



No. 19: Fall 2020

## Upcoming Meetings and Guest Speakers on Zoom

**Time: 7:00 – 8:45 p.m.**

*Joining a Zoom meeting is as  
easy as 1-2-3:*

1. Click on the meeting invite URL (link) from invitation email
2. Open the Zoom app (download if not already installed)
3. Approve the request to use your computer's audio and video (optional)

*Grab a drink and get  
comfortable in your favourite  
chair!*

**Monday,  
September 21**

### ***Annual General Meeting and Election***

**Come out for your vote  
and see what's new  
this season!**

**October 19  
and November 16**

***Exciting speakers  
in the works!***

# Write On!

**Newsletter of the North Shore Writers' Association  
Linking North Shore writers since 1993**

## President's Message

*Sonia Garrett*

There's a First Nations myth that comes from the area we now call California. In it, the land is said to rest on Great Turtle's back, Great Turtle stands on another turtle, that turtle stands on another, and so on, in an enormous turtle stack reaching down to the sea floor. When earthquakes occurred, it was said, "Great Turtle is stretching his legs."

The image of a giant turtle tower, precariously balancing the place we call home, has come to my mind a lot during the pandemic. Everyone has sensed an uneasy shift in their lives. For some, their realities have been altered in seismic proportions measuring off the Richter Scale. They have lost loved ones and grieve with all the social restrictions necessary to keep us safe. For others, the tremors are less intense—an ever-present awareness of our personal turtle towers bending and swaying under pressure.

Over the summer, the NSWA Executive have been hard at work, adjusting to our new reality and looking for ways to support members in these challenging times. These initiatives and acknowledgement come in no particular order.

- The NSWA Executive is aware of a number of members who have lost jobs, and income, during the COVID-19 lockdown. As a result, the 2020/21 membership fees will return to the 2018 level—\$35!
- To reduce personal contact and the risk of spreading disease,

Treasurer Steve Rayner, has set up an online system to process membership fees.

- Our Dare to be Heard and General Meetings will continue to be held remotely via Zoom. Carl Hunter, membership coordinator, will email meeting links to all members. While we can't meet together, the Executive aims to bring guest speakers right to your living room.

- Our hard-working Competition Committee are looking at ways to shift entries online, thereby avoiding crowded and compact PO Box collection points.

- To underpin these initiatives, the Executive, with Rod Baker as lead, is creating a new website so new members can find us, and current members can stay informed and connect as a community.

All this has taken many volunteer hours to achieve. It has taken us outside our comfort zone, problem solving in a high-tech world to ensure members still benefit from being connected with other writers. We've supported each other but WE NEED MORE HELP. Many hands make light work.

Please consider joining the NSWA Executive. Help the NSWA turtle stack become stronger than ever.

I am looking forward to welcoming you all to the new look 2020/21 NSWA programme.

Until then stay safe, stay kind, stay connected and keep writing. ■



## A Note from the Editor

This has been a disturbing and disruptive year to say the least. All spring and summer I have found it difficult to focus. After months spent within a few kilometres from home, my spouse and I decided to enjoy the last of the summer with a camping trip.

We did the supernatural BC thing and went on an 8-day paddle around the full Bowron Lake Circuit. 116km on our own steam. It was an offline experience. Unplugged so we could recharge. Away from wi-fi, noise and chaos of the world. We listened to the wind, the loons, ourselves.

Yes, it was beautiful. But, more than that, it was necessary. It provided a reset button. Now, I feel ready to face the season ahead with a clearer head and a calmer heart. I've started to write again.

Writing, I've come to realize, is yet another reset button. One you need not leave home for. When the heart feels light, it is fun to write. When the heart feels heavy, writing lightens it.

We're all paddling in the same body of water. The journey may feel long and strenuous, but it will yield its own beauty and peace.

Let's dip our paddles in, shall we?

Write on,  
Wiley

Please email me your writing news, stories and writing to [editornswa@gmail.com](mailto:editornswa@gmail.com).

