

# WESTERN TALE SPINNER



## ODE TO COFFEE AND COLDER WEATHER...

Soon we'll be beyond the August nip-in-the-air, and into outright chilly. Time for a coffee, a tea, or a good solid cup o' cocoa! And some pen and paper or laptop, curled under a blanket, toes by the fire...oh, that's too fast! But there is something about autumn that lends itself to hunkering down for some solid writing time. I hope this issue of our newsletter inspires, or at least percolates...



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**Illustrations** by Raymond Nakamura,  
Helena Juhasz

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## GOOD NEWS...

**Penny Draper** welcomes *Red River Raging* in 2014, her seventh book in the Disaster Strikes! Series (Coteau Books). Because Penny was overseas when the book came out, she did a blog launch instead. Called the Thirty Day Writing Challenge (at [www.pennydraper.ca](http://www.pennydraper.ca)), the entries give the inside story on the author's creative process, including such challenges as picking character names, choosing the right moment for the climax, filling in plot holes and finding a sense of place - while avoiding spoilers!

**Diane Jones** has had a story (title: "Pilgrim's Proof") accepted by *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, subtitled "Touched by an Angel." It has gone to the printer and will be out in October.

**Rebecca Kool** is jetting off to Japan for the month of October. Rebecca's bilingual (English/Japanese) kid's book, *Fly Catcher Boy*, was 'hatched' during the six years she lived and taught English in Nagoya (1994-2000). While she readily admits running away from home at age fifty for adventure and travel, it was her personal journey that resonated deeply and changed her life in ways she could never have imagined.

In her early years she 'performed' English for preschool children around Aichi prefecture. Moms encouraged—well, begged—her to write bilingual stories to help train their preschoolers to get used to hearing the English language. As the years went by she worked on a number of drafts between classes and on trains. Prior to departing Japan in 2000 she had a synopsis for *Fly Catcher Boy*. It would take nine years before she saw publication at age 65! Persistence pays off, yes it does.

Now, twenty years later she's returning to Japan for a book tour that will take her north of Tokyo and south of Kyoto. She's excited to report that she's received an invitation to present 'kamishibai storytelling' at the annual Japan Writer's Conference and looks forward to reunions with special friends.

*Peach Girl*, **Raymond Nakamura's** first picture book, has just come out with Pajama Press.  
[http://pajamapress.ca/book/peach\\_girl/](http://pajamapress.ca/book/peach_girl/)

**Mary McKenna Siddals** is thrilled to announce the IGOR-ly awaited arrival of her SPOOKtacular new picture book from Random House, *Shivery Shades Of Halloween*, illustrated by Jimmy Pickering... and it's off to a FANGtastic start with spirited reviews from Kirkus ("pithy rhyming verse"), Publishers Weekly ("dashes of humor"), and School Library Journal ("a spell to make a perfect Halloween"). BOOyah!

**Apis Teicher** is a nominee for an Aurora Award in the Best Art Category: <http://www.prixaurorawards.ca/aurora-awards/2014-aurora-nominees/>

And her children's book, *Bellybuttonless*, was in a Vancouver Sun article recently : <http://www.vancouversun.com/health/family-child/Mother+finds+unique+share+cancer+story+with+others/9777657/story.html>

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## Writing For Kids, in Spite of Parenthood: One Mom's Summer of Squeezing It In

by Lynn Leitch

The summer of 2014 started as it normally does in our family. There were sudden, welcome changes to our schedule. Early morning violin practises and last minute school projects were replaced by more fluid plans to spend time with friends and pass shady afternoons on our new trampoline.

A full, but peaceful summer seemed to lie ahead until I made a commitment that wasn't about family plans or schedules—it was about me. I registered for the SCBWI Canada East Conference and requested that not one, but two of my (yet unwritten) manuscripts be accepted for review and critique.

And there it was: the basic irony of my summer. The time that I wanted to spend with my kids would absolutely, positively, get in the way of writing for children. Between visions of day trips (water slides, zip lines, beaches) and thoughts about plot development and word count, I needed to know: *how on earth do so many writers make it happen? How do they find the time to write for children, in spite of parenthood?*

Maybe most writers with children were naturally inclined to wake up before dawn to crank out a few pages (that's not happening in my world). Maybe other writers have the stamina to write at night, once the kids are in bed (definitely not an option).

