

## Governor General's Literary Award

# Saint-Lambert son up for top national literary honour

Catherine Bridgen

Il Saint-Lambert wordsmith Michael Gilson thought the adjectives "elegant" and "fluid and idiomatic" were high praise from critics for his latest major work of translation, he's got to be seeing the most recent qualifier—"shortlisted for a Governor General's literary award"—as nothing short of stratospheric.

Earlier this month, the Canada Council for the Arts announced that Gilson is up for one of the country's most prestigious literary prizes for *Mafia Inc.: The Long, Bloody Reign of Canada's Sicilian Clan*, his 2010 rendition of the explosive 2010 "runaway best-selling expose" on organized crime and corruption in Montreal. The Oak Avenue resident is one of five finalists nation-wide—and

the sole contender with a work of non-fiction—in the running for the coveted GG in the category of French-to-English Translation.

"This is something that was completely unexpected," says Gilson, who runs his freelance translation business, Tangerine Communications, from the home he shares with wife Christine and two-year-old daughter Clara. "I definitely worked hard on the book and I think I did a good job, but to be in the company of translators like Sheila Fischman, who is considered the dean of English translation in Quebec, is an amazing honour and incredibly humbling."

Gilson's is one of only 69 books of the 1,700 submissions reviewed by the Council's peer assessment committees to make it onto the shortlist for the awards, which are

presented annually in the seven categories of fiction, non-fiction, poetry, drama, children's literature (text), children's literature (illustration), and translation, for both English and French works. On top of the obvious distinction of being counted among the country's most illustrious literary talents and the \$1,000 prize he automatically takes home as a finalist, the 49-year-old local translator also stands to win \$25,000—along with a specially bound copy of his book—if his title takes the prize in its category.

A film animation graduate from Concordia University, Gilson fell into translation almost by accident nearly 25 years ago when he took on a small contract to supplement the meagre income he was earning at the time as an employee of a Chinese film festival. He quickly found that he not only enjoyed the work, but that he also had a knack for "doing it fast and doing it well." After spending the next decade working as a translator, copy editor and proof-reader for a publishing services company and a graphic design and communications firm—while juggling a steady stream of contracts on the side—Gilson decided in 1998 to branch out on his own as a full-time self-employed translator.

"It turned out to be the right choice for me. I'm always busy; in fact, I usually have too much work—I tend to take on more than I should—but I really love what I'm doing," says the bilingual freelancer, who credits his parents for their foresight in enrolling him in Saint-Lambert's pioneering French immersion program back in the late 1960s.

In summer 2008, Gilson had his first crack at tackling a major literary work when he was given the contract by McClelland & Stewart to translate *Mon histoire*, Julie Couillard's tell-all memoir about her controversial relationship with federal Conservative minister Maxime Bernier. The English version of the book, whose original French version had been ghostwritten by Gilson's friend and colleague, journalist Serge Rivest, was listed #6 on the Montreal bestseller market for two weeks following its release.

"It was my first real book translation, so I wasn't quite sure how I was going to like it. I had 90,000 words to translate, and only two months to do it in, but I ended up really enjoying the experience and wanting to do more."



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So, needless to say, when Gilson received a call from Random House in December 2010 asking if he was interested in translating *Mafia Inc., Grandeur et misère du clan sicilien au Québec*—the chart-topper received by Montreal journalists André Cédilot and André Noël detailing the rise of one of Canada's most notorious Mafia families, and exposing a web of connections linking organized crime to the construction industry and political power-holders—he jumped at the opportunity to take on the challenge.

For the next four months, the translator spent eight to 10 hours a day, sometimes on weekends as well, crafting the bestseller into English and sifting through stacks of bankers' boxes and shopping bags filled with old newspaper clippings, court documents and other files to find the passages the authors had rendered into French for their original version of the book.

"It was painstaking work but it needed to be done," he says. "I'm a real perfectionist when it comes to the accuracy of sources and quotes. I think that's some of the added value I bring, in the sense that I always check the facts."

After running a completed draft of the first chapter by his mother—"Mum is the ultimate arbiter of good writing"—Gilson quickly reached his stride and was able to produce the 544-page prize-quality translation within the remarkably tight deadline.

For someone who has never really shared the popular fascination with the Mob, and one who has only ever seen one episode of *The Sopranos*, Gilson admits that some parts of the book were, for him, a "real eye-opener."

"Once you get into the details

about how these people tell their accounts, it's pretty sordid and horrific, even a bit ghoulish. And then when you see the connections drawn with the construction industry and politicians, it's more than a little shocking."

Today considered Canada's premier national literary distinction, the Governor General's Literary Awards were established in 1936 by then Governor General Lord Tweedsmuir (John Buchan) as a way to "encourage the growth of a truly Canadian literature." In the 75 years since that inaugural edition, 511 Canadian authors, poets, playwrights, translators and illustrators have been honoured for 607 different works.

