

# Niagara poet a runner-up at Canadian Literary Awards

By Canadian Press  
MONTREAL

Niagara-on-the-Lake poet Jim Slominski was among the next generation of home-grown writers celebrated Tuesday with the announcement of the winners of the Canadian Literary Awards.

Prizes were awarded for short stories, poetry and travel writing in French and English at a gala held in Montreal. A first prize of \$6,000 and a second prize of \$4,000 was awarded in each category for each language.

Slominski, 40, shared second prize for a series of poems inspired by his son Jake, who was diagnosed with a form of muscular dystrophy.

"I approach the blank page and let the paper and the pen do their own interaction," said Slominski, who writes each morning at 4 a.m. before his family is up, prior to starting his day job at Mori Nurseries Ltd. in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"I don't generally approach the page saying, 'I've got to write about this thing or that.' Different things come out at different times."

Part of a finished collection of poems with the working title *The Sound of Stars Stretching Apart*, Slominski hopes the attention created by his winning submission will help advance his quest for a publisher.

His first collection, *The Wind is a Tall Man Striding*, was published by Watershed Books, a Toronto-based writers' cooperative.

The first prize in fiction, the Bob Weaver Prize, was won by Camilla Gibb of Toronto, in English, and Suzanne Myre of Montreal in French.

Gibb won for her short story *Between Wars*, about the sense of dislocation of a Palestinian man who comes to New York City in the 1960s.

Gibb called the awards, which began in 1979, "the pre-eminent literary award in this country for this genre and certainly for essay writing."

"It's an award I've been aware of all my life. It has such a distinguished lineage. If you look back at the winners in the past, it really is a pantheon of Canadian greats."

Past winners have included Michael Ondaatje, Carol Shields, Barry Callaghan, Bonnie Burnard, Gail Anderson-Dargatz, Janice Kulyk Keefer, Gwendolyn MacEwan, Susan Musgrave and Shauna Singh Baldwin.

The winning works will be heard on the French and English CBC radio networks and will be published in Air Canada's *enRoute* magazine.

*with files from Christopher Waters*