

Calgary Freedom to Read Week Committee is the Recipient of the 2012 Award for the Advancement of Intellectual Freedom in Canada

(2 May 2012, Ottawa) - The Canadian Library Association is pleased to announce that the **Calgary Freedom to Read Week Committee** has been chosen as winner of the 2012 Award for the Advancement of Intellectual Freedom in Canada for its continuous and varied efforts over 18 years to promote and defend intellectual freedom issues in the City of Calgary, Alberta.

The Calgary Freedom to Read Week Committee, an ad hoc partnership that has consistently included citizens, school board representatives, and public library staff members, came together in 1994 when a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta (MLA) demanded that John Steinbeck's classic novel *Of Mice and Men* be removed from schools in Alberta, a book that the MLA admitted he had not read. The Committee made a stand against the removal of the book, and has remained active in the pursuit of intellectual freedom in the community ever since.

By leveraging the diverse backgrounds of its members – writers, librarians, educators, booksellers, civil libertarians, literacy activists, artists, and other interested groups and individuals – and by working with community leaders, the Committee has been able to reach wide audiences with its advocacy efforts. Its enduring success is all the more remarkable considering it is an ad hoc collaboration of committed individuals and groups.

Highlights of the Committee's activities over many years include:

- An annual application to City Council to formally declare the nationally recognized Freedom to Read Week.
- The annual formal presentation of a banned or challenged book to City Council to launch Freedom to Read Week.
- Organization and adjudication, with Calgary Public Library, of the annual "Who Chooses What You Read?" contest to engage youth in grades 7-9.
- Organization, selection, and presentation of the annual Freedom of Expression Award to a Calgarian who has made an outstanding contribution in support of freedom of expression, with previous recipients including, among others, educator and library advocate Lorne MacRae; actor and director Michael Dobbin; playwright and puppeteer Ronnie Burkett; alderman and library board member Suzanne Higgins; lawyer, former MLA, and founding president of the Calgary Civil Liberties Association Gary Dickson; journalist, columnist, and author Catherine Ford; Tibetan human rights activist, engineer, and educator Nima Dorjee; lawyer, civil libertarian, and president of the Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership Janet Keeping; staff and volunteers

of the Calgary Public Library; and City of Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi (the full list can be found at http://www.writtenword.org/calgary_freedom/).

- Regular communication of intellectual freedom issues with the local press.
- Collaboration with community groups, educational institutions, booksellers, and the Calgary Public Library to organize and promote of Freedom to Read Week events.
- Continuous vigilance against censorship and threats to intellectual freedom.

Through the use of innovative and high-impact initiatives that attempt to reach all City of Calgary residents, the Calgary Freedom to Read Week Committee has courageously demonstrated a proactive and ongoing commitment to the development of community awareness around intellectual freedom issues.

The Canadian Library Association's Award for the Advancement of Intellectual Freedom in Canada recognizes and honours outstanding contributions to intellectual freedom in Canada by individuals or groups. Preference is given to librarians and library institutions. However, like-minded individuals, such as teachers or authors or groups such as schools or publishers, are also eligible. The award is given from time-to-time, not necessarily on an annual basis, and there may be more than one recipient in any one year. The previous recipients of this prestigious award may be viewed at:

http://www.cla.ca/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Award_for_the_Advancement_of_Intellectual_Freedom_in_Canada&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=2442

The award will be presented to a representative of the **Calgary Freedom to Read Week Committee** at the CLA Awards Ceremony on 2 June during the closing ceremonies of the CLA Conference & Trade Show in Ottawa.

The Canadian Library Association / Association canadienne des bibliothèques is Canada's largest national and broad-based library association, representing the interests of public, academic, school and special libraries, professional librarians and library workers, and all those concerned about enhancing the quality of life of Canadians through information and literacy.

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