

WRITE ON!

Newsletter of the North Shore Writers' Association
Linking North Shore writers since 1993
No. 31: June 2023

Message from the Editor

The telltale signs of summer are here. Lemonade stands on sidewalks so hot you could fry an egg on them. Children at the Shipyards enjoying the splash pad and rippled water feature. Apartment building windows thrown open by residents desperately seeking a cool breeze. Line-ups at the local ice cream parlours becoming noticeably longer (I'll take a scoop of cookies and cream, please).

With summer comes a break for NSWA events and the newsletter. We hope you'll join us for the end-of-year social at the Silk Purse on June 19th. And before you know it, the AGM will be upon us once more.

This edition of the newsletter features a ton of interesting upcoming events, and event recaps; some really impressive member achievements; a Q&A featuring yours truly (thanks Linda, for making me sound more interesting than I actually am); and other fun pieces for your reading pleasure. I encourage you to print out a copy of this newsletter, purchase a pastry and a small iced coffee, and read the newsletter outside, ideally during golden hour. Just a suggestion.

As always, if you have any questions or suggestions, please email me at editor@nswriters.org.

Warmly,
Tiffany Budhyanto
NSWA Newsletter Editor



Upcoming Events

June 10, 2023

10:00am–12:00pm

Saturday Morning Write-In
(online)

June 19, 2023

6:00pm

End-of-season social
Silk Purse, West Vancouver

September 18, 2023

7pm

AGM

Details to follow

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2022-2023 Board of Directors

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Newsletter Submission Guidelines

You may submit any of the following:

- A blurb about your recent publication, or writing news (e.g. book launches, author readings, writing awards)
- Your poetry or prose (up to 600 words, fiction or nonfiction, and it can be an excerpt from a larger work)
- Artwork or photography (please send high-quality JPG or PNG files)
- Writing workshops or resources to share with fellow members
- A submission to our 100-word challenge

Please note:

Only submissions from NSWA members will be accepted.

Poetry, short fiction or nonfiction. No op-ed articles please.

Email your submission to editor@nswriters.org.

Contributors are responsible for the accuracy, originality, and reliability of their content.

Please check spelling, grammar, and punctuation prior to submission.

Writing that appears in the NSWA newsletter is eligible for submission to the Annual NSWA Writing Contest.

Publication in the *Write On!* newsletter is at the discretion of the Editor, in consultation with the Board of Directors.

Please note the next edition of the *Write On!* newsletter will be published in the fall.

Save the Date for our AGM!



On September 18th, 2023 at 7pm,
please join us at the Annual
General Meeting. All members are
welcome. More details will be
announced later this summer.



Saturday Morning Write-in



June 10th
10:00am–12:00pm
with host Suzanne Spohn

Writing doesn't need to be a lonely activity. Why not write
with other writers? Working together gives us energy and
discipline that we can't get toiling at our desks alone. Grab a
hot drink and let's write together via Zoom!

Join Zoom meeting:
[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87105551221?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87105551221?pwd=MUNTcFNkMWRxOXpRWIBHRHA2VUZpQT09)
[pwd=MUNTcFNkMWRxOXpRWIBHRHA2VUZpQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87105551221?pwd=MUNTcFNkMWRxOXpRWIBHRHA2VUZpQT09)
Passcode: Write

An Evening of Poetry with Sareh Farmand

by Melanie Dorchester



Those of us who attended the February Speaker Series as snow fell, were glad we did. **Sareh Farmand**, author of *Pistachios in my Pocket*, appealed to us as writers who would understand the NEED to write. With warmth, humour and photos of her family, we began with an image of an adorable young Sareh at her school desk in North Vancouver, pencil in hand.

Weaving between her writing and publishing experiences, Sareh read several poems from her first book of poetry. I had recently read *Pistachios in my Pocket*, and was deeply moved by the power conveyed through so few words. Each poem told a story that I could feel and visualize, and as she read aloud, quietness filled the room. Sareh explained that in the first of three sections, Desert Sky begins with the revolution in Iran in the early 1980s, when she was only three years old. We learn of her mother's desire for people to understand that at that time, Iranian women were able to be educated, independent people, who chose their own hairstyles and clothes. We learn of the fear and panic felt by family members as they were forced to flee their homeland. New Moon focuses on her family's unsettled time in Germany and Italy when they tried to settle but couldn't, due to immigration policies of the time. Finally, Northern Lights shares the angst and comforts of finally being welcomed into a permanent community and home in Canada.

