



BNC RESEARCH

A RESEARCH REPORT BY BOOKNET CANADA

# BNC RESEARCH

01.2019

## **The RBC Taylor Prize** Congratulations, nominees!

**What happens now?**  
**What if you win?**



**BOOKNET  
CANADA**

PREPARED BY BNC STAFF

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## Introduction

Being nominated for a literary award is an exciting time for a publisher, because with national recognition comes increased orders and sales. So, what's the best way to stay on top of the game? Can you predict when your books are going to start flying off the shelves? Will you need to reprint? What happens if you win?

BNC Research's literary award studies help Canadian publishers avoid surprises during awards season. By looking at sales data from previous years, we can better predict potential sales and order spikes, giving you the data you need to ensure you have enough copies in the warehouse and on booksellers' shelves.

This study examines sales and order trends for titles shortlisted for the 2018 RBC Taylor Prize for Literary Non-Fiction. To get a sense of what to expect during the award season, and to help nominees with stock and demand planning, we have created a trend analysis of last year's shortlist and winner, as well as a comparison in sales and stock position of all the winners from 2013 to 2018.

This study includes:

- Week-over-week comparison of volume sold for all nominees
- Stock position by week: How many units were on hand during the award season?
- On-order position by week: When do orders rise and fall, and by how much?

The first section of this study compares the 2018 RBC Taylor Prize shortlisted titles by volume sold and includes a look at overall sales in the Non-Fiction market during this time. The comparison by volume sold helps us understand how the award affects consumer behavior, and how it relates to the rise and fall of the Non-Fiction market as a whole.

Next, we look at the 2018 shortlisted titles individually, showing volume sold, units on hand (OH), and units on order (OO) throughout the RBC Taylor Prize timeline. This shows us the retail demand and how retailers are predicting sales, especially during the holiday season.

Finally, the year-over-year comparison looks at the award winners from 2013 to 2018, showing the impact of the award over time and noting similarities and special cases. The volume-sold comparison shows how the award is reaching readers; on-hand numbers show how retailers are predicting sales; and on-order information shows the retail demand.

### Note:

- All dates used in the graphs represent week-ending dates.
- BNC calculates percent change based on average units sold three weeks prior to shortlist and winner announcements compared to units sold in the week following each announcement. These calculations are dependent on a given title's availability in the market.

## Caveats

Based on publisher feedback, we estimate that BNC SalesData represents 85% of physical book industry sales. Certain retail categories are not completely covered by our retail panel, and this should be noted in any interpretation of these results, as the effect of certain awards may not be fully captured in our data. These retail categories include:

- **Independent bookstores:** BNC SalesData includes most major independent bookstores and many smaller ones but not all, any of which could be actively promoting an award winner. It also does not capture some specialty independent bookstores where a genre- or subject-specific award may have more impact. However, we are able to detect even the slightest variation in sales in our independent panel, so we are confident that sales changes in the independent market are well represented.
- **K-12 and higher-education sales:** Our panel does not include direct institutional sales to schools or college/university textbook sales.

New booksellers have begun contributing to BNC SalesData since our first literary awards study, conducted in October 2006. Some changes seen in year-over-year sales figures may be due to the increased number of stores reporting sales, rather than a true increase in overall sales.

At this time, ebook sales are not represented in BNC's data. Therefore, all numbers in this report refer to print books only.

