia educator Nick Smith writes that it is time for schools to put into practice more of what they know about effective learning strategies (Smith).

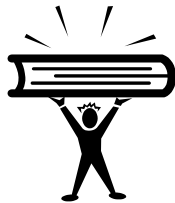
Michael Sullivan’s *Connecting Boys with Books* is written by and for librarians. Sullivan agrees with the conventional wisdom regarding which books appeal to boys, and the necessity of validating their choices. This practical work, however, is geared towards library programmes which will draw boys in and get them enthused about reading. One very simple concept is that of book groups for fathers and sons, mirroring their successful female equivalents. The fact that not many *dads* read for pleasure creates the opportunity for both generations to discover common ground together (Sullivan 35-36). Many practical ideas for “boy-magnet” programming has been published. For example, Michigan librarians Cindy Dobrez and Lynn Rutan created an elaborate programme to correspond to the seasonal NCAA Men’s Basketball Tournament, including maps, newspaper clippings and contests, which attracted both genders and got reluctant readers reading (Dobrez & Rutan). Librarians must move beyond the mere acceptance of boy-centred books to not only stocking them in quantity but promoting them (Sullivan 52-55).

Conclusion

Young adult writer Robert Lipsyte tells us that “boys have to learn what girls already know, that a book is something you can make into a cave, and that you can crawl into the cave, roll around in it, explore it, find out what’s in it, and what’s in you.” (Lipsyte). If commercial advertising can do such a good job at getting teens hooked on fashion, high-tech toys and (at its worst) tobacco, surely we as librarians can do our best to seriously addict children and teens – paying special attention to our reluctant boys – to a lifelong enjoyment of reading.

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Red Cedar Award & Stellar Award Programs

The **Red Cedar Book Award** program officially launched during Canada Children's Book Week, November 17-24, 2007.

For those of you new to the program, the Red Cedar Award is BC's Children's Choice literature award for kids in grades 4-7.

Every year thousands of children from across the province are invited to read books from the nominated lists of non-fiction and fiction titles and vote for their favourite next April. The final awards are presented to the authors by the children at this year's annual Awards Gala, in Surrey, on May 10th, 2008 (location to be announced later).

There have been big changes for the Red Cedar Award program this year! We have updated our website, and that's just the beginning. There will be no more registration fees for program resources. These resources will be freely available at <http://www.redcedaraward.ca>

Here you can find the full list of nominated titles, book information about each title and more. Come and join us!

Jennifer Caldwell & Christina Gerber
President, YRCA Secretary, YRCA

The 2007/2008 **Stellar Book Award** website at <http://www.stellaraward.ca> has been refreshed with new nominees for its third season! The Stellar Award is B.C.'s teen readers' choice award and the 'big sister' to the Red Cedar Book award for students in Grades 4 to 7. The nominees for this year's list were selected by teens working with mentors in Maple Ridge, North Vancouver and Vancouver.

The website is now open for teens to register on-line. Teens who have registered in the past will need to re-register as we've added new features this year (including a reminder if you forget your password!). Once teens have individually registered they can start to review and rank their favourite titles. Teens have six months to read and discuss the titles before voting next April.

There is a new section this year for book club leaders and older teens, teachers, teacher librarians, public librarians, parents - anyone who wants to lead a Stellar Book Club. All you need to do is register as a leader to find out information about author visits, download spine labels, link to study guides, and receive e-mails about promoting the Stellar award.

There will be up-coming author tours throughout the province with several of the authors over the next six months. Register as a book club leader, and you'll receive all the news!

Allison Taylor McBryde
Chair, Stellar Steering Committee

GREATER VICTORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY



Pattern Books

**In these books the story builds upon itself with a repeated phrase or rhyme,
enabling children to predict what will come next.**

Alborough, Jez	Duck in the Truck	Picture Book ALB
Alborough, Jez	Watch Out! Big Bro's Coming	Picture Book ALB
Blackstone, Stella	Who are You, Baby Kangaroo?	Picture Book ALB
Brown, Margaret Wise	Home for a Bunny	Picture Book BRO
Fearington, Ann	Who Sees the Lighthouse	Picture Book FEA
Hillenbrand, Will	Fiddle-I-Fee	Primary Non Fiction 782.42162 HIL
Hobeman, Mary Ann	It's Simple, said Simon	Picture Book HOB
Johnson, Paul Brett	Little Bunny Foo Foo	Picture Book JOH
Lewis, Kevin	My Truck is Stuck!	Picture Book LEW
London, Jonathan	Froggy Gets Dressed	Picture Book LON
Martin, Bill	Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you See?	Picture Book MAR
Masurel, Claire	Ten Dogs in the Window	Picture Book MAS
McMullan, Kate	No, No, Jo!	Picture Book MCM
Peck, Jan	Way Down Deep in the Deep Blue Sea	Picture Book PEC
Piper, Watty	The Little Engine that Could	Picture Book PIP
Rosen, Michael	We're Going on a Bear Hunt	Picture Book ROS
Sierra, Judy	What Time is It, Mister Crocodile?	Picture Book SIE
Simon, Francesca	What's That Noise?	Picture Book SIM
Simon, Norma	The Baby House	Picture Book SIM
Skorpen, Liesel	We Were Tired of Living in a House	Picture Book SKO
Thompson, Pat	The Squeaky, Creaky Bed	Picture Book THO
Vipont, Elfrida	The Elephant and the Bad Baby	Picture Book VIP
Waber, Bernard	Bearsie Bear and the Surprise Sleepover	Picture Book WAB
Weninger, Brigitte	The Elf's Hat	Picture Book WEN
Wood, Audrey	The Napping House	Picture Book WOO
Williams, Sue	I Went Walking	Picture Book WIL

Some Familiar Patterns

“Five little monkeys jumping on the bed...”

