

TODAY I AM

10 Stories
of Belonging



Edited by
Jael Richardson

Cover and illustration by Salini Perera



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INTRODUCTION

HAVE you ever felt like an outsider? Maybe you moved to a new school or a new neighbourhood or joined a new team or club or classroom?

In some ways, I have always felt like a bit of an outsider. Sometimes it feels like I don't quite belong because of the way I look or where I'm from.

If you've ever felt this way, this book is for you.

Today I Am is a collection of stories about kids who encounter moments of change, who want to feel more connected to someone or somewhere, who are struggling with or embracing what it means to truly belong.

There's a story about a family reunion and one about a boy who sprouts wings. There are stories set in imagined places, while others feel closer to home. Some involve magic or mystery. There's a story within a story, one told in verse and even one that's illustrated.

This book was written by some of my favourite writers — people who have also felt like outsiders at one point in their

lives and who have written beautiful stories inspired by the places they've lived or visited and by people they know.

The characters in *Today I Am* are learning to be themselves — kids who are discovering how to be wonderfully unique as they confront new people, places and truths. In each story, they learn something important about themselves, something that reminds them that they are smart, powerful, courageous, clever, compassionate, beautiful.

Today and every day, may you find the same courage to be entirely you — to say confidently “Today I am.”

Jael Richardson

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS



CHAD LUCAS **THE SECRET COUSIN**

Chad Lucas is the author of *Thanks A Lot, Universe* (winner of the Ann Connor Brimer Award for Atlantic Canadian Children's Literature), *Let The Monster Out* (a 2023 Red Maple Award Nominee) and *You Owe Me One, Universe*. A proud descendant of the historic African Nova Scotian community of Lucasville, he lives with his family in Nova Scotia.



MARTY CHAN **IN A FLASH**

Marty Chan writes books for kids and plays for adults. He's best known for his Marty Chan Mystery series, which includes award winners *The Mystery of the Frozen Brains* and *The Mystery of the Graffiti Ghoul*. The Junior Library Guild awarded the gold medal standard to his novels *Willpower* and *Haunted Hospital*. Marty works and lives in Edmonton, Alberta, with his wife Michelle.

Photo credit: Ryan Parker.



LISELLE SAMBURY **WHERE THE MULBERRIES GROW**

Liselle Sambury is the Trinidadian-Canadian author of the Governor General's Literary Awards finalist *Blood Like Magic*, its sequel, *Blood Like Fate*, and the standalone novel *Delicious Monsters*. Her work spans multiple genres, from fantasy to sci-fi to horror and more. In her free time, she shares helpful tips with writers and details of her publishing journey through a YouTube channel dedicated to demystifying the business of being an author.

Photo credit: Stuart W.



MICHAEL HUTCHINSON

HOME FIRES

Michael Hutchinson is a citizen of the Misipawistik Cree Nation in the Treaty 5 territory, north of Winnipeg. He is the author of the *Mighty Muskrats Mysteries* series. He has spent much of his career telling the stories of Indigenous peoples and advocating for First Nation families and communities across Canada. Currently he is the Communications Manager for the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre. Michael's greatest accomplishments are his two lovely daughters.



ROSENA FUNG

THE MEMORY FISH

Rosena Fung grew up and is based in Toronto, Ontario. Her graphic novel, *Living With Viola*, was nominated for the Silver Birch award. When she is not drawing, Rosena can be found teaching illustration, vending at zine fairs and going to the library. Her favourite activities are reading, cats, snacking and learning to play the guitar. Her name is pronounced, "Rosanna."



DANNY RAMADAN

A FEATHERED SAKR

Danny Ramadan is a Syrian-Canadian author and LGBTQ refugees advocate. His award-winning children's series, *The Salma Books*, includes the picture book *Salma the Syrian Chef* and early readers *Salma Makes a Home* and *Salma Writes a Book*. His adult novels, *The Clothesline Swing* and *The Foghorn Echoes*, continue to receive accolades. His memoir, *Crooked Teeth*, will be published in 2024.

Photo credit: Simon Remark.



JAEL RICHARDSON

THE INVENTION OF SERENE BROWN

Jael Richardson is the author of three picture books — *The Stone Thrower*, *Because You Are* and *The Hockey Jersey*. She is the founder and Executive Director of the Festival of Literary Diversity (FOLD) in Brampton, Ontario. Her debut novel, *Gutter Child*, was shortlisted for the Amazon Canada First Novel Award. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Guelph and lives in Brampton, Ontario.

Photo credit: Dean Macdonell.



MAHTAB NARSIMHAN

THE TOMB

Mahtab Narsimhan is an award-winning author with numerous critically acclaimed books in the fantasy, horror, mystery and contemporary genres. Many of her books have landed on prestigious award lists. *The Third Eye* won the Silver Birch Fiction Award in 2009. She is inspired by the desire to make sense of the world through stories and is deeply committed to representation and inclusion in all her novels.



Photo credit: Eugene Choi.



ANGELA MISRI

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR

Angela Misri is an award-winning journalist, author and educator. She is best known for her detective series, *The Portia Adams Adventures*, and her middle grade series, *Tales from the Apocalypse*. *Pickles vs the Zombies* won the 2021 Hackmatack Award for fiction. *Trip of the Dead* is up for the 2023 Red Cedar Award. Angela teaches journalism at Toronto Metropolitan University.

Photo credit: Abdul Malik.



BRANDON WINT

YESTERDAY I WAS, TODAY I AM, TOMORROW I WILL BE

Brandon Wint is an Ontario-born, Vancouver-based poet who gracefully weaves the threads of adversity and joy. For over a decade he has toured the globe, performing in the United States, Australia, Lithuania, Latvia and Jamaica. His poems and essays have been published in national anthologies, including *The Great Black North: Contemporary African-Canadian Poetry* and *Black Writers Matter*. *Divine Animal* was his debut book of poetry.