



Blue Spruce 2027 Nominee List



Call Me Gray

Written by Andrew Larsen and Bells Larsen

illustrated by Talullah Fontaine

Published by Kids Can Press

A child shares feelings about their identity with their dad in this powerful story about change, acceptance and, above all, love.

One winter, while creating their annual ice rink together, a child starts a conversation with their dad about something important. “Do you ever feel mixed up about who you are?” the child asks. But the father misunderstands the question. So, the child tries again later. “Do you ever feel different than the way you look?” Again, the father doesn’t get it. But this time he asks to hear more. And the child explains. “I look like a boy, but sometimes I feel more like a girl.” At last, it’s been said. The child shares that their name feels like an itchy sweater and they want to change it to “Gray.” It’s a big change, but one they can grow into together. And when Gray’s dad finally uses their chosen name, it feels warm and right, just like hot chocolate after the first skate of the season.

This personal story, co-written by acclaimed author Andrew Larsen and his son Bells, is inspired by Bells’s own experience as a transgender person. It’s about the joy and comfort a child feels when a parent affirms their identity, and how the transition can be complex for the rest of the family. An excellent conversation starter for families with a child who might be questioning their gender identity, it centers the child’s experience of navigating and sharing what they feel, and shows that, though the child’s sense of themselves is changing, their place in the family is not. It also demonstrates a supportive and respectful family environment, where home is a safe space. Tallulah Fontaine’s softly focused illustrations punctuated by the red of Gray’s cap create an inviting, wintery setting.

Content/ Discussion Themes:

Change, Acceptance, Family, Identity, Love, Self-Expression, Gender Identity, Transgender, Empathy, Traditions

Camping is a Terrible Idea

Written by Kirsten Pendreigh

illustrated by Tiffany Everett

Published by FIR Sleeping Bear Press

City kid Cammie likes her daily routines and schedules. When Dad announces a camping trip, she is horrified. Nature means messes and chaos! Camping is a terrible idea! And sure enough, camping is chaos! There are roots that trip, pesky biting mosquitoes, and campfire smoke that blows in her face. But, as it turns out, Mother Nature has her own set of rhythms and routines, from precise sunrise and sunset times to predictable ocean tides rolling in and out. Cammie also discovers calming nighttime sounds and reassuring patterns in the night sky. Backmatter on nature's cycles and how to tackle anxiety about new experiences.

Content/ Discussion Themes:

Family, Anxiety, New Experiences, Adaptability, Adventures, Camping & Outdoors, Nature

Dear Classroom 1B

Written by Lynn Leitch

illustrated by Christine Battuz

Published by Northwinds Press/Scholastic Canada Ltd.

After a bumpy introduction to his new home, Norm — a classroom hamster — is forced to take matters into his own paws. Unless he can convince the kids of Classroom 1B how he wants to be treated, he'll be destined for a whole year of water fountain baths, interrupted naps, and (ugh!) hugs. A hamster has his limits, no matter how cute and cuddly he might look!

Content/ Discussion Themes:

Humour, Class Pets, Pet Care, Letters, Letter Writing, Community, School

One Can

Written by Lana Button and Eric Walters

illustrated by Isabelle Malenfant

Published by OwlKids Books

A child donates a can of food to their school food drive. But in an unexpected twist, they come to understand what it means to give and receive.

A child is excited to donate a can of their favorite Zoodelicious to the school food drive. Their teacher has explained that the food will be given to people in need, along with mittens from the “mitten tree.”

In the classroom, there’s a carpet with one hundred squares, and the goal is to fill each square with a can of food. When the child places their can of Zoodelicious on square 100, everyone cheers, and the teacher puts a snowflake sticker on top to celebrate.

But a few days later, the child finds the same can of Zoodelicious among the groceries their mom has brought home. There’s a pair of red mitts, too. “Mom, are we the people in need?” the child asks.

The next morning, after having thought of all the people who will receive food from the school and wondering what else they might need, the child donates their too-small blue mittens to the mitten tree at school.

Created by an award-winning team, *One Can* tells a timely and touching story of a child who learns to give and receive—and wants only to give again in return.

Content/ Discussion Themes:

Empathy, Food Scarcity, Generosity, Giving, Donations, Kindness, Community, Compassion, Resiliency

Rez Kid

Written by Andrea Landry

illustrated by Isabella Fassler

Published by Kids Can Press

A celebration of traditional ways of life and the power of sharing what we have.

“Rez kid!” The girl ignores the taunt as she hurries to the back of the school bus. She just wants to get home to the reservation, where she can feel safe. One by one, she tells her mom, nóhkom, moshum and aunty about what happened. And one by one they offer her advice on what to do. Each one has a different idea, but each idea is the same at heart: share something from the reservation with the other children. The girl listens, but decides to come up with her own idea. And, as with everything else about her life as a rez kid, her idea grows out of all she has been given by those who came before her.

Andrea Landry has written a beautiful story that celebrates Indigenous ways of life and encourages readers to be proud of who they are. The traditions practiced on the girl’s reservation are showcased as she beads, harvests medicine, gardens and rides horseback with her elders. Isabella Fassler’s stunning art, with swirls of bold colors, evokes the majesty and splendor of nature. The message of showing kindness in response to aggression offers a powerful lesson for all readers. This book could augment social studies lessons on Indigenous cultures and character education conversations about courage, compassion and inclusiveness. An author’s note gives a brief history of reservations/reserves.

