

**Regina Author Writes Intimate Memoir about Sexual Assault,  
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Recovery**  
*To be Released During Sexual Assault Awareness Month*

**INVERMERE, B.C. - April 3, 2019** In late April, author **D. M. Ditson** will officially launch her award-winning memoir, *Wide Open*, as part of **Sexual Assault Awareness Month**. Ditson's story is a raw and emotional account of unravelling in the wake of a series of sexual assaults by several men that left her with post-traumatic stress disorder. Written during her recovery, Ditson shares her remarkable story of resilience to offer survivors hope – and maybe even proof – that they, too, can heal.

“This incredibly brave and powerful memoir is written in prose both luminous and stark,” said **Alison Pick**, **Man Booker Prize**-nominated author of *Strangers with the Same Dream* and *Far to Go*. “I read it in one gulp, in awe of the author’s willingness to surrender to her experience of trauma and of her generosity in sharing her journey with her readers. *Wide Open* will take you to the farthest reaches of what it means to be human.”

Before Ditson’s manuscript had been selected by a publisher, it was awarded the **John V. Hicks non-fiction prize** by the Saskatchewan Writers’ Guild. *Wide Open* is proudly published by [Coteau Books](http://Coteau Books).

“D. M. Ditson’s book is a courageous and powerful exploration of the insidiousness of sexual assault and rape . . . it has the potential to help us support survivors and reduce sexual violence,” said Pamela Cross, who is a feminist lawyer and co-chair of the Ontario Violence Against Women Roundtable.

Ditson, who is from Regina and now lives in the Kootenays, will hold **Book Launch and Recovery Conversation events** in Regina at Bushwakker Brewpub at 7 p.m. on April 30 and in Saskatoon at McNally Robinson Booksellers at 7 p.m. on May 1. She will also hold events in Calgary on May 3, in Invermere, B.C. on June 1, and in Radium, B.C. on June 4. Admission is free; everyone is welcome.

It is crucial that the national dialogue about sexual assault include conversations about PTSD and recovery because:

- Sexual assault is a [leading cause](#) of PTSD
- [One in four](#) North American women have been sexually assaulted
- Nearly [a third of women](#) develop PTSD after being raped
- Women are [more than twice as likely](#) as men to develop PTSD
- [9.2 per cent](#) of Canadians develop PTSD at some point in their lives
- Suicide risk [is higher](#) for those with PTSD.

**CONTACT:**

For more information, interviews, an advance review copy or to request an event in your community, please contact:

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**Coteau Books:** [coteaubooks.com](http://coteaubooks.com)



## Advance praise for *Wide Open*

“This incredibly brave and powerful memoir is written in prose both luminous and stark. I read it in one gulp, in awe of the author’s willingness to surrender to her experience of trauma and of her generosity in sharing her journey with her readers. *Wide Open* will take you to the farthest reaches of what it means to be human.”

– **Alison Pick**, Man Booker nominated author of *Strangers With The Same Dream* and *Far To Go*

“The narrator of this gripping memoir is on a journey to self-understanding. Why does she pick men who mistreat her? Why does she sometimes attack the men she loves? Why are her attitudes towards sex so confusing even to herself? She – and the reader – need to understand. Delving into her past, she examines the legacy of her family's fundamentalism and comes to recognize the ways in which her early experiences may have compromised her judgement, blighted her sense of boundaries, and coloured her responses to a horrific sexual assault suffered in young adulthood... In the last few years, Canadians have finally begun to acknowledge the pervasiveness of rape culture, but seldom has this problem been addressed from the point of view of someone who was raised as a conservative Christian. Written in vivid scenes, rich in dialogue and drama, and unfailingly honest, *Wide Open* tackles a significant subject in a voice that has rarely been heard.”

– **Susan Olding**, author of *Pathologies: A Life in Essays* and juror for the John V. Hicks prize awarded to *Wide Open*

“The exploration of the family's connection to fundamentalism ("maximum Christian" as the author describes it) offers plenty of discovery - in self, in family, in faith (or lack of it) - and the way the writer sees the rest of the world.”

– **Ted Barris**, author of 18 bestselling non-fiction books, including *The Great Escape: A Canadian Story* and juror for the John V. Hicks prize awarded to *Wide Open*

“D. M. Ditson's book is a courageous and powerful exploration of the insidiousness of sexual assault and rape. Approximately 460,000 girls and women are sexually assaulted in Canada every year. This book is an important glimpse into the world of one survivor of sexual assault. It has the potential to help us support survivors and reduce sexual violence.”

– **Pamela Cross**, feminist lawyer and co-chair of the Ontario Violence Against Women Roundtable

“In light of the worldwide #metoo movement as well as growing efforts to address post-traumatic stress disorder and its effects on people, D. M. Ditson's *Wide Open* is a timely, important and necessary read.”

– **Dr. Vianne Timmons**, President and Vice-Chancellor, University of Regina

## Author bio

D. M. Ditson has been writing for a decade, first as a journalist and then as a communications consultant for a series of governmental organizations. She is obsessed with telling the truth. *Wide Open* is her first book. Before publication, *Wide Open* has already won two awards: the 2017 John V. Hicks prize awarded by the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild and a 2015 Director's Bursary from Sage Hill Writing Experience.

D. M. Ditson is from Regina. She moved to Invermere, BC in 2018, where she can often be found enjoying the mountains. She is happy.

## Excerpt from *Wide Open*

### Now

Ian and I are on the couch watching one of his food shows. I slide my arm around his back, my fingers hovering above his waist. He doesn't suspect a thing. I tickle him.

He jumps and somehow I'm on the floor. He's kneeling on my shoulders and leaning over me. He clamps onto my nipples, pinching and laughing like a fiend.

I try to writhe away. "Stop," I say but there's no escape. His fingers are chewing at me. "Stop," I yell.

The pinches get harder.

Fuck you. I'm boiling, frothing. I fling my leg back, kicking over my head. My toe smashes something hard.

The pinching stops. I'm free. I won.

Ian's on the floor holding his face.

Right, it was Ian. The man I love.

"Where did I get you?" I ask. He doesn't answer. He's running his tongue along his teeth.

"Are you okay?"

"No," he slurs. "You kicked me in the face. You broke my fucking tooth."

I cover my mouth. Holy shit. I'm a lunatic. I'm as cold as I was on the minus-forty day I

felt my eyeball freeze.

Ian's in the bathroom checking the damage. He spits and comes back. "It's chipped," he says. "What the fuck?"

I'm still on the floor, hiding my face. My head is shaking back and forth.

"Come here," Ian says.

I can't.

He sits beside me. "I'm sorry for getting mad. I'm fine. It's nothing a dentist can't fix."

"I'm sorry," I whisper.

"It's okay. It was an accident. I know you didn't mean it."

But I did. I wanted to hurt him. His face goes blurry behind the tears that are trapped in my eyes. My god, I didn't mean to mean it.

## **Later**

"Why did all these bad things happen to me?" I ask my therapist, Nicole, a year into our work together. "I mean why didn't I learn? Why didn't I stop putting myself into such risky situations?"

Nicole's eyes remain as soft and steady as ever. "You didn't have the capacity to deal with what happened, so your subconscious took over and tried to resolve it for you," she says.

"I don't understand."

"We see a similar response in traumatized children," she says. "They'll often use their dolls to replay an upsetting incident over and over again until they can create a better ending."

My body shudders. A twitch of recognition. "Is that why I was obsessed about wrestling with Ian?"

She nods but she needn't have. I feel the answer all through me, the urgency and fire, the fury and desire.