**Deadline for next newsletter:  
December 4, 2020**

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## Newsletter Submission Guidelines

- Submissions from NSWA members only.
- Send writing news (recent publications, book launches, notices, etc.) and your creations (poems, short fiction or non-fiction pieces up to 600 words) to [editornswa@gmail.com](mailto:editornswa@gmail.com), or by mail to NSWA, PO Box 37549 Lonsdale East, North Vancouver, BC V7M 3L3.
- Writing that appears in the NSWA newsletter is eligible for submission to the NSWA writing contest.
- Contributors are responsible for the accuracy, originality and reliability of their content.
- Check your submissions for spelling, grammar and punctuation prior to submission. Word attachments are preferred over email text.
- Publication in *WRITE ON!* is at the discretion of the Editor, in consultation with the Executive.

**Disclaimer:** Any views contained in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Editor or the NSWA.

# Treasurer's Message and Membership Renewals

## *Year-end 2019-2020*

Due to the curtailment of in-person activities from mid-March, including the enforced cancellation of most social gatherings and events such as the Festival, the Association incurred lower than forecast costs. As far as possible, activities continued through applications such as Zoom, demonstrating the feasibility and effectiveness of virtual meetings and presentations. Nevertheless, the revenue from membership and contest entry fees exceeded expenses, resulting in an overall positive balance for 2019-2020.

## ***Membership Renewals – new online payment option available!***

Taking this into account and acknowledging that the 2020-21 season is likely to be mostly, if not entirely, virtual, the membership rate for 2020/21 (September 1, 2020 through August 31, 2021) is being reduced to **\$35.00**. This is a great deal to be part of a wonderful writing community and your timely renewal would be appreciated!

Payment may be made through online banking via Interac e-transfer to [nswamembership@gmail.com](mailto:nswamembership@gmail.com). Auto deposit has been set up to obviate the need for a security question and you should receive a virtual receipt confirming date, amount and completion. In a time of COVID, this is the preferred payment method. However, please be assured that payment can still be made by cheque posted to NSWA PO Box 37549, Lonsdale East, North Vancouver, BC V7M 3L3.

*Yours truly,*  
**Steve Rayner**  
**NSWA Treasurer**



*The North Shore Writers' Association thanks the North Vancouver City Library for their generous support of our ongoing activities and special events, and also for their support of all local writers and readers. The Library plays an active and varied role in the cultural life of our community - for more information and to find out how to participate, go to: [www.nvcl.ca](http://www.nvcl.ca)*

## Dare To Be Heard

If you're a writer and wish to read your work to a non-critical audience, come out to the next Dare to be Heard! Dare welcomes writers of all genres at all stages of the journey – plus interested listeners!

For the time being, meetings are via **Zoom** on the **first Monday of each month (second Monday if first is a holiday)**. In the future, when the space is deemed safe and available, in-person meetings will be take place in the 2nd Floor Boardroom at the North Vancouver City Library.

Dare starts at 7:00 p.m. Please log into Zoom a few minutes ahead of time and have your video/microphone on.

**Dare to share! See you online!**

*Upcoming sessions:*

*September 14, 2020*

*October 5*

*November 2*

*December 7*

*January 4, 2021*

*February 1*

*March 1*

*April 5*

*May 3*

*June 7*

*Venue: Zoom*

*(link to meeting will be emailed in advance of meetings)*

*Time: 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.*



## A Sneak Peek at a brand-new initiative ...

### *The Critique Boutique!*



A recent NSW speaker I particularly enjoyed was Daniel Kalla, an ER physician in a Vancouver hospital. He has written five best sellers — no mean feat for a busy doctor. After he had read us some absorbing excerpts from his books, he discussed his latest novel “We All Fall Down,” in which the Black Plague returned to modern times. Our members had lots of questions as to how to write such successful books. “Is your writing plot driven? Do you spend a long time on the plot?”

“Not really. I spend about a day writing the plot but I don’t always stick to it.”

“It’s character driven then?” suggested another member.

