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Spotlight on Canadian Authors: Rosemarie Boll--The Interview

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Canda Books Examiner: First, thank you, Rosemarie, for taking the time to let us get to know you. I'm quite excited to ask you a few questions. Oh and congratulations on the nomination for the [White Pine Award](#). That is an awesome program.

Rosemarie Boll: *It's a pleasure – and a happy surprise – to be shortlisted.*

CBE: Your bio states you practiced family law, which is definitely helpful in [The Second Trial](#), do you still practice law? (If so, how do you find the time to write?)

RB: *I practice in Edmonton with the Family Law Office of Legal Aid Alberta. I am very fortunate to work just half-time, so it leaves me time to write.*

CBE: When did you decide to write or has that always been something you've done?

RB: *I have been a non-fiction writer for many years. I write about family law for a Canadian magazine called LawNow. Our lives are governed by a complex network of laws and I try to explain what the justice system can and cannot do. Domestic violence is very important in any discussion of family law. Writing for LawNow let me reach a lot of people, but I wanted to connect with the teens who don't read LawNow, before they end up in shelters, in court, or in jail. My magazine editor encouraged me to write a novel about domestic violence, and the result was [The Second Trial](#).*

CBE: In [The Second Trial](#), some of the scenes are simply heartbreaking, but I found myself nodding and smiling a little because I recognize Danny. I've seen him more times than I care to count. The second last chapter, when Danny 'let's go' nearly had me in tears. Very poignant. Did you draw from your experiences with kids in these situations to write his character?

RB: *As a lawyer, I rarely represent children. However, every day I hear from parents, teachers, psychologists, social workers, or the police about the anguish kids suffer in high-conflict custody disputes and abusive homes. Too often, I see those kids in my office when they are adults. I listen to their anger and I watch the patterns repeat. The only way to move ahead is to make peace with a difficult past, but only a few people have Danny's strength of character to do it.*

CBE: In [The Second Trial](#), NIVA is an organization that helps relocate families in danger due to domestic violence. Have you had any experience working with this organization through your work as a lawyer? Could you tell us how many families would have needed this organization during that time? (as in 1 in 5 or 1 in 50?)

RB: *I met the NIVA people while researching one of the magazine articles. The program started in Alberta in 1997. It operated for ten years and assisted about 500 people before being taken over by Canada's federal*

government. Only a small proportion of people received complete identity changes. Now called [Confidential Service for Victims of Abuse](#) (CSVA), it still includes an identity change service. Other countries operate similar programs.

CBE: Domestic violence is a heavy subject for a young adult novel. (Although I strongly urge teens to read it.) Did you have any reservations about it being classified as YA? Have you had any negative reaction due to the subject matter?

RB: *While I have not received any negative feedback, some readers have not been able to finish the book. Others told me it hit painfully close to home. These sad reactions reassure me that the YA audience is the right one – society needs to engage kids in domestic violence and bullying education before they get themselves entrenched into the problem, either as perpetrators or victims. My book readership has no upper age limit—elder abuse is also a crime we need to know about and tackle.*

CBE: Elder abuse is an issue that often gets overlooked, I agree. Actually, in many communities, domestic violence, child abuse, etc. are still quite a problem. In your opinion, are things getting better? Why or why not?

RB: *Awareness is key. Unless you know about the problem, you cannot address it. There are now thousands of anti-violence campaigns, locally, nationally, and internationally. [UNICEF](#) recognises domestic violence as one of the world's most pervasive human rights violations. This is [Bullying Awareness Week](#), a grass-roots Canadian campaign which has spread to other countries. The internet has helped us speak out against domestic violence and bullying, and to reach people in isolated areas across the globe. We need to move away from the idea that domestic violence is “just a women’s issue,” something that goes on in families and away from the scrutiny of outsiders. We must acknowledge it for what it is – criminal violence that happens in a home. Society’s progress in recognising the invisible victims of this suppressed and misunderstood crime is painfully slow, but taking the long view (decades or even generations), it’s still progress.*

CBE: “Just a women’s issue”, very apt way of describing how too many see domestic violence. I hope that progress moves faster with people like you speaking out against it. ***The Second Trial*** is a good start, showing that it isn’t just a “woman’s issue” but also a family, friend, coworker, and society issue. I look forward to seeing more stories like this circulating and letting young people like Danny and even Nixxie, know that they aren’t alone.

Now, I ask this of most authors because it’s something Canadian writers trying to get published wonder; Do you have any advice for a new writer in terms of writing and getting published?

RB: *Don’t be shy about showing your work to people whose opinion you value. Ask for honest feedback and they won’t let you down. Find the new angle that will make your book stand out from the competition, then keep pitching it until it finds a home.*

CBE: What inspires you?

RB: *Making a difference.*

CBE: I love that. I don't know how you can top it, but because I love the answers to this question, if you could describe what writing means to you but only had five words, what would you say?

RB: *Writing is where I live.*

CBE: Very cool. Thank you so much, Rosemarie. I hope that your book gives voice to some young people who might not be able to put into words what they're feeling.

As I mentioned, and as Rosemarie's book shows, sometimes the worst bullies are the ones closest to us. Our parents, siblings, husbands, and wives. Bullying Awareness week runs **November 14 to November 22**. I can't think of any time when the message of this effort needs to be heard more. Make an effort in your community and pick up Rosemarie's amazing novel, ***The Second Trial***. It's worth the read.