Christelow, Eileen	Five Little Monkeys Jumping ...on the Bed	Picture Book CHR
	...Play Hide and Seek	“
	...Sitting in a Tree	“
	...Wash the Car	“
	...With Nothing to Do	“

“If you give a mouse a cookie...”

Numeroff, Laura	If you Give a Mouse a Cookie ...a Moose a Muffin	Picture Book NUM
	...a Pig a Pancake	“

“The Little Red Hen”

Cohen, Caron Lee	Digger Pig and the Turnip	Picture Book COH
Downard, Barry, ill.	The Little Red Hen	Picture Book LIT
Sturges, Philemon	The Little Red Hen makes Pizza	Picture Book STU

“The Old Woman and her Pig”

Aylesworth, Jim	Aunt Pitty Patty’s Piggy	Primary Non-Fiction 398.2 AYL
Brown, Ken	The Scarecrow’s Hat	Picture Book BRO
Litzinger, Roseanne	The Old Woman and her Pig	Picture Book LIT

“On the first day of Christmas...”

Brenner, Emily	On the First Day of Grade School	Picture Book BRE
Ross, Deborah	The Twelve Days of Kindergarten	Picture Book ROS
Brett, Jan Fiction	The Twelve Days of Christmas	Holiday Children’s Non- 783.65 TWE

“There was an old lady who swallowed a fly...”

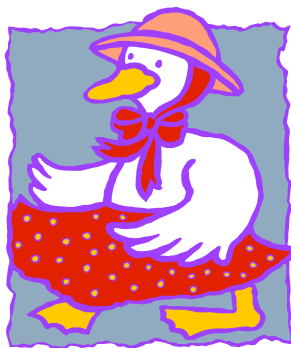
Harper, Charise	There Was a Bold Lady who Wanted a Star	Picture Book HAR
Sloat, Teri	There Was an Old Lady who Swallowed a Trout	Picture Book SLO
Taback, Simms	There was an Old Lady who Swallowed a Fly	Picture Book TAB

“This is the house that Jack built...”

Andrews-Goebel, Nancy	The Pot that Juan Built	Primary Non-Fiction 738.092 AND
Capucilli, Alyssa	Inside a House that is Haunted	Holiday Reader CAP

Crummel, Susan Dunphy, Madeleine	All In One Hour Here is the African Savanna	Picture Book CRU Primary Non-Fiction 577.48096 DUN
Dunphy, Madeleine	Here is the Coral Reef	Primary Non-Fiction 577.789 DUN
Fleming, Candace Fox, Mem Gelman, Rita Kalen, Robert Levine, Abby Lewis, Kevin Neitzel, Shirley	This is the Baby Shoes for Grandpa Pizza Pat Jump, Frog, Jump! This is the Pumpkin The Lot at the End of the Block Our Class took a Trip to the Zoo I'm Not Feeling Well Today The Jacket I Wear in the Snow We're Making Breakfast for Mother In Enzo's Splendid Gardens	Picture Book FLE Picture Book FOX Reader GEL Picture Book KAL Holiday Picture Book LEW Picture Book LEW Picture Book NEI " " "
Polacco, Patricia Schaefer, Lola	This is the Rain This is the Sunflower	Picture Book SCH Picture Book SCH "
Spence, Robert Zemke, Deborah	Clickety Clack This is Hanukkah This is Passover This is Thanksgiving	Picture Book SPE Holiday Picture Book THI " "

December 2005



National Identity in Canadian Children's Literature

An edited sample of work written by Shannon Ozirny, an MLIS SLAIS Student

Without question, it is hard to come by an author-illustrator team in Canada that has worked together consistently for decades. Therefore, regardless of one's love or loathing for the massively popular duo of Robert Munsch and Michael Martchenko, their work provides a unique opportunity to examine two very different presentations of Canadian identity.

Twenty-five years after publishing the iconic *The Paper Bag Princess (PBP)* in 1980, Munsch and Martchenko released *I'm So Embarrassed! (ISE)* in 2005. While the two books have different publishers, illustration styles, and plot lines, they are further differentiated by their portrayal of Canada. While *I'm So Embarrassed!* brims over with superficial national indicators, *The Paper Bag Princess* bubbles quietly with deeper insights into national identity. To maintain a fair approach, both books will be analysed using the same criteria; two popularly Canadian criteria of setting and humour, one neutral criterion considering punctuation and font, and the typically overlooked issue of childhood freedom, will shape the analysis. Ironically *ISE*, filled with tangible national signifiers, is not nearly as culturally authentic as *PBP*, despite the latter's seeming absence of a "measurable degree of Canadianness" (Nodelman 34).

