



## **Media Background: 2009 BC Award Finalists**

## Quick Facts

**Name:** British Columbia's National Award for Canadian Non-Fiction (short form: the BC Award)

**Value:** \$40,000

**Age:** This is the fifth year of the annually presented award

**Funding:** The British Columbia Achievement Foundation

**Shortlist announced:** December 10, 2008

**Winner announced:** February 2, 2009

**2009 jury:** John Cruickshank (chair), Stevie Cameron, Andreas Schroeder

**2009 shortlist:**

Daphne Bramham for *The Secret Lives of Saints:*

*Child Brides and Lost Boys in Canada's Polygamous Mormon Sect*

Mary Henley Rubio for *Lucy Maud Montgomery: The Gift of Wings*

Christopher Shulgan for *The Soviet Ambassador: The Making of the Radical Behind Perestroika*

Russell Wangersky for *Burning Down the House: Fighting Fires and Losing Myself*

**Past winners:**

2008: Lorna Goodison for *From Harvey River*

2007: Noah Richler for *This Is My Country, What's Yours?*

2006: Rebecca Godfrey for *Under the Bridge*

2005: Patrick Lane for *There Is a Season*

## About the Jury

**Stevie Cameron**, award-winning author, journalist, and commentator. Known as one of Canada's foremost investigative journalists, Ms. Cameron has contributed to national media including *Maclean's*, *The Globe and Mail*, and *The Financial Post*. Her latest book is *The Pickton File*, based on the Robert Pickton murder trial in BC.

**John Cruickshank** (chair), publisher of CBC News. Mr. Cruickshank is a former managing editor of *The Globe and Mail* and former editor-in-chief of *The Vancouver Sun*. Under his leadership the Sun won a record number of National Newspaper Awards. Prior to joining the CBC, Mr. Cruickshank was publisher of the *Chicago Sun-Times* and chief operating officer of the Sun-Times Media Group.

**Andreas Schroeder**, author, TV and radio host, and academic. Mr. Schroeder has written some 20 books, published in most of Canada's major newspapers, been a TV and radio host, and served as a long-time contributor to CBC radio's Basic Black Show. He holds the Rogers Communications Chair in Creative Nonfiction at UBC. His latest book is the autobiographical novel *Renovating Heaven*.

## About the Award

British Columbia's National Award for Canadian Non-Fiction is Canada's largest literary award for non-fiction. A vital part of Canadian culture, literary non-fiction provides a forum for writers to provoke thought and explore new ways of understanding. The BC Award celebrates the best work in this important genre.

The \$40,000 award originates in BC, and is presented annually.

### Eligibility Guidelines:

1. All entries must be first print editions published in Canada in English between November 1, 2007 and October 31, 2008, and be widely available to Canadian readers in bookstores and libraries. Books not published by August 31 but to be published by October 31, 2008, may be submitted as bound galley proofs.
2. All entries must be authored by a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident of Canada.
3. Entries may be authored by one or two individuals. Multi-authored titles are not eligible.
4. Only works of literary non-fiction are eligible. Entries should demonstrate a high standard of craft and quality of thought, whatever their subject or category within the genre.
5. Self-published books are not eligible. These are understood to include books authored by a senior officer of the book's publishing firm, and/or whose publication was underwritten in part or whole by the author. Such books as textbooks, how-to books, photographic books, etc. are not eligible.
6. Posthumously published books are not eligible.
7. The jury may request submissions at its discretion.

## **About the Foundation**

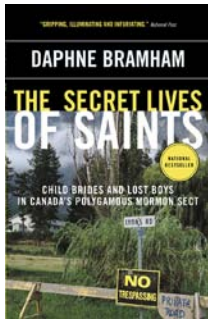
The British Columbia Achievement Foundation was established in 2003 to celebrate excellence and achievement. It is dedicated to recognizing outstanding community, creative, intellectual, and cultural contributions and to promoting a climate of possibility and encouragement.

The foundation is independent, and was established with an endowment of \$8 million from the Province of British Columbia.

The BC Award for Canadian Non-Fiction is one of six initiatives of the foundation. The others are the BC Community Achievement Awards, the BC Creative Achievement Awards for Applied Art and Design, the BC Creative Achievement Award for Aboriginal Art, the British Columbia Aboriginal Business Awards, and Time To Read: The BC Achievement Foundation Award for Early Literacy.

