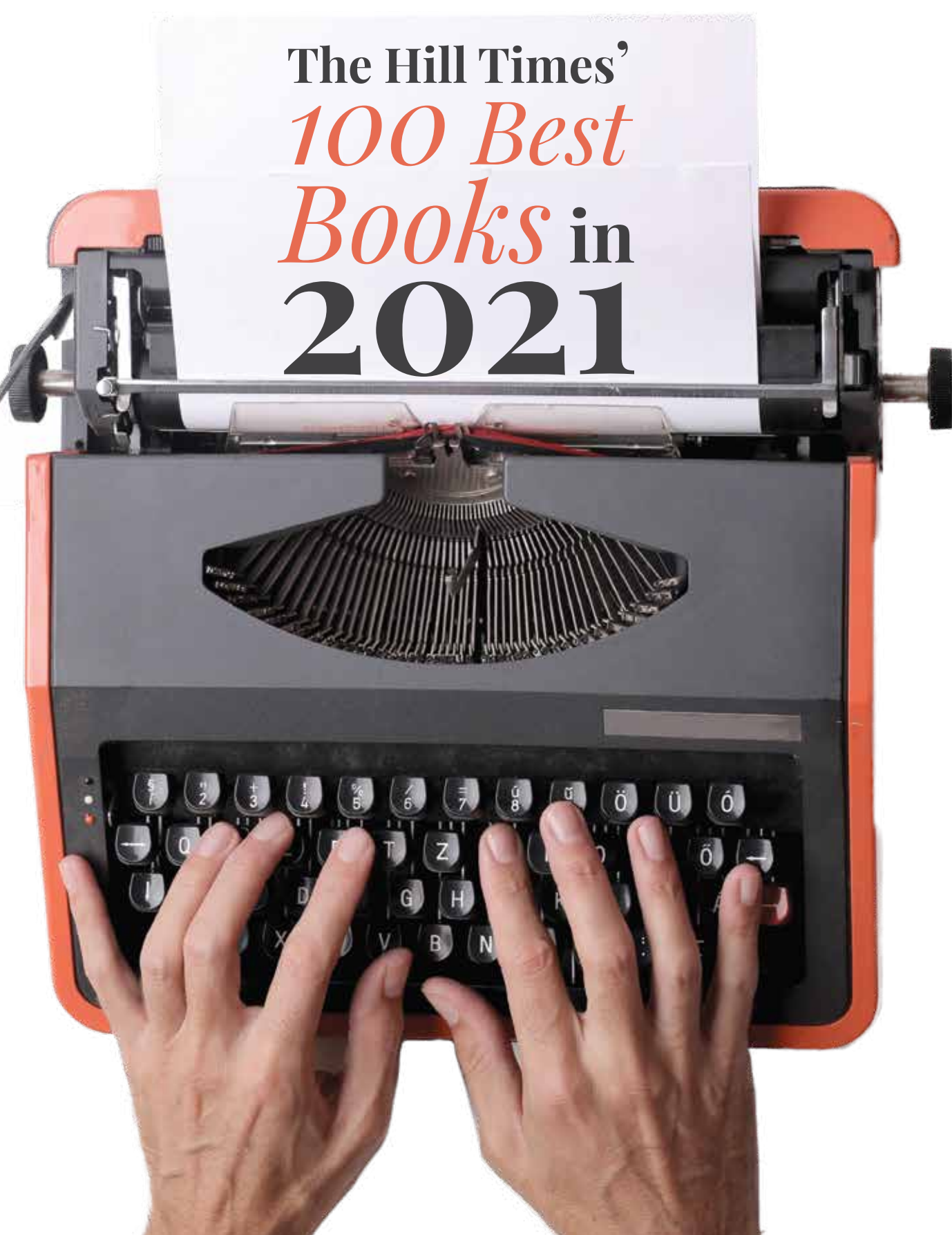


The Hill Times

BEST BOOKS 2021

Michael Wernick talks about his handy and dandy book, *Governing Canada: A Guide to the Tradecraft of Politics*

Alex Marland offer his top picks *in 2021*



Best Books

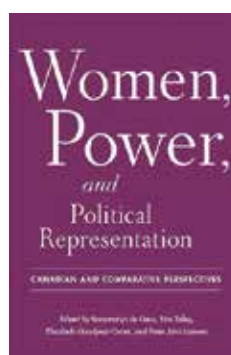
Some interesting reads about Canadian politics in 2021

Here's a sample published by three of Canada's largest academic publishers: University of British Columbia Press, University of Toronto Press, and McGill-Queen's University Press.

BY ALEX MARLAND

Political scientists authored many interesting books about Canadian politics in 2021. Here's a sample published by three of Canada's largest academic publishers: University of British Columbia Press (UBC Press), University of Toronto Press (UTP), and McGill-Queen's University Press (MQUP). I am going to begin and conclude this synthesis with women and Canadian political books, for reasons that I will explain later.

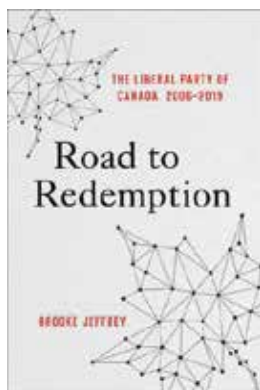
Women, Power, and Political Representation: Canadian and Comparative Perspectives (UTP) looks at challenges that women face in the political arena, ranging from cabinet to elections to gender quotas in legislatures. An intriguing chapter is "Black Women's Hair Matters," by Nadia Brown. The book is edited by Roosmarijn de Geus, Erin Tolley, Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant and Peter Loewen.



Women, Power and Political Representation: Canadian and Comparative Perspectives, by Roosmarijn de Geus, Erin Tolley, Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant and Peter Loewen, University of Toronto Press, 214 pp., \$14.98.

