

Opening More Than Presents This Holiday Season

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I was drawn in. With twinkling eyes and relaxed pose, David Bouchard told us story after story. Some of his tales were of family and some of First Nations and Métis people. I listened with rapt attention to his insights that crossed cultural boundaries. Bouchard is an educator, conference presenter, and author of more than 40 books. David's struggle and his son's struggle with dyslexia taught him that being able to read is the key to opening doors of opportunity, and he is passionate that parents, grandparents and caregivers take the time and energy to make book sharing a central part of children's lives.

Bouchard urges parents to do three things:

#1: "Surround children with books. Have books everywhere. Make piles of them in every room of your house."

#2: "Read with children every day."

#3: "Know that your child has a hero and that hero is you. Kids want to do things they see their parents doing. You can create a passion for reading in children by letting them see you read."

How do we find good books for children?

Start by thinking about the topics, ideas, or pictures that capture your child's interests. Then seek the knowledge of librarians and booksellers who know which books are new and exciting, and which books have stood the test of time.

Did you know?

- The Ontario Library Association highlights great books for children through its Forest of Reading® Programs? The Blue Spruce Award is chosen by children 4 to 7 years old. From 2007 to 2009, children across the province picked books written by Melanie Watt. "Scaredy Squirrel", "Scaredy Squirrel Makes a Friend" and "Chester" are favourites with this young crowd.
- The American Library Association's website lists winners of the 2009 Notable Children's Books. Recently published books, such as "A Visitor for Bear" by Bonny Becker, are listed for children of various ages.
- Local librarians and library websites are also great sources for finding and accessing many books without it costing you a cent.
- Booksellers from stores that are chains, independent, or specialists in used books are knowledgeable about good books for children and adults.
- On-line booksellers can be especially helpful when looking for books with culture specific stories or written in language other than English. By visiting www.davidbouchard.com, for example, you will find Aboriginal and Métis stories.

On David Bouchard's website you will also find a story that scores a goal for our Canadian Women's Hockey Team at the 2010 Olympics. About his picture book Bouchard wrote, "The successes of our Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team moves some to tears, others to take up hockey. It has moved me to write [That's Hockey.](#)"

During this holiday season, gift-wrapped books or library books strewn throughout your home show that you too share the passion for reading – a passion that can open doors to opportunity.