

Monthly Highlights



Each month, FOLD Kids highlights one picture book and one middle grade or young adult title by a marginalized Canadian author.

JANUARY: Picture Book



Ten Little Dumplings is about a special family in the city of Tainan who have ten sons where one son is seen as lucky. They are called the ten little dumplings because dumplings are auspicious but there is someone listening, studying and learning right alongside them...their sister. She grows up in the shadow of her brothers but finds her own path which she shares with her daughter, her own little dumpling.

This book was chosen as the Book-of-the-Month for January 2021 because it's a story about a girl finding herself in a world that privileges boys.

It's great to see the story's perspective shift halfway to centre the sister but also encouraging readers to go back and find her in the illustrations. Wume's art is warm, energetic and is the perfect vehicle for the narrative reveal.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

Larissa Fan is a Toronto-based experimental filmmaker and artist whose cinematic work has been screened at national and international festivals and venues, including the Anthology Film Archives, Images Festival, and Kassel Documentary Film & Video Festival. She currently works in social media marketing at the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre.

Cindy Wume is a Taipei-based illustrator and picture book maker now based in Taipei. Her debut picture book, *The Best Sound in the World*, was published in 2018, and her work has been exhibited at the Bologna Children's Book Fair, the Taoyuan Illustration Exhibition and the London Transport Museum's Sound of City art exhibition.

JANUARY: Young Adult



Charming as a Verb is a novel set in New York City and follows teen charmer Henri “Halti” Haltiwanger. Halti is liked by all he meets thanks to the smiling mask he puts on. He’s the perfect image of a first-generation American child of Haitian immigrants: he attends the prestigious FATE Academy, is a star debater and works part-time as a dog walker for wealthy New Yorkers. However, his easy demeanour hides his ambition to attend his dream college: Columbia University. Then Corinne Troy, the only person immune to his charms, blackmails him after finding out the whole dog walking side gig isn’t 100% legit. What does

she want? Lessons on improving her social image at school.

The humour found in Philippe’s debut can be also found in this book but there’s also a deeper dive into the experience of being a Black immigrant child of working class parents. It’s easy to reduce the story to a discussion about class and the feeling of trying to keep up with those who’ve financially have a head start especially within the context of education. However, there’s an intersection of class and race within the book that displays how difficult it is to separate the two experiences as well as how class doesn’t suddenly remove the structural barriers created by racism. It does all this while also being filled with family, friends and teen romance. This is why it was chosen as the Book-of-the-Month for January 2021.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ben Philippe is a New York-based writer and screenwriter, born in Haiti and raised in Montreal, Canada. He is the author of the William C. Morris Award-winning novel *The Field Guide to the North American Teenager*.

February: Picture Books



Dear Black Girls is a love letter to black girls. Nicole uses poetry to show Black little girls how awesome they are and how much she loves being one. Dalz's art accompanies it with its vibrancy as well as the range of Black girls depicted in the book. This is the Book-of-the-Month pick for February 2021 because of its care towards Black girls, a demographic often mistreated in society. We promise you that your heart will be full after reading this.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

Shanice Nicole is a Black feminist educator, facilitator, writer, and (out)spoken word artist. She believes that everyone has the power to make change and dreams of a freer world for us all.

Kezna Dalz is a Montreal-based multidisciplinary Black artist. She cares about representation, and portrays the beauty of womanhood, teen adult angst, and the worst of pop culture using vibrant colours.

February: Young Adult



Like Home is a young adult novel about a teen named Chinelo (or Nelo) who lives in the neighbourhood of Ginger East. She loves the community, her best friend, Kate, and the memories of growing here. She's not a fan of the growing gentrification that's slowly raising the rent in the area or the changes that her body is experiencing. Then Kate's family corner store gets vandalized which invites the police and media with their own ideas of what happened and painting Ginger East in a poor light. Chinelo is shaken by it and Kate pulling away isn't helping but she's determined to fix

things or lose it all.

This book is the Book-of-the-Month pick for February 2021 because it offers a relatable character to young people growing up in low-income neighbourhoods. These areas often have their stories told for them usually in a negative light but Onomé balances the very real difficulties wrought by lack of resources with human beings who experience everyday joy and community. It's a story that younger teens can enjoy easily while engaging with topics such as gentrification, media literacy, activism and how to deal with the changes in your life.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Louisa Onomé is a Toronto-based Nigerian-Canadian writer of young adult books. She holds a BA in professional writing from York University, and is an all-around cheerleader for diverse works and writers. She's also a Planning Team member at The FOLD.

