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## No shortage of young people's reading material for I Read Canadian Day

JEFFREY CANTON

SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL

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The second annual I Read Canadian Day on Feb. 17, 2021 is dedicated to young people reading Canadian books.

DARRYL DYCK/FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

These 13 new kids' books will transport you across Canada from coast-to-coast without ever leaving home, just in time for the second annual I Read Canadian Day on Feb. 17. The event, dedicated to young people reading Canadian books, celebrates the richness, diversity and breadth of our children's literature.

In Dave Paddon's very tall tale, ***Kimmy & Mike*** (*Running the Goat Books & Broadsides*, 6-8), delightfully illustrated by Lily Snowden-Fine, this brother and sister team set out on their fishing boat one morning to get "something for the pot" for dad's lunch and, next thing they know, these hearty young Newfoundlanders are following fish around the world. En route they encounter 60-foot squids, Somali pirates, talking iguanas and a blubbering merman named Saul before they find their way home.

***Mii maanda ezhi-gkendmaan*** / ***This Is How I Know: Niibing, dgwaagig, bboong, mnookmig dbaadjigaade maanpii mzin'igning*** / ***A Book about the Seasons***, Brittany Luby, illustrated by Joshua Mangeshig Pawis-Steckley (*Groundwood Books*, 3-7) is both a celebration of the seasons and a close look at the natural world inspired by the author's own childhood memories and the teachings of traditional Knowledge Keepers. Grandmother points out to her grandchild the green luna moth hidden among the birches, yellow bumblebees collecting purple fireweed, orange mushrooms emerging on the forest floor and the

white winter moon sitting high in the night sky. This book is written in Anishinaabemowin and English and illustrated in a contemporary Woodland style and the child through whose eyes we see the wonders of nature isn't identified by gender.

**Ten Little Dumplings**, Larissa Fan, illustrated by Cindy Wume (*Tundra Books*, 4-8) is not only a delicious way to celebrate Chinese New Year but is also a poignant story about the way cultural traditions can inadvertently make someone invisible. The 10 little dumplings are actually 10 little brothers growing up in a village in Taiwan who are so famous that the villagers even make up a song about them. But they also have a little sister who is equally amazing. Based on a family story, charmingly illustrated by Cindy Wume, this book beautifully uses the frame of a traditional tale to give little sister her voice back.

Shanice Nicole's first picture book, **Dear Black Girls**, just bursts with joy. Nicole's bold and powerful poem, illustrated by equally powerful paintings by Kezna Dalz (*Metonymy Press*, 6-10) is a vibrant honour song that celebrates the uniqueness of Black girls. Originally written as a spoken word piece, *Dear Black Girls* begs to be read aloud. It practically jumps off the page as it movingly explores all the possible ways of looking at what it means to be a Black girl in 2021.

**Trailblazers: The Black Pioneers Who Have Shaped Canada**, Tiyahna Ridley-Padmore illustrated by Meryll-Royce Ndema-Moussa (*Indigo Press*, 6-10). Starting with the tale of Mathieu Da Costa, the first recorded Black person to come to Canada in the 16th century, Ridley-Padmore offers 40 stories of incredible people – artists, activists, entrepreneurs, community leaders, teachers amongst others – who helped shape Canada but whose stories are under-told. Written in accessible rhyming verse, these poems put these amazing pioneers back where they belong.

**Howdy, I'm John Ware**, Ayesha Clough, illustrated by Hugh Rockwood (*Red Barn Books*, 6-10) Clough offers an in-depth account of John Ware, a legendary Black cowboy and rancher who was a larger-than-life figure – maybe he's Canada's Paul Bunyan? Clough also provides young readers with period photos and excellent online links.

**Broken Crayons**, Patsy Dingwell, illustrated by Marla Lesage (*Acorn Press*, 4-8) tells the story of a teacher who goes to Kenya as a volunteer. Ms. Gillis is sure that she's going to return to PEI with stories of jungle animals, having her picture taken at the equator and how different the Grade 3 classroom where she's teaching is but that's not what she remembers most vividly. You'll have to read this touching picture book yourself to find out what special gift her students in Kenya give her.

In **Carmen and the House that Gaudí Built** (*Owlkids*, 4-8), Susan Hughes imagines what it might have been like to be a little girl whose family is moving from the country to a big new house in Barcelona, forcing her to leave behind an imaginative connection to nature. But this isn't just any house – this is the famous Casa Batlló built by one of the most creative architects of all time. If anyone can bring the outside inside, it's Antoni Gaudí. Marianne Ferrer's vibrant illustrations bring Gaudí's amazing architectural innovations to life.

Andrew Larsen's **The Imaginary Garden** illustrated by Irene Luxbacher (*Kids Can Press*, 3-8) also imagines what it's like to lose your connection to nature when Theo's grandfather moves into an apartment, leaving the garden Poppa loved. But

Poppa has an idea – why not create an imaginary one on the wall of the apartment's balcony. But when Poppa leaves his granddaughter to take care of the garden while he's away, Theo isn't sure she can manage. Luxbacher provides the right touch in her vivacious illustrations, which help us see just how extraordinary this garden is.

***The Fabulous Zed Watson!***, Basil Sylvester and Kevin Sylvester (HarperCollins, 8-12) is a book that has something for everyone – deep belly laughs, a gripping on-the-edge-of your-seat combination of mystery, adventure and a road trip. And Zed and their best friend Gabe both love secret codes and werewolves, vampires and other creature of the night. Throw in a wide range of musical choices, some exotic flowers and fauna and you've got something absolutely fabulous. But there's more because this is a wonderful deeply empowering story about this non-binary kid who just wants to be accepted for who they are. Zed will absolutely win your heart – they've got mine.

What could be better when you're stuck at home than to go on some real life adventures with the guy credited with creating the survival TV genre? ***Wild Outside: Around the World with Survivorman***, Les Stroud, illustrated by Andrew P. Barr (Annick Press, 8-12) is chockfull of feats of derring-do as Survivorman shares his passion for the planet, helpful advice on how to safely have adventures of your own and seriously dramatic stories. Watch Les being stalked by a jaguar in the Amazon, spend the night with cockroaches in Papua New Guinea or fending off a moose in Algonquin Park without ever leaving home.

***Nature Out of Balance: How Invasive Species Are Changing the Planet***, Merrie-Ellen Wilcox (Orca Book Publishers, 9-12), the latest book in Orca's Footprints series, explores how the introduction of invasive species affects the ecosystem starting in the author's very own backyard in Victoria, B.C. Wilcox shares her environmental passion with young readers and helps them understand what's good and bad about invasive species and what they can do.

***Stand Like a Cedar***, Nicola I. Campbell, illustrated by Carrielynn Victor (Highwater Press, 6-9) takes us on a seasonal journey into the lives of Salish peoples on Canada's West Coast in this evocative book that poetically explores how important it is for us to see ourselves as part of the land. Campbell acts as our guide as she deftly explores traditional teaching, including the names of plants and animals in both the Nl̓e7kepmxcín or Halq'emeylem languages while Victor's illustrations bring that world to life.

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351 King Street East, Suite 1600, Toronto, ON Canada, M5A 0N1

Phillip Crawley, Publisher