Sareh described her own path to becoming a writer. She has degrees in International Relations and Education from UBC, and has worked as a teacher. (Full disclosure: My daughter had the good fortune of being inspired by Madame in her grade one French Immersion class!) In 2018, Sareh attended SFU's The Writing Studio, where her passion for writing poetry was fueled and supported by her mentor and cohort. When the class was encouraged to review their past writing to determine themes that had inspired them, she realized that her family's immigration story was ever-present. She learned to become aware of when and where she wrote, and noticed a change from using pen and paper, to a phone filled with potential poems, and now almost exclusively, her computer.

The SFU program was a catalyst for *Pistachios in my Pocket*, but Sareh was concerned about how her family members would feel about their stories being out in the world. Once again Sareh's humour emerged. Apparently her cousin assured her that there couldn't possibly be a problem because "No one reads poetry!" With that blessing, Sareh had many decisions to make: content, style, formatting, facing fear of political retaliation, how to be authentic, choose a title, and edit, edit, edit. Her publisher encouraged her to find a suitable illustrator, which was an easy choice for Sareh. Nazli Ataeyeh created stunning, complementary images.

What's next, you may ask? Would scriptwriting surprise you? I can't wait!

A Medley of Spring Speakers

by Lisa Bagshaw



That last few months have brought an exciting array of speakers into our midst. In March, **Tara McGuire**, author of auto fiction, *Holden After and Before*, spoke with us about her empowered journey to uncover what happened to her son who passed away from an overdose on the streets of Vancouver. Tara brilliantly creates fictional scenes leading up to her son's death, weaved together by in-depth research, personal experience in the field and intensive interviews. Inspired by her son's creativity and beauty, she writes this story not only in homage but as a vulnerable insight into a crisis of too many lives lost. One of her writing tips she revealed was to ask herself a question and then go for a walk in the forest. By the time she returned to her desk, the answer had usually emerged, and she could continue writing.

Cea Sunrise Person spoke to us in April about her memoirs *North of Normal* and *Nearly Normal*, about her extraordinary life starting with growing up in a hippie counterculture, living in teepees, squatting in cottages, relying on her teen mom and her sundry boyfriends to taking herself to Paris at 13 to pursue a life as an international model. In these inspiring memoirs, Cea addresses many challenging themes including sexual abuse, self-acceptance, resilience, and survival. With regards to the writing process, Cea says, "No one experienced more rejection than me," saying it took over six years, and lots of rejection to get her first memoir published. She says she knew she had a good story, and she was determined to refine it until it was published. And not only were they both best sellers and award winners, but they were made into a movie. After hearing Cea speak, you can't help but believe you too can do anything you put your mind to.

And in June, we were taken into a fascinating world of espionage, counter terrorism, crime and history in Spain, in **Peter Woodbridge's** Trilogy, *The Girl from Barcelona*. Through the eyes and experiences of main character Daniella, Peter takes us on a swift gallop through history and around the globe into intriguing worlds of secrets, revenge, and cover-ups. Peter generously shared his writing process in these three page-turner books. For example, he spends a lot of time on character development. He knows exactly who each character is, from birth onwards, and knows their thoughts and feelings on everything as if they are his own children. The result being, all his complex and fascinating characters linger with the reader long after the trilogy is finished. He also strongly feels the necessity to experience the places and most of the scenes in the books. One time, for the sake of authenticity, he wound up in the middle of a violent political protest, a decision his wife Kit was not keen on.

We will be taking a break in the summer, and back in October for more inspiring speakers! Do join us in the fall every third Monday at 7pm at the North Vancouver Library.

