

Teen Choice (Book) Awards: The Red Maple and White Pine Program of the OLA

By Melanie Grant

Ontario Library Association executive members attended the Texas Library Association's convention in 1993 to learn how they managed to stay engaged and relevant with young people in a large area, very similar geographically and demographically to Ontario, and were inspired by the Texas Bluebonnet Award, a children's choice book award selected by kids in grades 3-6. Upon return to Ontario, after some study, the Silver Birch Award was founded in 1994. In 1998, the Forest of Reading program expanded to include the Red Maple award for young people in grades 7-8, and in 2002, the White Pine award for grades 9-12 (OLA, 2013).

Each year, book titles are put forward by authors and publishers. The goals of the Forest of Reading program, in addition to encouraging literacy, include promoting Canadian authors, so the nominated books must be written by a Canadian citizen or resident, and published within two years preceding the nomination deadline. Ten fiction books in the Red Maple and White Pine categories are selected for nomination by a committee of the OLA, and in alternating years, nonfiction books are included in those categories as well. Participating students must read at least five nominated books to be eligible to vote.

The Forest of Reading program has categories encompassing all age groups, levels of reading, and French and English-

language books, and all awards are selected by the readers of the books. Although there are "trees" for adult readers, the focus is primarily on fostering reading among children and youth.

This is a selection of other teen choice book awards across Canada:

- Manitoba Young Readers Choice Awards (grades 5-8)
<http://www.myrca.ca/>
- Pacific Northwest Library Association's Young Reader's Choice Award – Intermediate (grades 7-9), Senior (grades 10-12). Catchment area is the Pacific Northwest - Alaska, Alberta, British Columbia, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington. The nominated books include US authors.
<http://www.pnla.org/yrca>
- Snow Willow Award – Saskatchewan (grades 7-9)
<http://www.willowawards.ca/>
- Stellar Book Award – BC (age 13-19)
<http://www.stellaraward.ca/2012/>

The winners of the children's and youth Forest of Reading categories are announced at the largest of the Festival of Trees celebrations, which occurs in Toronto in May. The Festival of Trees is the largest children's and young adults' literary festival in Canada, and it is focused on young people as attendees, with its events geared to the more than 8000 young people expected to attend; activities scheduled include workshops with nominated authors, a "tattoo tent" and a book trading tent. Other Ontario cities are invited to hold their own Festival of Trees, and in 2013, Parry Sound, Thunder Bay, and North Bay will be participating in the lead-up to the Toronto festival with their own literary events.

At the time of publication, the 2013 Red Maple and White Pine winners will have been announced, but discussing the merits of the winning selections would be a good topic of debate in a library youth group or book club. Here are the nominees for 2013:

Red Maple Fiction:

Crush. Candy. Corpse. by Sylvia McNicoll
The Dragon Turn: The Boy Sherlock Holmes, His 5th Case by Shane Peacock
End of Days by Eric Walters
First Descent by Pam Withers
Testify by Valerie Sherrard
This Dark Endeavour by Kenneth Opiel (previous winning author)
The Tiffin by Mahtab Narsimhan
The Town that Drowned by Riel Nason
The Vampire Stalker by Allison van Diepen
The Vindico by Wesley King

Red Maple Nonfiction:

Adventures of a Medical Man: Kids Illnesses and Injuries Explained by Dr. Michael Evans, David Wichman, and Gareth Williams
Beyond Bullets: A Photo Journal of Afghanistan by Rafal Gerszak with Dawn Hunter
Last Airlift: A Vietnamese Orphan's Rescue from War by Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch
Lizards in the Sky: Animals Where You Least Expect Them by Claire Eamer
The Lowdown on Denim by Tanya Lloyd Kyi and Clayton Hanmer
Real Justice: Fourteen and Sentenced to Death by Bill Swan
Running to Extremes: Ray Zahab's Amazing Ultramarathon Journey by Steve Pitt with Ray Zahab
The Sea Wolves: Living Wild in the Great Bear Rainforest by Ian McAllister and Nicholas Read
The Secret Life of Money: A Kid's Guide to Cash by Kira Vermond, Clayton Hanmer

You Just Can't Help It! Your Guide to the Wild and Wacky World of Human Behaviour by Josh Szpirglas and Josh Holinaty

White Pine Fiction:

All Good Children by Catherine Austen
Dark Inside by Jeyn Roberts
First Day on Earth by Cecil Castelucci
Getting Over Garrett Delaney by Abby McDonald
Karma by Cathy Ostlere
The Opposite of Tidy by Carrie Mac
The Taming by Eric Walters and Teresa Toten
Way to Go by Tom Ryan
The Way We Fall by Megan Crewe
Witchlanders by Lena Coakley

Past winners of the Red Maple and White Pine awards make for great additions to booklists, but have not been without controversy: in 2009, Red Maple-nominated *Book Nerd* by Susin Nielsen was challenged in Hamilton, Ontario, for its inclusion of foul language. The OLA stood behind Nielsen, and *Book Nerd* went on to win the 2010 Red Maple Award. To build a youth-approved booklist of excellent Canadian young adult literature, try these titles, the winners from the past five years of the Red Maple and White Pine awards:

Red Maple Fiction:

2012 *Half Brother* by Kenneth Opiel
 2011 *Not Suitable for Family Viewing* by Vicki Grant
 2010 *Word Nerd* by Susin Nielsen
 2009 *Out of the Cold* by Norah McClintock
 2008 *Safe as Houses* by Eric Walters

Red Maple Nonfiction:

2011 *Bite of the Mango* by Mariatu Kamara
 2009 *Royal Murder* by Elizabeth MacLeod

White Pine Fiction:

2012 *The Gathering* by Kelley Armstrong
2011 *The Monkeyface Chronicles* by Richard Scarsbook
2010 *Mostly Happy* by Pam Bustin
2009 *Little Brother* by Corey Doctorow
2008 *Keturah and Lord Death* by Martine Leavitt

White Pine Nonfiction:

2012 *The Book of Awesome* by Neil Pasricha

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