

Readers' Choice

Albertans have their say on who wins inaugural literary prize

BY ERIC VOLMERS, CALGARY HERALD APRIL 11, 2010

The ball's in your court. Will it be a comedy about a teenager who bases his romantic views on Kenny Rogers, a surreal short-story collection, a book about why Americans hate us or examinations of dark and triumphant moments in Alberta's history?

The province's bookworms will be making the final call on who should win the inaugural Alberta Readers' Choice Award, a literary prize worth \$10,000.

It will be the end of a long process that began last May when the Edmonton Public Library and the Book Publishers Association of Alberta joined together to help celebrate books published in the province. Two hundred submissions were accepted and eventually whittled to five by an awards committee, librarians and eventually five jurors. Those same jurors have now chosen a title to champion, not unlike CBC's Canada Reads. But the ultimate decision is up to you. If you want to vote, visit albertareaderschoice.ca before April 30.

Here are the books that made the shortlist.

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Bomb Canada and Other Unkind Remarks in the American Media, by Los Angeles-based author Chantal Allan

- Publisher: Athabasca University's AU Press

- What it's about: A study of anti-Canadian sentiments held by our neighbours to the south throughout the ages.

- Champion: Edmonton author and journalist Fil Fraser.

- Why you should vote for it: "For Canadians, it's an excellent primer on how Canada has stood up to Americans over our history," says Fraser. "The Americans are thoroughly pissed off because we are not them. What the book really underlines and illustrates is the immense frustration that the Americans have in the fact that we exist."

The Frog Lake Reader, by Edmonton author Myrna Kostash

- Publisher: Edmonton's NeWest Press

- What it's about: An examination of the Frog Lake Massacre of 1885, when young Cree warriors killed six white settlers living in Frog Lake, in what is now Alberta.

- Champion: Calgaryborn former senator and broadcaster Tommy Banks.

- Why you should vote for it: "We don't know enough about (the massacre) and we should all know more about it," says Banks. "I found the book enjoyable to read, interesting to read and very informative." The Forgotten Explorer: Samuel Prescott Fay's

1914 Expedition to the Northern Rockies, by Samuel Fay

- Publisher: Calgarybased Rocky Mountain Books.

- What it's about: A first-hand account of Fay's expedition through the Canadian Rockies north of Jasper. Fay, a Boston-born member of the American Alpine Club, died in 1971.

- Champion: Red Deer Mayor Morris Flewwelling.

- Why you should vote for it: "I think people will really enjoy the sense of intimacy and discovery that Fay creates in his writing," says Flewwelling.

Fishing for Bacon, by Calgary author Michael Davie

- Publisher: Edmonton's NeWest Press

- What it's about: Sad-sack teenager Bacon Sobelowski, who has a neglectful mother and a passion for fishing, attempts to find his true love with words of wisdom from Kenny Rogers as his guide.

- Champion: Edmonton bookstore owner Laurie Greenwood.

- Why you should vote for it: "Whether you're 18 or 68, I think this book will appeal to everybody," says Greenwood. "Who doesn't love a good laugh that this book can bring you?" Buying Cigarettes

for the Dog, by Toronto author

Stuart Ross

- Publisher: Calgary's Freehand Books

- What it's about: A collection of wild and often surreal short stories, dealing with everything from lost limbs to guerrilla cows.

- Champion: Calgary bookstore owner Simone Lee

- Why you should vote for it: "I could say things about how Ross juxtaposes realities, how he's an evolution of modernism or surrealism or any other ism," says Lee. "But mostly I have to say he's the greatest writer on the short list."

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