

2022-23 ANNUAL REPORT



Kathy Oster greets students at Story Avenue, February 2023



young alberta
book society

**CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF
BRINGING ALBERTA'S CHILDREN
AND LITERARY ARTISTS
TOGETHER**



Portrait of Gerry
Rasmussen
by Noah in grade 5



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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

This past year has been a year of slow recuperation and new challenges. While schools remained open as COVID-19 updates slowed and public health measures eased further, educators continued to be overwhelmed. All teachers are struggling with exhaustion. Many of our literary artist visits and other programs were again offered in-person, but virtual visits are likely to remain on offer as hosts and artists are now familiar with the technology and there are times when a virtual visit makes logistical sense even outside of the specific circumstances of the pandemic.

The Martyn Godfrey award for young Albertan writers went through some changes. After over twenty years, the changes allow us to now choose more winners from each of the eligible grade groups. The prize of an author visit was delivered virtually to the winners in two groups and went over very well.

Our Taleblazers festival once again ran year-round, with visits to many schools. The Seeds of Stories (SOS) bursary program continues to make it possible for many cash-strapped schools to host literary artist visits. In February, our popular Story Avenue writing camp returned to in-person. Young Edmontonians from several disadvantaged schools enjoyed writing and drawing exercises with our artists, ate a snack, and went home with a book each.

I want to thank Cenovus Energy, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, the Government of Alberta, the Edmonton Arts Council, the City of Edmonton, the Edmonton Community Foundation, Dinner Optimist Club of Edmonton, the Calgary Arts Development Association, Shaw Birdies for Kids, the Allard Foundation, Edmonton Public Teachers Local 37, the Telus Friendly Future Foundation, the Leanne Children's Foundation, the Werklund Foundation, and the Red Deer Community Foundation for their financial support this year. Special thanks as always to our Executive Director Stephanie Gregorwich and our Deputy Director Jennifer Plamondon. You two work magic in putting all of this together. And thank you to my fellow Board members, to our hosts, our literary artists, and our volunteers for valuing literacy and dedicating time to helping young Albertans.



CATHERINE LITTLE, JUNE 2023



MARTYN GODFREY AWARD



The Martyn Godfrey Young Writers Award had an exciting year in 2022! We received nearly 100 short stories from grade 4-9 students all over the province which were read by our volunteer jury.

This year saw a big shake-up in how prizes were awarded which allowed us to celebrate even more young writers.



Instead of two grand prizes plus one winner from each grade (2 winners and 6 runners-up), every grade now has three winners (18 winners total!), all of them get to attend our exclusive Winners' Circle online writing workshops, and they can bring a friend or sibling.

The elementary winners attended a workshop by Marty Chan while the junior high winners had a session by Natasha Deen. Every winner also received a certificate and a parcel of books by YABS authors.

“ I look forward to judging every year. The entries are always full of surprises as these young writers share their work and offer a peek of themselves. I'm so privileged to be among the first to read examples of what they can do. ”

**CATHERINE LITTLE,
JUDGE**



We began honouring the late Martyn Godfrey with this contest in 2001, inspired by Martyn's joy in the letters he received from children.

GODFREY WINNERS

Grade 4 Winners

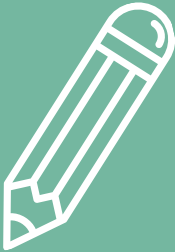
- Hailey Chan of Calgary for *Escape*
- Penelope Cho-Kelln of Calgary for *My Friend from the Deep*
- Elena Sala Macnab of Calgary for *Night Hunters*

Grade 5 Winners

- Kylie Cavilla of Calgary for *Two Perspectives*
- Leo Frey-Heinke of Edmonton for *On the Ice*
- Malaya Murray of Edmonton for *Terrified*

Grade 6 Winners

- Natalie Heimdal of Irma for *Dreams of Freedom*
- Anna Perrin of Edmonton for *The Light in the Darkness*
- Aneesha Sharma of Edmonton for *OCD*



