Cyndi’s Holiday Reads: The best in Canadian literature

It’s done. The fall semester has been accomplished. We did it people.

What did we do?
We learned to say hello in four new languages, got up close and personal with 14 staff in the Spotlight, established a new printing system for students, raised money for multiple charities, supported trade shows and technology events, went to students’ art installations, created an expo, attended some expos, prepared for winter weather closures, readied our cars for emergencies and helped our students to do so too, wrote a few reports, “opened” Open House with both style and record numbers, brainstormed ways to better mental health, absorbed a little more Indigenous knowledge and culture, participated in the Student Services Review, filled in the Employee Engagement Survey, updated some procedures, wrote some darned good policies, forgot to read some of those policies! (or was that just me?), nominated our peers for awards, launched a new program/apprenticeship (or two), registered for a sports tournament (or two), hosted a seminar (or two), hosted a hockey game (or two - you see a theme here?), collected a LOT of peanut butter, made videos, remembered our past, acknowledged the land we stand on, supported our communities, began preparation for the Quality Assurance Audit --

-- I’m sorry I simply have to take a breath
-- annnnd we made another convocation happen.
And I think that was just last week.

Now it’s the time to stop doing those things. There’s a house to make ready for and relatives to shop for, then cook for and/or visit with, (you do know that Grandma’s coming, right?) and we might want to skate outside one crisp starry evening, or put on skis and throw ourselves down or across what passes for mountains around here, or build completely wonky snowpeople with runny-nosed, snowsuit-waddling toddlers, which is just going to get knocked down. Perhaps though, we might get to read too. When Grandma’s gone to bed, of course.

“The Powers that Be” (whoever they are) looked around at the best of the best in Canadian literature and gave some really great books an award or two and since this is hot news and the library has all of them for you, I’m going to tell you about four of them. Two are set in Toronto and two from Newfoundland. All are worthy.

Placed in a clearly recognizable Toronto, in the 1950s, a brilliant woman is told by a cherished professor at the University of Toronto that higher education is no place for a woman.
Life then happens differently for her than it should have.

An interesting read for every woman.
Crisply written. Sparse in the telling and the right time to be told.
Fagan himself wasn’t sure what was going to happen until it unfolded for him.

Nominated for the Governor General.
Two children are left alone after successive deaths in their family. Truly alone on a rocky coastline of northern Newfoundland where isolation and storm and beauty and debt and loyalty and fear live right alongside with them.

If it sounds bleak, it is.
If it sounds rich and electrifying, it is.
If you think it will break your heart, it will.

Nominated for both the Governor General, and the Giller.
And the Rogers Writers’ Trust.

The author pens these words to us before she even begins: “This might hurt a little. Be brave.”

The words she chooses to use can be pretty but what she tells us happens is not.

Whatever I tell you about this book, you may disagree with me.
Many couldn’t agree even whether to finish this book and I won’t tell you what I did with it until you tell me.

Nominated for the Giller this year.

They met in Toronto when their mothers were dying (only one of them didn’t). And these two radially contradictory humans made a child.
And the story begins …

Told in varying literary styles that may surprise or disconcert you, it’s a pleasurable read that satisfies both intellectually and emotionally.

26th winner** of the 2019 Scotiabank Giller Prize.

* Did you know that winning the Giller Prize brings the author $100,000? Neither did Ian Williams. He just picked himself up off the floor yesterday.
To all my Georgian peeps and fellow workers: Happy shouts and high kicking jigs and hats thrown in the air! For and from all of us! (Do people still do this??) Well, I will, in K lot Friday, Dec. 20 around, oh, 4:37 p.m.

Have a happy holiday, everybody.
FREE BOOKS for EVERYBODY.
On the library!