



White Pine 2026 Nominees – Annotations and Content



Beast

Written by Richard Van Camp

Published by Douglas & McIntyre

For as long as Lawson can remember, his life in a small Northwest Territories town has revolved around “the Treaty” between the Dogrib and the Chipewyan, set down centuries ago to prevent the return of bloody warfare between the two peoples.

On the Dogrib side, Lawson and his family have done their best to keep the pact alive with the neighbouring Cranes, a family with ancestral ties to a revered Chipewyan war chief. But even as Lawson and his father dutifully tidy the Cranes’ property as an act of respect, their counterparts offer little more than scowls and derision in return, despite the fact that both families are responsible for protecting the treaty.

Worse still, it seems that one of the Cranes’ boys is doing all he can to revive the old conflict: Silver, fresh out of jail, has placed himself in the service of a cruel, ghoulish spirit bent on destroying the peace. Now it’s up to Isaiah Valentine, a Cree Grass Dancer, Shari Burns, a Metis psychic, and Lawson Sauron, a Dogrib Yabati—or protector—to face what Silver Cranes has called back.

This latest feat of storytelling magic by celebrated author Richard Van Camp blends sharply observed realism and hair-raising horror as it plays out against a 1980s-era backdrop replete with Platinum Blonde songs and episodes of *Degrassi Junior High*. Unfolding in the fictional town of Fort Simmer—the setting of previous Van Camp stories—*Beast* delivers a gripping, spirited tale that pits the powers of tradition against the pull of a vengeful past.

Content/Discussion Themes

Indigenous, LGBTQIA2S+, Male protagonist, bullying and isolation, Thriller, suspense, horror, Grief, loss, fear, Coming of age, Culture and tradition, Northern Canada 1980s, homophobia and discrimination, including instances of homophobic slurs and discrimination against LGBTQIA2S+ characters, death and grief, including loss of a parent and loss of a child, substance abuse and alcoholism, supernatural elements.

A Drop in the Ocean

Written by Léa Taranto

Published by Arsenal Pulp Press

Sixteen-year-old Mira Durand has just been checked into the secure unit of the Residency Adolescent Treatment Centre for obsessive compulsive and comorbid disorders. Four years of being passed around different psych wards like a hot potato have only worsened her OCD and

anorexia. Her brutal, religious compulsions, which she believes keep her mom safe, make her less of a clean freak and more of a freak. No wonder her only friend is her journal. At the Residency's Ward 2, Mira discovers that her shrink is a fellow fantasy nerd and that her wardmates have enough of their own high-risk behaviours to tolerate hers. The complex friendships she forms with them (including a first love), the slow trust she builds with her treatment team, and the outside and family visits she earns give her things to look forward to beyond the drudgery of her compulsions. But it takes visiting Gung Gung, her dying maternal grandfather, for her to realize that to truly live, she must fight the cognitive distortions at the heart of her compulsions.

Based on the author's personal experience, *A Drop in the Ocean* is a gritty, humanizing portrait of living with mental illness.

Content/Discussion Themes

Mental illness/OCD, Eating disorders, Body image, Self harm, Disability Literature, LGBTQ+ Literature, BIPOC and Asian Literature, Mental illness/psychiatric treatment, Self harm/compulsions, Eating disorder, Smoking/drug use, Grief/emotional trauma

For She is Wrath

Written by Emily Varga

Published by Pan Macmillan

Betrayed by her ex-lover and falsely imprisoned for a crime she didn't commit, Dania counts down the days until she can exact her revenge – if only she didn't have a life sentence to serve with no hope of release.

But when a fellow prisoner lands in the middle of her cell with a proposition and the keys to a dangerous Jinn treasure, Dania takes the chance to escape and pursue her path of vengeance. Armed with all the power she could want and a brand-new identity, Dania enacts a plan to bring down those who betrayed her and her family.