# The RBC Taylor Prize 2018

Organized by The Writers' Trust of Canada

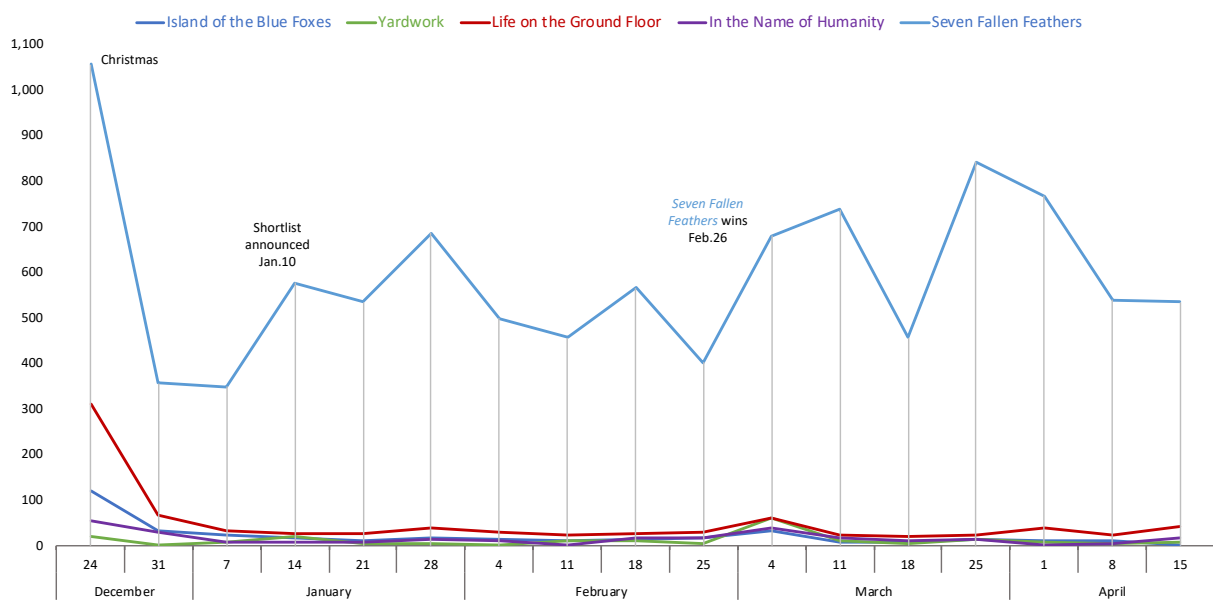
Nominations announced: Jan. 10, 2018

Winner announced: Feb. 26, 2018

Winner: *Seven Fallen Feathers*

## Volume Sold for All Shortlisted Titles

|          |    | Christmas                                                                         | Shortlist announced                                                               | Winner announced                                                                  |                                                                                   |                                                                                    |                    |             |             |  |  |
|----------|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------|--|--|
|          |    |  |  |  |  |  |                    |             |             |  |  |
|          |    | <i>Island of the Blue Foxes</i>                                                   | <i>Yardwork</i>                                                                   | <i>Life on the Ground Floor</i>                                                   | <i>In the Name of Humanity</i>                                                    | <i>Seven Fallen Feathers</i>                                                       | Overall Unit Sales | Non-Fiction | Week number |  |  |
| December | 24 | 118                                                                               | 19                                                                                | 309                                                                               | 55                                                                                | 1,055                                                                              | 1,556              | 1,024,478   | 1           |  |  |
|          | 31 | 33                                                                                | 0                                                                                 | 67                                                                                | 28                                                                                | 355                                                                                | 483                | 424,443     | 2           |  |  |
| January  | 7  | 23                                                                                | 8                                                                                 | 31                                                                                | 7                                                                                 | 348                                                                                | 417                | 344,388     | 3           |  |  |
|          | 14 | 15                                                                                | 19                                                                                | 24                                                                                | 8                                                                                 | 576                                                                                | 642                | 329,939     | 4           |  |  |
| February | 21 | 9                                                                                 | 5                                                                                 | 27                                                                                | 7                                                                                 | 534                                                                                | 582                | 338,245     | 5           |  |  |
|          | 28 | 16                                                                                | 4                                                                                 | 37                                                                                | 12                                                                                | 684                                                                                | 753                | 342,006     | 6           |  |  |
|          | 4  | 13                                                                                | 0                                                                                 | 28                                                                                | 10                                                                                | 497                                                                                | 548                | 321,797     | 7           |  |  |
|          | 11 | 10                                                                                | 9                                                                                 | 21                                                                                | 2                                                                                 | 456                                                                                | 498                | 299,599     | 8           |  |  |
| March    | 18 | 13                                                                                | 11                                                                                | 27                                                                                | 16                                                                                | 565                                                                                | 632                | 322,477     | 9           |  |  |
|          | 25 | 15                                                                                | 4                                                                                 | 29                                                                                | 17                                                                                | 401                                                                                | 466                | 292,172     | 10          |  |  |
|          | 4  | 33                                                                                | 60                                                                                | 61                                                                                | 37                                                                                | 679                                                                                | 870                | 300,384     | 11          |  |  |
|          | 11 | 8                                                                                 | 9                                                                                 | 23                                                                                | 17                                                                                | 736                                                                                | 793                | 297,117     | 12          |  |  |
| April    | 18 | 8                                                                                 | 3                                                                                 | 19                                                                                | 11                                                                                | 455                                                                                | 496                | 301,830     | 13          |  |  |
|          | 25 | 12                                                                                | 14                                                                                | 21                                                                                | 14                                                                                | 840                                                                                | 901                | 297,348     | 14          |  |  |
|          | 1  | 11                                                                                | 7                                                                                 | 39                                                                                | 1                                                                                 | 766                                                                                | 824                | 292,279     | 15          |  |  |
|          | 8  | 11                                                                                | 4                                                                                 | 23                                                                                | 5                                                                                 | 538                                                                                | 581                | 281,333     | 16          |  |  |
|          | 15 | 2                                                                                 | 7                                                                                 | 41                                                                                | 15                                                                                | 534                                                                                | 599                | 283,643     | 17          |  |  |



