

# Local author excited about release of book

by Bruce Parker  
Brooks Bulletin

Persistence is finally paying off for a Brooks woman.

After submitting her book "Danny Howard: Hero at Large" to 13 agents and numerous publishers, Donna MacNaughton has finally hit pay dirt.

She initially thought Rain Publishing would be putting out her children's book (grades four and five) but the person that runs the business got sick and all projects were put on hold this past spring.

"Basically, they gave me the option of looking at other alternatives and at that point I thought maybe this is a sign. Maybe I was meant to self-publish."

She proceeded to research self-publishers and discovered a business in Calgary called Blitzprint. While the deal was being finalized, Blitzprint started a new publishing company called Frontlist Publishing.

Frontlist Publishing is a cross-over company. It is not a traditional publisher and it is not self-publishing. It is in the middle.

Because of this, MacNaughton will do all the marketing that she normally would do and she is still going to be able to purchase books at a good price so she can sell them herself. At the same time, she will be able to take advantage of their marketing and distribution package where the book will be on Amazon.ca. In addition, book wholesalers will be carrying "Danny Howard: Hero at Large".

As part of her marketing plan she will be approaching area schools to see if she can talk to grades four and five students. She said Holy Family Academy has already approached her about taking part in their book fair and talking to classes.

"Danny Howard: Hero at Large" is about a boy who moves to Alberta from Ontario with his father. They don't have much but they manage and they get to live in a tent for the summer.

Danny makes friends easily at his new school, and life is good-until he begins to draw fire from the school bully. When Danny stands up for his friends, he faces some nasty retaliation for it, but the final insult-being

accused of stealing-is almost too much. What's the point of standing up for others if you just get beaten down for it? It takes every last bit of ingenuity that Danny has to get himself out of the mess, and he learns that you don't have to be a hero-you just have to do the right thing.

The official book release party will take place on October 19 at St. Joseph's Collegiate from noon to 4 p.m.

At this point, the only local business that has agreed to carry her book is Shoppers Drug Mart (2nd Street location). Owner Dave Myson will be hosting a book signing the weekend of October 24-25.

"He has been very awesome. We all know that Brooks is very supportive. This community has been very supportive of so many people, no matter what their situation or what they are doing. When he heard I was having a book published he said 'oh my gosh we have to do something'."

Excited doesn't even begin to cover how she feels about having her book published.

"It has been 10 years and every step of this process has gotten more and more exciting."

Lorraine Spence did the cover illustration and when MacNaughton first saw the drawing this past summer, it was exciting to see a picture of the kid who has lived in her head for the past 10 years.

The next step was to approach Iwaasa Industries to do all her marketing material and Roxanne Ross was very creative. She did all of the work with MacNaughton and helped come up with the cover design with Spence and MacNaughton.

While there are details still to work out, she has had a lot of friends and family approach her to see if they can do something to help out. They will be putting on an art show and sale along with a craft sale at the official book release party on October 19.

MacNaughton was not able to take part in the recent Kurtis Smith fundraiser so decided she would donate a portion of her book sales from the party to the family. Kurtis is a St. Joseph's Collegiate student who has been diagnosed with Pre B Acute Lymphatic Leukemia.

"You know what. It's because

we are a community. People have given to me so I am giving back a little bit."

The fundraiser for the family is a perfect example of what this community does.

"I have talked to people who have lived in Lethbridge and they come here. They are just absolutely shocked at the way the whole community comes out to support something like that. In the city, you may get a core group of people that know the person and come."

MacNaughton said her situation is not a need situation but it is a personal dream that is being fulfilled. Aside from her family and friends, the whole community has supported and cheered her on.

"It is such a good feeling. It means a lot."

With her first book set to be released, plans are underway to release her second book, "Danny Howard: Fostering Eli" in 2009.

MacNaughton is currently working on the third book in the series. She has a working title but nothing is set in stone.

Writing a third book is easier than her first in some ways because she knows the characters well but it is nerve wracking to sit down and think she is going to start writing a book.

Under normal circumstances, she works on her writing four mornings a week from 9 a.m. to 11:30.

When she first started writing, she did not have a schedule and would write when her children were in bed. Her children are grown now and after taking a creative writing course, she decided she needed to schedule her time.

With people hearing about her first book coming out, people have told her about how their children or their friends have written a book.

"I just find this so incredible. I can probably name five kids right now that I know have either written a book, are writing a book or are writing serious poetry."

MacNaughton said when she was a child, the only writing she did was in school.

It just seems there is a lot of focus on reading and writing and that is what kids do now. They write in their free time.

"I think that is a really good sign for the future of literacy."