

September 2006 - the galleys are proofed, the cover is finalized, the printing presses are doing their bit, the fall tour schedule is lining up...good gosh, could it be true? To have this new book coming out is as exciting as the first. The next I'll see Stain of the Berry is when a box arrives from Insomniac Press with copies of the final product. That is what I call champagne time.

September 2006 - this fall promises to be a terrific time with Stain of the Berry - including tour stops already booked and more to come, I've also just signed on as a panelist for the big Bouchercon mystery conference in Madison in October along with some of my dearest colleagues: Alex Brett, Neil Plakcy and Caro Soles; and it is being moderated by someone whose books I've been reading for many years, Mark Richard Zubro - so it will be a treat to meet and work with him.

September 2006 - I also have some exciting readings around the province over the next few months in communities such as Humboldt, Swift Current and Prince Albert - all of which I am thrilled to be doing.

September 2006 - I am heading off for nearly a month of lovely landscapes, runny cheeses and fresh baguettes, lazy mornings of drinking strong coffee and browsing through open air markets, rejuvenation and inspiration seeking and, equally as important, to ...drink wine in the land where the grape is grown (to roughly quote one of my favourite movies, Shirley Valentine). We've rented a small place in the south of France a short drive out of Nice to soak up the life in the French countryside. All this to be followed by a few days in London seeing shows and fine dining. I've never been to London and am greatly looking forward to the whole trip.

August 2006 - As Stain of the Berry, steams full ahead toward its release date this fall, I've already booked launches in Saskatoon, Winnipeg and Vancouver (with more dates and locations to come). See details on the events calendar. It seems hard to believe that I'll soon be reading from a new book - especially since I was just doing a reading from Tapas on the Ramblas less than two weeks ago. I was at a reading recently where the author stated that it would be his final reading from that particular book and his attention would now be focused on the new book he was writing; the one he was reading from would be relegated to his past. I found the idea interesting, but I don't think I could do it. I also recently had a chance to do a prolonged reading and I loved being able to use the time to go back to earlier Russell Quant novels. It felt as if I was revisiting old friends, and as I was reading the passages, the memory and flow of them and the practice I'd put into developing them as readings came back like riding a much-loved bicycle.

August 2006 - Another sure sign: Another sure sign that I have a new book coming out is when my business cards arrive. With each book I have new cards made up (thanks Huw) that list on the back the name and publication dates of each book in the Russell Quant series. It seems so deliciously official when a book name appears on a business card. Oh man, I can hardly wait to get that book in my hands for the first time!

August 2006 - I've just finished the copy edit changes I received from my Insomniac Press copy editor, Gillian (not to confuse her with substantive editor, Catherine). It is the second time we are working together, which is a bonus. Most of the changes were punctuation and other bits and pieces, but the bigger discussion points revolved around some passages that needed more 'Russell' put into them. And she was right. When I re-wrote them and 'Russell-ized' them, they were much better. The biggest item however was one of those things that proves how important it is to have so many levels of checks and balances in the editing process. For even after about a trillion read-overs, Gillian discovered a naming error. I'm sure very few except for the very diligent and observant would have noticed the change in name used in an obscure reference between one book and another, but it would have driven me crazy if it had gone through and I do think stuff like that is important to get right. So - thank you Gillian!

August 2006 - July in Saskatoon has been hot hot hot; and, according to today's paper, in a three-way tie for the hottest July on record at almost 2 degrees hotter than the average (which apparently is quite significant in the weather world). Personally, I love the heat. I love sitting by a pool with something cool to drink in one hand and a good book in the other and absolutely nothing I have to do til day's end except enjoy the outdoors in a sloth-like way. The best are those near end-of-day, golden hours when the sun covers everything in breathtaking bronze. Of course days such as this are few and far between - so when they come around, grab 'em!

July 2006 - Book number five in the Russell Quant series is close to being sent off to my substantive editor, Catherine - with a tentative title change to Sundowner Ubuntu. The original title was Tuli Block Ubuntu, but I wanted to put in my usual reference to a food/drink item or activity - which is what a Sundowner refers to. I will be getting final edits for Stain of the Berry back from my copy editor, Gillian, this week, after which it will go to galleys then to print.

July 2006 - Last week I co-hosted an event at the local McNally Robinson bookstore with fellow Saskatchewan author Murray Malcolm. It was a Discussion with the Authors type of thing where we spoke a little about ourselves and how we became writers and then fielded questions. A very enjoyable evening and it was nice to see a lot of new faces and people of all ages and backgrounds. Special hello to Sydney who is a young, aspiring fantasy writer.

July 2006 - At the end of July I will be appearing at Festival of Words in Moose Jaw - a true celebration of words in every format. And I have just confirmed my participation in the Left Coast Crime mystery fan convention in Seattle beginning of next year.

July 2006 - I am very pleased to have just been added to the Contemporary Author reference book series which is a Bio-Bibliographic Guide to Current Writers used by libraries, schools and other institutions throughout the US and Canada