Content/ Discussion Themes:

Community, Family, Culture, Indigenous characters, Indigenous ways of life, Kindness, Problem Solving, Courage, Compassion, Teasing/Taunting, Resilience

Fly in the Chai

Written by Zenia Wadhwani

illustrated by Chaaya Prabhat

Published by PRHC Tundra Books

Who loves chai more? Nanu . . . or the pesky fly that lands in his fresh cup? A delightful picture book romp featuring an adorable grandfather and granddaughter, a lively group of marketgoers and one very memorable fly.

On a trip to the market, Nanu gets a cup of chai. But before he can take a drink, his granddaughter stops him just in time.

STOP! There's a FLY in that chai!

Thus begins an epic battle between Nanu and the fly: who loves chai more??

This hilarious story will have readers on the edge of their seats and the dynamic illustrations will take them on a journey through a busy market they won't soon forget!

Who will win the chai battle? Read on to find out . . .

Content/ Discussion Themes:

Grandparent and grandchild relationship, Food and drink, Culture, Humour, Community

Love, Panda

Written by Elaine Su

illustrated by Charlene Chua

Published by Scholastic Canada Ltd.

Meet Panda: she's grumpy, she's snarky, she's a ball of mischief, and... she's been abandoned in the BABY'S room! Follow along as cheeky Panda the stuffy writes letters to Benny, her owner and the big brother, pleading to be rescued from the drooly, boring, (...and kinda cute?) baby.

Librarian and educator Elaine Su's debut picture book tells the story of a snarky, witty Panda who is eager to get back to her owner, Benny, but finds herself begrudgingly warming up to the drooly and excitable Baby. Award-winning illustrator, Charlene Chua's irresistible cute art and clever background details are sure to make every reread feel new! Perfect for little siblings, big siblings, and clever pandas.

Content/ Discussion Themes:

Letter Writing, Humour, Family, Siblings, Stuffed animals

My Neighborhood

Written by Delton Brown

illustrated by Briana Mukodiri Uchendu

Published by RHCB Random House Studio

A vibrant and lyrical picture book that follows two brothers on a journey through their inner-city neighborhood, showing off the beauty and life lessons to be found within.

My neighborhood ain't perfect, but it's more than flashing lights seen on the six o'clock news.

Follow a young boy as he explores his neighborhood hand-in-hand with his older brother, Trevor. They share handshakes on the sidewalk, laughter at the skate park, wisdom at the chess tables, rhythm in the dance circle, and kindness at the corner

store. With each step, this lyrical picture book radiates the sounds, gestures, and bonds that make a neighborhood more than just a place to live--that make it a home.

Pulsing with rhythm and swagger, Delano Brown's rich text and Briana Mukodiri Uchendu's beautiful illustrations capture the heart of an urban neighborhood and the relationships that bring it to life.

Content/ Discussion Themes:

Family, Connections, Neighbourhood, Urban areas, Inner-city neighbourhoods, Community, Disrupting Stereotypes

Sarabeth's Garage

Written by Melanie Florence

illustrated by Nadia Alam

Published by PRHC Tundra Books

A picture book that celebrates doing your own thing in the face of society's expectations . . . and a sweet story about a girl, her dad, her disapproving grandma and, most importantly, cars.

Sarabeth loves cars.

She loves the way the engines sometimes roar like lions and other times purr like kittens. She loves seeing sports cars that are sleek and fast like cheetahs and boxy SUVs that trundle along like elephants.

And most of all, she loves to help her dad at his garage.

Sarabeth's grandmother doesn't approve. She thinks little girls should play with dolls and wear dresses and always have clean hands. But when her car starts grumbling like a walrus instead of purring like a kitten, who will be there to help?

A delightful story about an independent and spirited girl who has no time for the limitations that society wants to put on her, and a grandma who gets the opportunity to change her way of thinking.

Content/ Discussion Themes:

Family, Growth Mindset, Independence, Challenging Traditional Gender Stereotypes, Being true to one's self

This is How We Talk: A Celebration of Disability and Connection

Written by Jessica Slice and Caroline Cupp

illustrated by Kayla Harren

Published by prh Dial Books

From the creators of *This Is How We Play* is a new jubilant, inclusive, luminously illustrated picture book that celebrates all the ways we communicate with each other.

We sign, write, clap! We tap, stim, scream! So many ways to talk and joke, play and learn and dream. This joyful read-aloud, with an empowering refrain, from disability rights activists Jessica Slice and Caroline Cupp, demystifies and respects how disabled people and their families use different forms of communication to connect and show love.

Back matter consists of a kid-friendly guide to thinking, learning, and talking about disability and communication; a glossary of the different disabilities represented throughout the book; and a guide for grown-ups on ways to encourage discussions about disabilities with the children in their lives. Throughout, *This Is How We Talk* centers, affirms, and encourages the disabled children and adults who are already doing the challenging work of advocating for themselves and finding strength in community.

Content/ Discussion Themes:

Inclusion, Disabilities, Ways to Communicate, Connection, Empowerment, Self-Advocating, Community