Heidi Greco
Is poetry alive and well in BC?
You’ll see

Tom Wayman
Everything that rises
must converge
What will happen when 30 poets & writers sit around the large fireplace of a retreat centre deep in the Selkirk Mountains considering the political in Canadian writing?

Sean Arthur Joyce
Poets Against War Canada
He’d had enough. He had to do something

Christine Leclerc
The pipeline is over
What ensues when a poet chains herself to a door in the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipelines office?

Daniela Elza
Where the any-angled light congregates
His poems look up at him like prisoners in isolation cells and they rattle tin cups back and forth on the metal bars

Bonnie Nish
Pandora’s turns 10
And there was cake

Sheila Peters
Put on your all-weather gear
Gillian Wigmore and Dirt of the Ages

Elee Kraljii Gardiner
The Stanza Project
“Wordsquatting” in Vancouver’s Downtown East Side

Kim Goldberg
The Way of the Poet-Warrior
Bif! Bam! Bop! How Liuhebafa, an ancient Chinese martial art, transformed Kim into a poet
POEMS

09 Jas Duke
Market forces

10 Tom Wayman
Beach

12 Sean Arthur Joyce
The Jinn in the nightmare’s eye

13 Sheila Peters
The night sky

16 Sheila Peters
Some rivers

16 Sean Arthur Joyce
Hunger

24 Evelyn Lau
Manning Park in the dark

29 Renée Sarojini Saklikar
thecanadaproject

34 Rob Taylor
The wailing machines

36 Chelsea Comeau
Pray

37 Bonnie Nish
Alice died in Wonderland

38 Daniela Elza
a shoreline to stand on

39 Gillian Wigmore
Dirt of ages excerpts

43 Elee Kraljii Gardiner
After Robert Kroetsch

44 Kim Goldberg
Excerpts from Twilight on Esplanade street

44 Kim Goldberg
Spawn

NEWS FROM THE FED

03 Poetry Issue
Theme issue editor’s intro
This issue gives ‘cornucopia’ a new dimension

05 Poetry Issue
Managing editor’s note
The digital transition to a new Wordworks

25 Welcome Candice James:
Who is the Federation’s new Poet Laureate president?

25 Thank you
Craig Spence has moved on to retirement and his experimental novel, The Cosmic Chicken

26 With appreciation
Honouring Sylvia Taylor and Barbara Coleman

34 Spirit Bear Award winner announced
Susan Musgrave: “Her artistic presence over the past forty years has helped create who we are.”

35 A virtual Fed and Schmooze Nights
What all does that mean?

48 President’s note
Change is afoot—now and more to come

REGULAR FEATURES

49 Members’ news
Who’s been doing what where when

59 Services available for writers in your community

60 By writers for writers:
April is National Poetry Month—resources to get busy!
When the Federation asked me to be Guest Editor for a *Wordworks* theme issue on poetry, I was already way too busy. But, I saw it as an opportunity to pull in some of the wonderful work I have seen happening around us. I could not resist the thought of putting my finger briefly on a bit of the pulse of poetry in British Columbia.

I write this on the plane back from the Split This Rock Festival in Washington, DC which honoured Sam Hamill, the founder of Poets Against War (launched after he declined an invitation to the White House in 2003). And here in this issue, is our own Sean Arthur Joyce, co-founder of the Canadian Poets Against War. Together with Tom Wayman he is organizing the Convergence Conference: Writing for Social Justice in New Denver, BC in May. Tom tells you all about it in “Everything that Rises Must Converge.”

I had the honour of interviewing Evelyn Lau, Vancouver’s third Poet Laureate. Evelyn spoke quite passionately of her commitment to nurturing emerging writers during her three-year term. In “The Way of the Warrior-Poet,” Kim Goldberg from Nanaimo, reminds us of how we can elicit poetry through the body and the poetic language of an ancient martial art. Christine Leclerc tells us about *The Enpipe Line: 70,000+ kilometres of poetry written in resistance to the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipelines Proposal*. The anthology was launched in March in Vancouver and Prince George. Heidi Greco writes of the latest flurry of poetry happenings. Sheila Peters, our Northern Regional Rep, who is also a writer and publisher in Smithers, gives us a glimpse into the writing of Gillian Wigmore, author of *Dirt of Ages*. Vancouver’s Bonnie Nish, co-founder of Pandora’s Collective, and a huge promoter of writing and writers all over the Lower Mainland, recounts how the collective was conceived ten years ago at her kitchen table.

You’ll be introduced to “wordsquatting,” a term I am quite enamoured with, as Elee Kraljii Gardiner speaks of *The Stanza Project*, how it was born and brought to the Thursdays Writing Collective—free, weekly drop-in creative writing classes for members of Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside now in its fourth year.

Find out what Renée Sarojini Saklikar is up to with *thecanadaproject*, which she says has been writing itself since 1962. A pioneer in her own right, I just found out Renée is also the instigator behind the new Lunch Poems Reading Series which will be brought to you by Simon Fraser University’s The Writer’s Studio as another way to nourish our day with poetry and conversation during our lunch hour. As if that wasn’t enough, I also had the pleasure of interviewing the fabulous young poet and human being, Rob Taylor, editor of *One Ghana, One Voice* and *spread it like a roll of nickels* websites, who is also part of the team running the Dead Poets Reading Series. Here I get the chance to speak to him on the occasion of the reprinting of his debut collection *The Other Side of Ourselves*.

Hope you enjoy what this issue has to offer.

