
NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Premier
BC Achievement Foundation

FINALISTS ANNOUNCED FOR \$40,000 NON-FICTION AWARD

VANCOUVER – The 2008 shortlist for Canada’s largest literary non-fiction prize, the BC Award for Canadian Non-Fiction, was announced today by Premier Gordon Campbell.

In the running for the \$40,000 prize are:

- Donald Harman Akenson for *Some Family: The Mormons and How Humanity Keeps Track of Itself* (McGill-Queens University Press)
- Lorna Goodison for *From Harvey River: A Memoir of My Mother and Her People* (McClelland & Stewart)
- Jacques Poitras for *Beaverbrook: A Shattered Legacy* (Goose Lane Editions)

The shortlist was chosen by a jury comprising David Mitchell (jury chair), a political commentator and historian; Patrick Lane, one of Canada’s most highly regarded poets; and Sandra Martin, award-winning senior features writer for the *Globe and Mail*.

“The shortlist highlights the range and possibilities of literary non-fiction, spanning everything from the lyrical to the sharpest research and reportage,” said Lane. “When you read these books, you’re reminded that good storytelling is just as important to non-fiction as it is to fiction.”

The BC Award’s increased \$40,000 prize value, along with its national scope, makes it the richest non-fiction book prize in the country and the non-fiction counterpart to the Giller Prize for fiction and the Griffin Poetry Prize.

Premier Campbell, a member of the board of the British Columbia Achievement Foundation, which administers the award, commented, “The new prize value reflects our commitment to nurturing the first national literary award to originate in British Columbia.”

The winner of the BC Award for Canadian Non-Fiction will be announced Feb. 7, 2008, at a presentation ceremony in Vancouver.

The finalists are described in the following citations from the jury:

Donald Harman Akenson for Some Family

With a prose style that is both witty and wise, historian Donald Akenson explores and explains our culture's fascination and obsession with genealogy. His model is the massive genealogical database created by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints – or the Mormons – and their efforts to provide a single narrative on how humanity keeps track of itself. Rather than focus solely on the motives of the Mormons in attempting such an impossible task, Akenson applies his enormous gifts of scholarship and intellect to show how genealogy provides a significant tool in tracing our social and economic history. And he does so with clarity, charm and humour.

Lorna Goodison for From Harvey River

Poet Lorna Goodison is a sensual writer who evokes family history through lyrical storytelling and imagery that is both vivid and lush. This is the story of how a home first settled in the mid-nineteenth century on the Harvey River in Jamaica became a place both real and imagined in the lives of Goodison's family. It is a memoir of a family, their roots and the memorable characters who formed them. It is also a tale of a mother whose strength and endurance imbues her children with the ultimate gift of happiness. This is a book that combines love and tragedy, poverty and loss in rich and authentic prose.

Jacques Poitras for Beaverbrook

This book is a journalistic tour-de-force that rips the canvas off Lord Beaverbrook's cultivated self-image and creates an incisive portrait of turmoil and grasping self-interest within his family. A story of manipulative greed, the book reveals the struggle between a Canadian art gallery and two charitable foundations on opposite sides of the Atlantic arguing over the ownership of a truly remarkable collection of artistic masterpieces that were given as gifts to establish the Beaverbrook Art Gallery in Fredericton, New Brunswick. Poitras has written a gripping narrative that rises above reportage and contributes a significant new chapter to Canada's post-colonial history.

The BC Award is an annual national prize established by the British Columbia Achievement Foundation, an independent foundation endowed by the Province of British Columbia in 2003 to celebrate excellence in the arts, humanities, and community service.

For more information on the award and this year's finalists, please call 604 261-9777 or visit www.bcachievement.com. Downloadable images of book covers and authors' photos for this year's shortlist are also available at this URL.

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