By mid-July, I had only managed to piece together bits and pieces of a single manuscript, written in ten minute increments. I soon started to fantasize about a different scenario. If only I had family nearby that was dying to spend time with their 7 and 9 year old relatives (they're pretty cute—any takers?). If only my teenage babysitter didn't have a real job this summer. If only it wasn't too late to sign up for the community summer camp.

Finally, by the last week of July, I knew that things had to change. I could almost hear the submission deadline approaching. Any writing was going to have to happen during the day, with kids underfoot. Full stop.

I started with an hour of mandatory 'quiet time' each day. The kids could read or play—it didn't matter, they just needed to be quiet in their bedrooms. Then I added half an hour of trampoline time in the afternoon. There were ground rules, of course—no neighbours over, no arguing and no flips. And when possible, I would print off a current copy and bring it along to the park, where crude editing and basic supervision could overlap.

Things got better once I accepted my circumstances and set a few boundaries (although, how parents with toddlers manage to write, I still don't know). August turned out to be more or less productive and not one, but two manuscripts are taking what I hope to be decent shape. There are just over two weeks left until the submission deadline and school starts next week. There is hope yet. Thank goodness for the trampoline.

*Lynn Leitch is a Vancouver native, now living in Burlington, Ontario with her family. She will be attending her first SCWBI conference in Ottawa this fall.*

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## Advice for Busy Writers

by Denise Jaden

When people ask me why I'm such a big advocate of NaNoWriMo (National Novel-Writing Month) and fast-drafting, my first answer is simply that I'm so busy. If I did not set stringent goals for myself to prioritize my writing at least a couple of times per year, I don't think I'd ever finish a book.

So how do you, as a busy writer/parent/spouse/employee/friend actually make your writing a priority? That's a good question. I have a few thoughts on the subject.

1. **Admit that writing is your dream and passion.** People around you will be much more supportive when you use words like "dream" or "calling" or "passion" than if you simply call it a hobby. In fact, if you call it a hobby, there's a good chance some people in your life will try to convince you to find a new, less time-sucking hobby.
2. **Know that busyness usually comes in waves.** If you don't keep your eyes peeled for the crests of the waves, though, it can sometimes feel like the waves just barrel over top of one another. If you're in a busy season right now, look toward the end of this season. When, realistically, do you expect this busy season of yours to slow down some? Set that as a date to brainstorm story ideas. Write it into your calendar. Book a few hours during the following week to actually write something.
3. **Stay sensible in committing to others and prioritizing commitments.** Other people will always think your commitments to them are super-important. But you should ask yourself if these commitments are truly urgent, or are you just taking on someone else's stress.
4. **Rather than singing the blues about your lack of writing time, instead work on flexing your brainstorming muscles.** Brainstorm character and story ideas when you're taxiing your kids around, or in the lineup at the grocery store. Keep a notepad with you, or download an app for your phone to keep all these ideas in one place as they come up (I have used and liked *A Novel Idea* for iPhone). Then you'll feel like you're still being creative and somewhat productive, even when there doesn't seem to be any time to sit down and actually draft or polish a story.



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**5. Don't do it alone.** If you stay accountable to other writer-friends, or follow a plan like that in my new book *Fast Fiction*, you'll be much more likely to succeed than if you stay isolated and hope that you'll find a way to stick with your goals. Plus, any journey is a lot more fun if you're not completely alone in it.

For more tips on fast-drafting, using time wisely, or for inspirational writing prompts, visit my blog at [denisejaden.blogspot.com](http://denisejaden.blogspot.com).

**Denise Jaden** is the author of critically-acclaimed fiction for teens, including *Losing Faith* and *Never Enough* from Simon & Schuster. Her nonfiction books for writers include *Writing with a Heavy Heart: Using Grief and Loss to Stretch Your Fiction* and her newest release, *Fast Fiction: A Guide to Outlining and Drafting a First-Draft Novel in Thirty Days*. She lives just outside Vancouver, Canada, where she homeschools her son and dances with a world-renowned Polynesian dance troupe.

