Eowyn (pronounced A-o-win) LeMay Ivey was raised in Alaska and continues to live there with her husband and two daughters. Her mother named her after a character from J.R.R. Tolkien’s The Lord of the Rings. The Snow Child is Eowyn’s debut novel. Her essays and short fiction have appeared in London’s Observer Magazine, Sunday Times Magazine, Sunday Express Magazine and Woman & Home Magazine. Eowyn worked for nearly a decade as an award-winning reporter at the Frontiersman newspaper. Her weekly articles about her outdoor adventures earned her the Best Non-Daily Columnist award from the Alaska Press Club.

Eowyn earned her B.A. in journalism and creative writing through Western Washington University’s honors program and studied creative nonfiction in University of Alaska Anchorage’s graduate program. She is a contributor to the blog 49Writers and a founding member of Alaska’s first statewide writing center.

The Snow Child is informed by Eowyn’s life in Alaska. Her husband is a fishery biologist with the state of Alaska. While they both work outside of the home, they are also bringing up their daughters in the rural, largely subsistence lifestyle in which they were both raised.

As a family, they harvest salmon and wild berries; keep a vegetable garden, turkeys and chickens; and hunt caribou, moose and bear for meat. Until recently the family hauled water each week for their holding tank and gathered rainwater for their animals and garden. Their primary source of home heat is a woodstove, and they harvest and cut their own wood.

These activities are important to Eowyn’s day-to-day life as well as the rhythm of her year.

eowynivey.com

WE ARE PLEASED to present this year’s award-winning debut novel The Snow Child by author Eowyn Ivey. We selected this novel for its quality of prose and storytelling. The Snow Child takes place in Alaska during the 1920s as a couple homesteads an impossible land after losing their child. Ivey carries us through the stark Alaska landscape without apology—threading the story together with a magical realism and hopeful persistence. Ms. Ivey was inspired to write the novel after she discovered the classic Russian fairy tale of the snow maiden. The story haunted her with its loneliness and magic in a landscape very similar to the one she grew up in. The Snow Child won the UK National Book Award and was short-listed for the Center for Fiction’s first novel prize.

Eowyn Ivey

TOWER THEATRE TICKETS
Tickets become available starting April 13, 2013, at www.towertheatre.org, the Tower box office or (541) 317-0700. The event is free, however tickets are required. Author Eowyn Ivey presents at the Tower Friday, May 3 at 7:00 p.m.

Ivey also presents at Redmond’s Ridgeview High School on Saturday, May 4 at 11:00 a.m. No tickets are required for the Redmond event.

A book signing immediately follows the presentations.

eowynivey.com

AUTHOR EOWYN IVEY
A Novel Idea: What are some of the unexpected twists you experienced writing and getting your first novel published?

Eowyn Ivey: To be honest the entire experience has been unexpected. As a bookseller, I felt like I had reasonable expectations about the process—I would be lucky to get published at all, and then the book would most likely go entirely unnoticed. It has been incredible to see The Snow Child on The New York Times bestseller list and hear from readers from as far away as New Zealand, India and Scotland. I still have to pinch myself now and then.

What has been the most dramatic change in your life as the result of your book’s great success?

It’s interesting because in ways our lives have changed a great deal. Because of the book, my family and I have been able to travel around the world, to Australia, New Zealand, Europe and throughout the United States. I’ve been able to shake hands with some of my very favorite writers. And I can now officially spend my work days as a novelist. But in other ways, our lives are very much the same—my family, my neighbors and community, my home, my life here in Alaska. I still have to wash the dishes and feed the chickens, we still haul our firewood and fill our freezer with salmon and moose meat, and for that I’m glad.

You depict the Alaska landscape beautifully in your novel. Describe your experience growing up, and now raising your own children, in Alaska.

Alaska both as a landscape and as a lifestyle is very important to me. As a child, hunting and fishing and growing our own vegetables was an important part of my family’s year, and the same is true now for my husband and I as we raise our two daughters. To be honest, I don’t know that our own daughters will choose to continue this kind of life in rural Alaska, but I’m glad they have been able to experience it.

Your mother is a poet. What influence does your mother have on your writing? What are other influences on your writing?

Yes, my mom, Julie LeMay, is a published poet, and she’s pursuing her M.F.A. in poetry at the moment. I think having readers and writers in my family was very influential. From early on, I learned by example the joy and wonder that can be found in the written word. And my mom’s influence continues—she and I are writing partners, often sharing our early drafts with each other. As for other influences, like a lot of writers, I am first and foremost a reader. I would love to think that some of my favorite books have helped shape my own writing.