But the one person standing in her way is the very man who signed her life away in the first place, and retribution becomes a complicated game of cat and mouse. Because sometimes betrayal isn't as simple as it seems and revenge certainly isn't as easy – not when your heart is involved.

Content/Discussion Themes

Fantasy, Romance, Deception, Revenge, Grief, Misogyny, Dictatorship, Oppression, Violence, Blood, Imprisonment, including torture, drug use and addiction, death of a parent, Self-harm, emotional abuse, kidnapping

The History of Everything

Written by Victoria Evans

Published by HarperAlley

Daisy and Agnes have always had each other.

And that's all they've ever needed—or wanted, at least. So when Agnes's mom drops the bombshell that she and Agnes are moving at the end of the summer, the girls are crushed. All seems lost until the pair unearth "The History of Everything," an old friendship scrapbook with the ultimate bucket list to make their last summer together unforgettable. But when Daisy starts dating a charming drummer, her social calendar suddenly has less room for her best friend. Insecurities bubble to the surface, and Daisy and Agnes begin to question if their friendship is meant to last the summer, much less forever.

In this tender graphic novel debut, Victoria Evans delves into the heart of a best friendship and explores what it means to grow up without growing apart.

Content/Discussion Themes

Graphic Novel, Friendship, Coming of Age, New Relationships, Death of a grandparent, Grief

Messy Perfect

Written by Tanya Boteju

Published by Quill Tree Books

Cassie Perera is a star student in St. Luke's junior class. But the new school year brings an unwelcome surprise—the return to St. Luke's of Cassie's former friend, Ben, who left a few years ago after a homophobic bullying incident Cassie knows she didn't do enough to prevent. Still harboring guilt from her inaction, Cassie decides, in her usual, overzealous way, to team up with the neighboring public school to found an underground Gender and Sexuality Alliance—as a complicated strategy for making things up to Ben. Secretly, Cassie is also tempted by the possibility of opening up about her own sexuality for the first time.

As Cassie's new friends urge her out of her comfort zone, she unlocks a kind of joy and freedom she's never felt before—even as she struggles to balance these experiences with her typical tightrope of being the perfect daughter, student, and Catholic.

Cassie's perfectly curated life unravels into turmoil, but can she embrace the mess enough to piece together something new?

Content/Discussion Themes

Found Family, Coming of Age, LGBTQIA2S+, Religion, family and societal pressure, Homophobia, racism, discrimination, microaggressions, guilt, perceived vandalism of religious figures

Recommended Reading

Written by Paul Coccia

Published by Zando Young Readers

Curvaceous, clever, and an avid reader, seventeen-year-old Bobby Ashton never misses a main character moment. So when it comes to asking out his crush, he plans a romantic gesture grand enough to go down in local history. Unfortunately, though, his extensive knowledge of every rom-com trope ever doesn't prepare him for how tragically he misreads the situation. Suddenly Bobby's very public romantic gesture turns into an ordeal so embarrassing it could be a villain origin story.

Having masterfully shattered every plan for his perfect summer before college, Bobby's last resort is working at his uncle's sleepy bookstore. Soon, Bobby is expertly recommending books for customers to perfectly cure what ails them. Attempting to rebound after a breakup? There's a book for that. Trying to tame your crochety coworker? There's a book for that too. Then a plot twist Bobby never saw coming walks through the door in the form of Luke, an unfairly attractive and staunchly anti-romantic lifeguard.

Bobby's blossoming connection with Luke reminds him of some of his favorite tropes: grumpy-sunshine, quippy banter, and even forced proximity. But after his last romantic disaster, should Bobby use all the tricks in his arsenal to turn Luke's head? Or is he misreading all the signs again? Do grand gestures really need to be so . . . grand?

Content/Discussion Themes

LGBTQIA2S+, Male protagonist, Romcom, Coming of age, Literary love, Found family, Body image issues, Insecurity, Cringe behaviour, Skinny dipping, Drinking

Songs for Ghosts

Written by Clara Kumagai

Published by Penguin Teen Canada

Seventeen-year-old Adam has just broken up with his boyfriend Evan and is not looking forward to the excruciating awkwardness at school for the rest of term or a whole summer stuck at home with his dad, stepmom and baby brother, Benji.

