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**Premier Gordon Campbell speaks at the British Columbia Achievement Foundation's National Award for Canadian Non-Fiction Ceremony**

Premier Gordon Campbell

*Check against delivery*

It was interesting for me as I was coming to this today. You know, I thought to myself about the things that are really great about being Premier of British Columbia, and there are lots of good things, but this is a great thing. As I stand here today, I thought to myself, you know, it's funny how ideas happen, because at one point I thought to myself: wouldn't it be great if British Columbia actually had a way that we could show the rest of the country not just what we have but that we [care about] the rest of the country; not about saying how great we are -- but we are great -- not about reminding them how great we are but reminding them how great Canada is because we have a place called British Columbia and, hard to say, a place called Ontario and Newfoundland and the rest of the country.

And as we started the BC Achievement Foundation, I should tell you that nothing -- nothing -- ever happens because of one person. It happened because we had a government and I had colleagues in government who wanted to establish a foundation and properly endow it so they could start recognizing the achievements of individual British Columbians but also the potential for British Columbia to make a significant contribution to our country, not just economically but culturally and socially. And it was the board who really grabbed that idea and said let's see what we can do with it.

So today, the last time that I get to speak to the creative non-fiction award winners here, I want to give special recognition to all of the members of the board but particularly the person who never thanks himself, Keith Mitchell, for the great job he's done of leadership and commitment to all of us. Keith is probably more nervous about doing this than you would imagine. But I also want to say what a great job -- really, an incredible job -- has been done by Nora Newlands, not just for this but for the entire BC Achievement Foundation.

Nora, thank you very, very much for the great, great commitment you have made to all of us.

I think when I come here, one of the things I love is the presenters, so I want to say thanks to all the presenters before you speak for what you're going to do and help us with, but I really want to thank the authors. We have had dozens of authors who have applied for this national creative non-fiction award, and we have only had, we will have had today, seven winners.

You know, we are fortunate to live in a country like Canada that actually encourages people to show us our world in ways that we wouldn't want to sometimes imagine it. There has never been a time when it's more important than right now. We live in a time where the world has shifted, it has moved, it has changed dramatically, and our non-fiction writers are the ones that hold the real world up to us and say: "Here you are." They use their talent and their ability and their creativity to hold up a different mirror for each of us to see the world probably in a significantly different light. And when they do a great job, as our four nominees have done now, they teach us something not just about our country and our community, but I hope they teach us all something about ourselves. They touch us in different ways.

When you think of the changes that have taken place and that are taking place and that will continue relentlessly to reshape and reshape and reshape the world that we're going to live in, in the future, we have to recognize a lot of what we thought about the past has disappeared. In fact, the past is kind of the lost world. The question for us is how do we move forward and create the kind of world we want for ourselves, and we can't do that if we don't look ourselves squarely in the eye, and sometimes it is the incredible talent of a non-fiction writer that holds up the mirror of our world and says: "Look, that's you."

I don't know how many here have read yet *On the Farm*. It's not a picture of ourselves that we'd like to see. You know, sometimes I guess the time deficits we have, the personal deficits we have in terms of what we can do, we allow ourselves to walk by and to forget others who are less fortunate than us and to put them aside. *On the Farm* reminds us of the malevolence that is out there, but it also reminds us, I hope, of the incredible people who are constantly striving for justice. We can't forget the prosecutor. We can't forget the police forces. We can't forget the people who continually strived to find the answer, to look for justice and to move us forward. They are hidden, often, in our lives. *On the Farm* brings them forward, and we should reflect on that and reflect on what we can learn from that experience.

When I read Charles Foran's book about Mordecai.... I never met Mordecai Richler. We need more Mordecai Richlers. We really do today. We are too comfortable today, we are too complacent today, and the first thing that Mordecai would do is he would challenge all of us. In my line of work I can tell you I'm not sure I would have liked meeting Mordecai, but he would have challenged us. He would have provoked us. He would have asked us: "Think about this, and what about that, and don't stand and say you believe in one thing when you do another thing." He challenged the comfortable and reminded us as Canadians, year in and year out, as he wrote for us about the place we lived and the things we aspired to.... He challenged us to be better, and because he consistently challenged us, he is a champion.

