

Welcome to

Write On!

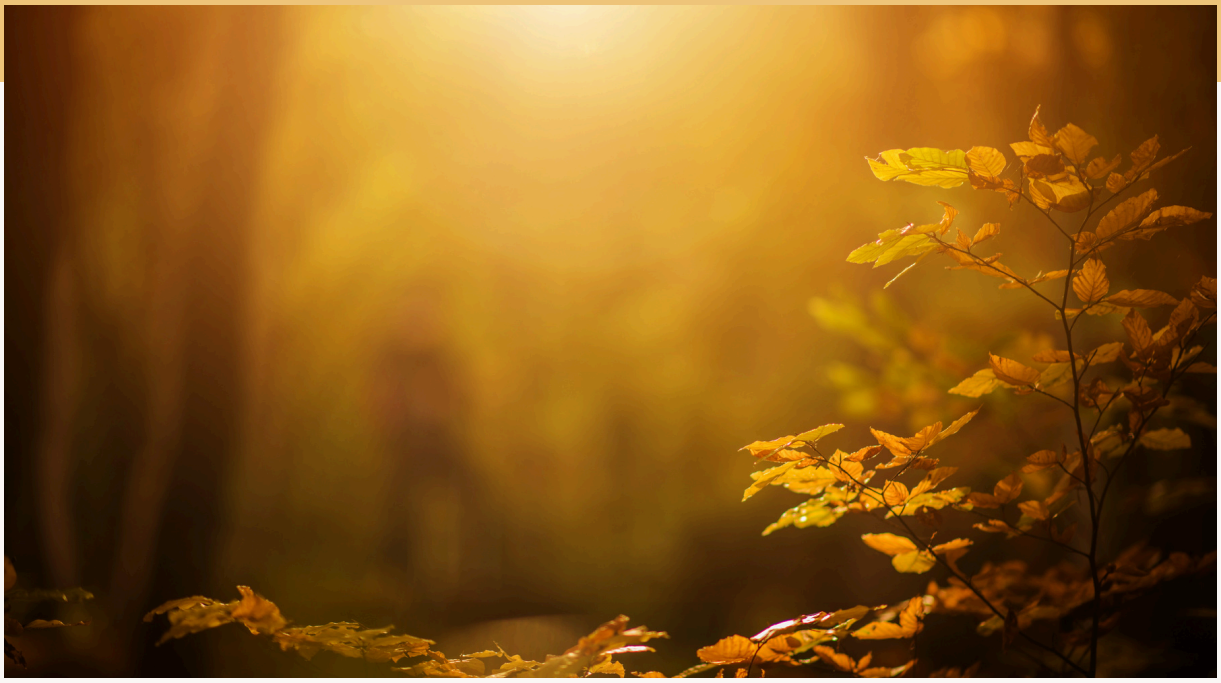
NORTH SHORE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

Linking North Shore writers since 1993.

We respectfully acknowledge the Coast Salish Peoples, including the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh), on whose unceded ancestral lands our community of writers supporting writers is grateful to live and work.

President's Message



September, the month where students (and teachers) return to school, leaves tumble to the lawn, moth-eaten sweaters reemerge from closets, and I turn on the fireplace and toast my toes. Your association began another year on September 21 with a well-attended Annual General Meeting, sharing of books, and recommended reads (look in this newsletter for a writer's list of favourite reads). A new Board was acclaimed — or is it an acclaimed board was named? Never mind, I digress.

We thanked outgoing board members Steve Rayner and Trish Gauntlett for their past achievements on the board, as well as Christine Cowan and Barbara Reardon for their entertainment duties. Do not fear, these esteemed colleagues and friends are not going anywhere, despite Steve currently touring Europe. We will still enjoy their company. Steve merely gets a break from Zoom meetings and seeking signatures on cheques. Trish gets a break from educating slow learners like me about governance issues. We also welcomed new board members Joys Chow (membership coordinator), Arleen Tyndall (Director of External Relations), Lois Keane (Director-At-Large), as well as Sonia Garrett (Treasurer). Sonia isn't a new face, having previously served on the board.

We have a full year planned for our 160 (!!!) members with 6 entertaining guest interviewees, multiple writing and reading opportunities, the spring writing contest, North Shore Writers Festival, etc. There've been many recent writing successes in our membership, including Wiley Wei-Chun Ho's publication of *The Astronaut Children of Dunbar Street* with Douglas & McIntyre (Wiley was last running the publicity circuit for her book in Toronto), and Carmen Farrell's new book contract with Tidewater Press. There have been many other success stories, too many to fill this short column. At any rate, welcome back! Happy writing,

Bill Koch



Board of Directors

President: Bill Koch
Vice President: Frances Peck
Secretary: Calvin Wharton
Treasurer: Sonia Garrett
Membership Coordinator: Joys Chow
Director of External Relations: Arleen Tyndall
Speaker Coordinator: Lisa Bagshaw
Library Liaison: Wiley Wei-Chiun Ho
Webmaster & Publicity: Carmen Farrell
Newsletter & Anthology Editor: Sylvia Leong
Directors-at-Large: Libby Soper, Lois Keane