“No, I sketch out the characters ahead of time, but sometimes new characters appear. I try to keep things fluid,” he explained. Almost as an afterthought he said, “What I found by accident that works really well for me is that I sent a chapter to a friend and the feedback I received was a real aid to my writing. So now, each chapter I write, I send it out to get three or four critiques.”

So, fellow writers, based on writerly advice and my own experience of having been in helpful critique groups, the NSW is starting an experimental opportunity to get feedback on our work called the Critique Boutique.

We are still working out the details but here is an outline of how it would work on our new website (under design):

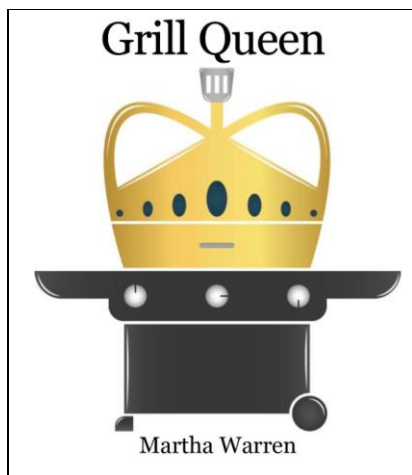
- 1) Members only may post up to 2,000 words of their work on the site, including their email address.
- 2) Any member may critique posted work, preferably using track changes in Word, and email their critiques to the submitter.
- 3) Writers retain full rights to their own work. Guidelines for providing constructive critique and timelines will be provided. This is a place for a writing community to help one another. Inappropriate comments will not be tolerated and participants must agree to a pre-set code of conduct.

Members suggestions are welcome during ongoing development of the Critique Boutique. Please email [rodvbaker@gmail.com](mailto:rodvbaker@gmail.com).

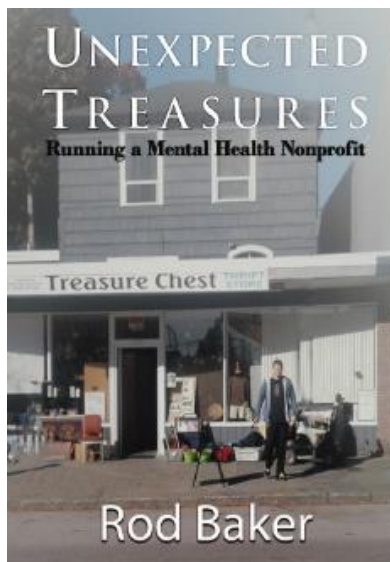
Sincerely,  
Rod Baker  
NSWA Vice President



# B R A V O !



Hats off to Martha Warren for this summer's release of her new cookbook **Grill Queen**. In this recipe book, complete with photos of mouth-watering delights from appetizer to dessert, is a celebration of a new wave of barbecue culture. Recipes are light, nutritious and easy to prepare. Written with humour and encouragement, this cookbook includes anecdotes on grilling, healing from loss, and reclaiming the joy of cooking. Available on Amazon.ca and Apple Books.



Congratulations to **Rod Baker** on the release of his latest book **Unexpected Treasures, Running a Mental Health Non-profit**. In his fourth memoir, Rod describes with honesty, compassion and humour, the struggles of providing mental health services amid the constant threat of budget cuts and insolvency, the 2008 global recession, and numerous personal and external challenges. Available on Amazon. For more info, visit [rodbakerbooks.com](http://rodbakerbooks.com).

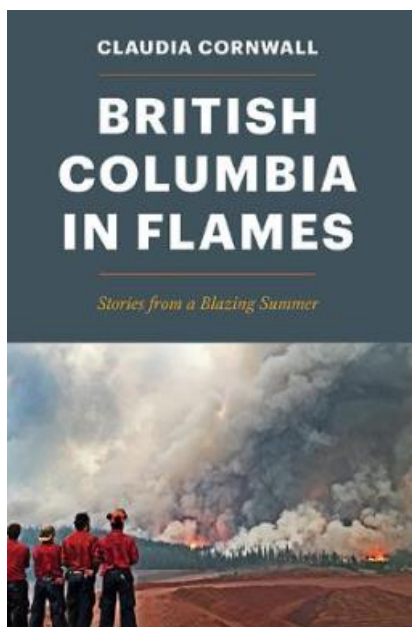


Kudos to **Joyce Goodwin** for having four poems accepted into The Ontario Poetry Society 2020 poetry anthology **"Infinite Passages"** (Beret Days Press). Her poems include: **Tiernan James, The Tide, Seagulls and Souls**, and **Pacific Sphinx** (see page 10). Joyce just received word that her poem **Last Breath** won a Judge's Choice Award in the Ontario Poetry Society Ultra Short Poem Competition 2020.

