

## Christmas Stories are ripe ground for Chicken Soup author ? especially after this last holiday



**By Brock Weir**

In the aftermath of the pre-Christmas ice storm, Janet Matthews was one of the luckier Aurora residents who only had to spend about 48 hours in the dark.

Whiling away the hours with a friend from Oak Ridges who was ultimately without power for eight days, she took out a copy of her latest book, *Chicken Soup for the Soul's O Canada: The Wonders of Winter*, to read Tanya Amrbose's take of surviving an ice storm of her own.

For Ms. Matthews, the book's editor, it was inspirational to read her story, put everything in context and even pick up a helpful hint.

These are the kinds of stories Ms. Matthews is looking to collect for her latest *Chicken Soup for the Soul* book ?Christmas in Canada.?

Ms. Matthews got the word from her American publishers on February 18 that another Canadian book was in the works and she was only too happy to accept their offer of reading the book for publication for October. And she knew just where to start.

?The Christmas of 2013 was unlike anything we have ever seen before because a lot of people were in the dark,? she says. ?A lot of people were challenged to follow through on their Christmas plans, and I know it was just a hard, hard time. But, there are going to be stories out there of people who overcame it in some way, and created a fabulous Christmas despite the challenges.

?I would like to find some of those stories of what did you do? Did you cook your turkey over the fire? How did you pull your family together and find a Christmas anyway? This is ripe ground for these kinds of stories. We can take some of these experiences that other people have and be inspired, and hopeful.?

Ms. Matthews first became affiliated with the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* book series as the co-author of their first Canadian installment, ?*Chicken Soup for the Canadian Soul*? in 2002. Since then, she has often been their go-to person for seeking out and honing truly Canadian stories to inspire and invigorate people across the country.

While the first installment focused on Canada as a whole, and the second on the winter wonderland that is Canada, this book's Christmas theme can encompass everything in the holiday season from family festivities, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, or simple holiday

decorating, following the Chicken Soup pillars of overcoming obstacles, facing adversity, realising or living a dream, any kind of love, family, community, kindness, and making a difference in the world.

?It has to be a story that will touch the heart of the reader, open them to hope, and inspire them to overcome obstacles in their own life, or face something they didn't want to face,? she says. ?Each story has a gift for the reader. Christmas books do extremely well and distributors are always looking for a new Christmas book.

?From my own childhood memories of Christmas holidays, whether it was when I went out ice skating with my friends, tobogganing, or whatever it was we did during that holiday season, the season is the art of magic. I know there is lots of drama in many different directions around Christmastime and sometimes things get healed at Christmas.?

If you think you have a story that might fit the bill, submissions can be made online to Ms. Matthews at [www.candiansoul.com](http://www.candiansoul.com) by May 30. If you are an experienced writer, or someone who might be setting pen to paper for the first time to tell a personal story, all entries are welcome and, if you have a story but are not sure how to tell it, Ms. Matthews will also provide coaching and mentorship to bring a story to life.