



CANADIAN CONTENT IN A DIGITAL WORLD

Submission from House of Anansi Press / Groundwood Books, November 2016

Over the past 50 years, the Canadian-owned publishing industry has grown in size, grown in stature and grown in reach. We believe that the amplification of Canadian stories through entrepreneurial Canadian publishers is a national and international success story, and the growth and influence of both House of Anansi Press and Groundwood Books over the same period has been a part of this success.

Ours is a digital business. Our intellectual property – the author and illustrator contracts that underpin our content, and the content itself – lives digitally. We prepare our books digitally, we market them digitally, and to a large extent we produce them digitally. However, in contrast to participants in other cultural industries such as film, television, and, for the most part, music, our creative work in publishing does not culminate in a digital product but in physical objects – high-quality printed books intended to endure for generations.

Books are vital to the intellectual and cultural lives of Canadians young and old. When we look forward 30 years to our nation's cultural and economic prospects, we see books at the centre. Of course that means that stories are at the centre, because it all comes back to stories. At Anansi and Groundwood we are proud of the many stories that we have helped bring into existence that we believe will be read in 30 years.

Here is one example from each company of the wide-ranging impact of our books and the stories they tell:

The CBC Massey Lectures series (Anansi). This series includes 46 titles dating back to 1961, all published in Canada by Anansi in print and digital form, with cumulative sales well over 1,000,000 copies. We have sold Massey Lectures titles into more than 40 territories worldwide, and the series is the basis for the Massey app, a major creative partnership between Anansi, the CBC, Critical Mass and Massey lecturers such as Margaret MacMillan, Adrienne Clarkson, Lawrence Hill, Wade Davis, Margaret Atwood, Stephen Lewis and Thomas King. The Massey app won a Cannes Silver Lion in 2013, the year we launched it.

Shi-shi-etko and Shinchi's Canoe, by Nicola Campbell, illustrated by Kim LaFave

(Groundwood). In 2005 Groundwood published *Shi-shi-etko*, a picture book about a young girl about to be taken to a residential school, and in 2008 we published the sequel, *Shin-chi's Canoe*, in which this young girl has to prepare her younger brother for the same devastating experience. Both books were then published in French by Editions des Plaines (Winnipeg), and *Shi-shi-etko* was the basis for a short film produced by Monkey Ink Media and directed by Kate Kroll, which was awarded “Best Drama” at the imagineNATIVE Media Festival. Since publication we have sold over 50,000 copies of these books (with sales still increasing year over year). We are proud that they have been so widely read, and so well received as stories that give children insight into a shameful part of our nation's history.

Here are our responses to the three questions from the Submission Guide, along with our broad recommendations in each area:

Consultation question #1: What does a cultural system that supports creators and respects citizen choice look like to you?

We believe that Canadian authors and illustrators are best-served by having a broad and diverse national choice of publishing partners with whom to work – Canadian publishers who are local to them and local to the readers they want to reach. House of Anansi was started by two Toronto writers because Canadian writers in the 1960s had so few Canadian publishing opportunities. Groundwood Books was started in the 1970s with the goal of publishing books for and about children whose experiences of the world are under-represented elsewhere. Every year since then we have worked to publish very good books that connect the widest possible range of Canadian writers and illustrators to the widest possible range of Canadian readers.

We recommend expanded investment in Canadian publishers through the Canada Book Fund, and we support the increased investments in the new programs of the Canada Council. These are proven public policy instruments in a cultural system that has been critically important to the long-term development of publishers like Anansi and Groundwood.

Consultation question #2: How can we meet the challenge of promoting Canada's creativity in the digital world, and how can we use content to promote a strong democracy?

Publishers like Anansi and Groundwood invest time and money in creative work. This work finds lasting expression in multiple forms – print and digital – in classrooms, in libraries and on home bookshelves, and links past generations with future generations. We have built up a wealth of diverse content over many years that has contributed to local and national conversations about self-expression, self-determination, political affairs, history, justice, equality, tolerance, sovereignty. These subjects can be illuminated for Canadians whether the book is nonfiction, or

fiction, or drama, or poetry, or a picture book or reader for children. We never lose sight of the fact that books and ideas transcend borders, especially in a digital world, but we know that we are so strong because what we do is rooted in the local.

We recommend that public policy and foreign investment decisions focus on expanding the Canadian-owned sector of the book industry. We suggest the possibility of incentives for increased investment in Canadian publishers from the private sector. Anansi and Groundwood are examples of the long-term benefits of building Canadian companies that concentrate not just on Canadian content but also on the economic benefits of keeping all publishing operations, and jobs, in Canada.

Consultation question #3: How do we support Canada's artists, content creators and cultural entrepreneurs in order to create a cultural ecosystem in which they thrive and that will benefit the growth of our middle class at home, and help them reach beyond our borders?

The use of our material in the classroom, especially in digital form if that is what students and teachers request, is a top priority for us and we have invested heavily in reaching that market. However we have watched with dismay as changes to Canada's copyright legislation hit our revenue and cut into our writers' incomes – putting a dent into our capacity to invest in new content and new formats. With the introduction of the “Fair Dealing Guidelines,” Canadian educators have stopped paying the licenses for use of our material in the classroom. This used to be an important market for us, but it is no longer even a market in the way that we, as businesspeople, understand that term. This turn of events has made future career prospects in this creative area more precarious – “thrive” is not really the word we would choose in this climate. We believe that a healthy ecosystem is dependent on a copyright regime that delivers fair remuneration for use of content.

We recommend that the government clarify fair dealing provisions immediately with a view to restoring a system of collective licensing that recognizes the value of our content, that covers (and pays for) digital use of our material in the classroom, and that works over the long-term for educators, for students, and for creators.