The setting in *I'm So Embarrassed!* is best described as a theatrical backdrop as a close inspection reveals superficiality and artifice. For instance, when Andrew and his mother drive through their coastal town, readers see a sweeping sky, birds flying in a V-shape, and rocky terrain. A second look, however, shows a moose sitting upright drinking a cup of coffee and a donkey pitching camp with an elderly man (*ISE* 4-5). Furthermore, the majority of the story takes place inside a mall. An inexplicably large pine tree stands inside the shopping center, and random "Canadian" animals peruse the place. Worse, these animals are glaringly anthropomorphized. One raccoon eats a candle-lit dinner while a teddy-bearish looking bear cub sips soda (29). These elements of the background are admittedly entertaining, but they are not indicative of Canada's uniquely natural sensibility. The setting in *ISE* represents a national setting "...at its worst...manifest in self-consciousness, awkwardness, or the pushiness of insecurity" (Nodelman 18).

This stands in stark contrast to *The Paper Bag Princess* in which the settings are “characters in their own rights – living breathing entities that affect the human characters in the stories” (Nodelman 18). Even avid fans of *PBP* may not have noticed that the entire story, with the exception of the first scene, takes place outdoors. In addition, Elizabeth finds her way to the Dragon’s cave by following the “trail of burnt forests and horses’ bones,” (30) and the Dragon’s ability to destroy immense forests measures his fire-breathing power. The sky, left crimson after the dragon’s exhaustion (39), also reflects Elizabeth’s cunning victory.

In addition to their involvement with nature, Canadians are known for their sense of humour which Sarah Ellis succinctly describes as “the off-centre quirkiness that comes with a country that is constantly inventing itself as it goes along” (Nodelman 20). Incongruent with Ellis’ assertion, the humour in *ISE* is purely infantile and slapstick. When his mother attempts to fix his hair, Andrew (who looks about ten or eleven) screams like a six-year-old, “*Spit!* Mommy-spit on my hair at the mall!” (8) Later, Andrew’s dreaded Aunt is predictably pictured with clownish makeup and a formidably large bosom and bottom (11). Further jokes revolve around Andrew’s baby pictures and his female friend’s underpants.

Unlike the rowdy obnoxiousness that passes for humour in *ISE*, the jokes in *PBP* emerge from stating an obvious fact at a well-timed moment. There is no better example than Elizabeth’s famous line “You look like a real prince, but you are a bum” (48). While readers can see for themselves that Ronald is a dud, Elizabeth’s statement is not redundant. Rather, it solidifies the hilarity of her predicament and gives a voice to readers who have been thinking the exact same thing. This technique is decidedly more understated and thoughtful, and probably better reflects our “off-centre quirkiness” than a boy’s repeated tantrums.

Moving away from the typically Canadian criteria of setting and humour, a brief examination of font and punctuation is surprisingly necessary. Although this seems an unlikely means of comparison, it actually illuminates another critical distinction between the texts.

The font and punctuation in *ISE* is overbearing, stressful, and adds to the book’s spastic, hectic tone. In total, the picture book contains thirty-four exclamation marks(!), seventeen CAPITALIZED WORDS, and eleven words written in *italics*. At the risk of sounding blunt, this is most certainly overkill. Readers are unsure where to direct their attention as every word

competes for focus. Furthermore, this excess takes away from the drama of turning the page. There is no sense of anticipation or suspense since everything is punctuated with either an exclamation or a scream.

In stark contrast to this punctuation landfill, exclamation marks in *PBP* are used thoughtfully and sparingly (four in total), and only for true exclamatory phrases. For example, when Elizabeth encourages the dragon's physical exhaustion she yells "Fantastic, do it again!" (40) Of course, when readers turn the page and see a gasping, wheezing dragon, they know he has taken Elizabeth's hearty encouragement. Clearly, the punctuation overload in *ISE* is not as reflective of the Canadian experience. Most would more readily attribute yelling and screaming to our chums south of the border since Canadians generally reserve their exclamation marks for times of necessity.

When the word "freedom" is used in discussion on children's literature, it is usually only in reference to books which explicitly deal with the topic. While neither *ISE* nor *PBP* seem to deal with childhood freedom, the final illustrations in each book make a strong statement to the contrary.

On the final, wordless page of *ISE*, Andrew and his friend Taylor-Jae parade through the mall carrying a mountain of merchandise. Walking beside them is a struggling shop clerk who buckles under the weight of all their loot (30). Readers assume that, after embarrassing their mothers, the children have shamed their parents into giving them a shopping spree. Here, the notion of freedom is purely monetary and tangible. Neither child has acquired complete autonomy; they are simply relying on their mother's credit cards for a bit of fun.

The final image in *PBP*, by contrast, is one of the most well-known images in Canadian children's literature, possibly because it symbolizes complete, uninhibited freedom. The brilliant combination of Elizabeth's joyous leap, the bright sun, and the tall trees reflects not only freedom, but the "prominence in our northern country of external nature [and] self-reliance" (Nodelman 19). Thus, it is quite appropriate that *PBP* bares the library classification of "Self-Reliance;" Elizabeth is free both because of the wide open landscape, and her separation from Ronald and palace life. Jeffrey Canton asserts that Canadians "believe empowerment is the right of every child" (Canton 13) and the final image of *PBP* perfectly captures this ideal.