Why do you believe the fairy tale that you based your novel on resonates so deeply with readers?

That’s a wonderful question, and one I’m not sure I can answer on the behalf of readers. I know why it resonated with me—it was a magical story set in a landscape that I recognized. Rarely had I come across stories that told of the northern wilderness, and it proved to be an important key for me as a writer. It opened this door and allowed me to see that I could bring a bit of magic to my Alaska stories. I was also struck by the longing and love in the original fairy tale, this sense that an old man and old woman could so want a child to love that they could create her out of snow.

When you wrote Faina’s character what was the primary essence you were hoping to get across to the reader?

I wanted her to be independent and fierce and mysterious. As a child, I loved books in which children survived by their wit and will—Island of the Blue Dolphins, The Boxcar Children. Originally I had numerous chapters written from her perspective that explained how she could survive on her own, but on advice from my agent (a fabulous editor) I stripped those chapters out because we realized that they took away some of her ethereal, magical qualities. In ways, Faina embodies some of what I admire about Alaska’s wilderness—this sort of unknowable, awesome beauty that is also a cycle of life and death.

Esther is a wonderful neighbor to Jack and Mabel. Does she resemble anyone you know?

It’s such a wonderful surprise how much readers have responded to Esther. She popped up on me unexpectedly, and I think both Mabel and I were so glad to have her in our lives. And I have prompted quite a bit of speculation in my hometown about who Esther really is. I do know several women who share some of her traits—adventurous, outgoing, fearless, giving, industrious. I’d like to think that Esther is an embodiment of a kind of spirit I see in a lot of Alaska women.

What is top on your bucket list?

This might seem rather boring, but right now I just want to sink back into my life here with my family. I’ve checked some things off my bucket list that I didn’t even know were there—petting a koala, seeing Paris at night, spotting my book on a library shelf. All of it has exceeded my imagination, but now I’m ready for some quiet time—reading, writing, being with my family.

Alaska, February 2013
Folk Tales

Sleeping Beauty, Paul Bunyan, Anansi and The Snow Child.

All of these are folk tales; stories told and passed down by “the folk.” Folk tales function as chronicles of life for the common man, revealing to us something about the history or geography of a particular area. We can learn from folk tales about community held values, how people lived and what their customs and behaviors were. Both fascinating and entertaining, folk tales are part of cultures world-wide, as demonstrated with the over 500 versions of Cinderella, from Yeh Shen of China to Sootface of the Ojibwa.

In a larger context, folk tales bridge one culture to another. People can be separated by race, socioeconomics or geography, but a folk tale that expresses common beliefs or values works to establish recognition and acceptance. We learn that, in many ways, all people have similar hopes and fears, which are reflected in the stories we tell. We all want to slay the beast, climb the glass mountain, save the damsel in distress.

Within the folk tale tradition is the sub genre of fairy tales. Fairy tales weave stories of magical and fantastical characters and events and give a glimpse into the desires and fears of a culture. Fairy tales are accepted as being untrue and always include magical characters doing magical things in magical places. They often include one-dimensional characters (really bad, such as Rumpelstiltskin from Grimm’s Fairy Tales, or really good, such as Nyasha from Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters) and are told for a variety of purposes including entertainment, enlightenment or inspiration. Although the main character is frequently human on a heroic quest, resolution usually comes through magic.

Eowyn Ivey’s The Snow Child is based on a traditional European folk tale and is recognized in the Aarne-Thompson classification, and in The Storyteller’s Sourcebook, as a particular motif. Each retelling features a lonely couple who creates a child from snow and is given months of happiness, until they learn that, with the coming of the warm days of spring, she cannot stay. Firmly rooted in the fairy tale tradition and set against the wild Alaska landscape, Ivey’s tale is full of love, loss, acceptance and sacrifice.

10 Years of “A Novel Idea ... Read Together”

Welcome to the 10th anniversary of “A Novel Idea ... Read Together.” The Deschutes Public Library and the Library Foundation wish to thank you, the thousands of Deschutes County readers, who participated in “A Novel Idea” every April for the last 10 years. Together we have created the largest community read/discussion program in the state of Oregon. More than 6,000 Deschutes County residents read, discuss and explore one book together through 25 free cultural programs and author visits each year. Through “A Novel Idea” we find a common place to discuss ideas, explore cultures, create art, explore similarities and question our differences in a safe and neutral environment.