I am quite interested in reading *A Liberal-Labour Lady: The Times and Life of Mary Ellen Spear Smith* (UBC Press) by Veronica Strong-Boag. When the pandemic forced professors to teach remotely, I spruced up my lecture materials for a Canadian executive-level government course at Memorial University by researching news stories from the early 20th century about Smith. She was British Columbia's first woman MLA, but really stands out for being the first woman to be a cabinet minister in Canada

and in fact the entire Commonwealth. *A Liberal-Labour Lady* promises to introduce this important yet under-appreciated Canadian political figure to a broader audience.



Road to Redemption: The Liberal Party of Canada, 2006-2019, by Brooke Jeffrey, University of Toronto Press, 336 pp., \$39.95.

Brooke Jeffrey offers up another inside account of Liberal Party politics in her latest book *Road to Redemption: The Liberal Party of Canada, 2006-2019* (UTP). It is a follow-up, of sorts, to her earlier book that documented Liberal Party infighting during the Chrétien-Martin era. This time she relies a bit more on media reports to provide a chronology of events under the leadership of Stéphane Dion, Michael Ignatieff, Bob Rae, and Justin Trudeau.

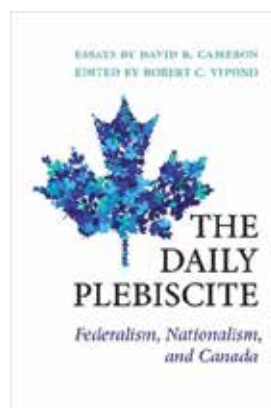
Another book that caught my eye is *Behind Closed Doors: The Law and Politics of Cabinet Secrecy* (UBC Press), by Yan Campagnolo. Naturally, those who follow Canadian politics are bound to be interested in what goes on in cabinet meetings. Yet anyone who studies politics knows that it is exceptionally difficult to get information about those forums because of the legalities of cabinet confidentiality. *Behind Closed Doors* adds to limited public knowledge about executive decision-making by examining the overzealous secrecy in Canadian government, and makes a case for more transparency.

An intriguing book about Indigenous rights and treaty making is *Beyond Rights: The Nisga'a Final Agreement and the Challenges of Modern Treaty Relationships* (UBC Press), by Carole Blackburn. This is a case study of the Nisga'a treaty, which was an agreement between the Nisga'a people, the Government of British Columbia, and the federal government that took effect in 2000. *Beyond Rights* documents the legal and political path that the Nisga'a nation forged to achieve this landmark agreement.

It used to be said that only in Canada will you find a book about federalism at an airport. Perhaps one such tome destined for weary travellers is *The Daily Plebiscite: Federalism, Nationalism, and Canada* (UTP), by David Cameron and edited by Robert

Vipon. The book weaves together Cameron's observations and musings about Canadian federalism and constitutional negotiations from the latter 20th century. *The Daily Plebiscite* will interest those looking for a historical journey through a period of heated national unity discussions.

Another new book about federalism is *Open Federalism Revisited: Regional and Federal Dynamics in the Harper Era* (UTP), edited by James Farney and Julie Simmons. The collection features chapters by political scientists from across Canada about regional differences and institutional changes during the Harper years. I'm looking forward to the chapter titled "Stephen Harper's PMO Style: Partisan Managerialism," by Jonathan Craft and Anna Esselment.

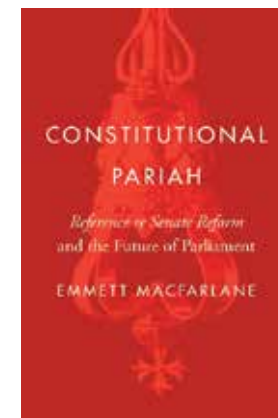


The Daily Plebiscite: Federalism, Nationalism, and Canada, by David R. Cameron and edited by Robert C. Vipond, University of Toronto Press, 326 pp., \$29.95.

Back when I was an undergraduate student at Carleton University in the 1990s, I took a course in Canadian federalism that included some heavy conversation about the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations, which was constituted in the late 1930s. I am struck that this body's work is the subject of *The Rowell-Sirois Commission and the Remaking of Canadian Federalism* (UBC Press), by Robert Wardhaugh and Barry Ferguson. It deals with the origins of fiscal federalism and how the provinces tapped into the federal government's spending power.

On the topic of royal commissions, an intriguing work is *The Fate of Canada: F. R. Scott's Journal of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, 1963-1971* (MQUP), edited by Graham Fraser. The Bi and Bi Commission conducted a pivotal inquiry into the presence of the French language and culture in Canadian society, and laid the groundwork for the federal government becoming officially bilingual. What is so curious about *The Fate of Canada* is that it is shaped around extracts of the journal of poet F.R. Scott who took notes about the commission's work.

A must-read for anyone interested in the Senate is *Constitutional Pariah: Reference re Senate Re-*

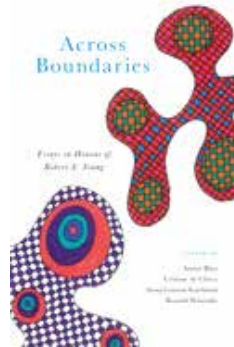


Constitutional Pariah: Reference re Senate Reform and the Future of Parliament, by Emmett Macfarlane, UBC Press, 198 pp., \$27.95.

form and the Future of Parliament (UBC Press), by Emmett Macfarlane. Grounded in the Supreme Court's reference decision in 2014 about electing Senators and setting term limits, *Constitutional*

Pariah branches into a detailed examination of the role of the Senate and the fallout of that landmark decision.

