Crow Boy
by Maureen Bush

Reviewed by Donna Gamache

Crow Boy is the second book in the Veil of Magic fantasy series by Calgary writer Maureen Bush for young readers in about grades three to five. In this series the magical world co-exists with a modern Canadian setting – in the Rocky Mountains of Banff and the coastal areas of Vancouver Island. Children who know these regions will enjoy the dual settings, and those who don’t can be encouraged to locate them on a map of Canada.

In the previous book, The Nexus Ring, we met eleven-year-old Josh and his eight-year-old sister Maddy. On a return trip from a Vancouver Island holiday to their home in Calgary, Maddy buys an unusual green stone ring. Soon the children encounter a strange troll-like man called Gronvald and an elegantly dressed woman/water spirit named Aleena who helps them pass through a magic veil into a co-existing world. They discover that both creatures were after the ring, which rightly belongs to a giant living in Castle Mountain in Banff National Park. After exciting adventures in both the natural and magical worlds, the children finally manage to return the ring for safekeeping.

In Crow Boy, Josh and Maddy have convinced their parents to spend the Labour Day long weekend camping in the park near Castle Mountain. Josh wants to use his own developing magical powers to pass through the veil, meet the giant again and have another look at the magical ring. But when he accidentally drops the ring, it is snatched up by Aleena, who wants to use it to pass back and forth through the veil, an action that is slowly destroying the veil and allowing human changes into the magic world. The greedy troll, Gronvald, is also after the ring, for his own evil purposes, and the children are determined to get it back before disaster strikes. To do so they must travel with the thoughtless Aleena, convince her to stop damaging the veil, and keep themselves out of the clutches of the evil Gronvald.

Into the children’s adventures the author manages to weave interesting and educational details such as information about the endangered Banff Springs snails and the
effect of global warming on our shrinking glaciers. She also emphasizes such values as co-
operation and trust, and a respect for other creatures and the environment. As an adult I
liked this, as well as the use of a western Canadian setting.

Although *Crow Boy* could be read on its own, most young readers would find it
easier to understand the plot if they had read the first book in the series. Perhaps parents
could purchase both together, since neither is very long.

Maureen Bush has written four books with some being short-listed for awards
such as the Silver Birch and the Saskatchewan Diamond Willow.

Donna Firby Gamache is a writer/retired teacher from MacGregor, Manitoba. Her newest
work is *Sarah: A New Beginning*, a novel for children, loosely based on the coming of her
great-grandparents to Canada in 1891.

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