



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Megan Gail Coles wins the 2019 BMO Winterset Award**

**March 26, 2020 (St. John's, NL)** – Megan Gail Coles is the winner of the 2019 BMO Winterset Award for her book, *Small Game Hunting at the Local Coward Gun Club*. The award celebrates excellence in Newfoundland and Labrador writing.

The two other finalists were Michael Crummey for *The Innocents* (Doubleday Canada, Toronto, ON) and Tshaukuesh Elizabeth Penashue for *Nitinikiau Innusi: I Keep the Land Alive* (University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg, MB).

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.

*Small Game Hunting at the Local Coward Gun Club* (House of Anansi Press Inc., Toronto, ON) was one of 32 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 2019, were eligible.

"Today we would have announced the winner of the BMO Winterset Award at Government House in St. John's, but this year has presented us with unprecedented circumstances given the COVID-19 outbreak," says ArtsNL executive director, Reg Winsor. "We extend our congratulations to Megan, Michael, and Elizabeth, and would also like to thank the jury members – Sharon Bala, Melissa Barbeau, and Craig Frances Power – for their wonderful work reviewing this year's submissions."

The BMO Winterset Award honours the memory of Sandra Fraser Gwyn – a St. John's-born social historian and prize-winning author who passionately promoted 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.

**Megan Gail Coles** is originally from Savage Cove on the Great Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland. A graduate of Memorial University and the National Theatre School of Canada, she is the executive director of *Riddle Fence* and the co-founder and co-artistic director of Poverty Cove Theatre Company. Her debut fiction collection, *Eating Habits of the Chronically Lonesome* (2014), won the BMO Winterset Award and the Margaret and John Savage First Book Award. She was most recently awarded the Writers Trust of Canada 5x5 prize. Megan's 2019 BMO Winterset Award-winning title, *Small Game Hunting at the Local Coward Gun Club*, which was also shortlisted for the Scotiabank Giller Prize, revolves around a cast of flawed characters all connected to a trendy St. John's restaurant, The Hazel. Over the course of a snowy February day, they are implicated in each other's hopes, dreams, and pains as they try to survive harsh economic times in the province.

The BMO Winterset Award is managed by ArtsNL.

**Media Contact:**

Charlene Jackson

Public Relations Specialist, ArtsNL

Phone: (709) 726-2212 ext. 203

Toll-free: 1 (866) 726-2212 (NL only)

[cjackson@nlac.ca](mailto:cjackson@nlac.ca)

[www.artsnl.ca](http://www.artsnl.ca)

*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 \$2.9 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.*