Daniela Elza
Editor, Poetry Theme Issue
Date: May 17, 2012
Time: 6:00 pm
Venue: Richmond Cultural Centre
7700 Minoru Gate
Richmond, BC
Agenda:
- Welcome and Introductions
- AGM
- Keynote Speaker
- Open Mic
- Refreshments & Snacks

Please RSVP by May 11 to info@bcwriters.ca
As we transition from a print magazine for *Wordworks* to a digital version, we are delighted to explore the poetry scene in BC and to have reports from all over the province. Our Poetry Issue Guest Editor, Daniela Elza, made this possible. We had a certain urgency in wanting to get an edition out to members in April, and Daniela took up the challenge in a masterful way and drew in wonderful content for you.

Meanwhile, some things will not be in *Wordworks* any longer. We have ported the “Launched” section over to the Federation website. For several reasons: 1) it means members do not have to wait until we have an issue coming out to promote their newly-launched books; they can post the information instantly; 2) having the “Launched” information in the website’s public-access area means it’ll be available worldwide at any time to anyone, not locked in a print issue of WW that goes only to members. So—much wider exposure. We do hope to get funding to enable publishing an annual print version of “Launched”—and then get it in doctors’ waiting rooms and on the ferries and in libraries and all around, so that recently-published BC books will get a bigger push.

But we ask members to have patience. We are very much in a transition stage. We operate totally with volunteer labour and, although we have exciting & creative ideas—and our members have wonderful creative ideas, which we hope they’ll share with us to expand our online universe—things do take time.

Meanwhile, we would value your feedback on any of our new initiatives (wordworks@bcwriters.ca). An enormous thanks to Daniela, who is also our Vancouver-Lower Mainland/Sunshine Coast Regional Rep, mother of two, recent doctoral graduate who just launched a poetry book as well, and as such is an XBP ( Xtremely Busy Person). Thanks also to George Opacic our Treasurer/Website Admin who has enabled the Members’ Only section of the website where *Wordworks* and many other wonders, as they unfold, will reside. Many thanks to Ben Nuttall-Smith our Fraser Valley Rep for gathering in and editing Members’ News.

And thanks to my cohort, Susan Greig, who does her magic on the look of our content in WW. Of course, it’s not actually magic: it’s skill, talent, and hours & hours of hard work.

All volunteers. All with full-time jobs. You are magnificent.

And thanks to all the previous editors of WW.

You know who you are and you know what it entails.

Margo Lamont
April 2012
SPRING in the Lower Mainland often arrives with a flurry of mixed weathers, including the odd flurry of snow. This spring has seemed intent on arriving with a flurry of poetry happenings – from readings and open mic events to full-on festivals.

The Vancouver International Readers and Writers Festival has initiated the Incite! Series (see link at end of article). In February, they brought in the internationally known Tess Gallagher and paired her with Merilyn Simonds whose oh-so-poetic prose took us into the wonders of the garden. In March, the same series presented three more poets, each reading from their newest collection – Victoria’s Steven Price (Omens in the Year of the Ox), former Montrealer, Julie Bruck (Monkey Ranch), and Vancouver-based W.H. New (YVR).

Besides the many organized reading opportunities for established poets (Robson Readings, VPL, etc.), venues
for open mic experiences positively abound. With regularly scheduled events (complete with feature readers) sponsored by Pandora’s Collective, Café Deux Soleils, and SFU’s TWS, Vancouver poets haven’t lacked for places where they can try out new work. The Kranky Reading Series and Timothy Shay’s Hogan’s Alley are newer to the mix, but are every bit as active as the more established programs.

Even those of us who live in the suburbs can’t complain about a lack of opportunities. Besides Spoken Ink, the long-standing series sponsored by the Burnaby Writers’ Society, evenings of open mic now take place regularly in New West (Poetic Justice), Langley (Watershed), White Rock (Zero to 360) and Surrey (Surrey Stories). Victoria, of course, is rich – not only in having a large population of poets, but in the range of open mic events from the long-running Planet Earth Series (with their very own anthology forthcoming) to others such as Pen in Hand.

While so many of our festivals tend to take place in summer or fall, this season has seen not one but three literary festivals blossoming early in the year. The Poetry Gabriola Festival took place February 16–19, a shift from their previous choice of November for this always-anticipated event. Organized by Artistic Director Hilary Peach, a board of directors, and a raft of hard-working volunteers, this well-organized festival is now in its eighth year. While the focus of Gabriola’s festival tends to be spoken word, this year’s feature readers (Susan Musgrave, Tanya Evanson, Tanya Davis, Barbara Adler, CR Avery, Jordan Scott, Gregory Scofield and Tim Lander) brought a broad range of not only experience, but of subject matter, focus, and voice. I am still sorry I wasn’t able to attend all four days of this celebration, one that honours so many aspects of poetry.

Then, as if one festival per weekend wasn’t enough, Galiano and Salt Spring Islands each hosted their own three-day events, with both running February 24 through 26. Although neither was focused solely on poetry, not surprisingly, both included it in their offerings. Saltspring’s Words Without Borders served also as a kickoff to Canada’s annual Freedom to Read Week, while Galiano’s festival placed its eye on Books: Windows to the Past, Present and Future.

And thinking of books, there have already been several new ones, from individuals as well as the lovely (and wonderfully suited to the season) anthology from Leaf Press, *The Wild Weathers: a gathering of love poems*.

With spring continuing to arrive at various areas of the province, no doubt it will bring its own “wild weathers” to our many varied regions. And as we head into National Poetry Month, it will be interesting to hear what else is popping up poetry-wise in other parts of British Columbia.

