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2025 CCBC Book Awards Celebrate Excellence in Literature for Young People

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Awards

CCBC News

Announcing the **2025 CCBC Book Awards** winners



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Toronto (October 27, 2025)—The Canadian Children's Book Centre (CCBC) is excited to announce the winners for seven of its children's book awards. Earlier tonight in a ceremony held at DoubleTree by Hilton's downtown Toronto location, these books and their creators were recognized for outstanding literary achievement. Highlights of the evening included a special slideshow celebrating 20 years of the Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award, as well as the inaugural presentation of the Sharon Fitzhenry Award for Canadian Children's Non-Fiction. In total, \$52,500 in prize monies was awarded tonight.

Tonight's winners include:

- ***Hummingbird / Aamo-binashee***, written and illustrated by Jennifer Leason, Anishinaabemowin translation by Norman Chartrand and Jennifer Leason (Orca Book Publishers), won the Richard Allen Chase Memorial Award (\$2,500).
- ***The Headmasters***, written by Mark Morton (Shadowpaw Press), won the Arlene Barlin Award for Science Fiction and Fantasy (\$5,000).
- ***Alterations***, written and illustrated by Ray Xu (Union Square Kids), won the Jean Little First-Novel Award (\$5,000).

- **Age 16**, written and illustrated by Rosena Fung (Annick Press), won the Amy Mathers Teen Book Award (\$5,000).
- **Song of Freedom, Song of Dreams**, written by Shari Green (Andrews McMeel Publishing), won the Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People (\$5,000).
- **Meet Jim Egan**, written by Elizabeth MacLeod, illustrated by Mike Deas (Scholastic Canada), won the inaugural Sharon Fitzhenry Award for Canadian Children's Non-Fiction.
- Celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, the prize for the Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award (\$20,000) was bestowed upon author-illustrator Yayo for **SOS Water** (Tradewind Books).

"The 2025 CCBC Book Awards bring together seven unique awards into one awesome celebration of excellence in Canadian literature for kids and teens. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the finalists and the winners," says Stephanie Wells, CCBC Executive Director. "All seven of these very different books have at their **hearts**, stories of hope and resilience. Readers will be inspired by the characters (some imagined, some real) as they fight for freedom, equality, rights, the environment, belonging, finding their own voice, and their place in the world. Some fights are quieter than others, some are peppered with humour, or feature beautiful art, but all show children that they can make a difference and that they are not alone."

"We are especially thankful to the supporters of these awards—A. Charles Baillie, Elly Barlin-Daniels, the Fitzhenry Family Foundation, Accelerate360 Canada, Teresa James, Rocky Mountain Book Award and Alice Chase—for helping us elevate Canadian books and their creators," says Wells. "We are also grateful to tonight's event supporters, Friesens and Tinlids."

Below is the full list of prizes presented, with comments from the jurors. To download a PDF of this press release, [click here](#). For a complete list of the shortlisted titles, [click here](#). Congratulations to all of the winners and finalists!

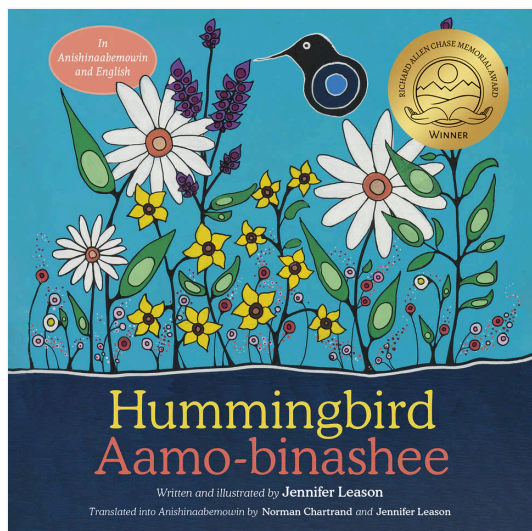
For more information, please contact:

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Richard Allen Chase Memorial Award (\$2,500)

Supported by Rocky Mountain Book Award and Alice Chase



Hummingbird / Aamo-binashee

Written and illustrated by Jennifer Leason
(Dalmeny, SK)

Anishinaabemowin translation by Norman
Chartrand (Surrey, BC) and Jennifer Leason
(Dalmeny, SK)

