

Nakusp author wins BC Arts Council scholarship

by Art Joyce

Nakusp author Galadriel Watson has recently won a BC Arts Council scholarship that will help her attain her Master's degree in Creative Writing at UBC. Watson is the author of 22 children's books and many magazine articles, including one in *Kootenay Mountain Culture* magazine about the 2015 Nakusp Medieval Days. Watson also holds a Bachelor of Arts with Distinction in Writing from the University of Victoria and completed Humber College's Creative Writing by Correspondence program. It's more of a challenge than ever to earn a living as a writer, with the Writer's Union of Canada estimating that writers' incomes have declined by almost a quarter since 2000, partly due to digital copyright 'modernization' in the internet environment. With this in mind, I interviewed Watson for the *Valley Voice* about her career plans.

Congratulations on your

scholarship. First of all, given that you already have other degrees, what is your goal with the Master's degree? How do you see it helping your career as a writer?

One of my main goals is to publish fiction with a traditional publishing house. Although I've come close, and have a top literary agent currently representing a young adult novel I wrote, I felt I could make my work even stronger. So I'm taking my Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing through the optional-residency program at the University of British Columbia—this means all courses are done online, and you can choose or not to attend a summer program. The teachers are all established writers, and my classmates already have impressive resumés. Through all their feedback, and learning what works and what doesn't by critiquing others' written pieces, I'm taking my own writing to the next level. Plus

you have to study at least three genres—you can't just focus on fiction, for example—which broadens your skills and expands your interests. I've renewed my love of creative non-fiction, learned that translation (French to English) is fascinating, like solving a puzzle, and am diving into comics, which I find very immediately satisfying. Also, getting a Master's degree qualifies me to teach in colleges or universities if I choose.

Are you already at work on a thesis, and if so, can you describe the theme in terms a general audience could understand?

My thesis is an adult novel, a modern-day psychological thriller that draws clues from the past. In it, a teenage girl's aunt goes missing, and she and her cousin must unravel where her aunt is and what will happen next. It was sparked by the idea: What if you're not the chosen one? What if you're not the sibling that excels in her career, or is able to achieve the life that

he wants, or is able to be with the people she loves? What if you're the average one; the one who's left behind? Through the novel, I explore these questions by examining how different characters react, from low self-esteem to addiction. On the flip side, I also explore what it's like being the chosen one, and how it comes with its own challenges and downsides.

I see you are a children's writer with 22 books already to your credit and a Young Adult novel on the way. Do you see yourself continuing this career path or are you interested in writing other genres?

Hopefully the Young Adult novel is on the way—I don't

have a publisher for it yet. In addition to fiction for adults, in the future I'd love to do translation and a graphic novel. I'm currently talking with a publisher about writing another children's non-fiction book. And I enjoy writing for magazines, especially about the visual and performing arts.

Given the limited financial returns for working as a writer, often it comes down to passion. What drives your passion for writing?

It's a shame that, unless you're in the upper echelon of success, it's hard to make decent money in any form of the arts. Luckily, with writing you can diversify. I've been earning my

living from writing in some way or another for decades now: writing books and magazine articles, doing corporate work. But the creative side is still something I feel compelled to do. Once I'm finished writing one project, another idea starts germinating. Before I know it, it's complex and growing and I'm in the middle of it and feel compelled to finish it. Also, I don't talk a lot in person, so writing is the way I express myself. Even if you're not doing it for money you have to pursue your passion or life feels frustrating and unfulfilled, like you're not living up to your potential. At least that's how it is for me.

NAKUSP & ARROW LAKES TRAILS MASTER PLAN

HOW
DO YOU
TRAIL?



Galadriel Watson of Nakusp has won a \$5,000 scholarship from the BC Arts Council to pursue her Master's degree in Creative Writing at UBC.