Heidi Greco lives in the wilds of South Surrey, where the weathers are mostly pretty darn good.
On May 11 this year, 30 or so men and women will sit around the large fireplace of a retreat centre deep in the Selkirk Mountains of southeastern BC at the start of a weekend devoted to considering the presence and absence of the political in Canadian writing.

The event, the Convergence Writers' Retreat: Writing for Social Justice, is a three-day affair in New Denver, BC, a hamlet on the shores of Slocan Lake about 2½ hours drive east of Vernon, 1½ hours south of Revelstoke and 1½ hours west of Nelson. The weekend will consider, via talks, discussions and workshops on a range of topics including overviews of political poetry, the difference between metaphors that reinforce the status quo and metaphors of resistance, and how to overcome the despair that inevitably overtakes—at least for a time—not only individuals involved with social change organizations but those pursuing the literary life.

Other topics the retreat will touch on include questions of audience (whether or not to preach to the converted), humour as a means to avoid self-indulgence and gain perspective, and an examination of that quintessential political prose-poem, the rant.

The Convergence Writers' Retreat was the brainchild of New Denver poet and journalist Art Joyce.

Art is a writer with a strong sense of history (two of his nonfiction books deal with Nelson's heritage homes, and with Nelson’s former streetcar fleet); he is keenly aware of the absence of political content when one leafs through virtually any Canadian literary magazine these days.

This situation may be compared to 40 years ago, when poetry was an integral part of the publications of the burgeoning movements for women's and students' rights, and for an end to the Vietnam War (including Canadian complicity in its many forms), imperialism, and racism.

Joyce, active locally in issues aiming to preserve the non-corporate lifestyle found among many inhabitants of BC's southeastern Interior, has felt despair not only at the depoliticization of his beloved art form. He has like any activist, had moments of despair at the inequality of resources between citizens' groups defending the unique character of their home and the predatory corporate giants who apparently need every place on earth to look and function exactly the same.

A bit of serendipity was the existence in New Denver of a retreat centre, Heart's Rest, that in part sprang into existence to combat despair. The creation of two United Church ministers, George Meier and Therese DesCamp in 2007, the beautiful wood buildings erected high above the bank of Carpenter Creek at the edge of town were originally conceived of in part as a place where mid-career pastors, aware of a despair at their vocation creeping into their lives, could find the spirit of renewal and rededication. Heart's Rest's founders quickly discovered despair to be a common aspect of a staggering number of mid-career lives: the place has hosted retreats for academics, healthcare workers, and many other occupational groups besides clergy--all of whom set out through their work to make the world a better place, and found after some decades that the beneficial impact they desired to create has either not occurred or is far smaller than they hoped and dreamed.

Out of this convergence of Joyce's wish for a renewal of political poetry and Heart's Rest's wish for a renewal of lives.
dedicated to improving humanity’s lot, the first meeting of the Convergence Writers’ Retreat organizing committee was convened last June. Rounding out the committee was New Denver environmental activist, writer, and editor Anne Champagne, and me, though my acreage lies a half hour’s drive south along Slocan Lake and the Slocan River.

My own fascination with politics in poetry (and vice versa) is spelled out in detail in my essay “An Aspirin as Big as the Sun,” which appeared in my essay collection A Country Not Considered: Canada, Culture, Work (Anansi, 1993). The essay is based on my keynote address to the Federation of BC Writers’ 1989 annual convention in White Rock (and subsequently published in Quarry in 1990—those were the days!).

The essay has many examples of the kind of political poems I’m drawn to—but currently I like to quote one that isn’t included whenever various by-now-thoroughly-disproven-and-disgraced mainstream economic theories are still trotted out as if they were solutions to the financial, moral, and social mess we find ourselves in.

The late Australian poet Jas Duke (1939—1992) has a poem called “Market Forces” in which he lampoons—decisively, as far as I am concerned—the unending deluge and flood of propaganda advocating laissez faire capitalism as the solution to every human problem.

Too bad Jas Duke won’t be in New Denver in May for our Retreat, but there’s room for you if you’re interested (though we’re keeping the size of the gathering to 25 participants plus facilitators, so every participant’s writing in the accompanying workshops will receive the attention it deserves).

Check here for all the details. And don’t worry about the cost of gas to drive here: by May the invisible hand of the market will surely have met the universal demand for cheaper gas by establishing a chain of service stations offering low, low prices that reflect the fact that Canada—thanks to the tar sands—is now a huge producer and exporter of oil.

No?

Oh well (no pun intended). At least you may get a poem or story out of all the incoherence we live among daily. And thanks to your experiences while at Convergence, your writing just might be better than it otherwise would have been.

Market Forces

A bus is traveling along a mountain road
The road is on the edge of a high cliff
The bus carries 100 passengers
They are rich and can pay
Among them is an economist
He knows the workings of Market Forces
Suddenly the bus swerves
And plunges over the cliff
The passengers are terrified
Except for the economist
He is not perturbed
He knows the workings of Market Forces
He knows that a busload of anti-gravity belts
Will instantly materialize
In response to the demand
That has just been created
Market Forces triumph
Once again

Jas Duke (1939–1992)
Beach

by Tom Wayman

Hemlock and cedar boughs,
and empty cottonwood limbs
are coated by icy froth:
winter's foam. High up, though,
a white fog
has blurred or blanked out the peaks
and summit ridges. Half the sky here
are huge rocks
in every season. But whenever stones
become vague,
their intentions clouded,
trouble is certain.

