



Winter 2008

The newsletter of the Vancouver International Writers Festival

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Writers Festival wraps up with record attendance

More than 14,000 people flocked to Granville Island for the 21st annual Vancouver International Writers & Readers Festival, breaking all previous attendance records.

"We are thrilled by the audience response this year, which was even greater than last year's," says Hal Wake, the Festival's artistic director. "There's no question that this Festival is a favourite for Vancouver and is drawing increasing attention among writers and readers everywhere."

One hundred Canadian and international authors appeared in 70 events, coming to Vancouver from Australia, the UK, Ireland, the US, France, Germany, Holland, South Korea, New Zealand, China, South Africa and India. Internationally acclaimed Canadian authors were also in abundance. "We were encouraged by last year's attendance figures to try new ideas and new locations again this year," say Wake, "and readers showed us that they wanted that. Our late Saturday night event in a bar on Granville Island was sold out well in advance, just like our traditionally popular events. We held more events than ever before, and people came out in huge numbers."

The Writers Festival ended with the Duthie Lecture, and a discussion by Ronald Wright about American politics, touching on a theme that permeated several of the Festival events in the days leading up to the US election.



(Top row from left) Ursula Le Guin, Sharon Olds, Leonie Swann (Middle) Ivan E. Coyote, Kinnie Starr, Milles Merrill, (Bottom) Peter Matthiessen, Willie Vlautin and friends. Photo: Chris Cameron

Rookie Writer 2008

Grade 12 student **Ryan Faliszewski** of Semiahmoo Secondary School is the winner of this year's Rookie Writer contest for his poem *The Pumpkin King*. More than 2500 students from around the Lower Mainland participated in the contest, which was sponsored by CBC Radio. Grades 8 - 12 winners spent a day at CBC's Radio Drama studios, creating radio performances based on their entries, which aired across BC on CBC's *North by Northwest*. Ryan's class attended a Festival event as part of his prize and all winners received a complete boxed set of Harry Potter books (with signed book plates!) courtesy of Raincoast Books. You can read *The Pumpkin King* on the VIWF website (www.writersfest.bc.ca/schools).

Boyden Wins Scotiabank Giller Prize

Congratulations to Métis author **Joseph Boyden**, the winner of the 15th annual Scotiabank Giller Prize for *Through Black Spruce*, his novel about contemporary aboriginal life. Boyden's appearances at the Festival won rave reviews.



Joseph Boyden does his best moose call. Photo: Chris Cameron

The Vancouver International Writers Festival and Knopf Canada present **Mary Lou Finlay**, former host of *As It Happens*, in an on-stage interview with Hal Wake on Wednesday, November 26, at UBC's Frederic Wood Theatre. *The Vancouver Sun* writes that Finlay's new book, *The As It Happens Files: Radio That May Contain Nuts* is a collection of "quirky short pieces and thoughtful ruminations on pressing world issues." Tickets are on sale through VancouverTix - 604.629.8849 or www.vancouvertix.com.



Photo: CBC

For on-the-ground Festival reports, check out the newest addition to the VIWF website—the Festival blog. www.writersfest.bc.ca

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Camilla Tibbs joins VIWF team

Camilla Tibbs is the new general manager of the Vancouver International Writers Festival. Camilla took over the GM job just two weeks before the launch of this year's Festival, replacing Aletha Humphreys. Camilla has an extensive background in arts management, primarily in classical music and theatre and was most recently general manager of Touchstone Theatre. She has a degree in English literature and is pleased to be returning to her "literary roots".

2008 Festival Volunteers

Thank you to the 280 wonderful volunteers who lent their time and talents to this year's Vancouver International Writers Festival!

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spreading the word



Students from Lucerne Elementary/Secondary Photo: Iлона Beiks

More than 7600 students attended 34 events for schools with writers from around the world at the Vancouver International Writers Festival this year, including students from Lucerne Elementary/Secondary in New Denver, who made the trek to Vancouver to take in an event with **Marie-Louise Gay** and **David Homel**. La Joie de Lire events in French featured writers from Québec, Saskatchewan and France. **Geoffroy de Pennart** from France was a particular hit, especially when he demonstrated the evolution of the illustrations in his book.

