

# THOMPSON FREE LIBRARY

## QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2023

### Award-Winning Indigenous Stories: Unfiltered and Unforgettable

by Jon Knepp

For the 2022 return of the James Brown Lecture Series, the TFL hosted author Morgan Talty and Lisa Sockabasin, Co-CEO of Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness to discuss Morgan's new book *Night of the Living Rez* on October 6th. It's not often that an award-winning author hails from Levant. Morgan is finally ending that drought, with the book having won the New England Book Award and become a national bestseller and finalist for the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction amongst other honors. Yet, the impact the book has had on communities throughout Maine has been more profound than any award.

During the talk, Lisa shared reviews from indigenous readers; among them a Passamaquoddy citizen who shared that "to see our language, words, and culture in print coupled with Morgan's great success is healing in action." The comments left Morgan speechless before he added a few jokes to break the heaviness of the moment. Morgan and Lisa discussed how works like his are important to preserve the indigenous storytelling tradition which permeates the Wabanaki culture. Morgan shares that "growing up, the way I told stories imparted itself on the way I write . . . it was my attempt to capture that oral storytelling voice."

In addition to his obvious skill as a writer, Morgan is honest and able to find the funny



or heartwarming in any situation, which came through in the talk and throughout the book. One of his favorite things to do is read his negative reviews, such as the curt Amazon review from Elaine he shared at the talk: "disappointing." In his story Safe Harbor, Morgan recalls his real life visit to his mother in a mental crisis stabilization unit and his subsequent car crash on the way home. Yet, even on this day Morgan recalls joking with his mother: "[t]hat does it, and we're both laughing hard. It feels good to laugh with her, feels like it scrapes the dark and grimy walls inside me." Like Morgan, the book blends very heavy and bleak topics with surprisingly light-hearted moments. In doing so, it creates a world with no wholly good or bad characters, situations, or settings. The good and bad blend together

into one narrative to show a complexity often found in real life, making for a truly one-of-a-kind book!

*Night of the Living Rez* is available at the library and at all booksellers. His talk can be viewed on our Youtube page at: [bit.ly/TFLyoutube](https://bit.ly/TFLyoutube). It was a pleasure to host him and Lisa and share the important work of indigenous literature with our community!

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## Tim's "Something or Other"

by Jon Knepp

When Tim Cotton showed up on December 1st for what he referred to as a “something or other,” I knew it would be a good time, but not a clue what to expect. It really was “something.”

Above all else, Tim is a great storyteller. This is what drew people to the Bangor Police Department Facebook page, where he first gained a following after taking over the neglected site that no one else wanted to manage. While other departments were posting boring notices, Tim found a way to spread the same information but in an mundane blotters became captivating tales. “I just like people and situations,” Tim stated at his event. “I find the funny and the interesting in almost every situation.”

Perhaps no story exemplifies this more than The Duck of Justice, the BPD’s unofficial mascot. No other police department would even mention a discarded taxidermied wood duck found in the garbage. Tim rescued the duck and it has since become a social media star. It has traveled internationally and went on tour with Aerosmith! It became so popular that a beautiful replica had to be carved by none other than the BPD janitor, who just happens to be a renowned duck decoy carver



“but only for fun.”

Tim regaled the crowd with tales of the colorful cast of characters he’s come to know while also showcasing the human side of police work. According to Tim, when done correctly, the job is about caring for people. Whether through Facebook, his three books (with a fourth on the way hopefully next year!), or in person, Tim’s good nature, humor, and honesty shines through! All three of his books are available at the library, or for a daily dose of Tim, head to his website [www.timcottonwrites.com](http://www.timcottonwrites.com) for more ways to interact than you, or he for that matter, would ever want.



## Getting Back to Our Roots

October 15th marked the return of the TFL/Voices From Home story slams after more than a year off. Stutzman's (and their wonderful pizza buffet) were our gracious hosts, as participants told their stories based on the theme "Routes to Roots." TFL's Michelle Fagan, who started the Voices From Home project said “I am so glad we are back to doing story slams. It was so nice to be at Stutzman's . . . the food, community and stories all go so well together. We are hoping to have them more regularly throughout the year. Hopefully every 2 or 3 months we will hold slams in fun venues around the area.” Hope to see you at the next one! —Jon Knepp



## Maine, Whatever the Weather

On Sep. 15th, Tom Roth regaled us with tales from his book *A Sporting Year in Maine* which outlines how to get the most of every month and season in our state, from mud season to ice fishing season and everything in between! —Jon Knepp

## An Enchanted Evening



Right before Halloween, local author Theresa Sneed’s talk highlighted her *Salem Witch Haunt* series, set during the time of the Salem Witch Trials, a topic on which she also has given well-received presentations at the Center Theatre. Theresa, a descendant of Susannah Martin, one of the women executed for witchcraft in 1692 Salem, describes the series as a “delightful,

enthraling story based on factual evidence.” Theresa is a very prolific author, having written many books on a number of topics, most of which she profiled and answered questions about from a spellbound audience. To learn more, head to [theresasneed.com](http://theresasneed.com) or watch her video on our Youtube channel at: [bit.ly/TFLyoutube](http://bit.ly/TFLyoutube). —Jon Knepp

## I Wanna See You Be Brave

by Kim Brawn

“There’s a little bit of edge of apocalypse to them,” said Julia Bouwsma of her poems, many of which she read before a receptive audience at the library on November 3.



“Poetry is about patterns,” said Julia, Maine’s poet laureate and author of *Midden* and *Work by Bloodlight*. Her work often focuses on patterns of inherited silence brought on by generational trauma. Themes of accountability, relationship to place, and the fallacy of land ownership also run through her writing.

Her thoughtful, evocative words and images pierced and lingered in the minds of those who attended. After her reading, Julia answered several questions including, does she think about having to share a poem in front of people when she’s writing it? Julia responded, “I try not to think about that when I’m writing . . . because I want to be brave in my poems.”

One of those people listening intently was

library director Jon Knepp who said, “The program was great! Julia is a wonderful poet, and her works lead to a deeper understanding if heard live. She also went into family stories, personal and sometimes brutal stories from her farm, her research for *Midden* and how she was part of a state program to recognize what happened with Malaga Island in Casco Bay (where residents of an interracial community were forcibly evicted in 1911) and try to heal those wounds. You then heard those stories and experiences come through in her poetry.”

Both of Julia’s books are available at TFL.

Find more info at

<https://www.juliabouwsma.com>

Watch her TFL program here:

<http://bit.ly/TFLyoutube>

## The Other Constant in Life

by Kim Brawn

The winds whipped around us, knocking the power out, but the day was bright enough to compensate for no lights. The weather and the outage did not deter Tom Lyford, TFL’s poet and storyteller extraordinaire, from embarking on what may be his last library program. (Or will it be more of a Tom Brady-style retirement? Stay tuned.) Tom and I decided to focus his latest 101 on the true object of all of our affections: books. He billed it as “reminiscing over what a lifetime of reading for enjoyment has meant for me. . . sharing spicy short passages from the writings that have not only entertained me but have helped shaped my life and often helped me to maintain my sanity over seven sometimes tumultuous decades.”

It lived up to that and more, with Tom’s entertaining stories, funny and candid quips, and powerful passages that he read from books including *To Kill a Mockingbird*,



*The Grapes of Wrath*, and *Rocket Boys*.

Tom’s programs tend to be comedy-dramas—which can be a tricky genre—yet he deftly swings back and forth between pathos and silliness, connecting with his audience and eliciting lots of laughter.

After a brief tribute to those childhood literary favorites “Dick and Jane,” Tom told

us about the time his older brother Dennis gave middle-schooler Tom a copy of the play *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (for those who are not familiar, a quick google will show you that it was probably not age appropriate). Needless to say, it proved to be a memorable vocabulary lesson with Tom becoming best friends with his dictionary, looking up all the colorful words.

That September afternoon proved an interesting and enjoyable trip down Tom’s never-ending memory lane. We listened to some powerful writing that highlighted strong women characters who have resonated with Tom through the decades.

After the talk, Tom joyfully held court. Several people stayed and chatted, sharing memories and swapping stories.

You can watch Tom’s Book Talk 101 here (with a brief interruption as the power came back on): <http://bit.ly/TFLyoutube>

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up now and stay up to date!**

## Nowhere to Hidebehind

by Kim Brawn

At first it seemed like a total bummer, author and Maine monster specialist Christopher Packard was a no-show at his late October, Halloween-timed program. Fortunately, his great-great grandfather Burton Marlboro Packard (founder of Packard's Camps on the Willimantic side of Sebec Lake) stepped in at the last minute, fresh from the woods, pack basket filled with items related to various Maine monsters.

Truth be told, Chris actually played the part of the long-passed Burton—staying in character throughout the entire event. He had members of the audience come up and select an item from the basket which would trigger memories of Maine monsters he or others had encountered. Chris—I mean Burton—spun wild tales of the Spectre Moose, Wendigo, Hidebehind—even how he chased floating orbs (Will-O-the-Wisps) through the woods. “Chris really went for it!” TFL director Jon Knepp stated. “He came out in character and also engaged the audience by making the program



interactive. Each item in the pack reminded him of experiences with Maine monsters, like the Spectre Moose, a giant white moose that vanishes in and out of the north Maine woods, or the Loup Garou, the Acadian and Quebecois werewolf said to be cursed men who committed such acts as cannibalism or sorcery.”

The Hampden-based writer and full-time high school science teacher obviously relished the role, giving a high energy, enthusiastic performance with lots of great monster folklore and anecdotes. “My kids and I had a blast! It was an incredibly enjoyable live experience!” wrote Amber

Youngblood in our YouTube channel comments. (You can watch this fun, family-friendly program here <http://bit.ly/TFLyoutube>.)

Chris, channeling Burton, left the audience with these parting words: “Treat the woods with respect, keep looking behind you and always tell your story. . . all these stories are true, in one way or another.” ☺

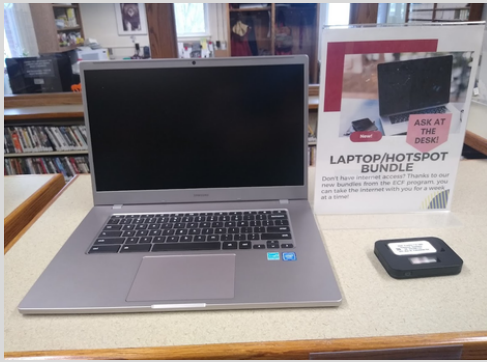
You can find Chris Packard's book *Mythical Creature of Maine* at TFL. He's on Facebook and @c.s.packard on Instagram or visit his website:

<https://www.christopherpackard.com>

### “... Give me something good to read!”

Trick or treaters showed up in droves on Halloween, climbing the steps of the library's original Main Street entrance. Tom and Phyllis Lyford, along with TFL's Alex Shaffer and his mom, Stacy, greeted the spooky guests of all ages. Almost 300 children of all ages took home a free book! According to Alex, the event “generated a lot of excitement. Adults were impressed with the selection of books and kids were like ‘OMG—I get to keep this?!’” —Kim Brawn





## Making Connections

In October, TFL (thanks to an Emergency Connectivity Program program) started offering laptop/hotspot bundles to help people with internet access issues. Library patrons are able to check out the bundle (or hotspot by itself) for a week at a time (with the possibility to renew).

"The hotspots and Chromebooks have gone out nearly fifty times in the last three months or so. We have loaned them to people from all over the area and so far, there have been no complaints about hotspots not working," says director Jon Knepp. "We have had mothers using them for homeschooling, families taking them camping, community members using them in their homes if they can't get or afford a wired high-speed connection." They're also great if you're thinking of switching to a mobile connection and "want to take it for a test drive." We have Franklin T10 devices using T-Mobile, which we found to have a wider, more reliable connection than other services. (For more information, contact TFL.) —Kim Brawn



## Red Cross Ready

Caroline King and Elaine Thomas of the American Red Cross of Northern New England stopped by TFL on November 17 to share their expertise. Participants picked up valuable information to prevent and prepare for home emergencies. The Red Cross offers free smoke detectors, installation, and troubleshooting if you have one that isn't working properly or is in a bad location! For more information, visit [www.redcross.org/endhomefiresnne](http://www.redcross.org/endhomefiresnne) or call (800) 464-6692 option #4. —Kim Brawn



## Free to Be You and Me

Our banned book display got people talking, thinking, and asking questions. Display creator Shannen Rhoda gives the back story, "Banned Book Week is an annual event celebrating the freedom to read sponsored by the American Library Association. After seeing the frequent book challenges and bans in the news last year, I thought it was important to highlight the issue with a book display at the library. Our display included books that have been banned or challenged in the US, including many classics like *To Kill a Mockingbird* and even *Charlotte's Web*. We also highlighted the top 10 banned books of 2021, six which we have at TFL and four that are available through interlibrary loan." —Kim Brawn



Shannen put her own playful twist on the perennial cancer-awareness program with a great display that garnered lots of attention and left very few mustaches!



Who doesn't love children's author Mo Willems?! Shannen's bulletin board—an ode to the excitable pigeon who populates his beloved books—brought smiles to many faces!



Did Tom miss his true calling playing corpses on shows like CSI? 🐼



## Festivus for the Rest of Us

The first Saturday in December saw a fun and festive flurry of activity at TFL as we celebrated the spirit of the season as part of Dover-Foxcroft's Hometown Holidays. Three stations were set up: Ms. Michelle making crafty cards and ornaments at one end, Phyllis Lyford creating popcorn and cranberry garland at the other, and Ms. Shannen cooking up delicious pizzelles (traditional Italian waffle cookies) in the middle. The sweet scent of anise filled the air as excited kids hunted for candy canes to win a free book. All ages enjoyed this special yuletide event! —Kim Brawn



The delightful holiday décor in the kids' section managed to charm even the grinchiest of souls!

**Thanks again to Kazia Knepp for helping with layout!**