A single snowflake
forms in the grey air
and begins to float downward
and then a second: first small ripples
of the approaching storm. Within minutes,
a swirl of dark snow descends: flood-tide waves
that hammer against the forest, the whitening roads,
the smoke blowing down
from the houses' roofs

White surf
smashes on to the beach
of the valley floor.
Harper’s Conservatives won a minority government in the 2006 federal election and it seemed clear our military would be pledged to an indefinite term in Afghanistan, I’d had enough. I felt I had to do something, even if in the realm of power politics it amounted to little more than a symbolic gesture. So I contacted Sam Hamill, the American poet who’d established the Poets Against War website in the U.S.

Hamill was only too happy to hear of interest in a Canadian version of PAW and soon introduced me via email to Sandra Stephenson, a coordinator of Peace Studies with Montreal’s John Abbott College. Sandra was just as eager to do something to help promote the cause of peace and as a poet, she welcomed the opportunity to help set up PAW Canada. We then engaged in a flurry of correspondence covering everything from the nuts and bolts of organizing a website to philosophical discussions of the poet’s role in promoting peace.

I felt that Canadian poets were taking the safe route, avoiding the issue entirely, in order not to offend the grant juries or scare off publishers.

Sandra pointed out the obvious difficulty in crafting well-written political poetry and the need to avoid didacticism. It’s a fine line too easily crossed between art and agit-prop.

I felt a sense of obligation to use my writing abilities for social justice but often wondered if, like Sisyphus of Greek legend, we were expending ourselves in a futile gesture. But then, as Sandra wrote while we prepared for our Web launch in the fall of 2006: “Sam is the only person I’ve ever come across who proposes looking at the rock of Sisyphus from the other side of the mountain. It just rises and disappears and rises again, from that angle. What a genius he is.”

Absolutely.

Since then, other projects and obligations have diverted my attention and I’ve been able to contribute little beyond my initial poems and essays.

Sandra has by default become the working heart of PAW Canada and for that I’m deeply grateful. In the intervening six years, PAW Canada has published everyone from novice poets to skilled practitioners like Timothy Shay, Robert Banks Foster, Heather Spears, Daniela Elza, Bernice Lever, bill bissett, Harold Rhenisch and Jamie Reid. Canadian Poet Laureate (2006-2008) John Steffler sent us a statement on Afghanistan.

And while it’s true that didacticism can easily derail art of any kind, poets writing for social justice and peace are part of an ancient and honourable tradition. The level of skill required to write such poems is no excuse for not doing it.

Submissions are always welcome at PAW Canada. You are invited to submit your poem at ‘submit your poem’ on the website.
When we stepped into morning light after 24 hours under a sky blazing with bullets and rocket fire, it was hard to know whether to scream or weep for joy.

Shrapnel had eaten a bleeding hole in Captain Barclay’s side, and we spent a delirious night with him yelling into the com for reinforcements that never came.

The pain and morphine made him hallucinate and he kept singing, *Red-poppy fields forever,* ‘til I thought my teeth would explode. The terrorist cell in the village we’d been sent to eliminate turned out to be a starving camp of women and children clawing our sleeves for food and stark-eyed with fear.

They looked at us like we’re the Devil incarnate, a gun in one hand and sweet water in the other. Most of the women were old enough to be our mothers.

The real insurgents came at us like wind-demons in an Afghan dust storm, the jinn* in the nightmare’s eye, somehow everywhere at once and nowhere.

When help finally came churning through the dunes in a yellow cloud the adrenalin began to drain from our blood, and some of the men couldn’t stop shaking.

Corporal Jones, who had been stalwart and wordless under fire the whole time, couldn’t stop screaming. He had to be held down and shot with tranquilizer.

The clefts and gullies of these mountains have been carved by the chisels of hard centuries, the dark eyes of her people burning with love for this fierce land.

What was it, exactly, we came here to do? The shock troops of empire, the blue-eyed sultans of oil—rosy-faced youth gone pale and haggard in the belly of the beast.

Now to be sent home to our sofas and satellite TV, politicians who never set foot in a desert seething with mines, and family who have no clue how to support us.

But you who sent us away to pass through hellfire and napalm, much as we love you, cannot expect us to fully return. The jinn have snared our souls in the nightmare’s eye.

Art Joyce
Published in *Star Seeds*, 2009
New Orphic Publishers, Nelson BC

*Jinn: (also Djinn) a night spirit or demon*
The night sky

by Sheila Peters

There are, I’ve been told, people dying. And I am sitting up here in this comfortable room, this bucket of light riding at the business end of some complicated piece of machinery. Someone else handles the gears and levers that keep me aloft, up here in the night:

the stars pop out
the fat moon rises above the canyon rim
a slow satellite passes

All this to light a parade of people, bundles balanced on their heads, babies strapped to patterned cloth fluttering on thin bodies. Carts dragged across broken ground. Soldiers – big-booted or bare-footed – finger triggers or draw knives from clever sheaths. Their hands – some dark, some pale – their long arms, wide shoulders, and strong backs wield clubs and machetes and rifles to open the translucent sheath of tissue that keeps us separate. To release the blood, spill its bright oxygen richness out into the air we all suck deep ten times a minute, the same air that feeds each detonation driving the pistons of this machine.

My dog looks up at me as her tongue slips out of her mouth – bright pink against her grinning teeth – and laps up the blood pooling in the tracks ground into the grass by this machine.

It holds me in its bucket way out into the night and shows me things.
the pipeline
is over

by Christine Leclerc

In July of 2010, I chained myself to a door in the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipelines office with several activists. Many more were outside the One Bentall Centre in Vancouver. The occupation was undertaken by Greenpeace to protest the proposed Enbridge pipelines. It was also undertaken in solidarity with First Nations through whose unceded territories Enbridge proposes to run the pipelines. We were well aware that 61 First Nations (at the time) and 80 per cent of British Columbians opposed the project.