Grade 7 Winners

- Naif Almaged of Edmonton for *Conor Brown Detective Files*
- Dahlia Hunter of Edmonton for *Wyatt*
- Gwyneth Ozar of Edmonton for *The Glass Deer*

Grade 8 Winners

- Abygale Fraser of Cold Lake for *Train Runner*
- Madelyn Nichol of Cold Lake for *Elegance Before Tragedy*
- Jajohn Ouyang of Calgary for *Divided*

Grade 9 Winners

- Andrea Hong of Calgary for *A Mother's Promise*
- Cal Ristic of Lethbridge for *As Above So Below*
- Monet Tran-Davies of Calmar for *Masquerade*

To check out the winners' stories head to:

<https://www.yabs.ab.ca/martyn-godfrey-young-writers-award/>





CENOVUS WORDPOWER



The Cenovus Wordpower tour once again brought 18 authors, illustrators and storytellers together with students in 20 Cenovus communities around Alberta. After consultation with hosting teachers and the experience of successful online touring, we kept the program online for another year -- but this time with a newfound confidence in our collective ability to manage shifting policies, school closures, unexpected medical leave, and cohorted scheduling.

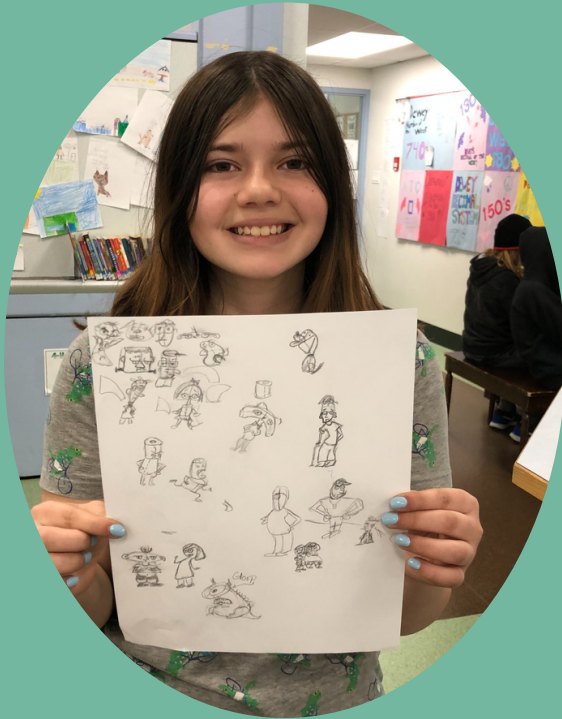
From April 4 to June 17, 2022 the literary artists sat down at their computers and beamed into classrooms from afar. The authors, illustrators and storytellers each worked with groups of up to five classrooms at a time, talking about their work; teaching writing, illustrating and storytelling techniques; and sharing the stories and artwork they've created. With smaller groups, they sometimes conducted workshops, leading classes of students through their own writing and drawing processes, and providing an insider's perspective. One author's presentation opening was so polished that a student commented out loud that it had to be recorded and was stunned when the author immediately replied to him.

The 2022 Tour artists were Bethany Ellis, David Poulsen, Gail de Vos, Gerry Rasmussen, Hazel Hutchins, Joan Galat, Karen Gummo, Kate Boorman, Katherine Koller, Kathy Jessup, Lorna Schultz Nicholson, Marty Chan, Natasha Deen, Rob Feagan, Shenaaz Nanji, Sigmund Brouwer, Sue Farrell Holler, and Tololwa Mollel.



WORDPOWER

CENOVUS WORDPOWER



Ardmore School student shows off artwork after Gerry Rasmussen's workshop

“The most valuable aspect of this program is simply that every student gets something out of the presentations. Whether it's a student who loves writing or reading and is super excited to see a real author, or one who is the opposite and starts to think maybe reading and/or writing isn't so bad, or for that student who is having a really crummy time and it is an escape for them. Everyone gets something positive out of it!”