Orca Book Publishers
for ages 6-10

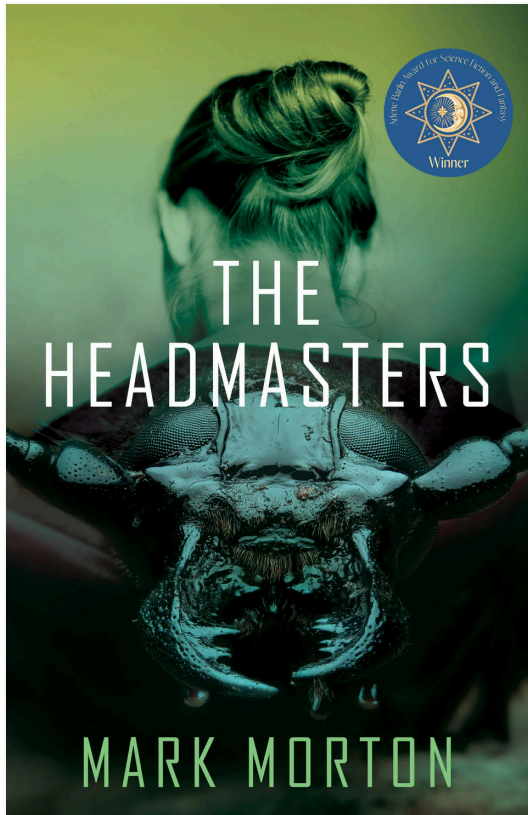
"A moving bilingual picture book that blends Indigenous storytelling with themes of love, resilience, connection, and healing... Author-illustrator Jennifer Leason invites readers on a powerful journey of personal awareness, self-discovery, and belonging—within family, community, and spirit... At the heart of the story is the hummingbird—a powerful symbol of strength, transformation, and renewal... The bold acrylic illustrations are simple but powerful. The changing colours reflect the main character's emotions, moving from sadness to hope and finally healing... This understated yet profound story resonates across generations, leaving readers with a lasting sense of connection and purpose. A must-have for every bookshelf."

JURY MEMBERS: **Michelle Dimnik**, retired teacher, literacy consultant and founding member, Rocky Mountain Book Award: An Alberta Children's Choice Book Award; **Aaron Fitchett**, Principal, Lethbridge School Division; **Ruth McMahon**, Professional Librarian, Lethbridge School Division.

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Arlene Barlin Award for Science Fiction and Fantasy (\$5,000)

Supported by Elly Barlin-Daniels



The Headmasters

Written by Mark Morton (Kitchener, ON)

Shadowpaw Press

for ages 12 and up

"A new science fiction novel that feels like it's already a classic... Morton's The Headmasters invites the reader into a dystopian future that is rife with traditional science fiction world building. His work brings to light the challenges of control and the puzzles that come with trying to navigate a future when the past is lost to memory... This well-paced young adult novel captures the readers' attention right from the beginning... A page-turner that brings the reader into this

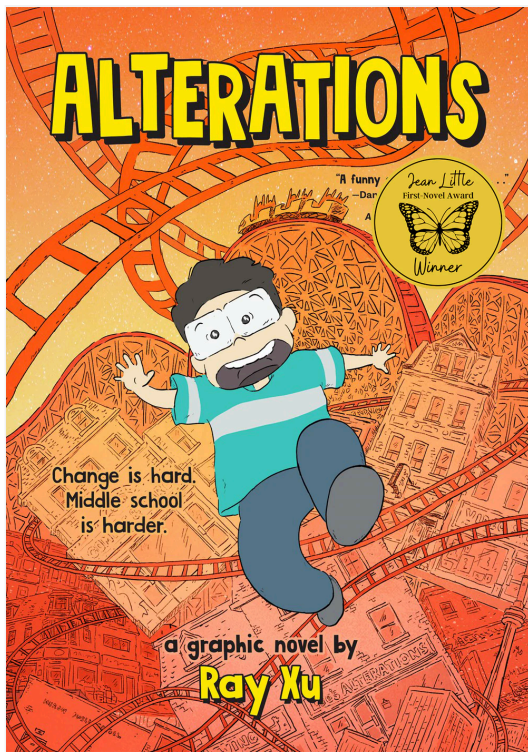
speculative reality in ways that are sure to leave them with a level of discomfort and hope that will not easily be forgotten."

JURY MEMBERS: **Fatma Faraj**, Junior School Teacher-Librarian, Branksome Hall; **Dr. Dave Jenkinson**, Professor Emeritus, Children's & YA Literature, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba, and former Editor, CM: Canadian Review of Materials; **Ashley Pamentor**, Manager, Programs, Girl Guides of Canada and Co-Chair, Red Maple and White Pine Steering Committees.

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Jean Little First-Novel Award (\$5,000)

Supported by Teresa James



Alterations

Written and illustrated by Ray Xu (Toronto, ON)
 Union Square Kids
 for ages 8-12

"A funny yet heartfelt story about a young Asian-Canadian kid who's trying to navigate his way through middle school... Drawing from his own memories of growing up in Toronto in the 1990s, Ray Xu has crafted a debut graphic novel to cherish... Hilarious and painfully honest, Alterations never shies away from the culture clashes that children of immigrants can face at school and home, while drawing readers in with engaging art and Kevin's

flights of imagination... The well-drawn characters and their struggles are memorable and endearing... A great addition to any bookshelf or school library."