Q&A with Tiffany Budhyanto

by Linda Mangnall

*Tiffany is our Write On! editor and author of a children's novel, **A Ride in a Rickshaw**. Her own wild ride brought her from political science studies in Toronto to law school in Vancouver and then took a delightful detour into a creative career. Tiffany is now working in communications and balancing life as a mother with a creative itch.*



Constitutional law is a unique entrée into the creative world. What drew you away from your initial plans and into a creative career?

While I loved learning about politics and the philosophy of law, the practice of law seemed quite a bit different. For me, a fulfilling career involves thinking in a creative way that I did not find in constitutional law. I believe there is power and joy in creating something of our own.

***A Ride in a Rickshaw* is inspired by your childhood experiences in Indonesia. Tell us more about the story.**

The story is based on my childhood summer vacations in Indonesia, where my parents are from. I'm still working through the manuscript and title, but it is about a young boy's journey in a rickety rickshaw through a small village and all the sights and sounds he sees along the way, such as street vendors selling freshly made satay and bakso.

It's been wonderful tapping into these childhood memories. My hope is that our young son will read the book when he is older and learn what life was like in this little pocket of time for me.

What children's book made an impression on you growing up?

My absolute favourite book was *Purple, Green and Yellow* by Robert Munsch. It's about a girl who wants special markers and ends up drawing all over her dad while he's sleeping. I think Munsch's books are just so playful and brilliant. They hold up even when you're an adult.

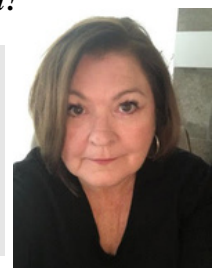
This issue is the fourth and final before the summer break. What have you learned as editor of *Write On!*

I joined the NSWA because I was itching to use a different side of my brain while on maternity leave. I also wanted to find other individuals on the North Shore who love writing just as much as I do. As editor, I have discovered how much talent lives on the North Shore - and how incredibly humble they are about their writing. I am very impressed by the submissions I receive for each edition. I wish writers would "toot their own horn" more!

Interviewer Note: On behalf of the NSWA, thank you, Tiffany, for your work on *Write On!*

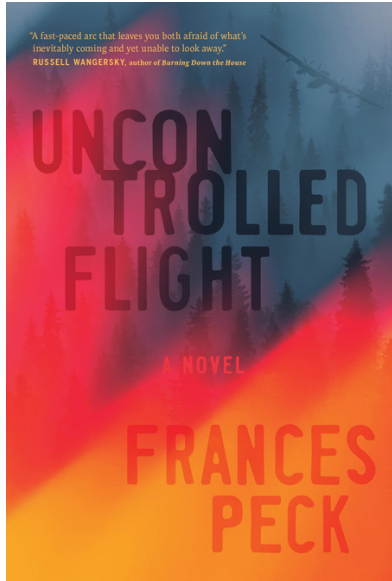
Write On! Member Q&A Feature

Linda Mangnall is a career and lifestyle writer who recently moved back to North Vancouver. She joined NSWA to connect with other creative people who are drawn to our coniferous-scented community. If you would like to be featured in our Q&A, contact Linda at Lindamangnall@icloud.com.



BRAVO!

A CELEBRATION OF OUR MEMBERS' ACHIEVEMENTS



Two pieces of exciting news regarding **Frances Peck**, NSWA Membership Coordinator. First, her debut novel *The Broken Places* has been shortlisted for the Rakuten Kobo Emerging Writer Prize. Congratulations to you, Frances!

Second, she has a new novel coming out September 1. *Uncontrolled Flight* (NeWest Press) begins with a plane crash. An experienced pilot is killed while fighting fires in the BC Interior, leaving behind a traumatized colleague, a grieving widow, and an accident investigator whose role in the incident is increasingly unclear. As the crash investigation unfolds, these three are drawn into a tangle of secrets and lies, passion and grief, blame and forgiveness. Early readers call the novel a “complex, emotional ride” that is “totally impossible to put down.” *Uncontrolled Flight* is available for preorder through most booksellers. Keep an eye on [Frances's website](#) for news of the book launch, likely in late September. NSWA members are warmly invited!



