

The Newfoundland and Labrador Book Awards

Under the distinguished patronage of the Honourable Frank Fagan, CM, ONL, MBA, Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

20th Newfoundland & Labrador Book Awards Shortlists Announced

(April 26, 2016 – St. John’s, NL): The juries have read and debated and have named the finalists for the prestigious Newfoundland and Labrador Book Awards, now celebrating 20 years. This year the Awards honour excellence in the categories of Fiction and Children’s/Young Adult Literature.

Finalists for the **Newfoundland and Labrador Book Award for Fiction** (sponsored by Killick Capital, Noreen Golfman, John and Jan O’Dea, and Fisher’s Loft):

- Joan Clark for *The Birthday Lunch* (Penguin Random House)
- Michael Crummey for *Sweetland* (Doubleday Canada)
- Sara Tilley for *Duke* (Pedlar Press)

Finalists for the **Bruneau Family Foundation Children’s/YA Literature Award**:

- Charis Cotter for *The Swallow: A Ghost Story* (Penguin Random House)
- Susan M. MacDonald for *Time for Treason* (Breakwater Books)
- Janet McNaughton for *Flame and Ashes: The Great Fire Diary of Triffie Winsor* (Scholastic)

Public readings by the finalists will take place in St. John’s as follows:

Fiction: Tuesday, May 31, 7:30 p.m., Suncor Energy Hall, Memorial University, emceed by media host (TBA).

Children’s/YA Lit: Sunday, May 29, 2 p.m., Rocket Room, Rocket Bakery, 272 Water Street.

The winning authors, to be **announced at a ceremony** on June 6 at Government House in St. John’s, will each receive a cash prize of \$1,500; each finalist receives \$500.

The Newfoundland & Labrador Book Awards are sponsored by the Literary Arts Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador and administered by the Writers’ Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador under the distinguished patronage of The Honourable Frank Fagan, CM, ONL, MBA,

Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador. Other sponsors this year include *The Telegram*, Rogers TV, Perfect Day, and the NL Teacher's Association.

What the judges said:

Fiction finalists:

Joan Clark, *The Birthday Lunch*. In [this novel] perhaps her best yet, Lily McNab on her 58th birthday is hit by a truck and killed while crossing the street. Clark masterfully spins a yarn out of this accident, exploring the ramifications for those affected, chiefly Lily's husband, son, daughter, and contrary sister Laverne, but also friends and neighbours, including the boy who drove the truck. Throughout the obsequies we get an insider's look at the workings of a small New Brunswick town. Clark's approach is delicate, shrewd, and compassionate. The characters, especially Laverne, are sharply drawn. A plot hovers intriguingly in the background. This is an eminently readable, tightly written, accomplished novel.

Michael Crummey, *Sweetland*. An atmospheric tale of a man who is so attached to his small island home that he decides to stay there when the whole community makes a permanent move to the mainland. Memories, isolation and hunger wear him down from reality into a haunted dream-state. Crummey effectively uses his seductive powers of plot and language, and originality of style and voice to take the reader along on Sweetland's wanderings. Despite the strangeness, *Sweetland* is a very readable novel.

Sara Tilley, *Duke* is an extraordinary book for the uniqueness of its principal voice, a barely literate but unusually articulate narrator, William Marmaduke Tilley (aka Duke) and for the universality of its focus, the dream of finding "easy" wealth in distant places. Sara Tilley knits together disparate elements of time, place character and theme --- loyalty, abuse and disappointment --- in an epic story that grabs the reader by the ear and sustains our fascination from the first line to the last. *Duke* is a complex human drama told with poise and originality by a gifted young author.

Children's/YA Literature finalists:

Charis Cotter, *The Swallow: A Ghost Story*. Good ghost stories generate evocative suspense and atmosphere, original, sympathetic characters, and, of course, raise readers' curiosity about what will happen next. When handled well these elements make readers tingle deliciously—even as they wonder about reading on. Charis Cotter's *The Swallow: A Ghost Story* succeeds on all these levels. Cotter merges contemporary realism with gothic creepiness as her two young protagonists, Polly and Rose, wind their way through a world where nothing is exactly as it appears. Her plot centres on an interesting premise: One girl who sees dead people, and one who *wants* to. Cotter is an accomplished writer, and the narrative drive of the story, pushed along in alternating Polly/Rose chapters, is impressive. Cotter's deft touch and camera eye make for fluid, engaging readability.

Susan M. MacDonald, *Time for Treason* is a strong, well-written book, one that young adults, especially fans of sci-fi, will undoubtedly welcome. The author demonstrates a sure touch with character and action, taking command of the story with cinematic flair. From the opening pages the reader is immersed in a powerfully imagined, multidimensional other world, one that never loses sight of human emotion. MacDonald is making a substantial mark in her chosen genre.

Janet McNaughton: *Flame and Ashes: The Great Fire Diary of Triffie Winsor*. Triffie Winsor's diary shows not only how life can be turned upside down in the blink of an eye-but also how resilient and adaptive children are in the wake of a disaster. With meticulous research, McNaughton weaves an engaging tale of the very fabric of day to day life in St. John's after the great fire of 1892, as the successful Winsor merchant family go from "riches to rags" overnight. *Flame and Ashes*, in true *Dear Canada Series* format, and with beautifully crafted narrative, will give all readers – young and old – poignant insight into an amazing "coming of age" story during one of the most important periods in Newfoundland history.

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