Other Volunteers

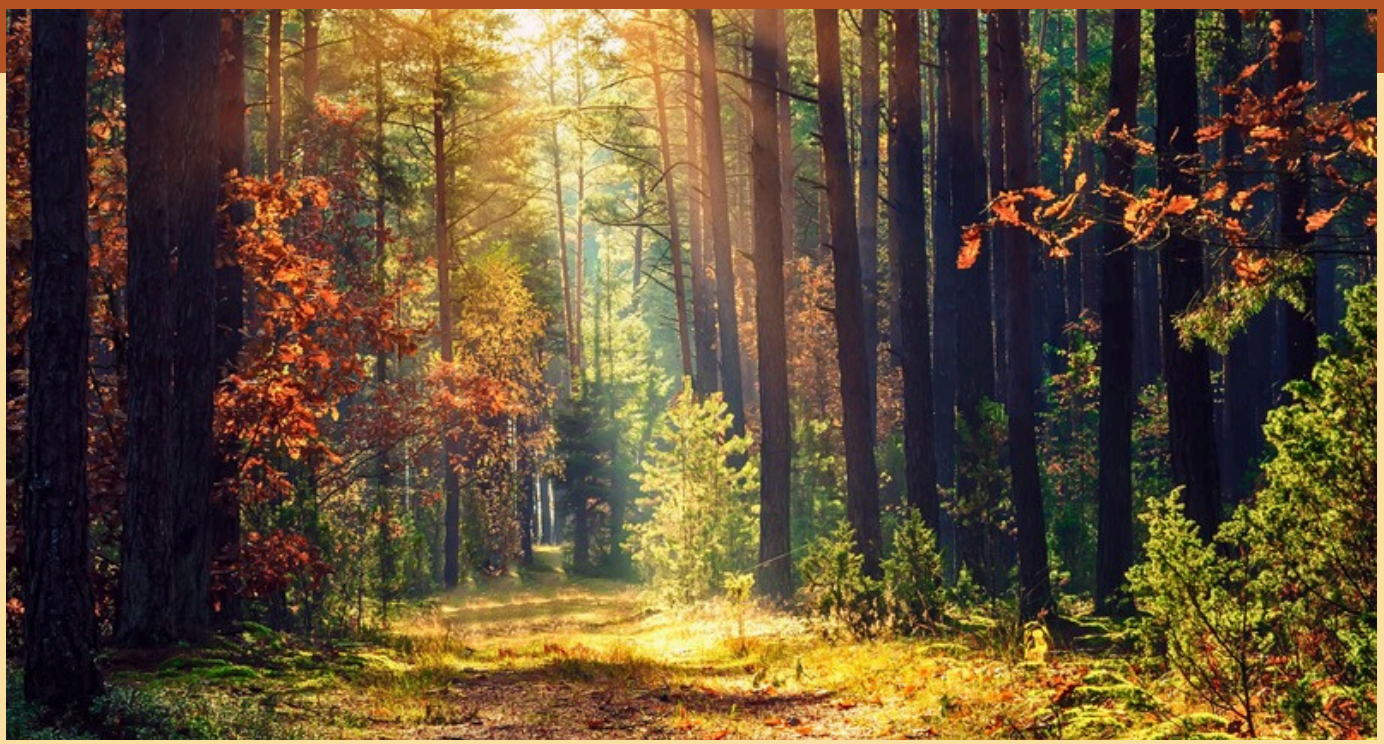
Member Q&A Coordinator: Linda Mangnall
The Last Pages Essay: Cathy Scrimshaw
Writing Contest Committee: Erin MacNair, Dhana Musil, Trish Gauntlett, and Libby Soper
Party Coordinators: Pending
Dare to be Heard Host: Rotating
Saturday Write-in Host: Melanie Dorchester
Saturday Silent Writing Hosts: Trish Gauntlett, Cath Ennis, Libby Soper
Proofreaders: Rosemary Gretton, Steve Rayner



Calendar Overview

Oct 03 - Saturday Morning In-person Silent Writing. Pg 9.
Oct 10 - Saturday Morning Write-ins. Pg 8.
Oct 13 - Dare to Be Heard Open Mic. Pg 7.
Oct 17 - Saturday Morning In-person Silent Writing. Pg 9.
Oct 19 - Speaker Series with Eddy Boudel Tan. Pg 10.
Oct 31 - Mentorship Round Tables. Pg 11.
Nov 07 - Saturday Morning In-person Silent Writing. Pg 9.
Nov 10 - Dare to Be Heard Open Mic. Pg 7.
Nov 14 - Saturday Morning Write-ins. Pg 8.
Nov 16 - Holiday Party. Pg 12.
Nov 21 - Saturday Morning In-person Silent Writing. Pg 9.

NSWA 2026/2027 Season



SEASON KICK OFF

Monday, Sep 21 - AGM, Book Swap, and cookies!

PARTIES

Monday, Nov 16 - Holiday Party
Monday, June 21 - Year-end Social

MEETINGS/SPEAKER SERIES

Eddy Boudel Tan, Steve Burgess, Carleigh Baker, Bill Gaston, Eve Lazarus, Natasha Mihell
North Vancouver City Library, Third-floor Room, 6:30 - 8:30 pm
Mondays: Oct 19, Jan 18, Feb 22, Mar 15, Apr 19, May 17

DARE TO BE HEARD OPEN MIC

North Vancouver City Library, First-floor Program Room, 7:00 - 8:30 pm
Tuesdays: Oct 13, Nov 10, Dec 8, Jan 12, Feb 9, March 9, April 13, May 11, June 8