March: Picture Book



After the success of *Ping*, Castillo returns with *Spark*, a picture book that's all about the magic of being alive and how we all have that spark inside of us.

It's the Book-of-the-Month pick for March 2021 because of its whimsical artwork that compliments the book's goal of depicting the wonder of being alive, not ignoring the dark elements but choosing to highlight the awe-inspiring aspect of existence. It also features very cute character designs.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ani Castillo was born and raised in Guadalajara, Mexico, where she studied communications, art, and digital media. She is the author and illustrator of *Ping* and her art has been exhibited in Mexico, Canada, and the United States, and her popular cartoon, *Pupa & Lavinia*, ran for ten years in Mexican newspapers. Ani now lives with her two young daughters in Canada.

March: Middle Grade



In *Treaty Words: For As Long As the Rivers Flow*, Mishomis teaches his granddaughter to listen to the nature around them while also telling her about treaties: the first ones between the earth and the sky, the ones between the Indigenous peoples and the British, and what treaties are meant to be.

It's a fantastic Book-of-the-Month pick for March 2021 because of the ongoing conversations around treaties in what we know as Canada (but also Turtle Island more broadly) and what Canadian settlers owe the Indigenous peoples of these lands in the

truest understanding of treaties and reconciliation. Craft does a great job at making this accessible to not just middle grade readers but also teens and adults who would benefit from understanding the land they currently live on. Swinson's art is beautiful and flows in its simplicity and great use of colour. It's perfect for a story that encourages taking our time with nature.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

Aimée Craft (Writer) is an Anishinaabe/Métis lawyer from Treaty 1 territory in Manitoba. She is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Common Law, University of Ottawa and a leading researcher on Indigenous laws, treaties, and water.

Luke Swinson is an Anishinaabe illustrator who is a member of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. He lives in Kitchener, ON.

April: Picture Book



We Move Together is a picture book about the different bodies that move and take up space but also how the world isn't built for all bodies. It's lovely to see the characters of this book work together and create solutions so that everyone has access to their community. To move doesn't necessarily just mean physically but also in terms of being motivated, inspired or to be moved emotionally.

It's the Book-of-the-Month pick for April 2021 because we don't often get picture books about disability or disabled characters written by someone with a disability. Trejos' art is so much fun and showcases a wide range of disabilities as well as racialized people, women with a hijab, queer imagery and etc.

There's also a Closer Look section at the end that includes sections like Ableism, Accessibility, Disability Arts and Culture, Disability Community and more that will leave the reader wanting to learn more about this community. It is essential reading for the little ones in your life.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

Kelly Fritsch is a disabled writer, educator, and parent living in Ottawa. She is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton University and co-editor of *Keywords for Radicals: The Contested Vocabulary of Late-Capitalism* (2015, AK Press).

Anne McGuire is an assistant professor in the Equity Studies program at the University of Toronto where she teaches courses on disability justice and disabled childhoods. She is the author of *War on Autism: On the Cultural Logic of Normative Violence* (2016, University of Michigan Press).

Eduardo Trejos is a Costa Rican multi-disciplinary artist. A lover of colour, insatiable reader, and parent of two boys, he currently lives in Toronto where he works as a graphic designer.

April: Middle Grade



Finding Home: The Journey of Immigrants and Refugees is a nonfiction book that tackles the history of human migration, why people leave their homes, the differences between refugees and immigrants, racism and xenophobia, and the challenges and benefits of being an immigrant and refugee. The book also features interviews of people who've come to Canada as either immigrants or refugees for a wide range of reasons and what their experiences have been like.

Choosing *Finding Home* for the Book-of-the-Month pick for April 2021 was the easiest thing in the world to do. Sookfong Lee did a phenomenal job in explaining the complicated and often divisive topic of migration to a middle grade audience but adults could learn quite a lot from this book as well. Terms are defined and different angles are addressed that are often left out of the public conversation when addressing the history of migration such as slavery or the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 (also known as the Chinese Exclusion Act). Shannon's illustrations are a beautiful companion to the well researched text.

What's most important, however, is that even though the content pulls from international examples, it is very much rooted in Canada. It's another must have in the school curriculum and on your children's bookshelves.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jen Sookfong Lee is a Vancouver-based writer whose books include *Finding Home: The Journey of Immigrants and Refugees*, *Chinese New Year* and *The Animals of Chinese New Year*, *Shelter* and more. Jen teaches at The Writer's Studio Online with Simon Fraser University, edits fiction for Wolsak & Wynn and co-hosts the literary podcast *Can't Lit*.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Drew Shannon is a Toronto-based illustrator whose work can be found in *Extreme Battlefields: When War Meets the Forces of Nature*, *Out of the Ice: How Climate Change is Revealing the Past*, *The Montague Twins: The Witch's Hand* and *his Is Your Brain on Stereotypes*.