JURY MEMBERS: Chad Lucas, author; Amy Mathers, reviewer and founder, Amy Mathers Teen Book Award; Sandra O'Brien, former Editor, Canadian Children's Book News, and former teacher.

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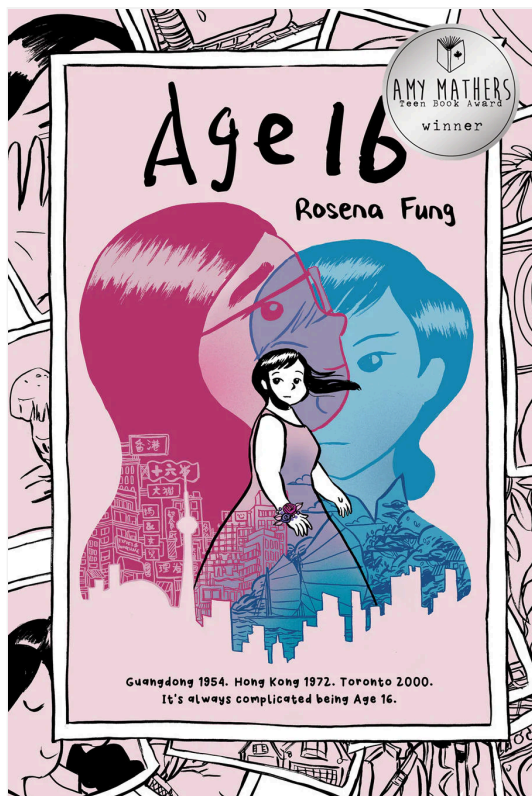
Amy Mathers Teen Book Award (\$5,000)

Supported by Accelerate360 Canada

Age 16

Written and illustrated by Rosena Fung (Toronto, ON)
 Annick Press
 for ages 12 and up

"A powerful graphic novel that connects three generations of women in one family and explores the hardships they all endured at age 16... Fung's artwork is fluid and evocative, adding layers and depth to the linked stories. Using a



change of colour to indicate each character's narrative, universal threads of race, identity and beauty standards run throughout as motivations become clear and each of the three come to know one another better... The evocative colour schemes and details in clothing, hairstyles and architecture make the shifts in time seamless... Emotionally complex, authentic and relatable, themes of familial expectation, racism, and trauma are explored as well as the fragile balance between mothers and daughters, and the healing that comes with understanding and acceptance."

JURY MEMBERS: **Maria Martella**, bookseller

and owner, Tinlids Inc.; **Jo Treggiari**, author and co-owner, Black Shop Books;

Tara Truscott, teacher-librarian, York Region District School Board.

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Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People (\$5,000)

Supported by the Canadian Children's Book Centre's Bilson Endowment Fund

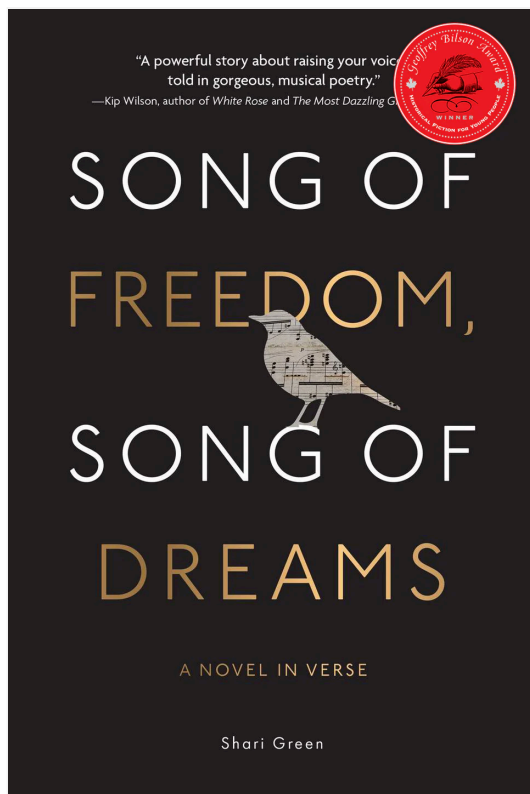
Song of Freedom, Song of Dreams

Written by Shari Green (Campbell River, BC)

Andrews McMeel Publishing

for ages 12 and up

"Green's gripping novel in verse explores the familial, personal, and political complexities of living in late 1980s communist East Germany... This book is beautifully crafted, from the title page to the included historical sources. Helena navigates profound loss, burgeoning love, terrifying state surveillance, and divided loyalties, but it is her desire for the freedom to pursue her dreams that propels her choices... The novel-in-verse format is perfectly suited to the topic, demonstrating how a young artistic person might find expression under a totalitarian regime."