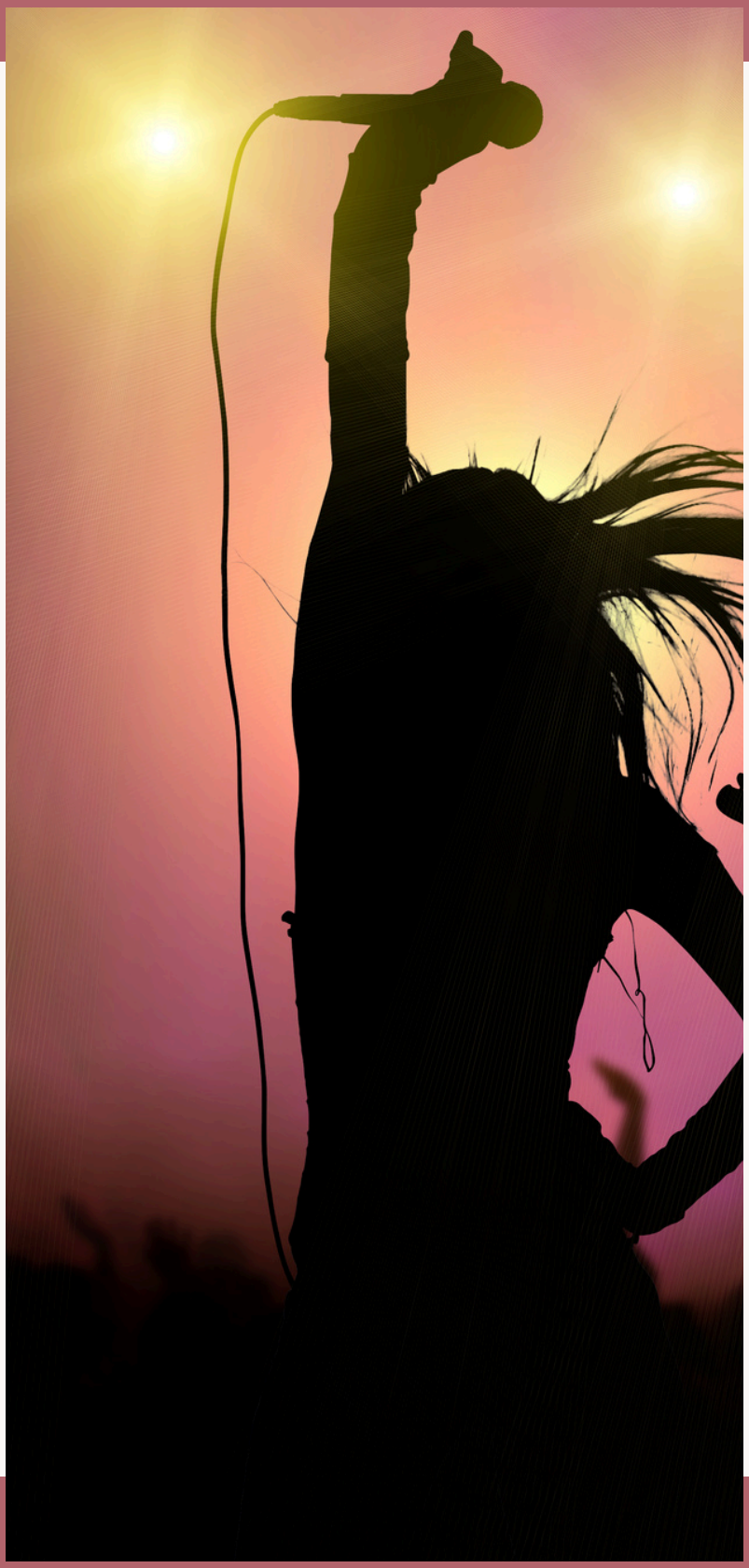
SATURDAY MORNING WRITE-INS

Zoom link distributed to the NSWA membership via email.
Oct 10, Nov 14, Dec12, Jan 9, Feb 13, Mar 13, Apr 10, May 8, June 12

SATURDAY MORNING IN-PERSON SILENT WRITING

Check NSWA emails and the City Library website for Fall sessions.

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS



MONDAYS

Oct 19
Eddy Boudel Tan
Author

Jan 18
Steve Burgess
Author/broadcaster

Feb 22
Carleigh Baker
Author

March 15
Bill Gaston
Author

April 19
Eve Lazarus
True-crime author

May 17
Natasha Mihell
Literary Agent

Hosted by the North Shore Writers' Association
and the

North Vancouver City Library

Third-floor Room

6:30pm
Connect with other writers.

7:00-8:30pm
A quick meeting about any arising NSWA business.

Then, when scheduled, onto the guest speaker!

DARE TO BE HEARD
OPEN MIC

TUESDAYS

Oct 13

Nov 10

Dec 8

Jan 12

Feb 9

March 9

April 13

May 11

June 8



Hosted by the North Shore Writers' Association
and the

North Vancouver City Library

First-floor Program Room

7-8:30pm

Read a short piece of your writing aloud in a friendly, supportive, and relaxed environment.

Or drop by to listen.

Not a critique group.

Free to attend.
Registration not required.
Open to the public.

SATURDAY MORNING WRITE-INS

HOSTED BY THE NORTH SHORE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION

Oct 10

Nov 14

Dec12

Jan 9

Feb 13

Mar 13

Apr 10

May 8

June 12



Imagine yourself in the comfort of your home, ready to write.

But nothing happens?

The friendly focused eclectic Saturday morning write-in may be a good fit for you! After a brief sharing of writing news, questions, concerns, and individual writing plans, we do a writing warm up, then get to work.

At the midway point and again at the end of the session, helpful writing tips are often shared.

Participants marvel at how much they can write in such a short time.

New members are always welcome.

10am-12pm

(Zoom link distributed to the NSWA membership via email.)

SATURDAY MORNING IN-PERSON SILENT WRITING

~~Sept 05~~

~~Sept 19~~

Oct 03

Oct 17

Nov 07

Nov 21

Dec 05

Dec 19



Hosted by the North Shore Writers' Association and the

North Vancouver City Library

Second-floor Teen Room

10am - 12pm
(Arrive/leave any time)

Want to write alongside other local writers? Whether it's a memoir, a novel, a blog, an essay, or any other project, come write with us! All backgrounds welcome.

We start with introductions. Silent writing from 10:10-11:45am followed by a brief chat about everyone's projects.

Not a critique group, or a place to read your work aloud — just a motivator to write regularly.

Limited space. Please register per session: https://www.nvcl.ca/author-and-writer-events and scroll down.

Questions? info@nvcl.ca

Lisa Bagshaw's Speaker Series

In Conversation with Eddy Boudel Tan



Kicking us off for the new NSWA Speaker Series on

Monday, Oct 19

is none other than Giller finalist Eddy Boudel Tan.

6:30pm

refreshments and mingling

7:00pm

the program starts

North Vancouver City Library

Third-floor Program Room

Non-members welcome. Bring a friend!

In his third novel *The Tiger and the Cosmonaut*, Eddy touches on many themes including belonging, intergenerational trauma, racism and rage, all of which he will discuss in the conversation. He will also share insight into how he develops such complex, "flawed heroes on emotional journeys making poor decisions." His experience on the business side will also be interesting as he has worked with small publishers and the biggest, and he will share his views on publicity, and working with agents and editors.

A second-generation Asian Canadian, Eddy is proud to identify as queer and champion stronger LGBTQ+ representation in the arts. He's the author of *The Tiger and the Cosmonaut* (Penguin Canada), which was a finalist for the 2025 Giller Prize and the 2026 Evergreen Award, and selected as one of the best novels of 2025 by *The Globe and Mail*, CBC, and *Quill & Quire*. His novel *After Elias* (Dundurn Press) was a finalist for the Edmund White Award for Debut Fiction and the ReLit Best Novel Award, while *The Rebellious Tide* (Dundurn Press) was a finalist for the Ferro-Grumley Award for LGBTQ Fiction.

Eddy Boudel Tan

Lisa Bagshaw, Speaker Coordinator, www.boldleaps.ca

Mentorship Round Tables



Proudly presented by the North Shore Writers' Association
and the

North Vancouver City Library
Third-floor Room

October 31

10:00 am to 11:30 am

Free to NSWA members and the public.

Are you a writer with questions about writing practices or the publishing process? Come and learn from members of the North Shore Writers' Association.

Mentorship Round Tables is a series of facilitated round table discussions on:

- The writing process: From inspiration to completion with Sonia Garrett and Frances Peck.
- Self-publishing: From start to finish with Rod Baker and Bill Koch.
- Traditional publishing: How to pitch, query, and work through rejection with Wiley Wei-Chiun Ho and Erin MacNair.