May: Picture Book



The Doll is a picture book about a little girl and her family who arrive at an airport in a new country as refugees. They are greeted by strangers and the little girl is gifted a doll. The book follows the girl over the decades and as a woman, she finds herself back at the airport to welcome a new family of refugees and gifts the doll to their little girl as a way to make her feel welcome.

This picture book is the Book-of-the-Month pick for May 2021 because of its focus on the refugee experience and the impact of making folks

feel welcomed in their new home. It's lovely to know that the story is based on Tran-Davies' own life which gets expanded upon in the author's note. Puth's art is beautiful and showcases a great use of colour like the maroon that ties the story together. It's a book that asks what you've done to pass it forward or to make someone feel welcomed in a space. It also hopefully offers refugee kids in Canada a glimpse at a possible future for themselves as creatives thanks to Tran-Davies' presence.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

Nhung N. Tran-Davies is an Edmonton-based writer, physician and advocate for social justice through education. Her family came to Canada as refugees from Vietnam in 1979 and in 2013 Nhung founded the Children of Vietnam Benevolent Foundation.

Ravy Puth is a Montreal-based illustrator. Born in Canada of Cambodian-Chinese parents, her work focuses on representations and cultural identities, that she explores through narratives of migration and feminism.

May: Young Adult



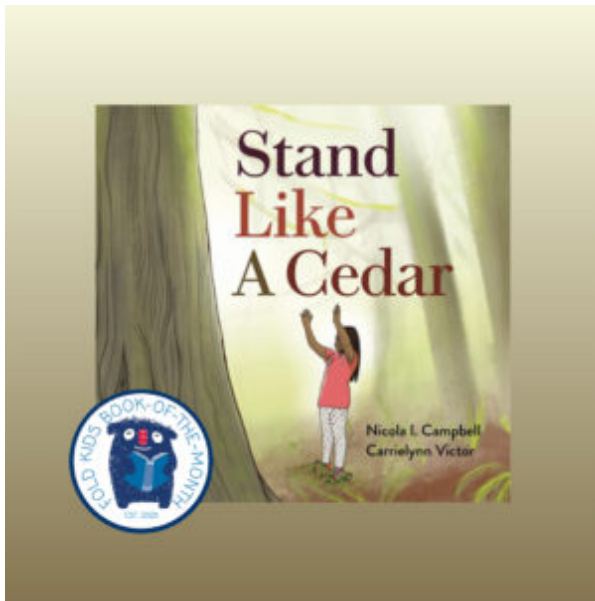
Misfit in Love is a sequel to Ali's debut novel, *Saints and Misfits*. In the novel, Janna Yusuf is excited for the weekend: her older brother, Muhammad, is getting married, she'll be reunited with her mother after a summer apart and Nuah be arriving too. Nuah is sweet, constant and has feelings for Janna but at the time, she wasn't ready to reciprocate due to a previous trauma she suffered but now she's ready! However, Nuah is treating her differently and two newcomers might complicate Janna's heart a bit. Throw in her mom's possible new love, her dad acting strange and opposing wedding planning

choices between her brother and his fiancée, and Janna might be having an unpredictable weekend. This was the Book-of-the-Month pick for May 2021 because it's lovely to see a contemporary teen story like this starring a Muslim teen girl. It discusses the scary nature of big life changes, racism, being disappointed by your parents and the shift in relationships. It's a book that older teens can get a lot out of as they get closer to life after high school but both high school students and adults will get a great read.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

S.K. Ali is the writer of two young adult novels (*Saints and Misfits* and *Love from A to Z*), a picture book (*The Proudest Blue* co-written with Ibtihaj Muhammad) and co-editor of an anthology (*Once Upon An Eid*). Her latest young adult novel is *Misfit in Love*.

June: Picture Book



It's summertime and *Stand Like A Cedar* is the perfect pick for June 2021's Book-of-the-Month. This picture book takes the reader through nature, and shares teachings on sustainability and connection to the land. It asks, "When you go for a walk in nature, who do you see? What do you hear?" Readers will learn the names of animals in the Nt̓e7kepmxcín or Halq'emeylem languages (a glossary as well as a note on coastal and interior Salish languages can be found at the end) while also being inspired to inquire about their own ancestors' knowledge whether through blood relation or the greater community.

