



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

12 May, 2008

**Winners of the 2008 Atlantic Book Awards**

After a week brimming with Book Festival events across all four Atlantic Provinces, including readings, signings, writing workshops, murder mystery tours and more, the nominees for the ninth annual Atlantic Book Awards convened at the Alderney Landing Theatre in Dartmouth. The air was frenetic with anticipation as copies of the 25 shortlisted books were snatched up from booksellers in the lobby. Ten different book prizes were awarded plus the Mayor's Awards for Illustration and for Cultural Achievement in Literature.

CBC-Radio One host Don Connolly opened the Ceremony with panache and continued to charm the audience as he presided over the proceedings. Mayor Peter Kelly took to the stage and awarded the **Mayor's Award for Cultural Achievement in Literature** to publishing up-and-comer **Robbie MacGregor**, co-publisher at Invisible Publishing, an ambitious company founded in 2007 and based in Halifax and Montreal, whose books have already garnered national praise. The **Mayor's Award for Excellence in Book Illustration** was presented to **Len Wagg** for his photographic portraits of Nova Scotia's most beautiful – and often secret – natural treasures in *Wild Nova Scotia* (text by Bob Bancroft, Nimbus).

The recipient of numerous awards throughout his rich and fascinating career, **Marq de Villiers** swept up both the **Evelyn Richardson Prize for Non-fiction** and the **Dartmouth Book Award for Non-fiction** for his unique account of Nova Scotia's most famous and beloved sailing vessel, *The Witch in the Wind: The True Story of the Legendary Bluenose* (Thomas Allen). Stewart Donovan had also been nominated for the Richardson and Dartmouth prizes for *The Forgotten World of R. J. MacSween: A Life* (CBU Press). Also nominated for the Richardson was Steven Laffoley for *Hunting Halifax: In Search of History, Mystery and Murder* (Pottersfield), and the final nominee for the Dartmouth prize was A. J. B. Johnston for *Endgame 1758: The Promise, the Glory and the Despair* (CBU Press).

**Beatrice MacNeil** received the **Dartmouth Book Award for Fiction** (sponsored by Jarislowsky-Fraser) for her tale of three Cape Breton sons serving in World War II, and the family members who await their return, *Where White Horses Gallop* (Key Porter Books). The other nominees were David Doucette for *North of Smokey* (CBU Press) and Carol Bruneau for *Glass Voices* (Cormorant).

The 20<sup>th</sup> annual **Booksellers' Choice Award** went to New Brunswick author **Jacques Poitras** for *Beaverbrook: A Shattered Legacy* (Goose Lane), a book of investigative journalism with characters and a plot so thrilling it's hard to believe it's not fiction. The other shortlisted titles were Steven Laffoley's *Hunting Halifax: In Search of History, Mystery and Murder* (Pottersfield) and Harvey Sawler's *Twenty-first Century Irvings* (Nimbus). Poitras was invited on stage a second time, with his publisher, Susanne Alexander of **Goose Lane Editions**, to accept the prize for **Best Atlantic Published Book**, sponsored by Friesen's Corporation and Hignell Book Printing. The runners-up were Nimbus Publishing for *Gracie, The Public Gardens Duck*, written by Judith Meyrick and illustrated by Richard Rudnicki; and Goose Lane Editions for *Miller Brittain: When the Stars Threw Down Their Spears* by Tom Smart.

Prolific New Brunswick writer **K.V. Johansen** received the **Ann Connor Brimer Award for Children's Literature** for her enchanting YA novel, *Nightwalker: The Warlocks of Talverdin* (Orca), the first book in a new series. The Award was presented by Ann's sister, Sara Smith. Also

nominated for this year's Award were Valerie Sherrard for *Speechless* (Dundurn) and Alice Walsh for *A Sky Black with Crows* (Red Deer).

The **Lillian Shepherd Memorial Award for Illustration** was presented by Carolyn Gillis to first-time illustrator **Richard Rudnicki** for his delightful depiction of Judith Meyrick's story of one duck's quest for a good meal, *Gracie, The Public Garden's Duck* (Nimbus). Also shortlisted were Eric Orchard for *A Forest for Christmas* (Nimbus) and Nancy Keating for *A Puppy Story* (Tuckamore).

Presented by Mary Jane Copps, President of the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia, the **Atlantic Poetry Prize** was awarded to **Don Domanski** for his breathtaking, Governor General's Award-winning masterwork, *All Our Wonders Unavenged* (Brick). George Murray's *The Rush to Here* (Nightwood) and Anne Simpson's *Quick* (McClelland & Stewart) were also nominated for the Prize.

The **Margaret and John Savage First Book Award** went to first-time novelist **Stephanie Domet** for *Homing: the whole story (from the inside out)* (Invisible Publishing), a tale that could only be based in Halifax — of love, grief, and the potential for healing that comes from the sometimes surprising interconnections of lovers, friends and neighbours. Also nominated were Fred Armstrong of Newfoundland for *Happiness of Fish* (Jespersen) and New Brunswick's Bob Mersereau for *The Top 100 Canadian Albums* (Goose Lane).

The show wrapped up with the **Thomas Head Raddall Atlantic Fiction Prize**, now worth the healthy sum of \$15,000, awarded to **Don Hannah** for his beautiful story of one woman's unusual journey home, *Ragged Islands* (Knopf). The ever-charismatic and award-winning author, Donna Morrissey, presented, and the Award's patron, Tom Raddall II was also in attendance. Bernice Morgan's *Cloud of Bone* (Knopf) and David Adams Richards' *The Lost Highway* (Doubleday) had also been shortlisted for this year's Prize.

The Atlantic Book Awards are presented by the Steering Committee of the Atlantic Book Festival, which is made up of representatives from the Atlantic Independent Booksellers' Association, Atlantic Publishers Marketing Association, Atlantic Area Publishers' Representatives, Ann Connor Brimer Award Committee, Dartmouth Book Awards, Hackmatack Children's Choice Book Awards, Nova Scotia Library Association, Halifax Public Libraries, Halifax Regional Municipality and Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia. Nominees and winners are chosen by independent peer juries.

The Steering Committee acknowledges the generous support that has made the Festival a reality: Department of Canadian Heritage, the Canada Council for the Arts, Nova Scotia Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage, CBC-Radio One, *The Chronicle Herald*, *The Guardian*, *The Telegram*.

For full details, including author bios and more, visit [www.writers.ns.ca/bookfest08](http://www.writers.ns.ca/bookfest08)

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**2008 Atlantic Book Festival and Awards**

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