

A large, vibrant blue flower with many petals is the central focus. In the center of the flower is a large, bright yellow circle. The background is a solid, muted brown color.

Thistledown Press

SPRING
2026



Thistledown Press

A Message from the Publisher:

Welcome to Spring 2026 from Thistledown! We're very excited about the three new titles we have on offer this season.

Chelsea Coupal's poetry collection *U ALIVE* confronts the big questions of contemporary life with clear-eyed courage and insight. How to find hope for the future in these difficult and uncertain times? How to reconcile oneself to the mistakes of one's past? How to memorialize and mourn the loss of a way of life on a family farm on the prairies? These poems are moving, honest, and deftly inventive.

A Study in Red by Connie Gault is both a mystery and a highly literary meditation on identity, desire, and the human need for connection and love. Two very distinct characters, Amy and Carol, revisit and wrestle with memories of a violent event in the past, each one narrating her own skewed version of what actually happened. It all adds up to a novel that is both suspenseful and wise, attuned to the hard questions about life's complexities.

The Peace Thieves by Brent van Staaldin takes the reader inside the world of Canadian peacekeepers during the 1990s Balkan war, and then into the broken lives of such men thirty years after the conflict has ended. The author creates a microcosm of life in the rougher parts of Hamilton, Ontario, and introduces the reader to an array of colourful and complicated characters in search of meaning, and of peace. The novel suggests that family can be found anywhere, for those willing to open their hearts.

JoAnn McCaig
Publisher
Thistledown Press



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des arts
du Canada

Saskatchewan

Canada

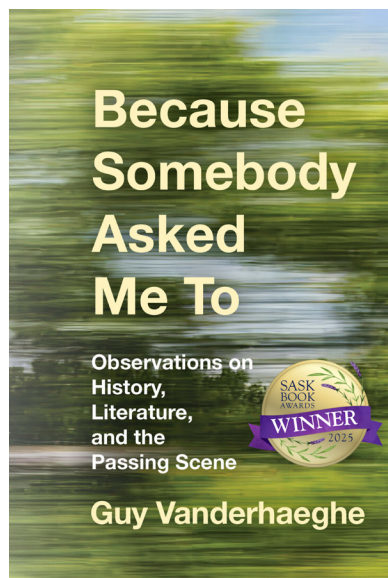
Thistledown Press gratefully acknowledges the financial support of SK Arts, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Government of Saskatchewan, and the Government of Canada for its publishing program.

Awards and Nominations

The latest award-winning and nominated titles from Thistledown Press.



WINNER



Because Somebody Asked Me To:

Observations on History, Literature, and the Passing Scene

by Guy Vanderhaeghe

Publication Date: September 17, 2024

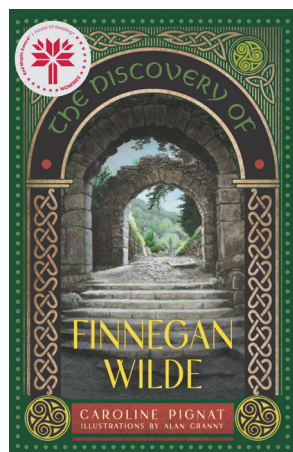
Winner:

2025 Book of the Year Award, Saskatchewan Book Awards

2025 Non-Fiction Award, Saskatchewan Book Awards

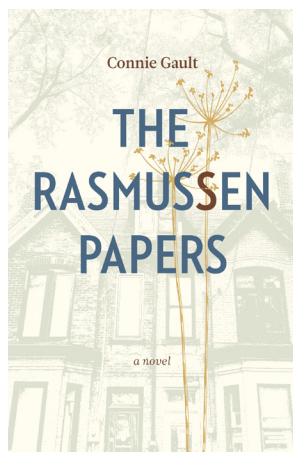
Finalist: 2025 City of Saskatoon Award, Saskatchewan Book Awards

FINALIST



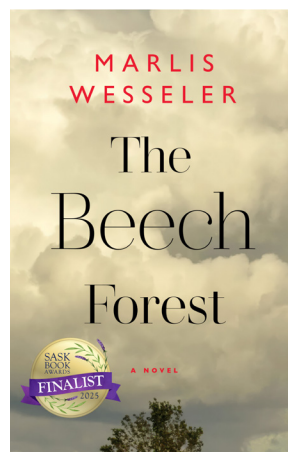
2026 Red Maple Award,
Forest of Reading Awards

