

# **Changing Catalogues: Understanding the Influence of the OwnVoices Movement on Canadian Children's Book Publishers**

By

**Si Mian (Melody) Sun**

B.A. (Psychology), University of British Columbia, 2016

Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

**Master of Publishing**

In the

Publishing Program

Faculty of Communication, Art, and Technology

© Si Mian Sun 2020

Simon Fraser University

Summer 2020

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0

International License. To view a copy of this license,

visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

# Declaration of Committee

**Name:** Si Mian (Melody) Sun

**Degree:** Master of Publishing

**Thesis title:** **Changing Catalogues: Understanding the Influence of the OwnVoices Movement on Canadian Children’s Book Publishers**

**Committee:**

**Mauve Pagé**  
Supervisor  
Lecturer, Publishing

**John Maxwell**  
Committee Member  
Associate Professor, Publishing

**Margot Blankier**  
Committee Member  
Editorial Assistant  
Penguin Random House Canada Young Readers

# Abstract

Since 2015, the OwnVoices Movement has been promoting the idea that stories representing any marginalized communities – people of colour, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities, etc. – should be written by authors from the same group. This report will examine the change of several Canadian children’s book publishers before and after the OwnVoices Movement, in particular Penguin Random House Canada (PRHC) Young Readers, the children’s imprint of Penguin Random House Canada.

This report is based on a three-month professional placement at PRHC Young Readers, thus it will first start with an introduction of PRHC Young Readers including its history and its current editorial process. Next, the report will review the development of the OwnVoices Movement and significant books that represent the trend. And last, this report will examine the Fall 2016 and Fall 2019 catalogues from PRHC Young Readers, Simon & Schuster Canada Children’s, Orca Book Publisher and Groundwood Books to see if there has been a change of the OwnVoices titles since the movement started. The ratio of OwnVoices books for each catalogue will be calculated and compared. After the comparison, the report will summarize the difference between Fall 2016 catalogues and Fall 2019 catalogues to show any progress after the OwnVoices Movement. After analyzing the research result, the report will conclude with further recommendations for future researchers regarding the OwnVoices Movement study.

**Keywords:** OwnVoices Movement; diversity; children’s book; Canadian book publishing.

# Acknowledgements

Thank you, Mauve Pagé, for supporting me through the writing of the thesis. Thank you, John Maxwell, for encouraging me when I had a hard time during the school terms.

To the team at Penguin Random House Canada Young Readers in Toronto: thank you for giving me such a wonderful opportunity to work with you all. Special thanks to Margot Blankier who had given me a lot of helpful advice on my thesis.

Thanks to the 2018 Master of Publishing cohort for all the pleasant memories. A special shout-out to Charlotte and Tricia for our productive work sessions.

To my book club friends: thank you all for your company and the online events, especially for keeping me sane during the quarantine time. Thanks to ally my friends who supported me via phone call or online chat. It is a crazy year but I'm glad to have you all. A special thanks to Shawn who volunteered to proofread the draft and gave me valuable feedback.

A big thanks to my parents. Thank you for supporting me both financially and emotionally. Thank you for giving me the freedom to choose what I love to do!

最后，我想用中文感谢自己的母语和文化，感谢所有读过的书，正是因为一代代创作者和出版人的努力，我才会读到那些深深震撼过我的书籍，才下定决心选择这个领域。我也很庆幸自己掌握了另一门语言，可以更自由地穿梭在两种不同的文化之间。

愿我将所爱之事坚持下去，发出自己声音，纵然微弱，也要保持独特。

# Table of Contents

Declaration of Committee.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
Table of Figures.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1 The Story of PRHC Young Readers.....	3
1. Tundra Books and the Legend of May Cutler.....	3
2. The Merger of Penguin and Random House.....	7
3. PRHC Young Readers at Today.....	8
Chapter 2 The OwnVoices Movement.....	11
1. Before the OwnVoices Movement.....	11
2. Starting the OwnVoices Movement.....	13
3. Change and Controversy.....	19
Chapter 3 The Research.....	23
1. About the Research.....	23
2. Results.....	24
3. Discussion.....	38
Conclusion.....	41
References.....	44

# Table of Figures

Figure 1 CCBC Multicultural Statistics for 2015 .....	11
Figure 2 CCBC Multicultural Statistics for 2017 .....	20
Figure 3 OwnVoices Ratio Comparison .....	39

# Introduction

In 2014, Ellen Oh and other publishing professionals started the hashtag #WeNeedDiverseBooks on Twitter to discuss the lack of diversity in the English language publishing industry. The social media protest prompted publishers to publish more diverse content, that is, more stories about marginalized groups, including but not limited to minority racial groups, LGBTQ+ communities or people with disabilities. The protest soon grew into a global movement which resulted in the creation of We Need Diverse Books, a non-profit organization addressing the lack of diversity in children's book industry.<sup>1</sup> However, recent research in North America found that the books representing marginalized voices were dominantly created by mainstream authors or illustrators who did not belong to the group depicted in the books.<sup>2</sup> In 2015, authors who noticed this problem started the hashtag #OwnVoices on Twitter. Since then, #OwnVoices became a movement, mostly in children's literature. It provided a guideline in the writing of children's books: works representing any marginalized communities – people of colour, LGBTQ+, people with disability, etc. – should be written by authors from the same group.

This report is based on my work placement at PRHC Young Readers in the summer of 2019 and additional research conducted outside the company. The report aims to document how Canadian children's book publishers reacted to the OwnVoices movement for greater diverse representation in books by examining the catalogues of large trade book publishing houses such as Penguin Random House Canada (PRHC) Young Readers and Simon & Schuster Canada Children's as well as independent publishers Orca Books Publisher and Groundwood Books. The changes of the publishers are revealed by comparing their Fall catalogues in 2016 to their Fall catalogues in 2019.

Chapter One introduces PRHC Young Readers with a focus on the history of its imprint Tundra Books, one of the oldest Canadian children's book publishers. This chapter also briefly reviews the merger of Penguin Canada and Random House Canada

---

<sup>1</sup> "Media Kit." *We Need Diverse Books*, accessed April 12, 2020. <https://diversebooks.org/media-kit/>

<sup>2</sup> "CCBC Multicultural Statistics for 2015," CCBlogC (blog), February 23, 2016. <https://ccblogc.blogspot.com/2016/02/ccbc-multicultural-statistics-for-2015.html>.

children's imprints and outlines the current editorial process of PRHC Young Readers in the context of the movement.

Chapter Two starts by reviewing the multicultural statics on children's literature in North America before the OwnVoices Movement and the We Need Diverse Books campaign. This chapter also provides an overview of the OwnVoices Movement, specifically in children's literature, introduces the development of the movement and finally discusses the controversies and criticism around the movement.

Chapter Three focuses on the comparison between the Fall 2016 and Fall 2019 catalogues of two large trade children's book publishers PRHC Young Readers and Simon & Schuster Canada Children's, as well as two independent children's book publishers Orca Books Publisher and Groundwood Books. The comparison aims to show the change in the number of OwnVoices books published after the movement. In this research, "OwnVoices books" is defined as books that promote diversity, and where their main characters share identity with either the author or the illustrator of the book as belonging to a marginalized group such as ethnic groups, sexual identity, sexual orientation, religious group and physical conditions. For each publisher and each catalogue, the number of OwnVoices books is compared to the number of the entire season's list and then the two years are compared to measure the change. This report hopes to find out if the catalogues of the Canadian Children's book publishers show any



# Chapter 1 The Story of PRHC Young Readers

## 1. Tundra Books and the Legend of May Cutler

The current PRHC Young Readers consists of three imprints: Tundra Books, Puffin Canada and Penguin Teen. Each imprint has its own history and became part of the current PRHC Young Readers at a different time. Among the three imprints, Tundra Books has the longest history and it has been publishing primarily for young readers in a wide range of categories: board books, picture books, chapter books, graphic novels, illustrated nonfiction and middle grade fiction.<sup>3</sup> Some of its previously published works have become Canadian classics such as Roch Carrier's *The Hockey Sweater* and Mordecai Richler's *Jacob Two-Two* series. Since its beginning, Tundra Books has been well known for its beautifully illustrated, high-quality children's books with original voices. The reputation could not have been achieved without May Cutler, the founder of Tundra Books whose early motto was "children's books as works of art."<sup>4</sup>

Born in Montreal, Cutler received her education from McGill University where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Master of Arts degree. She then went to New York to study journalism at Columbia University,<sup>5</sup> returning to Montreal to work as a journalist in the late 1940s. In 1967, Cutler started Tundra Books from her basement. The publishing house began with a focus on architecture and children's books, although the architecture list was short-lived.<sup>6</sup> Cutler became the first woman to publish children's books in Canada.<sup>7</sup>

Since the beginning, Cutler had focused on finding original and fresh stories and was not afraid to challenge mainstream publishing. For example, in 1971, Tundra Books

---

<sup>3</sup> "Tundra Books." *Penguin Random House Canada*. Accessed April 8, 2020.

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/imprints/TU/tundra-books>.

<sup>4</sup> Tamsin McMahon, "May Cutler: 'She Was the Grand Dame'" *National Post*, March 18, 2011.

<https://news.nationalpost.com/afterword/may-cutler-she-was-the-grand-dame>.

<sup>5</sup> Irwin Block, "Former Westmount Mayor Dies at 87." *The Montreal Gazette*, March 4, 2011.

<http://archive.is/sJqGN#selection-2465.2-2465.14>

<sup>6</sup> Gillian O'Reilly, "Tundra Books Turns 40!" *Canadian Children's Book News*, Spring 2007, 17.

[https://bookcentre.ca/files/Tundra\\_40th\\_Anniversary.pdf](https://bookcentre.ca/files/Tundra_40th_Anniversary.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Block, "Former Westmount Mayor Dies at 87."

published its first picture book, *Mary of Mill 18*, written and illustrated by a young artist Ann Blades. Blades' story was set in and written for a small community of Northern British Columbia where she was teaching. Cutler was touched by "the simple, but fresh and colourful art"<sup>8</sup> at that time when most of the Canadian children's literature "consisted of Beatrix Potter, C.S. Lewis or Enid Blyton's *Noddy* and other imports from the British Commonwealth and the U.S."<sup>9</sup> Although Cutler's fund application for this book was turned down by the Canadian Council for the Arts, Cutler decided to publish it without the grants.<sup>10</sup> This book eventually won the Canadian Library Association Book of the Year for Children in 1971.<sup>11</sup>

*A Child in Prison Camp* was the second picture book published by Tundra Books. It was an illustrated memoir, created by Shizuye Takashima, a Japanese Canadian who was sent to the internment camps as a child during World War II. At that time, this type of story had not been previously told in Canadian children's literature.<sup>12</sup> The book won numerous awards for literary and artistic merit since its publication and was re-edited and published in 1992.<sup>13</sup>

Although Cutler did not consciously publish "multicultural books" back in the 1970s,<sup>14</sup> she was only looking for stories that had not been told yet. She refused to publish authors and artists who had previously been published<sup>15</sup> and insisted on publishing people's own stories in their own words. To find new illustrators, Cutler tried a new approach by visiting gallery exhibitions and asking the illustrators that interested her if they could write something about their childhood or if they would be willing to illustrate certain stories.<sup>16</sup> To this day, Cutler is still remembered and praised for introducing less-known stories into the mainstream Canadian children's literature.

---

<sup>8</sup> O'Reilly, "Tundra Books Turns 40!", 17.

<sup>9</sup> McMahan, "May Cutler: 'She Was the Grand Dame'".

<sup>10</sup> O'Reilly, 17-18.

<sup>11</sup> McMahan, "May Cutler".

<sup>12</sup> O'Reilly, 18.

<sup>13</sup> "A Child in Prison Camp by Shizuye Takashima." *Penguin Random House Canada*. Accessed April 9, 2020. <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/176186/a-child-in-prison-camp-by-shizuye-takashima/9780887762413>

<sup>14</sup> O'Reilly, 19.

<sup>15</sup> McMahan.

<sup>16</sup> O'Reilly, 19.

Montreal bookseller Nicholas Hoare described Cutler as “a complete original and was way ahead of everyone at the time.”<sup>17</sup>

Cutler’s contribution to Canadian children’s book industry is fundamental and widely recognized. Charlotte Teeple, the former executive director of the Canadian Children’s Book Centre once said that “[t]here wasn’t really a Canadian publishing industry for kids in Canada until May Cutler...Canada’s children’s publishing industry has done exceptionally well and it is international now and really it all began with May.”<sup>18</sup> Sheldon Cohen, a long-term illustrator for Tundra Books, also said that “[Cutler] seemed to be the only one of the main publishers who really went beyond the traditional...she brought children’s books to another level and since then, I believe, has changed the way children’s books in Canada have been done.”<sup>19</sup> Ahead of her time, Cutler set a precedent to publish people’s own stories that were outside the mainstream.

After running Tundra Books for 28 years, Cutler sold the company to McClelland & Stewart. Tundra Books was taken over by a new publisher, Kathy Lowinger, and in 1996, the press moved from Montreal to Toronto. Unlike Cutler who had a specific interest in picture books, Lowinger was passionate about fiction and nonfiction books for older readers. She brought writers such as Marthe Jocelyn, Linda Holeman and Cary Fagan who have become long-term authors with Tundra Books since then.<sup>20</sup>

In a 2007 interview with Just One More Book, a podcast promoting and celebrating literacy and great children’s books, Lowinger revealed that her mandate for Tundra Books was to look for books that would not date very quickly. She wanted to publish books that would still be read in ten or twenty years; therefore, she looked for books that would have “all the hallmarks of literature, great characterization, interesting language, a fresh perspective that tells you something about what it is like to be a human

---

<sup>17</sup> "Cutler Remembered as Pioneering Publisher, Mayor." *CBC News*. March 4, 2011. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/cutler-remembered-as-pioneering-publisher-mayor-1.1061866>

<sup>18</sup> McMahan.