After over a year of keeping distance from loved ones and being inside, hopefully this book will inspire little ones and those who love them to go out into nature whether it's in a vast forest or their local park. If Victor's art doesn't motivate you to commune in nature in whatever way is possible for you, we're not sure what will!

ABOUT THE CREATORS

Nicola I. Campbell is the author of *Shi-shi-etko*, *Shin-chi's Canoe*, *Grandpa's Girls*, and *A Day with Yayah*. Nt̓e7kepmx, Syilx and Métis from British Columbia, her stories weave cultural and land-based teachings that focus on respect, endurance, healing, and reciprocity.

Carrielynn Victor is fueled by the passion to tell stories through her art. Her ancestors come from around the world, descending from bloodlines in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales that arrived in the Americas in the 1600s, and Coast Salish ancestors that have been sustained by S'olh Temexw (our land) since time immemorial. Carrielynn was born and raised in S'olh Temexw and nurtured by many parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. Along with a thriving art practice, Carrielynn maintains a communal role as a plant practitioner. The responsibilities for traditional plant practitioners range from protection and preservation of lands, networking and trade, and harvest and preparation methods.

June: Middle Grade



The Fabulous Zed Watson! is part road trip, part mystery but all around a fun middle grade read. What kid doesn't want the opportunity to go on a cross country adventure that involves a mysterious manuscript by a writer they adore? It's lovely to read characters whose passion leads them on an epic journey especially one that tests a newfound friendship and helps them grow a long the way.

It's not often a non-binary character gets a leading role in a story and to have a non-binary author tell it is even rarer. This novel is the Book-of-the-Month

pick for June 2021 because it offers readers an opportunity to get to know the non-binary experience but one that is told through a generally exciting story for young people. Hopefully, this book is just the beginning for both Basil and non-binary characters.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Basil Sylvester is a non-binary writer based in Toronto and co-author of *The Fabulous Zed Watson!* with their father, Kevin Sylvester.

Kevin Sylvester is a Toronto-based award-winning writer, illustrator and broadcaster. He's written over 30 books that range from murder mysteries and science fiction to books on sports and financial literacy. His most well known titles include The Almost Epic Squad series, Neil Flambé and the bestselling MiNRS. He co-authored *The Fabulous Zed Watson!* with Basil Sylvester.

July: Picture Books



The Frog Mother is the fourth book in the Mothers of Xsan series which looks at the life cycle of an animal and its importance to the Gitxsan Nation*. In this book, it focuses on Nox Ga'naaw, the frog mother, or more specifically, the Columbia Spotted Frog. It's a picture book for older kids (ages 9 – 12) that explores natural science through indigenous teaching. In literary circles, there's a lot of discussion on there being more than one way to tell stories and showcasing more Indigenous authors. Huson has shown with this book and the series overall that there is more than one way to explore nature which is why it's the Book-of-the-

Month pick for July 2021. Donovan does a fantastic job of incorporating Haida-esque art into her style which continues the marriage between the traditional and the natural world that Huson started with his writing. This is a book that shouldn't just be for the English classroom but should also be included in the Physical Education and Science curriculum. Perfect for adults who want to engage the young people in their lives with the outdoors.

*The Gitxsan Nation are Indigenous peoples from unceded territories in the Northwest Interior of British Columbia.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

Hetxw'ms Gyetxw, also known as Brett D. Huson, is from the Gitxsan Nation of the Northwest Interior of British Columbia, Canada. Growing up in this strong matrilineal society, Brett developed a passion for the culture, land, and politics of his people, and a desire to share their knowledge and stories. *The Sockeye Mother* (winner of the Science Writers and Communicators Book Award) is Brett's first book for children.

Natasha Donovan is a Métis illustrator originally from Vancouver, British Columbia. Her sequential work has been published in many works such as *This Place: 150 Years Retold* and the forthcoming Thomas King graphic novel *Borders*. She lives by the Nooksack River in Washington State.

July: Middle Grade



Peter Lee's Notes From the Field follows an 11-year-old Peter Lee whose one passion in life is to become a paleontologist. However, his dust-induced asthma puts a wrench in those plans over the summer break. Then his grandmother, Hammy, falls ill and both Peter and his sister, LB, are being kept in the dark about the details. Peter uses his scientific trains, a notebook and his keen observation, to find out what's wrong with Hammy and how best to help her.