Besides being a published poet, Joyce is also an accomplished painter. Her beautiful paintings are currently part of a watercolour exhibition in Kyiv, Ukraine, in two North Shore Artists' Guild shows, and at the Hycroft Gallery: <https://www.uwcvancouver.ca/event/hycroft-gallery-opening-july-august/>

## WEBSITES AND LINKS:

To reach a website, copy and paste the address into your web browser.



Brava to **Claudia Cornwall** for this month's release of *British Columbia in Flames* (Harbour Publishing, Sep 19, 2020)!

Claudia was interviewed by CTV in August:  
<https://www.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=2018673>

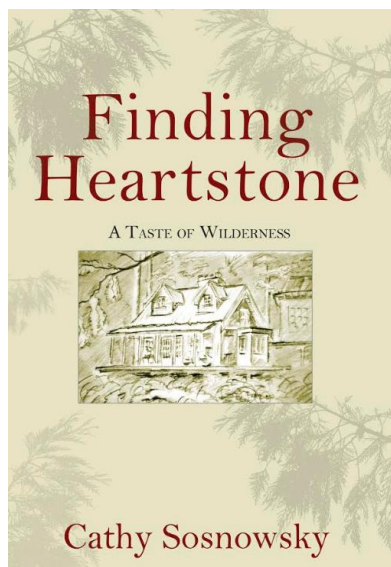
An excerpt of her book was recently published by Tyee:  
<https://thetyee.ca/Culture/2020/08/17/Riding-With-Flames/>

Catch Claudia at her upcoming events!

**September 26 at 1:30 pm:**  
 The North Vancouver Greens and 32 Books in North Vancouver are hosting a reading on Zoom. You can join with the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82714602956?pwd=NHhtbIVHQlPa2xDTTJlUdWN2WjhKQT09>

**September 27 at 2 pm:**  
 The Federation of BC Writers is hosting a reading on Zoom. Register for this free event at [BCWriters.ca/events-for-writers](https://www.bcwriters.ca/events-for-writers) and a Zoom link will be emailed to you.

Readers can contact Claudia through her website with any questions they would like her to answer in the Zoom discussions.  
[www.claudiacornwall.com](http://www.claudiacornwall.com)



Congratulations to **Cathy Sosnowsky** for the upcoming release of *Finding Heartstone: A Taste of Wilderness*, which will be available for purchase online through Caitlin Press or at your local bookstore (32 Books) in October. A Crowdcast launch is scheduled for **October 15<sup>th</sup>**.

Email Cathy for the link:  
[csosnowsky@shaw.ca](mailto:csosnowsky@shaw.ca).

A reviewer, Ray McGinnis, describes the book this way: "In *Finding Heartstone*, Cathy Sosnowsky weaves a stirring personal narrative describing a dream she and her husband realize as part of a wilderness cooperative on East Thurlow Island. She contrasts their wilderness adventures with an inner wilderness that occupies their lives after devastating losses. We get hungrier with each chapter as recipes are made for muffin-tin-oysters, orange marmalade and Hemming Bay fish and chips.

*Finding Heartstone* awakens in us memories of our own dreams, losses, and small victories as we travel uncharted paths between a comfortable life and our untamed world."