FINALIST



2024 Toronto Book Award

FINALIST



2025 Fiction Award,
Saskatchewan Book Awards

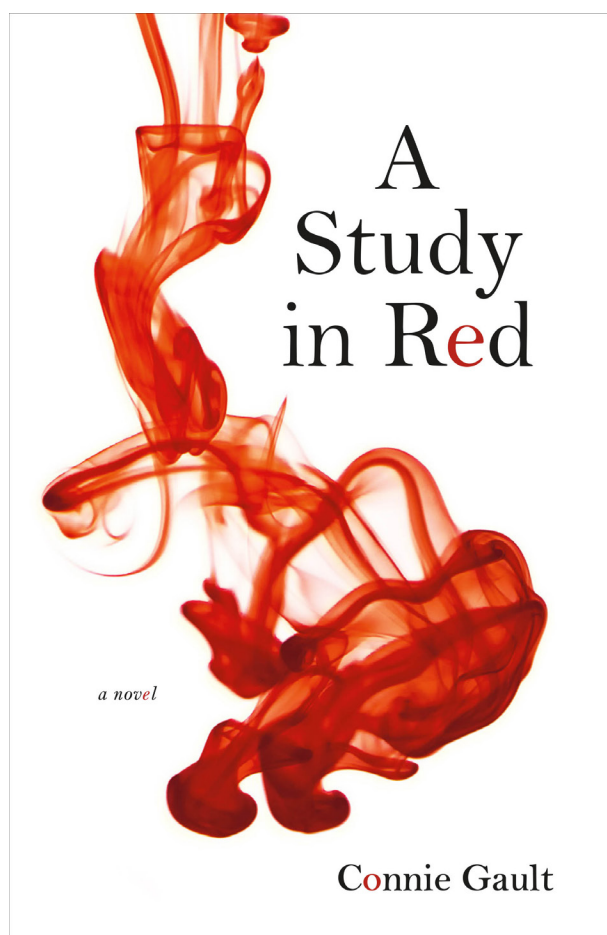
FINALIST



2025 First Book Award,
High Plains Book Awards

2025 Published Poetry in
English Award,
Indigenous Voice Awards



**Publication: May 12, 2026**

PB: \$24.95 CAD EPUB: \$10.99 CAD
 ISBN: 9781771872904 ISBN: 9781771872911

5.5 x 8.5 | 324 pages

FICTION / Literary
 FICTION / Psychological
 FICTION / Women

Availability: Canada & US

Distribution: UTP Distribution

[CataList](#) | [BookManager](#)

Publicity**Key Selling Points:**

- By the author of *The Rasmussen Papers*, nominated for the prestigious Toronto Book Award (2024)
- A page-turner of a literary mystery that is not so much a whodunit as a “whydunit”
- Powerful exploration of the nature of sisterhood, both familial and metaphorical

Comp titles:

- *Intimacies* by Katie Kitamura (2021)
- *Second Place* by Rachel Cusk (2021)
- *Hot Milk* by Deborah Levy (2016)

Keywords: literary mystery, literary fiction, memory, emotion, relationships

Review copies available. Contact publicity@thistledownpress.com.

A Study in Red

By Connie Gault

Two women tell the story of the shocking act of violence that transforms both their lives.

Carol and Amy haven't seen each other for decades—not since they met one fateful summer in 1962—but the death of a very old woman named Hattie reignites long smouldering emotions. What exactly happened to turn a summer idyll into a nightmare?

The first voice we hear in *A Study in Red* is Amy, talking as if she were the main character in a film noir. Then Carol picks up the narrative like a detective determined to use reason to examine the past. But the past beguiles her and she sinks into her memories of being thirteen, when she was Hattie's guest at her summer place and the enigmatic romance writer held her in thrall.

Amy and Carol think they can understand the violence that took place beside Hattie's swimming pool, but they both get crucial details wrong, and because of that, the mystery and their attempts to solve it have repercussions neither could have foreseen.

A literary mystery and an exploration of the nature of memory, this novel is also a study of the red emotions: lust, anger, jealousy, and not least, love.

Praise

“One shocking act cracks through this book like breaking glass, sharp enough to scar. Each time the shards settle, Gault gives her kaleidoscope a shake to show us a new pattern, a new devastating shaft of understanding. Gault is a brilliant writer, fascinating because she thinks—and because her thinking changes how we see the world.”

—Marina Endicott, author of *The Observer*

“A haunting novel of trauma, memory, and isolation. With a keen ear for the human voice, quiet precision, and deadpan humor, Connie Gault's story carries us across the wreckage of intergenerational violence. This novel is a testament to the resilience of even the slenderest of human bonds.”

—Tamas Dobozy, author of *Ghost Geographies*

About the Author

Connie Gault is the recipient of the 2025 Cheryl and Henry Kloppenburg Award for Literary Excellence. Her most recent novel, *The Rasmussen Papers*, was short-listed for the 2024 Toronto Book Award. Previous fiction has won several Saskatchewan awards and has been short-listed for the Commonwealth Prize for Best Novel of Canada and the Caribbean and long-listed for the Giller Prize. After living most of her life in Saskatchewan, Connie now resides in London, Ontario.





Publication: June 16, 2026

PB: \$24.95 CAD EPUB: \$10.99 CAD
 ISBN: 9781771872850 ISBN: 9781771872867

5.5x8.5 | 348 pages

FICTION / War & Military
 FICTION / Crime
 FICTION / Literary

Availability: WORLD

Distribution: UTP Distribution

[CataList](#) | [BookManager](#)

Publicity

Key Selling Points:

- Gritty and tender exploration of the long shadow cast by war
- A rare, personal story based on Canadian Peacekeeping operations
- About the power of blood relations and chosen family, and the healing nature of love

Comp titles:

- *The River Twice* by John Bemrose (2021)
- *Peacekeeping: A Novel* by Mischa Berlinski (2016)
- *Girl at War* by Sara Novic (2016)

Keywords: literary fiction, war, conflict, trauma, healing, secrets, connection

Review copies available. Contact publicity@thistledownpress.com.

The Peace Thieves



By Brent van Staalduinen

This compelling and ambitious novel is about the search for peace during a civil war and through its long, complicated aftermath.

Thirty years after his tour as a peacekeeper in Croatia in 1993, Francis is getting by—though only just—but when Viva arrives in Hamilton searching for the father she never knew, Francis' world tilts, upsetting the burden of his wartime memories. This powerful and compassionate novel alternates between the voices of Francis and Viva, delving into the secrets we hold, the hurts we try to hide, and the simple human connections that bind us.

In war-torn Croatia, Francis meets Lorina, a local woman whose father had just been killed in the conflict; he does his best to protect her in the face of overwhelming resistance and absurdity as he struggles to work alongside the impossibly difficult Master Corporal Mackey. Toward the end of his tour, Francis bears witness firsthand to the devastating aftermath of ethnic cleansing—and then, when a careless moment results in a life-altering injury, he is sent home.

Viva first encounters Francis serving breakfast to the homeless outside the bar he runs—where soldiers like him come to try to forget what they've seen and what they've done. The young woman is angry and resentful, spoiling for confrontation wherever she turns, but in time finds that Francis is not a villain, but someone she just might need to have in her life.

