



CAROL SHIELDS PRIZE FOR FICTION RECEIVES \$250,000 DONATION FROM MELINDA GATES

January 15, 2021—**The Carol Shields Prize for Fiction**, the first English-language literary award to celebrate excellence in fiction by women writers in the United States and Canada, announced today that it has received a \$250,000 (USD) donation from philanthropist, businesswoman, bestselling author, and global advocate for women and girls **Melinda Gates** through her investment and incubation company [Pivotal Ventures](#).

The inaugural Carol Shields Prize for Fiction will be awarded in 2023 and will be open to women and non-binary fiction writers in the US and Canada for a short story collection or a novel. The mission of the award is to celebrate, promote, and reward fiction by Canadian and American women writers. The winner will receive \$150,000 (CAD) and four nominees \$12,500 (CAD) each.

“We are so grateful to Melinda Gates for supporting women writers in North America,” said Carol Shields Prize co-founders Susan Swan and Janice Zawerbny. “Female authors, like women everywhere, have taken a hit during the pandemic, and this generous donation allows our new annual literary award to deliver an economic boost to a wider, more diverse group of women.”

“Throughout history, women have been writing profound, groundbreaking books. Yet, women authors earn less, are reviewed less often in major literary publications, and are routinely overlooked for awards. Ours will be a more equal society—and a more interesting one—when we expand the types of stories we deem to be worthy of recognition. The Carol Shields Prize for Fiction is an exciting step toward a future where books by women get the attention and prestige that they deserve,” said Melinda Gates.

About the Carol Shields Prize for Fiction

[The Carol Shields Prize for Fiction](#) was started by novelist, teacher, activist and journalist, Susan Swan and editor Janice Zawerbny. Former head of the Writers Trust of Canada Don Oravec; Noreen Tomassi, who ran the Center for Fiction in New York City; and US author Roxana Robinson are early founding members of the prize. In addition, the prize is supported by distinguished Honorary Patrons who have pledged their commitment to the prize: American writers Marilynne Robinson, Ann Patchett, Louise Erdrich, Erica Jong, Francine Prose, Jane Smiley, and Natasha Trethewey (board member), along with Margaret Atwood, Dionne Brand, Alice Munro and Marie-Claire Blais from Canada.

At \$200,000, The Carol Shields Prize for Fiction is one of the largest awards for literature anywhere and is the richest prize for women who write in the English language. It will be an annual prize and have one of the largest literary purses in North America. Works of translation published in Canada or the US in English, translated from Spanish or French, will be eligible for consideration. Funds so far have been raised to support the prize monies for the first three years of the prize. To support The Carol Shields Prize for Fiction, visit carolshieldsprizeforfiction.com/donate.

About Melinda Gates

Melinda French Gates is a philanthropist, businesswoman, and global advocate for women and girls. As the co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Melinda sets the direction and priorities of the world's largest philanthropy. She is also the founder of [Pivotal Ventures](#), an investment and incubation company working to drive social progress for women and families in the United States, and the author of the bestselling book *The Moment of Lift* (Flatiron Books).

Melinda grew up in Dallas, Texas. She received a bachelor's degree in computer science from Duke University and an MBA from Duke's Fuqua School. Melinda spent the first decade of her career developing multimedia products at Microsoft before leaving the company to focus on her family and philanthropic work. She lives in Seattle, Washington with her husband, Bill. They have three children, Jenn, Rory, and Phoebe.

About Carol Shields

Carol Shields was born in Oak Park, Illinois, in 1935, and moved to Canada in 1957 to attend university. She was the author of more than twenty books, including novels, plays, poetry, essays, criticism, short fiction and biography. Her books were nominated, and won, numerous international prizes. Most notably, her novel *The Stone Diaries* won the Governor General's Award for Fiction (Canada), the Pulitzer Prize (US), and was shortlisted for the Booker Prize (UK).

In 1997, her novel *Larry's Party* won the Orange Prize (now called the Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction), which is given to the best book by a woman writer in the English-speaking world. She edited, along with Marjorie Anderson, two highly successful anthologies of essays by women called *Dropped Threads*, in which women were encouraged to write about private and personal experiences that they hadn't shared with others before.

In addition to her career as an author, Shields worked as an academic, teaching at the University of Ottawa, the University of British Columbia and the University of Manitoba. In 1996, she became chancellor of the University of Winnipeg. She raised five children with her husband, Don, and died from complications of breast cancer in Victoria, B.C., in 2003, at the age of sixty-eight.

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