Written in journal entries and accompanied by Kwon's pencil art, Ahn has crafted a delightful story about family, being passionate about something and how to deal with a setback. The sibling relationship between Peter and LB is a highlight and does a good job at balancing conflict but also care between siblings. All of this is why it's the Book-of-the-Month pick for July 2021.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Angela Ahn is a former teacher and librarian, and has worked in the Canadian public education system, as well as in Hong Kong for two years, teaching English as a Second Language. She's the author

of *Krista Kim-Bap*, a Bank Street Best Book of the Year (2019) and lives in Vancouver with her family.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Julie Kwon is an artist and illustrator based in Brooklyn. A graduate of the Brown/RISD Dual-Degree program, her work is heavily inspired by the steady diet of manga, comics, and young adult novels she consumed growing up, as well as her many fond childhood memories.

August: Picture Book



Arab Fairy Tale Feasts is the latest title in Tradewind Books' Fairy Tale Feasts series. The series gets writers and illustrators from various cultures to write new tales, create illustrations and include recipes inspired by their culture. In this iteration, it features mini stories that pull inspiration from the Arabian Peninsula that feature kid cooks, squabbling animals, genies and ghouls, and so forth that ends with a lesson the story is trying to convey (also known as "the moral of the story"). Then readers get recipes for the dishes featured in the tales accompanied by some historical/cultural background.

This picture book skews a bit older but is a great family read. It's the Book-of-the-Month pick for August 2021 because of its marriage between the stories and recipes make this reading experience interactive. Alrawi's writing is fantastical and Kazemi's illustration is inviting and brings the dishes to life without sacrificing the folklore feel to the stories it accompanies. Some of the recipes came from Alrawi's aunt Asma but quite a lot of it came from Palestinian husband and wife duo Tamam Qanembou-Zobaidi and Sobhi al-Zobaidi who own the Vancouver-based restaurant Tamam. We dare you to leave this book not feeling famished.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

Karim Alrawi is an award-winning playwright, novelist and children's book author. His novel *Book of Sands* won the inaugural HarperCollins Prize for Best New Fiction. He is the author of several children's books, including *The Mouse Who Saved Egypt* and *The Girl Who Lost Her Smile*. He lives in British Columbia.

Nahid Kazemi is a Montreal-based artist, illustrator and graphic designer who has published many award-winning children's books. Her recent publications include *Over the Rooftops*, *Under the Moon* and *The Old Woman*. She has exhibited her work around the world.

RECIPE CONTRIBUTORS

Tamam Qanembou-Zobaidi was born and raised in the Old City of Jerusalem. She studied visual arts at Al-Quds University, and worked in Palestine as an actress, TV presenter and stage artist, but always had a passion for cooking. She and her husband, Sobhi al-Zobaidi, established the first Palestinian restaurant in Vancouver, the celebrated and much-loved Tamam. She lives in Vancouver with her husband and their two daughters.

Sobhi al-Zobaidi is was born and raised in Palestine and grew up in a refugee camp. His mother was from the village of Qulieh, one of many destroyed in the Nakba, and his father was from the village of Al-Safriyeh. After studying film production and cinema at New York University, Sobhi produced a number of award-winning documentaries and short films. A songwriter and published essayist on Palestinian culture and art, he lives in Vancouver, Canada with his wife, Tamam, and their two daughters.

August: Young Adult



The Disability Experience is a nonfiction book written for youth but should be read by all. The book establishes the types of disabilities before getting into the history of disability, culture of disability, the topic of independence for people with disabilities*, how tech has and can be a way to make things easier for folks with disabilities and of course, the advocacy and the politics of disability. It also offers ways able-bodied folks can help, a glossary and resources.

This is such a necessary read that's well researched and made accessible by Leavitt. Wuthrich's illustration also makes the reading experience bright and fun which is why the book was chosen as the Book-of-the-Month pick for August 2021. Disability isn't being discussed nearly as much as it should be in the classroom nor in society at large but hopefully, this book can be a way to make these conversations more common place.

In Leavitt's own words, "My goal in writing this book has been to demystify the world of disability and otherness enough that you will now view PWDs [People with Disabilities] with a discerning eye. You'll be able to distinguish individual types of disabilities rather than lumping them together. You'll understand that our independence may look different than yours and that our presence and inclusion are here to stay. The more we PWDs learn and share, the more we benefit."

*The author uses “person/people with a disability” in this book. There are folks from the disability community who reference themselves as “disabled person”. We default to whatever an individual from the disability community prefers.

