

**Rachel Dunstan Muller**  
**Mini Report - TD Book Week**

When I learned that I was headed to Quebec for this year's TD Canadian Children's Book Week, I assumed I would be visiting English schools in an urban part of the province. Instead I was sent to the Lower North Shore, a remote, predominantly English-speaking area just south of Labrador. I was delighted to have the opportunity to tour a region I previously knew nothing about.

The week was a thrilling whirlwind, as I travelled by small plane or helicopter from one tiny village to the next. I had 11 appearances on my itinerary, including a local radio interview and an extra school performance when two communities elected not to have evening events.

While I enjoyed the still-frozen coastal scenery and the unique transportation (including skidoo and ATV rides), it was the students who stole my heart. At one school for example, I was introduced to a young boy with autism and warned he might have difficulty staying focused. Instead he was visibly engaged from beginning to end of the hour-long session. One of the teachers took pictures; I have a wonderful photo of him smiling radiantly, and another of him holding his forehead in disbelief at a particularly surprising moment in one of the stories.

The schools had small populations, ranging from just 16 to 51 students. This resulted in some intimate and interesting sessions, with audiences that occasionally included students from 4 to 17 years-old. Choosing material that would engage everyone in this age range wasn't easy, but I enjoyed the challenge. I made sure to leave room between each telling for comments and questions, which generated some insightful discussion.

I prepared 24 stories for the tour, about half original material, and half traditional tales. In the end I cycled through my 15 favourites, which I told in various combinations depending on the age and mood of each audience.

In total I had the privilege to share stories with 190 students and 41 adults during an unforgettable week. I am immensely grateful to the Canadian Children's Book Centre, Storytellers of Canada-Conteurs du Canada, TD Book Week's funders, and all the organizers on the ground who made it possible.