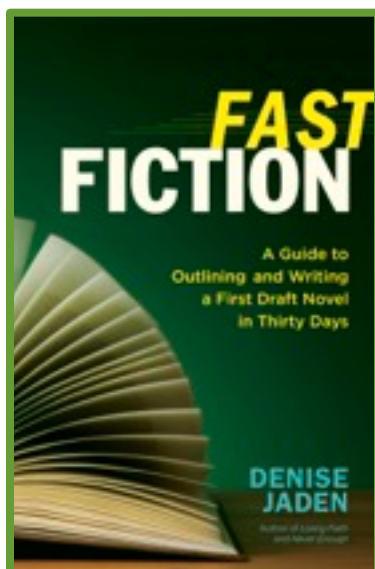


illustration by Helena Juhasz

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illustration by  
Raymond Nakamura

## One More With Feeling

by Maggie Bolitho

Is there a more memorable moment in a writer's life than the launch of the first book? Is there a more terrifying event? How does a writer prepare?

Before the launch of my debut novel, [Lockdown](#), I did the obvious things: attended a few local launches, asked other writers for hints, looked online, tweeted for help, and generally made a nuisance of myself.

In the end I identified these planning essentials:

- Find a location that is easy to get to by public transport and has good parking.
- Provide comfortable seats for the audience. Have you ever gone to a book launch in a small bookstore where you had to stand for the whole event and then couldn't even see or hear the writer? Point made.
- Ask someone to help with the meet and greet roles.
- Create displays that are tied into the theme of the novel.
- Keep the duration of the event reasonable. Respect people's busy lives.
- Provide snacks and drinks so people will linger after the launch.
- If possible get someone to man the sales desk and have an easy way for people to pay.

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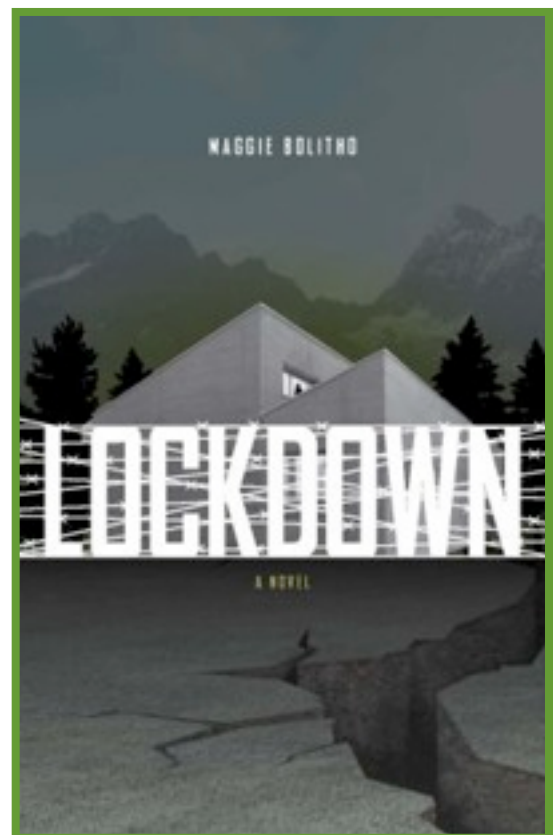
- Ask an articulate friend or two to introduce the writer and invite people to buy a book.

Those are the logistical issues. Once they are decided, the rest is up to the author. This is where there cannot be too much preparation. Here are some notes from my own experience, as well as from that amazing performance artist, [Ivan Coyote](#) (Talking the Talk at the Surrey Semiahoo Library, February 2014):

- Before you stand in front of the crowd, read the material aloud. Practice, practice, practice it—at least twenty times beforehand.
- Think of your piece as ascending a 15 storey building. Pace your reading so there are landings—pauses that allow your listener to absorb the material.
- The length of your reading should fill only 85% or so of your time slot. See previous comment about landings.
- Arrive early and check the facility out. Introduce yourself to the organizers if you are being hosted by a book store or other event. Try to remember names.
- When you are reading from a book, let the audience see it.
- Speak to the back of the room.
- Stop and make eye contact with your audience. Okay maybe not eye contact because it can be terrifying if you sense boredom or hostility from someone. Look at their ears. They won't be able to tell the difference.
- Remember to thank everyone for coming out. Also thank the people who are helping you host the event.

How did all these rules work out for the launch of [Lockdown](#)?

- I held it at the Community Meeting Room at the Lynn Valley branch of the North Vancouver Library. It's on a bus route and has ample parking, accessible by elevator. The room came with a kitchen, comfortable seats and good lighting.
- Volunteers from the North Vancouver Young Writers' Club impressed me with their excellent skills as hosts for the evening.
- I put together displays of emergency preparedness gear that tied into my novel's theme of a major earthquake. I put signs on it like "Zombie Apocalypse Emergency Rations."
- I kept the formal part of the evening to under an hour.
- My husband manned the sales desk. He started with plenty of change for cash sales as well as [Square](#) for credit card sales.