Shortlist announcement (Jan. 10, 2018):

The impact of the shortlist announcement varied by title. While two titles experienced a sales decline the week of the shortlist announcement, three titles saw increases in sales. The winning title, *Seven Fallen Feathers*, experienced a percent change of -8.87% based on a sales average from three weeks prior — keeping in mind that this time period included Christmas — compared to the week after the announcement; when we compare the week before and the week after the announcement, units sold almost doubled. *Life on the Ground Floor* also had increased sales after the shortlist announcement, but only by a minimal amount. In general, percent change declines are likely because the announcement takes place after Christmas, when consumer behaviour is on a decline.

**Winner announcement (Feb. 26, 2018):**

The week after the winner announcement, sales only increased for the winning title, *Seven Fallen Feathers*. Similar to the shortlist announcement, the winner and *Life on the Ground Floor* were the only titles to increase in sales. Both of those titles were also nominated for the Hilary Weston Writers' Trust Prize for Nonfiction earlier in the fall and *Life on the Ground Floor* won on Nov. 14, 2017. This may have influenced the popularity of these two titles, which were the highest selling among all the nominated titles in the 17-week period.

Nominee

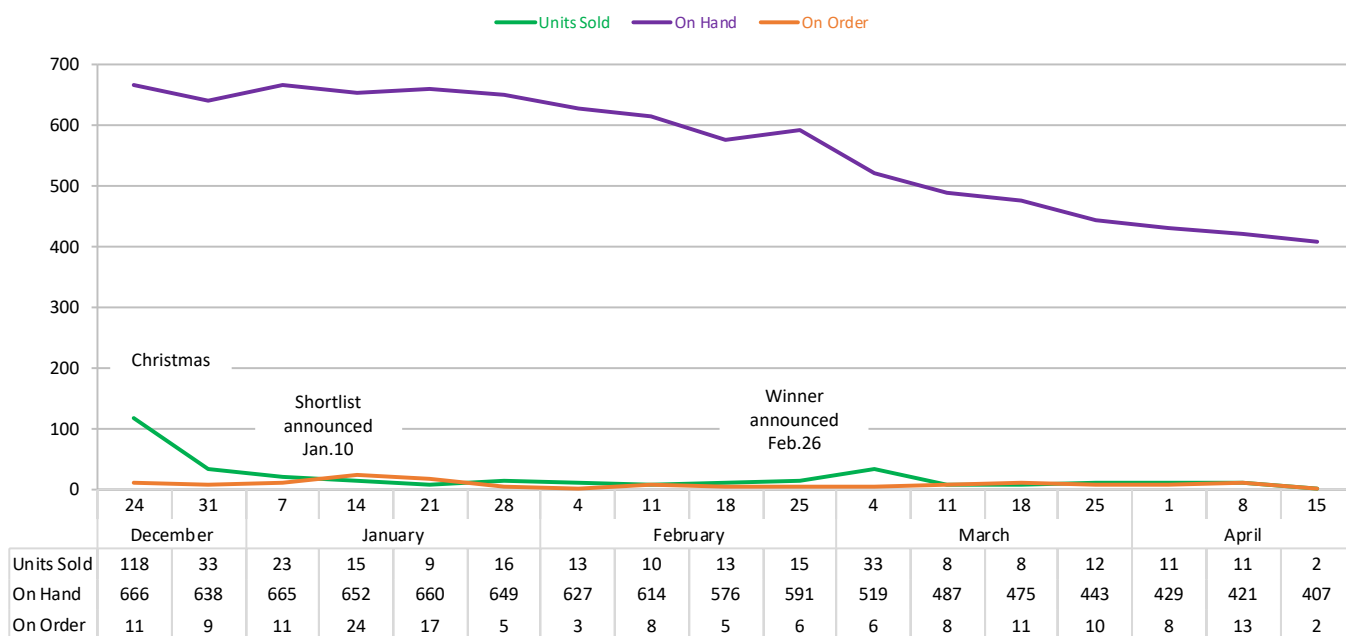
# Stephen R. Bown's *Island of the Blue Foxes*