**Wiley Ho** is pleased to be the winner of the 2020 BC/YT Short Story Contest. Her winning story *Masquerade* appears in the latest edition of *WordWorks* from the Federation of BC Writers. Her interview with the North Shore News appears at: <https://www.nsnews.com/entertainment/books/north-van-author-wins-federation-of-bc-writers-annual-short-story-contest-1.24148078>

# 100 WORD CHALLENGE

The challenge was to produce a story or poem, in **100 words or less**,  
on the theme of **how I survived**  
Here are your creations (photos: Unsplash)

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## How I Survived

*Rose Dudley*

“No tables available, unless you care to share with that woman in the corner.” called the waiter. “Do you mind if I join you?” I asked, thinking she looked vaguely familiar. “Not at all,” she responded, there’s plenty of room for three of us---my fiancé will be joining us shortly.... Oh! here he is.” My ex-husband, giving his floozy a squeeze and me a startled look, immediately ordered a double scotch before perching uncomfortably on the chair beside me. Even with the aid of three stiff gins, I don’t know how I survived the worst dinner of my life.



## We’ve Been Here Before

*Karen Bower*



Check news. Puzzle at contradictory messages. Wash hands. Buy masks. Stay in. Phone and email friends. Read. Write. Check news. Paranoia? Check Dr. Henry’s briefings. Search trusted scientific sites. Relax, a little. Only a little. Wear mask. Avoid anti-maskers. Stop watching US cable news election activities—too much paranoia, no leadership. Wear mask. Get outside-- only when others aren’t. Wash hands. Call doctor, “When flu shots are available, PLEASE call me.” Wash hands. Wear mask. IT is here to stay. Deal with that. Wash hands. Call and email friends. Read. Write. HANG IN THERE. Repeat.

## How I survived

*Cathy Scrimshaw*

I crouched low and inched my way along, using the cars as cover and cursing the full moon. The men I was tailing were only a few car lengths away. Too close for comfort, too far away to eavesdrop on. But I’m getting ahead of the story. Shirley House is my name, and sleuthing’s my game. I’ve been hired to ...

“Shirley! Quit that daydreaming and get yourself out here, or you’re fired! We got customers to serve!”

I sighed and tied my apron back on. He’d never understand. Daydreaming is the only way I’ve survived this job.





## Stop It, Mr. Dumb!

*Susan Lockhart*

“Stop it, Mr. Dumb!” This was my two-year-old granddaughter’s tactic to garner adult reaction. With great success, I might add. Coincidentally, this attention grabber emerged soon after the advent of Covid. So, when I find myself lamenting about being isolated from extended family and friends, not being able to travel, or becoming annoyed when there was no flour in the grocery store for three weeks, in my mind I hear my granddaughter’s words “Stop it, Mr. Dumb!” It’s then, I do stop and replace negative thoughts with those of gratefulness. Thank you, Hannah.



### Next 100 Word Challenge Theme:

#### **A knock at the door**

You may include or exclude the theme words!

**Submit your 100-word masterpiece to**

[editornswa@gmail.com](mailto:editornswa@gmail.com)

or by mail to

NSWA PO Box 37549 Lonsdale East, NV V7M 3L3

### 100-Word Challenge Tips:

- Strictly 100 words or less (excluding title, if any).
- Use the word count facility in WORD; it keeps track of the number of words used.
- Hyphenated words and words including an apostrophe are counted as single words.
- Fiction, non-fiction, poetry – all welcome!
- Exercise your precision and concision.
- Send along any pictures for inclusion (space permitting).
- If the challenge theme inspires a longer piece, feel free to submit it for consideration for the newsletter (with an “inspired by...” note).
- Have fun!



# Prose and Poetry

## **Autumn Glory** *Elly Stornebrink*

The countryside with its rolling hills, fields, and pastures are full of splendor as autumn appears. Trees are transformed into artistic and brilliant warm fire-like hues. Gentle breezes demonstrate dazzling displays.

I stand bewildered and spellbound in awe at the maples and oaks that line an orchard. I am thrilled and delighted as I gaze upwards at a majestic all-red maple tree.

Then the leaves murmur among themselves, bravely preparing for the coming season, dropping one by one. The melancholy trees moan and mourn for their loss as they feel barren and naked, exposed to the elements. They shiver from the cold and await the return of the warmth of Spring.

