

PROFILE: Jacqueline Moore

by J. Jill Robinson

In April I contacted Jacquie Moore in Saskatoon to ask if I could interview her about her book, *The Saskatchewan Secret: Folk Healers, Diviners, and Mystics of the Prairies*.

Nice to be speaking with you again, Jacquie. A lot has been going on with you in terms of your writing in the last six months, hasn't it?

A LOT has been going on, Jill! More than I could have imagined, really.

Let's hop right in to talking about your book. *The Saskatchewan Secret: Folk Healers, Diviners, and Mystics of the Prairies* is your first book, isn't it?

Yes.

I understand it has been doing really well—for example, it has spent a good long time on McNally Robinson's bestseller list.

Yes, Nicole at the store tells me it's been on for 20 or 22 weeks all together.

WOW! That must feel just great. Talk about affirming!

Absolutely, it does feel wonderful.

The Saskatchewan Secret is a collection of essays about healers in Saskatchewan. How did that topic pique your interest?

I'd been hearing about several naturally gifted healers in the province for years, and they'd become almost legendary to me. And this was the thing: they don't advertise, so I could only learn of these people through word-of-mouth. These sporadic anecdotes had a mythical quality because of the healers' elusiveness—you

could never get a clear answer on where they lived or their proper name, it seemed—and because the cures were so amazing, I very much wanted to meet them and find out about how they became healers. I wanted to experience firsthand, and then share, the person who can see illness within the body and manipulate energy. I applied for a Saskatchewan Arts Board grant to see if I could get a little help with research and travel costs, and they very graciously gave me some funding. That meant I was now committed, and over the next two years, I put together thirteen stories. Although it hadn't been my original intention to write a book, by then I had enough material to do just that.

There was another healer, a fourteenth subject, who I interviewed extensively but who never made it into the book—although he is fascinating and worthy, the story simply would not happen. And I know of many other astounding healers in this province; however, their names didn't come my way personally so I did not seek them out.

Given that they are so elusive, how did you find the "healers, diviners, and mystics" you've written about?

Finding them was the hardest part of the project. I had established several criteria to work with: that they had no formal training in healing arts; that they didn't advertise or make a business out of what they did; that their names came to me through a third party.

How was the writing process for you?

Well, let me say that the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild has

been absolutely instrumental throughout this whole project. First off, I was chosen to take part in their Mentorship Program and got major motivation and invaluable insights being paired up with you, Jill! That's when the writing really came together for me, and I credit



you for challenging me to fully engage in each of those stories. Then through the Manuscript Evaluation Service, I was able to get David Carpenter to go through the book and provide wonderfully useful feedback, too.

Thank-you, Jacquie. You self-published your book, didn't you? What made you decide to go that route?

I'd been working on my manuscript for over three years, what with research, writing, and editing, and I now wanted the book in-hand quickly. Some of the healers I featured were getting elderly and I was anxious to honour them with their stories in print in a timely manner. Plus my friend Wes Funk (who wrote *Dead Rock Stars*) convinced me that self-publishing was not as daunting as I'd previously thought!

Has it been a satisfactory process? Would you recommend it to others, or do you have some cautionary advice to offer?

It has been a very satisfactory process. I had total creative authority, so the look of the book is exactly what I'd envisioned.

I hired Benchmark Press in Regina, and I liked that they basically have a menu of options from which you can pick and choose. For instance, I didn't feel I needed their editing services as I'd had two of the best editors in the province already look at the manuscript, but I was more than happy to have Benchmark deal with ISBN numbers and Library and Archives Canada—all that administrative stuff. They were also able to handle some promotion and media relations, which was most helpful. And they set up an attractive website for me: www.folkhealers.ca.

That being said, there are definitely caveats. It's difficult to gauge how much of a market there is for your book, so how many should you print? The more you print, the less you pay per copy, but you need to have that cash up front. Plus you don't want to be overwhelmed with a basement full of books. In order to retain some profit, you need to be willing to do most of the legwork yourself and keep the buzz going—in the end, you're the one on the line.

Your book has sure been selling, too. A typical first book is doing well if it sells five hundred copies. But you have sold over 1300 copies in six months! That must feel great. Any idea why that might be?

I feel very lucky that *The Saskatchewan Secret* is selling so well. I think the timing just happened to be right, that people are more curious and open to these metaphysical concepts of energy healing, and the manifestation of intention. When I first started working on this book several years ago, that general interest was not as strong.

As a self-published author, have you had any difficulties placing your books in stores? And what other ways do you sell your books?

I promote the book by trying to get some coverage in local magazines and newspapers. I think to date there have been six stories on the book that have appeared in different community papers around the province.

