

BETWEEN THE ACTS

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EDEN ROBINSON



In *Between the Acts*, *The Globe and Mail* takes a look at how artists manage their time before and after a creative endeavour.

The last year has been an eventful one for Eden Robinson. By the time the Indigenous novelist attended the Scotiabank Giller Prize awards ceremony as one of the five shortlisted authors for the honour (which, alas, she did not win), the *Son of a Trickster* author had already won the \$50,000 Writers' Trust Fellowship earlier in the month and, in 2016, the \$25,000 Writers' Trust Engel/ Findley Award. The annual fellowship in particular aims to free writers from financial concerns to allow for creative independence. Here, Robinson talks about the financial freedom and what it means to her craft.

Normally my job is freelancing, whether it's teaching or writing on contract. I've appreciated all the jobs I've had, but it's a little time consuming. I would write from 4 o'clock to 5 o'clock in the morning. Then I'd switch over to marking and teaching classes, and I'd come back at night and do some editing.

So, the awards mean I don't have to wake up at four in the morning to write. With the Writers' Trust Engel/ Findley Award last year, I was able to finish *Trickster Drift*, the second book in the *Trickster* series. I had not produced a book in a year, ever. It usually takes me five years to write a novel. It's tough. You're squeezing in writing between your life and the hustle.

I've also had time to catch up on all the shortlists lately. It has been a very rich year for writers trying to see what novels can do. If there's a pattern for the novels coming out in Canada, it's writers trying to move away from the traditional form to express the weirdness of the time we're in. They're trying to express complex ideas of identity through different forms. That's the pattern I'm seeing. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's *This Accident of Being Lost* is an example of this.

For myself, I'm taking a two-month break before I start the third novel of the *Trickster* trilogy. After I finish that, I go back to a novel I was working on before. It's a trashy, band council romance. That's the one my mom is looking forward to the most.