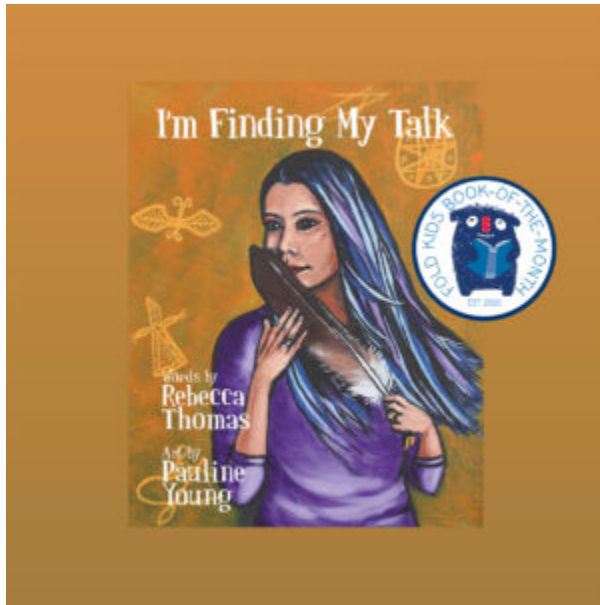
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hannalora Leavitt is a Victoria, British Columbia-based writer. She lost most of her vision by the age of 12 due to cancer and spent two years at a residential school for the blind, where she lived and learned alongside her blind peers. She works to demystify disability through her writing and public speaking with her loyal guide dog, Ogden, at her side. Hannalora holds an MFA in creative writing from the University of Victoria.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Belle Wuthrich is a Vancouver-based illustrator and designer specializing in books for young readers. Belle has contributed to more than a dozen books for kids, a number of which have won awards or been republished internationally, including the Montaigne Medal Award–winning *Eyes and Spies: How You’re Tracked* and *Why You Should Know* and the Silver Birch Award nominee *Eat Up: An Infographic Exploration of Food*.

September: Picture Book



I'm Finding My Talk is an illustrated poem by Rebecca Thomas that's in direct response to the Mi'kmaw poet Rita Joe's poem, *I Lost My Talk*, which also has an illustrated version published. While the latter dealt with the loss of language of Indigenous people who went through the residential school system, Thomas' version is about the reclaiming of language and in doing so, a connection to community, family and the elders who carry with them cultural knowledge.

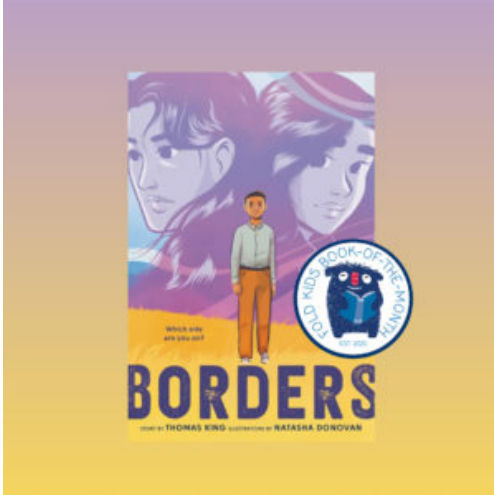
This book is the Book-of-the-Month pick for September because of its ongoing conversation with the past, its educating the present and leaving something for the future. As the illustrator for both Thomas' and Joe's picture books, Pauline Young makes that connection visually and brings to life the words of both poets. Indigenous youth are lucky to have these creatives produce such illuminating, heartbreaking, powerful and aspirational work as they find their talk as well.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

Rebecca Thomas is an award-winning Mi'kmaw poet. She is Halifax's former Poet Laureate (2016-2018) and has been published in multiple journals and magazines. Her other picture book, *Swift Fox All Along*, was shortlisted for the 2020 Governor General's Literary Award for Young People's Literature –Illustrated Books.

Pauline Young is a visual artist who was first exposed to the creative world through her father, Phillip Young, an internationally renowned artist, who painted the bottoms of her feet. She still recalls the smooth sensation of paint oozing between her toes. She draws her inspiration from him and the natural environment and is always looking down to see what the ground can offer, such as incorporating beach sand and red oxide sand into her paintings.

September: Middle Grade



Borders is a graphic novel adaptation of the Thomas King short story of the same name. It's a story about a

young Blackfoot boy and his mother on their way to visit his sister in Salt Lake City. When they reach the Canadian/United States border, they're asked for their citizenship. When they respond with, "Blackfoot," they're thrown into limbo between borders and nations.

This is the Book-of-the-Month pick for September because it's as much a story about what it means to live within borders imagined by settlers as it is about a family trying to reconnect after an estrangement. Natasha Donovan makes it onto this list for a second time (see July's pick: *The Frog Mother*) which is no surprise given the power of her illustration and its richness in colour.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

Thomas King is an award-winning writer of fiction, nonfiction and poetry such as *The Inconvenient Indian*, *77 Fragments of a Familiar Ruin*, *Indians on Vacation*, *Sufferance*, the *DreadfulWater* Mystery series and much more. King lives in Guelph with his partner, Helen Hoy.

