

Finalists announced for 2015 BMO Winterset Award

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 2, 2016 (St. John's, NL) – ArtsNL is pleased to announce the finalists for the 2015 BMO Winterset Award are Stan Dragland, Sara Tilley, and Leslie Vryenhoek. The award celebrates excellence in Newfoundland and Labrador writing. The winner will be announced at Government House on Thursday, March 24.

The three finalists are:

- Stan Dragland, for: *Strangers & Others* (Pedlar Press), St. John's, NL
- Sara Tilley, for: *Duke* (Pedlar Press), St. John's, NL
- Leslie Vryenhoek, for: *Ledger of the Open Hand* (Breakwater Books), St. John's, NL

The winner will receive a prize of \$12,500 and the two finalists will each receive \$3,000.

Books in any genre published in 2015 were eligible for the award. A total of 31 works by Newfoundland and Labrador authors (either native-born or resident) were submitted by publishers from across the country. The jury consisted of Chris Brookes, Megan Coles, and Randy Street.

The Winterset Award honours the memory of Sandra Fraser Gwyn, St. John's-born social historian, prize-winning author, and passionate promoter of Newfoundland and Labrador arts. Her husband, journalist and author Richard Gwyn established the award in 2000, which is managed by ArtsNL. It's named after the historic house on Winter Avenue in St. John's where Sandra grew up.

Finalists will read from their works and answer questions from the audience at a **public reading and reception: 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 23, at The Rooms (in the Theatre)**, 9 Bonaventure Avenue in St. John's.

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The Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council (now known as ArtsNL) is a non-profit Crown agency created in 1980 by The Arts Council Act. Its mission is to foster and promote the creation and enjoyment of the arts for the benefit of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The Council is governed by a volunteer board of 13 appointed by government, reflecting regional representation of the province. This includes 10 professional artists who provide sectoral

representation of the arts community; one community representative (with an interest in the arts); one business representative (with an interest in the arts); and one representative of the Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development (non-voting). ArtsNL receives an annual grant of \$2.1 million from the Province to support a variety of granting programs, program delivery, office administration, and communications. It also seeks support from the public and private sector. It supports the following artistic disciplines: dance, film, multidiscipline, music, theatre, visual art, and writing.

BACKGROUNDER:

ABOUT THE 2015 BMO WINTERSET AWARD FINALISTS

Stan Dragland is originally from Alberta and now lives in St. John's, NL. He was educated at the University of Alberta and Queen's University and is Professor Emeritus for the Department of English at the University of Western Ontario. He was founder of *Brick Magazine* and Brick Books, and is still active with the latter. Among his books are *Wilson MacDonald's Western Tour* (critical collage), *Peckertracks* (novel), *Journeys Through Bookland and Other Passages* (fiction and non-fiction), *The Bees of the Invisible: Essays in English Canadian Writing*, *Floating Voice: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Literature of Treaty 9* (criticism), *Apocrypha: Further Journeys* (non-fiction), *Stormy Weather: Foursomes* (prose poems) and *The Drowned Lands* (novel).

Sara Tilley is a writer, theatre artist, and clown who lives and works in her hometown of St. John's, NL. Her artistic work bridges writing, theatre, and Pochinko Clown Through Mask technique, with each discipline informing and inspiring the others. After graduating with a BFA in Acting from York University, Sara founded a feminist theatre company, She Said Yes!, in 2002. She received the Rhonda Payne Theatre Award in 2006 from ArtsNL, which acknowledges the contribution of a woman working in theatre in Newfoundland and Labrador. Her writing spans the genres of playwriting, prose, and poetry. She has written, co-written or co-created over ten plays. *Skin Room* (Pedlar Press, 2008), her first novel won both the Newfoundland and Labrador Percy Janes First Novel Award, the inaugural Fresh Fish Award for Emerging Writers, and was shortlisted for the Winterset Award and the Thomas Raddall Atlantic Fiction Prize. Sara won the Lawrence Jackson Writer's Award from ArtsNL in 2011. Her new novel, *Duke* (Pedlar Press, 2015), found its inspiration through her Pochinko Clown Mask work.

Leslie Vryenhoek is the acclaimed author of *Scrabble Lessons* (fiction), *Gulf* (poetry) and a new novel, *Ledger of the Open Hand*. Her work has been published and broadcast across Canada and internationally. A Manitoban now based in St. John's, NL, she is also the founding director of the Piper's Frith writing retreat. Leslie is a past president of the Literary Arts Foundation of NL, and served on the editorial committee of *Riddle Fence: A Journal of Arts and Culture*. She was also a director for the St. John's International Women's Film Festival.

Her diverse communications career has focused on local and international development, advanced education and disaster response. Leslie continues to offer professional

communications, writing and editing support to organizations, including Memorial University. Most recently, she completed four years with the international research/advocacy network **WIEGO**. That role took her around the world to meet informal women workers and write about their struggles. She also edits and provides communications support to a range of publishers and organizations.