

WRITE ON!

Newsletter of the North Shore Writers' Association
Linking North Shore writers since 1993
No. 33: December 2023

President's Message

My wife talks to the television - I'm serious - especially when there's something on the news she doesn't like. Gang violence, warfare, and partisan politics all irritate the part of her brain that rebels against a changing world, grating like sandpaper against the grain of her natural optimism.

I write this during an era of epic discontent and tragic warfare. My personal antidote to negative world news is to meditate on the kindness of my family and friends (including those in NSWA) and the beauty of the written word and art as crafted by our members and others in my circle.

NSWA has members who are accomplished visual artists and writers. In another sphere of my life, I have a friend who is a respected distance coach, Canadian champion in orienteering, visual artist, model train enthusiast — and those don't include his day job. In these times of trouble, we are blessed by others' inspiration and the beauty they create. Happy holidays.

Bill Koch, *President*



Upcoming Events

January 3, 2024

7:00pm

Dare to be Heard

North Vancouver City Library
2nd Floor Boardroom

January 13, 2024

10:00am-12:00pm

Saturday Morning Write-In
Virtual

January 15, 2024

7:00-8:30pm

General Meeting & Speaker
Series

North Vancouver City Library,
3rd Floor Program Room
Guest speaker: Jill Daum

Many thanks to the North Vancouver City Library for generously providing meeting space for many of our events and workshops.

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Melanie Dorchester, Barbara Reardon, Linda Mangnall



Message from the Editor

During this festive season, calendars fill up pretty quick with dinners, cookie baking sessions, and gift shopping. This year, at least for me, it feels like a treadmill of activities that won't slow down and just keep getting faster. I can't wait until the holidays finally arrive and I get a chance to sit down with a cup of hot tea, sit by the window, and just watch everything (and everyone) go by.

This edition of the newsletter has a lot of member achievements. I'm so proud of everyone who has contributed to the newsletter and submitted their work or good news. Thank you for making my job so joyful! I am celebrating right along with you.

Tiffany Budhyanto, *Newsletter Editor*

Upcoming Speakers

Lisa Bagshaw will be hosting an interview-style Speakers Series meeting every month at the North Vancouver City Library from 7:00-8:30pm. Read below for more information on our future guests!

January 15, 2024

Jill Daum is graduate of the Studio 58 acting program and has been working as an actor and writer for over 35 years. She is also one of the co-creators and performers in the internationally acclaimed trilogy of plays: *Mom's the Word*, *Mom's the Word 2: Unhinged* and *Mom's the Word – For Crying Out Loud*. She is currently working on a stage play *Forget About Tomorrow* for The Arts Club Theatre about a woman whose husband is diagnosed with Early Onset Alzheimers. Jill also has a passion for children's literature and reviews books for BC Global TV.



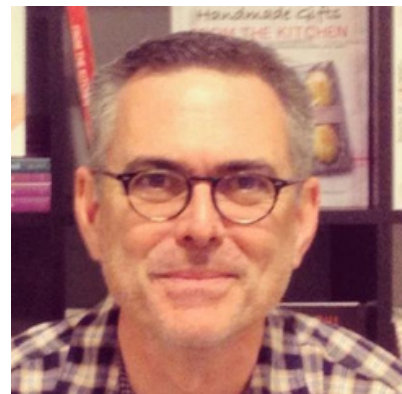
February 26, 2024

Grant Lawrence is an award-winning writer, musician, broadcaster, and live event host. He is the author of four best-selling books for adults: *Adventures in Solitude*, *The Lonely End of the Rink*, *Dirty Windshields*, and his latest number one bestseller, *Return to Solitude*. *Bailey the Bat and the Tangled Moose*, his first children's picture book, was released in 2021. Grant is also the host of the CBC Music Top 20 and the lead singer of the internationally acclaimed garage band The Smugglers.



March 18, 2024

Robert McCullough is Publisher of Appetite by Random House and a Vice-President of Penguin Random House of Canada. After twenty-one successful years at Whitecap Books, Robert had the opportunity to start a new imprint in Vancouver for Penguin Random House of Canada, where he has been creating a carefully curated collection of food, drink, and lifestyle titles since launching in 2012. Appetite's list has produced more than ten *Globe and Mail* Bestsellers and 5 *New York Times* Bestsellers.



