

# Canadian Authors Corner: An Interview with Author Lesley Choyce

## Questions and Answers

### Most recently published books

- ◆ Hell's Hotel. Kentville: James Lorimer and Company, 2009.
- ◆ Skate Freak. Victoria: Orca, 2008.
- ◆ The Book of Michael. Calgary: Red Deer Press, 2008.
- ◆ Running the Risk. Victoria: Orca, 2009.

### Other Titles by Choyce

<u>Shoulder the Sky</u> . Toronto: Dundurn,	2
<u>Refuge Cove</u> . Victoria: Orca, 2002.	2
<u>Deconstructing Dylan</u> . Toronto: Dundurn,	2
<u>Smoke and Mirrors</u> . Toronto: Dundurn,	3
<u>Sudden Impact</u> . Victoria: Orca, 2005.	4
<u>The End of the World as We Know It</u> . Calgary: Red Deer Press,	5
<u>Falling Through the Cracks</u> . Halifax: Formac, 1996	6

### 1. What is Canadian Literature? How do you define it?

Canadian literature is a very broad area. In general, I define anything written by a Canadian as Canadian literature.

**2. You have been writing novels for young adults for almost two decades. In this time, what developments and changes have you seen?**

When I first started writing books for young adults many of the subjects that I wanted to write about were considered taboo. Today, my most recent novels deal with gritty subjects like death, murder, rape and

stands the value of telling a good story. He is a strongly opinionated writer and is unabashedly who he is. I admire these qualities in an author. As for contemporary Canadian YA authors, I would have to say that I don't read many of them. I don't want to be influenced by other writers. I

young offenders. Fifteen years ago I would not have been able to get these books published.

### 3. Where does your writing fit within the context of Canadian Literature?

Though Canadian literature has moved away from its focus on Canadian history and landscape, books written by Canadian authors do not lose their appeal just because they are set in Canada. As long as the story is universal, it will get the attention of young people. There

is no such thing as Canadian literature anymore, only literature written by Canadians.

### 4. Do you have a favourite Canadian YA author? If yes, why are they your favourite?

I like Farley Mowat because he un-

want my stories and writing to be my own.

### 5. Your novels for young adults tackle all sorts of subjects that range from music to the environment. How do you ensure that your subjects will appeal to a younger audience?

I write characters that are interesting to me. Some are abnormally smart, like Martin in my book Shoulder the Sky, while others are quirky, or funny, or incredibly complex. I do research and talk to teens to make sure my characters are believable.



LESLEY CHOYCE IS A WRITER, A POET, A MUSICIAN AND A SURFER. HIS NOVELS FOR YOUNG ADULTS OFTEN DEAL WITH REAL AND RELEVANT SUBJECTS

## Questions and Answers With Lesley Choyce Continued

**6. Were you an avid reader during your teenage years? If so, did you read books by Canadian authors?**

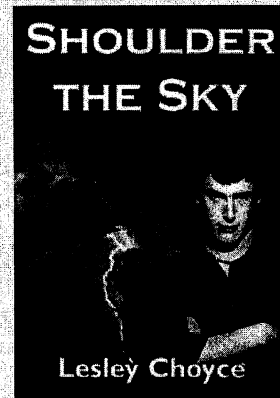
I read a lot when I was a teenager. I read science fiction and fantasy novels, which is interesting because I don't often write in these genres. My next novel, Living Outside the Lines, is going to be the closest I have come to writing a science

fiction book. When I was younger, I did not choose to read books by Canadian authors.

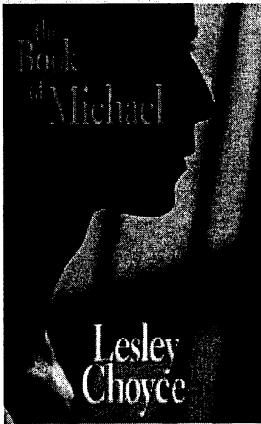
**7. It is often difficult to get young adults to read books by Canadian authors. They think they are boring. Can you think of a way that Canadian literature can shake this stigma?**

It is important that young

people are exposed to the full depth and breadth of Canadian writing for young adults. Often they are only given a limited selection by their English teacher in school. Canadian literature in high school should still be mandated as part of the curriculum, but teenagers should get to choose the books that they want to read.



MARTIN, THE MAIN CHARACTER IN SHOULDER THE SKY HAS JUST LOST HIS MOTHER



**8. Tell me what role, if any, you think that the public library can play in developing young people's interest in Canadian YA authors?**

The public library has always been a lifeline for me. It is a very valuable institution for promoting books. There is no better way to promote a book

than to have it on display at the public library. It is a way to expose young people to books that they would not otherwise pick up. Books in libraries can go really far afield, which provides a network for authors and their ideas to travel all over the world. One great way for libraries to promote Canadian

authors is to invite local talent to come and speak about their books. This is an excellent venue to

**9. What do you see in the future for Canadian writing for Young Adults?**

We are currently in a golden age of literature for young adults, but my concern is over the longevity of this age. Literature often goes through cycles and it is possible that we will see the downside of the current cycle we are in. It is important to take advan-

tage of the time that we are in now to continue to write excellent novels for young adults. It is the writers job to maintain young peoples interest YA written by Canadians.

**10. You have published four books in the last year: Hell's Hotel, Skate Freak, The Book of Michael, and Running the Risk. Are any of these books a favor-**

**ite of yours? Or are you most fond of something written earlier?**

My two favorite books are Shoulder the Sky and The End of the World as We Know It. Both these books have great characters and excellent story lines that deal with a great range of issues that are relevant for young adults.

*Many thanks to Lesley Choyce for donating his time and expertise to this YA Hotline Issue.*