Sylvia Leong's adult contemporary short fiction, *The Least of Myself* was published in the Spring 2023 Pulp Literature Press Magazine, Issue 38. In this fictional piece, Claire discovers a woman lying face down at the bottom of the stairs after returning to a restaurant to use the bathroom, Unconscious? Dead? Claire doesn't know because she's frozen in place, overcome, as her empathy fights to assert itself over her trauma response.

Sylvia Leong is an emerging author, passionate environmentalist, and therapeutic personal trainer living in a shoebox in the sky in North Vancouver. She has three published short stories and a fourth won third place in the 2023 North Shore Writing Contest. You can find her at sleong.com.

SCWES BOOK AWARDS FOR BC AUTHORS 2023

The Sunshine Coast Writers and Editors Union is pleased to introduce one of our judges for the SCWES Book Awards 2023, NSWA member **Christina Myers**, a writer, editor and former journalist. Her novel "The List of Last Chances" (2021) was longlisted for the 2022 Leacock Medal and shortlisted for the Fred Kerner Book Award. She was the editor of the award-winning anthology *BIG* (2020) and her work has appeared in almost a dozen prior or forthcoming anthologies, as well as in magazines, journals and online.

EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS



Sunshine Coast Art & Words Festival

The 2nd Annual Sunshine Coast Art & Words Festival will be held August 10th to 13th, 2023, at the Gibsons Public Market. Numerous workshops are on offer, including walking poetry, a freelance writing masterclass, and Truth & Reconciliation journalling. Several of these workshops will be hosted by NSWA member Cathalynn Labonté-Smith. As well, the festival includes one-on-one appointments with a literary agent, for a fee. Don't miss your chance to take part in these offerings and spend a gorgeous day on the Sunshine Coast! Pick up and drop off at the Langdale Ferry terminal available.

Write On Bowen - A Festival of Writers and Readers

Save the Date! Following on the heels of the rave reviews of last year's festival, the 2023 Write on Bowen Festival of Readers & Writers is to be held on idyllic Bowen Island on September 16 & 17, 2023.

The festival, sponsored by the Bowen Island Public Library and the Hearth, Arts on Bowen, will once again be presenting eight workshops over two days, plus special events.



Seaside Art, Photography & Book Fair



Sunshine Coast Writers, Artists, Photographers & Musicians at the stunning Seaside Centre in Sechelt will move you with words, images & stylings. August 18th to 20th, 2023. Browse local authors' book tables as well as hear readings and conversations with interviewer Michale Gurney, Coast Reporter's Art & Culture Editor. Get your free tickets here.



Stories & Music: Reflections on Wellness, Balance and Saving Lives

The 2023 Whistler Writers Festival won't be until October, however they will be holding a spring event on Thursday, June 15 at the Whistler Public Library to give book lovers a taste of what to expect in the fall.

Four guest authors are slated to attend, including NSWA member and Sunshine Coast writer Cathalynn Labonté-Smith. She will be speaking about her non-fiction book, *Rescue Me: Behind the Scenes of Search and Rescue*. The Sea to Sky Orchestra will be performing as well. You can [purchase your tickets here](#).



North Shore Authors Collection now accepting applications

The North Shore Authors Collection inspires, supports, and celebrates the literary talent of North Shore authors by showcasing locally created content in all three North Shore libraries for one year, starting in the fall. [Apply online](#) before the June 30, 2023 deadline! It's your chance to see your book on the shelves of our local libraries.

NORTH SHORE
AUTHORS COLLECTION

Deadline is June 30!

holden after & before
Tara McGuire

CITRINE
RIVA

My Mother's Story: GONE TOO SOON

Learn more: www.northshoreauthorscollection.com

NORTH SHORE WRITERS FESTIVAL 2023 PHOTO RECAP

From April 27th to 29th, readers and writers alike came together to celebrate Canadian literature. Here are some photos from the Festival, courtesy of Wiley Wei-Chiun Ho.