The Peace Thieves has the courage to ask tough questions about the true costs of war, not only to the citizens of the country where the conflict occurs, but to the people who attempt to help and protect them.

Praise

"For those whose mission it is to keep peace, war is never confined to combat zones. It seeps into the darkest crevices. It follows them home. In *The Peace Thieves*, Brent van Staalduinen has written a novel that makes post-apocalyptic seem like fantasy: the apocalypse is here. It is now."

—Wayne Grady, author of *The Good Father*

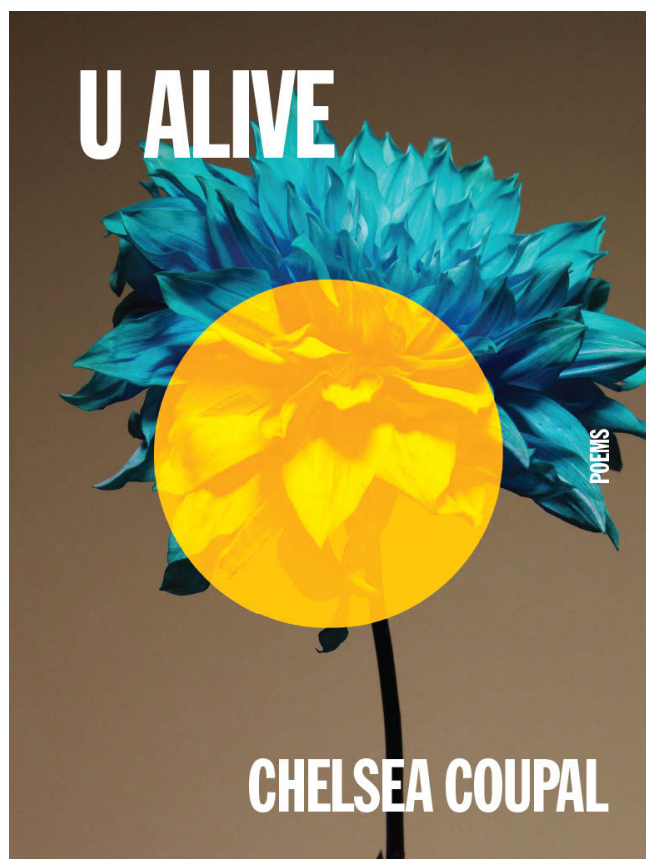
"A deeply felt and deeply affecting look at the vicissitudes of war and its aftermath. Brent van Staalduinen captures the inner lives of his characters with a compassion and humour that for all their traumas makes their journey ultimately an uplifting one."

—Nino Ricci, author of *The Origin of Species*

About the Author

Brent van Staalduinen is the award-winning and bestselling author of the novels *Unthinkable*, *Nothing But Life*, *Boy*, and *Saints, Unexpected*, and the story collection *Cut Road*. His stories have won numerous literary prizes and have appeared in journals and magazines on both sides of the Atlantic. A former army medic and recovering high school English teacher, he now lives in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada with his wife and two daughters, and when not writing or teaching writing to aspiring undergrads, he often finds himself looking for excuses to use his power tools or wandering city streets looking for stories. Find out more at www.brentvans.com.





U ALIVE

By Chelsea Coupal

Fierce, clear-eyed poems that confront head-on the struggle to have faith in some kind of future in our complex, ecologically challenged world.

U ALIVE, Chelsea Coupal's second poetry collection, documents the cusp between young adulthood and new motherhood, between being responsible for no one but yourself—and having the responsibility of a newborn generation in your arms. And with parenthood comes a sharp new awareness of mortality and its ubiquitous threat.

The collection tracks the past through its many collisions with the present, as the speaker moves between her new existence as a mother and the tumult of her life as a single person in her early twenties. The poems deal with being pregnant in the pandemic, and giving birth—while being unable to dismiss or forget the wild parties and romantic misadventures that came before settling into a life in the city with a partner. The collection is structured around innovative “calendar” poems taking us through a full year, in which the author explores intersections and transitions between childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, between the death of grandparents and the birth of the great grandchild they will not meet. Many poems are based on a deep connection with the life and land in rural Saskatchewan, the beauty of the brilliant yellow canola fields contrasting harshly with the sometimes toxic and disheartening realities of agribusiness.

These poems are honest, visceral, sensual, and alight with startling rhythmic cadences.

Publication: April 14, 2026

PB: \$19.95 CAD EPUB: \$9.99 CAD
ISBN: 9781771872836 ISBN: 9781771872843

6 x 8 | 78 pages

POETRY / Subjects & Themes / Family
POETRY / Women Authors
POETRY / Canadian

Availability: WORLD

Distribution: UTP Distribution

[CataList](#) | [BookManager](#)

Publicity

Key Selling Points:

- Accessible, topical poems appealing to millennial readers
- A searingly honest portrait of being a young woman in a small-town setting
- Similar in style to work by Karen Solie, Lorna Crozier, and Sheri Benning

Comp titles:

- *Field Requiem* by Sheri Benning (2021)
- *The Caiplie Caves* by Karen Solie (2019)

Keywords: poetry, Prairies, family, motherhood, adulthood, life

Review copies available. Contact publicity@thistledownpress.com.

Praise

“With unfurling truths, *U ALIVE* gives us a resonant chronicle of deep kindred bonds, a melodic hymnal for small prairie towns, and a farmhouse calendar devoted to the rhythms of place and self. Jubilant, fierce, and raw, Coupal evokes the intensities of the seasons: birth, coming of age, mothering, and of sickness and aging, alongside farm cycles and ecological loss. “Gentle-steady as a psalm” and with “cold-delicate heft”, *U ALIVE* is a resilient and powerful collection of poems—one in which we will all recognize ourselves.”