Thank you for taking part in the development of something truly magical for our communities.

Through the continued and steady support of seven sponsors, we are able to bring quality, award-winning authors to Central Oregon and keep the programs and author events free of charge and fully accessible for the residents of Deschutes County. These seven special sponsors are: The Starview Foundation; Bend Research; BendBroadband; E.H. and M.E. Bowerman Advised Fund of OCF; Francis, Hansen and Martin LLP; Oregon Humanities; and the Roundhouse Foundation. We’d also like to thank the five Friends of the Library organizations who fund critical library programs such as “A Novel Idea” year after year.

Here’s to another 10 years of reading and building community together!

Chantal Strobel, Project Director
ALASKA THEN & NOW

“...the sun was setting down the river, casting a cold pink hue along the white-capped mountains that framed both sides of the valley. Upriver, the willow shrubs and gravel bars, the spruce forests and low-lying poplar stands, swelled to the mountains in a steely blue. No fields or fences, homes or roads; not a single living soul as far as she could see in any direction. Only wilderness.”
—From Eowyn Ivey’s The Snow Child

When Jack and Mabel arrived on their Alaska homestead in 1920, they hardly found themselves part of a swelling population. They left Pennsylvania and entered a vast wilderness to become two of only 55,000 people in the whole territory, a population that shrunk significantly following the high of 64,000 at the end of the Gold Rush years.

It was in 1867, more than 50 years before Jack and Mabel’s arrival, that Secretary of State William H. Seward signed an agreement to purchase Alaska from Russia for $7.2 million. The purchase was often called “Seward’s Folly,” as few U.S. citizens could fathom what Seward wanted with such a distant and seemingly frozen land. At the time of the purchase, roughly 30,000 indigenous people lived in the region. These included the Inuit, Yupik, Aleut, Athabaskan, and Tlingit and Haida peoples.

President Lincoln signed the Homestead Act in 1862, but it wasn’t until May of 1898 that President McKinley extended homesteading to Alaska. In total more than 3,200 homesteads were claimed in Alaska, covering roughly 364,000 acres—which represented less than 0.1% of all acres in the state. Homesteading ended in Alaska in 1986, ten years after officially ending in the rest of the country.

Multiple bills to grant statehood—the first in 1916—failed. Statehood supporters continually found themselves fighting against not just political adversaries in the U.S. Congress, but against lack of interest on the part of Alaskans as well. Once statehood was granted in 1959, Alaska needed to address Native claims throughout the region. The 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act granted Natives with title to 44 million acres of land, and the U.S. paid $962.5 million in compensation for extinguishments of Native title to Alaska’s remaining 331 million acres.

The name “Alaska” is derived from the Aleut word “Alyeska,” meaning “great land.” What was once mocked as “Seward’s Folly” is now recognized annually with an official state holiday, “Seward’s Day,” to mark the land purchase and its significance. Today, this “great land”—our 49th state—is home to roughly 732,000 people. But it draws 1.5 million visitors every year and still inspires the dreams of countless people who long for the solitude, adventure and wilderness that Jack and Mabel sought in The Snow Child.

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A Winter Light

We still go about our lives in shadow, pouring the white cup full with a hand half in darkness.

Paring potatoes, our heads bent over a dream—glazed windows through which the long, yellow sundown looks.

By candle or firelight your face still holds a mystery that once filled caves with the color of unforgettable beasts.

by John Haines (1971)
“The Snow Child” Inspired Exhibits

Good stories have the ability to transport us to different times and places and allow us inside other lives and experiences. Stories also inspire creativity. Over the years various artists have used “A Novel Idea” selections as part of their creative process. The results have been beautiful works of art interpreting themes and scenes from the books on paper, in photographs and in textiles. This year Deschutes Public Library is pleased to include three unique art shows that were inspired by The Snow Child.

“The Snow Child” Inspired Quilt Show
April 5, 5:00–7:00 p.m. (First Friday Gallery Walk)
926 NE Greenwood Ave, Bend
Professional photographer Timothy Park shares winter photography inspired by The Snow Child.

During April, QuiltWorks Quilt Gallery is exhibiting 50 quilts, inspired by the novel The Snow Child. Each quilt, uniquely different in color, style, setting and shape celebrates The Snow Child and the quilters who have woven together their love of reading and quilting.