NSWA members Janine Cross, Wiley Wei-Chiun Ho, and Frances Peck speaking on a panel entitled "The Process of Writing: From Conception to Completion"



Photo on the far left:
Jill Daum, playwright and actor
of Mom's the Word collective

Photo to the left:
Frances Peck signing a copy of
her critically acclaimed and
Rakuten Kobo shortlisted debut
The Broken Places

Nomad Street

by Cathalynn Labonté-Smith

Clustered behind a discount retail store in North Vancouver are metal relics—homes to the nomads to nowhere. With limited funds to make their ancient hulks road-worthy and to fill cavernous tanks, they can but fantasize of open roads, reunions with estranged family, employment, and self-fulfillment. However, they wouldn't give up their home on wheels and landless lifestyle for anything.

On a frost-crackled winter morning, I loaded coffee vats, snack bars, and laminated notes to slip under windshields and headed to Nomad Street.

WILLIAM THE GARDENER

I handed out coffee, snacks and my contact information to any nomad with an open door or on the sidewalk. I meet “William” (48) leaning out of his door, who is originally from Vancouver Island. He invites me into his home of ten years—thick, inky smoke puffs out of the chimney. I spy a rooftop garden where he grows corn, pumpkins, melons, strawberries and other crops. The weight of the soil and plants made his rig lean heavily starboard until the suspension broke.

Inside he says, “I buy blocks of wood from Rona.” The spray foam insulation is visible on the interior. He made all the modifications to the cozy RV himself. He crossed Canada a couple of times, but now he only moves it around the block every other day and totally leaves the block once a week. If a nomad stays too long on the block, he says they get, “A 24-hour notice with chalked tires, then a paper notice, then ticketed and towed.”

William lives on disability, but was once a demolition tech. His spends \$500 to \$600—\$65 for RV insurance, \$200 to power the generator, \$120 for wood, \$100 on pet food (we will get to his pets) per month. The solar panel on the roof generates 240 watts in the summer and 40 watts in the winter.

He prefers this life over living in a run-down apartment “dealing with sketchy roommates”. According to William, being a nomad has less of a stigma than in the past. The challenges of his lifestyle are filling the water tanks, and getting showers. He does his laundry at the laundromat monthly. He plays video games, watches movies, and plays with his nine pet rats whose habitat takes up one-third of the living-space.

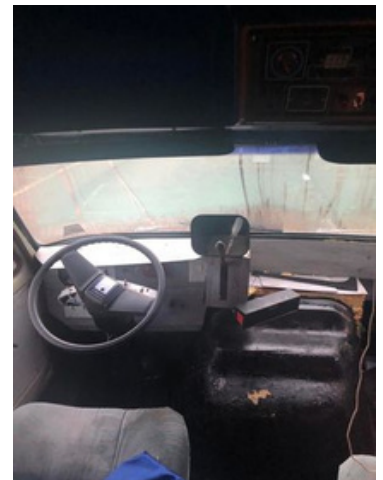
“I started with four, but the girls opened their cages, then opened the boys’ cages,” William chuckles. The rats watch us attentively. William’s goal is one more tour of Canada.

IMON THE FEARLESS

Imon lives in a 1982 Winnebago. He is proud that he was born the same year his RV was made. Imon stripped out anything digital and rewired it himself. I doubt I could drive it.

He opens the hood to reveal a tangle of wires.

He shows me an emergency exit built into the floor, and claims that the walls are both bullet- and zombie-proof. “With all the digital devices removed from his vehicle when the zombie aliens come, they won’t find me,” he says. Yet, there is a broken padlock on the outside door.



“Do people walk in on you?” I ask.

“Yes,” he replies.

“What do you do?” I ask.

“I say, ‘Welcome, have water, or a Coke, but they usually run away. If they stay, I say, ‘Come sit, have a cigarette.’ I talk to them about Jesus.’” He is a Mormon convert.

He heats a rock on a plate and sleeps with the rock that keeps him warm for five to six hours. He eats vegetarian organic food. He spends \$50 for propane, \$300 for gas for jaunts to Squamish and Hope, and \$140 phone and Internet a month.

He was in film school for two years, then switched to the pharmacist program at UBC. He then studied Chinese medicine in Shanghai. When he returned to Canada he was unable to work as an herbalist because it required a different license. Instead, he played violin in restaurants, painted, and drove a taxi.

“I live day by day. It’s an easy, simple life.” He writes scripts and poems.

Is he a happy person? “No,” this father of a teenager says. He doesn’t see himself as having a future and he wants his son back.