*Disaster and Triumph on Bering's Great Voyage to Alaska*

Douglas and  
McIntyre  
Trade Paperback  
9781771621618  
\$34.95



Sales vs. On Hand vs. On Order

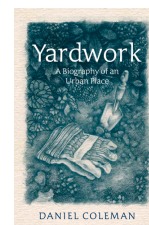


Nominee

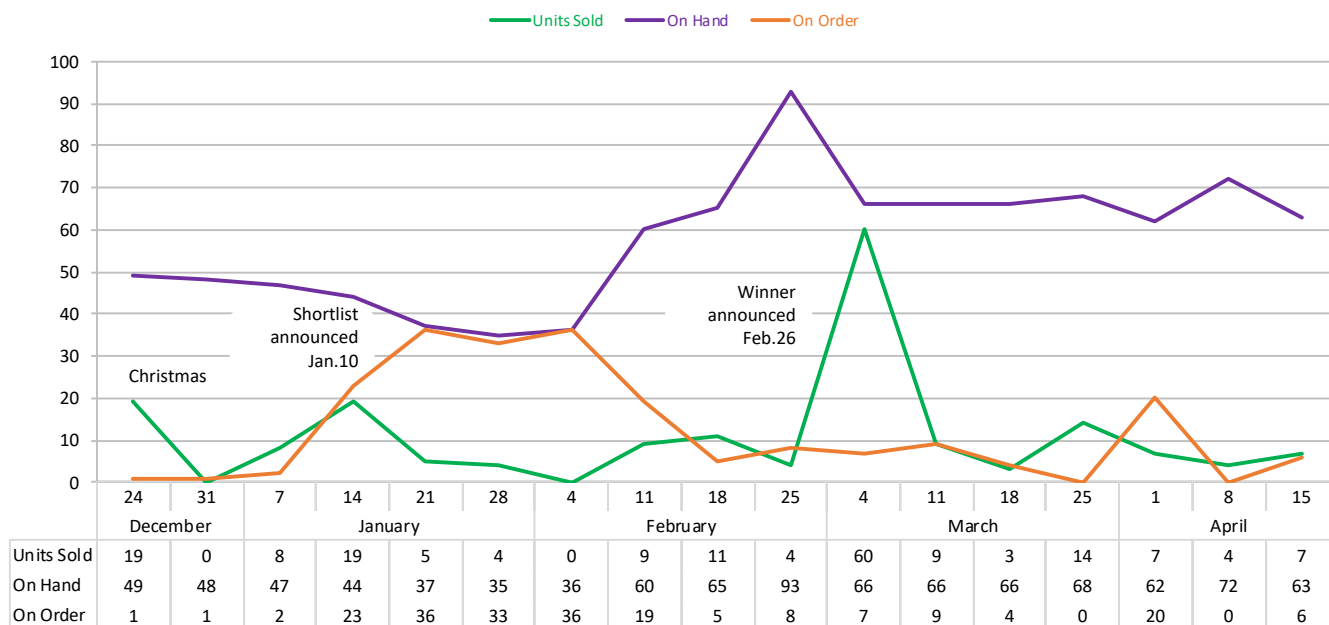
# Daniel Coleman's *Yardwork*

*A Biography of an Urban Place*

Wolsak & Wynn Publishers  
Trade Paperback  
9781928088288  
\$20.00



Sales vs. On Hand vs. On Order

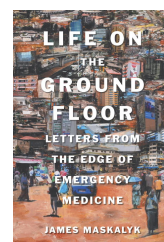


Nominee

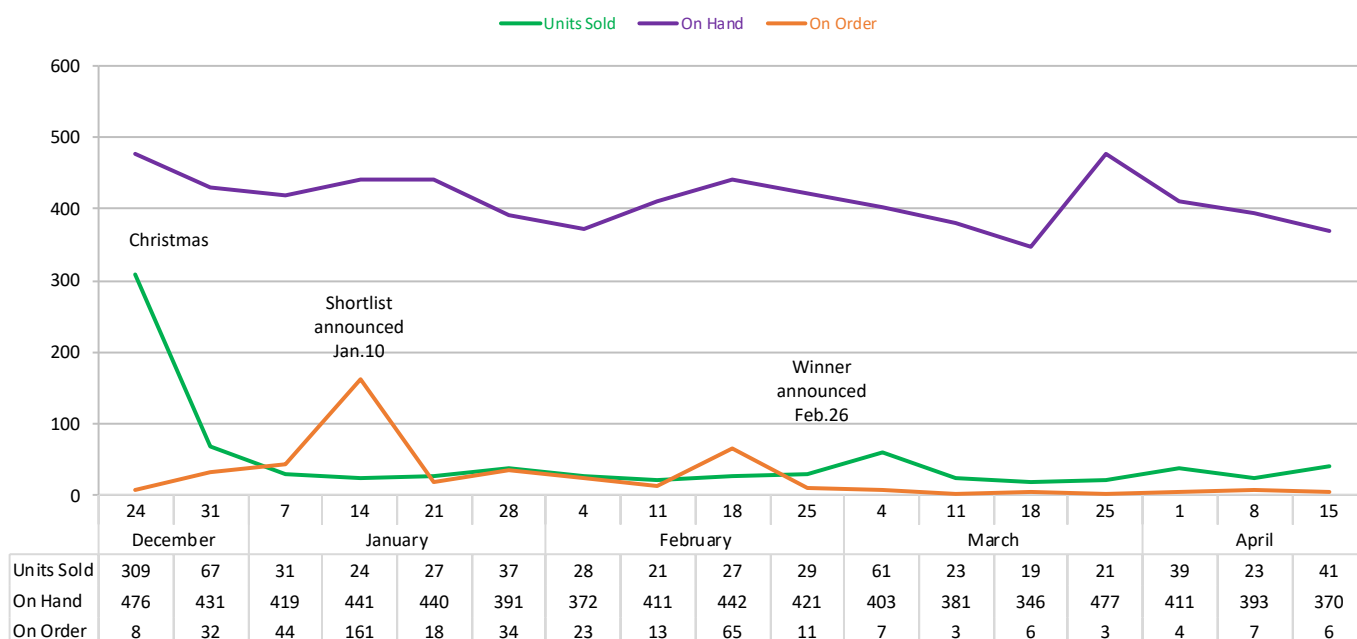