Submit your piece to the newsletter!



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.



DARE TO BE HEARD



Writing can be hard and lonely...but it doesn't have to be! Dare to be Heard encourages people to read their work aloud in a friendly and non-critical environment, and have the courage to finish their story. Meet fellow writers in a relaxed and welcoming setting.

MEETING DATES

7pm at the North Vancouver City Library
(2nd floor boardroom for every session)

January 3, 2024

February 7, 2024

March 6, 2024

April 3, 2024

May 1, 2024

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!



nswriters.org

A North Shore Writers Association Workshop.

Saturday Morning Write-ins

with host Melanie Dorchester



The Saturday Morning Write-Ins will be on the second Saturday of every month.

**January 13. February 10, March 9
April 13, May 11, June 8**

10:00am–12:00pm

Can you imagine yourself seated in the comfort of your own home, ready to write, then nothing happens? The friendly but focused eclectic Saturday morning write-in may be a good fit for you! After a brief check in to share recent writing news, questions, concerns and individual writing plans for the morning, we do a writing warm up, then get to work. At the midway point and again at the end of the session, insightful and helpful writing tips are often shared. Participants often marvel at how much they can write in such a short time.

New members are always welcome.

Join Zoom meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87105551221?pwd=MUNTcFNkMWRxOXpRWIBHRHA2VUZpQT09>

Meeting ID: 871 0555 1221

Passcode: Write (same every month)

Member Q&A with Helen Liang

by Linda Mangnall



Helen Liang is a new member of the NSWA. Her love of learning and willingness to change and grow has led her to a varied career path and a two-book publishing deal.

Welcome! What does the NSWA offer you?

I am interested in the NSWA because I want to grow my creative side and meet other North Shore writers. My goal is to learn from, and support, others in the writing community. I went to a meeting to check it out and I met welcoming and interesting members. I joined on the spot.

Tell us a bit about yourself.

I was a civil engineer working primarily in the aluminum industry. I returned to school in my 50s because I've always loved learning. I enrolled in BCIT's Technical Writing Certificate Program and Langara College's Library & Information Technology Program. I have since worked in both fields.

You are not afraid to make mid-life career changes. What inspired you?

At my first information session at the downtown BCIT campus I was asked if I was there for the senior retirement planning! I worked at libraries to pay my way through UBC. I came full circle back to the library because I was at a place in my life where I could work for enjoyment. I wanted to develop my creativity and the library is inspirational.

What twist in the career path led you to writing for children?

I began to consider writing for children while working in the circulation department of the North Vancouver District Public Library. I then enrolled in the online course "Writing for Children" with The Writers Bureau based in the UK.

You already have a two-book deal with Orca Book Publishers. Tell us your secret!

One assignment from my course was to choose a publisher I respected and who was accepting submissions. I was required to write a few chapters of my book and send off a query letter. Orca was my first choice. I submitted my proposal and, miraculously, I received an offer from the non-fiction editor for two books. I'm currently writing book one.

What are the books about?

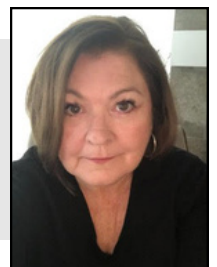
The books are about the importance of engineering in the community, from water and waste to transportation and more. They are written for the age 8-12 reader.

What childhood book made an impression on you?

As a very young girl I loved the Edith series by Dare Wright, particularly *The Lonely Doll*. Later, at about 12-years old, I enjoyed reading *Sacajawea* by Anna Lee Waldo. It is a powerful story and the first epic book I'd ever read.

Write On! Member Q&A Feature

Linda Mangnall is a career and lifestyle writer. Suggestions for the member Q&A feature are welcome and can be submitted to Linda at: Lindamangnall@icloud.com.