For further information, please contact:

British Columbia Achievement Foundation  
[www.bcachievement.com](http://www.bcachievement.com) | [info@bcachievement.com](mailto:info@bcachievement.com) | Tel: 604-261-9777



2009 FINALIST

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*The Secret Lives of Saints: Child Brides and Lost Boys in Canada's Polygamous Mormon Sect*  
By Daphne Bramham

Random House Canada | Hardcover | 480 pages | ISBN: 978-0-307-355881

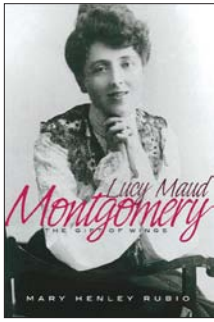
“... compelling storytelling, coupled with a dose of out-and-out anger, makes this dense and complex story compulsively readable.”

—Quill and Quire

Winston Blackmore of Bountiful, BC says it's God's will that he has dozens of wives and scores of children. Canada's most outspoken polygamist insists his faith left him no choice but to “marry” and impregnate nearly a dozen teens, and he has publicly admitted to marrying girls as young as fifteen. Polygamy and sex with minors are both illegal in Canada and yet Blackmore and this cult flourish. He believes that he and his religion are invincible, protected by the country's constitutional guarantee of religious freedom, and he keeps a framed copy of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms hanging on his office wall. So far, no one has challenged him.

*The Secret Lives of Saints* documents the rise of the fundamentalist Mormons and unravels Blackmore's story using his own words as well as those of people who have escaped the cult to live in the outside world. It details the intermarriages and intrigues among the patriarchs as they fight for control of minds, money, property and women. And running through the narrative are the most troubling questions of all: why has nothing been done to stop the illegal practices of this cult? Why haven't the polygamists, pedophiles and abusers been charged and jailed? As well as telling a story that will raise the hairs on your arms, *The Secret Lives of Saints* will leave you pondering the notion of tolerance, whether it is possible to have both religious freedom and individual rights, and where the line needs to be drawn between them.

DAPHNE BRAMHAM has been a columnist at the *Vancouver Sun* since 2000 and has won numerous awards for her writing, including a National Newspaper Award. The non-profit group Beyond Borders honoured her in 2004 for a continuing series of columns on the polygamous community of Bountiful, BC.



2009 FINALIST

*Lucy Maud Montgomery: The Gift of Wings*  
By Mary Henley Rubio

Doubleday Canada | Hardcover | 752 pages | ISBN: 978-0385659833

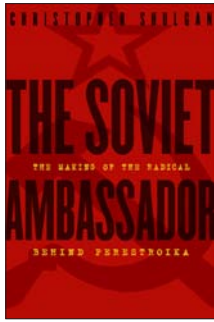
*“The result of several decades of research, Lucy Maud Montgomery: The Gift of Wings soars with the energy of its title, but delves even deeper into the darker side of the author’s life.”*

—The Globe and Mail

Mary Henley Rubio has spent over two decades researching Montgomery’s life, and has put together a comprehensive and penetrating picture of this Canadian literary icon, all set in rich social context. Extensive interviews with people who knew Montgomery—her son, maids, friends, relatives, all now deceased—are only part of the material gathered in a journey to understand Montgomery that took Rubio to Poland and the highlands of Scotland.

From Montgomery’s apparently idyllic childhood in Prince Edward Island to her passion-filled adolescence and young adulthood, to her legal fights as world-famous author, to her shattering experiences with motherhood and as wife to a deeply troubled man, this fascinating, intimate narrative of her life will engage and delight.

MARY HENLEY RUBIO is University Professor Emeritus at the University of Guelph. She co-edited *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery* (five volumes, 1985–2004), co-authored *Writing a Life: L.M. Montgomery*, and edited *Harvesting Thistles: The Textual Garden of L.M. Montgomery*. Her most recent book is the *Norton Critical Edition of Anne of Green Gables*.