Writer In Residence

Following the wrap of this year's Festival, Québec authors **David Homel** and **Marie-Louise Gay** made their way to Port Alberni on Vancouver Island where David spent five days as Writer-in-Residence at Port Alberni Secondary School, mentoring a Grade ten English class every day for the week. Between the two of them, David and Marie-Louise visited eight classes at PASS and four classes at local elementary schools, inspiring young readers and writers from grades three to eleven. Marie-Louise also worked with a Family Studies 11 class in a workshop format for two consecutive classes.

"The students think this was a worthwhile experience and enjoyed meeting and working with David and Marie-Louise very much." Lizabeth Bill, Teacher-Librarian, Port Alberni Secondary School.

The Writer in Residence program is sponsored by BC Transmission Corporation and supported by the Michael R. Shaw Outreach Program.



David Homel and Marie-Louise Gay. Photo: Chris Cameron

Spotlight on Jab Sidhoo

Vancouver businessman and philanthropist **Ajaib (Jab) Sidhoo** has been an enthusiastic supporter of the Vancouver International Writers Festival since 2002. His support for the Festival has taken many forms – as a corporate sponsor and donor through his family's company (East India Carpets), as a Gala attendee and most recently as a major donor to the Alma Lee Legacy Fund. In 2007 Jab's generous donation to the fund helped the Writers Festival reach its endowment fund goal of \$350,000.



Amitave Ghosh and Jab Sidhoo
Photo: Chris Cameron

VIWF Artistic Director Hal Wake says, "Jab's donation helped us get matching funds from the provincial and federal governments that have really boosted the endowment. In addition, his donation helps us bring writers who we might not otherwise be able to afford. In honour of Jab's South Asian heritage, we try to connect his donation to writers of Indian heritage. In 2007 it was **Kiran Desai**, and this October we presented Booker nominated author **Amitav Ghosh**. We are very grateful to Jab for helping making this possible."

Jab Sidhoo is a donor to many other local charities and to a village school in India, where his contribution has had particular success with encouraging girls to get an education. He recognizes the importance that reading and writing plays in ensuring students succeed.

In 2006 the Vancouver International Writers Festival created an endowment fund celebrating the accomplishments of its founder, Alma Lee. The fund has grown to over \$867,241, thanks to many generous donations from individuals and matching contributions from our government partners: the Province of BC through the BC Arts Renaissance Fund and the Department of Canadian Heritage.



Shaun Tan, Deborah Ellis. Photo: Chris Cameron

Reading with Writers

This fall Festival authors **Deborah Ellis**, **Marie-Louise Gay**, **David Homel**, **Cary Fagan**, **Hazel Hutchins**, **Elizabeth Knox**, **Jean Little**, **Melanie Little**, **Miles Merrill**, **Geoffroy de Pennart**, **Mariko Tamaki**, **Shaun Tan** and **Eric Walters** visited Lower Mainland inner city schools through the Reading with Writers program. This program, which is sponsored by HSBC Bank Canada and supported by the Raise-a-Reader fund, sends writers to inner city classrooms to inspire young readers and writers.

"On behalf of my grade 7 class I want to thank you for the wonderful visit with Deborah Ellis. My students had read some of her books just prior to her coming and were just thrilled with meeting her. Deborah was amazing to listen to. The students greatly benefited from the experience. It's been a few days and they are still talking about it (and reading her books!). We have a photo of her and the class up on the board to remind of us her visit."

Diane Mawson Norgate Elementary, North Vancouver

VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL WRITERS & READERS FESTIVAL

The Vancouver International Writers Festival strives to encourage an appreciation of the written word and to promote literacy by providing a forum where readers and writers can meet. We produce special events and an annual Festival featuring Canadian and international writers for readers of all ages.

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THE VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL WRITERS FESTIVAL
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Mary Lou Finlay: AS IT HAPPENED



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7:30 PM, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 26

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Info: www.writersfest.bc.ca 604.681.6330



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The Vancouver International Writers Festival's Literati Gala raised \$24,000 for Spreading the Word program for BC schools.

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