<sup>19</sup> McMahan.

<sup>20</sup> O’Reilly, 19.

being, whether or not it is in the guise of something hilarious and light or very serious.”<sup>21</sup> Lowinger also recognized Tundra Books as a literary publisher that followed the high standard of McClelland & Stewart.<sup>22</sup>

After Lowinger retired in 2009, no one was explicitly nominated as the new head of Tundra Books. Doug Pepper, the then president of McClelland & Stewart, promoted Alison Morgan, the director of marketing and sales to the position of managing director and promoted Kathryn Cole to the position of editorial director.<sup>23</sup> Two years later, in 2011, Tara Walker became the new editorial director of Tundra Books. Before working for Tundra Books, Walker had been an editor at Kids Can Press for sixteen years where she had accumulated valuable experiences with Canadian children’s books.<sup>24</sup>

McClelland & Stewart, a long-standing Canadian publisher founded in 1906, has contributed to Canadian Literature by publishing writers such as Margaret Atwood, Leonard Cohen, Margaret Laurence and Michael Ondaatje. However, the company had experienced financial difficulty since the 1970s. In 2000, Random House of Canada bought 25% of McClelland & Stewart’s shares while the remaining 75% was donated to the University of Toronto. In 2011, Random House bought the rest of the shares from the University of Toronto for \$1 and McClelland & Stewart officially became part of Random House of Canada. Therefore, Tundra Books also became part of Random House.<sup>25</sup> Walker remained as the editorial director of the imprint.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> “Interview with Kathy Lowinger.” *Just One More Book*, September 12, 2007.

<http://justonemorebook.com/?s=kathy+lowinger>

<sup>22</sup> “Interview with Kathy Lowinger.”

<sup>23</sup> Scott MacDonald, “Kathy Lowinger to Retire from Tundra.” *Quill & Quire*, June 2009.

<https://quillandquiere.com/industry-news/2009/06/24/kathy-lowinger-to-leave-tundra/>

<sup>24</sup> “Job Moves: October 5, 2011.” *Publishers Weekly*, October 2011.

<https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/people/article/48948-job-moves-october-5-2011.html>

<sup>25</sup> “How Canada’s Book Publisher McClelland & Stewart Became German-Owned.” *CBC Radio*, July 14, 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-july-14-2017-1.4203051/how-canada-s-book-publisher-mcclelland-stewart-became-german-owned-author-1.4203067>

<sup>26</sup> Leigh Anne Williams, “Random House of Canada Takes Over McClelland & Stewart; Canadian Pubs Unhappy.” *Publishers Weekly*, Jan 10, 2012, <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/international/international-book-news/article/50140-random-house-of-canada-takes-over-mcclelland-stewart-canadian-pubs-unhappy.html>

## 2. The Merger of Penguin and Random House

In 2013, Penguin Group (owned by British publishing company Pearson PLC) and Random House (owned by German media conglomerate Bertelsmann) merged into a multinational conglomerate publishing house, under the name of Penguin Random House. According to *the Atlantic*, when combined in 2013, the companies published over 15,000 books annually and had 10,000 employees, with a revenue of \$3.9 billion.<sup>27</sup> In 2020, Bertelsmann became the sole owner of Penguin Random House.<sup>28</sup>

As a result of the merger, the new Penguin Random House Canada moved to a new location in 2015. During the move, all the children's books imprints from both sides were united: Random House brought Tundra Books and Doubleday Canada Books for Young Readers, while Penguin Group brought Puffin Canada and Razorbill Canada. Because of the overlapping vision of the imprints and their similar backlist titles, Penguin Random House Canada decided to organize its children's imprints into one group under the name of Penguin Random House Canada Young Readers (PRHC Young Readers). Among the four imprints, only Tundra Books and Puffin Canada remained as imprints under PRHC Young Readers.

Puffin Canada originated from Puffin Books, a children's imprint launched in England in 1941. Puffin Canada publishes mostly middle grade fiction and classic Canadian literature, as well as select picture books. Puffin Canada publishes for children from infancy to twelve years of age.<sup>29</sup> It has published well-known children's book authors such as Eric Walters, Kelley Armstrong and Cary Fagan.

In 2016, PRHC Young readers launched Penguin Teen, a new imprint that would focus on young adult titles previously appearing under Razorbill Canada and Doubleday Canada Books for Young Readers lines. In the press release, Walker stated that they felt

---

<sup>27</sup> Laura Owen, "The Penguin-Random House Merger and the Biggest Publisher on Earth Are Here." *The Atlantic*, July 2013. <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2013/07/penguin-random-house-merger-complete/313748/>

<sup>28</sup> "Bertelsmann Acquires Full Ownership of Penguin Random House." *penguinrandomhouse.com*, December 18, 2019, accessed July 20, 2020, <https://live-global-penguinrandomhouse.pantheonsite.io/announcements/bertelsmann-acquires-full-ownership-of-penguin-random-house/>.

<sup>29</sup> "Puffin Canada," *Penguin Random House Canada*, accessed April 24, 2020, <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/imprints/NV/puffin-canada>.

they could best serve their authors and readers with one focused imprint for their young adult titles.<sup>30</sup>

### 3. PRHC Young Readers at Today

The current PRHC Young Readers has three imprints: Tundra Books, Puffin Canada and Penguin Teen. The current publisher Tara Walker is responsible for overseeing Tundra Books, focusing mainly on picture books with the help of Samantha Swanson and Margot Blankier. Meanwhile, Lynne Missen develops most of the middle grade fiction and young adult titles for Puffin Canada and Penguin Teen with the help of Peter Phillips. Elizabeth Kribs is the Associate Publisher while John Martz, the Art Director, is responsible for illustration evaluation and communication with illustrators and designers. The team also has a managing editor Kate Doyle and a Publishing Assistant Yashaswi Kesanakurthy. Every six months, a new intern joins the team to provide admin support and learns the editorial process. The intern's work includes logging and categorizing each submission, reading and evaluating manuscripts, writing reader's reports and keeping track of the awards and news updates on published titles.

Once the editor receives a manuscript from agents or authors, they categorize the manuscript as an A, B or C submission according to its urgency based on several factors: the profile of the creators; if the imprint have already published the author; if the submission is a multiple submission that is being evaluated by other publishers and how interested the editors are. Every week, the editors hold a picture book submission meeting and every two weeks, they hold a middle grade/young adult fiction submission meeting. On these submission meetings, the editors discuss the recent manuscripts and decide which ones are interesting enough to be included in the editorial meeting and which ones they will reject at this point.

It is during the submission meetings that I noticed the editors were having conversations about the authenticity of the voices when evaluating a manuscript. For

---

<sup>30</sup> Becky Robertson "Penguin Random House Canada Merges Two Young Adult Imprints under Penguin Teen Banner." *Quill & Quire*, October 2016. <https://quillandquire.com/omni/penguin-random-house-canada-merges-two-young-adult-imprints-under-penguin-teen-banner/>

example, during one of the picture book discussions that I joined, a manuscript featuring an immigrant boy but written by an author who had no immigration experience was rejected in part because it was not a lived experience. And, during one of the middle grade fictions/young adult novel discussions, a well-written manuscript featuring a Korean Canadian teenager became more intriguing when the editors found out the author was also from the Korean community. An authentic voice is a significant factor that the in-house editors are looking for in addition to an intriguing premise as well as believable and relatable characters.

During the bi-weekly editorial meetings, practical problems will be discussed for selected submissions. For example, is the agent only selling Canadian rights or North American rights? Is the manuscript going on to an auction? How will the team manage to deal with the auction? Most of the time, the team will decide by the end of the meeting whether they want to pursue a manuscript or give it up. When the editors and other team members cannot reach a consensus, they will wait for additional information from the agents or pass the manuscripts to another member (the managing editor or someone from the sales team) to give it a thorough read and then discuss it later. Most importantly to note, the decision is not made by one single person with a fixed standard. If the team decides to pursue a submission, then its editor will bring the submission to another acquisition meeting which will be joined by the CFO and the CEO to receive the approval to acquire the title.

The illustration meeting is slightly different. It usually consists of two parts, cover discussion and illustrator discussion. During the cover discussion, editors and the art director will present and display different cover options for an ongoing title. The rest of the team will share their thoughts on each cover and give feedbacks. Usually, one or two cover option(s) will stand out and the selected ones will be sent back to illustrators for further revision. During the second part, the goal is to find a matching illustrator for manuscripts that still need illustrations and/or covers. The art director will quickly go over each story and show the sample artworks of potential illustrators to the rest of the team. After reviewing each illustrator's samples, the team will choose their preferred illustrators and the art director will be in charge of contacting the artists and offering

them the job. Sometimes, the artists will not be able to accept the offer and the offer will go to the next preferred illustrator. However, during the illustration meetings I attended, OwnVoices was rarely mentioned.

These days, PRHC Young Readers still publishes a lot of works that promote Canadian literature and traditions. For example, in addition to publishing the original *Anne of Green Gables* in a new paperback edition, Tundra Books adapted *Anne* into picture book series *Good Night, Anne* and *If I Couldn't Be Anne* with the author Kallie George and the illustrator Genevieve Goodbout. For baby readers, Tundra Books published a series *Anne* themed board books that teach babies about numbers, colours, feelings and alphabet with the artworks created with cut fabric and hand embroidery.

At the same time, PRHC Young Readers continues to maintain the high standard that May Cutler and Tundra Books set as it keeps looking for original stories that had not been told yet. For example, in 2019, Tundra Books published a biographical picture book *It Began With a Page*, revealing the story of Gyo Fujikawa, a Japanese American children's book writer and illustrator who was considered by many people the pioneer to include multiculturalism in her books.<sup>31</sup> Her life story was worth being written and read but unknown to most of the public before.

---

<sup>31</sup> "Biography." *Gyofujikawa*, February 10, 2016. <https://gyofujikawa.wordpress.com/2016/02/10/about-gyo-fujikawa/>



# Chapter 2 The OwnVoices Movement

## 1. Before the OwnVoices Movement

Before the OwnVoices Movement in 2015, authors as well as researchers in the publishing industry had noticed the lack of diverse books in children’s literature. The Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) is a study and research library of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and it has been collecting statistics on multicultural content children’s books since 1985. Every year, CCBC receives books from major US children’s trade book publishers and counts the number of books with significant multicultural content, that is when the main character, or a character playing a significant role in the book, is a person of colour and/or First Nation American. This survey also counts how many of the books with multicultural content are created by authors or illustrators from people of colour and/or First Nation American communities, i.e. books that may fit the OwnVoices criteria.<sup>32</sup>

In 2015, CCBC received approximately 3400 books in total, mostly from U.S. mainstream publishers. The result of their survey is shown in the table below.

2015	About	Percent	By
African/African Americans	268	7.9%	92
Asian Pacifics/ Asian Pacifics Americans	113	3.3%	45
American Indians/First Nations	42	1.2%	18
Latinx	82	2.4%	40

*Figure 1 CCBC Multicultural Statistics for 2015*<sup>33</sup>

According to CCBC, a book will be counted as “about” when the main character is a person of colour or from a First Nation. In some cases, when the main character is White but the staff of CCBC can determine that a person of colour or an Indigenous character is featured significantly in the book, they will also count it as "about." If the characters of colour are secondary characters who seem not to play a significant role,

---

<sup>32</sup> “Diversity Statistics FAQs,” CCBC. Accessed April 12, 2020, <https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/statsfaqs.asp>.

<sup>33</sup> “CCBC Multicultural Statistics for 2015.” *CCBlogC*, February 2016, <https://ccblogc.blogspot.com/2016/02/ccbc-multicultural-statistics-for-2015.html>

then the book will not be qualified as “about.”<sup>34</sup> The percentages in the table were calculated based on the total number of books received.

Out of all books about people of colour and/or First Nations, CCBC further counted the number of books created by individuals from the same group. According to CCBC’s criteria, a book is considered as “by” if at least one of the creators (e.g., author, illustrator) is a person of colour or from a First Nation who identify with the character in the book. The results showed that not even half of the books were created by people from the group depicted in them. The CCBC statistics indicated that a significant part of the children’s books representing minority groups’ voices was created by people who were *not* from that specific cultural background.

However, the CCBC data has limits in terms of researching diversity and OwnVoices. First, CCBC believed that the meaning of the term OwnVoices is tied to culturally specific identities and experiences, therefore, their broad categorization (African American, Asian American, Latino American, etc) may not capture the information to determine if a book is OwnVoice or not. In addition, each individual may interpret the meaning of OwnVoices differently. Thus, they did not recommend calculating the ratio of OwnVoices books directly from their data.<sup>35</sup> Second, the CCBC 2015 survey only focused on racial diversity and it did not count the number of children’s books with LGBTQ+ content, people with disabilities or people from religious minority groups.

Yet, with such a lack of diversity and a lack of authentic voices as demonstrated in the CCBC data, it is not surprising that professionals within the book industry wanted to take action. In 2014, young adult novel writer Ellen Oh and other publishing professionals went on a social media protest against a panel at BookCon, an annual convention for pop culture in New York. The panel invited well-established children’s book authors to meet with the readers but all the panellists were White men including Jeff Kinney (author of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* book series), James Patterson (author of *I Funny* series, *Middle School* series), Rick Riordan (author of *Percy Jackson & the Olympians*

---

<sup>34</sup> “Diversity Statistics FAQs.”