A special word about *Keeping Canada Running: Infrastructure and the Future of Governance in a Pandemic World* (MQUP), by Bruce Doern, Christopher Stoney, and Robert Hilton. The book looks at Canadian infrastructure projects, the pandemic "build back better" mantra of the federal government and the future of infrastructure in an era of climate change. Sadly, author and Carleton University professor Chris Stoney passed away this month, leaving behind a large circle of students, colleagues, and friends. *Keeping Canada Running* will be part of his scholarly legacy.



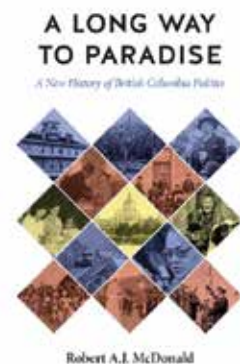
Across Boundaries: Essays in Honour of Robert A. Young, edited by André Blais, Cristine de Clercy, Anna Lennox Esselment and Ronald Wintrobe, McGill-Queen's University Press, 232 pp., \$34.95.

In academia, scholars sometimes honour a distinguished colleague by publishing a collection of essays in their friend's honour. This is known as a Festschrift. *Across Boundaries: Essays in Honour of Robert A. Young* (MQUP) edited by André Blais, Cristine de Clercy, Anna Lennox Esselment, and Ronald Wintrobe, pays homage to the late University of Western Ontario professor. *Across Boundaries* brings together scholars looking at how succes-

sion happens, how governments engage with each other, and how politics intersect with the economy. Among the contributors is former Liberal leader and minister Stéphane Dion.

Those interested in public administration will want to consider *Take a Number: How Citizens' Encounters with Government Shape Political Engagement* (MQUP) by Elisabeth Gidengil. The author is renowned for her meticulous assessment of Canadian elections data.

Big City Elections in Canada (UTP) draws on public opinion data from elections in eight municipalities to illuminate voting behaviour in Canadian municipal elections. Editors Jack Lucas and Michael McGregor have assembled a book wherein each co-authored chapter is a case study of a recent municipal contest. Likewise, *Electing a Mega-Mayor: Toronto 2014*, by McGregor, Aaron Moore, and Laura Stephenson uses survey data to understand municipal voters.



A Long Way to Paradise: A New History of British Columbia Politics, by Robert A.J. McDonald, UBC Press, 428 pp., \$39.95.

Some new books about regional politics in Canada are worthy of mention. *A Long Way to Paradise: A New History of British Columbia Politics* by Robert McDonald explores the sometimes wacky nature of BC politics from 1871-1972. *Neoliberal Parliamentarism: The Decline of Parliament at the Ontario Legislature*, by Tom McDowell argues that since the 1980s democracy has weakened in Ontario due to neoliberal rules and approaches.

On a final note, I had hoped to prepare a summary of academic books that would feature an equal balance of men and women authors. I was struck that men appear to have published books disproportionately more in 2021. If that impression is right, it might be further evidence of women experiencing more challenges than their male counterparts during the pandemic. Academic presses might want to consider this when encouraging Canadian scholars to submit book proposals.

Alex Marland is a professor at Memorial University of Newfoundland and author of a number of books, including the award-winning, *Whipped: Party Discipline in Canada*.

The Hill Times

The Hill Times' 100 Best Books in 2021

1. *Across Boundaries: Essays in Honour of Robert A. Young*, edited by André Blais, Cristine de Clercy, Anna Lennox Esselment and Ronald Winrobe, McGill-Queen's University Press, 232 pp., \$34.95.

2. *A Liberal-Labour Lady: The Times and Life of Mary Ellen Spear Smith*, by Veronica Strong-Boag, UBC Press, 288 pp., \$89.95.

3. *A Long Way to Paradise: A New History of British Columbia Politics*, by Robert A.J. McDonald, UBC Press, 428 pp., \$39.95.

4. *A Matter of Equality: The Life's Work of a Senator*, by Don Oliver, Nimbus Publishing, 215 pp., \$29.95.

5. *An Embarrassment of Critch's*, by Mark Critch, Viking, Penguin Random House Canada, 224 pp., \$32.95.

6. *Assisted Suicide in Canada: Moral, Legal, and Policy Considerations*, by Travis Dumsday, UBC Press, 208 pp., \$75.

7. *Behind Closed Doors: The Law and Politics of Cabinet Secrecy*, by Yan Campagnolo, UBC Press, 352 pp., \$89.95.

8. *Be Kind, Be Calm, Be Safe*, by Dr. Bonnie Henry and Lynn Henry, Allen Lane Canada, 216 pp., \$19.95.

9. *Beyond Rights: The Nisga'a Final Agreement and the Challenges of Modern Treaty Relationships*, by Carole Blackburn, UBC Press, 202 pp., \$89.95.

10. *Big City Elections in Canada*, edited by Jack Lucas and R. Michael McGregor, University of Toronto Press, 280 pp., \$32.95.

11. *Breaking Barriers, Shaping Worlds: Canadian Women and the Search for Global Order*, edited by Jill Campbell-Miller, Greg Donaghy, and Stacey Barker, UBC Press, 240 pp., \$89.95.

12. *Breaking Through: Understanding Sovereignty and Security in the Circumpolar Arctic*, by Wilfrid Greaves and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, University of Toronto Press, 278 pp., \$16.48.

13. *Call Me Indian*, by Fred Sasakamoose, Penguin Random House Viking Canada, 288 pp., \$32.

14. *Canada 1919: A Nation Shaped by War*, edited by Tim Cook and J.L. Granatstein, UBC Press, 338 pp., \$32.95.

15. *Canada as Statebuilder? Development and Reconstruction Efforts in Afghanistan*, by Benjamin Zyla and Laura Grant, McGill-Queen's University Press, 352 pp., \$39.95.

16. *Canada in NATO, 1949-2019*, by Joseph T. Jockel and Joel J. Sokolasky, McGill-Queen's University Press, 328 pp., \$42.95.