Were the Enbridge pipelines built, tar sands crude oil would run from Bruderheim, Alberta to a port near Kitimat, BC in one of the two pipelines. This condensate would be used to dilute tar sands crude, making it viscous enough to pipe to the coast. Over 700 rivers and streams would be intersected by the proposed pipelines, including salmon spawning habitat in the upper Fraser, Skeena, and Kitimat watersheds. The pipelines would bring oil tankers to BC’s north coast, where vessels larger than the Exxon Valdez would have to navigate the treacherous waters of the Inside Passage.

In the hours I spent in the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipelines office waiting room, Enbridge CEO John Carruthers observed us from time to time. After 14 hours, the police cut through our chains and carried our limp bodies to an oddly vacant office. While being removed from the premises, the image of a poetry-jammed pipeline struck me.

An artist’s residency with the Gabriola Institute of Contemporary Art (GICA) soon after the Enbridge occupation, provided time and space to develop and workshop The Enpipe Line concept. Through the GICA workshop process, I was able to conceive of The Enpipe Line as a 1,173 kilometre-long poetry collaboration, designed to go dream vs. dream with Enbridge’s pipeline proposal. (Enbridge later updated the length of its proposed pipeline to 1,177 km.)

On November 1, 2010, The Enpipe Line project was launched in Prince George, BC—a city close to the proposed pipeline route. Poet and professor Rob Budde read about the Enbridge office occupation in July and, noting that I taught creative writing at the University of BC, invited me (and poet Reg Johanson) to read at the university. Both Rob and Reg have contributed poetry to The Enpipe Line.
A call for submissions went out over the internet and contributions started to arrive from poets the world over. I started to measure the poems, and post them on my personal website, though the project was later moved to its own site at http://enpipeline.org. The long poem found in the book is comprised of the poems submitted to The Enpipe Line website in resistance to the proposed pipelines, and stands in solidarity with similar projects that resist social or environmental destruction. While the initial goal was to collect 1,173 kilometres over a two-year period, The Enpipe Line grew to over 50,000 km in less than one year and now measures over 70,000 km.¹

The Enpipe Line’s poems come from people who fight Enbridge in their communities. They come from people ready to move toward renewable energy and away from fossil fuels. They come from some of the world’s finest poets. They come from people who have never written poetry in their lives. The Enpipe Line’s contributors are of all ages and from all walks of life. They come from sister struggles against: fracking, Stuttgart21, child soldiers, Goldcorp, gold mining in Ghana, tar sands extraction, and of course, the BP oil spill.

As the months wore on, The Enpipe Line was part of several protests in Vancouver. The Anonymous Collective generated text in resistance to Vancouver-based Goldcorp’s socially and environmentally destructive mining practices in Guatemala. Simon Fraser University had accepted a $10 million donation from Goldcorp, which entailed the renaming of the SFU Centre for the Arts to the Goldcorp Centre for the Arts. The community at SFU rallied to get Goldcorp on the agenda at the school’s Board of Governors meeting, as the university accepted the donation prior to making it known to the SFU community. The Anonymous Collective staged a “mutterance” (a performance in which a group of people mutter a text together, though not necessarily in unison). The mutterance text can be found in The Enpipe Line.

On April 20, 2011—the one year anniversary of the five-month long BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico—poet-activists took to One Bentall in Vancouver to perform a piece of poets’ theatre called “Irresponsible Extraction, We’re Through with You.” This play was created for the Rising Tide Day of Action Against Extraction, in which Ta’Kaiya Blaney, Stephen Collis, and Ben West—all Enpipe Line contributors—took part.

In the spring of this year, Sheila Peters at Creekstone Press approached me about publishing the project as a book, because she too was concerned about the pipeline. Smithers-based Creekstone Press was an obvious fit, since Smithers is located just downstream of the proposed pipeline route.

This fall, The Enpipe Line was part of 100 Thousand Poets for Change—a global event. Quite a number of “Enpipeliners” participated in a shoreline cleanup in the morning and a reading hosted by Vancouver’s Carnegie Centre and The Word On The Street Festival in the afternoon.

Just as the book’s contributors and publisher were self-selected, so was the editorial collective—a true grassroots effort. The editorial collective includes Jen Currin, Jordan Hall, Ray Hsu, Nikki Reimer, Melissa Sawatsky, and Daniel Zomparelli. The discussions I’ve had with each have broadened my understanding of what means to work collectively.

I thank everyone who has touched the project. Proceeds from the sale of this book will be deposited into a Northern Gateway Pipelines Resistance Legal Defense Fund. This is important to the editorial collective as we want to support the physical processes of resistance that inspired the book in the first place.

The Enpipe Line, as it appears here, is a fraction of its actual size. At 72,128.71 km long, in a font one km tall, it would be almost impossible to print the poem in full scale. But, unlike Enbridge’s proposed Northern Gateway pipelines, The Enpipe Line represents a shared desire: that this pipeline project never sees the light of day.

Christine Leclerc is a Vancouver-based author and activist.
Some Rivers (291.6 km)
by Sheila Peters

What is this obsession with carving courses? Scouring and scraping, cliffs collapsing and bridges washed out? All these crashing chords and tragic denouements sinking into stinking tidal flats. Something in the key of huge.

A quiet seepage—
too quiet, really, to be called a spring—
can unlock the earth’s heat.
The ice exhales and opens a pool for this dipper bobbing on a rock.
It dives in and finds a current that’s warmer than the winter air.

