

Local author to launch fantasy series touching on Canadian history

By Rob Paul

When Lisa Oatway decided she was ready to throw herself into writing the fantasy series she'd always dreamt of, she set out to do two things: educate and entertain.

Her upcoming novel *The Dinosaur Encounter - The Alberta Episode of the The Blue Crescent Moon* is the first in a fantasy series that follows a family as they travel through Canada with the basis for the series focused on exploring major events in Canadian history.

'Growing up and going through school, I realized we learned more about places, events, and the history of other countries than our own,' she said. 'I thought I'd set out to showcase one province and pick one main event in their history and highlight that through the eyes of a young family. I have to be honest; it's loosely based on my own family and the family travels from province to province. It's a fantasy, so one of the children is exposed to a lightning storm and that gives her the gifts to communicate with inanimate objects and travel back in time.'

Not only is Oatway's goal to give readers a better understanding of some of the most interesting events in Canadian history, but she wants to do it in a way that helps families connect to the characters.

'The first novel deals with the dinosaurs in Alberta; most people don't even realize we had dinosaurs here in Canada,' she said. 'There are two species that are particular just to Canada, the Edmontosaurus and the Albertosaurus. These are true species and they become the central focus of the book. The little girl with her brothers and sisters rescue an egg that goes missing through an earthquake. It's cooperation, collaboration, caring, it's a family story.'

Having not had time in years past, earlier this year Oatway retired which finally allowed her to immerse herself in her passion.

'It's a labour of love and I started thinking about it probably 10 to 14 years ago,' she said. 'I worked full-time and raised a family of four, so I really didn't have a chance to do much of it, but anytime I'd have an idea I'd jot it down. Then I retired at the beginning of the year and thought, 'Well, here's my time to pull this together.' I started in February and had it done by May. I'd spend an hour or so each day chipping away and I had an outline and started putting pen to paper.'

'Then I approached some traditional publishers, and I didn't get anything, the approach was them saying they'd get back to me in three to six months. So, here I am at my age checking my emails everyday, twice a day, and I thought it was crazy, so I decided to self-publish. Now I'm close to publishing; about a month away; and I'm about 35 per cent through my second one.'

As for what her goals are with the series, she hopes to cover one historical event in each province and territory which means a baker's dozen worth of novels.

'I'd like to do 13, for the 10 provinces and three territories,' she said. 'My plan is to try and crank out two per year and so within five to six years I should be done. I'm excited, you've got an idea and you have no idea if it's going to work, but I've had two editors through the process, and they've come back with kind words and encouragement which has given me the impetus to continue.'

The book will soon be available locally through Forster's Book Garden in Bolton.