Frances Peck Delivers In Person and on the Page

by Lisa Bagshaw



We were delighted to have our own Frances Peck, Membership Coordinator of the NSWA, be our guest speaker in October. As an esteemed and celebrated author of two published novels *Uncontrolled Flight* and *The Broken Places*, Frances generously shared her writing process, the development of her complex characters, fast-paced plots, and her equally thrilling experience of the highs and lows of the publishing world. I was particularly fascinated by the skill and craftsmanship of her character development and the very complex relationships she created between them. It was the humanity of her characters that drew me in. She has an ability to demonstrate their flaws, fears, the false stories they tell themselves, and still have the reader love them and in my case, continue to think about them to this day. Add to that, the plots she chooses, whether it be a plane crash or an earthquake, serve to amplify the tension and conflict between and within the characters to make these books impossible to put down. Frances' generous sharing of her tips about her writing and publishing success made the evening not only enjoyable, but highly educational, informative, and inspiring.

BRAVO!

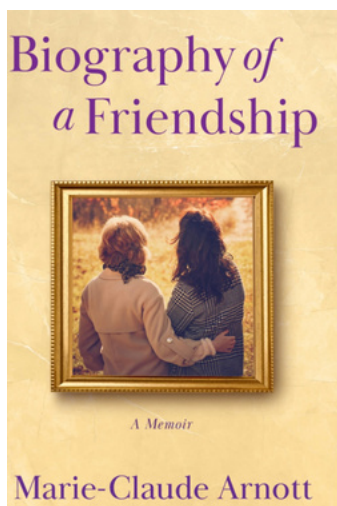
A CELEBRATION OF MEMBER ACHIEVEMENTS



Trish Gauntlett's non-fiction piece, *The Ice Road*, has won an Honourable Mention as part of the 2023 Surrey International Writers' Contest Jack Whyte Storyteller's Award. There were 115 entries from all over the world, across all genres of short story, with one winner and two honourable mentions. This story is about a drive Trish and her husband did in the winter of 2019 up the Dempster Highway from Dawson in Yukon to Inuvik in NWT. *The Ice Road* will be published next year in Pulp Literature magazine.



Member **Christine Cowan** has published her debut novel, *She Thought I Knew: a West Coast thriller*. Available on Amazon.ca in both e-book and paperback under the name C.S. Cowan, the story is about criminologist, Maeve Rosetti, who returns to the Sunshine Coast, to aid in the search for her missing teenage niece - all while navigating a complicated relationship with the sister she left behind. The process unearths old wounds and secrets from their childhood that threaten to destroy them.



Marie-Claude Arnott's memoir *Biography of a Friendship* will be published by Tule Publishing Group in March 2024. MC and Juliette have been friends for thirty years when a photograph of a gaunt Juliette turns their friendship upside down. This is the story of their lives through MC's memories of a sophisticated and refreshingly blunt Juliette and what happens after Juliette asks MC to accompany her on her final journey in Switzerland. As they discuss life, love, and death, doubt consumes MC. How can she be the friend Juliette needs? Through laughs and tears, MC is on a path more transformative than she could have imagined.



Joan Boxall's latest piece, "Tsawwassen First Nation Youth Centre: In Style with Coast Salish Tradition" marks a milestone in which she covers artisans working in artistic elements. Principal architect Dr. Nancy Mackin designed the space to include the Coast Salish creation story, in which birds descended from the sky and shed their feathers as they transformed into humans. Avian insignia (barn swallows, Western sandpipers and hummingbirds) adorn walls, welcome poles, and fritted windows (to prevent bird collisions). Being at the epicentre of the Pacific Flyway, millions of migrating birds flock to the area year-round.



Sincerest congratulations to our very own **Carmen Farrell** (Publicity and Webmaster) for being longlisted in the Creative Nonfiction category for the FBCW 2023 Literary Contest. The title of her piece is *Better Not Tell You Now*. Hurray Carmen!



*Celebrating the launch of the Christmas anthology **Better Next Year** at the West Vancouver Memorial Library. From left to right: Frances Peck; Wiley Wei-Chiun Ho, Lisa Bagshaw; and Erin MacNair.*

On December 10th, member **Wiley Wei-Chiun Ho** was part of a reading event for *Better Next Year* at the West Vancouver Memorial Library. Her piece "B v. J" is in this collection of stories. Wiley thanks NSWA friends who were able to make it through the bad weather and traffic to attend!

Better Next Year is available at indie bookstores and Amazon. It's a CBC Holiday Spirit Reads recommendation and on the Next Chapter (her story is mentioned at minute 15:15).