—Sandra Ridley, author of *Vixen* and *Sylvija: Poems*

“*U ALIVE* is a click of the shutter at the transitional moments of experience: the subtle passage of one moment or month or season into another, one generation into another, one state of being into another. With brilliance and sensitivity, and with equal attention to social and natural worlds, Chelsea Coupal writes with a beguiling sense of transformation and shift.”

—Medrie Purdham, author of *Little Housewife*

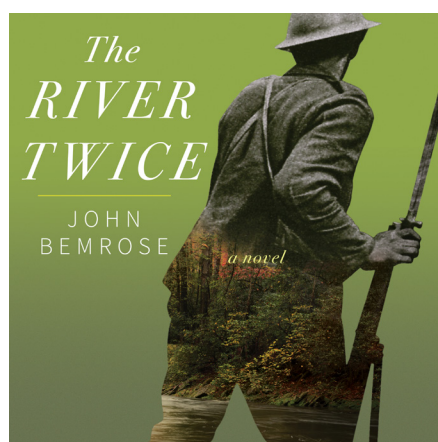
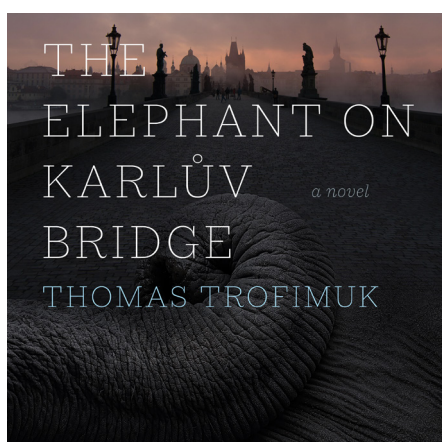
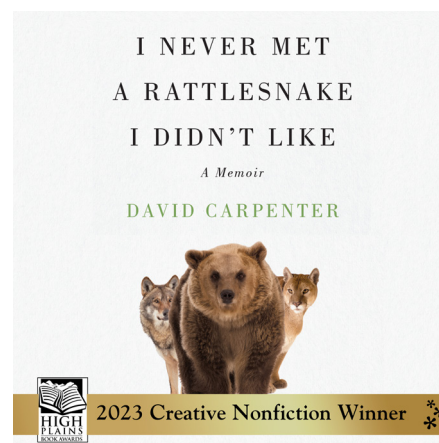
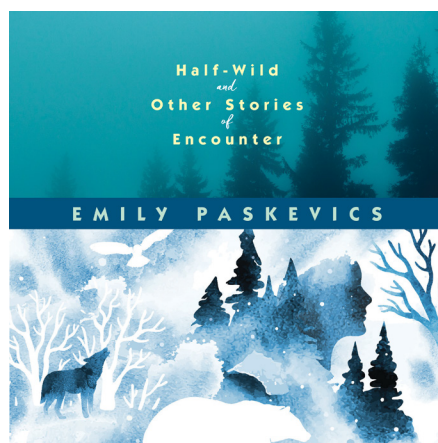
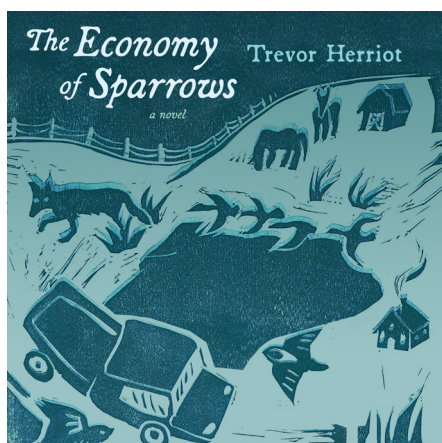
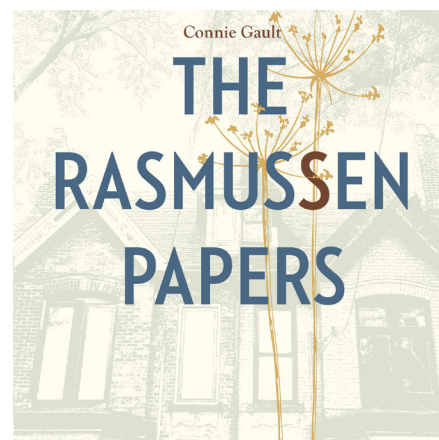
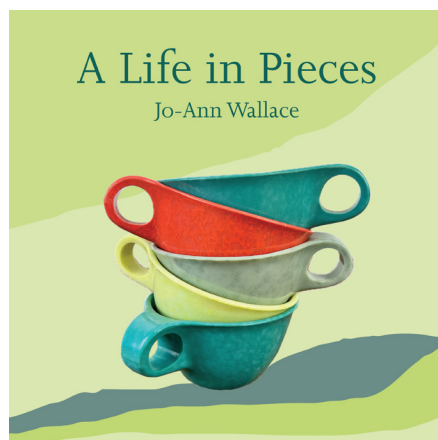
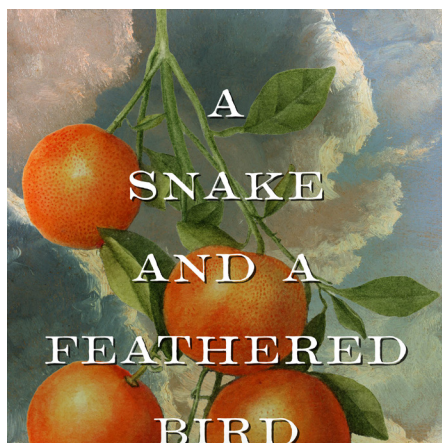
About the Author

Chelsea Coupal's first poetry collection, *Sedley*, was selected for an Indigo Exclusive edition and shortlisted for three Saskatchewan Book Awards. Her poetry has won the City of Regina Writing Award, been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and appeared in more than a dozen Canadian publications, including *Arc*, *EVENT*, *The Fiddlehead*, the *Literary Review of Canada*, *The Malahat Review* and *Best Canadian Poetry*.