Rotate through all three tables and topics in 30-minute sessions, or stay at a table for more than one round. Ask questions, share with other participants, and learn from your fellow writers who have experience in the writing trenches.

Registration is required.
Questions? Email info@nvcl.ca or call 604-998-3450.



Queens Cross Pub

Upstairs
2989 Lonsdale Ave, North Vancouver

Monday, November 16th
6:00pm

Order from the menu.
Spouses and friends welcome!

HARMONY Arts FESTIVAL
Writing Sprint Winner

Eliette Yip

This painting reminds me of all the strokes an artist uses with the paintbrush. One by one, bringing it to creation. Looking at it makes me feel as if even though it has a bottom and a top and two sides, that the painting is eternal ... never ending and never stopping.



Eliette's writing sprint was inspired by a painting exhibited at the Silk Purse Arts Centre.

Eliette Yip is a grade 6 student who enjoys writing, crocheting, and sketching nature. She plays piano and loves listening to music. She is the youngest in her family with a older brother and a older sister. She's so excited to be a part of the North Shore Writers' Association!

2026 RECOMMENDED READS

Compiled unscientifically by the attendees at the 2026 North Shore Writers' Association AGM.

Disclaimers:

- Attendees were under the intoxicating influence of sugar and friendship.
- No plants, animals, or writers' feelings were hurt during the act of compilation.
- This list is in no particular order.

Himself **by Jess Kidd (2017)**
A Fine Balance **by Rohinton Mistry (1995)**
Beach Music **by Pat Conroy (1995)**
Christine Falls **by Benjamin Black (2006)**
On Chesil Beach **by Ian McEwan (2007)**
No Great Mischief **by Alistair MacLeod (1999)**
The Dutch House **by Ann Patchett (2019)**
Universal Tides **by M.J. Milne (2026)**
In the Garden of Beasts **by Erik Larson (2011)**
The Cure for Drowning **by Loghan Paylor (2024)**
Biography of a Friendship **by Marie-Claude Arnott (2024)**
Whistler **by Ann Patchett (2026)**
Mindful of Murder **by Susan Joby (2022)**

The Last Crossing by Guy Vanderhaeghe (2002)
Letters to Kafka by Christine Estima (2025)
Dear Writer: Pep Talks & Practical Advice for the Creative Life by Maggie Smith (2025)
The Throwback: A West Coast Mystery by C.S. Cowan (2025)
The Art Spy: The Extraordinary Untold Tale of WWII Resistance Hero Rose Valland by Michelle Young (2025)
John of John by Douglas Stuart (2026)
Spying on America by Bill Gaston (2026)
The Pilot's Wife by Anita Shreve (1998)
Lying in Wait by Liz Nugent (2016)
Theo of Golden by Allen Levi (2023)
Nice Recovery by Susan Joby (2010)
Babel by R.F. Kuang (2022)
Friendship by Emily Gould (2014)
Such a Long Journey by Rohinton Mistry (1991)
The Astronaut Children of Dunbar Street by Wiley Wei-Chiun Ho (2026)
Daughters of the Sun and Moon by Lisa See (2026)
Island of Sea Women by Lisa See (2019)
The Assassins: A Book of Hours by Joyce Carol Oates (1975)
Uncontrolled Flight by Frances Peck (2023)
A Memory Called Empire by Arkady Martine (2019)
A Long Road to Freedom by Nelson Mandela (1994)
Crying in H Mart by Michell Zauner (2021)
Unruly: The Ridiculous History of England's Kings and Queens by David Mitchell (2023)
Strange Sally Diamond by Liz Nugent (2023)
Foster by Claire Keegan (2010)

Welcome New Members!

Crystal Hurdle



After teaching English and Creative Writing at Capilano University for thirty-five years, Faculty Emeritus Crystal Hurdle is reinventing herself in retirement by practicing yoga (wimpily), cycling (badly—joggers can pass her), painting, collaging, tapestry weaving, and creating mixed media art.

Mentoring writers through the League of Canadian Poets, TWUC, and the Canadian Artists Network, she also teaches Creative Writing to seniors.

After *Ted & Sylvia* (2003) and *Sick Witch* (2020) were published by Ronsdale Press, *Teacher's Pets*, a YA novel in verse, came out in 2014. *Syl-Lo-Therapy*, about Nabokov's *Lolita* Haze and Sylvia Plath, was published by Guernica Editions in 2026.

Crystal is working (playing?) on *Hide-and-Seek: the Creative Journey*, a poetry manuscript about art and art therapy.

When not creating art, this recovering poet writes fiction and creative nonfiction, not always about Sylvia Plath.

crystalhurdle.ca

Crystal Hurdle



Crystal Hurdle is delighted to announce the recent publication of *Syl-Lo-Therapy*.

Ripped from the confines of their books and storied mythologies, Sylvia Plath and Nabokov's Lolita Haze react, redact, reclaim — using food, math, bees, fashion, film, literary criticism, art, sexual identity, bibliotherapy, blood jets of poetry (and more) — on their parallel anachronistic rides. *Syl-Lo-Therapy* combines the best of creative vision with meticulous research. A deep dive into both Sylvia Plath and Nabokov's *Lolita*, two books in one.

"Crystal Hurdle's *Syl-Lo-Therapy* is an antidote to polite biography and academic literary criticism." (Sharon Thesen)

"Hilarious, inventive and meticulously researched, if you too are feeling framed or disempowered, a bracing course of Crystal Hurdle's *Syl-lo-Therapy* might just be the poetic pick-me-up you need." (Cathy Stonehouse)

Syl-Lo-Therapy – Guernica Editions

Welcome New Members!

Dr. Pasha, Parvaneh Hashemi



Dr. Pasha, Parvaneh Hashemi holds a Ph.D. in Information Technology Education and Literature. She founded and, for fifteen years, chaired Thousand and One Nights, a non-profit literary organization in BC dedicated to fostering creative writing, poetry, and the visual arts, earning recognition from notable Canadian personalities and several universities.

As a visual artist, she has showcased her work in exhibitions across Canada, receiving positive reviews. As a poet and illustrator, her creations have appeared in numerous newspapers and magazines across North America, with two poems archived by the Library of Congress in the United States in the collections *The Path Not Taken* and *The Best of the 90s*.

phpasha.com

Dr. Pasha, Parvaneh Hashemi

is a seasoned author with extensive travel experience who has immersed herself in diverse cultures and acquired several languages.