# James Maskalyk's *Life on the Ground Floor*

*Letters from the Edge of Emergency Medicine*

Doubleday Canada  
Hardcover Trade  
9780385665971  
\$29.95



Sales vs. On Hand vs. On Order



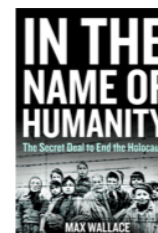
James Maskalyk's *Life on the Ground Floor* was also nominated for the 2017 Hilary Weston Writers' Trust Prize for Nonfiction in September 2017 and won in November 2017.

Nominee

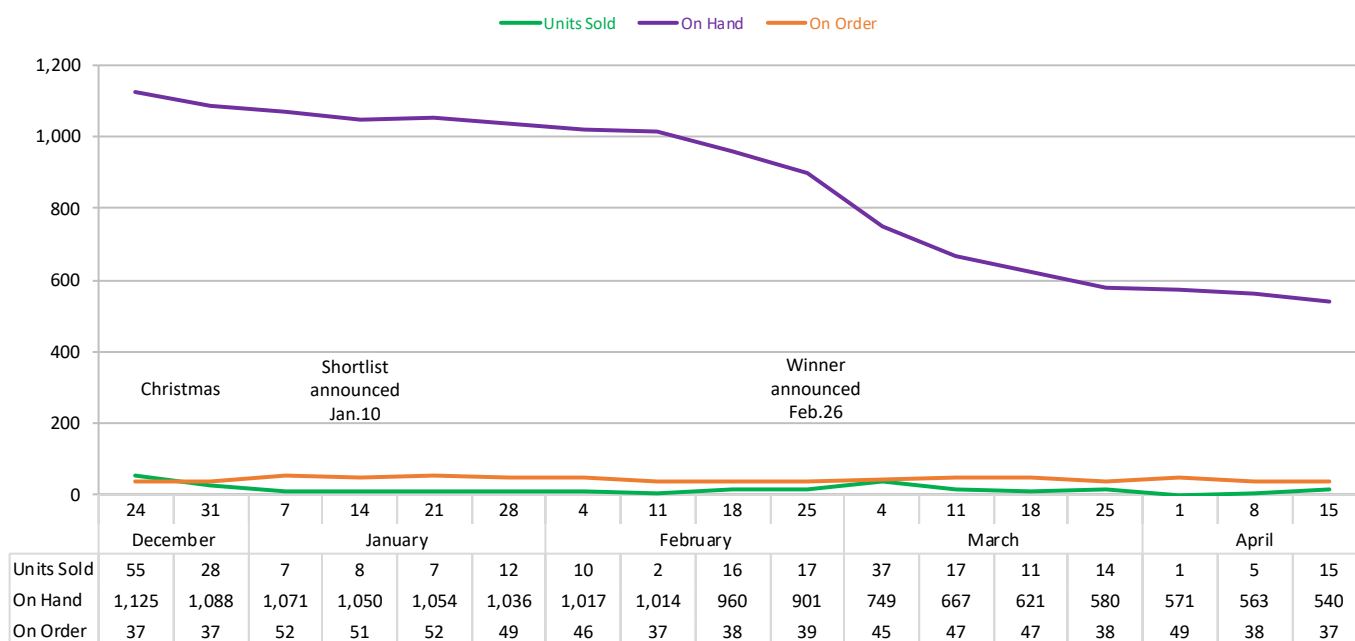
# Max Wallace's *In the Name of Humanity*