He is someone Canadians remember. As Charles pointed out, if you look at the book, the life and times of Mordecai Richler, the front is a picture of Mordecai. You don't even have to tell people it's Mordecai. I'm trying to figure out how he constantly did that so fashionably with his glasses, and I'm going to work on that in the future. But I can tell you this. We need more Mordecais, and maybe the Life and Times will encourage someone else to follow the kind of path that he led. They'll be unique, they'll be different, but they will get us to see ourselves in a different light. They will challenge us.

And what about the challenges that we see in James's exceptional story of the quest to find his past and to find himself in that past? Like James, I was the son of a doctor; like James, my father took his own life; and I know what happened when that happened with me. It was quiet. It wasn't just quiet. There was silence. I didn't discover that my father had taken his own life until years after it happened. That was because someone was trying.... They think -- I believe they felt -- they were trying to protect me. They were trying to protect me from the stigma of depression. They were trying to protect me from talking about suicide.

It's interesting. We can talk about suicides in other groups, but we can't find a way to talk about it in our own immediate families. Today in Canada there is about three million people in Canada that have suffered from depression, and they're quiet about it. They try to hide it, and they wrestle with it in their lives. And if you read James's book, you'll find about the wrestling match that takes place, and it doesn't stop. It doesn't stop because you wake up on a Monday and it's a nice day out. It is always there in your minds. And what better gift to us than to remind us that our world unfortunately is touched by mental illness, each of our communities. It doesn't matter how high your income, it doesn't matter where you're from, I can tell you your community is touched by mental illness.

I know from my experience in public life that although we can talk about it up high, when it comes to our own communities, when it comes to our own neighbourhoods, we want to put it behind us. James has brought that forward and said: "Look at this. See this. Imagine this. Feel this. Know this. Act on this." That's what creative non-fiction can do.

And John Vaillant's tiger reminds us that the world that we live in is one world, with beings of all sorts that shape it. As I started to go through John's book, I thought to myself how much easier it is to think about what they should do or should be or how they should act in Siberia than it is to ask us to do the same things of ourselves here in British Columbia or in Canada; how easy it is for each of us to say what others should do as opposed to what we should do.

So today I want to say thanks to each of our nominees. I want to say thank you to each of you for holding up a different mirror of different aspects of our lives in Canada. I want to say thank you for giving of yourselves, because you can't write

a book of this quality without an enormous personal gift and personal commitment. So thank you for that.

And to all of you who are here today, thank you for offering your support to this national award for creative non-fiction. It does help define us as British Columbians. It helps remind us of both who we are, but it also helps remind us of what we can be. And I want to say, as this is my last time that I get to talk to you in this capacity.... Let me just say that I think that right at the end of John Vaillant's book he talks about the recipe for the future, and the recipe for our future, in his words: "It's elusive, it's costly and time-consuming to prepare, but one thing is clear. Its active ingredients are not greed and guilt but vision and desire."

What do we want to be? Who do we want to be? What do we want to reflect as a country? How can we do that together?

I promised, Keith, that as I left you today, I would leave you with this quote: "Whatever you can do or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it." Thank you to our authors for their boldness in taking on their projects. Thank you to each of them for creating a special kind of magic for each of us as we read their books. And thank you to all of you. If we continue to be bold and pursue our dreams, our goals and our objectives as Canadians, with all of the strengths we have as a country, recognizing all of the weaknesses we have, there is nothing that we can't accomplish, and we can become what we would like to become: a model not just for the world but, mostly importantly, for our children and fellow Canadians in the years ahead.

Thank you very much. Thank you for coming.