Driven by deep empathy, she has gathered numerous profound stories by interviewing individuals worldwide, which form the basis of her two published novels, *The Sound of Silence* and *Who Knows Where Butterflies Die*, both available worldwide in print and on Kindle in English and Persian.



The Sound of Silence is a timeless narrative exploring human isolation and how it can entrap individuals and drive them to commit the unimaginable.

Order *The Sound of Silence*

Who Knows Where Butterflies Die is a heartrending allegory addressing social and global injustices, recounting the experiences of people who risked everything to flee oppression in pursuit of freedom, including those who were unable to succeed. The allegorical form protects the identities of the real individuals whose stories inspired the work.

Order *Who Knows Where Butterflies Die*

Douglas MacLeod

Doug MacLeod published “Singlehanded Sailing Strategies: Tips for Success from Those Who Do It,” in the July edition of *Pacific Yachting Magazine*. Doug interviewed three singlehanded sailors who shared their knowledge on safe and successful solo cruising. The article is available at:

pacificyachting.com



Joan Boxall

A long-time contributor to *Inspired Senior Living*, Joan wrote this travelog, “What the Heck is Hygge?” about a holiday she took last summer to the land of 'hygge':

Senior Living Magazine

The second article, “Henry Moore Got to Me in a Round-About Way,” came out in essay form for an online journal for which she has never before written:

After the Art



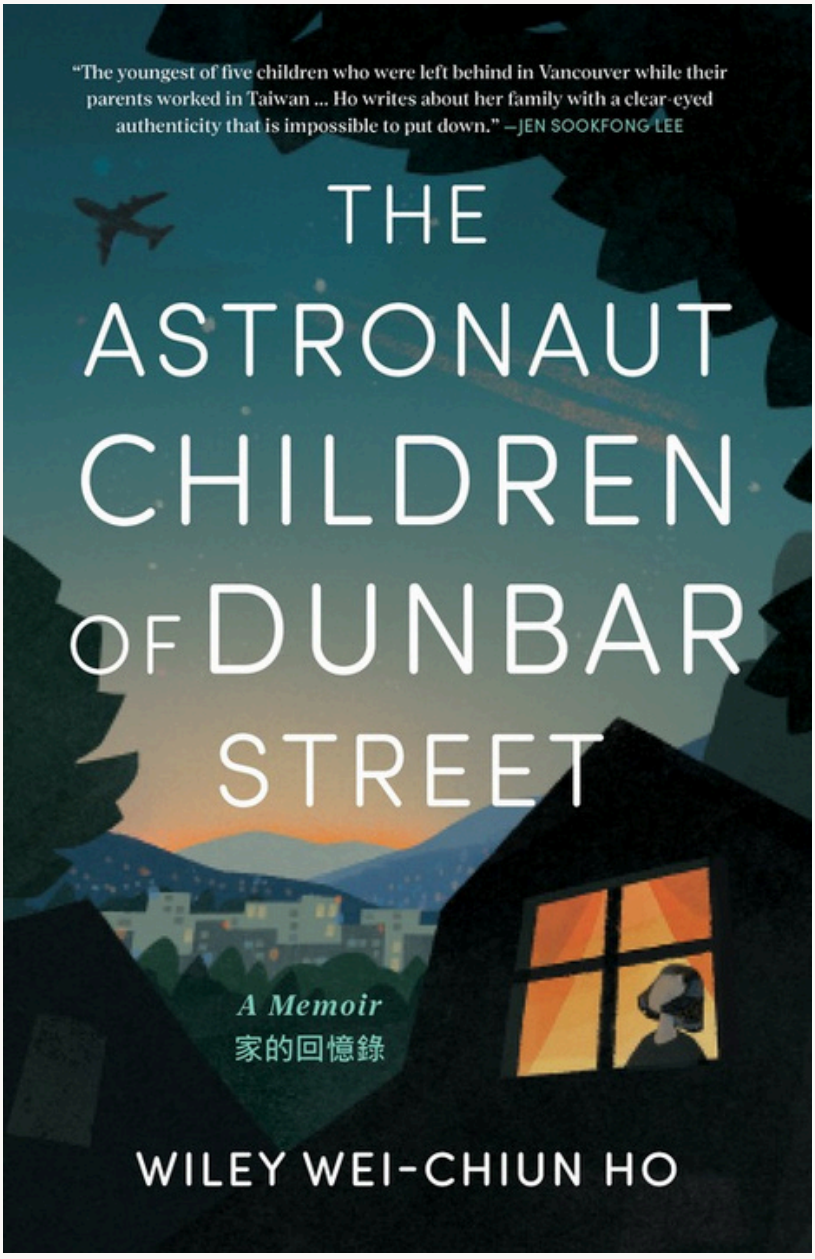
WILEY WEI-CHIUN HO

Available in audiobook.

For readers who enjoy listening to stories while walking, driving, gardening, or doing chores, Wiley will read to you!

The Astronaut Children of Dunbar Street is an intimate geopolitical memoir about a family separated by distance and borders, split between Taiwan and Canada in the wake of shifting global powers.

While countless “astronaut children” and “parachute kids” have grown up in Canada, the US, Australia and New Zealand, their stories remain largely absent from the literary landscape. *The Astronaut Children of Dunbar Street* brings their experience into urgent and unforgettable focus.



Available at the library or wherever you get your audiobooks.

wileyweichiunho.com

Sylvia Lorianne Leong



Sylvia's micro-fiction, "Vancouver's Crows" is published in *Andorinha Press's* Issue 2 – "Art is the lie that makes us realize truth."

"The imagery, description, and poetic quality is what got us (the piece actually feels like a micro-fiction/poem crossover, in a good way!); and it's a definite fit with our general preferred themes."

- Sonia Nicholson,
Editor-in-Chief,
Andorinha Press

"Vancouver's Crows"

slleong.com

Sylvia Lorianne Leong



She is a rainforest walker in search of fairies, but Sylvia Leong has crafted her own kind of magical life. Writing anchors every morning. In the condo she calls her *Cottage in the Sky*, she writes romantic, historical, and contemporary fantasy, along with thought-provoking non-fiction articles.

Sylvia is currently querying her second novel, *THE UNWICKED WITCH*, and working on her third, *ÉTAÍN'S DAUGHTER*, all while writing a lifestyle cookbook. With six short stories published and two more awaiting publication, Sylvia's dedication to her writing is matched by her passion for the environment and for helping others through her career as a therapeutic personal trainer.

Sylvia describes herself as thrifty, but she is generous with others — giving freely of her time, her knowledge, and her creativity, both on the page and in the thoughtful way she lives her life.