It has been fairly easy to get the book into specific retailers that I thought would be a good fit—it's presently being sold in about 20 places around the province, as well as on my website. There have been a couple instances where a retailer rejected the book because I didn't have a distributor, but mostly I get the impression that if the book looks attractive, interesting, and saleable, the retailer wants to make money off it as much as you want a place to sell your book. I think that's the key.

McNally Robinson has been awesome. They hosted the launch of *The Saskatchewan Secret*, and that included all the pre-advertising and poster printing—in the end, some 70 people were there and it was, for me, a magical evening. The staff there is totally approachable and knowledgeable, and they're quick to call if they're getting low on books. I've been really impressed with that store in all ways.

Do you attribute some of your success to good reviews, word of mouth, or...?

Both. Good reviews have been very beneficial, and so has word-of-mouth. And book clubs are often eager to select a local book for reading if it means the author will come speak to them in person and answer questions—I've had some interesting times with those! Farmers' markets, craft fairs, and niche conventions are all great places to market your book, too.

What other kinds of promotional tools have you employed? Have you given some readings?

Doing regular readings is essential (if a little painful for many of us shy types), so I gratefully say "YES" whenever I'm asked. I have done several readings: at the Medstead Library; for the Vertigo Reading Series in Regina; in the Creative Writing class at Walter Murray Collegiate, and at the Unitarian Congregation of Saskatoon. A couple of times I signed up for Open Mic sessions with the Saskatoon Writers' Coop to get more practice.

Also, I've been chosen to participate in the Saskatchewan Arts Board's Culture on the Go Tour sometime before June. For that, four writers together will visit four communities around the province, in which we'll each do a reading in the local school by day, and then in a public venue in the evening. *The Saskatchewan*

REMINDER—J. V. HICKS AWARDS & SHORT MANUSCRIPT AWARDS

The deadline is June 30, 2010 for submissions to the John V. Hicks Awards. Details can be found at:

<http://www.skwriter.com/?s=home&id=114>

The Short Manuscript Awards deadline is also June 30 and information is available at:

<http://www.skwriter.com/?s=home&id=113>

For more information contact Tracy Hamon at 306-791-7743; email programs@skwriter.com

Secret would be nowhere near as successful—if even in existence—without all the support from the SWG.

Will you be entering it in the Saskatchewan Book Awards? I guess it would be eligible for nonfiction, first book, Saskatoon Book, Reader's Choice, and Book of the Year.

Yes, I would like to enter this book in the Saskatchewan Book Awards, and I'm so appreciative that they accept self-published work. I would have to say that there is still some prejudice out there about self-

publishing, but as books like *I Am Hutterite* become national bestsellers, it paves the way for more of us "indie" writers. For me, perhaps the most significant aspect of self-publishing is that I retain the rights to my book. And I must admit, it's actually exhilarating to get out there and sell as many copies as I can—there's a challenge in that, and a lot of personal satisfaction.

Are you working on another book?

I have half a dozen stories written for the next book, yes.

But these days I find I'm more extroverted while promoting *The Saskatchewan Secret*, and I haven't felt like sitting down quietly to write. So I have dedicated the rest of spring and summer to continue getting this book out, and in the fall I'll return to that project-in-waiting.

It's been a pleasure talking with you, Jacquie. All the best for continuing success with *The Saskatchewan Secret*.

Thank-you, Jill.

2010 HYLAND AWARD NOMINATIONS

The Hyland Award has been established to recognize the many achievements of Saskatchewan Writers' Guild members through their volunteer support of the Saskatchewan literary community.

CRITERIA

- The recipient must be an SWG member and a resident of the province.
- Recognition is for volunteer contributions made within the writing community on a local, provincial, or national level.
- The recipient must be a volunteer in the writing community for a minimum period of five years.
- The Hyland Award recipient must have provided outstanding service to the growth and development of the SWG and the writing community. In a letter (maximum three pages), the nominating Guild member should provide the following information:
 - the particular role played by the recipient in the SWG.
 - the impact of the contribution on the growth and development of the SWG and the writing community.

Nominators are asked to submit a letter as well as the prepared nomination form. This letter should include a description of the nominee's involvement in the SWG or the writing community. The description should be as complete as possible, since it will be used as the basis for the nomination.

The letter should include the following:

- the particular role played by the recipient in the SWG.
- the impact of the contribution on the growth and development of the SWG and the writing community.

Applications should be typed.

Please note that applications must be received in the SWG office no later than 4:30 p.m. on Friday, September 3, 2010.

Submit nominations to the following address: SWG, Hyland Award, Box 3986, Regina SK, S4P 3R9.

The Hyland Award will be presented at the annual general meeting of the SWG.

For a complete list of criteria and a nomination form, please visit: <http://www.skwriter.com/?s=home&id=99>