More information: (541) 725-0527, marilyn@quiltworks.com

“The Snow Child” Inspired Photography Exhibit
April 13–May 4
Redmond Public Library
Professional photographer Timothy Park shares winter photography inspired by The Snow Child.

View art inspired by The Snow Child during regular studio hours (Monday–Friday, 9:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m.) or at the artist reception on April 26.


Contact Linda, (541) 312-1064, lindab@deschuteslibrary.org.

A6 Exhibit and Reception
April 13–May 6
Atelier 6000 Studio
389 SW Scalehouse Ct. Ste 120, Bend
Artist Reception
April 26, 6:00 p.m.

Librarian Discussion Questions

1. When Mabel first arrives in Alaska, it seems a bleak and lonely place to her. Does her sense of the land change over time? If so, how?
2. Jack and Mabel are emotionally distant from each other in the beginning of the novel. How do they overcome their estrangement?
3. How do Esther Benson and Mabel differ in temperament, and how does their friendship change Mabel?
4. The first time Garrett sees Faina in person is when he spies her killing a wild swan. What is the significance of this scene?
5. In what ways does Faina represent the Alaska wilderness?
6. Jack and Mabel’s only child is stillborn. How does this affect Mabel’s relationship with Faina?
7. When Jack is injured, Esther and Garrett move to their farm to help them. How does this alter Jack and Mabel’s relationship?
8. Much of Jack and Mabel’s sorrow comes from not having a family of their own, and yet they leave their extended family behind to move to Alaska. By the end of the novel, has their sense of family changed? Who would they consider a part of their family?
9. Death comes in many forms in The Snow Child, including Mabel giving birth to a stillborn infant, Jack shooting a moose, Faina slaying a swan, the fox killing a wild bird, Jack and Mabel slaughtering their chickens, and Garrett shooting the fox. Why is this one of the themes of the book and what is the author trying to say about death?
10. What do you believe happened to Faina in the end? Who was she?
A NOVEL IDEA EVENTS

“The Snow Child” Inspired Quilt Show
April 5, 5:00–7:00 p.m.
(First Friday Gallery Walk)
April 6, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
QuiltWorks
926 NE Greenwood Ave, Bend
QuiltWorks unveils 50 quilts based on The Snow Child. Each quilt, uniquely different in color, style, setting and shape, celebrates The Snow Child and the quilters who have woven together their love of reading and quilting. The exhibit displays throughout the month of April in the QuiltWorks gallery. Book clubs are also invited to hold their April meetings at QuiltWorks.
More information: (541) 725-0527, marilyn@quiltworks.com.

“A Novel Idea” Kick Off
April 13, 3:00 p.m.
Downtown Bend Public Library

“The Snow Child” Inspired Photography Exhibit
April 13–May 4
Redmond Public Library
Professional photographer Timothy Park shares winter photography inspired by The Snow Child.
Contact Linda, (541) 312-1064, lindab@deschuteslibrary.org.

A6 Exhibit and Reception
April 13–May 6
Atelier 6000 Studio
389 SW Scalehouse Ct. Ste 120, Bend
Artist Reception
April 26, 6:00 p.m.
View art inspired by The Snow Child during regular studio hours (Monday–Friday, 9:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m.) or at the artist reception.

Film Screening:
“Alone in the Wilderness”
April 14, 1:30 p.m.
Sisters Public Library
April 19, 2:00 p.m.
Sunriver Area Public Library
April 21, 1:00 p.m.
La Pine Public Library
April 21, 2:00 p.m.
Downtown Bend Public Library
April 26, 3:00 p.m.
Redmond Public Library
April 27, 2:00 p.m.
East Bend Public Library
To live in a pristine land unchanged by man; to choose an idyllic site, cut trees and build a log cabin; to be not at odds with the world, but content with one’s own thoughts and company. Thousands have had such dreams, but Richard Proenneke lived them. He found a site, built a cabin and stayed to become part of Alaska. Alone in the Wilderness is a simple but powerful account of his life alone in the wilds of Alaska.