Q: You describe your writing as "a ménage à trois of romantic, historical, and contemporary fantasy." What drew you to these genres and what feeds your imagination?

A: Because my childhood summers meant hiking and camping in the Rocky Mountains, Mother Nature is the closest thing I have to a religion. The forest, streams, mountains, and now the ocean, are a huge inspiration to my work and my lifestyle choices. Reading is another source of inspiration. *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien; everything Anne Rice; and my absolute favourite, Susanna Clarke's *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*.

Linda Mangnall's Q and A

Q: Your lifestyle honours a small footprint through your choices of home, food, and daily living. How did you come to this way of living?

A: Environmental living is a journey. But once I started educating myself, it became addictive to see how much I could live without. I've saved oodles leaving unexciting, unneeded stuff on the store shelf without sacrifice. Example: fabric softener combats wrinkles and static cling when laundering with hard water. Vancouver has soft water. I LOVE that I haven't used fabric softener in over twenty years without a wrinkle or static cling in sight. Environmental choices are usually the healthiest and least expensive options. Because I buy less, I enjoy working part-time and have the bandwidth to write and volunteer.

Q: Do you fold environmental messages into your writing?

A: Judgmental or preachy writing doesn't capture an audience. My environmentalism shows up subtly through character's choices. One example is a scene near the end of *THE UNWICKED WITCH* where the protagonist and her love interest pack a thermos of coffee and ceramic cups and take them down to the waterfront to watch the sunrise (and yes, there's a marriage proposal!). In my world, Starbucks' plastic-lined paper cups don't exist.

Q: There was a specific time in your life when you decided, "Do it or forget it." From there, you took specific steps towards your writing life. How did you begin in earnest and which steps helped you the most?

A: I think most life changes are a choice. I'm sharpest in the morning, so I reorganized my schedule to write at the beginning of each day (for however long) and see clients in the afternoons and evenings. Eleven-ish years later, I haven't wavered. The most important step is to give oneself permission to write badly. I lie to myself that no one will ever see my work. That way writing is fun!

Q: You have six short stories published and two others awaiting publication. Still, you have written and spoken about the rejections you faced over more than a decade of writing. What could you share with others who may face or fear rejection?

A: Rejections are many; acceptances are rare. I think the trick is for the desire to write to be stronger than the desire to be published. Most of my published short stories started from dreams or were explorations for the characters featured in my novels.

Q: How do your work and interests — from personal training and photography to reading and critiquing other writers' work — feed your creativity?

Linda Mangnall's Q and A

A: During personal training sessions, my clients and I chat about writing and books and often solve all the world's problems, ha-ha! My creativity is quite visual. Setting and description are the strongest parts of my fiction writing, and photography is a wonderfully visual creative outlet. And nothing levels up writing skills like learning to critique others' work.

Q: *Cottage in the Sky* (working title) is one of your current projects. It is part cookbook and part lifestyle, based on your personal journey. What more can you tell us about this book?

A: So many people don't realize how healthy, thrifty, and environmental (not to mention easy) it is to cook. Unfortunately for most people, fast food, takeout, and packaged meals dominate. My upcoming cookbook will include the delicious and nutritious whole-food recipes I've spent years creating, alongside weight-loss secrets, cooking tutorials, nutritional truths, a grocery guide, meal planning, and serving notes — coming soon!

Q: You are a highly valued volunteer with the NSWA as editor of this newsletter. In addition, you edit the annual *Rivulets* literary anthology. Why did you become a NSWA member and how do you benefit?

A: I'm terrible at public speaking and after COVID I offered to host Dare to Be Heard so I could practice. DTBH was already hosted, but the NSWA needed a newsletter editor. As a behind-the-scenes type person, I find the position gives me a way to flex my visual creativity and has introduced me to a remarkable group of people.

Q: What childhood book made an impression on you?

A: The childhood book that fired me up was *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis. I mean, how enchanting to find a magical world through a wardrobe!

Learn more about Sylvia and read her work:
SLLeong & Leong Orthopaedic Health



Linda Mangnall is a writer who draws out the richness of people's stories through interviews and profiles that uplift and inform. Besides profiling members for *Write On!*, she co-hosts Words in the Burbs North Shore. Linda is also a certified Foodservice Tea Specialist who takes pleasure in sharing stories over a cup of fine tea.

Contact Linda at lindamangnall@icloud.com

Thank you! This is my final Q&A for *Write On!* as I make room for new creative projects. Thank you to the members who, over almost four years, generously shared their time and their stories with me. It has been a privilege to write about you.



SUNSHINE COAST WRITERS AND EDITORS SOCIETY

Not An Island

Literary Quarterly

OPENS OCTOBER 1, 2026

DEADLINE DECEMBER 15, 2026

BC SENIORS (AGE 55+) ARE ELIGIBLE

SUBMIT ORIGINAL UNPUBLISHED ENTRY/ENTRIES IN THE GENRES OF:

* POETRY – 1-3 POEMS/ENTRY
* CREATIVE NONFICTION – 2000-WORD MAX.
* SHORT STORIES – 2000-WORD MAX.

LIMIT OF 3 ENTRIES PER ENTRANT (9 IN TOTAL FOR POETRY.)