“People fight and kill each other over land. Too many are killed over land” - that’s why the nomad life suits him. He claims to have a car in case of an emergency. He has a wealthy family who visits him—no other nomads I talked to have those riches.

It’s dark and cold, so I leave Imon to make dinner and heat up his evening rock.

I drive to Jericho Beach, where platoons of the landless, as they identify themselves, try to look inconspicuous. I chat with a nomad with terminal cancer, parked in a rented spot at the hostel. On the beach, I speak with a construction worker who hops from job site to job site, saving to buy a home by living in his van.

ROB LOOKING FOR A BETTER LIFE

Rob sends an email from the note I left on his windshield of his run-down RV parked on Nomad Street. We met for lunch at the pub in North Vancouver near the nomad strip—fashioned out of a railcar, yet it goes nowhere.

Rob (65) has been a trucker, police officer, and worked for a major telecommunications company also, but has been unemployed for five years. He lived in Toronto, Edmonton, and Deep Cove. He has two adult children and is twice-divorced from the same woman.

He’s looking for a free-spirited partner to travel with him, but it’s “hard as women are more interested in material things,” he says. He sculpts soapstone, does relief carving, paints, follows politics, enjoys fixing autos, and plays Black Jack.

“Male nomads outnumber females thirty to one, because of the isolation. You need to network and it’s daunting to network as a female.”

He lives on only \$20,000 a year, wants to skate the Rideau Canal, visit relatives on the East Coast, go on a road trip with his daughter, and help people with mechanical problems.

Nomads like William, Imon and Rob feel fortunate to have autonomy, one RV-length at a time, despite the solitude and inconvenience and the search for welcome streets and friends.

The Last Page

by Cathy L. Scrimshaw

It's finally happened. I am a woman of a certain age. Officially a senior citizen. So, what does that mean for my writing?

I've written all my life, in one form or another. In school, of course. Then, in my working life, course materials and outlines in a corporate training centre. I ghost-wrote articles and reports for my boss. I've been a newsletter editor for an organization more than once. For a short time, I wrote artist statements and bios.

My dream was always to be a novelist. I wrote my first mystery novel, *The Secret of Rodeo Ranch*, at the ripe old age of 12. I still have it, as a reminder of my earliest writing achievement.

Although life has taken me on many different paths, that dream has stayed with me. To be honest, in my younger years I didn't really think I had the life experience to write a good novel. But now that I'm older, and most of my adult responsibilities to family, community and work are taken care of, it's time to dream again.

Last year, I had a look through the manuscript of my early novel. What struck me was how little I've strayed from my creative roots. In that story, two young friends ride the train through the Rockies to a guest ranch, where they discover their love for the wilderness, uncover dastardly deeds committed by evil ranch hands, and save the day with their derring-do and love for justice.

It's pretty obvious I was a fan of the Nancy Drew books. Still, it was clear my writing direction was set, not to mention my love of reading mysteries.

Fast forward to the present day and my current grey-haired self. I now love reading pretty much anything of quality, although if there is a mystery involved so much the better. And my current novel project? Two friends, separated for decades by geography and different priorities, return to their roots in a wilderness community, join forces to solve a murder and uncover a long-running conspiracy in the process. In the end, poetic justice prevails, but with life-changing effects for all involved.

What separates the two stories, other than time, is all the life experience I've acquired, and how that has changed my writing. I've experienced life's highs and lows. Rode a horse through the Rockies and savoured boiled coffee by a campfire on a chilly mountain morning. Enjoyed apple strudel in Salzburg and croissants in a Parisian café. Attended christenings, birthday parties, weddings; had great jobs and suffered career setbacks, met wonderful people plus a few I'd rather forget, and attended more funerals than I care to remember.

All of that goes into my fiction writing now. I like to think that, while my subject matter might not have changed dramatically, the depth and complexity of my writing has. With age and experience – and practice – has come the ability to create a richer, deeper, more compelling story.

At least I hope it has.

So, age is an advantage for a writer. Retirement, even for this lady of a certain age, is still in the distant future. We really are getting better as we get older.

Have a great summer, everyone!