Carolyn MacDiarmid, a former preschool teacher, has been employed with the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW) since 1997. She has worked in various roles and is the author of CCRW’s “Wendy Blair” storybook series completed in 2005. As a writer who has low vision, she enjoys writing whimsical material that challenges the notion that people who have disabilities are incapable. MacDiarmid is a proud Ontarian who has lived in Toronto all her life and currently lives in the city’s east end with her husband and daughter.

James Tuer is a Toronto-based artist who works at an animation studio by day, and illustrates fun projects (such as the book you’ve just read) by night. He enjoys working on projects that positively impact people’s lives. James and Carolyn first worked together on the Wendy Blair series, and have teamed up again over a decade later to bring you three new stories that help to break down stereotypes about living with a disability.
About This Book...

This book is a project of the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW), a national, non-profit organization that promotes and supports the meaningful and equitable employment of Canadians with disabilities. Funding for this project was provided by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (ADO) to celebrate Ontario’s 150th anniversary and this province’s diversity.

*I’m Smart in My Own Way* is a delightful story that celebrates potential and the fact that we all have different abilities and something to contribute. The main character, Bartley, struggles to get good grades in school. However, his powers of observation help him to observe the signs of an impending crisis. He also observes potential and possibility in a giant vine that encroaches his town.

Carolyn MacDiarmid
The Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work
I’m Smart in My Own Way

This project is funded by the Government of Ontario’s Ontario 150 Partnership Program.

A project of

CCRW
Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work

CCRT
Le Conseil Canadien de la Réadaptation et du Travail
Bartley’s hobby was exploring –
It was fun and never boring.

He was smart, but even so,
His grades in school were often low.
One day he sat without a sound
And listened closely to the ground.

Some children teased him to no end,
“The ground must be your closest friend!”
Bartley told them, “Stay alert! There’s something breaking through the dirt!”

The kids responded, “It’s a mole – It’s burrowing to make a hole.”

Bartley quickly pointed down, “There’s something bigger in our town!”
Remarked the girl with bouncing braids, “You must be wrong – you get low grades.”

Everyone ignored the fuss, “The noisy ground is fine with us!”

Bartley shared his final thought, “You think you’re safe, but you are not!”
He tried to let the whole town know,
But everyone was on-the-go.
Bartley headed down the street –
He dragged his feelings and his feet.
He asked his mother, “Am I smart?
I try my best to do my part;
I study hard, as you advise
But find it hard to memorize,
And since I seldom get an ‘A’,
My classmates question what I say.”
Mamma’s eyes began to glow, “My dear, you’re smarter than they know.”

She then continued with her praise, “All folks are smart in different ways; I know quite well your situation – You excel in observation!”
Bartley perked up, “Yes, I do! In fact, I have some news for you."

“I know I heard a scary sound Of something moving through the ground.”

The earth was slowly moving – yep! He saw a bounce in Mamma’s step.
That night he heard an awful crack
That sent a shiver down his back.

And even though the hour was late,
He shouted out, “Evacuate!”

“There isn’t time to sleep or snooze –
I’m giving you ground-breaking news!”
He got the people to their feet
And chased them down the bursting street.

A minute later, what a scene!
The town became a trampoline!

A giant vine popped through the soil –
It took forever to uncoil.

Ontario could feel the burst –
This pop-up plant would be its first.
Bartley promptly raised a brow, “I think the folks will listen now!”

The look on everybody’s face
Said, “What on earth has taken place?”

Everyone was shocked and shattered –
Each was safe, and that’s what mattered.
All the people in the town
Apologized to Bartley Brown.

His response was simply, “Yup!
I saved you folks from going up!”
Then everybody took a stand, “We’ll cut the vine and clear the land.”

Bartley called out, “Treat it right, And it will reach a boundless height!”

“Like our minds, it has no limit – There is great potential in it.”
“I will stroke it, I will weed it, I’ll refresh it, and I’ll feed it.”

“It will get a big reaction As a major town attraction.”
That vine is now an endless maze –
It’s going through a growing phase.

Tourists gather in a line
To gaze upon the lovely vine...

And Bartley is delighted – yep!
He has a bounce in every step.
He gently sits upon the vine –
He looks so proud and feels so fine!

He glistens like a summer day...
And knows he’s smart in his own way!
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