**Congratulations to Jenni Burke, the Adult Category**

**First Place Winner of the 2021 Farley Mowat Writing Contest**

**DREAMING OF THE ARTIC**

Words that come to us, when we think of the Artic? Biting cold. Barren. Frigid. Bitter. Icebergs. Melting icecaps. Dark. Scary. Terrifying. Bitter. Seals. Penguins. Polar bears. Death. Canada. Inuit. Ancient culture. Farley Mowat. Writing. Language. Voiceless.

The Arctic, not for the weak of heart.

Words that come to me, when I think of the Artic? Vast lands. Ocean. Clean air. Fresh snow. Endless skies. Aurora Borealis. Northern lights. Resonance. Serene. Surreal. Isolated. Solitude. The loudest silence. Life. The midnight sun. Nunavut. Painting. Speechless. Rebirth. Revival. Ancient wisdom. Longing. Source. Reverence.

The Arctic, not for the weak of heart.

A place, the great white north, that few desire. A place they would rather ignore, or perhaps even pretend it doesn’t exist at all. A place, that on the surface seems dead and barren, but upon closer inspection, is actually teeming with life. A place that is under appreciated, and almost unrepresented in the world.

The Arctic, not for the weak of heart.

A vital life force, throbbing through the energetic veins of the north. A vital life force, flowing through the land, sea, and sky. A vital life force, flowing through the culture and people. A vital life force in the magic of the elements; earth, air, fire, water. A vital life force resonating through the Northern Lights, and midnight sun. A vital life force pulsing through each arctic fox, wolf, hare; each moose, caribou, reindeer; each owl, goose, puffin; each whale, orca, seal. A vital life force, I imagine, you feel in each breath, each sacred step, each precious moment. A vital life force, reverberating and echoing through all time.

The Arctic, not for the weak of heart.

Over the years, growing up in Canada, I have come to love winter. It is by far my favourite season. The older I get, the more I love the peace and solitude of the long dark days, and the silence of a fresh snowfall. As a result, I have managed to romanticize the Arctic in my mind. I have a longing for the North that will not be satiated until I have touched that land, breathed that air, seen those skies, and felt that vital life force surge through my own veins. I imagine I have canvases to paint, poems to write, songs to sing. I feel called to the North, but truly I don’t know why. Especially when, in my opinion, the Arctic is not for the weak of heart.