**JILL TERCIER,
DR. B. BROUSSEAU
SCHOOL**

“We absolutely loved our author visits. We have been enjoying reading the books with students in the library classes. The kids felt like they met celebrities as they were familiar with their published works which was so cool.”

**ALICE NORMAND,
COLD LAKE MIDDLE SCHOOL**

The 2022 Tour Communities: Ardmore, Beaver Lake Cree Nation, Bonnyville, Caslan, Cold Lake, Drayton Valley, Edson, Elizabeth Metis Settlement, Fort MacKay, Grande Cache, Hinton, Kikino, Lac La Biche, Lamont, Le Goff / Cold Lake First Nation, Plamondon, Rocky Mountain House, Sturgeon Lake First Nation, Valleyview, and Whitecourt



WORDPOWER



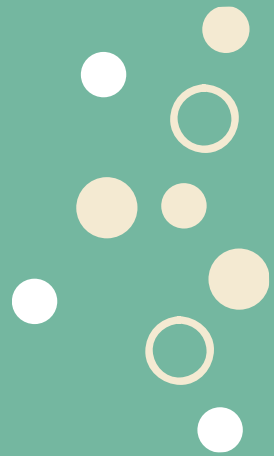
TALEBLAZERS

YEAR ROUND & BURSARIES



In many ways, 2022-23 was more challenging than the previous year for Taleblazers, our annual literary festival which sends YABS literary artists into schools and libraries all over the province.

While we once again had travel funding thanks to our successful casino in the summer, many artists were unsure about committing to overnight travel, going back to in-person, or continuing with virtual. While schools were still enthusiastic about the idea of artist visits, they were faced with tighter than ever budgets, the 'pandemic slide' in their students' academic and social levels, and continued unexpected medical leave leaving them drastically understaffed.



We held to the lessons learned about grace and flexibility and arranged bookings throughout the year as part of our Year-Round Bookings service. We secured money for 49 bursary spots from multiple sources (most of which occurred during this fiscal year but some are carried over into next). We worked with schools to reschedule bookings that had to be postponed due to illness and assured them that it was okay. We dipped our toes back into in-person sessions and re-learned along with the artists how to do travel claims forms.

Under the combined banners of Taleblazers, Year-Round Bookings, Dr. Charles Allard Win-a-Literary Artist, and Seeds of Stories bursaries, we successfully facilitated 19 in-person and 43 online bookings by 17 different artists. Our artists conducted 187 individual sessions at 55 different schools and libraries in 20 different communities across Alberta.

The Taleblazers festival creates opportunities for literary artists to engage students of all grade levels around the province, which leads to enhanced levels of literacy, and most importantly, excitement about reading and the arts.



Taleblazers

TALEBLAZERS

YEAR ROUND & BURSARIES



Kathy Jessup at Bonnyville Municipal Library, November 2022

My favourite moment of the day was when the students of our Young Authors Club couldn't wait to continue working on their novels and had a new level of confidence. I have seen many students have an 'AHA!' moment during the presentations that could have been a connection, a new idea, an improved attitude about writing in general and a new interest in books and authors in some students. There's so much value it's hard to pick just one thing!

**HEATHER HENRY,
PIONEER SCHOOL**



Lorna Schultz Nicholson at
A. Blair McPherson,
Edmonton, January 2023

*Thank
you!*

Our deepest thanks go out to the many sponsors of our bursary spots: The Allard Foundation; The Edmonton Community Foundation; Calgary Arts Development; Shaw Birdies for Kids presented by AltaLink; and the Red Deer & District Community Foundation.



STORY AVENUE



On February 23-24, 2023, with joy and excitement, students, instructors, volunteers and teachers were able to gather at the Centre for Education in Edmonton for two inspiring mornings of writing and illustrating workshops with nine YABS authors and illustrators.