ANONYMOUS ENTRIES ONLY. NAME MUST NOT APPEAR ON THE WORK

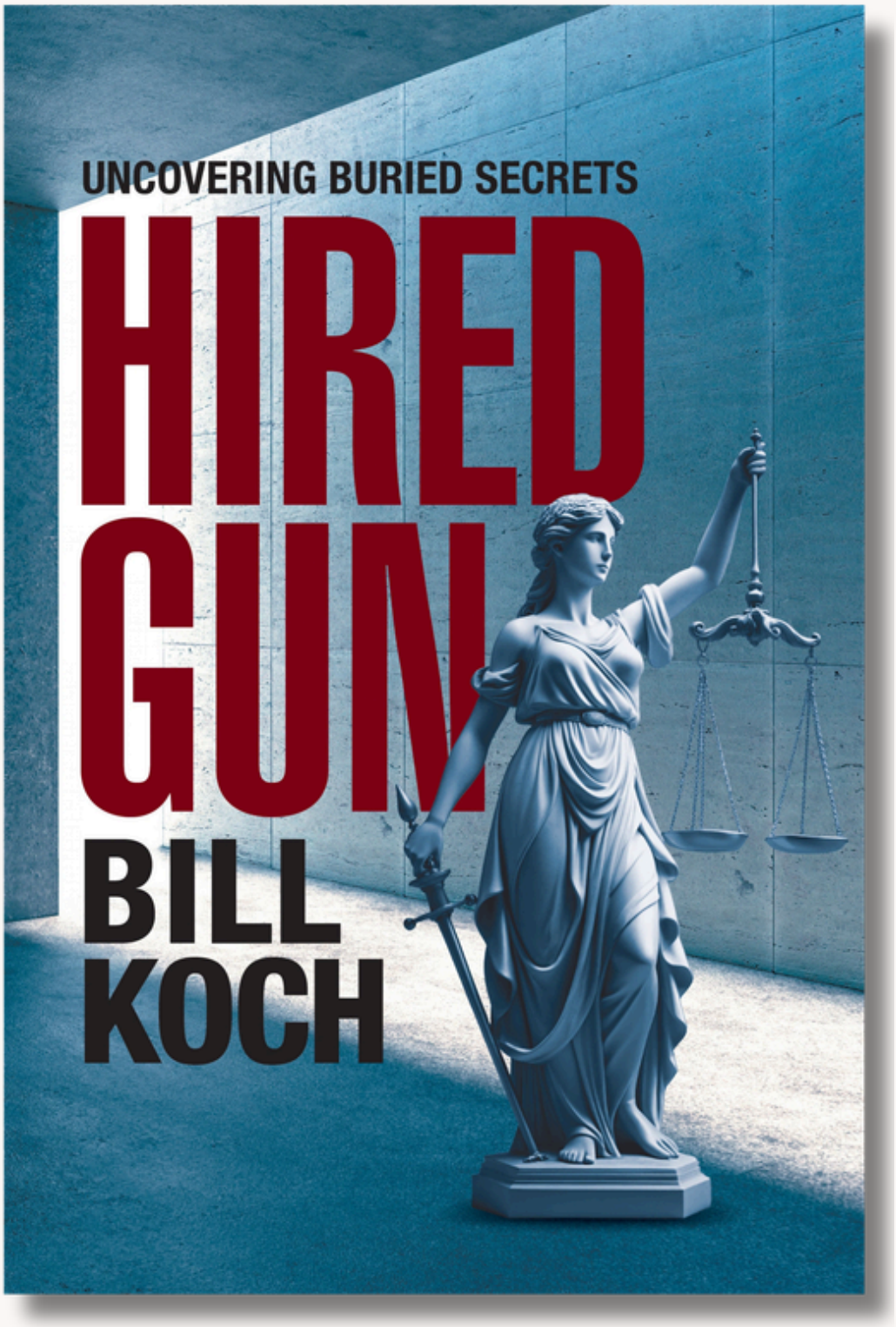
ENTER BY EMAIL ONLY AS ATTACHMENTS TO
SUNSHINECOASTWRITERSANDEDITORS@GMAIL.COM
ENTRY FEE:
$15/ENTRY FOR SCWES MEMBERS.
$20/ENTRY FOR NON-MEMBERS.
PAYMENT VIA ETRANSFER OR MAIL CHEQUE TO:
SUNSHINECOASTWRITERSANDEDITORS@GMAIL.COM
SCWES 787 MADISON PLACE GIBSONS, BC V0N 1V1

HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

PRIZES:
$100 FOR WINNERS IN EACH CATEGORY

NOTE: ENTRIES MUST BE HUMAN-AUTHORED TO BE ELIGIBLE.
AI-GENERATED CONTENT WILL BE DISQUALIFIED AND THE ENTRY FEE FORFEITED

WWW.SCWES.CA/CONTESTS



Hired Gun: Uncovering Buried Secrets

Poor Sleeper

The distant past

He was only eight when he learned to spot weakness. His mother was after him to finish his homework as he played with the newest toy his father had given "my special boy." Enthralled with the tiny model car, he sprawled on his bedroom floor, feet up in the air, and raced it around an imaginary racetrack on the faded carpet.

His mother hovered over him; her frail figure draped in a faded dress. “Time for your homework.”

His father often called her “pathetic,” and shook his head dismissively. “I don’t know how I got stuck with you. You’re an old lady before your time.”

The boy glanced up. “Vroom … VRoom … VROOM …” The car skidded through a sharp U-turn and accelerated once again.

She frowned. “Your homework. Now.”

“Vroom …”

She reached down and jerked away the car. “I’m taking this until you finish your homework.”

For a moment, his fingers curled as if still holding the car. His mother turned and stepped toward the kitchen. He jumped to his feet, grabbed her elbow, and squeezed hard. “Give it back.”

“No, you must finish —”

He struck her across the back with his closed fist, once, then twice. “Give it back.”

His mother turned with the same look on her face he’d seen when his father spoke harshly to her. In that moment, the boy appreciated the difference between the weak and the strong.

~

The years passed. In puberty, sleep began to bring strange stickiness in his groin, ill-formed images to his mind. One night, he woke to noises from his parents’ bedroom. Her retching sobs and his father’s leaden sighs confused the boy, wondering how pain could mix with pleasure.

He tiptoed to the kitchen. The clock read twelve. Cupping his hands over his ears, he slipped outside as the warped screen door whispered shut. It was a muggy

night, moisture from the ocean clinging to the day's heat. He stood on the cracked concrete porch, removed his hands from his ears, and gazed across the street. Unlit houses sat shrouded in shadows of towering maples. The crickets' rhythmic ring rose from the grass.

He hesitated. In front was darkness. Behind him, his mother's cries. He turned twice to go inside, then slowly descended to the street.

Down the block, a light glowed from the second floor of a house. A girl with delicate white arms leaned over a desk, a study lamp illuminating her freckled face. Why is she studying so late?

He slipped closer and hid beneath the branches of a fruit tree. From the shadows, he saw her left hand playing with a lock of auburn hair, the right gripping a pencil. Her brow crinkled. She wrote a note, shook her head, leaned back, and chewed the pencil before tossing it down. He was gazing upward, a hidden witness to her studies, when she suddenly rose from her chair. She shook her head and walked away from the desk.

Her room sank into darkness. Minutes passed. He shifted from one foot to another under the tree, hoping for her return.

Eventually, the boy turned away to prowl other dark suburban streets. He found more lit windows and observed others in late-night activities, their facial expressions and actions fuelling more questions for him. So much to learn about people through their windows. On and on, he wandered and wondered, body exhausted but mind exhilarated. At dawn, he stumbled into the kitchen. His father found him at the table, eating cereal.