17. *Canada to Ireland: Poetry, Politics, and the Shaping of Canadian Nationalism, 1788-1900*, by Michele Holmgren, McGill-Queen's University Press, 258 pp., \$39.95.

18. *Canada's Holy Grail: Lord Stanley's Political Motivation to Donate the Stanley Cup*, by Jordan B. Goldstein, University of Toronto Press, 342 pp., \$24.71.

19. *Can You Hear Me Now: How I Found My Voice and Learned to Live with Passion and Purpose*, by Celina Caesar-Chavannes, Penguin Random House Canada, 280 pp., \$29.95.

20. *China Unbound: A New World Disorder*, by Joanna Chiu, House of Anansi Press, 304 pp., \$24.99.

21. *Coloniality and Racial (In)Justice in the University: Counting for Nothing?* edited by Sunera Thobani, University of Toronto Press, 422 pp., \$26.95.

22. *Colour Matters: Essays on the Experiences, Education and Pursuits of Black Youth*, by Carl E. James, University of Toronto Press, 390 pp., \$39.95.

23. *Constant Struggle: Histories of Canadian Democratization*, edited by Julien Mauduit and Jennifer Tunnicliffe, McGill-Queen's University Press, 504 pp., \$39.95.

24. *Constitutional Pariah: Reference re Senate Reform and the Future of Parliament*, by Emmett Macfarlane, UBC Press, 198 pp., \$27.95.

25. *Constitutional Politics in Multinational Democracies*, edited by André Lecours, Nikola Brassard-Dion, and Guy Laforest, McGill-Queen's University Press, 240 pp., \$37.95.

26. *Damaged: Childhood Trauma, Adult Illness and the Need for a Health Care Revolution*, by Robert Maunder and Jonathan Hunter, University of Toronto Press, 232 pp., \$29.95.

27. *Dangerous Opportunities: The Future of Financial Institutions, Housing Policy and Governance*, edited by Stephanie Ben-Ishai, University of Toronto Press, 208 pp., \$34.95.

28. *Did You See Us? Reunion, Remembrance, and Reclamation at an Urban Indian Residential School*, by survivors of the Assiniboia Indian Residential School, edited by Andrew Woolford, University of Manitoba Press, \$24.95.

29. *Disorientation: Being Black in the World*, by Ian Williams, Penguin Random House Canada, 216 pp., \$25.

30. *Electing a Mega-Mayor: Toronto 2014*, by Michael McGregor, Aaron A. Moore, and Laura B. Stephenson, University of Toronto Press, 208 pp., \$24.71.

31. *Federalism in Canada: Contested Concepts and Uneasy Balances*, by Thomas O. Hueglin, University of Toronto Press, 384 pp., \$54.95.

32. *Fiscal Federalism in Multinational States: Autonomy, Equality, and Diversity*, edited by François Boucher and Alain Noël, McGill-Queen's University Press, 304 pp., \$37.95.

33. *Flora! A Woman in a Man's World*, by Flora MacDonald and Geoffrey Stevens, McGill-Queen's University Press, 328 pp., \$34.95.

34. *Global Development and Human Rights: Sustainable Development Goals and Beyond*, by Paul Nelson, University of Toronto Press, 256 pp., \$27.95.

35. *Governing Canada: A Guide to the Tradecraft of Politics*, by Michael Wernick, UBC Press, On Point Press, 211 pp., \$21.95.

36. *Health and Healthcare in Northern Canada*, edited by Rebecca Schiff and Helle Moller, University of Toronto Press, 450 pp., \$49.95.

37. *Indian in the Cabinet: Speaking Truth to Power*, by Jody Wilson-Raybould, Harper Collins Canada, 352 pp., \$34.99.

38. *Inequality in Canada: The History and Politics of an Idea*, by Eric W. Sager, McGill-Queen's University Press, 488 pp., \$37.95.

39. *Innovation in Real Places: Strategies for Prosperity in an Unforgiving World*, by Dan Breznitz, Oxford University Press, 288 pp., \$29.95.

40. *Joseph Roberts Smallwood: Masthead Newfoundland 1900-1949*, by Melvin Baker and Peter Neary, McGill-Queen's University Press, 248 pp., \$34.95.

41. *Keeping Canada Running: Infrastructure and the Future of Governance in a Pandemic World*, by G. Bruce Doern, Christopher Stoney, and Robert Hilton, McGill-Queen's University Press, 442 pp., \$39.95.

42. *Life in the City of Dirty Water: A Memoir of Healing*, by Clayton Thomas-Müller, Allen Lane, 240 pp., \$22.95.

43. *Making and Breaking Settler Space: Five Centuries of Colonization in North America*, by Adam J. Barker, UBC Press, 312 pp., \$89.95.

44. *Mass Capture: Chinese Head Tax and the Making of Non-Citizens*, by Lily Cho, McGill-Queen's University Press, 272 pp., \$39.95.

45. *My Stories, My Times: Volume 2*, Random House Canada, by Jean Chrétien, 288 pp., \$34.95.

46. *Muskrat Falls: How a Mega Dam Became a Predatory Formation*, edited by Lisa Moore and Stephen Crocker, Memorial University Press, 300 pp., \$27.95.

47. *Neglected No More: The Urgent Need to Improve the Lives of Canada's Elders in the Wake of the Pandemic*, by André Picard, Penguin Random House Canada, 208 pp., \$19.95.

48. *NISHGA*, by Jordan Abel, McClelland & Stewart, 288 pp., \$32.95.

49. *Nothing Less Than Great: Reforming Canada's Universities*, by Harvey Weingarten, University of Toronto Press, 232 pp., \$26.95.

50. *Off The Record*, by Peter Mansbridge, Simon & Schuster, 368 pp., \$29.99.

