

Sara Tilley wins the 2015 BMO Winterset Award

March 24, 2016 (St. John's, NL) – Sara Tilley is the winner of the 2015 BMO Winterset Award for her book *Duke*. The award, which celebrates excellence in Newfoundland and Labrador writing, was presented today at a ceremony at Government House in St. John's.

The two other finalists were Stan Dragland for *Strangers & Others* (Pedlar Press, St. John's, NL) and Leslie Vryenhoek for *Ledger of the Open Hand* (Breakwater Books, St. John's).

The BMO Winterset Award is composed of a partnership between the BMO Financial Group and those involved from the start - ArtsNL and the project's founder, writer Richard Gwyn, OC. The prize awarded to the annual winner is \$12,500, while the finalists each receive \$3,000. It is one of Atlantic Canada's richest literary prizes.

Duke (Pedlar Press, St. John's, NL) was one of 31 works by Newfoundland and Labrador authors (either native-born or resident) that were submitted by publishers from across the country. Books in any genre, published in 2015 were eligible. The jury consisted of Chris Brookes, Megan Gail Coles, and Randy Street.

The BMO Winterset Award honours the memory of Sandra Fraser Gwyn, St. John's-born social historian, prize-winning author, who did so much to promote a national awareness of the arts of this province. Her husband, journalist and author Richard Gwyn, OC, established the award in 2000. It is named after the historic house on Winter Avenue in St. John's where Sandra grew up.

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.

The BMO Winterset Award is managed by ArtsNL.