"Literary excellence is what drives the Governor General's Literary Awards," said Robert Sirman, Director and CEO of the Canada Council for the Arts, in announcing the 2012 finalists. "This year's shortlisted books put the creative talent of our authors, translators and illustrators front and centre. They inspire readers to discover new places and live memorable experiences through books."

The winners in each category will be announced November 13 in Montreal, while the formal awards ceremony will take place November 28 at Rideau Hall, the Governor General's official residence in Ottawa.

While Gilson is obviously anxious to learn the final results, he's also quite content for the moment to just bask in the glow of "this ultimate recognition from my peers. It's really been an amazing feeling, somewhere between being totally flabbergasted and incredibly flattered. I have to admit it felt pretty good when I got the news, and it still does."

PHOTO: BILLY HARTLEY

## Une fin de saison faste pour le soccer

Lors de la fin de semaine de l'Action de Grâce, les équipes U11FAA et U12FAA de Saint-Lambert ont participé au tournoi de Natick, en banlieue de Boston. Les U11 jouant dans la catégorie U12 et les U12 dans la catégorie U14. Ce moment a été une occasion privilégiée pour resserrer les liens et démontrer le savoir-faire des jeunes joueuses de Saint-Lambert. Soulignons la performance remarquable des joueuses de l'équipe U12 qui ont signé toutes leurs victoires par blanchissage! Elles l'ont en effet remporté 2 à 0 contre les Hawkettes de Hudson, 3 à 0 contre le Red Heat de Holliston, 7 à 0 contre le Heat de Arlington, 6 à 0 contre les Thrillers de Wellesley et c'est par la marque de 4 à 0 contre le Crush

de Natick que l'équipe de Saint-Lambert remportait le tournoi. Quel exploit! Cet échec est-il le prétexte à une nouvelle tradition entre le Massachusetts et Saint-Lambert?

### Du côté du U14MAA

Plus d'une centaine de personnes ont assisté au parc de la Voie maritime à la finale de la Coupe Promotion, ce samedi 13 octobre. L'équipe U14MAA de Saint-Lambert s'est alors mesurée aux joueurs de Chomedey. C'est par la marque de 1 à 0 que les joueuses de Saint-Lambert l'ont emporté, ce qui leur permettra d'évoluer au sein de la Ligue de soccer élite du Québec (LSEQ) en U15AAA l'été prochain. Félicitations à tous les joueurs et aux entraîneurs!



L'équipe féminine de soccer U12. Dans l'ordre habituel, rangée du haut : Isabelle Cousineau, Danika Garfield, Annie Bernier, Victoria Panneton, Marika Dallaire, Ariane Vendette, Marie-Hélène Cousineau, Audrey-Anne Nielsen, Jean-Christophe Sourie. Dans la rangée du bas : Géraldine Lambert-Dufour, Gabrielle Laurion-Ingold, Alexie Aylwin, Jasmine Huard, Elisabeth Bureau, Annabelle Rouleau, Justine Bradette, Eza Beauchamp Verdon, Claudia Fortin et la gardienne, Marie-Lou Savaria.

## Multi Art : De Saint-Lambert à Montréal



On peut actuellement découvrir des œuvres de Sarah Fecteau, Nicole Laporte, Anouck Goulet, Pauline Paquin, Andrew Kiss, Jean-Louis Courteau, Tommy Zen et Heidi Messing McDonald à la galerie « The Rendez-Vous » du Centre de commerce mondial.

Lors de la construction du Centre de commerce mondial de Montréal, une partie de la ruelle des Fortifications fut conservée. Ce lieu accueille, parmi d'autres événements, des expositions.

Appelé « The Rendez-Vous », l'espace accueille actuellement sur ses murs une belle collection d'œuvres d'artistes de Multi

Art, agence d'artistes de Saint-Lambert qui les représente, et indirectement de la galerie Le Balcon d'art qui les expose, parmi d'autres galeries.

Si vous préférez vous dépayser pour découvrir les œuvres de ces artistes, sachez que l'espace est situé au 747, Square Victoria et qu'il est ouvert les mercredis, jeudis et vendredis de 10h à 18h. L'exposition se poursuit jusqu'à fin novembre.

## REACHing the finish line



Students from REACH School braved the grey and rainy weather earlier this month to take part in the school's first annual Track and Field day, initiated by teachers June Bastos and Donna Howe, the sporting event, which was held at Seaway Park, had the special-needs participants competing in seven different disciplines—from long jump, stick handling and team relay to shot put, precision marathon, 60-metre sprint and 60-metre hurdles—and included "official" opening and closing ceremonies. Thanks to the hard work of parents, teachers, volunteers—and, of course, the athletes themselves—this first edition proved to be such a success that the Saint-Lambert school is hoping to grow the event into a larger Special Olympics over the next few years by inviting other schools to participate. Part of the Riverside School Board, REACH is a regional program designed to promote the autonomy and development of students with intellectual delays, handicaps or other developmental challenges.

# MASCARADE

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