<sup>35</sup> “Diversity Statistics FAQs.”

series) and Lemony Snicket (author of *A Series of Unfortunate Events*). By creating the hashtag #WeNeedDiverseBooks on Twitter, the protesters criticized this all-male, all-White panel, pointed out the lack of diversity in children’s literature and called out the industry to publish more marginalized stories.<sup>36</sup>

This small protest led to a global movement beyond children’s literature community, which resulted in the birth of a non-profit organization adopting the name of the campaign “We Need Diverse Books” (WNDB). Their mission is “to promote or amplify diversification efforts and increase visibility for diverse books and authors, with a goal of empowering a wide range of readers in the process.”<sup>37</sup> They recognize all diverse experiences, including LGBTQIA+, people of colour, gender diversity, people with disabilities, and ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities. Though its mission did not focus on promoting authors to write their own experiences, this movement and the following organization paved the way for the OwnVoices Movement.

## 2. Starting the OwnVoices Movement

As described above, children’s books representing minority groups’ voices have been mostly created by authors who are not come from that specific background. This phenomenon is not new in the publishing industry. In the 1960s, when anti-Black racism was part of the public discussion, publishers increased the number of book deals on Black culture but White authors wrote most of the books. A group of concerned individuals formed the Council on Interracial Books for Children, which then sponsored a contest calling for more Black writers.<sup>38</sup> Walter Dean Myers, a Black American writer, won his first award from the contest and became a prominent children’s book author later in his life. However, Myers remembered that, when Black people were no longer a hot political

---

<sup>36</sup> Ron Charles, “‘We Need Diverse Books,’ They Said. And Now a Group’s Dream Is Coming to Fruition.” *The Washington Post*, January 2017. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/we-need-diverse-books-they-said-and-now-a-groups-dream-is-coming-to-fruition/2017/01/03/af7f9368-d152-11e6-a783-cd3fa950f2fd\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/we-need-diverse-books-they-said-and-now-a-groups-dream-is-coming-to-fruition/2017/01/03/af7f9368-d152-11e6-a783-cd3fa950f2fd_story.html)

<sup>37</sup> “Media Kit.” *We Need Diverse Books*, accessed April 12, 2020. <https://diversebooks.org/media-kit/>

<sup>38</sup> Walter Dean Myers, “CHILDREN’S BOOKS; ‘I Actually Thought We Would Revolutionize the Industry,’” *The New York Times*, November 9, 1986, <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/11/09/books/children-s-books-i-actually-thought-we-would-revolutionize-the-industry.html>.

issue in the 1970s, books on Black experience were largely cut by the publishers as a response to the market.<sup>39</sup>

In a 1998 article published in *The Horn Book*, Black American author Jacqueline Woodson expressed her anger after being constantly asked the question of how she felt about White people writing about people of colour on different occasions. In the article, she realized that “no one but me can tell my story.”<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, she stated that, “my hope is that those who write about the tears and the laughter and the language in my grandmother’s house have first sat down at the table with us and dipped the bread of their own experiences into our stew.”<sup>41</sup>

This long-existing issue was once again brought up to the public awareness with a new hashtag by Corinne Duyvis. Duyvis is an award-winning young adult author of sci-fi and fantasy as well as the co-founder and editor of Disability in Kidlit. In 2015, she posted the following suggestion on Twitter: “#ownvoices, to recommend kidlit about diverse characters written by authors from that same diverse group.”<sup>42</sup>

On her website, Duyvis clarified the use of the hashtag, which was soon widely spread and discussed within the children’s literature community. By “diverse,” she did not just refer to racial diversity. The hashtag “#ownvoices” should be an inclusive term that covers people of colour, LGBTQIA+, people with disabilities and people from minority religious or cultural backgrounds. The hashtag can also be used in any genre, category, or form of art, not limited to children’s books. The core idea to remember, stated Duyvis, is that #ownvoices is applicable “as long as the protagonist and the author share a marginalized identity.”<sup>43</sup> For authors who want to promote their own books on social media with this hashtag, Duyvis encouraged them to “be specific and be clear” about what aspect of the character(s) is based on a personalized experience. For example, if a White lesbian author wants to create an Asian character who is also lesbian, then the

---

<sup>39</sup> Myers, “CHILDREN’S BOOKS; ‘I Actually Thought We Would Revolutionize the Industry.’”

<sup>40</sup> Jacqueline Woodson, “Who Can Tell My Story,” *The Horn Book*, January 3, 1998, <https://www.hbook.com?detailStory=who-can-tell-my-story>.

<sup>41</sup> Woodson, “Who Can Tell My Story.”

<sup>42</sup> Corinne Duyvis, “#ownvoices.” “*Corinne Duyvis*, accessed April 12, 2020. <http://www.corinneduyvis.net/ownvoices/>

<sup>43</sup> Corinne Duyvis.

author is encouraged to clarify that the sexual orientation aspect is “#ownvoices” instead of the ethnicity of the character.

Kayla Whaley, another editor at Disability in Kidlit supported Duyvis by providing two significant reasons explaining why children’s literature world needed OwnVoices. First, Whaley believed that most diverse stories written by majority group authors were “rife with stereotypes, tropes, and harmful portrayals.”<sup>44</sup> Creators from marginalized groups witnessed their stories being misused and misrepresented in the mainstream culture again and again. Secondly, Whaley argued that even when majority group book creators were able to portrait diverse characters accurately with abundant research, writing from real-life experiences still adds richness to the stories because the creators and the characters share the same identity.<sup>45</sup> As a wheelchair user herself, Whaley stated that “[she] can list a whole host of tiny everyday details about the physical and emotional reality of [her] disability that secondary research is unlikely to surface.”<sup>46</sup>

Published two years after the start of the movement, *The Hate U Give* is an example of how an OwnVoices title can win a vast readership. *The Hate U Give* is a young adult novel published by Balzer + Bray, an imprint of HarperCollins. The main character in this novel is a 16-year-old Black girl who lives in a poor Black neighbourhood but goes to a privileged high school where most students are White. One day, she witnesses her childhood best friend, an unarmed Black teen boy, killed by a police officer. Many descriptions in the book were based on the author Angie Thomas’s childhood experiences. As a Black woman growing up in the predominantly black Georgetown neighbourhood of Jackson, Mississippi, Thomas recalled that when she was six, she saw two drug dealers decided to “recreate the wild west with a shootout and she had to run out of the crossfire.”<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Kayla Whaley, “#OwnVoices: Why We Need Diverse Authors in Children’s Literature.” *Brightly*, accessed April 12, 2020. <https://www.readbrihtly.com/why-we-need-diverse-authors-in-kids-ya-lit/>

<sup>45</sup> Whaley, “#OwnVoices: Why We Need Diverse Authors in Children’s Literature.”

<sup>46</sup> Whaley.

<sup>47</sup> Afua Hirsch, “Angie Thomas: the debut novelist who turned racism and police violence into a bestseller.” *The Guardian*, March 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/mar/26/angie-thomas-the-debut-novelist-who-turned-racism-and-police-violence-into-a-bestseller>

*The Hate U Give* was an instant commercial success after it was published in 2017. It stayed on the New York Times Young Adult Bestseller List for 116 weeks<sup>48</sup> with more than 100,000 copies in print.<sup>49</sup> The book also received plenty of critical acclaims and attention from book reviewers and readers. *Publishers Weekly* commented that “its greatest strength is in its authentic depiction of a teenage girl, her loving family, and her attempts to reconcile what she knows to be true about their lives with the way those lives are depicted.”<sup>50</sup> Readers on Goodreads added it to numerous book lists such as Own Voices Books,<sup>51</sup> #OwnVoices YA,<sup>52</sup> MG/YA/NA #ownvoices<sup>53</sup> and Diversity Bingo 2017.<sup>54</sup> Many individual book reviewers included this novel when compiling OwnVoices lists. For example, Modern Mrs. Darcy, a book blog created by author Anne Bogel, recommended *The Hate U Give* in her list of OwnVoices books.<sup>55</sup> The book was also adapted into a film in the following year which holds a rating of 97% on Rotten Tomatoes.<sup>56</sup>

However, the publisher did not use the hashtag #OwnVoices when they posted the book on Instagram for the first time in 2017.<sup>57</sup> HarperCollins Canada also did not use the hashtag either when announcing the publication of the book in 2017 on Instagram.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> Kaelyn Forde, “Readers Embrace Marginalised ‘Own Voices’, but Book Industry Lags.” *Aljazeera*, May 30, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/readers-embrace-marginalised-voices-book-industry-lags-190529175624879.html>

<sup>49</sup> Alexandra Alter, “New Crop of Young Adult Novels Explores Race and Police Brutality,” *The New York Times*, March 19, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/19/books/review/black-lives-matter-teenage-books.html>.

<sup>50</sup> “The Hate U Give Book Review.” *Publishers Weekly*, accessed April 2020, <https://www.publishersweekly.com/9780062498533>

<sup>51</sup> “Own Voices Books.” *Goodreads*, accessed June 8, 2020, <https://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/own-voices>

<sup>52</sup> “#OwnVoices YA.” *Goodreads*, accessed June 8, 2020, [https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/113168.\\_OwnVoices\\_YA](https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/113168._OwnVoices_YA)

<sup>53</sup> “MG/YA/NA #ownvoices.” *Goodreads*, accessed June 8, 2020, [https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/91987.MG\\_YA\\_NA\\_ownvoices](https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/91987.MG_YA_NA_ownvoices)

<sup>54</sup> “Diversity Bingo 2017.” *Goodreads*, accessed June 8, 2020, [https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/107430.Diversity\\_Bingo\\_2017](https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/107430.Diversity_Bingo_2017)

<sup>55</sup> Anne Bogel, “20 Terrific Titles from #ownvoices and #diversebooks Authors.” *modernmrsdarcy.com*, Sept 27, 2017, <https://modernmrsdarcy.com/own-voices-diverse-books-list/>

<sup>56</sup> “The Hate U Give.” *Rotten Tomatoes*, accessed April 26, 2020, [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the\\_hate\\_u\\_give](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_hate_u_give).

<sup>57</sup> HarperCollins (@harpercollins), “This Gem Just Hit #1 on the New York Times Best Seller List!”, *Instagram*, March 8, 2017, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BRZSvXKgpDx/>

<sup>58</sup> HarperCollins Canada (@harpercollinsca), “THIS IS THE. MOST. IMPORTANT. BOOK OF THE YEAR.”, *Instagram*, Feb 27, 2017, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BRCWW8nAUIs/>

Although it is not clear if the publisher intentionally followed the OwnVoices trend or not, it is evident that there is an appetite and a following for these books on the readers' and reviewers' side.

Independent publishers have also shown interest in publishing OwnVoice books. Arsenal Pulp Press is an independent literary publisher in Vancouver, British Columbia, known for publishing marginalized voices. In 2016, it decided to publish its first children's book, *The Boy & The Bindi*, to discuss children's exploration of gender and queerness. In *The Boy & The Bindi*, a five-year-old boy is curious about his mother's bindi, which is the red dot on the centre of a woman's forehead that represents the point where creation starts. The bindi is commonly worn by South Asian females but the boy wishes to have one as well. Instead of criticizing him, his mother teaches him about the significance of the bindi and encourages him to explore freely as he wants.<sup>59</sup>

This picture book is an example of an OwnVoices book because its author Vivek Shraya, a Toronto-based writer and artist, is of Indian descent and identifies as transgender.<sup>60</sup> The book was covered significantly in the media before it was released.<sup>61</sup> The coverage in the media was in part because of her previous literary works based on her personal life like *God Loves Hair*, a short story collection that was about the coming-of-age experiences of a queer kid from an Indian immigrant family living in Canada, and a poetry collection, *Even This Page is White*, which discussed everyday racism in Canada.<sup>62</sup> The pre-publication media attention was due in part because she was the 2016 Pride Toronto Grand Marshal around the time of the book release and because of her public queer identity.

After the publication of *The Boy & The Bindi*, the book received praise and positive reviews from many established platforms. *Kirkus Reviews* commented that "the mostly easy rhyming and vivid colours make this an unforgettable look into Hindu

---

<sup>59</sup> Vivek Shraya, *The Boy & the Bindi*. Arsenal Pulp Press, October 2016.

<sup>60</sup> Dannielle, "Girl, It's Your Time: Trans Artist Vivek Shraya On Finding Freedom and Wholeness," *Autostraddle*, May 19, 2016, <https://www.autostraddle.com/girl-its-your-time-trans-artist-vivek-shraya-on-finding-freedom-and-wholeness-336300/>.

<sup>61</sup> David Vi-Ky Ly, "Publishing Diversity with The Boy & The Bindi: A Case Study of the First Children's Picture Book From Arsenal Pulp Press," April 19, 2017, <http://summit.sfu.ca/item/17278>.

<sup>62</sup> "Writing." *Vivekshraya.com*. Accessed April 19, 2020, <https://vivekshraya.com/projects/writing>

culture.”<sup>63</sup> However, upon receiving the review, Shraya expressed concerns to her publisher that she did not want the book to be “understood as specifically Hindu.”<sup>64</sup> Shraya wanted the focus of the discussion to be the book’s approach to “queerness and spirituality.”<sup>65</sup> Arsenal Pulp Press later edited the press kit on its website and subsequently more reviews were written in the way the author had hoped for. After the change, other media such as The Huffington Post<sup>66</sup> and BuzzFeed<sup>67</sup> reviewed the book with a clear focus on the gender identity theme.

*The Boy & The Bindi* is not just an example of publishing OwnVoices book by an independent publisher. It also shows that the author could have a substantial impact on how the book should be marketed and reviewed by the public. Because the book was related to her own background and experiences, the author had a more in-depth understanding of how the book should be approached. In addition, the author’s shared identity with the communities was beneficial to the marketing of the book.

