

French-Canadian history inspired author's new book

By **DAVID JASPER**
THE BULLETIN

The past always plays a big part in the present of historical fiction author Kerry Chaput.

The Bend writer's latest book, "Daughter of the King," is based on the true history of the "filles du roi," or "the king's daughters," destitute women who were sponsored by King Louis XIV to become settlers in Canada.

"Daughter of the King" is Chaput's third book, and the first she didn't self-publish. It was inspired by the ancestry of her husband, Mike.

"I kind of stumbled into this story," she said. "I started doing ancestry research for my husband because I just wanted to find out where his family was from in France." She was able to trace his family line back to the late Middle Ages.

"The French-Canadian records are incredible," Chaput said. "You can find everything you want, kind of, because everyone was in the same church for 300 or 400 years. ... And I found the story of these women who lived in the 17th century, and they were born in France but married in Quebec, and they were all around the same time."

She would eventually discover the story of these so-called daughters of the king, destitute women who came to the New World to help settle Canada — not a segment of North American history U.S. citizens would be likely to know.

"The king basically sent out his people to find women who really had no future in France," she said. They were neither indentured servants nor mail-order brides. The women would be given transportation, land and more for the trouble of heading off into an unknown world.

"They said, 'You don't have a whole lot here for you, so why don't we offer you this opportunity? You will have passage paid. We will give you a dowry. We'll give you all the things that you need for new clothes. We'll give you a farm. And when you get there, you're under no

obligation to marry.'"

But there was the hope that they would marry.

"There were more men than there were women — that was the problem with Canada," Chaput said. "The population was dwindling. It wasn't heading in the right direction, and the king wanted women to know that this was a place you could thrive. They didn't want women to be afraid of it there, so they gave women all the power."

The saga's protagonist is Isabelle, a fierce Protestant woman in Catholic France of the 1660s. After she fends off an attack by a nobleman, Isabelle has little choice but to convert to Catholicism and escape to Canada as a daughter of the king.

According to publisher Black Rose Writing, "Readers looking for fast-paced true to life stories will fall in love, and love to hate, these characters."

Chaput penned her first story at 12 and took her first stab at a novel at 25 "having zero idea what I was doing," she said, but she really came into her power as a writer at age 40.

"I had taken a break from work to stay home with my kids and decided 'OK, I don't have any excuses anymore,'" she said. "I pulled out that same book from 15 years before and started to work with it."

That would eventually become the first of her two self-published books, "The Darkness We Carry," published in 2019, and followed by "My Boring Life."

As a mother of two elementary school-aged kids, Chaput's life sounds anything but boring. To make it work, she gets up at 4 a.m. to write. The early bird already has her next book written and is now querying literary agents about it in hopes of landing a publisher. Its subject matter is much closer to home and a little more contemporary: Bend during the Great Depression.

"I'm pretty proud of it. I'm happy with how it came out," Chaput said. "Now it's up to fate, I guess, to see what happens."



Kerry Chaput



'Daughter of the King' is by Bend author Kerry Chaput.



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