

# North Battleford in the '50s the scene of latest in author's Buddy Williams series

By Jayne Foster  
Staff Reporter

1950s North Battleford. Kids might spend entire days outdoors, even in winter. Not everybody had, or wanted, a car. School principals could still administer the strap.

In the third of a four-book series, former North Battleford resident Kenneth William Budd sets the story of an 11-year-old boy in a fictional community only thinly disguised as his home town. It's a timeless story of growing up in an era when a child's life was very different from today. Still, children ripening into adulthood face the same choices no matter the era.

The series revolves around four seasons in a young Buddy Williams' and his family's lives, starting with the first book, *SummerWild*, set at likewise thinly disguised Jackfish Lake. Born in North Battleford, Budd spent his first 14 years here before moving to Brooks, Alta., and almost every summer was spent at Cochin beach. He now lives in the Sunshine Coast area of British Columbia and his four-novel series reveals his love of nature and belief in its inherent role as a teacher to the human species.

*SummerWild* was released in 2011, and followed up by *FallGently* in 2012, which takes young Buddy back to his home near the railroad tracks of a small city. By the end of the second book, the young protagonist has learned some lessons, but he has also been faced with calamitous changes against which he rails with all the subjectivity of youth.

*WinterFree* continues with some tough times for Buddy's family. Author Budd is not kind to his main subject, as no writer should be who wants his story to absorb the reader, yet he allows young Buddy and his friends to have some joy amongst their travails.

While the series is written in the juvenile fiction genre, appropriate for Grades 5 through 9, it's also one that an older audience, especially prairie-raised readers, can enjoy and appreciate — a trip back to a time when some things were simpler, and others were harder. The wondrous schoolroom of nature was closer to one's back door, but it could also prove capricious. The indoor classroom offered up basic fare, but the pitfalls of personality clashes could loom large, and, in *WinterFree*, they certainly did.

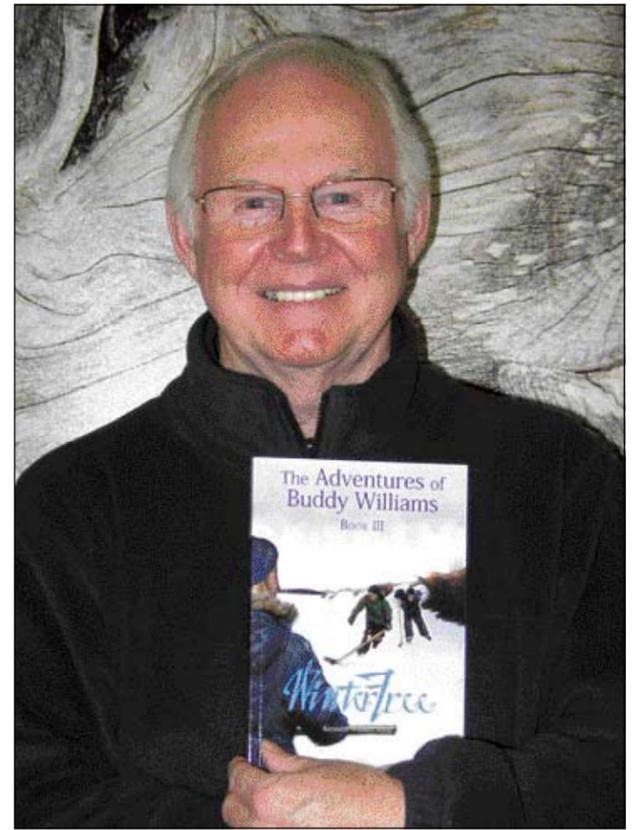
In its local context, the fictionalized memoirs will bring back memories to those who also grew up here. The series will also intrigue those who may have missed out on that particular decade yet

still enjoy delving into the history of this community. Budd refers to these readers as a "bonus audience." One member in particular is the late Dr. Mary McPhail, whose grandson read to her from *SummerWild*, "because the McPhails still have a cottage at Cochin, and Alex's grandmother would respond joyously with her own memories of her time at the lake with her family."