Unfortunately, I am not able to find the publisher’s social media posts on the book to examine if they used the hashtag #OwnVoices to promote the book upon its publication. When Vivek Shraya promoted the book on her own Instagram account, she did not use the hashtag #OwnVoices. In the mainstream media, most of the review platforms did not associate this book to the movement but a few did. For example, the Booklist Reader compiled a transgender OwnVoices book list,<sup>68</sup> the San Francisco Public Library posted an OwnVoices book list on gender diversity children’s books<sup>69</sup> and

---

<sup>63</sup> “The Boy& the Bindi.” *Kirkus Reviews*, accessed April 13, 2020, <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/vivek-shraya/the-boy-the-bindi/?page=85>.

<sup>64</sup> Ly, “Publishing Diversity with The Boy & The Bindi.”

<sup>65</sup> Ly.

<sup>66</sup> James Michael Nichols, “This Beautiful Children’s Book Is Exploring Queer South Asian Themes.”, *The Huffington Post*, Oct 30, 2016, [https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/the-boy-and-the-bindi\\_n\\_5810e2a4e4b08582f88d41eb?ri18n=true](https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/the-boy-and-the-bindi_n_5810e2a4e4b08582f88d41eb?ri18n=true)

<sup>67</sup> Sonia Mariam Thomas, “This Trans Artist Wrote A Book About Breaking Gender Stereotypes By Wearing A Bindi.” *Buzzfeed*, Nov 18, 2016, <https://www.buzzfeed.com/soniathomas/boy-and-the-bindi>

<sup>68</sup> Terry Hong, “Transgender Pride, Literally.” *The Booklist Reader*, June 28, 2019, <https://www.booklistreader.com/2019/06/28/young-adult-literature/transgender-pride-literally-11-titles-by-ownvoices-authors-and-more/>

<sup>69</sup> “LGBTQIA PRIDE: Gender Diversity In Children's Books!” *The San Francisco Public Library*, accessed June 8, 2020, <https://sfpl.bibliocommons.com/list/share/1132761418/1204305407?page=1>



Diamond Montessori, an individual book reviewer, stated the book is an OwnVoices title.<sup>70</sup>

To conclude, OwnVoices is not a new concept. The demand for authentic voices from marginalized communities can be dated back to at least the 1960s even though at that time, the term OwnVoices was not invented. The 2015 OwnVoices Movement and the subsequent OwnVoices bestsellers like *The Hate U Give* indicated that there is an appetite for the OwnVoices books. With their own effort, readers identify these books and promote them using the term OwnVoices. However, it seemed that publishers had not largely adopted the term OwnVoices in their marketing strategy to promote books that fit in the category. Cancel culture might be a factor that discourages publishers from applying the term OwnVoices to their books. In the publishing industry, cancel culture refers to the behaviour of boycotting someone's book if the author has done or said something inappropriate or offensive. A controversial example will be discussed in the next section.

### 3. Change and Controversy

The term OwnVoices is not commonly used by publishers' marketing team, nor it is well known to the librarians. In 2018, the School Library Journal published a survey asking public librarians and school librarians from U.S. and Canada whether they were familiar with the term OwnVoices at all. The results showed that only a little more than half of all librarians surveyed were familiar with the term. Among all librarians surveyed, 72% of public librarians were familiar with the term whereas only 52% of school librarians were aware of it.

Nevertheless, the children's book industry showed some changes after 2015. In 2018, CCBC released a multicultural survey which was based on approximately 3,700 books they received in 2017, again mostly from U.S. publishers. According to the released statistics, books containing multicultural content, that is, they included

---

<sup>70</sup> Diamond Montessori, "Queer Kids Book Club." [diamondmontessori.com](https://www.diamondmontessori.com), Oct 30, 2018, <https://www.diamondmontessori.com/blog/2018/10/30/queer-kids-book-club-the-boy-amp-the-bindi>

significant content/characters of African American, Asian American, Latino American and First Native American, represented 31% of the total books surveyed. The percentage of diverse books increased since 2014, and 2017 became the highest year on record since 1994.<sup>71</sup>

<b>2017</b>	<b>About</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>By</b>
African/African Americans	340	9.2%	100
Asian Pacifics/ Asian Pacifics Americans	310	8.4%	122
American Indians/First Nations	72	1.9%	38
Latinx	216	5.8%	73

*Figure 2 CCBC Multicultural Statistics for 2017*<sup>72</sup>

However, even as the number of books with multicultural content increased significantly, the number of books written by people of colour was still low. White authors still wrote the majority of children’s books with multicultural content despite the effort of the OwnVoices Movement started in 2015.<sup>73</sup>

Between 2015 and 2017, there was a slight improvement for a particular group such as American Indians/First Nations. As shown above, in 2017, out of the 3700 books, 72 had significant American Indian/First Nations content/characters and out of them, 38 which was more than half, were created by American Indian/First Nations authors and/or illustrators. In 2015, out of the 42 books with significant American Indian/First Nation content/character, only 18 were created by individuals from the American Indian/First Nations communities. Like the 2015 survey, the data from this survey is not enough to accurately calculate the OwnVoices ratio because the broad categorization may not be able to capture all necessary information to determine if a book is OwnVoices or not.

This year CCBC also expanded its survey to include children’s books with LGBTQ+ content/characters. Out of the 3700 books received, there were only 136 books that had significant LGBTQ+ content/characters which represented 3.7% of the total. Out of the 136 books, not even half of them were written by authors who identified as

<sup>71</sup> “CCBC 2017 Multicultural Statistics.” *CCBlogC*, February 22, 2018, <http://ccblogc.blogspot.com/2018/02/ccbc-2017-multicultural-statistics.html>.

<sup>72</sup> “CCBC 2017 Multicultural Statistics”

<sup>73</sup> “CCBC 2017 Multicultural Statistics”

LGBTQ+. The survey also noticed a significant lack of LGBTQ+ picture books for younger children while most of the books published are young adult novels.<sup>74</sup>

Meanwhile, the OwnVoices Movement had sparked many controversies and concerns since it started. For instance, African American young adult fiction writer Kosoko Jackson had to cancel his debut novel *A Place for Wolves* with his publisher Sourcebooks because it was criticized as not being OwnVoices enough, although it had been “positioned as an #OwnVoices LGBTQ romance.”<sup>75</sup> The main character of the novel is Black and homosexual, which is like Jackson himself. However, the setting of the book was the focus of the criticism. Online reviewers pointed out that Jackson was not qualified to tell a story set in war-torn Kosovo in the 1990s. As a result, Jackson had to cancel the book deal less than a month before its publication date and 55,000 copies of the book had to be pulped.<sup>76</sup> Ironically, Jackson was an advocate for the OwnVoices Movement. About a year before the cancellation of his debut novel, he tweeted:

"Stories about the civil rights movement should be written by black people. Stories of suffrage should be written by women. Ergo, stories about boys during horrific and life changing times, like the AIDS EPIDEMIC, should be written by gay men. Why is this so hard to get?"<sup>77</sup>

Being a sensitivity reader and a supporter of the OwnVoices Movement himself, Jackson’s decision to cancel the book was an irony that triggered many mixed reactions in the young adult literature world. Some authors believe that “the single-minded focus on ‘authenticity’ as a standard for publication has begun to act as a hindrance, not a help.”<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> “CCBC 2017 Statistics on LGBTQ+ Literature for Children & Teens,” *CCBlogC* (blog), April 6, 2018, <http://ccblogc.blogspot.com/2018/04/ccbc-2017-statistics-on-lgbtq.html>.

<sup>75</sup> Emma Kantor, “Sourcebooks Cancels Kosoko Jackson’s YA Debut,” *Publishers Weekly*, accessed February 6, 2020, <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-book-news/article/79392-sourcebooks-cancels-kosoko-jackson-s-ya-debut.html>.

<sup>76</sup> Kat Rosenfield, “What Is #OwnVoices Doing To Our Books?” *Refinery29*. Accessed June 22, 2019, <https://www.refinery29.com/en-ca/2019/04/229355/own-voices-movement-ya-literature-impact>.

<sup>77</sup> Rosenfield, “What Is #OwnVoices Doing To Our Books?”

<sup>78</sup> Rosenfield.

For example, an aspiring male author with a recognizably ethnic surname wrote a young adult novel with a white female main character. When he submitted the manuscript to his agent, he was rejected with a suggestion that he should write another book with a male protagonist, “preferably #ownvoices”.<sup>79</sup> This anonymous author refused to be “told to write a specific kind of diversity to appeal to the checklist of white gatekeepers” and as a result, he gave up his young adult writing completely.<sup>80</sup> According to the Lee & Low 2019 Diversity Baseline Survey, across North America, 76% of the professionals working in the industry including publishing staff, literary agents and review journal staff are White and 85% of the people who work in Editorial are White.<sup>81</sup> It is hopeful to know that today’s agents and publishers who are dominantly White take OwnVoices into their consideration. However, discouraging authors, especially those from marginalized groups to publish their stories is not the original intent of the OwnVoices guideline.

The above researches and example mostly reflect what has happened in the children’s literature industry in the U.S. after the OwnVoices Movement. In the next chapter, this report will examine the change in the Canadian children’s book publishing industry, looking at PRHC Young Readers, Simon & Schuster Canada Children’s, Orca Books and Groundwood Books before and after the OwnVoices Movement.

---

<sup>79</sup> Rosenfield.

<sup>80</sup> Rosenfield.

<sup>81</sup> Lee & Low Books, “Where Is the Diversity in Publishing? The 2019 Diversity Baseline Survey Results,” *Lee & Low Blog*, January 28, 2020, <https://blog.leeandlow.com/2020/01/28/2019diversitybaselinesurvey/>.

# Chapter 3 The Research

## 1. About the Research

This research aimed to examine if there was an increase in the number of OwnVoices books published and/or distributed by Canadian children's book publishers after the OwnVoices Movement. It compared the Fall 2016 catalogues and Fall 2019 catalogues of selected publishers/imprints including PRHC Young Readers, Simon & Schuster Canada Children, Orca Books and Groundwood Books. PRHC Young Readers and Simon & Schuster Canada Children were chosen because they represent large publishers who are part of an international publishing company while Orca Books and Groundwood Books represent small publishers established in Canada. Additionally, Orca Books was chosen because it is located on the West Coast, which provides a different perspective from the other three publishers. The Fall 2016 catalogues were selected because they should reflect the influence of the movement at its beginning phase as the movement started in September 2015 based on the seasonal publishing process. The Fall 2019 catalogues were selected to see and record the change in three years after the movement's beginning. All the catalogues used in the comparison were retrieved from BNC Catalist, an online catalogue system established by BookNet Canada for the Canadian book trade.

For each catalogue, the total number of books (including books published by the publisher and books distributed by the publisher) and the number of OwnVoices books were recorded. The book will be defined as an OwnVoices book when it meets the following two criteria:

1. The main character(s) of the book represent(s) a minority group, including but not limited to an ethnic group, LGBTQ+ community, religious group or individuals with disabilities;
2. At least one of the book creators, either the author or the illustrator, must self-identify with the main character in the book in the aspect that they intended to highlight. The report will examine the following information to decide if a book is OwnVoices or not:
  - i. The synopsis of the book;

- ii. The author/illustrator's bio;
- iii. The review(s) of the book.

Compared to the CCBC survey, the measurement in this report will be less strict. For example, if the author and the main character are both African American but originally from different countries, the book will still be considered as an OwnVoices title in this report. Using a relatively lenient measurement is because the specific identity information of the authors and/or illustrators will be too difficult to obtain unless directly contact each of them. Some publishers are also distributors such as Simon & Schuster Canada and Orca Books Publisher, so the report will include the books distributed by them as well.

After compiling data for each publisher, the number of OwnVoices books will be divided by the total number of the books to calculate the ratio of OwnVoices books for each catalogue. The ratio will be compared between the two years and across all the publishers. Books with unclear information that could not be determined OwnVoices or not will also be counted and specified.

## 2. Results

### **PRHC Young Readers**

The Fall 2016 catalogue of PRHC Young Readers contains 31 books in total. Among them, four books meet the criteria of OwnVoices books and the OwnVoices book ratio is 12.9%.

- *Ugly* written by Robert Hoge: This is a middle grade nonfiction based on the author's own experience with disability and special needs.<sup>82</sup>
- *The Sun is Also a Star* written by Nicola Yoon: This is a young adult romance story between a Jamaican American girl and a Korean American

---

<sup>82</sup> "Ugly by Robert Hoge." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=4615775>

boy which matches with the author's cultural background and her husband David Yoon's background.<sup>83</sup>

- *Yitzi and the Giant Menorah* written and illustrated by Richard Ungar: This picture book is based on Jewish folklore and the author is from the same community.<sup>84</sup>
- *Another Me* written by Eva Wiseman: This is a historical fiction based in Europe during the fourteenth century. The protagonist is a teenage Jewish boy who wants to protect his community from false accusations that raise tension between themselves and other residents. The author is from Jewish community.<sup>85</sup>

As for Fall 2019, there are 25 books in the catalogue and among them, four fit the OwnVoices book criteria which represent 16% for 2019.

The four books are:

- *Ho'onani* written by Heather Gale, illustrated by Mika Song: This is a picture book based on the true story of a young Hawaiian girl who tried to lead an all-male performance. The illustrator used to live in Hawaii.<sup>86</sup>
- *Encounter* written by Brittany Luby, illustrated by Michaela Goade: Inspired by French explorer Jacques Cartier's journal entry during his first expedition to North America in 1534, the story depicts the first encounter between a sailor representing the explorer and a fisherman representing the native resident on one day in 1534. Both the author and the illustrator are from Indigenous communities.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> Elena Nicolaou. "Is *The Sun Is Also A Star* Based On A Real-Life Love Story?" *Refinery29*, May 17, 2019. Accessed March 10, 2020. <https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2019/05/231960/the-sun-is-also-a-star-based-on-true-story-nicola-yoon-book-movie>.

