



Yasuko Thanh and Margriet Ruurs Win Victoria Book Prizes

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For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC – Two Victoria authors were recognized for their literary talent at tonight's 2017 Victoria Book Prize Society Awards Gala. Yasuko Thanh was named the winner of the 14th annual City of Victoria Butler Prize for *Mysterious Fragrance of the Yellow Mountains*, published by Hamish Hamilton. Margriet Ruurs was named the winner of the 10th annual Bolen Books Children's Book Prize for *Stepping Stones: A Refugee Family's Journey*, published by Orca Book Publishers.

Mayor Lisa Helps and event sponsor Brian Butler presented Thanh with the \$5,000 City of Victoria Butler Book Prize and Samantha Holmes from Bolen Books presented Ruurs with the \$5,000 Bolen Books Children's Book Prize.

In *Mysterious Fragrance of the Yellow Mountains*, Thanh transports readers into a vivid, historical Vietnam, one that is filled with chaotic streets, teeming marketplaces, squalid opium dens, and angry ghosts that exist side by side with the living. *Mysterious Fragrance of the Yellow Mountains* won the Rogers Writers Trust for Fiction Prize and was nominated for the Amazon.ca First Novel Award.

Previous to winning the Journey Prize for her short story *Floating Like the Dead* in 2009, Thanh earned her living as a busker, an opium dealer, a cleaner of goat pens, a bed and breakfast operator, a housekeeper, and a panhandler. In 2013, she was named one of 10 writers to watch by CBC Books. Thanh completed her Bachelor of Arts as well as a Master's of Fine Arts at the University of Victoria. She also screams in the punk band *12 Gauge Facial*.

Stepping Stones: A Refugee Family's Story is a unique picture book that was inspired by the stone artwork of Syrian artist Nizar Ali Badr, discovered by chance by Ruurs. The author was immediately impressed by the strong narrative quality of Mr. Badr's art and contacted him to see if he would agree to work with her. Including many of Mr. Ali Badr's already-created pieces, Ruurs created a story about the Syrian refugee crisis. *Stepping Stones* tells the story of Rama and her family, who are forced to flee their once-peaceful village to escape the ravages of the civil war raging ever closer to their home. With only what they can carry on their backs, Rama and her mother, father, grandfather and brother Sami, set out to walk to freedom in Europe.

Ruurs is the author of many award-winning books for children. She enjoys speaking about reading and writing to students at schools around the world. Her adventures have taken her to such countries as Myanmar, Pakistan, Laos, Tanzania and many other countries. Ruurs was born in the Netherlands but has been a Canadian for most of her life.

The awards gala was held at the Union Club of British Columbia and was emceed by journalist and community builder, Jo-Ann Roberts. Victoria's Poet Laureate Yvonne Blomer and Youth Poet Laureate Maita Cienska opened the evening with a two-voice poem.

The City of Victoria Butler Book Prize celebrates its 14th year in 2017 and is a partnership between the City of Victoria and Brian Butler of Butler Brothers Supplies. Ten years ago, Mel Bolen founded the Bolen Books Children's Book Prize to provide authors and illustrators of books for children and youth an increased opportunity for recognition. Additional sponsors include the Union Club of British Columbia, Greater Victoria Public Library, Island Blue Print, Chateau Victoria, Magnolia Hotel and Spa, Friesens Corporation and CBC Radio.

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.victoriabookprizes.ca or www.victoria.ca.

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