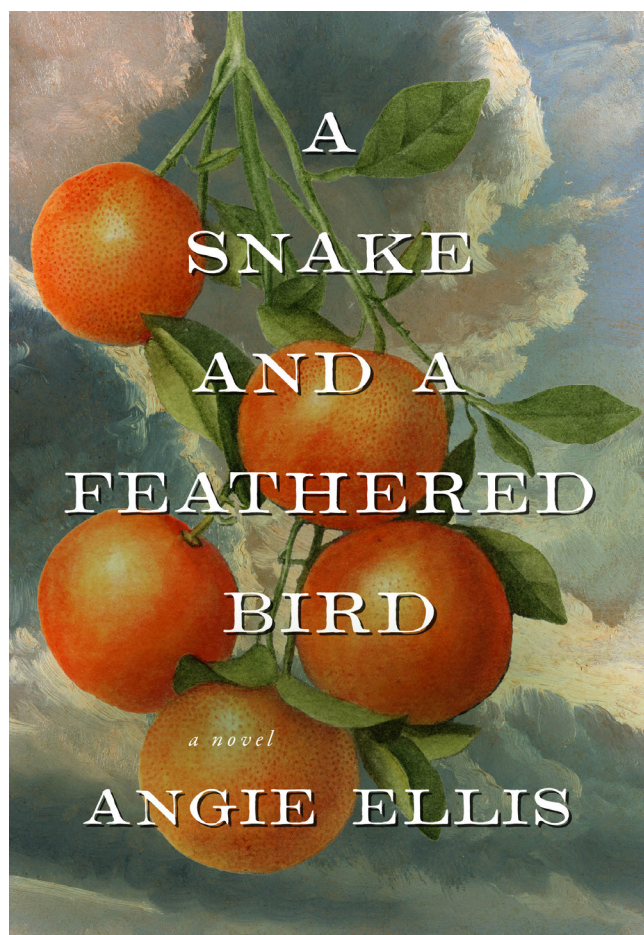
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Publication: October 7, 2025

PB: \$24.95 CAD EPUB: \$10.99 CAD
 ISBN: 9781771872812 ISBN: 9781771872829

5.5 x 8.5 | 324 pages

FIC019000 FICTION / Literary
 FIC014100 FICTION / Historical / 19th Century / General
 FIC043000 FICTION / Coming of Age

Availability: WORLD

Distribution: UTP Distribution

[CataList](#) | [BookManager](#)

Publicity

Key Selling Points:

- Captivating exploration of self-discovery amid complex relationships
- Debut novel from the 2023 winner of the Masters Review Winter Short Story Award ("The Sisters")

Comp titles:

- *North Woods* by Daniel Mason (2023)
- *Far Cry* by Alissa York (2023)
- *Ridgerunner* by Gil Adamson (2020)

Keywords: literary fiction, coming-of-age, debut, historical, atmospheric

Review copies available. Contact publicity@thistledownpress.com.

A Snake and a Feathered Bird



By Angie Ellis

This atmospheric coming-of-age tale, set on Vancouver Island circa 1875, follows Ben as he struggles to unravel his family history while caught in the vortex of other people's lives.

Three-year-old Ben comes to live with Agda and her volatile husband James in their small wilderness cabin. His early childhood is happily spent in the lush rainforest, helping his beloved Mère in the garden and learning his letters at the kitchen table. Until James takes young Ben on a whisky run, with tragic results. And when they return to the cabin, his mother has been mysteriously injured and dies soon after.

The nearby Stenhouse farm becomes Ben's refuge, where he's inspired by the spiky, truth-telling girl Effie and her risk-taking bravado. But when his father dies, seventeen-year-old Ben must make the wilderness trek to the city to honour James's bequest to his niece Lily. There, Ben gets hopelessly entangled with the people he meets, especially Lily, who seems constantly in need of rescue—and the longer he stays the further he drifts from Effie.

Ben must fight mightily to fulfil his obligations—especially to himself—and escape the seductions of the city and his own contradictory desires in this richly imagined debut novel.

Praise

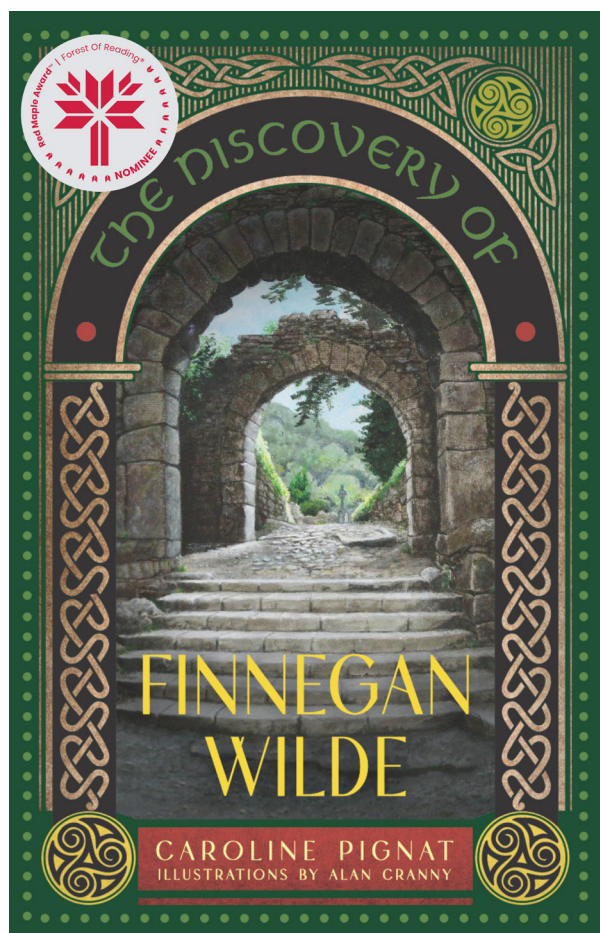
"Ben's journey to adulthood is lit by the beauty of the human spirit in its many painful facets. *A Snake and a Feathered Bird* is a remarkable debut novel."
 —Bill Gaston, author of *The World* and *Tunnel Island*