51. *On Borrowed Time: North America's Next Big Quake*, by Gregor Craigie, Goose Lane, 248 pp., \$22.95.

52. *Open Federalism Revisited: Regional and Federal Dynamics in the Harper Era*, by James Farney and Julie M. Simmons, University of Toronto Press, 358 pp., \$32.21.

53. *On Property*, by Rinaldo Walcott, Biblioasis, 112 pp., \$14.95.

54. *Out of the Sun: On Race and Storytelling*, by Esi Edugyan, House of Anansi Press Inc., 248 pp., \$32.99.

55. *Nothing But the Truth: A Memoir*, by Marie Henein, Signal, Penguin Random House Canada, 288 pp., \$32.95.

56. *Pandemic Societies*, edited by Jean-Louis Denis, Catherine Régis and Daniel M. Weinstock, with Clara Champagne, McGill-Queen's University Press, 356 pp., \$34.95.

57. *Pandemic Spotlight: Canadian Doctors at the Front of the COVID-19 Fight*, by Ian Hanomansing, Douglas & McIntyre, 256 pp., \$22.95.

58. *Peyakow: Reclaiming Cree Dignity, A Memoir*, by Darrel J. McLeod, Douglas & McIntyre, \$22.95.

59. *Permanent Astonishment: A Memoir*, by Tomson Highway, Doubleday Canada, Penguin Random House Canada, 344 pp., \$32.95.

60. *Reconciling Truths: Reimagining Public Inquiries in Canada*, by Kim Stanton, UBC Press, 268 pp., \$89.95.

61. *Return: Why We Go Back to Where We Come From*, by Kamal Al-Solaylee, HarperCollins Canada, 320 pp., \$32.99.

62. *Rez Rules: My Indictment of Canada's and America's Systemic Racism Against Indigenous Peoples*, by Chief Clarence Louie, McClelland & Stewart, Penguin Random House Canada, 352 pp., \$34.95.

63. *Road to Redemption: The Liberal Party of Canada, 2006-2019*, by Brooke Jeffrey, University of Toronto Press, 336 pp., \$39.95.

64. *Royally Wronged: The Royal Society of Canada and Indigenous Peoples*, edited by Constance Backhouse, Cynthia E. Milton, Margaret Kovach and Adele Perry, McGill-Queen's University Press, 336 pp., \$39.95.

65. *Saga Boy: My Life of Blackness and Becoming*, by Antonio Michael Downing, Viking, Penguin Random House Canada, 344 pp., \$26.95.

66. *Send Them Here: Religion, Politics, and Refugee Resettlement in North America*, by Geoffrey Cameron, McGill-Queen's University Press, 256 pp., \$37.95.

67. *Shaping the Futures of Work: Proactive Governance and Millennials*, by Nilanjan Raghunath, McGill-Queen's University Press, 256 pp., \$95.

68. *Sharing the Land, Sharing a Future: The Legacy of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, edited by Katherine A.H. Graham and David Newhouse, University of Manitoba Press, \$31.95.

69. *Sir Mackenzie Bowell: A Canadian Prime Minister Forgotten by History*, Barry K. Wilson, Loose Cannon Press, 364 pp., \$21.28.

70. *Slut-Shaming, Whorephobia, and the Unfinished Sexual Revolution*, by Meredith Ralston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 232 pp., \$34.95.

71. *Social Service, Private Gain: The Political Economy of Social Impact Bonds*, edited by Jesse Hajer and John Loxley, University of Toronto Press, 424 pp., \$19.98.

72. *Sovereignty: The Biography of a Claim*, by Peter H. Russell, University of Toronto Press, 192 pp., \$14.98.

73. *Spin Doctors: How Media and Politicians Misdiagnosed the COVID-19 Pandemic*, by Nora Loreto, Fernwood Publishing, 368 pp., \$35.

74. *Stand on Guard: Reassessing Threats to Canada's National Security*, by Stephanie Carvin, University of Toronto Press, 424 pp., \$17.98.

75. *Talking to Canadians: A Memoir*, by Rick Mercer, Doubleday Canada, Penguin Random House Canada, 329 pp., \$32.95.

76. *Telecom Tensions: Internet Service Providers and Public Policy in Canada*, by Mike Zajko, McGill-Queen's University Press, 240 pp., \$34.95.

77. *The Daily Plebiscite: Federalism, Nationalism, and Canada*, by David R. Cameron and edited by Robert C. Vipond, University of Toronto Press, 326 pp., \$29.95.

78. *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*, by David Graeber and David Wengrow, Signal, Penguin Random House Canada, 704 pp., \$32.95.

79. *The Day the World Stops Shopping: How Ending Consumerism Saves the Planet and Ourselves*, by J.B. MacKinnon, Penguin Random House Canada, 352 pp., \$32.95.

80. *The Devil's Trick: How Canada Fought the Vietnam War*, by John Boyko, Knopf Canada, Penguin Random House Canada, 256 pp., \$32.

81. *The Fate of Canada: F.R. Scott's Journal of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, 1963-1971*, edited by Graham Fraser, McGill-Queen's University, 384 pp., \$37.95.

82. *The Four Lenses of Population Aging: Planning for the Future in Canada's Provinces*, by Patrik Marier, Uni-

versity of Toronto Press, 368 pp., \$22.48.

83. *The Gatherings: Reimagining Indigenous-Settler Relations*, by Shirley Hager and Mavopiyane, University of Toronto Press, 304 pp., \$29.95.

84. *The Laws and the Land: The Settler Colonial Invasion of Kahnawà:ke in Nineteenth-Century Canada*, by Daniel Rück, UBC Press, 336 pp., \$39.95.

85. *The Least Possible Fuss and Publicity: The Politics of Immigration in Postwar Canada, 1945-1967*, by Paul A. Evans, McGill-Queen's University Press, 344 pp., \$90.