Celebrating the North Shore Authors Collection by Frances Peck



Some of the NSWA members at the November 17 reception for the 2023–2024 North Shore Authors Collection. Left to right: Samantha Adkins, Frances Peck, Peter Woodbridge, Lisa Bagshaw, Albert Brecht, Cathalynn Labonté-Smith, Rosemary Keevil

On November 17, the Lynn Valley Library was the scene of a bustling reception—complete with an eloquent toast by Lisa Bagshaw, NSWA Speaker Coordinator—to kick off the 2023–2024 North Shore Authors Collection. This annual collection of books, curated by the three North Shore library systems, features titles that span genres by authors from right here on the North Shore.

Warmest congratulations to the NSWA members with books in this year’s collection:

Samantha Adkins, David Bowra, Albert Brecht, Sonia Garrett, Rosemary Keevil, Cathalynn Labonté-Smith, Rhonda Mailey, Frances Peck, Calvin Wharton, Peter Woodbridge

Discover the books by these and other authors in the collection by visiting the special display at the NVDPL (Lynn Valley Branch), the North Vancouver City Library, or the West Vancouver Memorial Library. Or browse through the titles and author bios online:
<https://northshoreauthorscollection.com/collection/>.

ARTWORK



Downhill Racers, acrylic on paper
by Steve Rayner

100-WORD CHALLENGE

This edition's theme required the inclusion of three words selected at random: *adult*, *offset*, and *unlawful*.

Hopeful

He was an adult. That's how he excused it. This was offset by his history. The car totaled by a telephone pole and the unlawful hosting of bonfire-lit keg parties for underage drunks in the wooded hollows of the Rockies. A smart kid whose disregard for rules, entrepreneurial spirit, and impulsivity drove Dad nuts. So, when he married and divorced, not once but twice, moved out of the country, and spent forever in school, discouragement weighed heavily on his father. But he was still his son, so he showed up for the third wedding. He was ever hopeful.

- Bill Koch

The Rules

"Any unlawful behaviour will be recorded and punished," yelled citizen Molkawitz into the microphone. "For this colony to function, every adult prisoner on Molkawitzonia must attend the Work-order-day."

He took a breath and lowered his voice to offset his youthful vocal chords. "Anybody found to be non-compliant will be immediately extracted, handcuffed, shaved bald and returned to Earth on the next shuttle." A smile crossed his face. "Moreover... there will be no food or video-game credits issued on that voyage."

"Citizen Molkawitz, put that darned phone down and start eating your dinner before everything gets stone cold," yelled his mother.

- Rod Baker

My child-like wonder is often offset by my adult responsibilities. This is never more apparent than during Christmastime. I no longer stay up past my bedtime waiting to hear the pitter patter of reindeer feet on my rooftop. No chocolate chip cookies or warmed glass of milk to be had by Santa. Trespassing on private property is unlawful anyway.

- Tiffany Budhyanto

So, if you think bemoaning your age, as an excuse to offset such unusual behavior, will let you off the hook, you are out of touch with reality. You are almost an adult and should know that stealing sausages and bacon from a deli, frying them up in a hotel room and selling them to other guests in the hotel lobby might be a financially rewarding little side business, but I'm afraid it is considered unlawful on all fronts. I must, however, give you credit for your ingenuity.

- Rose Dudley

Your next newsletter 100-word challenge: Submission must be 100 words or less (excluding title);
Can be prose or poetry; Inclusion of theme words is optional;
Use these three randomly generated words: outer, crystal, wriggle
Email your masterpiece to editor@nswriters.org

Untitled

adapted by Rod Baker from a piece by Moses James

A man, who regularly attended community meetings suddenly stopped participating. After a few weeks, on a very cold night, the leader of that group decided to pay him a visit. He found the man at home, sitting in front of a fireplace where a bright wood-fire burned. The man welcomed the leader and invited him to sit down. There was a great silence as the two men watched the flames dancing around the logs that crackled in the fireplace. The leader stared intently at the logs that formed the fire. After some time, he stood up, grasped a pair of tongs, selected a log burning brightly, removed it from the fire, and set it down on the hearth away from the fire.

The two men continue watching the fire without speaking. Before long, the fire died down. There were only momentary flickers of flame until the fire went out. What had previously been a source of bright light and heat, became dull embers.