<sup>84</sup> Margot Blankier, personal communication, August 4, 2020.

<sup>85</sup> Margot Blankier, personal communication. August 4, 2020.

<sup>86</sup> "Ho'onani by Heather Gale." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18549855>

<sup>87</sup> "Encounter by Brittany Luby." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18549859>

- *It Began with a Page* written by Kyo Maclear, illustrated by Julie Morstad: This is a picture book biography of Gyo Fujikawa, a Japanese American children's book illustrator. While she grew up in Canada, the author Kyo Maclear is half Japanese and half British.<sup>88</sup>
- *Broken Strings* written by Eric Walters and Kathy Kacer: This is a middle grade fiction that discusses the traumatic influence of the Holocaust on generations. One of the co-authors, Kathy Kacer, is from a family that survived the Holocaust.<sup>89</sup>

In the case of *Encounter*, both the author and the illustrator are from Indigenous communities: Luby is a member of Anishinaabe while Goade is of Tlingit descent. Luby is also a history professor at the University of Guelph with a specialization in Indigenous history in North America. She was confused when she grew up learning things in history class that were not the same as what her parents told her at home.<sup>90</sup> In this picture book, she wanted to “showcase that indigenous presence and cultural vitality”<sup>91</sup> with her perspective and her knowledge. Meanwhile, Goade also admitted the sad reality that accurate representation for Indigenous communities is almost non-existent or underrepresented.<sup>92</sup> The picture book also includes an author's note to outline the historical context for young readers to better understand the issue. *Kirkus Reviews* remarked the book as “an uplifting, #ownvoices vision for what could have been and what we are responsible for now”.<sup>93</sup>

Not every OwnVoices title in this catalogue was created entirely by individuals from the same community as the main character(s). Nevertheless, the editorial team adopted different strategies to add authenticity to the books. For example, *Ho'onani* is a

---

<sup>88</sup> Kyo Maclear, “About.” <http://www.kyomaclear.com/about/>, accessed April 5, 2020.

<sup>89</sup> “Kathy Kacer- About Me.” *KathyKacer.com*, accessed April 5, 2020.

<http://www.kathykacer.com/aboutme.html>.

<sup>90</sup> Samantha Balaban, “A Sailor Meets A Fisherman In 1534: It's An ‘Encounter,’ Not A Discovery.” *NPR.org*, accessed March 12, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/2019/09/29/764733881/a-sailor-meets-a-fisherman-in-1534-its-an-encounter-not-a-discovery>.

<sup>91</sup> Balaban, “A Sailor Meets A Fisherman In 1534.”

<sup>92</sup> Balaban.

<sup>93</sup> “Encounter.” *Kirkus Reviews*, October 1, 2019. Accessed March 12, 2020.

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/brittany-luby/encounter-luby/>.



picture book that focuses on Hawaiian culture, especially on celebrating the non-binary gender identity culture but its author Heather Gale is neither from the Hawaiian origin nor an LGBTQ+ community. The book is based on a true story and inspired by a PBS documentary *A Place in the Middle*. The author “used a little creativity to create the story version”<sup>94</sup> while still incorporated basic facts about the characters. However, this book is considered as an OwnVoices title because the Filipina illustrator Mika Song is of Pacific Islander descent and she once lived in Honolulu, Hawaii when she grew up.<sup>95</sup> Her familiarity with the culture added more visual authenticity to the image of the character and the setting.

Similarly, *Broken Strings* is narrated from the perspective of a middle school girl whose grandfather is a survivor of the Holocaust. Eric Walters, one of the co-authors, is an established children’s book author in Canada but has no direct tie to the Holocaust or the Jewish community. The other co-author Kathy Kacer is the child of Holocaust survivors and is an award-winning author for Holocaust fiction and non-fiction books for young readers. This combination brought many positive reviews to the book such as *Quill & Quire*’s comment “Walters and Kacer pull off this impressive feat of complex storytelling and make it look easy, with a novel that flows and entertains and devastates.”<sup>96</sup> However, the book is not commonly promoted as an OwnVoices book even if it fits the criteria of this report.

In the case of *It Began with a Page*, the book is based on the real-life experience of Gyo Fujikawa, a Japanese American children’s book writer and illustrator. As fans of Fujikawa’s works and collaborators on two picture biographies, Kyo Maclear (who also has Japanese background) and Julie Morstad decided to make a book on this influential artist. They visited Fujikawa’s relatives to gather information. With the help from the Fujikawa family, Maclear and Morstad dug through archives and looked through old

---

<sup>94</sup> Maria Marshall, “The Picture Book Buzz - Joint Interview w/ Heather Gale and Mika Song,” *mariamarshall.com*, accessed March 11, 2020. <https://www.mariacmarshall.com/single-post/2019/11/18/The-Picture-Book-Buzz---Joint-Interview-with-Heather-Gale-and-Mika-Song>.

<sup>95</sup> Marshall, “The Picture Book Buzz - Joint Interview w/ Heather Gale and Mika Song.”

<sup>96</sup> “Broken Strings.” *Quill and Quire*, August 26, 2019. <https://quillandquire.com/review/broken-strings/>.

photos to reveal the story of Gyo Fujikawa which had not been published yet.<sup>97</sup> This book was not promoted as an OwnVoices book by the publisher, nor was it associated with the movement by review platforms but it met the criteria in this report.

Overall, the ratio of OwnVoices books for PRHC Young Readers has increased since 2016 from 12.9% to 16%.

### **Simon & Schuster Canada Children**

Simon & Schuster Canada is a division of Simon & Schuster, one of the Big Five publishing companies publishing a wide range of bestselling or award-winning fiction and nonfiction books. Simon & Schuster Canada used to be the Canadian distributor for Simon & Schuster.<sup>98</sup> In 2013, it received permission from the Canadian government to establish its domestic publishing program and started to publish its original titles.<sup>99</sup>

For Simon & Schuster Canada Children, its Fall 2016 catalogue has a total of 399 titles. However, it is worth noting that most of the titles were published by the head office of Simon & Schuster in the U.S. and Simon & Schuster Canada only operated as the Canadian distributor. Out of the 399 titles, nine of them are qualified as OwnVoices titles which represent 2.3% of the total. The nine titles are:

- *Ghost* written by Jason Reynolds: This is a middle grade fiction featuring a Black boy who struggles to be the best runner in his track team. Jason Reynolds is a Black American author.<sup>100</sup>
- *The Only Road* written by Alexandra Diaz: This middle grade fiction features a 12-year-old boy who flees from Guatemala to the U.S. Living in the U.S., the author is the daughter of Cuban refugees and a native Spanish

---

<sup>97</sup> Antonia Saxon, "Q & A with Kyo Maclear and Julie Morstad." *Publishers Weekly*, Sept 26, 2019, <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-authors/article/81285-q-a-with-kyo-maclear-and-julie-morstad.html>

<sup>98</sup> Jim Milliot, "Simon & Schuster To Acquire Distican," *Publishers Weekly*, November 25, 2002. Accessed March 13, 2020. <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/print/20021125/41073-simon-amp-schuster-to-acquire-distican.html>.

<sup>99</sup> Leigh Anne Williams, "Simon & Schuster to Begin Publishing in Canada." *Publishers Weekly*, May 30, 2013. Accessed April 5, 2020. <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/publisher-news/article/57520-simon-schuster-to-begin-publishing-in-canada.html>.

<sup>100</sup> Jason Reynolds, "About." <https://www.jasonwritesbooks.com/about>, accessed June 11, 2020.

speaker.<sup>101</sup> The book was also published in Spanish (*El único destino*) at the same time, in both paperback and hardcover.

- *Lion Island* written by Margarita Engle: This story introduces Antonio Chuffat, a champion of civil rights who is also a descent of African, Chinese and Cuban. Chuffat is an advocate for the Chinese community in Cuba which is where the author's mother comes from. The author developed an attachment to Cuba during her childhood.<sup>102</sup>
- *The Distance Between Us* (Young Readers Edition) written by Reyna Grande: This is adapted from *The Distance Between Us*, a memoir about the author's border-crossing journey from Mexico to the U.S.<sup>103</sup>
- *Ticket to India* written by N. H. Senzai: Sets in India, the two girls in this middle grade fiction travel from Delhi to their grandmother's hometown in Northern India. Born in the U.S., the author is of Indian descent.<sup>104</sup>
- *All American Boys* (Reprint) written by Brendan Kiely and Jason Reynolds: In this young adult novel, a Black boy is mistakenly believed to be a thief and beaten up by police while a White boy is the only witness. Jason Reynolds is a Black American author.<sup>105</sup>
- *Cinderella* written by Chloe Perkins, illustrated by Sandra Equihua: This is a board book that twists the classic story of Cinderella with a Mexican spin. The illustrator was born and raised in Mexico.<sup>106</sup>
- *Snow White* written by Chloe Perkins and illustrated by Misa Saburi: Similar to the above title, this board book twists the classic fairy tale with

---

<sup>101</sup> "Bio & Contact Info." Alexandra-diaz.com, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://alexandra-diaz.com/biography-contact-info/>

<sup>102</sup> "Lion Island by Margarita Engle." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=5337466>

<sup>103</sup> "The Distance Between Us by Reyna Grande." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=5337472>

<sup>104</sup> Naheed Hasnat Senzai, "About." <http://www.nhsenzai.com/about/>, accessed June 11, 2020.

<sup>105</sup> Jason Reynolds, "About."

<sup>106</sup> "Cinderella by Chloe Perkins." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=5337592>

a Japanese spin. The illustrator was Japanese American who was born in New York and raised in Tokyo.<sup>107</sup>

Besides these nine titles, two titles cannot be classified due to the lack of author's information. They are the paperback and hardcover edition of *The Power Within* written by H. K. Varian. The character on the book covers is in a dark skin but there is little information about the author's ethnicity.

In Fall 2019, Simon & Schuster Canada Children has 364 titles in total. Still, most of them were published by Simon & Schuster in the U.S. and distributed by Simon & Schuster Canada. Among them, 18 titles can qualify as OwnVoices books which represent 4.9% of the total. The 18 titles are:

- *Sulwe* (hardcover) and *Sulwe* (counterpack) written by Lupita Nyong'o, illustrated by Vashti Harrison: This is a picture book to celebrate one's own unique identity. The main character is a young Black girl. The author is a Kenyan actress and producer<sup>108</sup> and the illustrator is a Black artist from Virginia, US.<sup>109</sup>
- *Parker Looks Up* (hardcover) and *Parker Looks Up* (counterpack) written by Parker Curry and Jessica Curry, illustrated by Brittany Jackson: This is a picture book based on the story of Parker Curry, a Black girl who was inspired by the portrait of Michelle Obama during her trip to the National Portrait Gallery. The book was co-written by Parker and her mother,<sup>110</sup> accompanied by the illustrations from Brittany Jackson who is also Black.<sup>111</sup>

---

<sup>107</sup> "Snow White by Chloe Perkins." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=5337593>

<sup>108</sup> "Sulwe by Lupita Nyong'o." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=19100258>

<sup>109</sup> Vashti Harrison, "About." *Vashtiharrison.com*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://www.vashtiharrison.com/about>

<sup>110</sup> "Parker Looks Up by Parker Curry." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=19100262>

<sup>111</sup> "Brittany Jackson." *Simon & Schuster*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://www.simonandschuster.com/authors/Brittany-Jackson/161996630>

- *P Is for Poppadoms!* Written by Kabir Sehgal and his mother Surishtha Sehgal,<sup>112</sup> illustrated by Hazel Ito: This is an alphabet book that teaches the alphabet with elements from Indian culture such as Chai or Yoga. Surishtha Sehgal is an Indian immigrant to American while Kabir was born in America.<sup>113</sup>
- *Amy Wu and the Perfect Bao* written by Kat Zhang, illustrated by Charlene Chua: The main character is an Asian girl who tries to make the perfect Bao, a traditional Chinese bread-like dish. The author was born in a Chinese immigrant family in America<sup>114</sup> while the illustrator grew up in Singapore.
- *Dancing Hands* written by Margarita Engle, illustrated by Rafael López: The story is inspired by the talented Latina pianist Teresa Carreño who was from Venezuela. The author contributed to the story with her Cuban heritage and the illustrator was born and raised in Mexico.<sup>115</sup>
- *The Book Rescuer* written by Sue Macy, illustrated by Stacy Innerst: This is a biography of Aaron Lansky who founded the Yiddish Book Center to help to search and preserve Yiddish language publications. The author was raised in a Jewish family.<sup>116</sup>
- *Muslim Girls Rise* written by Saira Mir, illustrated by Aaliya Jaleel: This is a nonfiction book introducing readers to learn about outstanding Muslim women and their contributions in different fields. Promoted as a debut OwnVoice author by the publisher, Saira Mir is a Muslim physician from

---

<sup>112</sup> Melissa Ruggieri, "Atlanta's Kabir Sehgal Adds Another Grammy to His List of Achievements." *AJC*, March 2, 2017. Accessed March 31, 2020, <https://www.ajc.com/blog/music/atlanta-kabir-sehgal-adds-another-grammy-his-list-achievements/C7INI3FIWVaYpdMVP4P8NL/>.