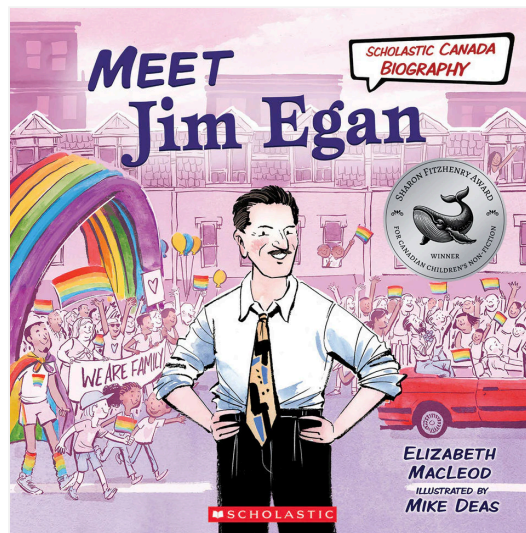


JURY MEMBERS: K. Joan Harrison, Librarian, The Sacred Heart School of Montréal; **Brandon Mitchell**, author, illustrator and founder of Birch Bark Comics; **Tracey Schindler**, reviewer and former teacher; **Gail de Vos** (chair), author, storyteller and Adjunct (Associate) Professor, School of Library and Information Studies, University of Alberta.

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Sharon Fitzhenry Award for Canadian Children's Non-Fiction (\$10,000)

Supported by the Fitzhenry Family Foundation



Meet Jim Egan
(Scholastic Canada Biography)
Written by Elizabeth MacLeod
(Toronto, ON)
Illustrated by

Mike Deas (Salt Spring Island, BC)
Scholastic Canada
for ages 6-10

"The latest offering in the Scholastic Canada Biography series focuses on 2SLGBTQIA+ gay rights and environmental activist and all-around trailblazer Jim Egan who for over 50 years fought for inclusiveness, understanding and equal rights. MacLeod, as we've come to expect, not only creates just the right information to give readers a sense of the times this remarkable Canadian lived in but creates a sense of connection with her young readers with the perfect balance of biographical details and fascinating facts reinforced by

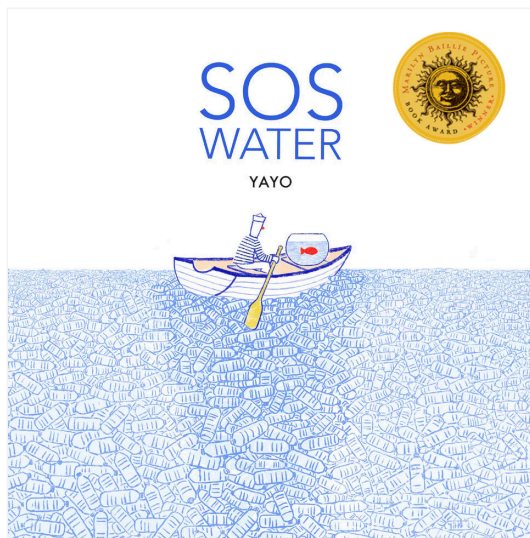
Deas' playful cartoon illustrations and black-and white-photographs... The storytelling is captivating, and the illustrations are bright and expressive... Meet Jim Egan is a must in every library."

JURY MEMBERS: **Jeffrey Canton**, children's book reviewer, *The Globe & Mail*; **Haneefa Corbie**, Middle School Department Head, Selwyn House School; **Colette Poitras**, Métis librarian.

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Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award (\$20,000)

Supported by A. Charles Baillie



SOS Water

Written and illustrated by Yayo (Montreal, QC)
Tradewind Books
for ages 4-8

"Necessary, relevant, and unique. This is a necessary addition to any library because it addresses a very relevant global topic that affects all living creatures on Earth... A punchy, spirited picture book bursting with wit, wonder, and wildly imaginative visual

surprises... The journey story is inventive, the illustrations are sometimes quirky, and the environmental theme is vital... This story not only invites readers of all ages to think about the effects of climate change but to think about taking action to take care of our planet... Kids will be drawn in by the striking artwork and stay for the empowering message that even small voices can make big waves."

JURY MEMBERS: **Jade Lee**, elementary teacher-librarian, Vancouver School Board; **Janis Nostbakken**, children's media specialist; **Larry Swartz**, Instructor, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto and author of *Teaching Tough Topics* and *Better Reading Now* (Pembroke Publishers).

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About the Canadian Children's Book Centre

The Canadian Children's Book Centre is a national, not-for-profit organization founded in 1976. We are dedicated to encouraging, promoting and supporting the reading, writing and illustrating of Canadian books for young readers. Our programs, publications, and resources help teachers, librarians, booksellers and parents select the very best for young readers.

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