## **The following Poems** **by Joyce Goodwin**

### ***TIERNAN JAMES***

A winter child is born at dawn,  
along the silver path of  
a super moon, thus lunar light  
illuminates his journey from the  
stars.

Born when time looks back  
and clocks rewind the past;  
when cold creates ice and crystal  
flowers; a glimmering  
of snow angels.

This little boy of Irish blood  
embodies old knowledge  
of times when druids lit fires  
on hilltops, to announce  
the dawning of a new age;  
descendant of an ancient race,  
son of immigrants, this is  
a child of the diaspora.

Tiernan now lives where old  
growth  
forests once sustained first  
peoples,  
where Pacific rain sings songs of  
displacement and reconciliation;  
fulfillment of a dream,  
this little boy is born into a land  
the world calls Canada,  
where dreamers learn to steer  
by the stars and lunar light  
is a silver path to the future.

### ***Seagulls and Souls***

When seagulls call my name  
I hear departed souls,  
their cries unsettle me  
in a stranger's land,  
transporting me back  
to the island home where  
my people lie buried,  
and spirits walk with me  
in the half light.  
In a stranger's land I hear  
crying on the wind  
when seagulls call my name.

### ***THE TIDE***

The tide pulls away  
stranding the past,  
slippery slime of  
evolutionary life  
abandoned sucking  
in salt licked pools,  
now watched over  
by the stricken heron.

### ***MEMORY TO IMMORTALITY*** ***(in Italy)***

I worshipped at the holy grail  
saw art in golden shadows,  
beauty in dark contours of faith.

I felt the weight of tyranny,  
power obsessed with beauty,  
the agony and the ecstasy,  
art transformed from memory  
to immortality, where marble  
only sleeps  
and gods break free.  
On canvas, armies of popes and  
princes  
triumphant in battle, their  
presence lingering  
in the long halls they never truly  
left.  
We intrude into their palaces and  
prisons,  
spirits of a bygone age now  
immortalized.

### ***Pacific Sphinx***

The Lions unmoved watch  
silently  
over the narrows below, where  
snarling traffic fumes on the iron  
span  
and deep beneath tectonic plates  
grind the bedrock as uneasy lions  
watch silently over the narrows.

### ***"Last Breath"***

They took his breath away,  
on bended knee;  
the irony of it.

## Bulletin Board



Free! Check out the great line-up!

<https://www.wordvancouver.ca/2020festivalschedule>

A banner for the BC-Yukon Flash 2020 Contest. The background is dark blue with a sparkler. On the left, the FBCW logo is in a blue box, and "\$350 Prize" is written in large yellow text. In the center, "BC-Yukon FLASH 2020 CONTEST" is written in yellow. Below that, it says "Flash Fiction stories - up to 500 words max, including title - no theme". Further down, it says "Entry fee \$10 FBCW Members, \$15 non-members. Open to all Canadian residents. Opens Sept. 1st. DEADLINE: Midnight, Oct. 1st, 2020". On the right, there is a photo of Karen Schaubert, the contest judge, with her name and title below it.



**NaNoWriMo**

**November is NaNoWriMo month!**

Writing a novel alone can be difficult, even for seasoned writers. NaNoWriMo helps you track your progress, set milestones, connect with other writers in a vast community, and participate in events that are designed to make sure you finish your novel. Oh, and best of all, it's free! Sign up at <https://nanowrimo.org>



[deepstorydesign.com](http://deepstorydesign.com)

## DEEP STORY

*Design*

### Online Writing Events for Fall 2020

*with April Bosshard*

#### **Writing Together Sessions**

3 hours to connect and write ~ Tuesdays 10 to 1

#### **Monthly One Day Writing Retreats**

Saturday 9:30 to 3:30 ~ Sept 19, Oct 17, Nov 14

#### **Deep Story Design Online**

8 weeks on structure and character ~ Oct 7th to Nov 25th

#### **The Drafting Circle**

Mondays 2 to 4 ~ Sept 14 to Dec 14

*Email April: [deepstorydesign@gmail.com](mailto:deepstorydesign@gmail.com)*

*Let's write together this fall!!*

### ***From April Bosshard of Deep Story Design:***

Many writers make the mistake of putting everything that they know into the story, but for a story to end up being greater than the sum of its parts, some of those parts have to come out. Tweaking this balance is a huge part of the writing process. With the exception of a few indulgences, the primary guideline is to give your reader only what they need to know so that they are 1) not confused and 2) want to keep reading.