Hopefully this analysis has shown the danger in believing all our country's books are equally or generically "Canadian." Even work from our country's most famous author-illustrator team varies drastically in its portrayal of the national sensibility. As *I'm So Embarrassed* and *The Paper Bag Princess* prove, a ratty, flammable garment is easily just as nationalistic as a moose in a mall.

¹ As of February 24th, 2007, *The Paper Bag Princess* is catalogued at the Vancouver Public Library under the headings "Princesses – Juvenile Fiction," "Dragons – Juvenile Fiction" and "Self-reliance – Juvenile fiction."

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Early Literacy Storytimes @ Your Library: Partnering with Caregivers for Success

Saroj Nadkarni Ghoting and Pamela Martin-Diaz (American Library Association, c2006)

Submitted by Andrea Brimmell, Children's and Family Literacy Librarian,
Juan de Fuca Branch, Greater Victoria Public Library

Six Early Literacy Skills

See pages 12-15 and pages 24-29 of the text

Print Motivation

Print motivation is having an interest in and an enjoyment of books.

What do I tell the adults?

“Choose a time when you and your child are in a good mood to share books.”

“Even if your child is interested for only a short time, that's OK. Keep it fun. You can try again later.”

“It is more important for the interaction around a book to be positive than for it to be long.”

Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness is the ability to hear and play with the smaller sounds in words. It includes activities that work with rhyme, words, syllables, and initial sounds.

What do I tell the adults?

“Making up rhyming words, even making up silly nonsense words that rhyme, is one good way to develop phonological awareness, one of the early literacy skills.”

“Playing with words, especially words that are interesting to your child, is a fun way to develop phonological awareness. It helps children later when they are trying to sound out words.”

“Songs are a wonderful way to build phonological awareness because there is a different note for different syllables. Babies are learning the rhythm of language, and young children are hearing parts of words.”

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is knowing the names of things.

What do I tell the adults?

“Children with a strong vocabulary can understand what they read better than children with a smaller vocabulary.”

“Books have many words that are not often used in normal conversation or on television. By reading books with children, you expand their vocabulary.”

Narrative Skills

Narrative skill is the ability to describe things and events and to tell stories.

What do I tell the adults?

“It is critically important that we encourage the children to participate and to talk! This is more easily done one-on-one than in a group.”

Print awareness

Print awareness is noticing print in the environment, knowing how to handle a book, and understanding how to follow the words on a page.

What do I tell the adults?

“Let your child turn the pages of a book while you read.”

“Babies will put books in their mouths and bite them. This is how they explore their world. Let the baby have some books that you don’t mind getting messed up. This is how they learn about books!”

“There are many things you can do during the day to help your child with print awareness: Point out signs as you are walking or driving—like labels at the grocery store and stop signs.”

Letter knowledge

Letter knowledge is to know that letters are different from each other, that the same letter can look different, and that each letter has a name and is related to specific sounds.

What do I tell the adults?

“Young children learn best through their senses. Letters are made of shapes. Let young children explore real things that are round (like a ball), that are straight (like blocks), and that have holes in them. In this way, they will have a better understanding of shapes when they see them on paper.”

“Children can learn about letters in different ways—by noticing them all around. They can make their bodies or fingers into letters, use magnetic letters, or make letters out of play dough.”

Dialogic Reading -- Family Storytime or Preschool Storytime

The Shopping Expedition, by Andre Amstutz, illustrated by Allan Ahlberg

I am going to demonstrate *dialogic reading* with *The Shopping Expedition*. It has nice clear pictures, few words, but lots of action. Dialogic reading means having a dialogue or conversation around a book. Dialogic reading improves *vocabulary and narrative skills*. As you turn the pages of the book, ask your child open-ended questions so that he or she will have to tell you what is going on in the picture, rather than just pointing to things. This book works well in a group, but dialogic reading works best in a one-to-one situation. This is something that you can do with your child often. You may want to do it when you read a book for the second time.

Letter Knowledge -- Toddlertime, Family Storytime, or Preschool Storytime

Old Black Fly, by Jim Aylesworth (use big book)

BINGO (song using felt board)

Today we are going to focus on the early literacy skill letter knowledge, which is knowing the letters of the alphabet, and that these letters have sounds that go with them.

We are going to start out by reading *Old Black Fly*, by Jim Aylesworth. As the old black fly buzzes around, he lands on various things, all beginning with different letters of the alphabet.

Now, I am going to put some letters on the felt board. Let’s sing the song: There was a farmer had a dog, BINGO was his name-O. As we sing the song, I am going to be taking away letters

starting with the B, and we will replace these letters with claps. Watch how the word BINGO changes as you take the letters away!

There are many alphabet books that you can borrow from the library. A set of magnetic letters or an alphabet puzzle can be helpful in developing letter knowledge. As you talk with your child, you can point to different objects, and ask them what letter of the alphabet it begins with (eg. Tree begins with “t”, apple begins with “a”). Doing some of these things in your daily lives will help your child become familiar with the alphabet before he or she goes to school.”