The final installment in the series will be *SpringRush*. Budd told the *Regional Optimist* Wednesday he was jubilant at having just sent the completed manuscript to

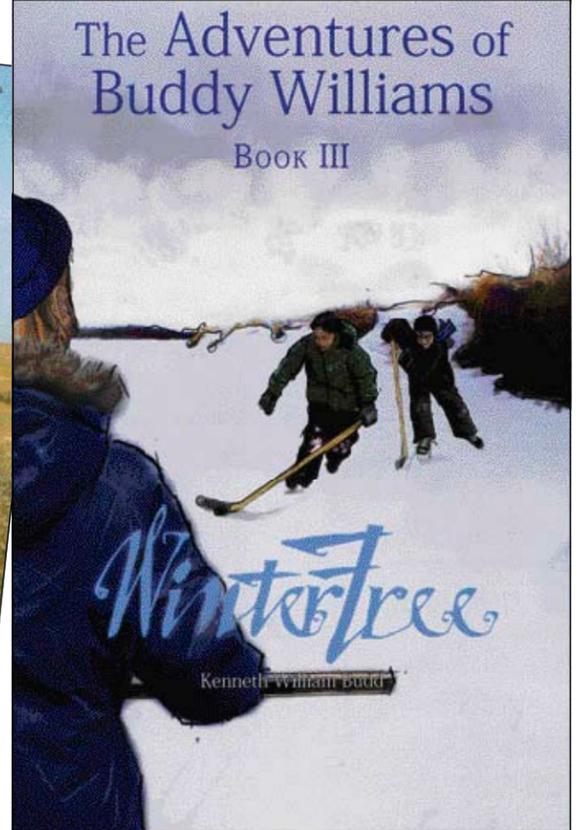
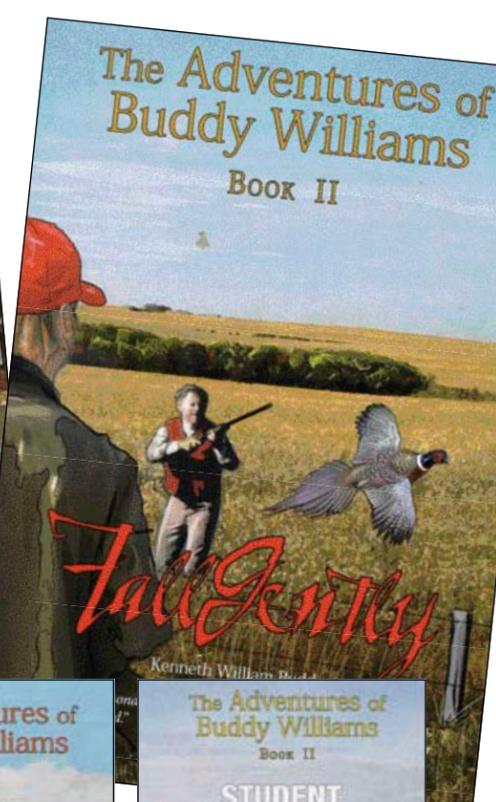
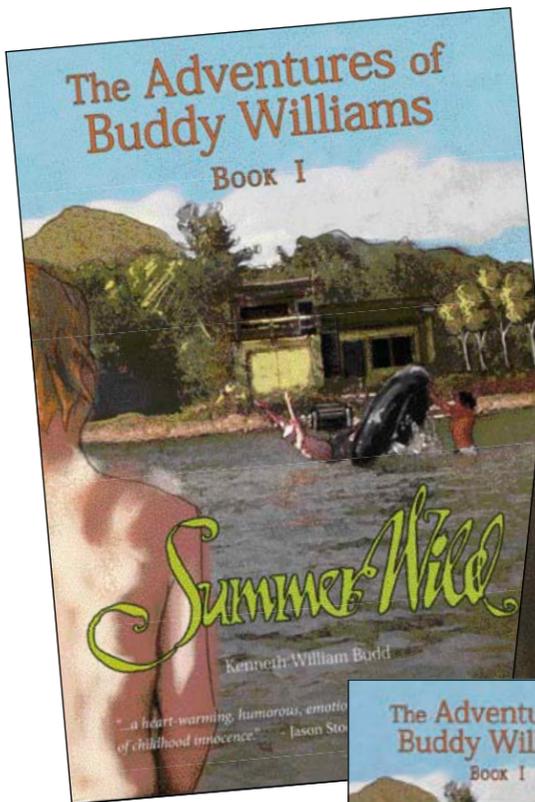
“There were no smells. The cold seemed to have frozen all of them. The usual scents, like the cool water of the creek, the different plant odours, and even the pungent stink of a skunk, had vanished. It was as if the cold had sucked them up and maybe stored them away somewhere for the winter.”

