

## Winners announced for \$5K First Nation Communities READ Awards for Indigenous storytelling

The awards recognize outstanding Indigenous books for children, young adults and adults

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Boozhoo!/Hello! and The Baby Train have won this year's First Nation Communities READ Awards. (Graphic by CBC Books)

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Mangeshig Pawis-Steckley and Stella Shepard are the winners of the 2025-2026 First Nation Communities READ Awards.

The First Nation Communities READ Awards are two \$5,000 prizes that celebrate outstanding Indigenous books for children and young adult/adult literature. Chosen by a jury of First Nation librarians, the winning titles are distributed in libraries across Ontario.

Pawis-Steckley won the children's category for the picture book *Boozhoo!/Hello!*, translated to Anishinaabemowin by Mary Ann Corbiere.

*Boozhoo!/Hello!*, written in both English and Anishinaabemowin, introduces readers to all sorts of woodland and water animals going about their usual activities, from bees buzzing to minnows dancing and a fox digging.

Pawis-Steckley is an Anishinaabe illustrator also known for the picture books *Mii maanda ezhi-gkendmaan* / *This Is How I Know* and *Mnoomin maan'gowing* / *The Gift of Mnoomin*, both written by Brittany Luby. He is a member of Wasauksing First Nation and lives in Vancouver.

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Shepard won in the young adult/adult literature category for her novel, *The Baby Train*, which explores the legacy of forced adoption in Eastern Canada.

Apple, a young woman who grew up in the foster care system, finally finds a home in P.E.I. with a couple who never had their own children. When she gets pregnant, she and her family want to raise the baby together, but members of the Catholic Church, social workers and government officials decide that as an unwed mother, that can't be.

The baby ends up with a wealthy family in the United States. *The Baby Train* traces both her life and his in the aftermath of that loss.

Shepard is a journalist, author and photographer from Prince Edward Island. Her stories can be found in four of the Chicken Soup for the Soul books and many Atlantic newspapers and magazines.

The winner announcement kicks off First Nations Public Library Week, which runs from October 6-10.