

Author Biographies

Valorie M. Allen

VALORIE M. ALLEN of Lethbridge Alberta has spent the last 35 years working with environmental, population, and animal rights groups, and was awarded the Canadian Volunteer Award for her efforts. She is a proud member of Population Institute Canada, and this experience along with her many years in the education field, revealed the dire need for this book of hope and solutions. *Eight Billion Reasons Population Matters* follows her first award-winning book, *Growing Pains—A Planet in Distress*, as she continues to shine light on humanity's most critical failure. Read more on her website at www.populationinsync.net. Get your copy at usual outlets and at Analog Books in Lethbridge.

Cathleen Charissage

Cat Charissage is a contemplative educator, writer, and artist who has over forty years of experience in accompanying individuals and small groups in exploring the "Deep and Real" aspects of life. With degrees in both Adult Education and Theology, she has worked for many years supporting those healing from trauma, especially sexual trauma, and was the Executive Director of the Sexual Assault Center in London, Ontario. Presently she accompanies others in navigating the depth dimensions of life, writes about Soulwork on her website's blog, and is the co-founder/producer of the monthly Poetry Open Mic Owl Poetry where she reads her recent poetry. Cat lives with several chronic diseases including chronic pain. Her inspiration comes from the sunflower blossoming along the road through a crack in the asphalt, and her motto is "Wherever possible, bring beauty; persist and carry on!" She lives with her family in southern Alberta, Canada, in traditional Blackfoot territory. She can be found at www.catcharissage.com and on Facebook and Instagram.

Steffanie Costigan

Steffanie Costigan has always held a strong passion for writing despite her severe disability with dyslexia. She is currently living in Canada, Alberta, with her husband and three children.

Steffanie is a journalist and hopes to continue her passion for writing books and her dream of continuing as a journalist.

Steffanie studied creative writing and took her program in digital communications and media at Lethbridge College. She hopes her writing will resonate with people and inspire those that read her writings. This novel is her life's work as she started writing this book at the young age of 12 years old and didn't stop until publication.

Her passion for writing started at the young age of three years old; She has also written plays and had the opportunity to direct one of her written plays, "A Stoney Gaze," in 2021. Steffanie met the love of her life Jarom Costigan in Adelaide, Australia. They soon married in March 2015. The love between the two protagonist characters within this novel was strongly inspired by Steffanie's own experience meeting her husband. If it is something Steffanie believes in, it's love at first sight, as that is the experience, she, and her husband both share with one another.

Tina Craig

Tina is a non-fiction writer with a B. Sc. in Agroecology who has worked in both the government and private sectors. She is a self-published author with three books *Unlikely Righteousness*, and *Leo and Clark's Cat Tips: 21 Ways to Submit Your Human*. She is a blogger with the space Daily Winning on Quora (Daily Winning (quora.com)). When not writing she spends time with her husband, two dogs, and two cats and works as an estimator for a manufacturing facility.

Cameron Flaig

*The author of the new Children's Book Sharks Do Hang Ten and ForestBots; Lethbridge author **Cameron Flaig** doesn't just bring passion and creativity to his newest book. He also brings with him a personal story that extends far beyond the printed pages of his book.*

Cameron is a **lifelong Lethbridge resident**, a **community ambassador** and a **dedicated volunteer**. He has done significant work within the community as an entertainer. His work with children has lead him to become a trusted and well-recognized advocate by various organizations across the city.

Whether it be donning his annual Christmas costume to become "Jingles the Elf", or his work as a mascot for local high schools, sports teams and the Lethbridge college, his volunteered time reading to children, or his work as a volunteer musician with several churches; Cameron has always been a tireless supporter of the community, the arts, and the fostering of imagination and compassion within the youth of Lethbridge. He currently works for the YMCA's Youth Services Department, where he brings his enthusiasm and creativity to enrich the time that youth spend in the building.

Cameron is bilingual, plays multiple musical instruments, and belongs to several athletics groups.

...He is also **living with a disability**.

Cameron was born with a condition that results in regular seizures. He can't remember a time where seizures weren't a daily consideration. As a child, he had episodes very frequently, and while medicine and an increased understanding of his seizures has helped him live with Seizure Disorder, he still experiences a seizure several times per week.

While his condition threatened to limit his possibilities, Cameron persevered. While attending LCI, he worked as a mascot and a janitor, despite the challenges his seizures presented. Despite the learning challenges he faced, Cam obtained a High School Diploma and a Diploma from the Lethbridge College. Then, he tried to find typical employment and continued to work as a mascot and an entertainer. Even if it meant doing it for **free**.

All the while, Cameron was fostering a love of story-writing. He estimates he has written 85 children's stories over the years. In 2018, he published his first book, *Sharks Do Hang Ten*, and he followed that up with *ForestBots* in 2022. For both projects, he worked with local artists and local printers to bring his vision to life.

Cameron continues to work towards becoming a respected and established children's author, as well as an example for the disability community. In 2019, he appeared on a speakers panel for International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Cameron currently resides and works in Lethbridge, his lifelong home.