*A Memoir of Love, Prison, and Other Complications*

Penguin Canada  
Hardcover Trade  
9780670069590  
\$36.00



Sales vs. On Hand vs. On Order

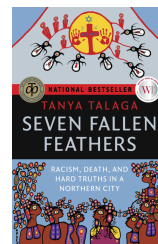


Winner

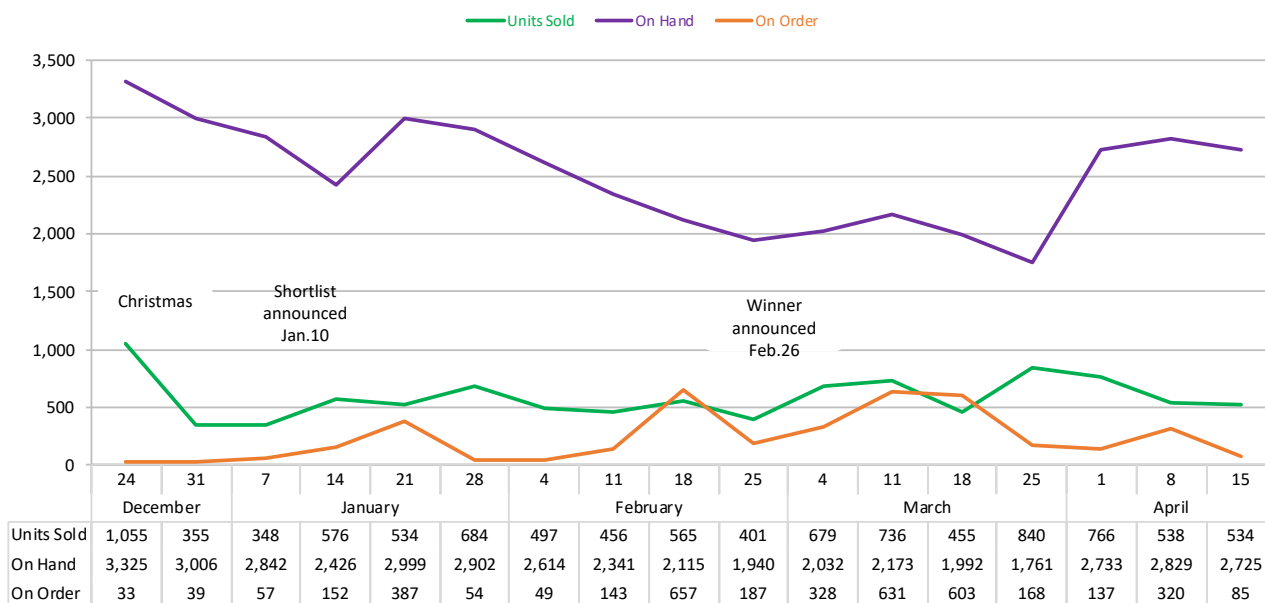
# Tanya Talaga's *Seven Fallen Feathers*

*Racism, Death, and Hard Truths in a Northern City*

House of Anansi Press  
Trade Paperback  
9781487002268  
\$22.95



Sales vs. On Hand vs. On Order



In addition to winning the 2018 RBC Taylor Prize, *Seven Fallen Feathers* was nominated for the 2017 Hilary Weston Writers' Trust Prize for Nonfiction in September 2017.