Thus began his nocturnal wandering. Night after night, he hid outside houses, secretly peering into others' lives, studying intimacies from a distance.

Hired Gun: Uncovering Buried Secrets

Two

I am cheaply bought with this uncommon currency,
the language of the heart.
And you lay down two words, dear one,
to purchase my surrender.
I sleep, eat, breathe them, as if they are all I need,
as if they are the Holy Grail, the secret room within the Sphinx,
as if they are all temples and all gods.
Two words, by chance, from you to me.
What was the cost to you?
A breath, a heartbeat passing in a moment, unconsidered,
gone?
Or like the widow's mite, tiny and worthless in itself,
made priceless by the risk of giving all and gaining nothing,
did those words contain your hopes and dreams?
Were they the highest price that you could pay
for cloth of such uncertain measure?

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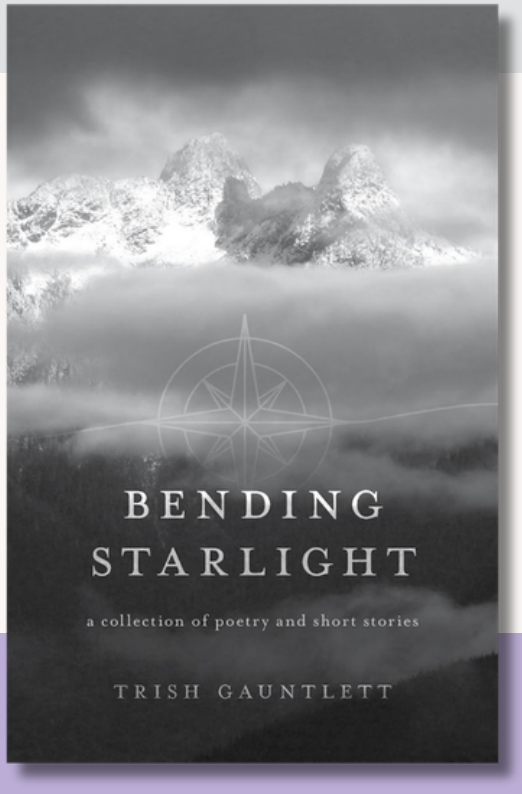

Submission Guidelines

- The NSWA newsletter is capped at 45 pages. Please submit early with everything pasted into the body of one email. Word doc/PDF not accepted.
- Email editor@nswriters.org with the newsletter section in the subject heading. (Subject: Bravo! Brava!, NSWA Spring Newsletter.)
- Send your best writing, exactly how you want to see it in the newsletter. Contributors are responsible for their content's accuracy, originality, reliability, spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Please, no resubmissions.
- Attach high-quality JPG or PNG files for artwork/photography to the email.
- Provide links to where the reader can buy your book, register for your workshop, or read more about you on your website, etc.
- Publication in the newsletter is at the discretion of the Editor, in consultation with the Board of Directors. We reserve the right to make minor copy-editing changes.
- Only submissions from NSWA members are accepted.
- Deadlines are Sept 30, Nov 30, Feb 28, and May 31.

CALENDAR EVENTS: Book launches, author readings, writing workshops, or resources to share with fellow members. Please include: name of event, date and time, location, drop-in or registration (link), and other needed information.

BRAVO! BRAVA!: For publications, writing awards, etc., include a 150-word third-person blurb, a PNG or JPEG, and links for purchase and your website.

DRIBBLE/DRABBLE: 50-word or 100-word challenge.

POETRY/PROSE: Up to 600 words of fiction, nonfiction, or an excerpt from a larger work. No opinion articles please.

NEW MEMBER WELCOME: Send your head shot/avatar and a third-person 100-word biography (writerly name, writing successes, preferred genre(s), fun tidbits about you, and your website or preferred social-media handle).

Along with editing the NSWA newsletter, Sylvia Leong writes an uplifting ménage à trois of romantic, historical, and contemporay fantasy. slleong.com

Cathy L. Scrimshaw's Last Pages



September always feels like the beginning of a new year for me, maybe even more than January does. September is when classes begin again, for both adults and young people. When associations start up their new seasons. When I embark once again on my long morning walks through pathways lined with brilliant, beautiful fall colours.

It's also when I return to my writing desk with fresh ideas and renewed energy. And when I sit down at that desk, I like to go back to the basics to fire up my creativity.

We've always been told to write what we know, at least to start with. To write about our own environment, our own experiences, then use our imagination and research to expand on that. To use all five senses to bring life to our writing.

But how exactly to do that?

Over the summer, I practiced using my five senses to consciously notice the world around me, and use that in short bursts of writing, first at home, then when I was out. It was surprisingly enjoyable. Pen and paper are all that's required.

First, I wrote down one thing I could see and my reaction to it; then something I could smell, and whether it was pleasing or off-putting; then things I could hear and touch and, finally, something I could taste, or could still savour the taste of.

Cathy L. Scrimshaw's Last Pages

Each time I ended up being acutely aware of my immediate environment and my reaction to it. We all know this as living in the moment, and it's good for our mental health. But best of all, it is a good writer's tool, especially for beginners. For, when all our senses are involved in noticing what is right in front of us, we are on the way to breathing life into a story or writing a great descriptive scene for an article.

I decided to put this to use in situations unusual to me and see what the outcome was. I had two great opportunities, first in a five-hour bus ride to Kelowna and, second, in multiple visits to the local laundromat after our washing machine died.

The Ebus trip to Kelowna was rich with details. On the 6:20 a.m. departure, I took note of the eclectic collection of early morning travelers; the mingling smells of perfumes, various baked goods, the aftershave of the man sitting behind me; the sound of several voices murmuring discreetly into their phones, the rush hour coming to life around us, the roar of the bus engine, the rough feel of the seat upholstery and the rich taste of the coffee I'd brought to sip.

By the time we reached Merritt, my imagination was on fire, and I had almost too many story ideas.

The laundromat? It was filled with cheerful, bustling people handling all manner of clothing and linens, with hot humid air filled with the fragrance of scented soaps and dryer sheets, all against the background thump of machines and muted conversations.

So much detail to work with. So much grist for the character mill. All just a ten-minute drive up the road.

There is such a rich vein of inspiration in ordinary life. My resolution for the coming writing season is to pay attention to it, live more in the moment, and use those observations to enhance my work. After all, as a writer, I'm a keen people-watcher and observer anyway. Now I have a method by which I can put those traits to good use. I'm looking forward to trying it out more.



by Cathy L. Scrimshaw


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