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Arno Kopecky named winner of the 2014 Edna Staebler Award for Creative Non-Fiction

WATERLOO – Arno Kopecky has won the 2014 Edna Staebler Award for Creative Non-Fiction for *The Oil Man and the Sea: Navigating the Northern Gateway* (Douglas & McIntyre). Award receptions to honour Kopecky will take place Nov. 13 at Wilfrid Laurier University's Waterloo and Brantford campuses.

In *The Oil Man and the Sea*, Kopecky, along with photographer Ilja Herb, spends 12 weeks sailing the treacherous coastal passages of the Great Bear Rainforest, slated to become a busy oil tanker route for the proposed Northern Gateway pipeline, which would transport bitumen from the Alberta oil sands to the British Columbia coast. Along the way, the novice sailors spend time with local residents, including many First Nations members, listening to their concerns about the pipeline and how it will affect their way of life, and the rainforest's fragile ecosystem. Part investigative journalism and part environmental travelogue, the story puts a human face on a complicated and controversial issue.

"Few of us will probably ever have the chance to visit the Great Bear Rainforest, meet the people who live there and hear first-hand their concerns about the pipeline project," said Bruce Gillespie, an award juror and professor in the Digital Media and Journalism program on Laurier's Brantford campus. "Kopecky's book takes us there and lets us hear the concerns of the people who will be most affected by the pipeline in a compelling way."

Based in Squamish, B.C., Kopecky is a journalist and travel writer, whose stories have appeared in publications ranging from *The Walrus* and *The Globe and Mail*, to *Reader's Digest* and *Foreign Policy*. He has reported from five continents, including civil uprisings in Mexico, cyclones in Burma, politics in Zimbabwe and election violence in Kenya. *The Oil Man and the Sea* is his second book. In his first book, *The Devil's Curve: A Journey into Power and Profit at the Amazon's Edge*, Kopecky spends one year in South America chronicling how affluent Western corporations and lifestyles impact impoverished and indigenous communities in Peru and Columbia.

In addition to *The Oil Man and the Sea*, the shortlist for the 2014 Edna Staebler Award also included: *Confessions of a Fairy's Daughter* by Alison Wearing (Knopf Canada) and *The Memory of Water* by Allen Smutylo (Wilfrid Laurier University Press).

On Thursday, Nov. 13, the award presentation will take place from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the Senate and Board Chamber on Laurier's Waterloo Campus, followed by a reception at 8 p.m. A reception will also be held on Laurier's Brantford campus earlier in the day; details will be available at wlu.ca/staebleraward.

About the Edna Staebler Award for Creative Non-Fiction

Established and endowed by writer and award-winning journalist Edna Staebler, the Edna Staebler Award for Creative Non-Fiction is administered by Wilfrid Laurier University, the only university in Canada to bestow a nationally recognized literary award. The \$10,000 award encourages and recognizes Canadian writers for a first or second work of creative non-fiction that includes a Canadian locale and/or significance. First-hand research, well-crafted interpretive writing and a creative use of language or approach to the subject matter distinguish winning books. Previous winners include authors Linden MacIntyre, Wayson Choy, Elizabeth Hay and Carol Shaben. The award is celebrating its 23rd anniversary this year.

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