There’s spirit in there somewhere,
and bouncing back, the bird it dipsy doodles
on the slippery dance floor
$tapping$ out some bebop riff
we all wish that we could follow.
Something in the key of home.

Hunger
by Art Joyce

April is the cruelest month.
—T.S. Eliot

All winter long we mourn the sun, that god we love most in absence. Blood dreams uneasily in a moist underworld, and sap knows its place in the darkness.

Chill air mellow on a chickadee’s song. Green light returns leaf by leaf from the shadow side of the moon. Bare teeth shine in granite mouths that tear at blue sky. Something moves in the veins, something animal.

Bones must be eviscerated, lives sucked clean. Something moves down the mountainside, looking to be made one with you.

From this sleep, a terrible awakening. A beauty so profound, blood drips from its jaws.

Published from Star Seeds, New Orphic Publishers, 2009
When you nail it. That moment to me is absolute bliss. After chewing over a poem endlessly in my head to feel like I have gotten it exactly right, there is nothing like that moment. Pure joy.

EVELYN LAU
Feature interview with Evelyn Lau

The Federation’s Regional Representative for Vancouver, the Lower Mainland and Sunshine Coast, poet DANIELA ELZA, interviews Vancouver’s Poet Laureate, Evelyn Lau.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Vancouver’s third Poet Laureate Evelyn Lau over the phone and asking her some questions. What you will read here is a small fraction of this conversation which was about an hour long and revolved around topics that we crave as writers. We could have kept on talking about when a poem is done -- how do you know it is right? -- the trouble with perfectionism -- about dreaming your apartment is flooded when it is only the neighbour peeing -- or that poetry can sometimes save your life. DE

You mentioned in our conversation that you know what you need of your writing. What do you enjoy most about writing?

EL:  When I think about what I love most about writing -- what comes to me is that moment when you have been struggling for days, for weeks, to find the right line, word, image, or the right ending to a poem, or even a line break that shifts the sound of the poem. When you nail it. That moment to me is absolute bliss. After chewing over a poem endlessly in my head to feel like I have gotten it exactly right, there is nothing like that moment. Pure joy.

You do not like to interact with technology. What is your writing process? Where do you write best?

EL: One thing I like about poetry is that you can write it by hand. There is something about that connection. Sometimes I will take my work down to the Seawall and sit there, sometimes I will sprawl on the floor of my apartment, or on my
apartment, or on my bed. My main requirement is silence. And that can be surprisingly hard to find. The last time I went down to the Seawall and started to work, I realized everybody had a cellphone. I looked for a place where people were not in groups, thinking that if they are sitting by themselves that will fine. Then they take their cellphone out and start chatting. So yes, my main requirement is silence.

In terms of your process, at what point will you transfer that into a typed-up product?

EL: After several drafts. I like to have several messy drafts, where it is handwritten and I have arrows, maybe a diagram, scrawls and scribbles, pages that are really almost indecipherable to other people. I try to go off on tangents and see where they lead me. I think that is important in the first few drafts to not censor yourself. We could be so self-critical that it just strangles the creativity. The restraint is useful in the later drafts, but in the beginning I need to explore and not worry, because you do not know what you might find. Sometimes what you started with ends up being stilted and not what you wanted at all. I think for me it will almost be dangerous to go to the screen too soon with poetry. It will change the whole process. Whereas, with prose I have composed on the screen—you know, with essays and with fiction. It is still not preferable but at least it is plausible and possible while with poetry, for me it will kill it. It almost feels that with poetry it is almost dangerous to go to the computer screen too soon.

What is the strangest feedback you have received?

EL: I am sure I have had lots of strange feedback, but the funny one that pops into my head is when I gave a reading once years ago. There were some high school students in the audience and they were asked to write down their responses. One student wrote: This was better than television. I thought: what a compliment! I don’t know if you read that quote by Susan Musgrave where she said the best compliment that she had was when a student wrote: “Susan Musgrave made me hate poetry a little less.”

You shared something at the reading you did at the Twisted Poets Literary Salon about a woman who came to you and said: I am glad I am not your mother.

EL: Yes, because I had been reading poetry about my family. When you write personal revealing material, you get some very personal responses. Over the years I have received some very personal and confessional letters from strangers about their own experiences. That is very moving to know that strangers will trust you even with stuff they have not been able to share with their spouses or children.

What keeps you awake at night?

EL: What doesn’t keep me awake at night would be probably a better question. Well, it sounds very pedestrian, but I think worrying about money keeps me awake at night because I am one of these ridiculous writers who doesn’t have a full-time job. Just doing freelance work and not knowing from month to month if I will have enough. It is crazy. But at the same time I know how much time I need for my own writing and I know when I have too much on my plate, the first thing that is sacrificed is my writing. And I can’t have that. So it is a very tough balance. So, I would say that keeps me awake. But also I
live downtown at a busy intersection and I don’t know how people sleep. It is absolutely crazy. It is like Mardi Gras most nights. Otherwise, living downtown is so convenient: I walk everywhere, I don’t need a car, so it is great that way; but the noise is terrible. I was complaining to this woman—she lives out in Squamish—and she is kept awake because she can hear the salmon slapping as they swim upstream. I am hearing drunks breaking bottles, swearing, screaming at three in the morning. She is hearing salmon slapping, but it is still keeping her awake.

Living here we have so much ambient noise, but a lot of that we do not pay attention to. I had a friend over for tea and she was saying: how do you deal with the noise here during the daytime? To me it was: what noise? For me during the day it is actually quiet.

