



Children of the Klondike and *Counting on Hope* Win Victoria Book Prizes

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For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC — At an awards gala this evening, two Greater Victoria authors were recognized for their literary achievements. Frances Backhouse, author of *Children of the Klondike*, was named the winner of the 7th Annual City of Victoria Butler Book Prize; and Sylvia Olsen, author of *Counting on Hope*, was named the winner of the 3rd Annual Bolen Books Children's Book Prize.

Mayor Dean Fortin and event sponsor Brian H. Butler presented Backhouse with a \$5,000 cheque for her award winning, historical non-fiction work published by Whitecap Books, for best book published in the preceding year in the categories of poetry, non-fiction, fiction and biography.

In 2008, the Victoria Book Prize Society partnered with Bolen Books to establish the Bolen Books Children's Book Prize to recognize children's and youth literary works. Samantha Holmes, co-owner and general manager of Bolen Books, presented Olsen with a \$5,000 cheque for her children's book published by Sono Nis Press.

From the discovery of gold in 1896 to the emergence of Dawson City as a post-gold-rush town in the early twentieth century, *Children of the Klondike* chronicles the stories of individual children. Drawing on letters, journals, contemporary accounts and memoirs, it looks at the lives of youngsters who witnessed the treasure hunt of the century firsthand. With anecdotes that range from humorous to heartbreaking, it paints a detailed picture of what it was like to grow up in a rough, yet cosmopolitan northern frontier community populated by lucky millionaires, down-and-out dreamers, "scarlet" women, and a few adventurous families.

A long-time freelance journalist and award winning author, Backhouse specializes in writing about history and biology (sometimes even in the same story). Her historical non-fiction work *Women of the Klondike*, tells the unique stories of women during this period of history. She also draws on her training as a biologist and experience as an interpretive naturalist to write about nature and the environment. Backhouse has travelled in Africa, studied grizzly bears in the remote and spectacular Kluane Valley, and has conducted seabird research in Haida Gwaii. Backhouse lives in Victoria with fellow writer, Mark Zuehlke.

Counting on Hope tells the story of a British girl named Hope and a First Nations Lamalcha girl named Letia, whose lives are profoundly changed when their two cultures collide. The action is set against the backdrop of the confusing events surrounding the British colonization of British Columbia and an 1863 naval assault on Kuper Island. Alternating between free verse and prose, *Counting on Hope* chronicles the girls' lives before, during and after their meeting. The novel captures the wonder and joy of their forbidden friendship and describes the tragic events, suspicion, fear and confusion that characterized so many early encounters between Europeans and the First Peoples.

Counting on Hope was nominated for the *Sheila A. Egoff Children's Literature Prize* this year. Olsen has written picture books, first readers, novels for young adults and non-fiction. She has spent most of her life living in the Tsartlip First Nation on Vancouver Island, where her children and grandchildren now reside. Because Olsen is non native and her children are of mixed heritage, many of her stories are about the challenges and rewards individuals of different cultures experience when they interact.

The other four finalists for the City of Victoria Butler Book Prize included M.A.C. Farrant, Eve Joseph, Jay Ruzesky and Deborah Willis. Dede Crane and Michelle Mulder were the two other finalists for the Bolen Books Children's Book Prize. Held at the Union Club of British Columbia, the gala featured readings by the eight finalists, offering guests the opportunity to meet the writers and have their books autographed. The event was emceed by Jo-Ann Roberts, host of CBC Radio One's *All Points West*.

Founded in 2004, the City of Victoria Butler Book Prize is a partnership between the City of Victoria and Brian Butler of Butler Brothers Supplies. The Bolen Books Children's Book Prize was founded in 2008. This year's sponsors include the Greater Victoria Public Library, the Magnolia Hotel and Spa, the Union Club of British Columbia, the Victoria Marriott Inner Harbour Hotel and the CBC.

The Victoria Book Prize Society establishes the policy and criteria for the prizes, appoints the juries and administers the competitions.

For more information, visit: www.victoria.ca and click on *What's New?* or visit: www.victoriabookprizes.ca

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