86. *The Platform Economy and the Smart City: Technology and the Transformation of Urban Policy*, edited by Austin Zwick and Zachary Spicer, McGill-Queen's University Press, 352 pp., \$39.95.

87. *The Rowell-Sirois Commission and the Remaking of Canadian Federalism*, by Robert Wardhaugh and Barry Ferguson, UBC Press, 350 pp., \$45.

88. *The Rural Entrepreneur: John Bragg, The Force Behind Oxford Frozen Foods and Eastlink*, by Donald J. Savoie, Nimbus Publishing, \$27.95.

89. *The Symbolic State: Minority Recognition, Majority Backlash, and Secession in Multinational Countries*, by Karlo Bastra, McGill-Queen's University, 272 pp., \$37.95.

90. *The Two Michaels: Innocent Canadian Captives and High Stakes Espionage in the U.S.-Cyber War*, by Fenn Hampson and Mike Blanchfield, Sutherland House, 282 pp., \$24.95.

91. *The Unconventional Nancy Ruth*, by Roman Lumpkin, 454 pp., Second Story Press, 285 pp., \$28.95.

92. *Top Secret Canada: Understanding the Canadian Intelligence and National Security Community*, edited by Stephanie Carvin, Thomas Juneau, and Craig Forcese, University of Toronto Press, 328 pp., \$36.95.

93. *Transformative Media: Intersectional Technopolitics from Indymedia to #BlackLivesMatter*, by Sandra Jeppesen, 312 pp., \$89.95.

94. *Twice Migrated, Twice Displaced: Indian and Pakistani Transnational Households in Canada*, by Tania Das Gupta, UBC Press, 214 pp., \$89.95.

95. *Unreconciled: Family, Truth, and Indigenous Resistance*, by Jesse Wenthe, Allen Lane, Penguin Random House Canada, 208 pp., \$29.95.

96. *Values: Building a Better World for All*, by Mark Carney, Signal, Penguin Random House Canada, 608 pp., \$39.95.

97. *Where Beauty Survived: An African Memoir*, by George Elliott Clarke, Knopf Canada, 336 pp., \$24.

98. *Women at the Helm: How Jean Sutherland Boggs, Hsio-yen Shih, and Shirley L. Thomson Changed the National Gallery of Canada*, by Diana Nemiroff, McGill-Queen's University Press, 552 pp., \$44.95.

99. *Women, Peace, and Security: Feminist Perspectives on International Security*, edited by Caroline Leprince and Cassandra Steer, McGill-Queen's University Press, 256 pp., \$37.95.

100. *Women, Power and Political Representation: Canadian and Comparative Perspectives*, by Roosmarijn de Geus, Erin Tolley, Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant and Peter John Loewen, University of Toronto Press, 214 pp., \$14.98.

—Compiled by The Hill Times' editor Kate Malloy, the 100 Best Books List is based on Canada's non-fiction bestsellers' lists, book reviews, opinions, and publishers' lists. The books are listed in alphabetical order.

kmalloy@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Best Books

Michael Wernick on governing, political journalism, and his Machiavellian inspiration

‘I was pissed off, and I thought it needed to be called out.’ the former top civil servant talks to Peter Mazereeuw about his explosive committee testimony following the Yellow Vest protest on Parliament Hill, and a whole lot more.

BY PETER MAZEREEUW

Michael Wernick spent 38 years working in Canada’s non-partisan public service. For the last three of those years, from 2016 to 2019, he served as the clerk of the Privy Council and secretary to the cabinet, a role in which he was the most senior civil servant in the government, and one of the prime minister’s closest advisers.

Wernick took an early retirement in April of 2019, after he became embroiled in the SNC-Lavalin scandal, testified in front of the House Justice Committee about it, and was accused of partisanship by some opposition MPs.

He recently authored a book about the inner workings of government, entitled, *Governing Canada: A Guide to the Tradecraft of Politics*, and made an appearance on *The Hill Times’ Hot Room* podcast in October to discuss the book and his time in government. The following is an edited version of that interview.

So let’s start at the beginning. Why did you decide to write this book?

“It happened over the last Christmas holiday, my daughter was home from university, and she had some reading to do for the next term. She was taking a classic political theory course. And one of the books that she had to read at the time was Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, which is, as you probably know, a guide to statecraft. And it was just one of those moments where I thought, ‘Hmm, maybe that’s the kind of book I could write.’

“I’d been thinking about writing during my retirement period, but I didn’t want to write a memoir. I didn’t want to write a first-person narrative. Most of my best stories, I’m never going to tell, because they’d break the confidence of the, you know, the incidents I’d be talking about.

“But this just seemed to unlock the possibility of writing something that would be useful, particularly to political science stu-

dents, like my daughter. I looked at her reading list for some of her courses, and most of what’s available to students about Canadian government and politics is written by academics and journalists. Not that there’s anything wrong with that. But very few of them, if any, have been in the cabinet room, or briefing a prime minister, or briefing a minister, so they’re always third-person, indirect. And I thought it might be a contribution for those students and their professors to have a resource written by a practitioner. There aren’t that many around.”

Most of your book is devoted to three segments: advice to a prime minister, advice to a minister, advice to a deputy minister. Why did you choose that format, in particular?

PM, especially one who’s also finance minister: scheduling conflicts, trouble with the flow of documents, gossip about the PM succession, jealousy in cabinet. How do you manage that tension as a prime minister or as a clerk, and stop it from derailing the cabinet’s work?

“Well, I think what I say in the book in more detail is that if you’re a brand new prime minister, feeling your way along, you probably don’t need a deputy prime minister. And you should leave that decision until later in your mandate, when you have a clearer sense of what a deputy prime minister could add, or what role he or she could play. And that’s what several prime ministers have done over the years. It creates a new dynamic within the cabinet, and I’m sure that the

main pressure is to keep the flow of decisions moving forward and to keep some traction underneath the government’s agenda.”

