

The Lakefield Literary Festival has an exciting line-up of six amazing authors attending our events this July. Over the next several weeks the Festival has partnered with the Lakefield Herald to introduce you to our authors and their books which will be featured over the weekend of July 17 and 18. All tickets are on sale now, available online and at Happenstance Books and Yarns in Lakefield. For more details, visit lakefieldliteraryfestival.com

A Look at the Lakefield Literary Festival Authors

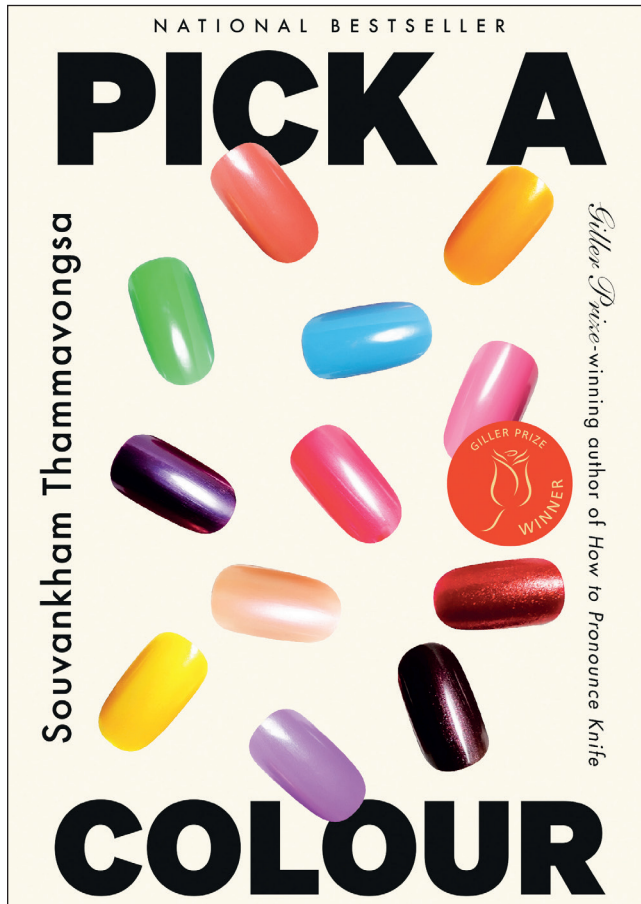
Pick A Colour by Souvankham Thammavongsa

BY BARRY MUTTER

Souvankham Thammavongsa is a Canadian writer born in a refugee camp in Thailand. At the age of one her family settled in Toronto. She is the winner of the 2025 Giller prize for her novel *Pick a Colour*. Her novel is narrated by the owner of a nail and cosmetic salon. The setting is the salon and the narration is first person omniscient. That simply means that the reader is privy to the thoughts and imagination of the narrator. The salon has, besides the owner, four employees. Why write a story about a nail and cosmetic salon? What would possess a reader to pick up the book and read it?

This writer deserves an award for her literature. Her novel reads like poetry. It highlights the world that consumes a nail cosmetician. The salon absorbs a large part of the waking hours of each girl. Beyond those hours, however, each girl has an another life. Our narrator peers into those lives. She illustrates them so sensitively that a reader can easily empathise and connect with each worker. Their daily existence is ordinary and their employment is basic. Each life, however, is a life worth writing about. The four employees have connections, siblings, partners, children, etc., that fill their day. Their lives are precious. Our protagonist, the narrator, focuses on each life and draws the reader into a relationship with each lady. The first person perspective evokes empathy and compassion to console the reader and involve them.

What do we know about the narrator? She is named



Ning and her life is unraveled before the reader. She is 42 years old. Her extracurricular passion is boxing. She describes her boxing matches clearly. She is a fighter and has excelled at it. The reader is comfortable that they are dealing with a strong woman. She lives what most of us would refer to as a sparse existence. She lives above the shop she created. She is not interested in marriage. She is not interested in having children. She is interested in independence.

She acquired knowledge of the business she founded by working for another. She was an employee for a decade. Her previous employer was also a strong woman. Their relationship was employee and employer, not friendship. Our narrator became a competitor and her relationship with her previous boss, Rachel, is now more like a contestant she would meet in the boxing ring. The purpose of a boxing match is to win. The purpose of a business is to succeed. Competitors are to be overcome.

Is there a theme? Beneath the surface of this narrative there is a sense of loneliness. The reader is privy to only the thoughts of the narrator. Although the narrator of the story is resilient, competitive, and very capable she is a loner. Is that the cross an immigrant from a different cultural and social environment must bear to join our Canadian family? Each woman working in the salon has come from another culture and social environment. Within the salon they are protected. They are in an environment where they can connect with colleagues who are similar. Outside the walls of the salon they are vulnerable and potentially invisible. Perhaps this is what our narrator wants. In the Nail Salon she is potent. She controls her environment. She knows her employees and knows that they need her. Ning can handle threats such as a competitor. She can deal with anything that occurs on her turf. Outside it is another world. Beyond the protection of the Salon she, and her employees, fade into anonymity. This could be the plight of anyone attempting to exist independently in what seems to be an alien culture. Is there not safety in the company of our own?

This story does not have a mysterious plot or a romantic relationship. The novel is about a half a dozen women working and living in a world of images and colour. Each woman has their own life to fulfil. Each cosmetician, however, possesses a responsibility to look after and care for their customers. *Pick a Colour* is a sensitive portrayal of characters living a full life in a world of colour.

LAKEFIELD LITERARY Festival

Books and Tickets available at Happenstance Books & Yarns

Pick a Colour by Souvankham Thammavongsa will be featured on July 18 at 3 p.m.

Tickets also available online at LakefieldLiteraryFestival.com

Trent Lakes Public Library

Buckhorn Library

Trent Lakes Public Library

BY JOANNE O'HERON

“Make a Splash – Dive Into a Good Book!” is the theme of this year’s Summer Reading Program at the Trent Lakes Public Library. Children are encouraged to keep reading throughout the summer to build strong reading habits, explore new adventures, and have fun with books. Visit either library branch to sign up and join the adventure.

Teddy Bear Story-time begins July 7 at the Cavendish Library. Every Tuesday from 6:30



Meet our summer student, Julia

p.m. to 7:30 p.m., children are invited to wear their favourite pajamas and bring along a cuddly stuffed animal for an evening of stories, crafts, and fun. This free program is

drop-in, and everyone is welcome.

We look forward to seeing you at the library this summer!

www.trentlakeslibrary.ca



Photo Submitted

The Alliance of Cottager and Road Associations met this past Saturday at the Wilson Park Community Centre in North Kawartha. This group of concerned organizations meet annually to discuss issues that take priority across the East Kawarthas regarding the environment, our waterways as well as land preservation.

STARTING AT \$59⁹⁷

KINGDON TIMBER MART

KINGDONTIMBERMART.CA (705) 652-3361

DOOR EXCHANGE program