Phonological Awareness – Babytime, Toddlertime

Rhymes: Slowly slowly very slowly / Pat-a-cake pat-a-cake

Today I am going to tell you about the importance of *phonological awareness*, which is the ability to hear and play with the smaller sounds in words. Babies [and toddlers] have the ability to hear all these sounds. They are called phonemes. The English language has about 41 phonemes. The word “as” has two phonemes: /a/ /s/; the word “chick” has three: /ch/ /i/ /k/. Ultimately, as a child learns to read, they will need to “sound” words out using these phonemes. This is called *phonics*. To develop phonological awareness it is important that babies and toddlers hear all these sounds frequently. Saying rhymes with them and singing songs helps babies to pick up phonemes, because words are often said more slowly and with more emphasis in songs and rhymes.

Vocabulary -- Family Storytime or Preschool Storytime

Where the Wild Things Are, by Maurice Sendak

Raven: a Trickster Tale from the Pacific Northwest, by Gerald McDermott

Today we are going to talk about how reading books with your children helps to expand their vocabulary. Books have many words that are not often used in normal conversation or on television. Try to choose books rich in new words. Read the book through the first time without explaining words, so that your child can enjoy the sounds and poetry of the words. Then you can read the story again, explaining new words.

Repetition: Children learn and remember by hearing stories, songs and rhymes more than once. They will want to hear stories they like over and over. Stories affect children on an emotional level as well. That is another reason why they will want to hear a story read many times.

Children who have a large vocabulary will learn to read more easily.

Early Literacy Workshop, Preschool Storytime

Submitted by Andrea Brimmell, Children's and Family Literacy Librarian
Juan de Fuca Branch, Greater Victoria Public Library

Early Literacy Skill:

Letter Knowledge - Preschool Storytime.

Materials used: Book, Rhyme, Song etc.

Welcome song:

The more we get together, together, together
The more we get together the happier we'll be!
'Cause your friends are my friends and
my friends are your friends!
With (fill in children's names one after the other)
The more we get together the happier we'll be!

Fingerplay:

I have 10 little fingers and they all belong to me.
I can make them do things, would you like to see?
I can shut them up tight or open them wide!
I can put them together or make them all hide!
I can make them jump high, I can make them jump low;
I can fold them quietly and hold them just so!

Max's ABC, by Rosemary Wells

BINGO (song using felt board)

There was a farmer had a dog and Bingo was his name-O
B-I-N-G-O, B-I-N-G-O, B-I-N-G-O
And Bingo was his name-O
(Repeat verse, taking away letters starting with B and replace with a clap, until all letters are claps)

Stretch

Tall as a tree (stretch tall)
Wide as a house (arms out wide)
Thin as a pin (arms by sides)
Small as a mouse (crouch down low)
Jack in the box, so quiet and still, won't you come up?
YES! I WILL! (everyone jumps up)

I Ain't Gonna Paint No More! By Karen Beaumont, illus. By David Catrow

Tips for Parents

Today we are going to focus on the early literacy skill letter knowledge, which is knowing the letters of the alphabet, and that these letters have sounds that go with them.

There are many alphabet books that you can borrow from the library. A set of magnetic letters or an alphabet puzzle can be helpful in developing letter knowledge. As you talk with your child, you can point to different objects, and ask them what letter of the alphabet it begins with (eg. Tree begins with “t”, apple begins with “a”). Doing some of these things in your daily lives will help your child become familiar with the alphabet before he or she goes to school.

Additional Materials

Quick as a Cricket, by Audrey Wood, illus. By Don Wood

Imagine a Day, by Sarah Thomson, illus. By Rob Gonsalves

Stretches for Preschoolers

Two little feet go tap, tap, tap
Two little hands go clap, clap, clap
Two little legs go jump, jump, jump
Two little fists go thump, thump, thump,
One little child turns slowly around
One little child sits quietly down.

I wiggle my fingers,
I wiggle my toes,
I wiggle my shoulders,
I wiggle my nose.
Now all the wiggles are out of me,
I'm just as quiet as I can be! (Jane Cobb, I'm a Little Teapot, 1996)

Button Factory

Hi, My name is Joe.
I've got a wife, 3 kids, and I work in a button factory.
One day the boss came up to me and said
Hey Joe, Are you busy? I said no,
He said push this button with your left hand.

Keep adding actions, until you are doing them all at once (right hand, left foot, right foot, head, tongue. After tongue, “Joe, are you busy?” Answer: “Yes!”

Pre-K and K Sampler

An edited submission of poems and chant-a-longs submitted by Robert (Max Tell) Stelmach
© Robert Stelmach 2007

ICICLE

Icicle, icicle upside down,
Long and slender, slick and round,
Dangling in the sun all day,
Please don't melt and go away.

Now with movements:

Icicle, icicle upside down, (*Let arms hang down in front of you like a 'V' with finger tips together.*)
Long and slender, (*Reach up and let your hands slip down the sides of the icicle.*)
slick and round, (*Repeat previous*)
Dangling in the sun all day, (*Reach up and hold the top of the icicle between your thumb and pointing finger.*)
Please don't melt and go away. (*Reach up again and let your fingers wiggle down the sides of the icicle as it melts.*)

Available on "The Land of Graws" CD.