But there are all kinds of people who are going to want you to ‘put a word in with [the] PM for me,’ you know, push things in this direction or that. How do you respond when you get those kinds of requests?

“Well, it’s a position of considerable responsibility, where your judgment obviously matters a great deal. So it’s important to have a good fit between the prime minister and the clerk; between the prime minister, the chief of staff, and the political office; and between the clerk and the chief of staff. That triangle is really important to how Canadian government works.”



Michael Wernick served as clerk of the Privy Council between 2016 and 2019. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

and implementable policies and programs.

“So most of the work of senior public service is about how to move things forward. It would be presumptuous to advise whether they should do that or not. The accountability is to Parliament and to the voters.”

But you must run into situations—I’m not going to ask you to dig into specifics—but situations where you think, ‘You know, this is just going to be very difficult to do, in practical terms.’

“Yeah, and that’s ... your job is to point out, you know, here are some of the [challenging] aspects...that’s the due diligence function of cabinet. And there’s a very elaborate process of due diligence on initiatives going towards cabinet, of which there would be a couple hundred every year. It could be costing, it could be legal challenges, it could be international implications, it could be federal-provincial relations, it could be relationships with Indigenous peoples. There’s a lot of due diligence involved in the cabinet process, and the art of it is to make sure that it doesn’t become something that bogs things down, and makes moving forward, you know, too difficult.

“So it’s really about that flow of issues through cabinet that I try to open up a little bit in the book.”

In your section about advice to administer, you wrote: ‘most people who leave governing feel that they have left projects incomplete, and wish they had done more.’ You were talking about cabinet ministers, but it leads me to wonder whether that applies to you as well, after more than 30 years in government? Is there anything you left behind in your to do list that you still think about?

“Oh, dozens of things, I mean, you leave a job, whether it’s abruptly or even on your own time, [and] there will be projects that are half-finished or incomplete. So I left all kinds of things that I would have liked to have spent more time on. It’s a long list, but every job comes to an end one way or another.”

Anything you’re free to share?

“Well, I mean, I’ve given interviews and written about things in other fora. So, you know, I keep a watchful eye on a number of issues. And there are things now which I can spend more time on as a retired guy. But I’m not going to weigh in on, you know, what the government should do. Your publication is full of pundits and op-ed writers who can give the government advice on that. I think the contribution I can make, perhaps, is some of my experience about how things work. And that was the purpose of the book.”

“I wanted to get across as best I could, how cabinet government works: what are some of the techniques and the tradecraft involved in cabinet government.

And so the three perspectives that would be useful would be the prime minister, who chairs cabinet; being a minister; and then the aspects of being a deputy minister that involve supporting a minister in a cabinet government. There are other dimensions to being a prime minister, there’s other dimensions to being a minister, and there’s certainly other dimensions to being a deputy minister, but the core of my book is about ... Canada’s model of cabinet government, and how it works.”

Prime Minister Trudeau kept Chrystia Freeland on as deputy prime minister and finance minister in his new cabinet. You devoted a couple of pages of your book to some of the pitfalls that come with appointing a deputy

prime minister and Minister Freeland are mindful of that and, you know, they’ll find a way through it.”

You wrote a lot in the book about the pressure that members of cabinet inevitably come under from other people, but not as much about the pressures faced by top civil servants. So when you’re the PCO clerk, how much pressure do you feel from other civil servants, cabinet ministers, lobbyists, and political staffers, to do what they want you to? And how do you manage that?

“Well, the clerk of the Privy Council is the secretary to cabinet, so what I focus on in the book is the role of the clerk in supporting the prime minister as the prime minister’s deputy minister, and then in ensuring that the cabinet function works as well as it can. You’re literally the secretary to cabinet when you’re in that job. So, you know, the

Let me give you a hypothetical scenario just for fun. A new government has come into power, elected on a promise that sounds good to voters, but which you, as a senior public servant, know will be very difficult to implement, or might just be bad policy for reasons that are not obvious. In that circumstance, what does a clerk of the Privy Council say to a new prime minister when he or she arrives ready to make good on that promise?

“Well, it’s never the role of the public service, in my view, to tell a government what it should do, or whether it should do something. The government has a democratic mandate; it’s just come back from an election with a mandate to do the things that it promised Canadians in the campaign. So, you know, that’s our job in the public service, is to translate that into actionable choices at a cabinet table, and the way forward,

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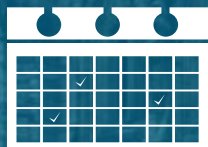
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Best Books

Michael Wernick on governing, political journalism, and his Machiavellian inspiration



Michael Wernick, then clerk of the Privy Council, pictured swearing in Karina Gould as Canada's minister of democratic institutions in 2017. *The Hill Times* photograph by Jake Wright

Continued from page 22

One of the things you wrote about, speaking of how things work, is the sort of rationalization for centralized control, for why the Prime Minister's Office does things like pick staff for cabinet ministers. The centralization of power in the PMO is something that gets talked about a lot in Ottawa among the pundit class, usually not in positive terms. Do you think it's desirable, or even possible, to move away from that in the future, and give ministers more independence?

"Centralization is your word, not mine. There has to be a coordination across the government. You have 30 to 35 ministers, each with an agenda. All of the meaningful issues of our time are multi-minister issues. If it was climate change, or Indigenous reconciliation, or how to deal with China, or what to do you know about any number of issues, even something as straightforward as cannabis legalization, you have to coordinate the efforts of multiple ministers. There are over 300 federal entities in the federal government. So I think of it more as alignment and coordination. It may feel like control to some of the people. And I was a line deputy minister at Aboriginal Affairs for eight years. But that tension back and forth between looking at the government as a whole and, you know, the initiatives and the interest of any of its component pieces, that's the dynamics of Canadian government. They're not going to change. You know, prime ministers rule their cabinets with a lighter or tighter hand, and that's their prerogative."