When we get in a car we want to go somewhere. When we pick up a book, we want that too. Not many of us have time for meandering Sunday drives through the country without a particular destination in mind. Readers expect a competent writer to be behind the wheel and ready to take them someplace relevant and meaningful. Readers crave direction. They want to know they are in good hands when they climb inside your story. They want a reliable vehicle—whether a sports car, or a sedan, to get them from beginning to end. They don't want an unpredictable jalopy prone to stalling.

What fires up the engine of your story? A clear story questions. Once a writer knows her story question, she can keep the material that supports it and remove the material that is distracting. The question can be as simple as: will the lovers end up together (romance), or will the detective find the murderer (murder mystery)? When a character wants something—girl wants boy; sleuth wants killer—but they don't have it yet and can't get it easily, questions automatically arise: will they get that thing or not? And: how?

Characters, like the rest of us, want many things, but when one thing doesn't stand out above the others, even slightly above, the story can get confusing. Think of this story question as connected to a primary want, and the other wants are secondary, related, or possibly dependent on the primary one. This primary story question keeps the engine of the story running all the way through, which means you can't *answer* the question until the end of the story. So the character's attempts to fulfill a primary want will drive the story, nudged along by the asking and answering of secondary questions.

When Luke Skywalker decides he wants to help save Princess Leia and defeat the Empire, he first has to get to Mos Eisley Spaceport on Tatooine, find a ship and a captain, learn to use the Force, and all manner of tasks in service to the primary, overarching want. When Dorothy decides she wants go home after landing in Oz, she has to find friends and allies, outwit and defeat enemies, find a wizard, steal a witch's broom, and the list goes on. We don't know if Luke defeats the Empire or if Dorothy makes it home until the end of the story.

When a story contains this primary, driving story question, readers will very happily go along for the ride.



## ***In memoriams***

Maria Tomsich  
February 26, 1931 – August 8, 2020

In the late afternoon of August 8<sup>th</sup>, as the sun broke through the clouds and shone on the North Shore mountains, Maria Tomsich ended her journey. She was born in Fume, Italy and immigrated to Canada with her brother in 1951, eventually settling in Vancouver. She received a PhD from Brown University and went on to a teaching career at UBC. She had many interests, from pottery, travel and the environment to poetry. In recent years, she was a dependable participant in North Shore Writers' Association events. Those of us who attended Dare were treated to many of her poems, written and read with passion.

(by Doug MacLeod)

### **John Young Sykes**

It is with great sadness we announce the sudden passing of John in North Vancouver. He is predeceased by his beloved mother, Shirley. Survived by his father Russ; sister Roberta (John); nieces Grace, Abby and Molly; and by his many relatives and friends. John was a writer and poet who loved travel, nature, birds and solitude. He will forever be remembered for his kind heart and creative soul. He will be deeply missed and loved forever. There will not be any funeral or memorial service.

(Richmond News)



(Photo credit: John Young Sykes)

## **Executive Slate 2020 - 21** (election Sep 21, 2020)

### ***President (and Director)***

Janine Cross

### ***Vice-President (and Director)***

Rod Baker

### ***Secretary (and Director)***

Christine Cowan

### ***Treasurer (and Director)***

Steve Rayner

### ***Membership Coordinator***

Carl Hunter

### ***Library Liaison***

Sonia Garrett

### ***Speaker Coordinator***

Janine Cross

### ***Newsletter Editor/Archivist***

Wiley Ho

### ***Webmaster***

Kelly Hoskins

### ***Writing Contest Coordinator***

Doug MacLeod

### ***Dare to be Heard Host***

Elly Stornebrink

### ***Member-at-Large***

Barbara Reardon

*Many thanks to all our volunteers for their  
dedication and hard work!*



*"Remember to turn everything off once a week - including your brain - and walk somewhere quiet." - unknown*