2009 FINALIST

*The Soviet Ambassador: The Making of the Radical Behind Perestroika*  
By Christopher Shulgan

McClelland & Stewart Ltd. | Hardcover | 288 pages | ISBN: 978-0-7710-7996-2

*“A fascinating story of why even insiders lost faith in the Soviet system—and how Canada played its part. Christopher Shulgan illuminates the key friendship between Yakovlev, the Soviet ambassador in Ottawa, and Mikhail Gorbachev, and shows how it contributed to the huge changes in Russia in the 1980s.”*

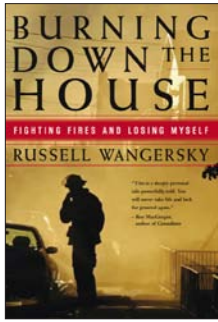
—Margaret MacMillan, author of *Paris 1919* and *Nixon and Mao*

Few realize that behind Mikhail Gorbachev’s Cold War-ending perestroika reforms stood an owlish figure who was just as important as the Soviet leader himself. Fewer still know the role Canada played in transforming Gorbachev’s advisor from a devout Stalinist to the most potent force for democracy and justice ever to walk the halls of the Kremlin.

His name was Aleksandr Yakovlev. Today in an increasingly autocratic Russia he’s reviled as the man who brought down the Soviet empire—the “architect” of perestroika and the “godfather” of glasnost, who, some say, was the puppetmaster manipulating Gorbachev’s strings. Yakovlev is acknowledged to have devised the strategy that won Gorbachev the job of Soviet leader. After the Soviet collapse, Yakovlev was the only other man present as Gorbachev negotiated his transfer of power to Russian president Boris Yeltsin. In between, Yakovlev was behind every democratic measure Gorbachev instituted, leading the Pulitzer Prize-winning writer David Remnick to dub him “Gorbachev’s good angel.”

Drawing on interviews with Yakovlev’s family and dozens of his friends, as well as never-before-disclosed archival research material, *The Soviet Ambassador* recounts Yakovlev’s tortuous evolution from Stalin’s acolyte to Stalinism’s nemesis, from faithful member of the Communist Party to liberal democrat engineering the same Party’s collapse. With profound implications for diplomacy in a conflict-driven age, Yakovlev’s story is also a remarkable testament to the power of conviction, and an inspiring account of an underdog overcoming injustice to improve the lives of his fellow citizens.

CHRISTOPHER SHULGAN’S feature writing has won him numerous honours, most recently a National Magazine Award in 2007 in the category of politics and public policy. A former writer-at-large for *Toro* magazine, he is a frequent contributor to such Canadian media as *The Globe and Mail* and *Maclean’s*.



2009 FINALIST

*Burning Down the House: Fighting Fires and Losing Myself*  
By Russell Wangersky

Thomas Allen Publishers | Hardcover | 320 pages | 978-0-8876-2329-5

*“This is a book about the deleterious effects of maintaining professional silence regarding one’s own traumatic experiences. *Burning Down the House* may be an act of exorcism for its troubled author, but it is also a compellingly candid, incendiary narrative of emotional and mental decline.”*

—Quill and Quire

Thousands of boys dream of become firefighters. Some get the chance, and for some of those, the dream becomes a nightmare. *Burning Down the House* is the story of Wangersky’s eight-year career as a volunteer firefighter, an experience that wound up reaching into every facet of his life and changed the way he saw the world forever. Written in vibrant, luminous prose, the book traces his years from rookie to veteran firefighter and the toll it took on his personal life. Offering a rare glimpse into physical dangers and psychological costs of trying to save strangers’ lives, Wangersky paints a harrowing and sometimes heartbreakingly vivid portrait of the fires, medical calls and automobile accidents that are the standard fare of the profession.

Visceral and affecting, *Burning Down the House* is an insightful insider’s account of the perilous world of firefighting and an unforgettable memoir of how, in finding his passion, Wangersky lost himself.

RUSSELL WANGERSKY is a writer whose first collection of short stories, *The Hour of Bad Decisions*, was nominated for numerous awards including, most notably, the longlist for the 2006 Giller Prize and the shortlist for the 2006 Commonwealth Writer’s Prize. The editor of the *St. John’s Telegram* in Newfoundland, Wangersky’s columns and editorials appear in newspapers across Canada.