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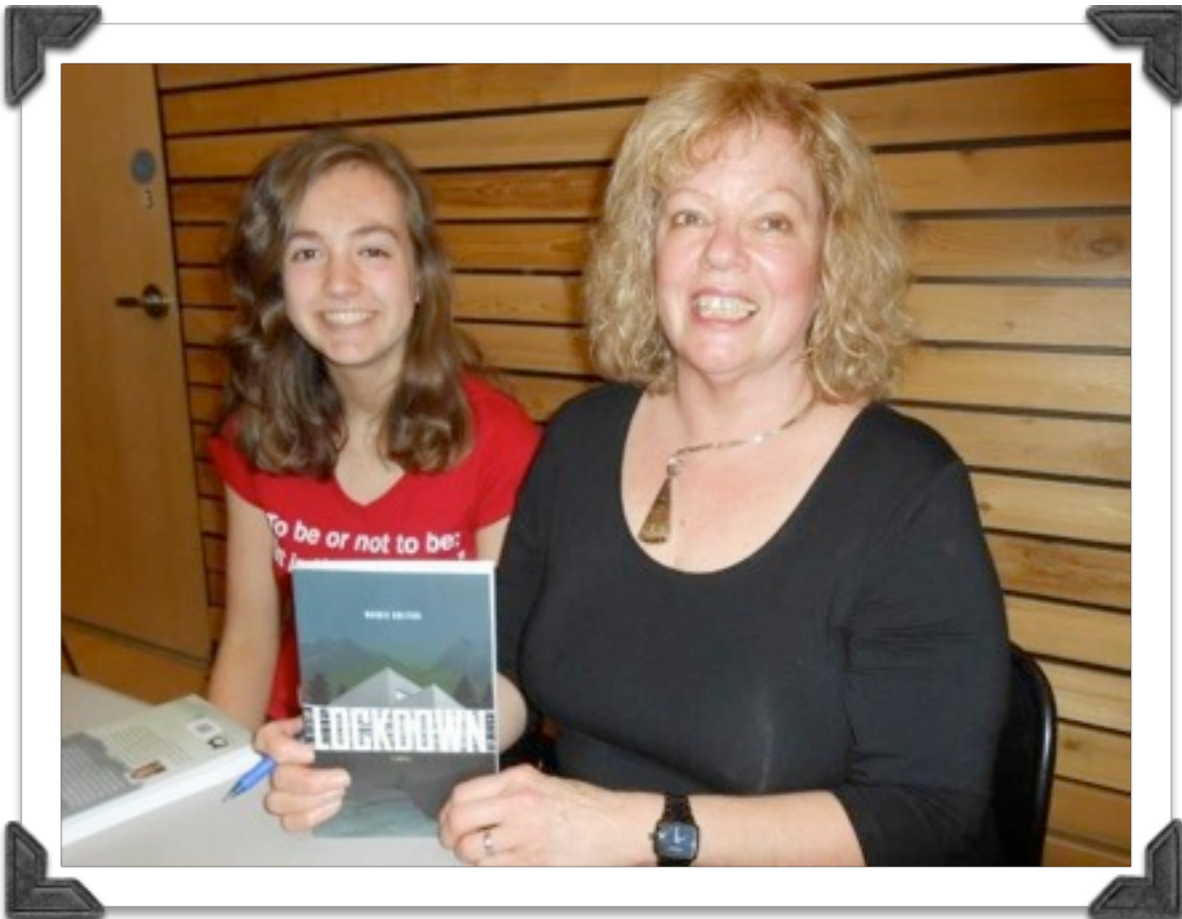
- My writing partners, [Lisa Voisin](#) and [Lynn Crymble](#), were excellent MC's.

I also put together a quiz of emergency preparedness questions and invited audience participation for the answers. At the end of the evening there was a draw for three small bags of emergency preparedness supplies.

As to my part of the night? I did everything on the author's list and I still didn't feel ready. But I stood in front of the crowd and gave it my best shot. When I finished, there was more than just polite applause. People clapped longer than I expected. They liked it! Or maybe they were just grateful that the whole thing was over.

Still, when I read with Steven Galloway a month later at the City of North Vancouver library, it was much easier. I didn't even come close to fainting.

The first time is always the hardest. And the best. Thank you everyone who came out to support me.



