

IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award Laudatio 2014

Good evening!

Mr. Tamura from Asahi Shimbun, IBBY President, Award-Winners, President of IBBY Mexico and IBBY friends,

It is a great honor for me to present the winners of the IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award 2014.

This award was founded in 1986 in commemoration of the 20th IBBY Congress in Tokyo, and made possible by the sponsorship from the Asahi Shimbun Japanese newspaper company. In the world of children's books, there are many important awards and occasions to publically praise good works and good authors. But there is no award that highlights organizations that are active in continually handing books to children other than the IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award.

It is also the one and only international award sponsored by the Asahi Shimbun. I would like to say thank you to the many people who have been involved in the continuation of the cooperation of Asahi Shimbun and IBBY. We have seen big social changes over these past 28 years, however, we have come through this because we share one thought: 'Every child has the right to read and to have access to books.'

The award is presented every two years to two projects that are run by groups or institutions. The winners are selected from among projects nominated by IBBY national sections from all over the world. That means this award represents the spirit of IBBY, in other words: this special network of people who work in connecting children and books in every corner of the earth.

The jury, selected from the members of the elected IBBY Executive Committee, judge every nominated project on the following criteria:

- How well does the project support IBBY's Mission Statement?
- Is there existing or possible support for the project from other funding sources?
- Has the project been in existence for at least two years prior to its nomination? Is the project sustainable? Does it provide a framework for growth?
- What is the impact of the project? Does it reach its stated target audience?
- Is the project original and innovative?
- Can the project provide a model for others? Is it easily replicated? Are any printed materials available and are they of high literary quality?
- Can the results of the project be evaluated?

This year 14 candidates were nominated by 13 IBBY national sections. Out of these 14, we selected two winners. The screening process was not easy, because all the projects were very special and have developed effective methods of promoting reading.

The nominated projects have been established all over the world: in Armenia, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Mexico, Poland, Slovenia, South Africa, USA, Venezuela, and two in Peru.

The 2014 IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Awards are given to the following two projects:

“The Children’s Book Bank”, Canada

and

The Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa, “PRAESA”, South Africa

The Children’s Book Bank

“The Children’s Book Bank” was founded in 2007 in Toronto with the mission of supporting children’s literacy by recycling gently used children’s books and distributing them, free of charge, to children living in high-needs neighbourhoods. The area where the Book Bank is located is one of Toronto’s high-density low-income neighbourhoods. It is also the first home to many new Canadians. There are 102 nationalities within a two kilometres radius of the Book Bank!

The Book Bank operates like a bookstore, but with one big difference: the books are free to children. There is no membership, registration or fee of any kind at the Book Bank. On each visit children are permitted to choose and take home to keep one book. They are encouraged to visit frequently and to build their own home libraries.

We selected the Children’s Book Bank as one of this year’s winners because it is a very simple system of book recycling, which in addition to getting books into the hands of children, also effectively uses the skills of librarians and teachers. This idea has the potential to be expanded and replicated in many places. And they have established a range of outreach initiatives and partnerships with other organizations.

PRAESA

The Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa, PRAESA is an independent unit for research and development affiliated to the University of Cape Town. It was established as a result of the struggle against apartheid education and its initial function was to document alternatives that had been tried out and could guide the new education process.

PRAESA organizes various projects for development of bilingualism and bi-literacy in early childhood education, as well as running activities developed to raise the status of African languages in society.

It lobbies for language policy in education at national and provincial government levels. Its focus is on a well-run mother tongue based bilingual system, that provides the best of both worlds for all children, where teachers and children communicate in a language they command and understand.

PRAESA's activities are in agreement with the basic philosophy of IBBY in that they value the child's mother tongue.

On behalf of the members of the jury: Marilar Aleixandre from Spain, Hasmig Chahinian from France, Azucena Galindo from Mexico, Linda Pavonetti from USA, Timotea Vrablova from Slovakia, Nadia El Kholi from Egypt and myself, I would like to congratulate all those involved in these two outstanding projects.

Small movements can become a big waves if we co-operate. Just as little activities will create power if we continue. IBBY is a network of individuals who are bound to overcome differences in ideology, culture and customs – we have the same thoughts and goals.

To empower people who are working in grassroots activities is in keeping with IBBY's social interest. After the experience of the disaster in Northern Japan in 2011, I understand that to continue and maintain this social interest and concern is often a challenge that we all share.

Winning this award shines a spot light on each of these projects and helps to keep their momentum. It is important that we know the work that these organizations are doing, and encourage them to keep up their passion. It is also important that we tell the rest of the world about their work.

It is with great pleasure that I now ask the representatives of the two winning projects: Ms. Kim Beatty and Ms. Carolyn Madonia, from Canada, and Ms. Carole Bloch and Ms. Ntombizanele Mahobe from South Africa, to come up to the stage.

Warm congratulations to these two winning projects and to all the people who work for them! Many thanks to the IBBY National Sections for their nominations and I would especially like to thank again the Asahi Shimbun our generous long-time sponsor of this valuable award.

Thank you.

Kiyoko Matsuoka

IBBY Asahi Reading Promotion Award Jury President 2014

Museo del Palalote, Mexico City, Mexico

Friday 12 September 2014