Jenna Greene

Jenna Greene is a YA/ Children's author known for her award-winning Reborn Marks series as well as her Imagine series. Her most recent title, *An Owl Without A Name*, has been selected for the TD summer reading program for libraries across Canada. A teacher and former podcast host, she's an engaging public speaker with knowledge on a wealth of writing topics. When she isn't writing or teaching, she can be found in dance class or on the lake, paddling a dragonboat.

Leslie Johnson

Leslie grew up in the shadows of the Rocky Mountains on a ranch near Waterton Park. Storytelling was part of her upbringing and her mother encouraged her active imagination. She has five finished yet unpublished manuscripts and outlines for two more. She is the founder and current moderator of the River Bottom Writers where she encourages other writers to find their muse and write.

Charlie Kerby

Author of the action-packed Cassi Requin science fiction novels, Charles James lives in Lethbridge with his amazing wife, two awesome kids, and a couple of Guinea pigs. By day, Charles is a radiation oncology physicist and professor. Website: www.charlesjamesauthor.com.

Vickie MacArthur

Vickie MacArthur is a writer, spiritual director, yoga and meditation teacher passionate about integrating embodied awareness, breath, and spirituality into everyday life. Her debut spiritual memoir *A Lotus on Fire: How a Buddhist Monk Ignited My Heart* (March, 2023) is a story about awakening to the kind of love that transcends boundaries of culture, race, and religion, to create bridges of understanding and peace.

Website: www.vickiemacarthur.com

Jean McCarthy

Jean McCarthy is an award-winning author, blogger, and podcaster known globally as a voice of recovery advocacy for over a decade.

Jean's books include *Take Good Care* (2022), *UnPickled Prepare to be Alcohol-Free* (2022), *UnPickled Holiday Survival Guide* (2019), and a volume of poetry, *The Ember Ever There* (2020). She also wrote an illustrated *Roberta the Tree and Me* (2023), a children's picture book about emotional regulation.

UnPickled Blog chronicles Jean's alcohol-free lifestyle since her first day of sobriety in 2011. Thousands of readers credit *UnPickled* as a motivating factor in their decision to quit drinking.

Jean produced and hosted *The Bubble Hour* podcast from 2013-2023. The show has over 4.5 million downloads and continues to top charts around the world.

Jean recently returned from Australia, where sold-out audiences were thrilled to meet the woman behind the voice they know so well. She has led recovery retreats for women at Kripalu in Maine, as well as in Mexico and L.A.. At a gala in New York City, Jean received the 2017 SheRecovers Hope Award in recognition of her efforts to help others seek positive change.

Mandy Michelle

Mandy Michelle is a traditionally published, contemporary romance author from Lethbridge. Mandy holds her BA and MA in History and wrote her thesis on Religion in the Imperial Roman Army. Naturally, romance writing followed. She has two novels published with Scarsdale Publishing and is featured in an anthology through Limitless Publishing.

She is a proud, longtime member of the River Bottom Writers, a winner of National Novel Writing Month, nine years running, and a graduate of Winghill Writing School. She is also on the board of Lethbridge's Writing Convention, Wordbridge.

Her world revolves around her terrier, Oliver, but she also enjoys wood carving, at risk to her typing fingers, baking retro recipes, and hiking, slowly.

You can find her on Facebook at www.facebook.com/mandymichellewriting and @wordycupcake on Instagram.

Teri Petz

Bianca Rowena was born in Romania, Transylvania and has enjoyed writing from a young age. She now lives in Canada, which is the setting and inspiration for her novels. Bianca studied Cinema/Television/Stage/Radio at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology.

Bianca's published works include: *A Fort Steele Christmas*, *The Virgin Diaries*, and *The Rita Series* (YA Sci-Fi Fantasy Trilogy which consists of the novels - *Rita*, *Takano Rynn*, and *The Rise of Rynn*).

E.R. Reading

E. R. Reading lives in Alberta, Canada. She grew up telling stories to her friends and family. She started writing her debut novel, *Soul Chaser*, at the age of sixteen. Writing with her cats as companions, she works to create heartfelt stories. She is currently working on book two, *Project Angel*, which is the final book in the *Soul Chaser* duology.

Bianca Rowena

Bianca Rowena was born in Romania, Transylvania and has enjoyed writing from a young age. She now lives in Canada, which is the setting and inspiration for her novels. Bianca studied Cinema/Television/Stage/Radio at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology.

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Raine Silito

Brit Sandford

Brit Stanford grew up gold mining in British Columbia, RVing in Mexico, and studying cadavers in the Dutch Antilles. She completed a degree in Journalism and worked as a columnist, grant writer and biographer for the elderly. Today she lives at the foot of the Canadian Rockies with her husband, five children and a squeaky violin. She is the author of The *Timespeaker* trilogy. Follow her @britstanfordbooks

David Walker

David Walker has a Master's Degree in Creative Writing (Playwriting) from Salford University and an Honour's Degree from the Samuel Beckett Centre for Drama & Theatre Studies in Trinity College, Dublin. He trained for three years as an actor at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in London. He worked extensively as an actor and director in plays and musicals in London, Dublin, and Edinburgh. Joint UK/ Canadian citizenship. He writes under the names David Stirling and Ben Braddock.