<sup>113</sup> Paul Avgerinos, Deepak Chopra, Kabir Sehgal, "HOME: Where Everyone Is Welcome, with Deepak Chopra, Kabir Sehgal and Paul Avgerinos," *Parvati Magazine*, July 17, 2017, <https://parvatimagazine.com/2017/07/music-home-everyone-welcome-deepak-chopra-kabir-sehgal-paul-avgerinos/>.

<sup>114</sup> "Kat Zhang." *Wikipedia*, December 24, 2019. [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kat\\_Zhang&oldid=932297868](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kat_Zhang&oldid=932297868).

<sup>115</sup> "Dancing Hands by Margarita Engle." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=19100297>

<sup>116</sup> Stacey Dresner, "Conversation with Sue Macy," *Jewish Ledger (blog)*, October 2, 2019, <http://www.jewishledger.com/2019/10/conversation-sue-macy/>.

Washington, DC. She wrote the book to help her daughter find feminist role models who are also from the same heritage.<sup>117</sup>

- *More to the Story* written by Hena Khan: This is a middle grade fiction featuring four sisters living in an American Muslim family. The author identifies as a Pakistani American writer.<sup>118</sup>
- *The Crossroads* (reprint) written by Alexandra Diaz: This is a sequel to *The Only Road* published in 2016. The protagonist, a boy from Guatemala who lives in the U.S., remains the same. The author, currently living in the U.S., is the daughter of Cuban refugees.<sup>119</sup>
- *The Distance between Me and the Cherry Tree* written by Paola Peretti and translated by Denise Muir: This middle grade fiction features a ten-year-old girl who is going blind. The author suffers from Stargardt disease which causes progressive vision loss and eventual blindness.<sup>120</sup>
- *SLAY* written by Brittney Morris: This young adult fiction features a teenage Black girl who is secretly a game developer fighting against prejudice and racism in the virtual world. The author identifies as Black.<sup>121</sup>
- *Lu* (reprint) written by Jason Reynolds: Written by the same author of *Ghost* which was published in 2016, this middle grade fiction also features a Black teen boy from the same track team. The author is a Black American writer.<sup>122</sup>
- *I'm Ok* written by Patti Kim: The protagonist is a Korean American boy. Born in South Korea, the author later immigrated to the U.S.<sup>123</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup> "Muslim Girls Rise by Saira Mir." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=19100304>

<sup>118</sup> "More to the Story by Hena Khan." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=19234478>

<sup>119</sup> "The Crossroads by Alexandra Diaz." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=19234480>

<sup>120</sup> "The Distance between Me and the Cherry Tree by Paola Peretti." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=19234498>

<sup>121</sup> "Bio." *authorbrittneymorris.com*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://www.authorbrittneymorris.com/bio>

<sup>122</sup> Jason Reynolds, "About."

<sup>123</sup> "I'm Ok by Patti Kim." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=19234612>

- *Infinite Hope* written and illustrated by Ashley Bryan: This is a memoir of Ashley Bryan who is a Black artist, writer and illustrator of children's books.<sup>124</sup>
- *Our Wayward Fate* written by Gloria Chao: This young adult fiction tells the story of a seventeen-year-old girl who is the only Asian in her school in Indiana. The author identifies as Asian American.<sup>125</sup>
- *Blended* (reprint) written by Sharon M. Draper: The protagonist is an eleven-year-old Black girl who is torn between her two families after her parents' divorce. The author is Black.<sup>126</sup>

Besides the above titles, two titles cannot be determined. They are *The Mia Mayhem Collection* and *Mia Mayhem Stops Time!* Both have a Black girl on the cover as the main character but the information on the author is not sufficient to determine if the books are OwnVoices or not.

In 2019, the publisher worked with established celebrities such as Lupita Nyong'o who is an award-winning actress as well as an activist, Kabir Sehgal who had won four Grammy Awards and Parker Curry who went viral on the internet before her book deal.

### **Orca Book Publishers**

Located in Victoria, BC, Orca Book Publishers is a Canadian children's book publisher that has published many award-winning, bestselling books in many genres. Founded in 1984, Orca has been publishing many Canadian authors and bringing them to the international market.<sup>127</sup> Orca has published among others: Kelly Armstrong, Cherie Dimaline and Julie Flett. Orca always "aims to help young readers see themselves reflected in the books they read"<sup>128</sup> by producing books that represent people of all ethnicities, religions and LGBTQ.

---

<sup>124</sup> "Ashley Bryan Biography." Ashley Bryan Center, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://ashleybryancenter.org/ashley.html>

<sup>125</sup> Gloria Chao's website, "About me." <https://gloriachao.wordpress.com/>, accessed June 11, 2020.

<sup>126</sup> "Biography." [sharondraper.com](https://sharondraper.com), accessed June 11, 2020, <https://sharondraper.com/biography.asp>

<sup>127</sup> Orca Book Publishers, "About Us." <https://www.orcabook.com/About.aspx>, accessed April 16, 2020.

<sup>128</sup> Orca Book Publishers, "About Us."

In Fall 2016, Orca published 54 titles in total. Among them, five fit the criteria of OwnVoices books and the ratio is 9.3%. The five books are:

- *We Sang You Home* written by Richard Van Camp, illustrated by Julie Flett: This board book expresses parent's love towards their newborn baby. The character depicted in the book is an Indigenous girl and both the author and the illustrator are from Indigenous communities.<sup>129</sup>
- *Stepping Stones* written by Margriet Ruurs and the illustration were photos of stone artwork created by Nizar Ali Badr: Written in dual languages – English and Arabic – this book tells a story about the Syrian refugee crisis. Nizar Ali Badr is a Syrian artist and his stone artwork inspired the story.<sup>130</sup>
- *The Matatu* written by Eric Walters, illustrated by Eva Campbell: The story is set in East Africa. The illustrator was born in Ghana, a country in West Africa and spent her childhood in Barbados and Jamaica, where most of the populations are of African descent.<sup>131</sup>
- *The Moccasin Goalie* (Classic Edition) written and illustrated by William Roy Brownridge: This is a new edition of a storybook that was initially published in 1995. The main character could not play hockey like other kids because of his disability. Like the main character, the author's ability to walk and run was hindered as a child because of a physical condition.<sup>132</sup>
- *Diwali: A Festival of Lights* written by Rina Singh: This is a non-fiction book introducing the Indian tradition Diwali. The author is of Indo-Canadian origin.<sup>133</sup>

---

<sup>129</sup> "We Sang You Home by Richard Van Camp." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=4373653>

<sup>130</sup> "Stepping Stones by Margriet Ruurs." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=5471648>

<sup>131</sup> "The Matatu by Eric Walters." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=4373656>

<sup>132</sup> "Bill's Story." *Heart of Hockey: The Art of Bill Brownridge*. Accessed March 27, 2020. <https://heartofhockey.com/bills-story/>.

<sup>133</sup> "Diwali by Rina Singh." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=4373687>



In Fall 2019, there is a total of 51 titles in Orca’s catalogue. However, Orca published 45 titles while Theytus Books published five of them and Pembroke Publishers published one. Seven out of the 51 titles, that is, four from Orca and three from Theytus Books are OwnVoices books which represent 13.7%. The four published by Orca are:

- *The Phone Booth in Mr. Hirota's Garden* written by Heather Smith and illustrated by Rachel Wada: The story was inspired by the true story of the wind phone in Otsuchi, Japan, which was created by artist Itaru Sasaki. Both main characters are Japanese. The illustrator is a Japanese Cantonese immigrant who is living in Canada.<sup>134</sup>
- *Light a Candle / Tumaini pasipo na Tumaini* written by Godfrey Nkongolo and Eric Walters, illustrated by Eva Campbell: Set in Tanzania, the story is told in two languages: English and Swahili. One of the authors, Godfrey, is a Ph.D. student in political science with extensive experience working in Tanzania and the illustrator is from another African community.<sup>135</sup>
- *Picking Up the Pieces* written by Carey Newman and Kirstie Hudson: The book introduces the Witness Blanket, an art project created by the Indigenous artist Carey Newman. This project collects hundreds of items from residential schools across Canada and tells the story of each item. The author Carey Newman’s father is a survivor of residential school.<sup>136</sup>
- *Kung Fu Master* written by Marty Chan: This is a middle grade fiction featuring a Chinese immigrant boy and it matches with the author’s ethnic identity.<sup>137</sup>

---

<sup>134</sup> “The Phone Booth in Mr. Hirota’s Garden by Heather Smith.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18261808>

<sup>135</sup> “Light a Candle / Tumaini Pasipo Na Tumaini by Godfrey Nkongolo.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18261811>

<sup>136</sup> “Picking Up the Pieces by Carey Newman.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18261835>

<sup>137</sup> “Kung Fu Master by Marty Chan.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18261844>

The three published by Theytus Books which is a leading North American publisher of Indigenous voices are:

- *Meennunyoung adultkaa / Blueberry Patch* written and illustrated by Jennifer Leason, translated by Norman Chartrand: In the story, a Salteaux Elder shares the tradition of blueberry picking. The story is written in dual languages: English & Anishinaabemowin. The creator and the translator both identify themselves as Saulteaux–Métis Anishinaabek.<sup>138</sup>
- *Neekna and Chemai* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) written by Jeannette Armstrong, illustrated by Barbara Marchand: This novel introduces the customs and traditions of Okanagan First Peoples. The author was an Indigenous leader born on the Okanagan Reserve.<sup>139</sup>
- *Legends and Teachings of Xeel's, the Creator* written by Dr. Ellen White: Dr. White was a member of Snuneymuxw Nation of Nanaimo on the eastern shore of Vancouver Island. In this book, she shared four stories passed down to her from her ancestors.<sup>140</sup>

For Orca, the ratio of OwnVoices books increased from 9.3% to 13.7% but it was partially due to its connection with Theytus Books. As the distributor for Theytus Books, Orca helped to place more local Canadian authors, especially ones from the Indigenous communities to bookstores, libraries and schools.

### **Groundwood Books**

As an imprint of House of Anansi, Groundwood Books is an independent Canadian children's publisher based in Toronto. Groundwood Books is dedicated to publishing books that are “unusual” or “potentially controversial” as well as books that reveal the experiences of under-represented children.<sup>141</sup>

---

<sup>138</sup> “Meennunyakaa / Blueberry Patch by Jennifer Leason.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18261815>

<sup>139</sup> “Neekna and Chemai by Jeannette Armstrong.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18261826>

<sup>140</sup> “Legends and Teachings of Xeel’s, the Creator by Dr. Ellen Rice White.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18261838>

<sup>141</sup> Groundwood Books, “About.” <https://groundwoodbooks.com/>, accessed April 4, 2020.

In Fall 2016, Groundwood Books published 17 titles in total. Four of them qualify as OwnVoices books which represent 23.5% of the whole list:

- *Dos Conejos Blancos* written by Jairo Buitrago, illustrated by Rafael Yockteng: Published in Spanish, this book depicts a young girl and her father's travel to the U.S. as immigrants. The author is a Colombian children's book writer who lives in Mexico City.<sup>142</sup>
- *Somos como las nubes / We Are Like the Clouds* written by Jorge Argueta, illustrated by Alfonso Ruano and translated by Elisa Amado: Published in English and Spanish, this book of poetry tells the story of young people who left Central America for the U.S. and the author is a Salvadoran poet.<sup>143</sup>
- *Book Uncle and Me* written by Uma Krishnaswami and illustrated by Julianna Swaney: The book was originally published in India and the main character is a young girl resembling the author herself when she was young. The author was from India.<sup>144</sup>
- *Aluta* written by Adwoa Badoe: Set in 1981 Ghana, this young adult fiction tells the story of an 18-year-old girl's college life when she gets involved in student politics. The author was born in Ghana.<sup>145</sup>

In Fall 2019, five of the 21 books published by Groundwood Books can be labelled as OwnVoices books and the ratio of the OwnVoices books is 23.8%:

- *My Friend* written by Elisa Amado, illustrated by Alfonso Ruano: The story depicts the friendship between a Latino girl who just moved to the U.S. and a White girl. The author was born in Guatemala.<sup>146</sup>

---

<sup>142</sup> "Jairo Buitrago-Writer", *Jairo Buitrago*, September 23, 2015. <http://jairo-buitrago.blogspot.com/2015/09/jairo-buitrago-escritor.html>.

<sup>143</sup> "Somos Como Las Nubes / We Are Like the Clouds by Jorge Argueta." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=4372883>

<sup>144</sup> "Book Uncle and Me by Uma Krishnaswami." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=4372885>

<sup>145</sup> "Aluta by Adwoa Badoe." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=4372887>

<sup>146</sup> "My Friend by Elisa Amado." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18409084>

- *Caravan to the North* and *Caravana al Norte*, the Spanish edition of the same book, written by Jorge Argueta, illustrated by Manuel Monroy: This book is a novel in verse which features a Salvadoran boy whose family joins the caravan heading north to the U.S. The author is a Salvadoran poet who published with Groundwood Books in 2016 as well.<sup>147</sup>
- *A Song for China* written and illustrated by Ange Zhang: Set in the 1920s to the 1930s, this picture book tells the story of a young Chinese author Guang Weiran. The author is a Chinese-born Canadian illustrator.<sup>148</sup>
- *Red Land, Yellow River* was also written by Ange Zhang: This is a memoir of Zhang's childhood during the Cultural Revolution in China.<sup>149</sup>

Overall, the slight increase from 23.5% to 23.8% may indicate that Groundwood Books started to publish original voices even before the movement. What also makes Groundwood Books unique is that it has been focusing a lot on the immigration issue from Central America and had published relevant books in both English and Spanish.

### 3. Discussion

After comparing the ratio of OwnVoices titles for 2016 and 2019 for each publisher (see Figure 3 for overview), four findings can be summarized from the above data collection.