As the men continued to stare into the fireplace, the leader grasped the tongs, picked up the discarded log and placed it in the middle of the fireplace. Fueled by the remaining heat of the embers, the fire crackled, rekindled, and burst into flame. As the leader stood up and walked toward the door, the host spoke the first words of the meeting: “Thank you for your visit and your lesson. I’ll return to the group.”

Why is a group important? Each member that withdraws takes fire and warmth from the rest. Group members are all part of the flame that keeps the meetings warm. We are all responsible for keeping each other’s flame burning. What matters is to be connected. We are here to meet, learn, exchange ideas, or simply to know that we are not alone. Life is beautiful when we lift one another!



EMPTY SPACE

by Trish Gauntlett

Why should we save this Earth when Saturn's sky rains diamonds?
Jupiter's aurora shifts in purple, yellow, turquoise, brighter, older than our Northern Lights.
Titan's tides hide secret oceans, trapped beneath red ice.
On Mars, Olympus Mons, watchtower of alien gods, is higher than two Everests.
Why should we save this Earth when out there,
out there is the stuff of dreams, the building blocks of life?

Except we cannot breathe in space.
And this is no small thing when diamonds fall
and symphonies of rainbows fill the sky.
We cannot cry or shout or whisper.
We cannot not sing.

There are no trees in space.
No Sitka spruce measuring its branches one by one against the open sky.
No shore pine sending all its life and purpose to the top.
No sun-bright, evergreen arbutus, with its fractal green and orange bark.
No sacred cedar, shaping house and history, clan and culture.
No oxygen.

Trees hold the power of life and death for us and we for them, in equal measure.
Now is the time to throw ourselves against the ancient justice of the woods
and promise transformation, restoration, conservation.

Trees do not take sides.
They do not choose redemption.
They simply live or die, often by our hand.
Why should we save them? Why protect this Earth?
On Saturn, Jupiter, Titan, Mars, all planets and all moons, not one tree grows.

Although we do not ask for grace from trees,
they give it.
And we can breathe.
We can cry and shout and whisper.
We can sing.

The Last Page

by Cathy L. Scrimshaw

I popped into the Local Authors Book Fair on December 2. Held in the Community Room at the Lynn Valley library, there were rows of tables staffed by local writers with their books. I went not to buy (my bookshelves are stuffed to the gills already with books yet to be read), but to see people I hadn't seen for far too long. To chat and wander and see what's happening.

I wasn't disappointed.

I ran into writers I'd served with on the NSWA executive, women I consider friends but had lost touch with during the pandemic. We had a lot of fun catching up with each other's lives. I even bought a book.

One of my neighbours, a romance writer, had a table. Both of us being dog owners, and living within a block of each other, I run into her on a semi-regular basis; still, it was nice to see her showcasing her work and to meet her table-mate, a guitar-playing outdoorsman who writes about the six months each year he spends living in the wilderness.

I met Rosemary Keevil, new to the NSWA, who was partnered at a table with Frances Peck. So lovely to meet her, and to spend a few minutes chatting with Frances, who is doing so much for us now.

All this is leading up to my topic: the importance of community.

Like most writers, I'm more of an introvert than an extrovert. Given a choice between staying home with a good book, my husband and my dog or going out to an event where I'll be one of dozens, or worse yet, one of a hundred, I'll always lean toward the former. Even when walking my dog, I tend to prefer going on my own than with a group.

But that's not really the best way to go through life.

We get so much from social contact, from community interaction. Apart from being good for our emotional health, it's good for our writing. How are we to craft meaningful stories if we're not part of the social fabric of our world? How can we develop complex fictional characters if we don't listen to, observe, understand and empathize with the people around us?

How can we write insightful non-fiction if we don't involve ourselves in the events unfolding in the world around us?

The answer is, of course, we can't. Not really.

I could have stayed home that December afternoon. I have a whole pile of books I gave myself for Christmas. All of them were emitting siren calls. Wanting to be picked up and read. But I chose to connect with other writers instead. The books will wait. The chance to socialize wouldn't.

I'm glad I made the choice to attend the fair. Because after all, who better to inspire, encourage, maybe even to prod us into being better writers than other writers? Who else really understands us and what we do?

I'll continue to make that choice, and, in the New Year, attend as many NSWA meetings and literary events as I can. I hope you will too.

See you in 2024!