## **NSWA Events Calendar**

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**September 14:** *Dare to be Heard*

**September 21:** *NSWA Annual General Meeting*

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**October 5:** *Dare to be Heard*

**October 19:** *NSWA general meeting with guest speaker*

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**November 2:** *Dare to be Heard*

**November 16:** *Guest speaker or writing workshop*

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**December 4:** *Newsletter submission deadline*

**December 7:** *Dare to be Heard*

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**January 4:** *Dare to be Heard*

**January 18:** *NSWA General Meeting with guest speaker*

## The Last Page

Cathy L. Scrimshaw

On September 1<sup>st</sup>, I had a great opportunity – I spent an hour with Canadian writer Louise Penny and former American Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. I'm sure you all know who Hillary Clinton is. For those who don't recognize Louise Penny's name, she is an internationally best-selling writer of literary mysteries, whose books are translated into 29 languages. Sept. 1 was the launch of Penny's 16<sup>th</sup> novel, hosted by the Washington D.C. bookstore Politics & Prose. Louise Penny joined from her flat in London, England, and Hillary Clinton from her home in New York.

Why am I telling you this? Because I would never have been able to attend this event last year. In order to see them together then, I would have had to fly to some destination back east, probably in the U.S., pay hundreds of dollars for the flight, hotel costs, and meals out, and take 3 or 4 days to do so.

But not now. Because of the pandemic, Penny's launch and book tour stops are on-line, and accessible to us all no matter where we live. I just had to buy my ticket, which included a book, then be at my desk at the appointed time. I put on my best sweats (Louise and Hillary were worth dressing up for), got my cup of tea (it was mid-afternoon our time; if it had been evening, I might have poured myself a glass of wine), put my feet up on a stool, then sat back and enjoyed listening to two intelligent,

accomplished women talk about books and writing and take questions from the virtual audience. All for the sum of only \$65.00 Canadian.

It was a wonderful way to spend an hour.

This year, the NSWA is going virtual as well. You will already have read of the plans our hard-working Executive members have come up with to keep us all connected during the library closure. In fact, they are providing us with *more* opportunities than we normally get for our membership dues. We will still have our monthly meetings, and Dare to be Heard. But now, instead of having to leave our home on those dark and stormy nights (I couldn't resist – sorry, everyone), we'll all now be able to pour ourselves that cup of tea or glass of wine, relax in our flannel pyjamas if we want, and listen to guest speakers in the comfort of our own home. We'll still be able to ask questions and interact with each other – it will just be online.

Our Speaker Coordinator, Janine Cross, is working hard to get really outstanding presenters for us, and this year she's not constrained by geography. She'll be inviting internationally best-selling writers from across North America and maybe even from across the Atlantic. What a great opportunity for all of us – it is not to be missed!

Dare to be Heard will still be a staple. I've joined in for the last two evenings of Dare, in May and June, and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. It's lovely to be able to put my feet up, close my eyes, wrap my

shawl around my shoulders, and be read to; when my turn came, it somehow seemed easier to read my work when I was at my desk, in my own personal writing space. The supportive atmosphere was still evident. All who took part in the virtual evening brought with them their sharp writer's sense and their kind, constructive approach to feedback.

I'm looking forward to the new additions as well. The Critique Boutique and new Member's Forum on the expanded website will be outstanding ways for us to stay in touch with each other. We might even find that we're *more* connected as a group. When the pandemic is over, and we find ourselves face-to-face at the library again, we'll know each other better than ever, all thanks to the internet, Zoom, and the hard work of our volunteer Executive.

And all this for a cost that is less than what I paid to spend just one hour with my favourite Canadian mystery writer. It's a heck of a deal, for a year not to be missed.

See you on Zoom!

