

Russell Wangersky Wins the 2010 BMO Winterset Award

March 24, 2011, St. John's, NL – Russell Wangersky is the winner of the 2010 BMO Winterset Award for his book *The Glass Harmonica*. 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 Samuel Thomas Martin for *This Ramshackle Tabernacle* (Breakwater Books, St. John's) and Craig Francis Power for *Blood Relatives* (Pedlar Press, Toronto).

Last October, BMO Financial Group partnered with the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council and the Sandra Fraser Gwyn Foundation to sponsor the award. As a result of this partnership, the top prize increased from \$5,000 to \$10,000, and the two finalist prizes increased from \$1,000 to \$2,000. It is Atlantic Canada's richest literary prize and one of the richest regional awards in Canada.

The Glass Harmonica is described by writer Steven Galloway as "sinister, touching, violent and tender." Set in a small working-class community in St. John's, a unique series of stories unfolds after a man witnesses the murder of his neighbour.

The Glass Harmonica, published by Thomas Allen Publishers of Toronto, was one of 37 works by Newfoundland and Labrador authors (either native-born or resident) submitted by publishers from across the country. Books in any genre, published in 2010 were eligible for the award. The jury was made up of writers Libby Creelman (St. John's), Kenneth J. Harvey (Cupids), and Randall Maggs (Corner Brook).

The BMO 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. It is named after the historic house on Winter Avenue in St. John's where Sandra grew up.

"This year's BMO Winterset Award finalists are all first-time novelists," said Gwyn. "What that says is that literary creativity is alive and well, and plainly and simply bursting out in Newfoundland and Labrador. If the Award has played any part in helping this happen, Sandra would have been delighted."

Russell Wangersky's 2008 book, *Burning Down the House: Fighting Fires and Losing Myself*, won three national awards for non-fiction, including the B.C. National Award for Canadian Non-Fiction, the Edna Staebler Award, and the Drummer-General's Award.

His 2006 short story collection *The Hour of Bad Decisions* was long-listed for the Scotiabank/Giller Prize; short-listed for the Commonwealth Writer's Prize, first book, Canada and the Caribbean; and was a finalist for the 2006 Winterset Award. Russell lives in St. John's where he's a journalist at *The Telegram*.

The BMO Winterset Award is administered by the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council (NLAC).