THE BUG SONG

There's a bug in my hand (*Point to the bug in your hand.*)
And it climbed on my nose (*Point to your nose.*)
And it played a bass drum (*Beat on your drum.*)
Bum, bum, bum, bum. (*Repeat twice.*)

What if it was a great big bug? (*Repeat twice, encouraging the children to make their bug bigger and bigger each time.*)

What if it was a teeny-tiny bug? (*Repeat twice, indicating to the children that the bug is smaller and smaller.*)

Only move your lips on the last repetition.

Then vocalize the final bum, bum, bum, bum loudly and move your arms briskly.

Available on "Dragon with a Flagon" CD.

Robert Stelmach, a.k.a. Max Tell, is a writer, performer, and educator.

His CDs are available from Library Bound in Toronto

CD Music Development

Tracy Reid x29 tracy@librarybound.com or on Max Tell's web site: www.maxtell.ca

Traditional Mexican Tales of Folk, Fairy & Fable in Contemporary North American Children's Books

By Sara Kuhn

An edited sample of a work originally written for Instructor Allison Taylor-McBryde's course, LIBR 521, at the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies, University of British Columbia

"Naomi Shihab Nye (1995) said that Mexico ' . . . has always been a country of spirit, a country where magic feels close and possible, a country of passionate color and deep ties'" (Wadham, 1999, p. 7), which is illustrated thoroughly by Mexican tales of folk, fairy, fable, myth and legend—alive and well in North American children's books today.

Many Hispanic folktales "exist in both a Mexican version and a southwestern United States version" (Vigil, 2000, p. xiv). "Like plants, the stories have naturalized in their own habitat" (Philip, 2003, p. 2). *Arroyo* (dry gulch), *cañon* (canyon), mesquite (desert bush), and chaparral (a tightly packed group of shrubs), are "Mexican Spanish" words used to describe the desert country of the American Southwest (Lyons, 1972).

In his notes on the older-than-the-hills (first published in 1952) Mexican folktale "Horse Hooves and Chicken Feet," Philip's particular rendition was "collected from a 12-year-old Mexican American girl who had heard it from a classmate." Its modern influence is revealed when a young girl rides to the hospital by ambulance (2003, p. 75). All tradition is not lost to shiny new gadgets. "In the storytelling community, there exists the concept of respecting a story's core of authenticity . . . retelling traditional stories and ensuring that the core of the tale remains untouched and true," reflecting "the evolution of the traditional tale as it lives as part of an active oral tradition" (Vigil, 2002, p. xv).

Wadham (1999), stated that "in every case Latino children's literature begins with folklore—tales and rhymes" (p. 57), and Schon, in 1978, praised the "great beauty and variety in Mexican . . . tales, folk arts, folk dances, and folk songs," which gives "children delight and new insights into the . . . genuine artistic talents of the Mexican people" (pg.

81-82). One gorgeous modern children's book, Naomi Shihab Nye's "The Tree is Older than You Are," "represent[s] a small but important bit of the spectacular richness which is Mexican literature" and includes well-known legendary Mexican poets and artists as well as the voices of a new generation (1995, p. 7). "There is a wealth of Latino children's poetry that rivals Mother Goose" (Wadham, 1999, p. 57). Through authors like Nye, the tradition continues... from word-of-mouth to written page, and back again.

Common themes and plots in traditional Mexican folktales abound. For example, "Pedro" tales come in many forms and versions which contain similar elements. "Pedro descends from the Spanish picaresque tradition of Don Quixote . . . In some stories Pedro is a hero trying to correct injustices. In others he is much more of a trickster" (Wadham, 1999, p. 61). Wadham is referring to the tale of *Pedro and the Money Tree*, retold in Vigil's "The Eagle on the Cactus" and Aardema's picture book, "Pedro and the Padre," in which Pedro is a child. Vigil depicts a conniving and savvy adult Pedro while Aardema portrays Pedro as a smart but lazy and dishonest juvenile. Humour is maintained in each tale but the morals are decidedly different. It's okay for Vigil's Pedro to trick those whom "deserve" it and not acceptable for Aardema's Pedro to perform trickery (portrayed as immoral lying), which precludes the original tale's intention.

Barlow & Stivers found the smart mischievous, and happy rabbit character to be quite popular in the U.S.—and "though he is a rogue," he is usually the hero (1995, p. 9).

There are many tales told in Mexico in which a rabbit is the hero, as in *The Giant and the Rabbit*. Perhaps this is because the rabbit is so small and powerless in comparison with the other animals. The Mexican people have to work hard to scrape a living from their stubborn soil, so they love tales in which pluck and cleverness overcome brute force (Lyons, 1972, p. 91).

