

MEDIA KIT

“A post-modern collage of poetry, tweets, historical documents, and photographs ... This book is potently human and uplifting, at once a grim testament to what we are capable of inflicting and a celebration of what we can endure.”

– **DEREK HANEURY,**
AUTHOR/NOCTURNAL TONGLÉN

“This is a book and it is a journey. It is carefully crafted with the feel of white archive gloves and parchment and tweezers, but the urgency of the writing and the creativity of the hybrid text lifts the stories out of the yellowed pages of history and right into your social media feed.”

– **AUTUMN PHILLIPS,**
THE CHARLESTON POST & COURIER

“A remarkable voice from 100 years ago speaking to us today with exceptional power and emotion.”

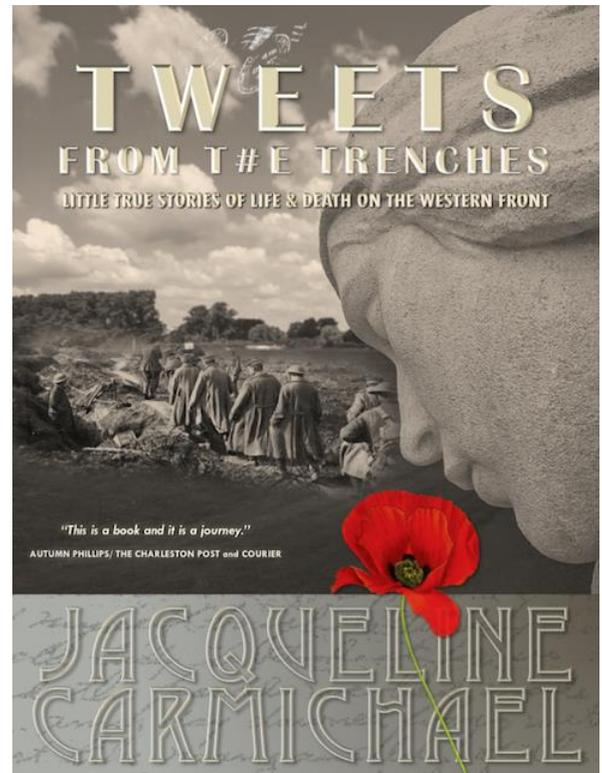
– **GRAHAM THOMSON,**
COLUMNIST/EDMONTON JOURNAL

“Carmichael takes the war to end all wars and places it in a world of tweets and instant fast-paced feedback pulling the past into the present ... She reminds us that war continues in an everlasting loop of trenches and guns and boys fighting Fritz while cell phones are imagined but “set on silent when they slip over the top lest a sniper hear & hone in on their heart.” Carmichael sits in Vimy trenches and tweets from an account in her grandfather’s name. This is a kind of poetry paired with journalism. History with metaphor. Technology set in a real world we barely can imagine now. Thankfully, Carmichael can and we follow her, with curiosity and awe, into that bloody past, learn of women who hid their identities so they could fight, men who hid their fighting so they could continue to live.”

– **YVONNE BLOMER,** CITY OF VICTORIA POET LAUREATE/AUTHOR/‘SUGAR RIDE:
CYCLING FROM HANOI TO KUALA LUMPUR’

“Jackie Carmichael ... helps bring history to life and makes it readily accessible to young readers. A thread that runs through the entire book is that soldiers were and are real people, with hopes, dreams and aspirations. Tens of thousands of those soldiers never got to live out their dreams. Carmichael’s work poignantly speaks for those whose voices have been silent for one hundred years.”

– **Maj. (Ret.) KEN HYNES,** CHIEF CURATOR/THE ARMY MUSEUM HALIFAX CITADEL



Tweets from the Trenches: Little True Stories of Life & Death on the Western Front
Jacqueline Carmichael

ISBN: 9780993971709 / ask us about bulk/education discounts

For more information call 250.726.6072 or email Carmichael.jacqueline@gmail.com
www.tweetsfromthetrenches.com

“Delivering rations to the front/dodging bullets & mortar fire both ... Bullets ripped the dirt up all round me but none of them were marked Black Jack.” George “Black Jack” Vowel, 1915

As heard on CBC Radio (Vancouver, Victoria, Edmonton, Halifax & Saskatoon) and CHEK TV, and seen in newspapers across Canada and the United States: over 100 tiny true stories from World War from Allied soldiers, female combatants and nurses and the home front. Jacqueline Carmichael brings real voices from diverse backgrounds to life in journal excerpts, poetry and creative non-fiction. Presented chronologically, with historical images and photos from the author’s journey in her grandfathers’ steps. Suitable for readers of all ages.

MEDIA RELEASE – Tweets from the Trenches: Little True Stories of Life & Death on the Western Front

FROM JOURNALIST JACQUELINE CARMICHAEL COMES AN EXTRAORDINARY COLLECTION OF over 100 tiny accounts of what it meant to be on the ground in World War I. Published in the centenary of the Pursuit to Mons and the critical last 100 days of the “Great War,” *Tweets from the Trenches: Little True Stories of Life & Death on the Western* is an odyssey into the dugouts of WWI history. Written in flash documentary creative non-fiction, it encompasses excerpts of journals, letters and memoirs of Allied participants from Prince Edward Island to Yorkshire to South Carolina. With a picture on almost every page, the war unfolds chronologically in stories of valour and heartbreak, on everything from rationed rum and brave homing pigeons to post-traumatic stress disorder.

Port Alberni, British Columbia resident Jacqueline Larson Carmichael had two grandfathers on the ground with the Canadian Expeditionary Force throughout the fiery battle on the Western Front. After discovering her paternal grandfather’s trench letters and journals, her curiosity about their experience led to walking on the Western Front herself as part of a research project.

As a social media experiment, the seasoned journalist gave Black Jack a Twitter account of his own, posting in his name on Twitter and Facebook – as if he were posting from the trenches of Flanders, Belgium and France.

“I envisioned my grandfather, @BlackJackVowel or #AlbertaWorldWarISoldier, ‘hunkered down under a hunk of tin’ amidst pouring rain and artillery fire, desperately trying to be safe, while using a smartphone to communicate with loved ones a world away,” Carmichael said.

Chapter headings timeline the war to help orient the stories year by year in the bigger picture, punctuated with images of WWI-era photos, postcards, and documents, and modern-era photos from the Western Front. The British Columbia resident ventures out past accounts of soldiers and battles to include a nurse executed in German-occupied Belgium for rescuing British soldiers, men “Shot At Dawn” under charges of desertion or cowardice, women cross-dressing to get into battle, terse memoir excerpts of an escape from a German prisoner-of-war camp, and the last letter home from an Olympian.

Life after battle – including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) – is addressed in a series of pieces that include the dramatic example of Canadian Member of Parliament Samuel Simpson Sharpe, whose death induced by the trauma of war was barely acknowledged in Ottawa circles for almost a century.

“I sometimes found myself in tears over these stories,” Carmichael recalled. “I was struck by their vitality and their youth. Reading these century-old accounts made me realize how much like us they were, a generation wrapped up in world events.”

For media interviews, call 250-726-6072

www.weetsfromthetrenches.com

Early reviews:

★★★★

'FAST-PACED, POETRY ...

Paired with journalism ...Technology set in a real world we barely can imagine now ...
We follow her, with curiosity and awe, into that bloody past '

YVONNE BLOMER/CITY OF VICTORIA POET LAUREATE, EDITOR, 'REFUGIUM'

★★★★

'GORGEOUSLY DESIGNED ... ENGAGING ...

Wildly creative ... respected journalist Jacqueline Carmichael brings the reality
of world war to a generation raised on reality TV and social media.'

THERESE TAG GOULET/FOUNDER, FABJOB PUBLISHING

★★★★

'GENRE-BENDING ...

It's an innovative mind that can re-think such possibilities for history,
and Carmichael's is a creative non-fiction project brimming with vibrancy.'

WAYDE COMPTON/DOUGLAS COLLEGE

AUTHOR, 'THE OUTER HARBOUR' 'THE REVOLVING CITY'

★★★★

'WONDERFUL ...

Makes the war to end all wars accessible for generations far removed
from its carnage or lessons yet to be learned.'

GORD JOHNS/MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, COURTENAY-ALBERNI

★★★★

'CREATIVE FIELDWORK

Forges a profound archival work that will resonate with all Canadians.'

SUSAN STENSON/AUTHOR, 'NOBODY MOVE'

★★★★

'POIGNANT ...

Speaks for those whose voices have been silent for over one hundred years.'

MAJ. (ret.) KEN HYNES/CHIEF CURATOR, THE ARMY MUSEUM HALIFAX CITADEL

★★★★

For more information, visit tweetsfromthetrenches.com.

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ABOUT JACQUELINE LARSON CARMICHAEL

Jacqueline Larson Carmichael has won awards for her journalism, including the Texas Associated Press Managing Editors Award for Feature Series Writing. Over more than two decades, her work has appeared in publications such as The Dallas Morning News, Entrepreneur Magazine, The Edmonton Sun, The Quad Cities Times, and The Westerly News in Tofino/Ucluelet, where she was managing editor and publisher. Her short fiction has appeared in Merge, and she is working on a novel set in the Pacific Northwest. A graduate of Simon Fraser University's The Writer's Studio,

Carmichael is on the board of the Federation of British Columbia Writers, and she is active in creative circles in B.C. She lives in British Columbia on Vancouver Island, with her family and two noisy Shetland sheepdogs.

Q&A with JACQUELINE CARMICHAEL

Author of Tweets from the Trenches: Little True Stories of Life & Death on the Western Front

How long did this novel take you to write?

My aunt gave me the letters and journals of my paternal grandfather a decade ago. I did a series of articles about him for newspapers and magazines. The looming 100th anniversary of the Armistice and Treaty of Versailles kickstarted the thing – and to expand the research to include others impacted by the war. Every time I thought I was done, something else would pop up that just had to go in.

Why the title “Tweets from the Trenches: Little True Stories of Life & Death on the Western Front”?

Conducting a social media experiment that gave my granddad a profile on Twitter and Facebook inspired the poems at the front of the book. These young men and women were the youth of their day, and their scrawled postcards and journal entries and letters home – even the telegrams announcing their deaths – were the social media of the day. It just took a little longer for the text to arrive. I became a bit fascinated by the clash of lifestyles a century apart, but I had to acknowledge the universality of those emotions.

How did you choose which 100 tiny stories went into the book?

I wanted it to be a sort of survey of the war – a bunch of snapshots about real people who were all-in, not about higher-ups or those with less at stake. I felt it important to include allies from other countries, in addition to Canada and the U.S. Initially, the low-hanging research fruit skewed to male white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, and I thought that it didn't make statistical sense to have it only be about white guys. This really was really a “world war.” So I sought out stories about women – some in non-traditional roles, some were that generation's version of Rosie the Riveter; about black soldiers and First Nations soldiers, about Asian and Latino participants. There's not always a clear picture of what the ethnic roots or religion of the story subjects were, but there is reference to Christian, Catholic, Muslim participants. I wanted to reflect the sadness, the tenderness of loss, and the waste and harshness of war - but also some of the uplifting or even humorous aspects of its humanity. I love animals, and wanted the book to reflect, at least in part, their role in morale and battle; it's possible these pieces might appeal to younger readers, which is what I had in mind with the simple rhyme scheme on Sgt. Stubby's. I wanted the book to feel somewhat like a collage, and to be visually accessible. Same thing with concrete poems – poems physically shaped like something, and haiku – tiny little accounts with a minimum of words. I even wrote a song, inspired by Port Alberni soldier George Morton Bird, who was wounded at the Somme but died in a later battle. By using footnotes I was able to satisfy my inner journalist's need for facts, to bring a little history to poetry and a little poetry to history. I often took my cues on tone from the letters and journals of my grandfather.



You have a number of photocredits in the book. Are you a photographer?

Not at all! In 2016 and 2017 I had the opportunity to walk on the Western Front in the footsteps of both of my grandfathers, who were both in the war for pretty much as long as Canada was in it. My photos are from that. There are family photos, vintage photos and postcards from the collection of Canadian war letters in Dr. Stephen Davies' department at Vancouver Island University, and there are a handful of really amazing photos contributed by high-level photographers who live near the Western Front and spend many hours on research and wonderful camera work. Like the cover photo, the head of Canada Bereft at the Vimy Memorial, stellar work by Belgian photographer Steven Van Den Eynde. Brad K. Larson did some photo illustration work as well, just to mix it up a bit visually.

How do you reconcile sympathy for the people involved in the war with concerns about World War I?

The section on the aftermath of the war, #Long After, deals with ongoing impacts of war trauma on participants and their families. Spoiler alert – it didn't always end well for those who returned apparently intact from the battlefield. I think it's important to debunk myths of war's glory, but it's also essential to recognize the valour and sacrifice of so many who just did what their country asked of them. I don't get into the "just war" idea – I'm not the right one to debate the uselessness of World War I. And I do think the idea "lest we forget" is a mandate we owe an entire generation that was ripped to shreds in that chaos. This was a world war, and it was a world loss. Snatching away such a huge part of a generation forever – stilling those millions of voices permanently – that bell tolls for all of us. And like George Santayana said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." (Which, of course, we did in a way – although each subsequent war has had its own uniqueness. But that's another story.)

Did working on this book change anything for you?

Getting into my grandfather's head a bit (and the heads of other soldiers in particular), I learned some empathy for him. Understanding more about what they saw/what they were subjected to, gave me a little appreciation for what had impacted Black Jack's personality, and how his family was affected by that. It made me more determined than ever to stop that cycle. And I wrote about that, so that was therapeutic. I still have questions – like why my two grandfathers, who were both young prairie farmers who were "over there" essentially all four years of war came back and had such different personal outcomes in terms of having a good family life. I did my share of weeping over a number of these stories; I broke the so-called rule of journalism about staying objective. I took these tiny tales to heart. And I learned that in risky circumstances, when death is a very real possibility, some people are better than others about talking about important things rather than what I consider to be mundane matters. For some, talking about their accounts or what kind of fish they'll catch when they get home was probably a soothing mantra, maybe even a way to empty the head of fear and dread. Others wrote poignant letters that would probably be cherished by their kinfolk if they didn't make it home.

A kindness I gave myself was permission not to stick with a strict definition or form of poetry. I consider this book flash documentary creative non-fiction prose.

How did you balance non-fiction and creativity?

Not always perfectly! My initial instinct was to write in the voice of the people I was writing about. This evoked questions about what I could fairly assume they were feeling and what records actually exist that say what they were feeling. My inner journalist basically duked it out with my inner fiction writer. Finally I decided long footnotes would help keep the facts in a

separate place from some of the more prosy material, and I tried not to stray too much into any supposed motivations. Fortunately, I had access to letters and memoirs and postcards, so people could speak for themselves. Also, there were some memoirs that were so vivid, I dared not touch them at all, except to excerpt. I used a “drop-cap style” at the beginning of that tiny story to convey that someone in particular was recounting their story.

Why did you organize it in chronological order?

Initially I planned to organized material by type – so, battles, individuals, my grandfather, women, daily life in wartime, that sort of thing. I didn’t like the feeling like women were off in a little ghetto, or that a reader’s eyes might skim over a section that wasn’t of particular interest. I initially had a separate timeline of World War I, which I thought would be an easy reference tool, but in the end I decided instead to lay out material in chronological chapters #1914, #1915, #1916, #1917, #1918, #1919, #Long After, and to use chapter heads to reveal the major landmarks of what happened in the war that year, which was helpful to me, and may help others as well. And I want to go back and apologize to teachers like Mr. Marvin Janzen and Mr. Kline Kapps for my utter disinterest in the dates of history in high school social studies. I wish I would have had this book then. I probably would have gotten better grades.

ABOUT JACQUELINE LARSON CARMICHAEL

Jacqueline Larson Carmichael has won awards for her journalism, including the Texas Associated Press Managing Editors Award for Feature Series Writing. Over more than two decades, her work has appeared in publications such as The Dallas Morning News, Entrepreneur Magazine, The Edmonton Sun, The Quad Cities Times, and The Westerly News in Tofino/Ucluelet, where she was managing editor and publisher. Her short fiction has appeared in Merge, and she is working on a novel set in the Pacific Northwest. A graduate of Simon Fraser University’s The Writer’s Studio, Carmichael is on the board of the Federation of British Columbia Writers, and she is active in creative circles in B.C. She lives in on Vancouver Island in Port Alberni, British Columbia, with her family and two noisy Shetland sheepdogs.