Maggie Bolitho with a young writer



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**I can't believe it's a digital illustration – what I need to do that**  
by Patricia Pinsk



Image: 90% digitally drawn image

There is an ever-growing trend toward creating digital illustration. Some of the tools on the market are making it easy to seamlessly merge the traditional and digital worlds together. It's getting more difficult to determine whether something is hand or computer generated. And digital illustrations are becoming more abundant as technology develops to allow for more traditional-looking or unique-looking renderings. There are a lot of tricks and effects that you can accomplish digitally that would either be impossible, or take forever to do manually.

### **So if you want to embrace the digital side, where do you start?**

You need a decent flatbed scanner ([Mustek](#) or [Brother brands](#) - look for tabloid size 11x14). It also really helps if you have something like a [Wacom](#) tablet and digital pen. Trying to draw with a mouse is difficult to say the least, and you risk injuring your wrist. You can buy a cheap second hand tablet off of [Craig's list](#) if you don't initially have the money. You will want a tablet with a decent amount of sensitivity points to obtain various levels of shading in your mark-making. The **Wacom Intuos Pen** is a good start, as it has 1024 levels of pressure sensitivity and a resolution of 2540 lines per inch.

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The next step is obtaining graphic software. [Adobe Photoshop](#) is used by many in the industry. There of course are other products such as [artRage](#), [Mischief](#), [CorelDRAW](#), and [Manga Studio](#) – to name a few. You can usually download a trial version of the software and test these products out before committing to anything. In the end, it's a personal choice of what works best for you, your artistic needs and your budget. If you purchase a new [Wacom tablet](#), the pro versions come with software. If you are a student, or with a non-profit organization, check out [Studica](#) for deals on tablets and software.

There are many digital paint brushes that are now available. Many brushes are free to download and import into your graphic software (check out [You the designer: Brushes](#)).

Once you are set up with you tools, there are great tutorials such as Neil Fontaine's [digital painting video tutorial for beginners](#), and [illustration tutorials on BlogSpot](#) . Once you master one program you'll find similarities between other programs as far as icons, and use of terminology. This makes learning other programs easier as you build on your skills.

The thing to remember is that learning new techniques is constant. The digital world is fast-changing. The upside is that things are getting faster and easier to do as well as learn.

*"The world is changing at such a rapid rate that it's turning us all into amateurs. Even for professionals, the best way to flourish is to retain an amateur's spirit and embrace uncertainty and the unknown."*

### Austin Kleon

Patricia Pinsk's children's and editorial illustrations are multi-media work that is primarily in watercolour, ink, digital photography, coloured pencil and collage. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Vancouver's Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design (now called Emily Carr University of Art and Design), as well as a Certificate in New Media from Vancouver Film School. She has studied at Pilchuck Glass School (WA, USA), as well as numerous other art workshops in Canada and the USA.

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## Event Horizon by Ken Kilback

**The Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators—Canada West** is holding its conference, **WestCwic 2014**, on **Saturday September 20, 2014** at the Holiday Inn Express in Burnaby, BC. Featured speakers include author/illustrator Lisa Cinar, and authors Hazel Hutchins, Denise Jaden, and Pamela McDowell. Manuscript and portfolio consultations are available. For more information, please go to <http://canadawest.scbwi.org/events/>.

From **Friday September 19 through Saturday September 27 2014** in Winnipeg is **Thin Air: Winnipeg International Writers Festival**. Guest speakers include authors Andre Alexis, Brenda Hasiuk, and Peter Midgley, and graphic novelist/artist David A. Robertson. For more information, please go to [www.thinairwinnipeg.ca](http://www.thinairwinnipeg.ca).

**Lethbridge Word on the Street** is on **Sunday September 21 2014** at the Main Library from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Guest speakers include authors Jacqueline Guest, Karen Bass, and Carrie Mac; author/illustrator Ruth Ohl; and illustrator Martin Springett. For more details, please go to [www.thewordonthestreet.ca/wots/lethbridge](http://www.thewordonthestreet.ca/wots/lethbridge).

**Saskatoon Word on the Street** is on **Sunday September 21 2014** at the Civic Square around City Hall, in front of Frances Morrison Library, from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Guest speakers include authors Kelley Armstrong, Sean Cummings, Deborah Ellis, and Arthur Slade; and author/illustrator Barbara Reid. For more details, please go to [www.thewordonthestreet.ca/wots/saskatoon](http://www.thewordonthestreet.ca/wots/saskatoon).