"Angie Ellis is like a west-coast William Faulkner. I could taste and smell the earth in this story, feel the fog of old forests. Ellis's empathetic prose teases out the beauty of isolation, and gives life to a range of unsung souls . . . I loved getting lost in this moody world."
 —Colin McAdam, author of *Fall* and *A Beautiful Truth*

About the Author

Angie Ellis is a writer from Vancouver Island whose short fiction has appeared in *Narrative*, *Story*, *The Fiddlehead*, *Grain*, and other literary journals. Her stories have won the Masters Review Short Story Award, Best of the Net, and Best Small Fictions, and two were longlisted for the CBC Short Story Prize. She has received grants from both the Canada Council for the Arts and the BC Arts Council. A graduate of the Humber School for Writers Program, she has also attended the Humber Summer Workshop. She lives in the Cowichan Valley on Vancouver Island.





Publication: August 19, 2025

PB: \$16.95 CAD EPUB: \$9.99 CAD
ISBN: 9781771872874 ISBN: 9781771872881

5.5 x 8.5 | 424 pages

JUVENILE FICTION / Historical / Exploration & Discovery
JUVENILE FICTION / Legends, Myths, Fables / General
JUVENILE FICTION / Social Themes / Self-Esteem & Self-Reliance

Availability: North America - English

Distribution: UTP Distribution

[CataList](#) | [BookManager](#)

Publicity

Key Selling Points:

- 2025 Red Maple Award Nominee (Forest of Reading Awards)
- By the author of Governor General's Literary Award-winning *Greener Grass* (2009) & *The Gospel Truth* (2015)

Comp titles:

- *The Assassin's Curse* by Kevin Sands (2018)
- *Mark of the Plague* by Kevin Sands (2017)
- *The Blackthorn Key* by Kevin Sands (2016)

Keywords: adventure, archeology, Celtic, folklore, historical fiction, Ireland

Review copies available. Contact publicity@thistledownpress.com.

The Discovery of Finnegan Wilde



By Caroline Pignat

A thrilling novel of self-discovery that is part adventure, part mystery, and part Celtic myth, set in Dublin in 1913.

Fifteen-year-old Finnegan Wilde steals to survive. Always on the run from gangs and police, Finn is also fleeing her own mysterious past, glimpsed only through nightmares and an unusual Celtic mark on her arm. When, in a chance encounter outside the museum, she scores a journal filled with strange diagrams, maps, and a drawing identical to her mark, Finn hungers for more than the next meal. She wants answers, and more than anything, she wants to find her family.

Eddie Moore, a young apprentice archaeologist, has spent months trying to decipher an ancient manuscript he and his father excavated from a bog. The Moores believe it was written by Tomas, a 9th century monk, and that it holds the clue to finding the legendary Cauldron of Plenty, one of four Treasures of Ireland. But when Eddie's father is seriously injured by a gang in an attempted robbery, Eddie alone must find the Cauldron.

When their search brings them together, Finn and Eddie realize the mark on her arm and his ancient manuscript are connected. Finn doesn't trust this awkward scholar from the rich side of town. Eddie is just as suspicious of this wild girl with no home, no past, and no rules. But if they can work together, perhaps—as Tomas hoped—they will make the greatest discovery of all.

Three voices—those of Finnegan, Eddie, and Tomas—intertwine like a Celtic knot that readers will delight in unravelling to the very last page.

Praise:

"A grand adventure through Irish legends, full of ancient magic, secrets, and hidden treasures."

—Kevin Sands, award-winning author of the Blackthorn Key series

"I fell in love instantly with the smart, sassy, lonely Finn—and soon after, Eddie and every other character in this story so richly steeped in Irish lore . . . all I can say is *Wow!*"

—Kathy Stinson, acclaimed author of over 40 titles for young people

About the Author

Irish-Canadian author and educator Caroline Pignat is the recipient of two Governor General's Awards for Children's Literature (*Greener Grass*, 2009; *The Gospel Truth*, 2015). She explores complex themes through her character-driven stories and her work is hailed by the Canadian Children's Book Centre as "historical fiction at its best!" Pignat immerses her readers in rich and varied historical settings, drawing them close to characters who embody resiliency, empathy, and hope. She lives in Ottawa.

Kohkum's Royal Bannock



By Wilfred Burton; illustrated by Hawlii Pichette. Michif translation by Irma Klyne and Larry Fayant



This beautifully illustrated Métis picture book is fully bilingual in Michif and English. A feast for the eyes and a tickle for the funny bone, Kohkum cooks up a HUGE order of bannock in her own kitchen, for the Queen and 299 guests!

This lively and whimsical tale begins with a letter from the government asking Kohkum to cook bannock for the Royal visit. Kohkum's grandson Xavier is as excited as she is, until they do the math and are shocked to learn that they are cooking not just for the Queen but for her entourage and guests too. A mad scramble ensues, with a rushed trip to the grocery store to buy a ridiculous amount of flour and milk, and a perilous trip home with the car stuffed with supplies and Xavier riding on the roof. Several aunties come to the rescue, helping with bannock assembly and sharing in the excitement of cooking for the Queen.

