Meet MacEwan University’s 21st Writer in Residence, Richard Van Camp: Canadian author brings a wealth of experience writing in different genres and for different audiences

Edmonton--Dust off your manuscript or jot down that poem inside your head—MacEwan University’s Faculty of Arts and Science has announced its 21st Writer in Residence. Author Richard Van Camp begins the first of his two-term residency on September 17 (his second term will begin January 13).

The university’s Writer in Residence program has hosted poets, novelists, essayists and screenwriters, the likes of which include Pierrette Requier, Lynn Coady, E.D. Blodgett, Curtis Gillespie and Thomas Wharton. MacEwan University’s writer in residence occupies an office on campus where they work on their own project while also being available for support and to share professional insights and experiences with people interested in writing, whether as a hobby or as a career.

As Richard takes over the role, he says he has one goal in mind. “I want to get people book deals,” he says. “I want to work them really hard and get them ready to show manuscripts to my agents. A lot of people are sitting on shoebox novels that haven’t been shown to anybody, and they’re really beautiful and deserve to be read by editors.”

Richard, a member of the Dogrib Nation from Fort Smith, Northwest Territories, writes about northerners and aboriginal people “walking in two worlds—traditional and contemporary.” And he has written everything from poems, short stories and novels to lullabies and comic books.

“The story is the boss,” he says. “The story tells me if it’s a poem or a short story or a prose piece or a children’s book—it really tells me what to do. There’s a reason I work with eight different publishers.”

He has written a novel, The Lesser Blessed—the film version of which he intends to screen at the university later this year—and three collections of short fiction. He is currently working on a new collection, Night Moves.

“I’m looking forward to showing The Lesser Blessed at MacEwan,” he says. “We’ve also just finished shooting another movie called Mohawk Midnight Runners. It’s a short about streaking, and I’m looking forward to showing that at MacEwan as well.”

Since becoming an uncle, he has written lullabies and books for babies and children. In fact, the Edmonton Public Library purchased 6,000 copies of his latest baby book, Little You, for distribution to newborn babies all over Alberta. Little You and his first baby book, Welcome Song for Baby, are both official selections of the Books for BC Babies program.

Founded in 1971, MacEwan University is a comprehensive university offering more than 65 programs including undergraduate degrees, applied degrees, diplomas, certificates, continuing education and corporate training. Its philosophy of inspiring minds, academic excellence, and providing career opportunities continues to be its guide as it serves the educational needs of students across Alberta, Canada and the world.

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