**Word Vancouver** is from **Wednesday September 24 through Sunday September 28 2014**. Events will be held at a variety of places, including Carnegie Community Centre, Banyen Books and Sound, Historic Joy Kogawa House, and Library Square. Guests include authors Maggie de Vries and Sarah Ellis. Please go to [www.wordvancouver.ca](http://www.wordvancouver.ca) for details.

**WordFest: Banff-Calgary International Writers Festival** is being held from **Tuesday October 14 through Sunday October 19 2014** at different locations around Calgary, Banff, and the Bow Valley. Guest speakers include authors Caroline Adderson, Dennis Lee, Hugh Brewster, and Jonathan Auxier; and author/illustrators Geneviève Côté and Scott Chantler. Tickets go on sale starting September 3 2014. For more information, please go to [www.wordfest.com](http://www.wordfest.com).

**LitFest**, Edmonton's Non-Fiction Festival, is scheduled for **Thursday October 16 through Sunday October 26 2014**. No information is available yet, but check in at [www.litfestalberta.com](http://www.litfestalberta.com).

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**The Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators—Canada East** presents its **Annual Fall Conference** from **Friday October 17 through Sunday October 19 2014** at the Albert at Bay Suite Hotel in Ottawa, Ontario. Featured speakers include editors Kelsey Murphy and Laura Whitaker; illustrator Wallace Edwards; and author and co-founder of SCBWI, Lin Oliver. For more information, please go to <http://canadaeast.scbwi.org/events/>.

On **Saturday October 18 2014**, from 8:00 a.m. to Noon at the University Golf Club, the **Vancouver Children's Literature Roundtable** is hosting its annual **Illustrators' Breakfast**, with illustrator Marie-Louise Gay. Please go to [www.vclr.ca/illustrator-breakfast/](http://www.vclr.ca/illustrator-breakfast/) for more details or to register.

The **Canadian Association of Children's Authors, Illustrators and Performers** is presenting its annual **Packaging Your Imagination** conference from **Saturday October 18 through Sunday October 19 2014** from 8:15 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Humber College Lakeshore Campus in Toronto, Ontario. Guest speakers include author Susin Nielsen; author/illustrators Debbie Ohi and Ashley Spires; illustrators Cybèle Young and Matt James; and editors Shelley Tanaka and Tara Walker. Also available this year is the choice to register for the live online streaming of the conference. For more information or to register, please go to [www.canscaip.org](http://www.canscaip.org).

The annual **Vancouver Writers Fest** is taking place from **Tuesday October 21 through Sunday October 26 2014** at Granville Island. Among the over one hundred guest writers speaking at the festival are Caroline Adderson, Marie-Louise Gay, Anne Villeneuve, Helaine Becker, Marie Lu, Sarah Ellis, Lee Edward Fodi, Marthe Jocelyn, and Mariko Tamaki. For more information, please go to [www.writersfest.bc.ca](http://www.writersfest.bc.ca).

From **Friday October 24 through Sunday October 26 2014** is the annual **Surrey International Writers' Conference** at the Vancouver Sheraton Guildford Hotel in Surrey. Guest speakers include authors Joelle Anthony, Dan Bar-el, and Eileen Cook; agents Taylor Martindale, Kris Rothstein, and Nephele Tempest; editor Abby Ranger; and more. Please go to [www.siwc.ca](http://www.siwc.ca) for more information or to register.

On **Monday November 17 2014**, from 4:30-6:00 p.m., the **Vancouver Children's Literature Roundtable** presents its annual **AuthorFest at UBC**. Guest speakers include authors Norma Charles, Robert Heidbreder, and Deborah Hodges. This event is being held Room 100 of the Scarfe Building, and is free to everyone.

The **Vancouver Children's Literature Roundtable** is also featuring **Serendipity 2014** on **Saturday March 7 2015** from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in Vancouver, BC. The theme for the conference is **Edgy, Eerie, Exceptional**. Guest speakers include authors Holly Black, Mariko Tamaki, and Andrew Smith; author/illustrator Molly Idle; and editor Kelli Chipponeri. For more details or to register, please go to [www.vclr.ca/serendipity-2015/](http://www.vclr.ca/serendipity-2015/).

*Note: SCBWI Canada West distributes information about events, but passing along this information does not constitute an endorsement. Interested persons must follow up on all aspects of these events on their own.*