

***Full Steam To Canada* World Premier in Lashburn**

May 16, 2011

A world premiere book launch was held this past Wednesday at J.H. Moore Elementary School in Lashburn.

Author Anne Patton enthralled the children of grades 4, 5 and 6 as she read from her new novel *Full Steam to Canada*, and discussed the background to it one day before the official launch at the Barr Colony Cultural Centre in Lloydminster.

Patton's novel focuses on the experiences of a young English girl who travels to Canada on a ship with her family as one of the Barr Colonists in 1903. The book, the first of two, follows the heroine, Dorothy Bolton, as she crosses the ocean and then journeys by rail to Saskatoon. The girl's adventures are loosely based on the life of Dorothy Holtby.

"I want to write stories about children from Saskatchewan," said Patton, "because, well, there aren't a lot really, are there?"

The original idea for the story came from an interview in 1982. "I was teaching in a small town southeast of Moose Jaw, and a friend introduced me to Dorothy Holtby Boan. Dorothy was close to 90 years old at the time and I still remember how she chuckled when she recalled how wonderful it felt to be free." Anne taped the interview and listened to it again in 2005 and realized that she had the makings of a wonderful story. She brought the tape to the book launch and the children were taken back in time, first 29 years to the original interview, and then 108 years as they listened to Mrs. Boan describe what it was like to be a young girl on a ship bound for Canada. "Everyone (but me) was so seasick, that I got to run around and explore every nook and cranny. I had the run of the whole ship!"

Drawing on extensive primary source material which included the taped interview and Dorothy's brother Robert's diary, Anne Patton has constructed a tight and realistic children's novel that will have broad appeal. Period details and period speech, and anecdotes of actual events are beautifully incorporated into the narrative. The book rewards the reader with the sense of what it must have been like for a family to take the life-changing decision to leave the homes they knew and to travel to a big, harsh and beautiful new world. It also enables one to experience the liberating feeling shared by so many pioneers as the freedom of Canada gave them the opportunity to break free of the social and class restrictions of Victorian England.

Full Steam To Canada is published by Coteau Books. Anne's other popular children's books include *Fiddle Dancer* and *Dancing In My Bones* which explore Metis Culture, and *Song Lei in a New Land*, a novel about a Chinese girl who arrives in the Queen City (Regina) expecting to find a queen. The forthcoming sequel to *Full Steam To Canada* is tentatively titled *By Grit and By Gully* and will cover the journey of Dorothy Bolton from Saskatoon to the family's homestead in the Northwest.



Photo by Murray McDonnell