



OLA Best Bets Committee

2019 Annual Report to OPLA Council

January 30th, 2020

OLA Best Bets Committee Members

Theresa Power - co-chair (Centre for Equitable Library Access)
Kara Miley - co-chair (Toronto Public Library)
Sheilah O'Connor* (Toronto Public Library)
Vivien Keiling* (Barrie Public Library)
Lindsay Irvine (East Gwillimbury Public Library)
Julia Campbell* (Whitby Public Library)
Lisa Radha Weaver (Hamilton Public Library)
Frances Hanemaayer (Burlington Public Library)
Samantha Dillane (Caledon Public Library)
Brandy Goffigan* (Toronto Public Library)
Kate Morrison (Hamilton Public Library)
Emily Bingham (Mississauga Public Library)
Meghan Tinmouth (Hamilton Public Library)
*outgoing

In 2019, the Best Bets Committee added seven new members to our committee: Lisa Radha Weaver (Hamilton Public Library); Frances Hanemaayer (Burlington Public Library); Samantha Dillane (Caledon Public Library); Brandy Goffigan (Toronto Public Library); Kate Morrison (Hamilton Public Library); Emily Bingham (Mississauga Public Library); and Meghan Tinmouth (Hamilton Public Library). This was one of the largest increases in membership to date, and represented the needs of the committee.

At the end of this year, we will be saying goodbye to four members, Sheilah O'Connor (our longest standing member with over twenty years on the committee); Vivien Keiling (our former Chair), Julia Campbell and Brandy Goffigan. They will be missed for their contributions to the Committee. We are in the process of accepting new members to replace them.

In 2019, the Committee re-evaluated our Terms of Reference. At its conclusion, new objectives were included: make membership more welcoming to members located outside of the GTA; and, create a more effective means of evaluating our work to best accomplish our mandate. As we are currently accepting applications for new members, focus on recruiting from Northern Ontario, rural libraries, and areas located outside the Greater Toronto Area can begin in the 2020 reading year. We are currently working on how that would look and we look forward to sharing that with you.

During the past year, the Committee has read over 400 titles, keeping with our yearly average. Our final meeting will take place on January 9th, where the 2019 Top Ten lists will be finalized. We are presenting the final lists at OLA Super Conference on Thursday January 30th. Also, we will be partnering with CANSCAIP to host an author panel at Super Conference this year.

In 2019, the Committee attended the Festival of Trees to promote our lists and outreach to the community. We have plans to be present at the 2020 Festival as well. Our committee was not able to attend the 2019 Child and Youth Expo in Thunder Bay, but we will endeavor to attend the 2020 event. We are also assessing other OPLA and OLA events in which we would promote our work.

At events such as Super Conference, Festival of Trees, and the Child and Youth Expo, the Best Bets committee shares our Top Ten lists – current and past years’ – and highlight Canadian materials that are selected based solely upon their own merit for their intended audience. As the committee accepts all titles based on the eligibility criteria that they are written and/or illustrated by a Canadian and published in the given year, there are minimal barriers for small publishing house or independent publishers from having their title considered and recognized. These lists continue to be valuable resources for teachers, parents, and library staff as readers’ advisory and collection development tools.