---

<sup>147</sup> "Caravan to the North by Jorge Argueta." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18487913>

<sup>148</sup> "A Song for China by Ange Zhang." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18409083>

<sup>149</sup> "Red Land, Yellow River by Ange Zhang." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18409082>

Publisher	Total 2016	OwnVoices 2016	OwnVoices Ratio 2016
PRHC Young Readers	31	4	12.9%
Simon&Schuster	399	9	2.3%
Orca Book Publisher	54	5	9.3%
Groundwood Books	17	4	23.5%

  

Publisher	Total 2019	OwnVoices 2019	Ownvoices Ratio 2019
PRHC Young Readers	25	4	16.0%
Simon&Schuster	364	18	4.9%
Orca Book Publisher	51	7	13.7%
Groundwood Books	21	5	23.8%

*Figure 3 OwnVoices Ratio Comparison*

First, an increase of the OwnVoices books published in Fall catalogues can be observed for each publisher from 2016 to 2019. The increase indicates the publishers all published and/or distributed more titles with original and authentic voices. The OwnVoices Movement may influence the publishers’ decision-making process but the change may also due to factors other than a cultural shift such as an increasing readership who demand more authentic voices or possible grants which may encourage publishers to support marginalized creators. The result from this data collection is not enough to interpret the reasons behind the change but a positive change is indeed observed.

Secondly, in 2016, Groundwood Books had the highest ratio of 23.5% whereas Simon & Schuster Canada Children had the lowest rate of 2.3%. In 2019, Groundwood Books still had the highest proportion which was 23.8% and Simon & Schuster still had the lowest ratio again at 4.9%. The different missions of the publishers may explain the variances. Groundwood Books is an independent imprint that is dedicated to publishing thought-provoking children’s books. They may have more freedom to experiment with the values of the OwnVoices Movement earlier and with more resources.

Third, PRHC Young Readers, as a commercial imprint and part of an international publishing house, has a relatively higher ratio of OwnVoices books comparing to Simon & Schuster Canada Children. As introduced in Ch.1, May Cutler, the founder of Tundra Books, was not afraid to challenge mainstream publishing at her times and this may still have an impact on the current PRHC Young Readers. Besides, unlike Simon & Schuster Canada who just started to publish their original titles from

2013, the two imprints of PRHC Young Readers, Tundra Books and Puffin Canada have a longer history of publishing in Canada than Simon & Schuster Canada Children.

Last, the themes of OwnVoices books published by the four publishers were mostly about the representation of minority groups from diverse ethnic's backgrounds. Occasionally, there were books addressing children with disabilities. However, there was no book with LGBTQ+ content and/or character in 2016 and 2019. It is also more challenging to determine if an LGBTQ+ book is OwnVoices because gender identity or sexual orientation is personal information, and authors or illustrators may not want to reveal it to the public.

## Conclusion

This report started with an introduction to PRHC Young Readers, especially focusing on the history of Tundra Books and its contribution to publish authentic voices. May Cutler, the founder of Tundra Books, set a precedent to publish original stories that were not from mainstream culture back in the 1970s and 1980s.

The report also revealed the history of neglecting voices from marginalized groups in publishing industry. Black author Walter Dean Myers traced back the lack of authentic voices from minority groups in the publishing industry back to at least the 1960s. The concern was again brought up in 2015 on Twitter and gradually grew into a movement. It has been promoting a new guideline regarding who should write about what: works that specifically represent minorities should be created by individuals who are from the same group. I wanted to examine if there were any visible changes after the movement, especially in the Canadian children's book publishing industry.

To find out if the publishers started to follow the guideline of OwnVoices after the start of the movement, I collected the Fall 2016 catalogues and Fall 2019 catalogues from PRHC Young Readers, Simon & Schuster Canada Children, Orca Books Publisher and Groundwood Books to compare each publisher's catalogue over three years and also to compare large publishing companies with independent publishers. I summarized four findings from the data collection: first, for all four publishers, their Fall 2019 catalogues had a higher ratio of OwnVoices titles than their Fall 2016 titles. Second, Groundwood Books had the highest ratio in Fall 2016 and Fall 2019 whereas Simon & Schuster Canada Children had the lowest ratio in both years. Third, between the two large trade publishing houses which are both a part of an international company, PRHC Young Readers had a higher ratio of OwnVoices books in Fall 2016 and Fall 2019 than Simon & Schuster Canada Children. Fourth, most of the OwnVoices books published by the four publishers were about minority racial groups. Books with themes like disabilities and LGBTQ+ were relatively rare.

However, there are several limitations to this research. First, the criteria to measure if the book is OwnVoices or not is subject to my access to information and my

interpretation as well as the external identification of creators within minority groups. In some cases, the information of the authors and/or illustrators is not enough to decide if the book is an OwnVoices title. In addition, the criteria used in this report are relatively lenient. As long as one of the creators, either author or illustrator or photographers, match with the main character, then the book can be categorized as an OwnVoices book. If the criteria became stricter, the results would be very different. Instead of solely using media's reviews or the publisher's marketing, the measurement relies on my additional research and judgment of the information. For some books, the publishers may not promote them as OwnVoices but if they met the criteria, they would be categorized as OwnVoices books.

Secondly, the selected four publishers may not be able to represent the scope of all Canadian children's book publishers. There are several children's book publishers that I am not able to include such as Scholastic Canada, HarperCollins Canada, Kids Can Press because of insufficient time and resources. Also, I did not include adult book publishers who partially or occasionally publish for kids such as Arsenal Pulp, Second Story Press and ECW Press because I intended to focus on publishers who specialize in children's books.

Finally, the scope of the research is also limited. The results can only represent a change after the movement and are not sufficient to draw a direct causal relationship between the OwnVoices Movement and the increase. It will be worthwhile for future researchers to find out other possible factors that contribute to the change of the OwnVoices books, whether a cultural shift, increased readership or another factor.

Many professionals in the industry have discussed the lack of diversity in publishing and this report specifically provided some insight into the change of Canadian children's book publishers before and after the OwnVoices Movement. The results indicated that, overall, there are more OwnVoices books published by Canadian children's book publishers since the movement, especially by authors and/or illustrators who are from a minority ethnic group. As I write this report, the Black Lives Matter Movement gained a lot of attention from the media. Multiple Canadian publishers,



including Penguin Random House Canada<sup>150</sup>, Simon & Schuster Canada<sup>151</sup>, HarperCollins Canada<sup>152</sup>, Scholastic Canada<sup>153</sup>, Orca Book Publishers<sup>154</sup> and Greenwood Books<sup>155</sup>, all stated their support to Black communities and other racialized communities as well as anti-racist practices via their social media. I look forward to witnessing more changes in the publishing industry with this ongoing movement, particularly the possibility to allocate resources to authors from marginalized groups to tell their own stories.

---

<sup>150</sup> Penguin Random House Canada (@penguinrandomca), "The current protests against anti-Black racism and white supremacy.....We're now ready to share our plan." *Instagram*, June 10, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CBRFu0cgSFY/>

<sup>151</sup> Simon & Schuster Canada (@simonschusterca), "Conversation is important.....part of this change." *Instagram*, June 10, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CBQ35bvJ1GK/>

<sup>152</sup> HarperCollins Canada (@harpercollinsca), "We stand in solidarity with our black authors, coworkers, customers, and communities across North America.....and we'll be sharing more diverse reading lists and their creators in the coming weeks and beyond. #BlackLivesMatter #WeNeedDiverseBooks" *Instagram*, May 31, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CA3yCMIjioZ/>

<sup>153</sup> Scholastic Canada (@scholasticcca), "Repost • @ireadya Black stories matter, now and always. What is your favourite book by a Black author?" *Instagram*, June 9, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CBOHfgFAPh7/>

<sup>154</sup> Orca Book Publishers (@orcabook), "Orca Book Publishers supports diverse voices in the world around us.....You can find resources through our Instagram Story and the link in our bio." *Instagram*, June 1, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CA6YdDOIUZQ/>

<sup>155</sup> Greenwood Books (@groundwoodbooks), photo, *Instagram*, June 2, 2020, [https://www.instagram.com/p/CA8H1kNH\\_80/](https://www.instagram.com/p/CA8H1kNH_80/)

## References

- “#OwnVoices YA.” *Goodreads*. Accessed June 8, 2020, [https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/113168.\\_OwnVoices\\_YA](https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/113168._OwnVoices_YA)
- “2018 Diverse Book Collections Survey,” *School Library Journal Research*, accessed January 7, 2020, <https://www.slj.com/?page=slj-diverse-books-survey-2018>
- “A Song for China by Ange Zhang.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18409083>
- “A Child in Prison Camp by Shizuye Takashima.” *Penguin Random House Canada*. Accessed April 9, 2020. <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/176186/a-child-in-prison-camp-by-shizuye-takashima/9780887762413>
- Alter, Alexandra. “New Crop of Young Adult Novels Explores Race and Police Brutality,” *The New York Times*, March 19, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/19/books/review/black-lives-matter-teenage-books.html>.
- “Aluta by Adwoa Badoe.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=4372887>
- “Ashley Bryan Biography.” *Ashley Bryan Center*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://ashleybryancenter.org/ashley.html>
- Avgerinos, Paul. Chopra, Deepak. Sehgal, Kabir “HOME: Where Everyone Is Welcome, with Deepak Chopra, Kabir Sehgal and Paul Avgerinos,” *Parvati Magazine*, July 17, 2017, <https://parvatimagazine.com/2017/07/music-home-everyone-welcome-deepak-chopra-kabir-sehgal-paul-avgerinos/>.
- Balaban, Samantha. “A Sailor Meets A Fisherman In 1534: It’s An ‘Encounter,’ Not A Discovery.” *NPR.org*. Accessed March 12, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/2019/09/29/764733881/a-sailor-meets-a-fisherman-in-1534-its-an-encounter-not-a-discovery>.
- “Bertelsmann Acquires Full Ownership of Penguin Random House.” *penguinrandomhouse.com*, December 18, 2019. Accessed July 20, 2020, <https://liveglobalpenguinrandomhouse.pantheonsite.io/announcements/bertelsmann-acquires-full-ownership-of-penguin-random-house/>
- “Bill’s Story.” *Heart of Hockey: The Art of Bill Brownridge*. Accessed March 27, 2020. <https://heartofhockey.com/bills-story/>.

- “Bio.” *authorbrittneymorris.com*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://www.authorbrittneymorris.com/bio>
- “Bio & Contact Info.” *Alexandra-diaz.com*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://alexandra-diaz.com/biography-contact-info/>
- “Biography.” *Gyofujikawa*, February 10, 2016. <https://gyofujikawa.wordpress.com/2016/02/10/about-gyo-fujikawa/>
- “Biography.” *sharondraper.com*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://sharondraper.com/biography.asp>
- Blankier, Margot. “Re: Thesis\_SFU Placement” Message to Melody Sun. Email. August 4, 2020.
- Block, Irwin. “Former Westmount Mayor Dies at 87.” *The Montreal Gazette*, March 4, 2011. <http://archive.is/sJqGN#selection-2465.2-2465.14>
- Bogel, Anne. “20 Terrific Titles from #ownvoices and #diversebooks Authors.” *modernmrsdarcy.com*. Sept 27, 2017, <https://modernmrsdarcy.com/own-voices-diverse-books-list/>
- “Book Uncle and Me by Uma Krishnaswami.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=4372885>
- “Brittany Jackson.” *Simon & Schuster*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://www.simonandschuster.com/authors/Brittany-Jackson/161996630>
- “Broken Strings.” *Quill and Quire*, August 26, 2019. <https://quillandquire.com/review/broken-strings/>.
- “Caravan to the North by Jorge Argueta.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18487913>
- “CCBC Multicultural Statistics for 2015.” *CCBlogC*, February 2016. <https://ccbloc.blogspot.com/2016/02/ccbc-multicultural-statistics-for-2015.html>
- “CCBC 2017 Multicultural Statistics.” *CCBlogC*, February 22, 2018, <http://ccbloc.blogspot.com/2018/02/ccbc-2017-multicultural-statistics.html>.
- “CCBC 2017 Statistics on LGBTQ+ Literature for Children & Teens,” *CCBlogC*, April 6, 2018, <http://ccbloc.blogspot.com/2018/04/ccbc-2017-statistics-on-lgbtq.html>.

- Charles, Ron. “‘We Need Diverse Books,’ They Said. And Now a Group’s Dream Is Coming to Fruition.” *The Washington Post*, January 2017.  
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/we-need-diverse-books-they-said-and-now-a-groups-dream-is-coming-to-fruition/2017/01/03/af7f9368-d152-11e6-a783-cd3fa950f2fd\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/we-need-diverse-books-they-said-and-now-a-groups-dream-is-coming-to-fruition/2017/01/03/af7f9368-d152-11e6-a783-cd3fa950f2fd_story.html)
- “Cinderella by Chloe Perkins.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020,  
<https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=5337592>
- “Cutler Remembered as Pioneering Publisher, Mayor.” *CBC News*, March 4, 2011.  
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/cutler-remembered-as-pioneering-publisher-mayor-1.1061866>
- “Dancing Hands by Margarita Engle.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020,  
<https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=19100297>
- Dannielle, “Girl, It’s Your Time: Trans Artist Vivek Shraya On Finding Freedom and Wholeness,” *Autostraddle*, May 19, 2016, <https://www.autostraddle.com/girl-its-your-time-trans-artist-vivek-shraya-on-finding-freedom-and-wholeness-336300/>.
- “Diversity Bingo 2017.” *Goodreads*. Accessed June 8, 2020,  
[https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/107430.Diversity\\_Bingo\\_2017](https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/107430.Diversity_Bingo_2017)
- “Diversity Statistics FAQs,” *CCBC*. Accessed April 12, 2020,  
<https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/statsfaqs.asp>.
- “Diwali by Rina Singh.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020,  
<https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=4373687>
- Dresner, Stacey. “Conversation with Sue Macy,” *Jewish Ledger*, October 2, 2019,  
<http://www.jewishledger.com/2019/10/conversation-sue-macy/>.
- Duyvis, Corinne. “#ownvoices.” *CorinneDuyvis.net*. Accessed April 12, 2020.  
<http://www.corinneduyvis.net/ownvoices/>
- “Encounter.” *Kirkus Reviews*, October 1, 2019. Accessed March 12, 2020.  
<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/brittany-luby/encounter-luby/>.
- “Encounter by Brittany Luby.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020,  
<https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18549859>
- Forde, Kaelyn “Readers Embrace Marginalised ‘Own Voices’, but Book Industry Lags.” *Aljazeera*, May 30, 2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/readers-embrace-marginalised-voices-book-industry-lags-190529175624879.html>

Gloria Chao's website, "About me." <https://gloriachao.wordpress.com/>, accessed June 11, 2020.