Second Sunday:
The Work of Alaskan Poet John Haines
April 14, 2:00 p.m.
Downtown Bend Public Library
Born in Virginia in 1924, poet John Haines homesteaded in Alaska for over 20 years. He authored several collections of poetry and received numerous awards and honors, including two Guggenheim Fellowships, a National Endowments for the Arts Fellowship and an appointment as Alaska’s Poet Laureate. He died in Fairbanks in 2011, but his legacy still reverberates throughout Alaska. In this Second Sunday presentation, OSU Cascades associate professor Neil Browne explores Haines’s life and work. An open mic follows.
Folklore
April 15, 6:00 p.m.
Downtown Bend Public Library
April 24, 6:00 p.m.
Sunriver Area Public Library

Eowyn Ivey was inspired to write The Snow Child after she discovered the classic Russian folk tale of the snow maiden. The story’s magic and landscape stayed with her for months before she began writing. Folk tales, like that of the snow maiden, and storytelling are an important part of the traditions of cultures the world over. Terry Krueger, a literature instructor at COCC, explores the significance—and the magic—of folklore and why it’s an important part of our lives.

Homesteading Central Oregon
April 18, 6:00 p.m.
East Bend Public Library
April 21, 2:00 p.m.
Sisters Public Library

Oregon’s precursor to the Homestead Act, called the Donation Land Act, drew hundreds of thousands of people westward, and about 50,000 of them settled in Oregon. From Madras to Fort Rock, Sisters to Hampton, traditional homesteading on the High Desert challenged the hardest homesteaders, from lack of water to sheer isolation. Join Kelly Cannon-Miller of the Des Chutes Historical Museum to learn about the reality of early 20th century homesteading in the High Desert.

Make a Felt Fox
April 20, 2:00 p.m.
East Bend Public Library
April 23, 6:00 p.m.
Redmond Public Library

Make a little set of felt fox faces, like the little fox in The Snow Child. Local craft maven Kelley Gilbert shows you how to apply these little guys to elbow patches, coffee cup cozies and other great accessories. Class is limited to 15 participants. Register online at www.deschuteslibrary.org/calendar or call Liz at (541) 312-1032.

Dutch Oven Cooking
April 27, 1:00 p.m.
High Desert Museum
May 1, 12:00 noon
Sisters Public Library

Experience a taste of the past through Dutch oven cooking demonstrations at the High Desert Museum’s 1904 Living History Ranch and at the Sisters Public Library. Join Linda Evans, the Museum’s curator of Living History, as she demonstrates how to prepare updated versions of authentic frontier dishes: beef stew, apple pie and sourdough biscuits.

You’ll discover what life was like for High Desert settlers a century ago as you sample the dishes. Take home recipes from 1879, along with instructions on the best way to create them in a way to please a 21st century palate. Class is limited to 20 participants. Register online at www.deschuteslibrary.org/calendar or call Liz at (541) 312-1032.

The Irresistible Pull of the Last Frontier
April 28, 2:00 p.m.
La Pine Public Library
May 1, 6:00 p.m.
Downtown Bend Public Library

Indigenous people inhabited Alaska for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans. But from the Gold Rush of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and continuing today, explorers and settlers find themselves drawn to America’s largest and least densely populated state in pursuit of fortune, adventure, solitude and majestic beauty. Elizabeth Marino, cultural and environmental anthropologist with OSU Cascades (PhD, University of Alaska Fairbanks) was one of these settlers. In this presentation Marino explores what makes Alaska irresistible to so many people and why this last frontier continues to draw visitors and settlers alike. Marino highlights both the difficulties and the rewards of life in the Arctic and addresses how the North is changing now, even before our eyes.

Author Events
May 3, 7:00 p.m.
Tower Theatre, Bend

The reading is free, but tickets are required. Tickets are available online at www.towertheatre.org, (541) 317-0700 or from the Tower Theatre box office during regular business hours beginning Saturday, April 13, at 10:00 am.

May 4, 11:00 a.m.
Ridgeview High School
4555 SW Elkhorn Avenue, Redmond
This is a non-ticketed event. Books are available for sale at the reading.

The next 10 years
“A NOVEL IDEA” has grown more than 10 times its size in 10 years! From just 600 people participating in 2004, to more than 6,000 people participating today, “A Novel Idea” is the largest community read program in the state of Oregon. What will the next 10 years bring?

Student outreach to area high schools to include teens in the free author presentations/discussions.

More art: Currently, print makers, quilters and photographers create art that celebrates the themes of the selected “A Novel Idea” book. We will add new art and artists every year.

Books that expand our world: We will continue to select books that take us out of our comfort zone into new lands and points of view. Have an idea for the next “A Novel Idea” book? Send us an email at webmaster@deschuteslibrary.org.
The Deschutes Public Library Foundation thanks our donors

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