— Excerpted from *WinterFree*



Kenneth William Budd

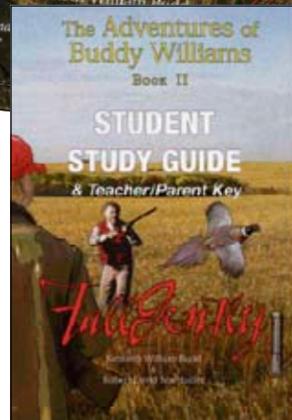
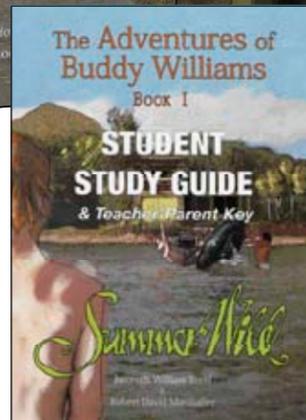
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his editor the previous day. In *SpringRush*, Buddy is faced with the question of how to turn his life around after a winter of poor decision-making in *WinterFree*. It is expected to be available in May of 2014.

A retired teacher, Budd owns and operates SummerWild Productions, an independent book production company, through which he produces his own books as well as those of others. He began this venture after studying with the late W.O. Mitchell at the Banff Centre. He has now produced, published or written two dozen books. One of his productions is *CARMANAH*, Artistic Visions of an Ancient Rainforest, which won both the Bill Duthie Booksellers' Choice Award and the Roderick Haig-Brown Regional BC Book Prize in British Columbia.

The Buddy Williams series is one Budd feels is worthy of study in classrooms, at home or in any other educational setting, including English as a Second Language class. From its inception, the author hoped the series would be entertaining and educational. He has, with writer and editor Robert



David Marthaller, created a series of study guides to accompany the books, each unique to its particular book and its chapters.

The study guide leads students on a chapter-by-chapter exploration of the novel, with activities to enhance reading, writing and comprehension.

With the study guides, Budd and Marthaller hope to support understanding and enjoyment of the novels as well as help students identify the "big ideas" and consider them in their own contexts.

The guides for *SummerWild* and *FallGently* have been released and the third, which is a guide to *WinterFree*, is due to be delivered to the author from the printer at the end this month.

Budd is planning an author's tour this fall and will be focusing on the study guides as well as the novels

themselves.

He has seen some success with the study guides so far and hopes for more. He became acquainted with a teacher from Kitscoty, Alta. while on a tour through western Canada two autumns ago. High school teacher Dave Dumont came to a signing, the result of which was that he introduced *SummerWild* to his Grade 9 English class.

"At the end of his study of the novel unit, within which he utilized the study guide as well, I did a couple of Skype sessions with his kids that not only summarized their questions about the characters and the plot of the book, but I also did a creative writing session with them. It was wonderful," says Budd.

In addition, he says, a private school in Vancouver that focuses on upgrading ESL students to allow them

A four book series by author Kenneth William Budd, whose hometown is North Battleford, is nearing completion, with the fourth book, entitled *SpringRush*, having been sent off to the editor, and the third study guide ready to be released at the end of this month. The series revolves around four seasons in the life of a young Buddy Williams.

to enter post-secondary institutions used *SummerWild* one semester and then *FallGently* the next — along with the study guides — with a Grade 11 and then a Grade 12 class.

"I got to go into the city and spend time with them after each novel to do a summary of each. It was a giggle to have them ask questions about Canada's natural world and our culture," he says.

"Also," he adds, "here on the Sunshine Coast, I have two elementary schools using *SummerWild* as their vehicle to study the novel, both at the Grade 6 and 7 levels. I will be a guest in those classrooms, too, as I hope to be — either in person or via Skype — with any class that works with my books."

Budd says part of his overall plan is to continue to work extensively with schools, partly because he miss the kids and the classroom since retiring.

He has also made some

contacts in North Battleford, so the books could become part of students' studies here.

The first three of the *Adventures of Buddy Williams* series are available for purchase at Cradleberry's in North Battleford and from Chapters Online. More information about the series, including student guides and bonus activities for the books, are available at [www.summerwild.ca](http://www.summerwild.ca).

If you check out the back pages of the novels, you will find a list of some of Budd's experiences. They include skydiving (once), snorkeling and SCUBA diving in the Caribbean, swimming with humpback whales off Maui and trapping, tagging and tracking grizzlies in Montana. Other highlights of his varied experiences are hiking in the Badlands of Alberta, directing a wilderness backpacking program in Kananaskis Country and beachcombing on the west coast of British Columbia.