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OPLA Committee Report

Committee Name:

OLA Best Bets Committee

Committee Members:

Kara Miley, co-chair

Theresa Power, co-chair

Emily Bingham

Katie Vlanich

Jennie Fallis

Linda Ludke

Stephanie McPherson

Kristra Sumnauth

Meagan Wilkinson

Emily Anderson

Monika Trzeciakowski

Date of Last Meeting:

Thursday January 4, 2024

Date of Next Meeting:

Thursday February 8, 2024

Summary:

In 2024, the committee on boarded two new members, Emily Anderson (Essex County Library) and Monika Trzeciakowski (Brampton Public Library). We will also be saying farewell after the Super Conference to long time members, Emily Bingham (Toronto Public Library), Jennie Fallis (McGill University), as well as Stephanie McPherson (Trent Lakes Public Library). We wish Emily, Jennie, and Stephanie the best of luck with their future endeavours and thank them for their support of the committee. The committee has begun recruitment for three to four new members to fill our vacancies, and is actively looking for readers particularly in the Young Adult category.

The committee continues to meet monthly online, which has worked well for us, and allowed us to seek members outside of the greater Toronto area. We continue to ask publishers to send electronic copies of their titles (along with one physical copy) so that members who live farther away can still access materials to review. Members read over 300 titles in 2023, which is in line with past year's numbers. We want to thank our members for their continued dedication to reading so many books.

Cybersecurity attacks affecting the Toronto and London Public Library systems in late 2023 had an effect on some member's ability to source materials for the committee. We expect this to continue to affect



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some members into 2024 until full systems have been restored. This lack of access underscored how important publisher participation is in providing access to copies of their eligible titles.

The committee participated in the Festival of Trees in 2023 at Harbourfront Centre. This was the first in person festival since the Covid 19 pandemic began in 2020. Members had a table at the festival and promoted our lists to the participants. We spoke with over 170 parents, educators, and students, who attended over two days. Members also participated in the 2023 Child and Youth Expo in November with a virtual panel presentation on Diversity in Children and Youth books. Best Bets members highlighted titles we were considering for the 2023 list, as well as older titles from our back catalogue. Our committee is always looking for new ways to engage and promote our lists to a wider audience. However, participation in events is becoming increasingly challenging. It is increasingly difficult for members to be allowed the time to participate in these events, and with a committee that now has members from all over Ontario, the primarily GTA-focused in person events are only realistic for a few members.

Our committee will be presenting our 2023 Top Ten lists at OLA Super Conference on Friday January 26, at 10:45am. We hope this will be the start of another successful year of reading for our committee.

Submitted by:

Kara Miley & Theresa Power

Date:

January 17, 2024