## Year-Over-Year Comparison 2013–2018

2018

Tanya Talaga's *Seven Fallen Feathers*

House of Anansi Press

Trade Paperback | 9781487002268 | \$22.95

2016

Rosemary Sullivan's *Stalin's Daughter*

HarperCollins Canada

Hardcover Trade | 9781443414425 | \$34.99

2014

Thomas King's *The Inconvenient Indian*

Doubleday Canada

Hardcover Trade | 9780385664219 | \$34.95

Trade Paperback | 9780385664226 | \$21.00

2017

Ross King's *Mad Enchantment*

Doubleday Canada

Hardcover Trade | 9780385684620 | \$39.95

2015

Plum Johnson's *They Left Us Everything*

Penguin Group (Canada)

Trade Paperback | 9780143189053 | \$22.00

2013

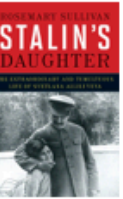
Andrew Preston's *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith*

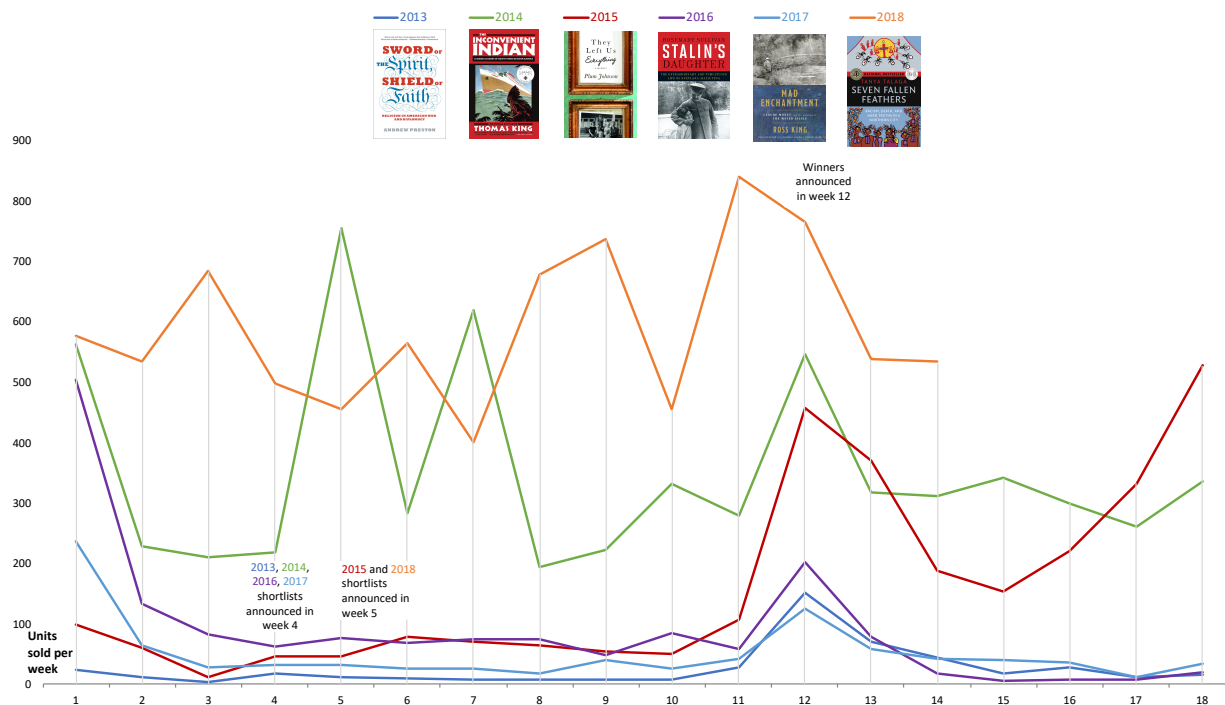
Knopf Canada

Hardcover Trade | 9780676977424 | \$37.50

Trade Paperback | 9780676977431 | \$24.95

## Winner Comparison – Volume Sold

|      | Shortlist announced                                                                 |                                                                                     | Winner announced                                                                    |                                                                                      |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|      | <i>Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith</i><br>Andrew Preston                       | <i>The Inconvenient Indian</i><br>Thomas King                                       | <i>They Left Us Everything</i><br>Plum Johnson                                      | <i>Stalin's Daughter</i><br>Rosemary Sullivan                                        | <i>Mad Enchantment</i><br>Ross King                                                   | <i>Seven Fallen Feathers</i><br>Tanya Talaga                                          |
|      |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Week | 2013                                                                                | 2014                                                                                | 2015                                                                                | 2016                                                                                 | 2017                                                                                  | 2018                                                                                  |
| 1    | 23                                                                                  | 562                                                                                 | 99                                                                                  | 503                                                                                  | 237                                                                                   | 829                                                                                   |
| 2    | 11                                                                                  | 229                                                                                 | 61                                                                                  | 134                                                                                  | 64                                                                                    | 1,055                                                                                 |
| 3    | 3                                                                                   | 210                                                                                 | 11                                                                                  | 83                                                                                   | 28                                                                                    | 355                                                                                   |
| 4    | 17                                                                                  | 218                                                                                 | 47                                                                                  | 62                                                                                   | 31                                                                                    | 348                                                                                   |
| 5    | 11                                                                                  | 756                                                                                 | 45                                                                                  | 77                                                                                   | 31                                                                                    | 576                                                                                   |
| 6    | 9                                                                                   | 283                                                                                 | 79                                                                                  | 69                                                                                   | 26                                                                                    | 534                                                                                   |
| 7    | 8                                                                                   | 620                                                                                 | 70                                                                                  | 74                                                                                   | 25                                                                                    | 684                                                                                   |
| 8    | 7                                                                                   | 193                                                                                 | 65                                                                                  | 74                                                                                   | 17                                                                                    | 497                                                                                   |
| 9    | 8                                                                                   | 223                                                                                 | 54                                                                                  | 49                                                                                   | 39                                                                                    | 456                                                                                   |