"The Rabbit's Ears" (Barlow & Stivers/Nye) is an ancient Mayan legend. The rabbit wants to be bigger like other animals, so god gives him long ears. DeSpain's "Rabbit's

Last Race” illustrates the complex and diverse origination of Mexican folktales. Paralleling plots from Aesop's "The Rabbit and the Hare" (1894), Grimm's "The Hare and the Hedgehog" (1853), an African American tale entitled "Mister Rabbit Finds His Match at Last" (1880), and ancient folktales from Tibet and Romania (Ashliman, 2002), it does not hero-ize the rabbit, probably because it most likely did not originate in Mexico.

DePaola's "The Legend of the Poinsettia," a modern retelling of the traditional Mexican story "La Flor de la Noche Buena" (Flower of the Holy Night) in which a young girl, María—having no gift for baby Jesus for the Catholic celebration of *Las Posadas*—offers weeds, which miraculously turn into the vibrant red flowers of the Poinsettia plant. Vigil's María is a young egocentric tantrum-throwing child, and/or "a typical child who is full of innocent wishes" (2000, p. 26). DePaola's rendition softens her character—depicting a child whose sincerest desire is to please baby Jesus. The story is tastefully constructed, highlighting the cultural emphasis on the importance of family in Mexico.

The ant is a popular character in Mexican fables like "The Ant, the Lamb, the Cricket, and the Mouse" (Brenner), "The Mouse and the Ant" (Vigil), and "The Ant Who Learned to Play the Flute" (Vigil's discussion of which investigates the ant's popularity):

The *hormiguita* was one of the hardest working ants in the anthill. All day and night, he helped dig out tunnels so the anthill could continue to grow and support the many new ants who were constantly being born . . . He wasn't king of the anthill, however. He was just a regular worker ant with the responsibilities of a worker ant—which are mainly to work hard, and then work even harder some more (2000, p. 203).

Climo's modern picture book retelling of a distinctly Mexican version of "The Little Red Ant and the Great Big Crumb"—a fable originating in Spain, Portugal and France—is an absolute delight. It is an "I Think I Can" tale starring an ant that *could*—even though she was "smaller than the others" and probably held an inferior job title (1995, p. 5).

There are too many Mexican tales of the adversity between rich and poor to count. The ubiquitous *dos compadres* (two friends) characters—one rich and the other poor—occur in the ever popular tale, "Ashes for Sale." Lyons' poor compadre is described as a "slow-witted, trusting fellow" (1972, p. 71). His wife is described as being "no cleverer." In Vigil's more compassionate, less descriptive retelling, the poor compadre is portrayed as a hard worker who is subject to unending ridicule—unjustly labeled lazy and stupid by the rich compadre. His insincere offerings cause the poor man's wife to speculate that "The rich *compadre* has never helped us before. I'm suspicious" (2000, p. 164-165).

However, thankfully, the poor are often outsmarting the rich. Lyons explains, discussing the more modern tale of "The Marvelous Chirriónera:"

. . . The story of how three poor lads outsmart the old miser is also especially satisfying to most Mexicans. In a harsh land like Mexico, there are many poor and few rich. The storyteller and his audience often side with the poor man. The *campesino*, or poor peasant, is still the backbone of Mexican society. Not doubt the owners of the rich ranches, the haciendas, have their own tales—but their audience is small! (1972, p. 89).

Albeit the heavy religious nature of many traditional Mexican tales, the essence of the magical and mystical—stemming from ancient times—exists still. Philip's version of "Horse Hooves and Chicken Feet," from his stunningly illustrated compilation of the same name, reveals the witchy identity of the attractive woman Silvestre Guzmán is dancing with by the shape of her feet—they are those of a chicken.

Another contemporary retelling of an original tale, Gollub's "Uncle Snake," also involves body parts being changed into those of other animals by magical forces. Uncle Snake is encouraged by a medium and magician, the *nahual*, who resides in an enchanted cave. The *nahual* tells Uncle Snake that he is "destined to show the world something new"—lightening—inspired by an ancient belief from pre-Hispanic folklore,

"that a snake in the sky brings about heavy rains" (Gollub, 1996). It is still said today in Oaxaca that snakes are "'crossing the sky'" during a lightening storm (Gollub, 1996).

"Folktales in which a crafty human outwits the Devil (or ogre) are always popular" (Philip, 2003, p. 73). Stories of *el diablo* are numerous and far-reaching. The ogre tales are just as—if not more—frightening. Hayes' retelling of the classic bogeyman tale, "¡El Cucuy!" is well-known to Mexican and Mexican American children. "With his humped back and his big red ear, el Cucuy was once a standard part of child rearing" (Hayes, 2001, Back Cover), and shows up as early as the 16th century in Spain. Hayes' crafty version tells of a widower who cannot manage his mischievous girls. He shouts for the ogre to come down from his cave and kidnap them—which the ogre obliges to do. The girls are rescued by a reticent father, and start behaving as perfect, angelic children.

Popular North American children's fairy tales are also present in Mexican stories. The legend, "Atzimba, the Princess," from The Barlow text, is "similar to Sleeping Beauty," yet contains elements reminiscent of the plot of *Romeo & Juliet*—a tale of prohibited love between a Mexican Indian princess and a Spanish soldier (1995, p. 41).