**Where do you get inspiration?**

**EL:** In the past I used to write prose and when I wrote prose I found inspiration in being really engaged with other people, going out, being surrounded by people, listening to conversation. I always kept slips of paper in my wallet so when someone said something interesting I would go to the bathroom and write it down. For poetry I find the complete opposite. What inspires me for poetry is solitude, is going for walks by myself, is sitting in my apartment, and ignoring the phone. And living alone. Even though I have been with somebody for 12 years we do not live together. I find poetry really requires that almost monklike quiet. Which is so different from when I was writing prose: I was very social and was always so interested in people and in drama and conversation. Also, when I was writing prose I was much more driven by productivity, whereas poetry to me has different rules.
In an ideal world what would happen to poets and poetry?

EL: Years and years ago Martin Amis said it well in a brilliant short story in the *The New Yorker* in which he had two characters—one was a poet and I think the other one was a Hollywood celebrity. He switched them, so that the poet is riding around in the limo with babes hanging off his arms, drinking champagne, and everyone recognizing him on the street. Whereas the Hollywood celebrity is starving to death in his garret. It was just brilliant. In our society, poets tend to be the least recognized, the least compensated, the least understood. What I think is great about all these Poet Laureate positions that are springing up and all these reading series, is that it lends poetry a bit more legitimacy and currency in the real world. I am pretty sure in our lifetimes we would still be reading to small audiences, preaching to the converted most of the time. But every once in a while I am surprised by somebody that I would not have thought as someone who reads poetry who will really respond to a poem. I have a friend who is a doctor who is Chinese; he grew up in Hong Kong and they had to memorize Chinese poetry. Whenever he gets on a plane he brings his favourite book which is an anthology of Chinese poetry. And he reads that on the plane.

As our new Poet Laureate how do you see the three years ahead of you? What is your vision?

EL: I wanted the bulk of my work to be working with emerging writers which is a quieter sort of thing. It is not terribly flashy. It is more one-on-one. I remember starting out and how hungry I was for some guidance, some direction from a published writer—the opportunity to connect with them even briefly, to show them a little bit of my work, have them give me some feedback. I see that hunger out there all the time.

There are times I am just going for a walk, or I am sitting on a bus, when somebody will recognize me and will pull out a manuscript they are carrying with them and say, *Will you please read this and tell me what you think?* It is crazy. I have a...
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couple of times, but it is not really appropriate and I am not helping them very much because it is on the spot. I remember having dinner with a friend and a guy came up from the next table and handed me a manuscript. I see that so much with emerging writers. I was the same way, and other people starting out were the same way. So being able to offer these consultations for free through the library—it gives a structured way in which to do that.

That is already quite a full schedule.

EL: A lot of people have been submitting.
   Also I am discovering in having this role, all of a sudden you have this title stuck on you and all of a sudden you get asked to do a lot of other things as though you actually have some power. Which is kind of good. I have been able to call Hal Wake at the Writers’ Festival and say, “Oh, I have just read this fantastic new book of poetry—would you have this person read?” And he included the person in his reading series. So things like that, which ordinarily, without the title, you do not think of doing or nobody will listen to you—all of a sudden you have a little bit of clout.

I also hear in that gesture your enthusiasm to promote new writers.

EL: Yes, and having that title helps you be more proactive about things like that. So that part of it I really enjoy. Just being able to advocate a bit more for people.

During her term in the Poet Laureate position, Evelyn Lau is offering free consultations to emerging poets through the Vancouver Public Library.
For more information and to arrange interviews, please contact: Jean Kavanagh, Manager, Marketing & Communications, Vancouver Public Library at 604-331-3895 or jean.kavanagh@vpl.ca
MANNING PARK IN THE DARK
from *Living Under Plastic* printed with permission.
by Evelyn Lau

The night we came through the storm and survived, I loved my life for the first time. The world was white, there were no other cars on the winding highway to light our way as we climbed the summit of the mountain pass, anchored by instinct to the vanishing road. We were alone on our approach to Summerland, roped to life by a single strand of breath—I breathed in and out as we sped around curve after curve in the blindness, the road gone under our feet but for the slick of tires sticking to snow, the guiding lines invisible, white paint under white flurry. The screen of the windshield blazed our sight with filaments of bright, snow whipping horizontal towards us like a million stars from the universe. Then I was calm. I let go. I could have fallen forward forever, the air tasting like honey, stillness opening at the centre of my body, I wanted it to go on forever. Breath, silence, piano music faintly stirring from the CD player, strings guiding us down into a valley pillowed in fog, lights twinkling in the small towns. Then the arc of a flashlight through the air, the animal lying across the road in a heap of flesh as if asleep, the screeching swerve back into our lives.
The Federation’s new President

We welcome Candice James as the President of the Federation of BC Writers. Candice has a rich history in poetry. She’s also the Poet Laureate for the City of New Westminster, president of Slam Central Spoken Word Society, a full member of the League of Canadian Poets, and a director on the Canadian Festival of Spoken Word.

But if you ask her she’ll tell you that first and foremost she is a working poet, and when asked how she feels about poetry she said: “Words, when strung together like a beautiful, rare necklace, are priceless, indestructible and eternal. Poetry is the grand ballroom these words live, breathe, and dance in. Poetry Waltzes into the heart and creates passionate rhapsodies and tender symphonies for the soul. Poetry’s playground of emotions is peppered with excitement, enchantment, love, harmony, sorrow, heartache, empathy, and bereavement. Poetry is the rhythm of the universe painted onto paper with pen, ink and imagination.”