| 10   | 8                                                                                   | 331                                                                                 | 51                                                                                  | 85                                                                                   | 26                                                                                    | 565                                                                                   |
| 11   | 28                                                                                  | 279                                                                                 | 107                                                                                 | 58                                                                                   | 42                                                                                    | 401                                                                                   |
| 12   | 151                                                                                 | 547                                                                                 | 458                                                                                 | 201                                                                                  | 124                                                                                   | 679                                                                                   |
| 13   | 70                                                                                  | 318                                                                                 | 371                                                                                 | 78                                                                                   | 59                                                                                    | 736                                                                                   |
| 14   | 43                                                                                  | 311                                                                                 | 187                                                                                 | 17                                                                                   | 42                                                                                    | 455                                                                                   |
| 15   | 18                                                                                  | 341                                                                                 | 153                                                                                 | 5                                                                                    | 39                                                                                    | 840                                                                                   |
| 16   | 28                                                                                  | 300                                                                                 | 221                                                                                 | 7                                                                                    | 36                                                                                    | 766                                                                                   |
| 17   | 11                                                                                  | 260                                                                                 | 332                                                                                 | 8                                                                                    | 11                                                                                    | 538                                                                                   |
| 18   | 15                                                                                  | 335                                                                                 | 528                                                                                 | 20                                                                                   | 33                                                                                    | 534                                                                                   |



The RBC Taylor Prize clearly has a positive sales effect on winning titles; all of the winning titles in the past six years experienced a sales increase after the winner announcement. *Seven Fallen Feathers* experienced the highest sales numbers during this 18-week period, possibly influenced by the other award and public acclaim it received, followed by *The Inconvenient Indian*.

## Conclusion

Our analysis leads us to conclude that the RBC Taylor Prize for Literary Non-Fiction continues to have a positive impact on Canadian book sales:

- Five out of six nominated titles in 2017 saw an increase in sales immediately following the winner announcement, with sales for the 2018 future winner peaking for Christmas and three weeks after it won the RBC Taylor Prize. Sales for the 2018 winning title were lowest the week before it won.
- The impact of the shortlist announcement was varied for the nominated titles; while some titles experienced increases in sales following the announcement, others experienced decreases. As the shortlist is announced after the holiday season, overall consumer behaviour is on the decline during this time period.
- The highest-selling winning titles both benefited from other awards:
  - The 2014 winner, Thomas King's *The Inconvenient Indian*, also won the 2014 British Columbia's National Award for Canadian Non-Fiction and the 2013 Canadian Booksellers Association Libris Award for Non-Fiction Book of the Year, in addition to being nominated for Canada Reads 2015, the 2014 Hilary Weston Writers' Trust Prize for Nonfiction, and the 2013 Trillium Award.
  - *Seven Fallen Feathers* was nominated for the 2017 Hilary Weston Writers' Trust Prize for Nonfiction, the 2017 Speaker's Book Award, and 2018's British Columbia's National Award for Canadian Non-Fiction; it won the First Nation Communities Read Indigenous

Literature Award, and 2017's Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing, in addition to being a *National Post* 99 Best Book of the Year and a *Globe and Mail* Top 100 Book.