Written by an educator, this story provides many opportunities to count in English and Michif, with many laughs along the way as Kohkum, aunties, and Xavier scramble to cook the bannock in time for the Queen's visit. Boldly colourful, humorous illustrations by illustrator Hawlii Pichette bring this entertaining story to life. Full translation makes this book ideal for in-class cultural learning and Michif language acquisition.

Publication: August 5, 2025

HC:	PB:	EPUB:
\$21.95 CAD	\$14.95 CAD	\$9.99 CAD
ISBN: 9781771872751	ISBN: 9781771872744	ISBN: 9781771872768

10.5x9 | 32 pages

JUVENILE FICTION / Indigenous / Family Life
 JUVENILE FICTION / Concepts / Counting & Numbers
 JUVENILE FICTION / Humorous Stories

Ages 4-9+ / PreK - Grade 4

Availability: WORLD

Distribution: UTP Distribution

[CataList](#) | [BookManager](#)

Publicity

Key Selling Points

- Fully bilingual in Michif and English, with many opportunities to count in both languages
- Author has won and been shortlisted for multiple awards

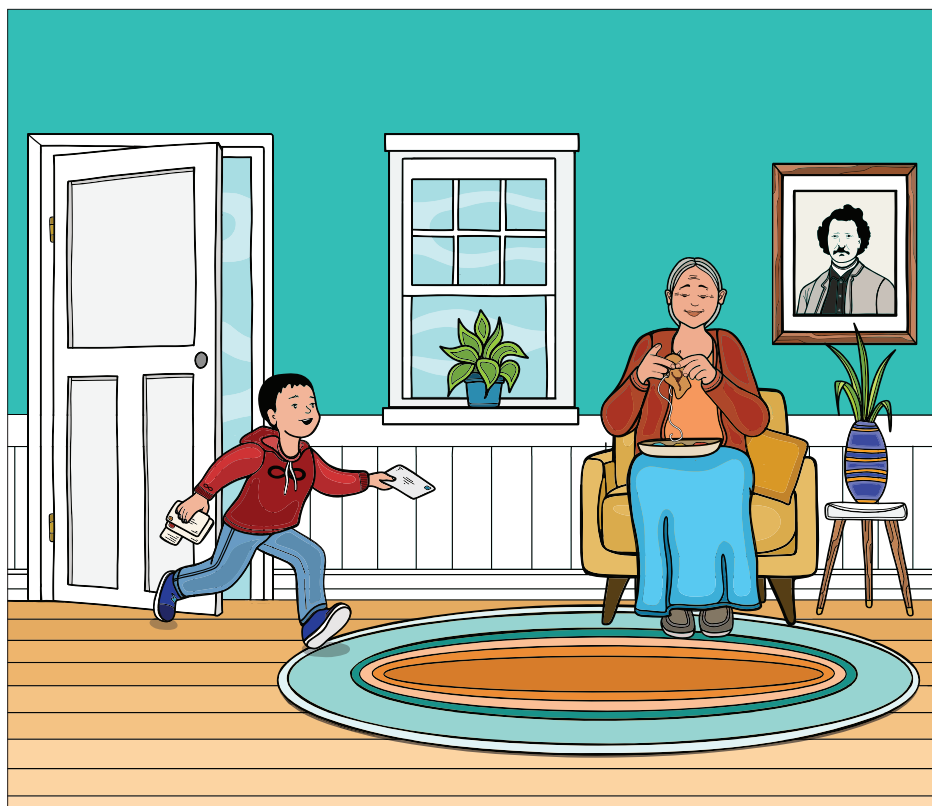
Comp titles:

- Benjamin Grows a Garden* by Melanie Florence (2025)
- Auntie's Rez Surprise* by Heather O'Watch (2023)
- Awâsis and the World-Famous Bannock* by Dallas Hunt (2019)

Keywords: baking, bannock, early math skills, Grandma, Grandson, Michif, the Queen

Review copies available. Contact publicity@thistledownpress.com.





Praise

“. . . full of details, concepts and questions that are cleverly designed to keep young readers fully engaged with this very entertaining story.”

—Michelle Shaw, SaskBooks Reviews

About the Author

Author Wilfred Burton, a proud Michif, grew up in the Midnight Lake area of Saskatchewan. He was an elementary teacher, university instructor and literacy coordinator for over 30 years. He is currently retired and spends his time writing, reading, gardening, beading, rug hooking and doing lots of volunteer work in the community. He is a published author of several Métis specific picture books. His love of storytelling, fiddle music and dance came as gifts from his mother, Georgina Nolin. A gift he loves to share with others through presentations and writing. He lives in Saskatoon.

About the Illustrator

Hawlii Pichette is a Mushkego Cree (Treaty 9), urban, mixed-ancestry artist. Her work is deeply influenced by her culture and upbringing and reflects the beautiful interconnections of the natural world. She currently lives in London, Ontario, Canada.

Kohkum's Royal Bannock, interior (pg. 2-3). By Wilfred Burton, illustrated by Hawlii Pichette. Michif translation by Irma Klyne and Larry Fayant.

“Kohkum! We’ve got mail!” shouted Xavier.

There was always excitement when they got mail. If there were flyers, Kohkum sat and pointed out the things on sale. If there was a cheque, Xavier knew they’d go shopping and he’d get a treat. But this time, it was different.

“It’s . . . from the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan,” read Xavier.

“What do they want from this old Michif woman?” asked Kohkum.

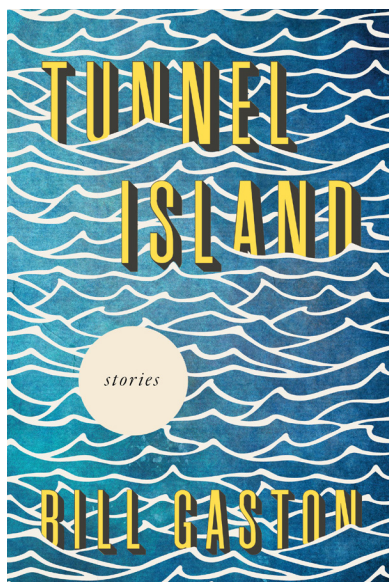
“Kohkum! La mail dayawnawn!” taypwayw Xavier.

Toultawn oohpipayihowuk la mail ka ayawchik. Tawnishpi lee flyers ka takoshikik, Kohkum apiw akwa itwayhum kaykwy ka wayhtukihtayk. Ishpi aen check ka mishkuhkik, Xavier kishkayhtum ka do natahikaychik akwa kwaykway ka meekowiwi. Maka akwa pahkawn.

“Si . . . ouschi li Gouvarneur di Saskatchewan,” amishchikayw Xavier.

“Kaykwy ka dawayhtuhkik ouschi awa la vyay Michif?” kwaychihkaymo Kohkum.





Tunnel Island: Stories

by Bill Gaston

Publication: April 29, 2025

PB: \$24.95 CAD
ISBN: 9781771872683

EPUB: \$10.99 CAD
ISBN: 9781771872713

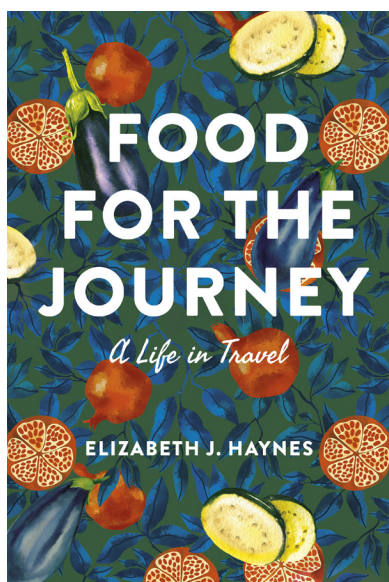
5.5 x 8.5 | 228 pages

FICTION / Short Stories
FICTION / Small Town & Rural
FICTION / Dark Humour / General

Availability: Canada - English
Distribution: UTP Distribution
[CataList](#) | [BookManager](#)

Set on an island in BC's Salish Sea, *Tunnel Island* is a richly imagined and often darkly hilarious collection of linked stories by short-fiction master Bill Gaston.

Highly original and empathetic, *Tunnel Island* is electrified by dark undercurrents that jolt and illuminate by turns. Bill Gaston's bighearted vision of life on a heavily forested island immerses readers in a world rendered tender and tolerable by human folly and our stumbling attempts at redemption.



Food for the Journey: A Life in Travel

by Elizabeth J. Haynes

Publication: May 27, 2025

PB: \$24.95
ISBN: 9781771872690

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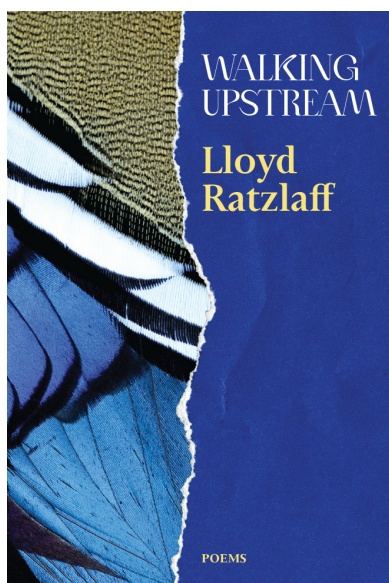
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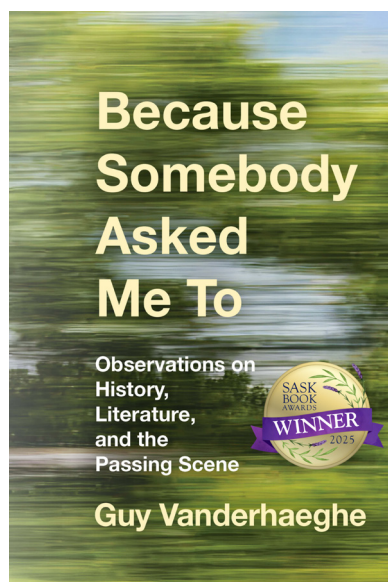
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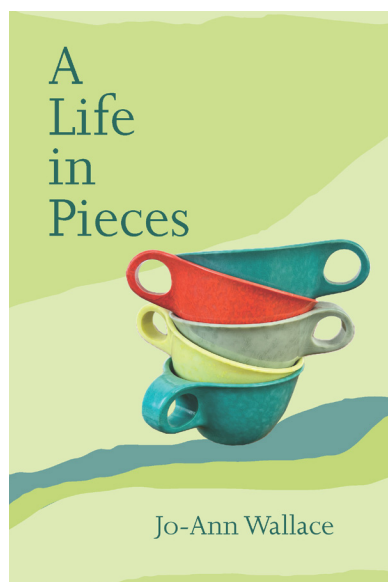
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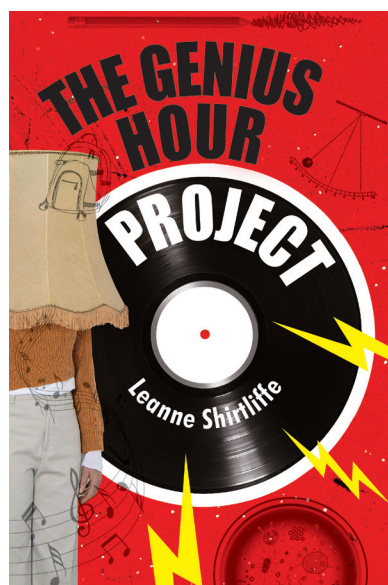
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