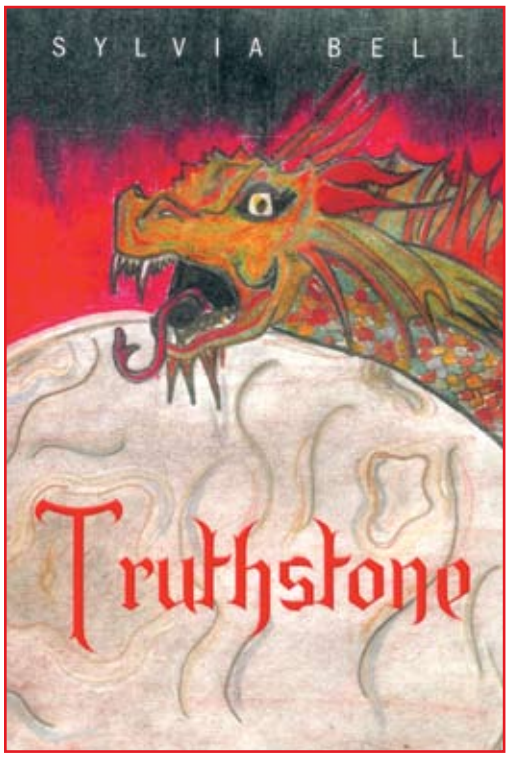
Lives

Sylvia Bell is a principal … and novelist. Truthstone was published this month.

Sylvia Bell is your typical — well inasmuch as any school leader can be 'typical' — elementary school principal. Her school, Windrem Elementary in Chetwynd, adheres to the three Cs — caring, considerate and cooperative. The school, which enrolls more than 50% of its students from two Bands at Moberly Lake, is strong on student leadership, has peer tutors and mediators, an awards day and an annual talent show. The school is focused on reducing its environmental footprint through reducing, reusing and recycling. As principal, Bell has a hand in every aspect of the school.

In addition to all these tasks, Sylvia recently found the time to publish her first novel, *Truthstone*, which features the artwork of local student Ashlynn Pedersen (Chetwynd Secondary). The novel is a dark, compelling and complex story that features a number of well-drawn characters. When 13-year-old Darien sets off on a journey, his fate overtakes him and he is sent on a quest to find a Truthstone. As he searches, another force looks for him. Al Zaric dreams of leading the world into a time of evil. He wants to use Darien's heart-blood to awaken the Dark One. Vhari, the midwife's daughter, soon discovers that she has magical powers. The two youths have never met but Vhari is steadily pulled into the darkening web of Darien's destiny.

Sylvia says her interest in writing began with letters sent to her by her grandmother, but that she didn't truly embark on her creative fiction until she came to Canada. A lab technician in Scotland, Sylvia's move to Canada to pursue a teaching career brought her to Selkirk College in Castlegar where she started taking creative writing courses. It was some



16 years ago that *Truthstone* began — at first as a short story. "I was looking for some good fantasy fiction to read, and in arrogance, I thought I could write." It was six years of reflection, creating and writing before the *Truthstone* story was fully drawn — now as a novel. Although the creative aspect of her book was finished, it was another 10 years before it made it off the back burner. "I was busy building my teaching career," she explains and other than the odd attempt to interest publishers, the novel sat untended.

The book, she explains, did not come to her as a 'single skeleton' but rather "developed along the way." Her process, writing without an outline, she says, "is not how I would teach writing."

Sylvia's novel will be included at the Frankfurt International Book Fair this October at is available as a paperback, hardback and eBook from both Amazon and Xlibris. bcp vpa

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