Four hundred grade 5 & 6 students joined us from from Delton, Norwood, John A. MacDougall, Mee-Yah-Noh and Oliver schools. They attended two sessions with different artists, were fed a mid-morning snack, and returned to school with pages of writing and a book by one of their instructors.

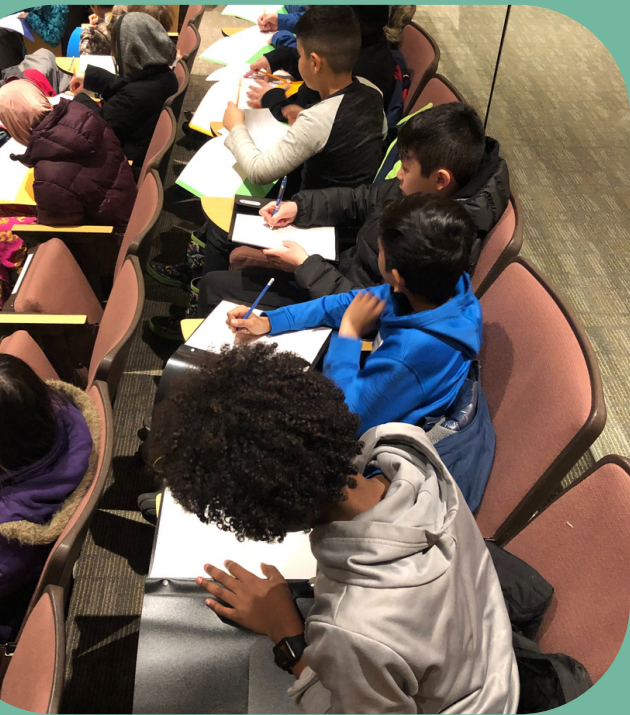
The students went back to their schools bubbling over with glee about finishing their stories from the workshops and starting new ones. They whizzed through the gift books they were given, traded with their friends, and emptied the library shelves of everything written by the instructing authors.

Story Avenue is always a highlight and being back in person for the first time since February 2020 made it even more special.



Story Avenue 2023 instructors (left to right): Sigmund Brouwer, Joseph Simons, Joan Marie Galat, Bill Bunn, Lorna Schultz Nicholson, Carolyn Fisher, Gerry Rasmussen, Sue Farrell Holler, David A. Poulsen

STORY AVENUE



Story Avenue students learning to write comics

“ I'm always impressed by how the authors can engage the students and have them filling pages with words, sketches, brainstorm, and stories in such a short period of time. One of my students came out of his session so excited that he had filled an entire page with a strong story when this is something that is usually so difficult for him to do! Big smiles today!

KATIE CHAPMAN, TEACHER

“ Bill [Bunn] was kind, so funny. I used to worry about my writing but he gave me confidence to just write and not worry so much. He told me not to freak out about whether it was perfect because no one's story is perfect in the first draft. The best part was when he said my first paragraphs were actually very good!

STORY AVENUE STUDENT

“ It was good to meet authors but it was great to actually talk with them, have a real conversation! The authors seemed like they were interested in what I had to say. I was surprised when one of them said that THEY were excited to meet us!

STORY AVENUE STUDENT

“ I really liked the book I got from my author. I read it everyday after lunch in school. It took such a long time because I usually don't read long novels (I read graphic novels only usually) but I feel like it was an accomplishment and the style ended up being good.

STORY AVENUE STUDENT



Some of our incredible volunteers

Our deepest gratitude goes out to our Story Avenue sponsors: The Werklund Foundation, the TELUS Friendly Futures Foundation, the Edmonton Public Teachers Local 37, and the Dinner Optimist Club of Edmonton





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A LEGACY OF CARING



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The Young Alberta Book Society also gratefully acknowledges the support of Leanne's Children's Foundation.