Since I've got you here, I want to ask for your perspective on journalism in Canada, and how journalists cover the federal government. What do we get wrong most often in our coverage, and what deserves more of our attention?

"Well, the thing I've noticed about journalism, which has been observed by others, is a tremendous erosion of capacity over the last 10 years. I think the Parliamentary Press Gallery in Ottawa is less than half the size it was 10 years ago. There was a time when the major news outlets had time for people to really get depth on particular fields. There was something called a beat reporter, people would cultivate knowledge and contacts, and be able to write about issues."

"Now there's a smaller number of people, stretched thinner. They tend to be generalists covering a whole range of issues. So they skim from one thing to another, and it's difficult for them. I don't have any easy answers for that. ... So it's really that, you know, that depth."

"I hope that my book might be useful to some reporters who come to Ottawa to cover politics and government. I did a lot of background briefings for journalists in my time, mostly explaining how things work, and who to go and see, and, 'Here's a resource,' and 'Do you realize this happened three years ago?'"

"I think a main feature of journalism—it's not a criticism, it's, again, it's just the way the world is—is the memory is very short. And anything that happened more than about two years ago is ancient history. So it's sort of always, always in the present,

always chasing today's story and today's headline, and a very, very low attention span. And so you don't see issues pursued in depth."

"When I was [at] Aboriginal Affairs, I would have liked to have had journalists pursue issues in greater depth and for more length, but they kind of flit in for a few days and then leave, in most cases."

One of the toughest parts of covering the federal government from the outside, as a journalist, is trying to decipher when a decision has been made primarily for political reasons—possibly even at the expense of the public interest—and when there's something else at play, maybe some kind of logistical barrier to action that the government isn't talking about. Now, I would argue it's important for Canadians to know which is the case, but how can we tell? Or how can we find out?

"Well, ultimately, it's up to voters to judge what's the public interest. You know, the outputs of government are laws, regulations, policies, programs, agreements, those are all there to see. There's been more, there's more proactive disclosure of the outputs and the processes of government than [at] any time in our history. Everything's there, on proactive disclosure, whether it's contracts or grants and contributions, staffing actions, military promotions: the whole workings of government are more transparent than they've ever been."

"So I think what you're referring to, and this comes up, is how much access should there be to the deliberative processes before a decision. And that's one of the things I do talk about in the book."

The last time many Canadians will have heard your name was shortly before your retirement in the spring of 2019, when you testified to the House Justice Committee about the SNC-Lavalin scandal. You took an early retirement afterwards, and said at the time that you didn't believe you could continue serving as clerk after some opposition MPs accused you of partisan behaviour. So looking back now, do you think you should have done anything differently in the lead up to that?

"I think that I was drawn into the story and became part of the story, and became part of the targeting and the crossfire, and I really don't see how that could have been avoided in the way things unfolded. So I was going to leave the job at some point anyway, and I was very conscious of its institutional role, particularly in an election year, when you are responsible for continuity of government."

"We had just set up the mechanism for calling out foreign interference in an election campaign and made the clerk the main whistleblower on that. And you need to basically have the trust of opposition parties and leaders that you are a steward during the election period. And if they are lucky enough to win the election, that you're there to receive them and help onboard them. And I, I definitely felt that I had crossed a line where I couldn't have that trust from the opposition parties. And so I had to step out of the job."

You started off your testimony before that committee with a warning about the direction in which the country was headed, and the 'rising tide of incitements to violence in Canada,' particularly around politics. You were criticized in some corners afterwards for making those remarks. An op-ed in *The Globe and Mail* have called them partisan and alarmist. And the following year, a man stormed the grounds of Rideau hall with loaded guns, looking for the prime minister. And in this election campaign, we saw protesters throw rocks at the prime minister, and a right-wing, fringe party triple its share of the vote. What did you know when

you made that speech in 2019, that the rest of us didn't?

"Well, I made those remarks the day after the yellow vest rally on Parliament Hill, where people were carrying around signs saying, 'Trudeau traitor.' And that's what really triggered, you know, my intervention. I am a student of history, and I know what happens in other countries when people start using the words 'patriot' and 'traitor.' Now that virus has infected Canada, but it's also infected other countries. And I don't think it was alarmist; I knew I was going to have some attention because of what was going on at the time, and I made a very conscious and mindful decision to use that spotlight to talk about these issues."

"What I knew that, you know, maybe has only come out more in the intervening years, is I knew that a lot of the ministers, particularly the women ministers, were getting incredible abuse, and personal attacks and threats of violence. And the default setting back in those days was, 'let's not talk about it, because it might just encourage copycats,' but I knew, you know, the kind of vile things that were going on, to ministers, and in some cases, political staffers."

"And frankly, I was pissed off, and I thought it needed to be called out. And, you know, sadly, what's happened over the last two years has only demonstrated it is a real issue. What I talked about in the book is, this is now a permanent feature of coming into public life. To become a minister—certainly prime minister, but even an ordinary cabinet minister—there is a price of exposing you to this, this kind of abuse, and cyber bullying and personal attacks, and to some extent, some real physical danger to you and your family. And over a period of time, I think we will find that fewer people want to come into public life, or that the people leave public life because they can't take it anymore. And that's a kind of form of adverse selection. We will find a cost to that, in terms of our democracy."

***Governing Canada: A Guide to the Tradecraft of Politics*, by Michael Wernick, UBC Press, On Point Press, 211 pp., \$21.95.**

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Michael Wernick, then clerk of the Privy Council, appears as a witness at a House Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights meeting on Feb. 21, 2019. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade