



SHOP INDIE

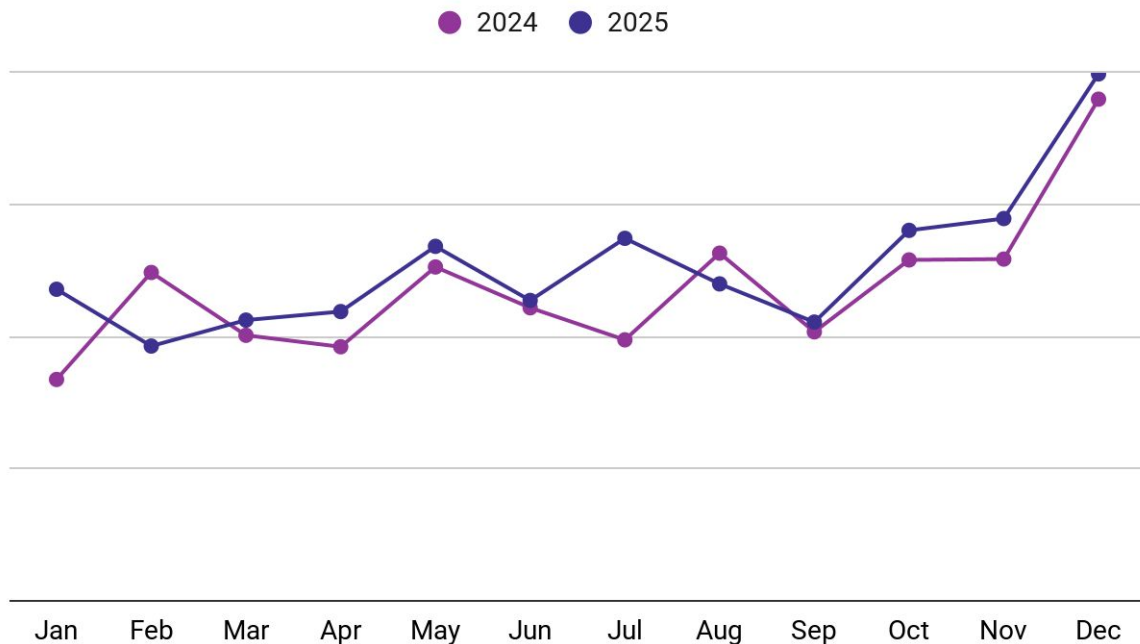
SHOP LOCAL

Independent Market Review 2025





Units sold in the Independent market



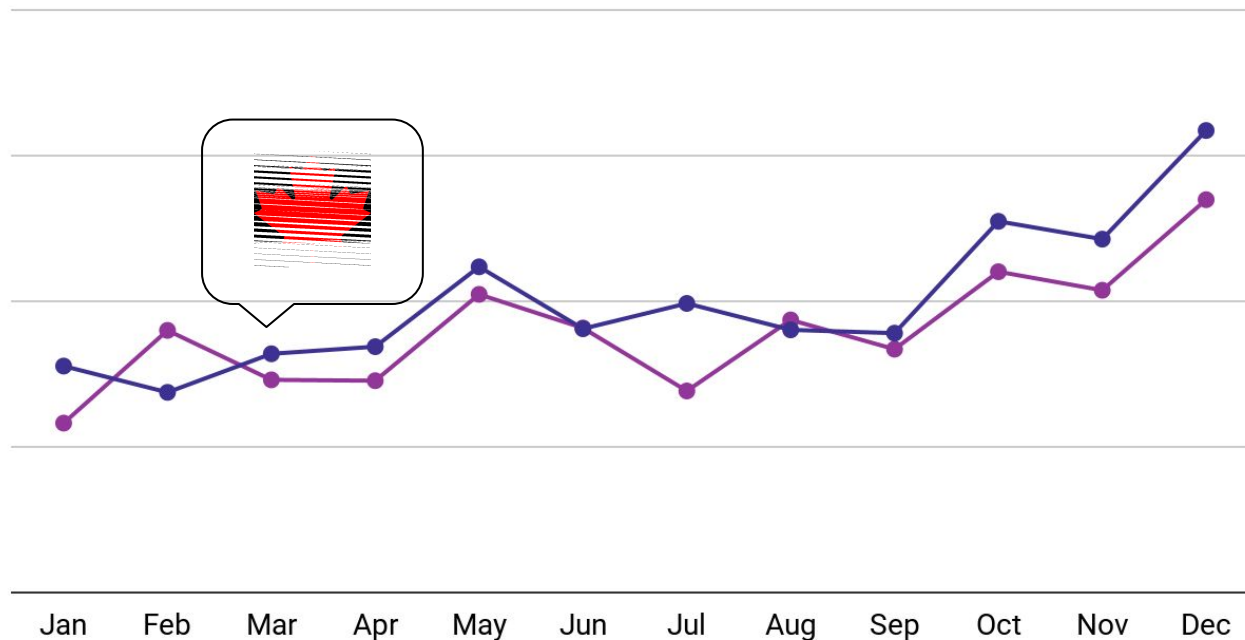
+7.2%
2025 over 2024

Source: BookNet Canada



CDN Units sold in the Independent market

● 2024 ● 2025

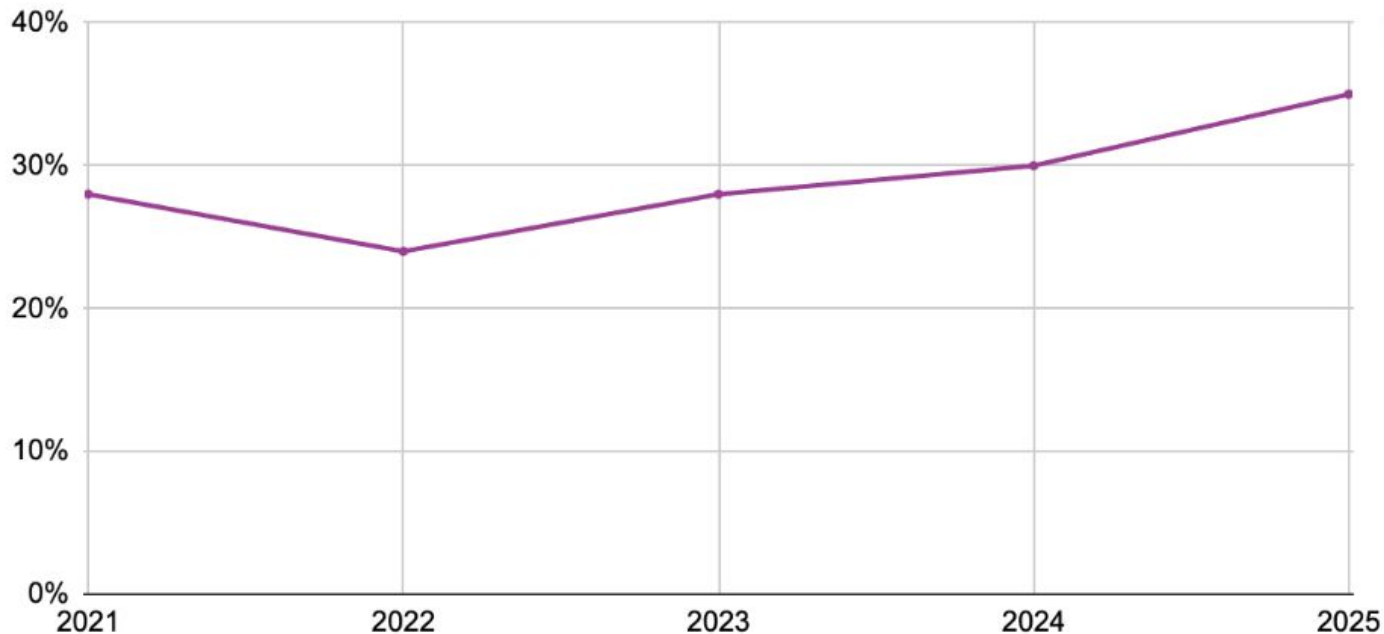


+11%
2025 over 2024

Source: BookNet Canada



Percentage of books by or about Canadians/locals read by Canadian readers, 2021–2025



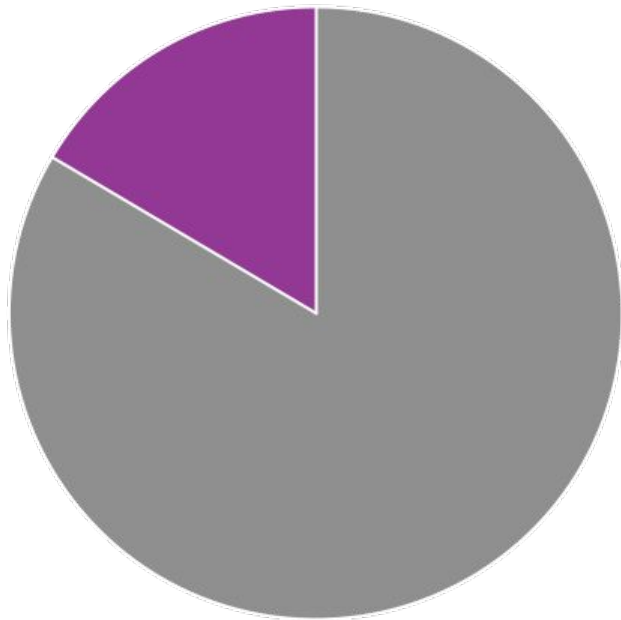
Source: BookNet Canada





CDN Units sold in the Independent market

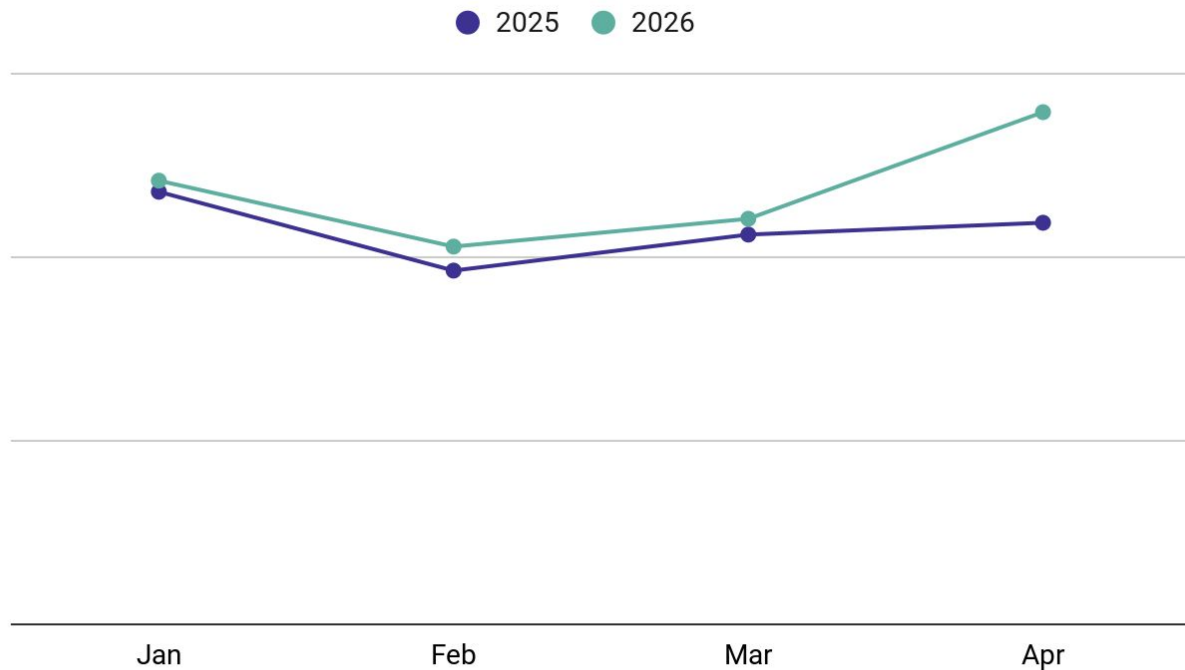
● Total units sold ● Canadian units sold



19.7%



Units sold in the Independent market YTD

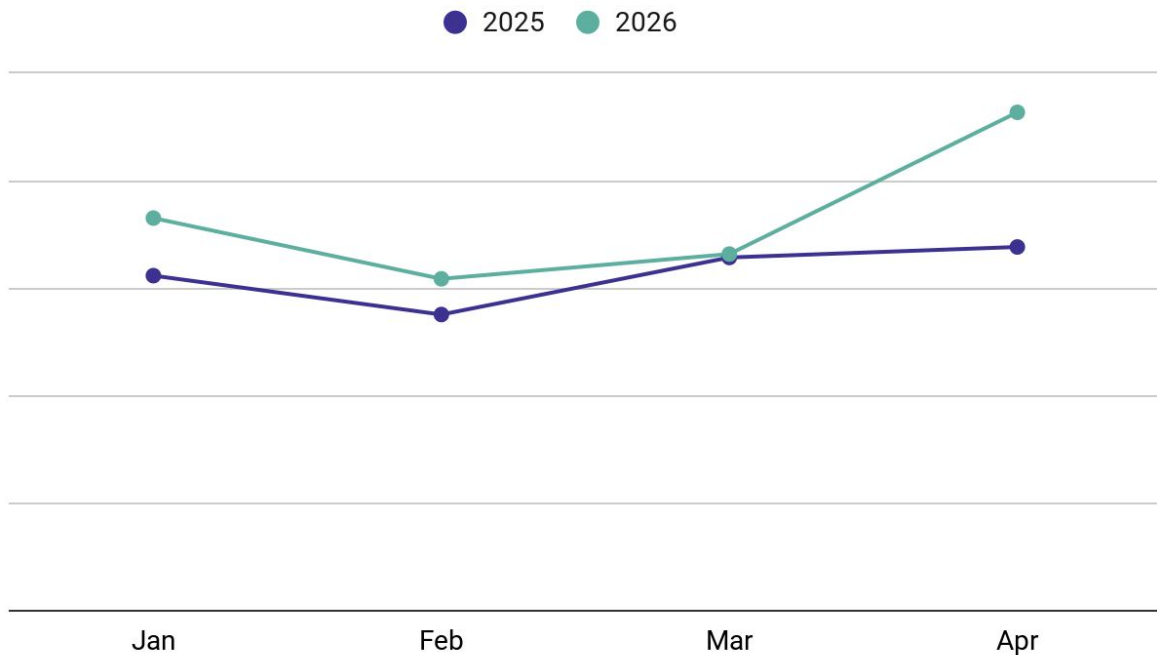


+10.2%
2026 over 2025 YTD

Source: BookNet Canada



CDN Units sold in the Independent market YTD

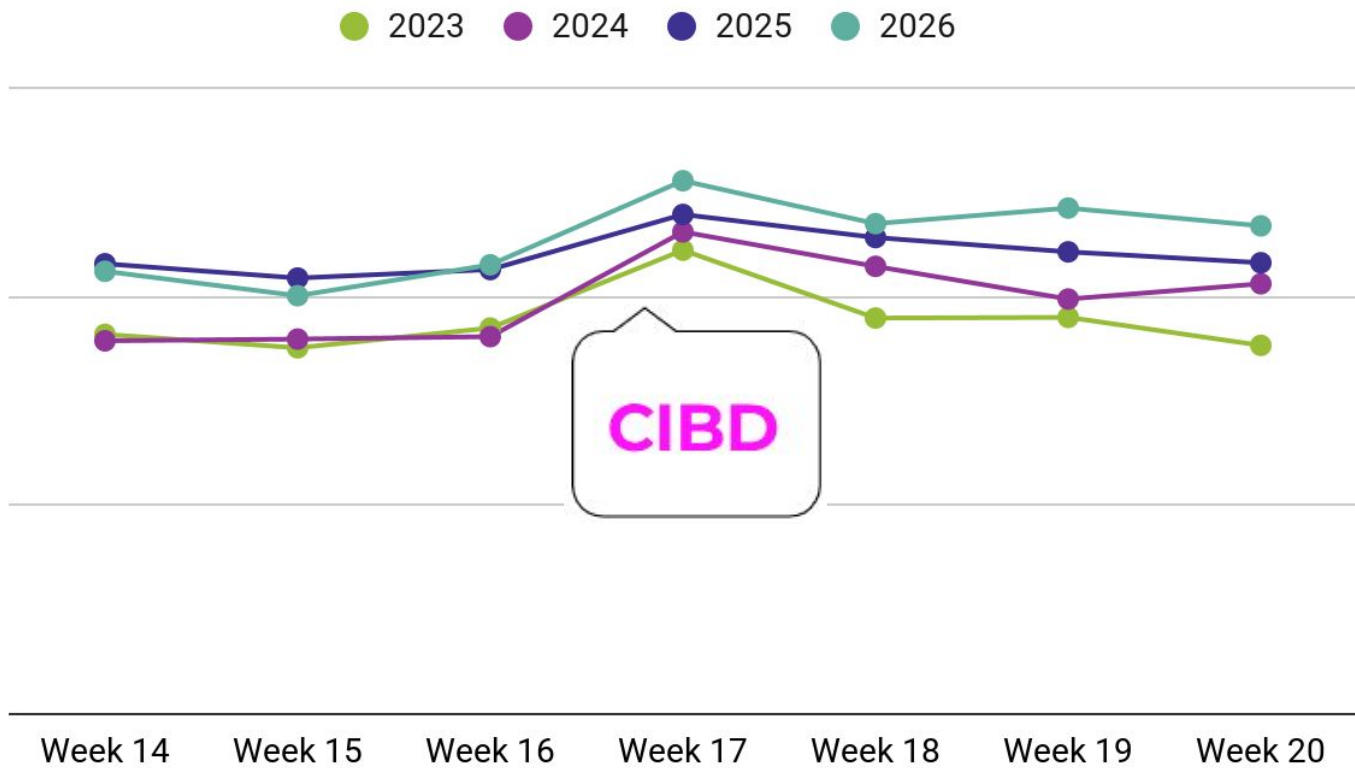


+17.1%
2026 over 2025 YTD

Source: BookNet Canada



Year over year unit sales in the Independent market





Word-of-mouth: 36%

- including book clubs or reading groups

Bookstore : 27%

- staff, browsing, displays, newsletter, etc.





Q&A



Thank you

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booknetcanada.ca/newsletter-sign-up

booknetcanada.ca/retailers

BOOKNET TECH FORUM

ECW PRESS

PRESENTATION BY [ELHAM ALI](#)

THRIVING TOGETHER | MAY 28, 2026

THE WITCH OF WILLOW SOUND



VANESSA F. PENNEY

Overview:

"Part mystery, part tragedy, and all feminine ferocity, The Witch of Willow Sound is a spellbinding debut novel." — Foreword Reviews, starred review

Pub Date: September 30, 2025

Print Price: \$24.95

BISACs:

FICTION / Gothic

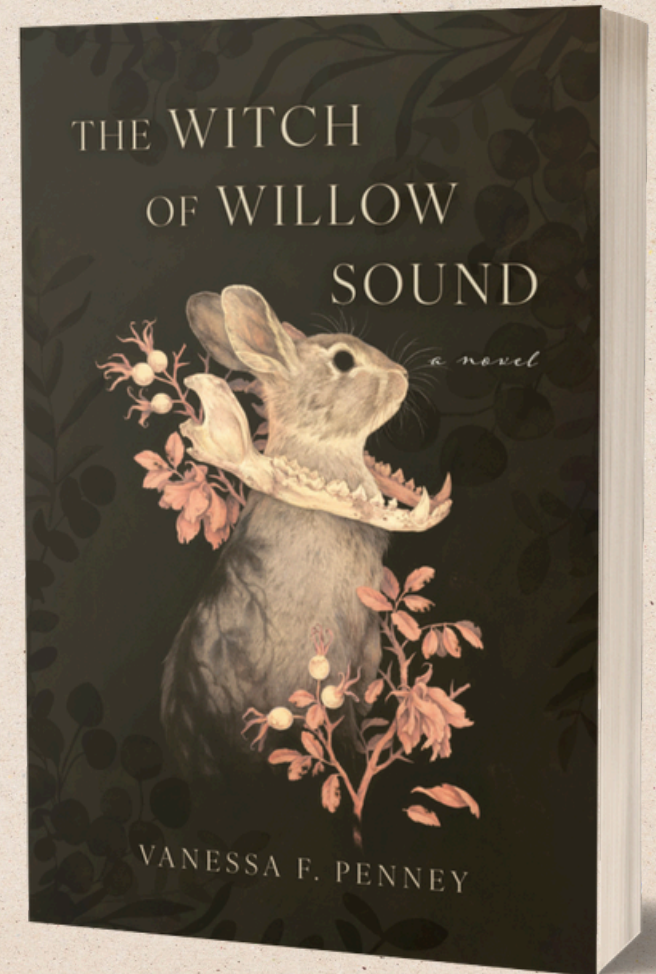
FICTION / Fantasy / Cozy

FICTION / Mystery & Detective

FICTION / Women

Print Sales (to date): 2600

Indie Sales (to date): 1200



The Pitch:

Indie bookstore marketing began May 2025 with a mailing to 10 bookstores across Canada:

- Blue Heron Books (ON)
- Daisy Chain Books Co. (AB)
- Flying Books (ON)
- Good Dog Books (NS)
- Magpie Books (AB)
- McNally Robinson (MB)
- Munro's Books (BC)
- Shelf Life Books (AB)
- The Spaniel's Tale (ON)
- Type Books (ON)



Bookstores received a "For Your Consideration" package with an ARC, sell sheet, and letter written by author Vanessa F. Penney.

The Pitch:

Vanessa's author letter was very valuable and would go on to be used throughout marketing for the book. It was featured as a graphic on Edelweiss, sent with book and ARC mailings, featured in newsletters, and incorporated into pitches.

My favourite line: "*The Witch of Willow Sound* is a story about strong, defiant women and sheds light on what societies do with people, and the past, they don't want. There are strange things ahead, and the woods are dark and deep. Dear reader, are you in?"



"Her wild eyes glittered and let off orange light. She looked a little wicked."

Dear Reader,

All stories about Nova Scotia must have some darkness in them, I say. Because of all the bones.

There are lost cemeteries and unmarked graves everywhere, here. Many people have no idea. But if you stay in Nova Scotia long enough — and if you don't mind dark things — you pick up bits of truth about it, like broken sea glass on the shore.

The Witch of Willow Sound was inspired by the bits of broken glass that haunt me most.

Even just a stone's throw from where I sit to write these words, dear reader, forty unmarked graves rest under wild grass. The "Poor Farm for the Harmlessly Insane" burned down in 1929, and residents of the poor farm remain buried in the land, there, their names and stories lost. Over time, their graves have sunk, leaving coffin-sized depressions in the ground, the way the whispers of their forgotten stories have sunk into the lines of this letter, and the pages of *The Witch of Willow Sound*.

For generations, Nova Scotia was known as the Lost Person Capital of North America, because its death-dealing shorelines cut deep into land smothered by sprawling, thick forests that have a history of swallowing people up. My childhood was spent wandering the woods of Nova Scotia and clambering along its steep, oceanside cliffs. Defying death without knowing it, I suppose, in my little second-hand shoes. These memories inspired the fictional place I named Willow Sound.

The humble cottage in Willow Sound was inspired by my secret desire (sometimes) to yank out all the cables and cords that tether us to the modern world and go live cozy in a cottage in the woods, surrounded by creaking hemlocks and wild pansies and piles of books to read through the steam of blackberry tea.

However, in East Coast Canadian history and witch lore, women who freed themselves from the rules and limitations of society were not admired, but misunderstood and often feared. Knowing this, the cozy cottage I wrote became filled with shadows. Secrets burbled in dark corners.

The Witch of Willow Sound is a story about strong, defiant women and sheds light on what societies do with people, and the past, they don't want.

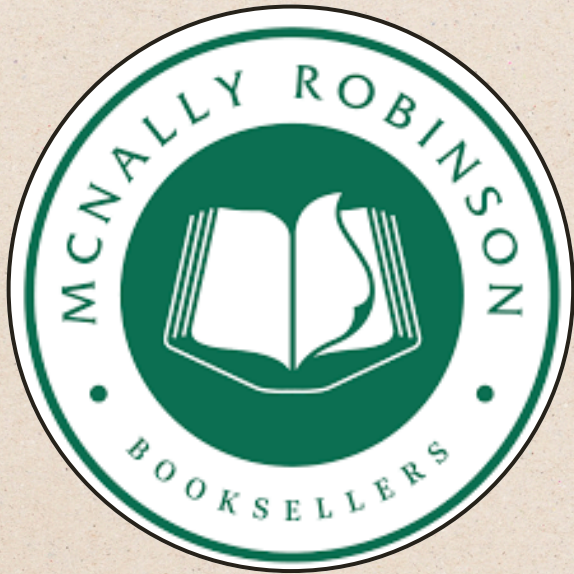
There are strange things ahead, and the woods are dark and deep. Dear reader, are you in?

Vanessa Penney
Vanessa F. Penney

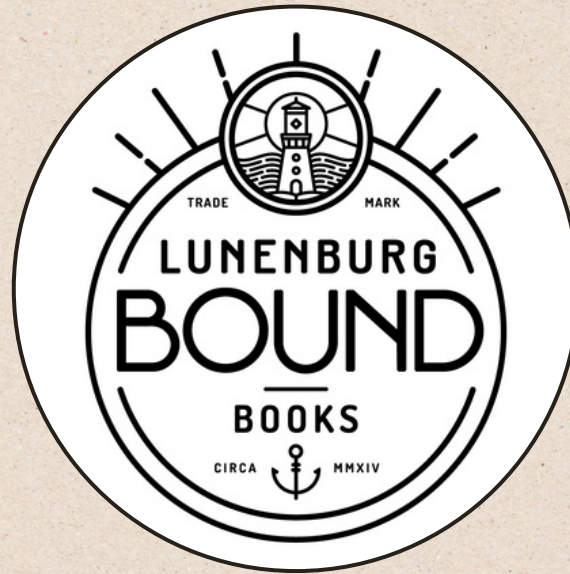


Indie Partners:

We were so lucky to have amazing bookseller support for *Witch of Willow Sound*! As hard as we work to reach out and find the best indie partners for each book, sometimes it's great when they come to us. Shoutout to our friends at:



Co-op partner



Event host

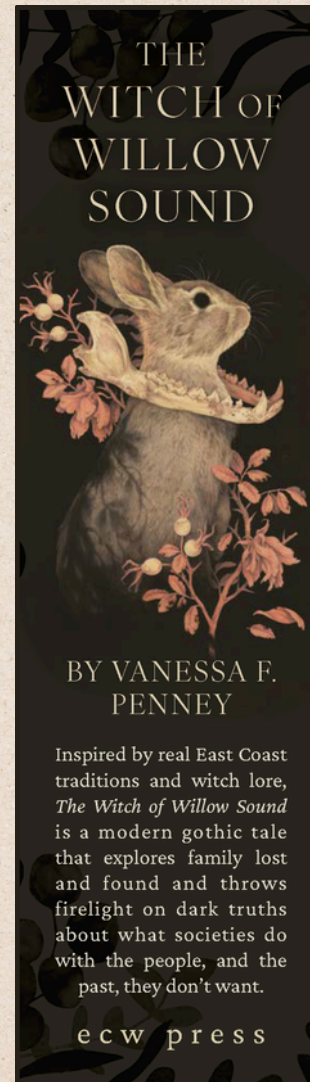


Holiday promotions

Indie Partners:

As well as these specialized partnerships, we reached out to 75 bookstores across Canada offering *Witch of Willow Sound* bookmarks in support of the CIBA Booksellers' List. As a result we sent **480 bookmarks** to **45 bookstores** across the country!

Also on offer, these adorable "Cats of ECW" stickers.



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THANK
YOU!

THRIVING TOGETHER | MAY 28, 2026

THE WITCH
OF WILLOW
SOUND



VANESSA F. PENNEY

The Personal Touch: Biblioasis x Indies

Hilary Ilkay, Sales Coordinator

In-house sales

- Biblioasis is a tiny team (5 full-time employees), and I am the sales rep for all of Canada
- When we outsourced sales, we were told our books were “too dark” for the market and not sellable: this prompted the press to bring sales in-house
- This shift allowed us to connect directly with booksellers and learn their preferences/habits and represent our books ourselves
- It also resulted in higher buys and overall improved communication, forging a stronger indie literary community

Bookseller care

- We take time to make our indie accounts feel valued in a number of ways, including handwritten notes when we mail ARCs and comp copies
- If we want to establish a relationship with a new account and make them feel welcome, we send them a “Biblioasis care package” with books, catalogues, merch, etc.
- When we visit stores in person, we always bring things with us
- I annotate our printed catalogues by hand and our digital ones with tailored commentary and notes

Mailing and communications

- We make sure to mail out ARCs early to generate enthusiasm about our titles
- I send weekly publicity/news updates to our accounts to keep them up to date on what's going on
- We collaborate on co-ops whenever we can
- I get to know booksellers through in-person as well as video/phone calls so that I can suggest books for staff picks, book clubs, subscriptions
- We always showcase the “human” side of publishing

Case Study: local author visits

- Russell Smith's *Self Care* was not performing quite as well as we thought it could, so I helped organize a tour of Toronto indies and we designed stickers with a quote from a *Globe and Mail* review: "bleak horny comedy"
- We asked stores for a minimum stock quantity and visited so that Russell could sign copies; we gave them stickers and collaborated on social media posts
- This brought a lot of attention to the title, especially with the in-store displays: *Self Care* remains one of our bestselling titles from the fall catalogue

Takeaways & conclusions

- The earlier we can inform indies about our books, the better, and continued communication & follow-up is crucial to our titles succeeding in stores
- Knowing the individual profiles and needs of our accounts helps us tailor our pitches
- We make sure we help stores display/feature our books and offer to send whatever assets we can
- Though we're small, we put a lot of effort into sustaining personal relationships with our accounts