Natasha Donovan is a Métis illustrator with a focus on comics and children's illustration. Her work can be found in *This Place Anthology*, *Wonderful Women of History*, and has illustrated children's books such as *The Mothers of Xsan* series, *Surviving the City*, *From the Roots Up* and *Classified*.

October: Picture Book



Rap and hip-hop is among biggest (if not the biggest) genre of music in North America and is a massive driver of culture whether it's in the clothes worn, the language used, viral dances and more. It's even heavily featured internationally in places like South Korea where musical acts like the boy band, BTS, use it. This is why *Welcome to the Cypher* is the Book-of-the-Month pick for October.

This picture book is about a narrator who introduces kids in his community to the powerful possibilities of rap. Awuradwoa Afful is an absolute pleasure to gaze up especially in how it interacts with Khodi Dill's words which plays with rhythm and flow just like rap itself. Often when rap is discussed, the negatives are what folks hold onto but rap is a genre with many sub-genres, and it is first and foremost about self-expression. It is poetry up against a beat and Dill does a wonderful job at leaving little ones the tools to create their own rhymes long after they've read the book. It's also a fabulous pick for a read-aloud.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

Khodi Dill is a Bahamian-Canadian writer of everything from rap songs to children's literature. He is a practicing anti-racist educator with a passion for social justice and the arts. Khodi is a proud father and partner who lives and writes in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Awuradwoa Afful is a Ghanaian-Canadian designer, illustrator, and animator. She was born and raised in Toronto, Ontario.

October: Middle Grade



Chasing Bats and Tracking Rats: Urban Ecology, Community Science, and How We Share Our Cities is a nonfiction middlegrade book about how studying urban wildlife can help make cities around the world healthier as well as those who live in them. Dr. Cylita Guy presents her own work alongside the work of eleven diverse scientists in an engaging and informative narrative with fun illustrations by Cornelia Li.

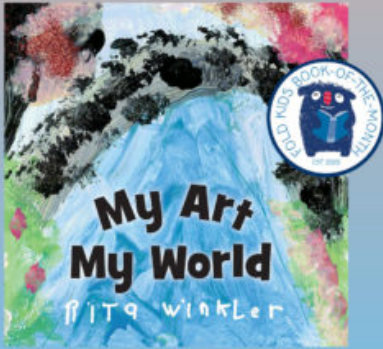
This is the Book-of-the-Month pick for October because Dr. Guy uses science to also talk about how social injustices like racism can impact how scientists study wildlife but also the creatures themselves. This book makes science accessible and it makes nature something that even folks who live in cities could appreciate. Once again, this is a pick that would be beneficial not just for the kids in your lives but also for adults as well.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

Cylita Guy, PhD is a Toronto-based ecologist, data scientist, and science communicator who studies bats. In her downtime, you can find your friendly neighborhood batgirl chasing her next big outdoor adventure.

Cornelia Li is a Chinese-born illustrator based in Toronto. She is intrigued by narrative weaved into daily interactions between people and their surroundings and sets out to capture this relationship by externalizing ideas and emotions into visual elements.

November: Picture Book



My Art, My World is a picture book that gives readers an insight into the life of Rita Winkler, a young woman with Down syndrome, through her greatest passion: art! This book is the Book-of-the-Month pick for November because it's a fun reading experience. It's great to feel the enthusiasm Winkler has for visual art and writing about her life through that makes it all the more interesting. It's especially fantastic to have a creator with Down syndrome publish a book for kids and hopefully, more of these will emerge as a result.

The proceeds from the sale of this book will be donated to organizations that enhance the lives of people with developmental disabilities.

ABOUT THE CREATOR

Rita Winkler is a young woman with Down syndrome. She was born in Calgary, Alberta, and currently lives in Toronto, Ontario, with her mother Helen. Rita works in the Coffee Shed in New College at the University of Toronto, part of the Common Ground Cooperative, a social purpose enterprise. Rita also attends the Dani-Toronto day program. She is particularly proud of being able to travel to Dani and Coffee Shed independently, using public transit. In her free time, Rita enjoys social media, listening to music, watching movies, writing newsletter articles, and being with friends and family.

November: Young Adult



Tahira in Bloom is Heron's first young adult title and it's about a South Asian teen girl named Tahira who aspires to be a fashion designer. When her coveted internship falls through, she spends her summer in a small Ontario town to help revitalize her aunt's boutique. That's when she finds out about the floral designing competition and teams up with the grumpy boy next door. Tahira's goal is win so she can stand a better chance at getting into the top fashion school in New York City but maybe she'll gain something she was expecting.