Philip's "The Two Marias" is comparable to the modern day "Cinderella." The prince orders the wicked stepmother to free his love, and they "live happily together for many years" (2003, p. 50), which is a bit more realistic than "happily ever after." Tomie DePaola's "Adelita" is a contemporary children's picture book which sets the Cinderella story into a Mexican context. It is superbly done and the main character, Adelita, wears a traditional Mexican dress. However, my favourite Mexican Cinderella story is Coburn's "Domitila," as it is an original tale from the Mexican tradition. It is a story of the love a wealthy hacienda owner feels for a former cook in his household, and his search to find her, find true love, and find himself. It is the typical tale of a wealthy male landowner

and a poor peasant girl, yet McClellan's illustrations are not stereotypical—but revealing and honest, with a stark yet subtle beauty reminiscent of the Mexican countryside.

For Mexican fairy tales with kings, princesses and magic, I recommend "The Waterfall of Wisdom," "The Green Bird," "The Enchanted Forest," "The Jewels of Shining Light" and "The Miracle Of Mirajei" from the Vigil text as well as "The Dwarf of Uxmal" from Barlow & Stivers. Well-known elements in these stories include magical mirrors, enchanted princes, evil stepmothers, and witches—sure to delight young ones!

Most Americans and Canadians . . . have overlooked on their own doorstep one of the most unusual and fascinating countries on earth . . . Many people see Mexico as a culture of tacos, tortillas, [and] over-sized sombreros . . . minor manifestations of Mexican culture. Far more significant and important are the intangibles—the fundamental values, the shared attitudes and the deeper, more complex forms of behaviour that are the heart and soul of the country" (De Mente, 1996, p. xi).

As Vigil aptly stated, "modern retellings [of folktales] will help keep alive the great legacy of the oral tradition, which is at the heart of every culture" (2002, p. xv).

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Canadian Book Champions

Canadian Children's Book Centre Links Authors with Teachers and Students (www.bookcentre.ca)

(September 2007) – Every November, a team of 30 authors, illustrators and storytellers disperse, visiting thousands of children and teens in schools and libraries across Canada. At the same time, 450,000 copies of a Canadian picture book make their way to Grade One students country-wide.

Who marshals this massive effort, called TD Canadian Children's Book Week? The Canadian Children's Book Centre – Canadian children's book champions. Now in its third decade, the CCBC links teachers, librarians, booksellers and children's book lovers with the best books this country has to offer. "The best way to help children and teens find the books they want and need," says CCBC president and UBC Education librarian Jo-Anne Naslund, "is to become a member of the Canadian Children's Book Centre, and get connected directly to its many resources and programs."

This November, the CCBC's TD Canadian Children's Book Week celebrates The Magic of Books. In British Columbia, students have the opportunity to meet award-winning Teresa Toten, dazzling artist Ron Broda and energetic, imaginative Edo van Belkom. (see www.bookweek.ca).

Book Week and the TD Grade One Book Giveaway are just two of the CCBC's programs. The CCBC also administers four awards to honour and promote literary excellence. The \$20,000 TD Canadian Children's Literature Award, the \$10,000 Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children's Non-Fiction, the \$10,000 Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award, and the \$1,000 Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People highlight great books for today's Canadian children.

Award-winning Canadian books introduce children to both wonderfully imagined worlds and seriously real issues. Fiction-wise, we have Kenneth Oppel's amazing bat societies, Marie-Louise Gay's enchanting *Stella* and *Sam*, Deborah Ellis's Afghanistan novels and Julie Burtinshaw's historical fiction about Black settlers on Saltspring Island – to name just a few. Canadian non-fiction examines the way objects are made (Bill Slavin's *Transformed*), the principles of physics (the Primary Physical Science series), the tragedy of the Holocaust (Karen Levine's *Hana's Suitcase*, now available in over 20 languages), even the history of reading and censorship itself (Val Ross's *You Can't Read This!*). Canadian authors and illustrators provide children with windows on the world and mirrors to their own communities.

The CCBC website (www.bookcentre.ca) offers a wealth of information on Canadian children's books. CCBC members, however, also receive its regular publications (*Canadian Children's Book News* and the *Our Choice* selection guide) as well as information updates.

"Teachers are eager to introduce students to the best writers and illustrators – so many of whom are Canadian," says Naslund, a longstanding member and supporter of the CCBC. "That being so, the best way to achieve that objective is to join the Canadian Children's Book Centre."

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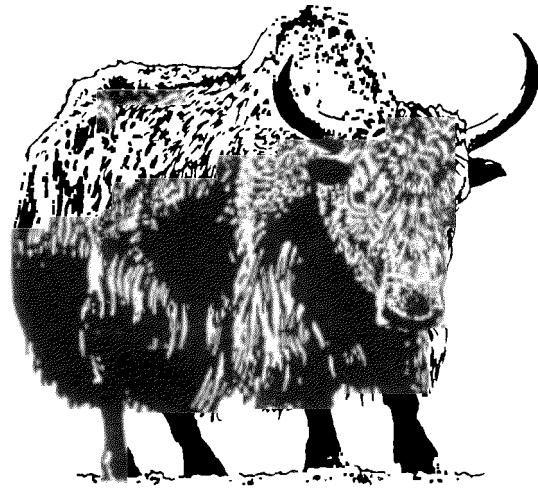
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