But then Adam discovers a diary in some boxes in the attic and is quickly enthralled by their poignant story. They were written by a young woman living in Nagasaki in 1911. Adam is enraptured by her life and loves, becoming totally absorbed in her story. And then he starts to be haunted by her ghostly presence . . .

Equal parts globe-trotting love drama, chilling ghost story and exploration of Japanese history, *Songs for Ghosts's* poetic prose and memorable characters will leave readers breathless.

Content/Discussion Themes

LGBTQIA2S+, Male protagonist, Ghost story, Mystery, Romance, Coming of age, Poetic prose, Japanese culture, Violence, graphic descriptions, Death and grief, including the loss of a parent, Unwilling separation of parent from child, Alcohol use, Microaggressions, References to the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Forced marriage, Female oppression

Titan of the Stars

Written by E.K. Johnston

Published by Tundra Books

Celeste knows every inch of this ship. She's proud of her work as apprentice engineer. And as the maiden voyage of the Titan launches, she's optimistic for the promises of this new journey from Earth to Mars — this new life.

Dominic arrives at his suite where his valet is busy unpacking his things. His chest is tight, already feeling anxious inside his dad's precious new ship. Once it launches, he's trapped, inside the ship and inside the life his father has chosen for him — a life that will leave his dreams of art school behind.

Discovered under melted ice caps, ancient aliens have been brought onto the Titan as well, and stored in display cases for the entertainment of the passengers . . . until an act of sabotage releases them into the ship, with zero discrimination for class, decks or human life . . .

Content/Discussion Themes

LGBTQIA2S+, Thriller, Science Fiction, Aliens, Classism, Social inequality, Survival, Human Trafficking, Indentured Servitude, Child Abuse, Graphic Violence, Death of A Parent or Sibling

The Unfinished

Written by Cheryl Isaacs

Published by Heartdrum

When small-town athlete Avery's morning run leads her to a strange pond in the middle of the forest, she awakens a horror the townspeople of Crook's Falls have long forgotten.

The black water has been waiting. Watching. Hungry for the souls it needs to survive.

Avery can smell the water, see it flooding everywhere; she thinks she's losing her mind. And as the black water haunts Avery—taking a new form each time—people in town begin to go missing.

Though Avery had heard whispers of monsters from her Kanien'kéha:ka (Mohawk) relatives, she has never really connected to her Indigenous culture or understood the stories. But the Elders she has distanced herself from now may have the answers she needs.

When Key, her best friend and longtime crush, is the next to disappear, Avery is faced with a choice: listen to the Kanien'kéha:ka and save the town but lose her friend forever...or listen to her heart and risk everything to get Key back.

Content/Discussion Themes

Horror, Thriller/Mystery, Indigenous (Kanien'kéha:ka), Mental health/anxiety, Cultural heritage, Running, Forest, Friendship, Familial relationships, Panic attacks, Death and grief, including the death of a child, Addiction, Monsters, Chronic illness, Violence and graphic descriptions, including imagery of body horror, Dementia, Microaggressions/racism, Kidnapping

The Unweaving

Written by Cheryl Parisien

Published by Tidewater Press

In 1869, the people of Red River in Rupert's Land meet the arrival of surveyors from the new Dominion of Canada with trepidation. As the Métis Nation begins negotiating terms for joining Confederation, each member of the Rougeau family adapts in their own way. This novel follows Clément, Marienne, Julien, and Charlotte must seek their own supports as the Red River Resistance unfolds and each must reckon with their choices.

"We are like the sash, woven together from different peoples and traditions, making something new, beautiful, and strong."

Content/Discussion Themes

Historical, Canadian History, Métis/Indigenous, Family, Drama, Colonialism, Displacement, Violence, Loss of Family