This novel is a Book-of-the-Month pick for November because it's a well crafted story about teen romance, the pressure of figuring out who you are as a teen, the existence of casual racism, navigating genuine relationships in the age of social media, and understanding the world of fashion and floral design. It's definitely a book you want to devour in a single sitting.

ABOUT THE CREATOR

After a childhood filled with Bollywood, Monty Python, and Jane Austen, Farah Heron constantly wove uplifting happily ever afters in her head while pursuing careers in human resources and psychology. She started writing her stories down a few years ago and is thrilled to see her daydreams become books. The author of *Accidentally Engaged* and *The Chai Factor*, Farah writes romantic comedies for adults and teens full of huge South Asian families, delectable food, and most importantly, brown people falling stupidly in love. Farah lives in Toronto with her husband and two teens, a rabbit named Strawberry, and two cats who rule the house. She has way too many hobbies, but her thumb is more brown than green.

December: Picture Book



Friends Are Friends, Forever is about Dandan's last day in her home located in Northeastern China before she and her family move to America. It's also Lunar New Year's Eve which she spends with her extended family as well as her best friend who she spends the day making their favourite wintertime tradition: crafting paper-cut snowflakes, freezing them outside, and hanging them as ornaments.

This is the December Book-of-the-Month pick because it's a perfect read for the season. It's very much a book about dealing with change and learning to create new

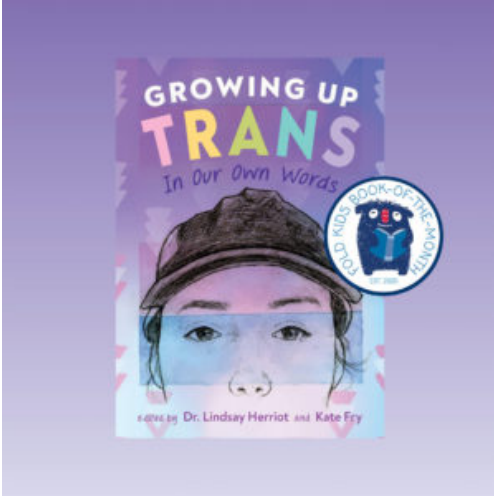
connections with people even in a new space. It's especially interesting to see a winter holiday that isn't just Christmas and will hopefully encourage young readers (and the adults in their lives) to seek out other winter holidays. It's also an incredibly beautiful and colourful thanks to Scurfield which is lovely for a season that's known for its long dark nights and the cold.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

Dane Liu was born in China and spent her teenage years in the U.S. and Canada. In 2018, We Need Diverse Books awarded her a year-long mentorship. *Friends Are Friends, Forever* is her first picture book, and she lives in Portland, Oregon.

Lynn Scurfield is a mixed media illustrator based just outside of Toronto, Canada, who has worked on a variety of projects in newspapers, magazines, comics, and children's publishing.

December: Middle Grade



Growing Up Trans: In Our Own Words is a collection of stories, essays, art and poetry by trans youth aged 11 to 18 that grew out of a series of workshops held in Victoria, British Columbia called Gender Generations Project (formerly known as the Trans Tipping Point). The works explore the lives of these trans youth on topics like childhood, family and daily life, school, their bodies and mental health.

It's the December Book-of-the-Month pick because FOLD Kids has always been about empowering youth and this collection does exactly that by offering trans youth the opportunity to have their voices heard and amplified. These stories provide a range of experiences as well as feelings from the tearjerkers to pure joy. It's a resource for all youth whether trans or cis but most importantly, it's a fulfilling reading experience that will hopefully inspire young artists to create.

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Dr. Lindsay Herriot is a full-time inclusion/special education teacher in the Greater Victoria School District. She also works at the University of Victoria in several capacities, as an adjunct/sessional professor in both the Faculty of Education and School of Child and Youth Care and as a fellow at the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society. A cisgender, bisexual, white settler, Lindsay is originally from unceded Mi'kmaq territory in New Brunswick and is of Acadian, Scottish and Anglo heritage. She now lives on the unceded territory of the Lekwungen Peoples in Victoria, BC, with her spouse and two young children.

Kate Fry is a writer and editor currently living as a white settler on the unceded lands of the Lekwungen Peoples. Her writing has appeared in several publications, including Prism International, This Side of West, Bad Dog Review and The Albatross. She recently completed a BA with honors in English literature from the University of Victoria. Kate co-founded the Trans Tipping Point project in 2017 with her great friend and mentor, Lindsay Herriot.