Groundwood Books, "About." <https://groundwoodbooks.com/>, accessed April 4, 2020.

Groundwood Books (@groundwoodbooks), photo, *Instagram*, June 2, 2020, [https://www.instagram.com/p/CA8H1kNH\\_80/](https://www.instagram.com/p/CA8H1kNH_80/)

Harrison, Vashiti "About." [Vashtiharrison.com](http://Vashtiharrison.com), accessed June 11, 2020, <https://www.vashtiharrison.com/about>

HarperCollins (@harpercollins), "This Gem Just Hit #1 on the New York Times Best Seller List!", *Instagram*, March 8, 2017, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BRZSvXKgpDx/>

HarperCollins Canada (@harpercollinsca), "THIS IS THE. MOST. IMPORTANT. BOOK OF THE YEAR.", *Instagram*, Feb 27, 2017, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BRCWW8nAUIs/>

HarperCollins Canada (@harpercollinsca), "We stand in solidarity with our black authors, coworkers, customers, and communities across North America.....and we'll be sharing more diverse reading lists and their creators in the coming weeks and beyond. #BlackLivesMatter #WeNeedDiverseBooks" *Instagram*, May 31, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CA3yCMIjioZ/>

Hirsch, Afua. "Angie Thomas: the debut novelist who turned racism and police violence into a bestseller." *The Guardian*, March 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/mar/26/angie-thomas-the-debut-novelist-who-turned-racism-and-police-violence-into-a-bestseller>

"Ho'onani by Heather Gale." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18549855>

"How Canada's Book Publisher McClelland & Stewart Became German-Owned." *CBC Radio*, July 14 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-july-14-2017-1.4203051/how-canada-s-book-publisher-mcclelland-stewart-became-german-owned-author-1.4203067>

"Interview with Kathy Lowinger." *Just One More Book*, September 12, 2007. <http://justonemorebook.com/?s=kathy+lowinger>

"I'm Ok by Patti Kim." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=19234612>

- “Jairo Buitrago-Writer”, *Jairo Buitrago’s blog*, September 23, 2015. <http://jairo-buitrago.blogspot.com/2015/09/jairo-buitrago-escritor.html>.
- “Job Moves: October 5, 2011.” *Publishers Weekly*, October 2011. <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/people/article/48948-job-moves-october-5-2011.html>
- Kantor, Emma. “Sourcebooks Cancels Kosoko Jackson’s YA Debut,” *Publishers Weekly*. Accessed February 6, 2020, <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-book-news/article/79392-sourcebooks-cancels-kosoko-jackson-s-ya-debut.html>.
- “Kat Zhang.” *Wikipedia*, December 24, 2019. [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kat\\_Zhang&oldid=932297868](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kat_Zhang&oldid=932297868).
- “Kathy Kacer- About Me.” *KathyKacer.com*. Accessed April 5, 2020. <http://www.kathykacer.com/aboutme.html>.
- “Kung Fu Master by Marty Chan.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18261844>
- Lee & Low Books, “Where Is the Diversity in Publishing? The 2019 Diversity Baseline Survey Results,” *Lee & Low Blog*, January 28, 2020, <https://blog.leeandlow.com/2020/01/28/2019diversitybaselinesurvey/>.
- “Legends and Teachings of Xeel’s, the Creator by Dr. Ellen Rice White.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18261838>
- “Light a Candle / Tumaini Pasipo Na Tumaini by Godfrey Nkongolo.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18261811>.
- “Lion Island by Margarita Engle.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=5337466>
- Ly, David Vi-Ky. “Publishing Diversity with The Boy & The Bindi: A Case Study of the First Children’s Picture Book From Arsenal Pulp Press,” April 19, 2017, <http://summit.sfu.ca/item/17278>.
- MacDonald, Scott. “Kathy Lowinger to Retire from Tundra.” *Quill & Quire*, June 2009. <https://quillandquire.com/industry-news/2009/06/24/kathy-lowinger-to-leave-tundra/>
- Maclear, Kyo. “About.” <http://www.kyomaclear.com/about/>, accessed April 5, 2020.

- Marshall, Maria. "The Picture Book Buzz - Joint Interview w/ Heather Gale and Mika Song," *mariammarshall.com*. Accessed March 11, 2020.  
<https://www.mariamarshall.com/single-post/2019/11/18/The-Picture-Book-Buzz---Joint-Interview-with-Heather-Gale-and-Mika-Song>.
- McMahon, Tamsin. "May Cutler: 'She Was the Grand Dame'" *National Post*, March 18, 2011. <https://news.nationalpost.com/afterword/may-cutler-she-was-the-grand-dame>.
- "Media Kit." *We Need Diverse Books*. Accessed April 12, 2020.  
<https://diversebooks.org/media-kit/>
- "Meennunyakaa / Blueberry Patch by Jennifer Leason." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18261815>
- "MG/YA/NA #ownvoices." *Goodreads*. Accessed June 8, 2020,  
[https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/91987.MG\\_YA\\_NA\\_ownvoices](https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/91987.MG_YA_NA_ownvoices)
- Milliot, Jim. "Simon & Schuster To Acquire Distican," *Publishers Weekly*, November 25, 2002. Accessed March 13, 2020.  
<https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/print/20021125/41073-simon-amp-schuster-to-acquire-distican.html>.
- "More to the Story." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020,  
<https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=19234478>
- Moulds, Josephine. "Penguin and Random House to Merge." *The Guardian*, October 2012. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2012/oct/29/penguin-random-house-merger-bertelsmann>
- "Muslim Girls Rise by Saira Mir." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020,  
<https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=19100304>
- "My Friend by Elisa Amado." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020,  
<https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18409084>
- Myers, Walter Dean. "CHILDREN'S BOOKS; 'I Actually Thought We Would Revolutionize the Industry,'" *The New York Times*, November 9, 1986,  
<https://www.nytimes.com/1986/11/09/books/children-s-books-i-actually-thought-we-would-revolutionize-the-industry.html>.
- "Neekna and Chemai by Jeannette Armstrong." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020,  
<https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18261826>

- Nicolaou, Elena. "Is The Sun Is Also A Star Based On A Real-Life Love Story?" *Refinery29*, May 17, 2019. Accessed March 10, 2020.  
<https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2019/05/231960/the-sun-is-also-a-star-based-on-true-story-nicola-yoon-book-movie>.
- Orca Book Publishers, "About Us." <https://www.orcabook.com/About.aspx>, accessed April 16, 2020.
- Orca Book Publishers (@orcabook), "Orca Book Publishers supports diverse voices in the world around us.....You can find resources through our Instagram Story and the link in our bio." *Instagram*, June 1, 2020,  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CA6YdDOIUZQ/>
- O'Reilly, Gillian. "Tundra Books Turns 40!", *Canadian Children's Book News*, Spring 2007, [https://bookcentre.ca/files/Tundra\\_40th\\_Anniversary.pdf](https://bookcentre.ca/files/Tundra_40th_Anniversary.pdf)
- Owen, Laura. "The Penguin-Random House Merger and the Biggest Publisher on Earth Are Here." *The Atlantic*, July 2013.  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2013/07/penguin-random-house-merger-complete/313748/>
- "Own Voices Books." *Goodreads*. Accessed June 8, 2020,  
<https://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/own-voices>
- "Parker Looks Up by Parker Curry." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020,  
<https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=19100262>
- Penguin Random House Canada (@penguinrandomca), "The current protests against anti-Black racism and white supremacy..... We're now ready to share our plan." *Instagram*, June 10, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CBRFu0cgSFY/>
- "Picking Up the Pieces by Carey Newman." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020,  
<https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18261835>
- "Puffin Canada," *Penguin Random House Canada*. Accessed April 24, 2020,  
<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/imprints/NV/puffin-canada>.
- "Red Land, Yellow River by Ange Zhang." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020,  
<https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18409082>
- Reynolds, Jason, "About." <https://www.jasonwritesbooks.com/about>, accessed June 11, 2020.



- Robertson, Becky. "Penguin Random House Canada Merges Two Young Adult Imprints under Penguin Teen Banner." *Quill & Quire*, October 2016.  
<https://quillandquire.com/omni/penguin-random-house-canada-merges-two-young-adult-imprints-under-penguin-teen-banner/>
- Rosenfield, Kat. "What Is #OwnVoices Doing To Our Books?" *Refinery29*. Accessed June 22, 2019, <https://www.refinery29.com/en-ca/2019/04/229355/own-voices-movement-ya-literature-impact>.
- Ruggieri, Melissa. "Atlanta's Kabir Sehgal Adds Another Grammy to His List of Achievements." *AJC*, March 2, 2017. Accessed March 31, 2020, <https://www.ajc.com/blog/music/atlanta-kabir-sehgal-adds-another-grammy-his-list-achievements/C7IN13FIWVaYpdMVP4P8NL/>.
- Saxon, Antonia. "Q & A with Kyo Maclear and Julie Morstad." *Publishers Weekly*, Sept 26, 2019, <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-authors/article/81285-q-a-with-kyo-maclear-and-julie-morstad.html>
- Scholastic Canada (@scholasticca), "Repost • @ireadya Black stories matter, now and always. What is your favourite book by a Black author?" *Instagram*, June 9, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CBOHfgFAPh7/>
- Senzai, Naheed Hasnat, "About." <http://www.nhsenzai.com/about/>, accessed June 11, 2020.
- Shraya, Vivek. "The Boy & the Bindi." *Arsenal Pulp Press*, October 2016.
- Simon & Schuster Canada (@simonschusterca), "Conversation is important.....part of this change." *Instagram*, June 10, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CBQ35bvJ1GK/>
- "Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda," *Becky Albertalli(blog)*. Accessed April 19, 2020, <https://beckyalbertalli.com/simon-vs-the-homo-sapiens-agenda>.
- "Somos Como Las Nubes / We Are Like the Clouds by Jorge Argueta." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=4372883>
- "Stepping Stones by Margriet Ruurs." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=5471648>
- "Sulwe by Lupita Nyong'o." *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=19100258>

- “The Boy& the Bindi.” *Kirkus Reviews*. Accessed April 13, 2020, <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/vivek-shraya/the-boy-the-bindi/?page=85>.
- “The Crossroads by Alexandra Diaz.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=19234480>
- “The Distance between Me and the Cherry Tree by Paola Peretti.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=19234498>
- “The Distance Between Us by Reyna Grande.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=5337472>
- “The Fault in Our Stars.” *Kirkus Reviews*, January 2012. <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/john-green/fault-in-our-stars/>
- “The Fault In Our Stars’ Book Sales Lift Bertelsmann Results,” *The Hollywood Reporter*. Accessed April 19, 2020, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/fault-stars-book-sales-lift-729094>.
- “The Hate U Give Book Review.” *Publishers Weekly*. Accessed April 2020, <https://www.publishersweekly.com/9780062498533>
- “The Hate U Give.” *Rotten Tomatoes*. Accessed April 26, 2020, [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the\\_hate\\_u\\_give](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_hate_u_give).
- “The Matatu by Eric Walters.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=4373656>
- “The Phone Booth in Mr. Hirota’s Garden by Heather Smith.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=18261808>
- “Tundra Books.” *Penguin Random House Canada*. Accessed April 8, 2020. <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/imprints/TU/tundra-books>.
- “We Sang You Home by Richard Van Camp.” *BNCcatalist*, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://bnccatalist.ca/ViewTitle.aspx?id=4373653>
- Whaley, Kayla. “#OwnVoices: Why We Need Diverse Authors in Children’s Literature.” *Brightly*. Accessed April 12, 2020. <https://www.readbrightly.com/why-we-need-diverse-authors-in-kids-ya-lit/>

Williams, Leigh Anne. "Random House of Canada Takes Over McClelland & Stewart; Canadian Pubs Unhappy." *Publishers Weekly*, Jan 10, 2012.  
<https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/international/international-book-news/article/50140-random-house-of-canada-takes-over-mcclelland-stewart-canadian-pubs-unhappy.html>

Williams, Leigh Anne. "Simon & Schuster to Begin Publishing in Canada." *Publishers Weekly*, May 30, 2013. Accessed April 5, 2020.  
<https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/publisher-news/article/57520-simon-schuster-to-begin-publishing-in-canada.html>.

Woodson, Jacqueline. "Who Can Tell My Story," *The Horn Book*, January 3, 1998,  
<https://www.hbook.com?detailStory=who-can-tell-my-story>.

"Writing, Vivek Shraya," accessed April 19, 2020,  
<https://vivekshraya.com/projects/writing/>.