Candice’s first book of poetry, A Split in the Water (Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1979) was a collection of surrealistic free verse poems characterized by vivid imagery. The late Fred Cogswell, poet, English professor at the University of New Brunswick, and recipient of the Order of Canada, was her mentor. He encouraged her to continue writing poetry: “You’ve got the gift,” he told her. However, it was music that called to Candice and she spent the next 30 years performing and touring as a singer/songwriter and bass player...

Then in 2010 she hung up her bass guitar and left the music scene to dive back into poetry. She became a familiar figure on the local literary scene. Her recent books of poetry include Inner Heart—A Journey (2010); Bridges and Clouds (2011); and Midnight Embers, A Book of Sonnets.

Her work has appeared in numerous international anthologies, magazines, newspapers and e-zines. She’s been the featured poet at many poetry events and on radio shows, and is the creator of the ongoing poetry events, Slam Central Spoken Word, Poetic Justice, and Poetry in the Park.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Craig Spence for his last several years of service to the Federation as President. Craig has retired and moved to Victoria where he will be expanding his writing career.

You can follow his fortunes on Facebook or those of his characters in his experimental blog novel The Cosmic Chicken.
With heartfelt appreciation

Sylvia Taylor has played a key role in the development of the Federation of BC Writers. During the past 14 years, she has worn many hats: President, Regional Representative, and most recently as Executive Director.

Barbara Coleman served many years as the Federation of BC Writers membership coordinator and administrative assistant; she was the warm and welcoming voice of the Fed and truly appreciated for her customer service skills.

“Thank you from everyone at the Federation; we couldn’t have done it without you. We wish you well in all your future endeavours!”
Write on the Beach
Sun. June 10, 2012 - 9:15am to 5pm
Beecher Place, 12160 Beecher St,
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Keynote: Transformation in the Book Industry
by Margaret Reynolds, Association of Book Publishers of BC

PRESENTATIONS:
The Power of Story in Fiction & Non fiction by Lois Peterson
Poetry in Prose by Loreena Lee
Writing for Magazines by Ursula Maxwell-Lewis
Inspired to Write by Don Hunter
Includes lunch

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$60 Federation of BC members; $75 Non-members (before 10 May, 2012)
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Q: what is The Canada Project?
A: thecanadaproject is a life-long-poem-chronicle. It is a contained body of work where one may find: a novel; poems and proems; essays, things in series, suites, sets, numerals and the numinous. thecanadaproject is of a whole and it is fragmented. It is long in the way of long and short, disjointed, collected, imploded, gathered up again and again. It is solitary and it is collaboration.

Q: how long have you been writing The Canada Project?
A: thecanadaproject has been writing itself since 1962, with interruptions. 1985 was interruption. Since 2009, there is a study that is a practice. There is the debt to other writers. There are lists.

Q: is it about true life?
A: thecanadaproject is about life from Pune, India to Canada’s West Coast and places in between. It is true. It is fiction. It is truism and nuance and fact and information and song and sutra. It is performance and poet’s theatre. It is lyric but jagged and always, interrupted by everything. It is excess and not enough. It is archive. It is ephemera (borders, packets, files, boxes, photographs). It is on the edge, looking sideways. It is motherplace of a nation made material in a poet’s body. It is incantation and manifesto and...

Q: well, are there any poems in it?
A: yes

Q: do they rhyme?
A: sometimes, yes.

Q: who influences the poems?
A: from Zieroth to bok; from Compton to Crozier; from Rose to Reznikoff; from...

A: sure

Q: let’s try that again—so: what kind of poetry is found in your project?
A: thecanadaproject is concept made song, the first person undermined, effaced, still present, searching for the thing that is the line, broken, dead, resurrected, distorted in representation, still alive.

It is good old plain English, stolid in its yearning for lyric, and eager in its yearning for the scorn that is post-post-post-modern/ism. thecanadaproject loves rhyme & form but also everything that is anti-rhyme, transcendent and irradiated beyond and behind form. It is more curious about the world than the world in it. Still, it keeps going.

Q: what will end it?
A: the breath

Q: is everything you write a part of The Canada Project? [response redacted at the request of the poem]

Q: are there publications?
A: thecanadaproject can be found in poems and essays published online, in print, and in performance, and—

Q: what’s that...couldn’t quite make out, what?
A: and—
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#1 we have a new message

Listen. We are word-panderers. My people, my people
our words stick huts in a landscape blasted by tired ideas
they lean-to, and we cannot know
what we do not see
in the classroom, at the book-club, at the bus-stop, in the boardroom: ours,
this shared English/English, Wodin-driven. And : know
we cannot imagine it is theirs, too birth-embedded sinewy tissue
of others let into we, my people, we are also
those others dreaming misty fjords, imagining hill undulating desert where we are found
as girls, crones, grey-heads, borne from the She-Witch, from Hucklebone man, fretted over
spurned by a handful of Hindu gods, and Allah, singing Jesus loves (us)
this we know. The joke’s right here, eh?

We use it, English/anguish, and hear the wind in Wales,
knee deep in meadowsweet. Later : sink down on our knees, clearing in Uppsala,
armed Artemis. The conceit : hold a birch wand to this page, singe a sow’s ears, chase,
and be caught. Held fast. A hooting owl. Hoot. Hoot. Do we geddit? Do we?

Listen. That gadfly, Coppola, propped the spine of a book, The Golden Bough, on a set in his movie
about—over there. We know it. What? Get a T.V., then, for chrissakes!

Look, this neo-log-ismic-lang-spill, coded, un/coded, threads pull from a sweater, this
blue that is the blue after embers blow coal-red,
holly fire of our language.
Yes.
We be clever enough. We see that crazy man, Graves, who may or may not make an appearance.
Wait : know how much paying attention is prayer is poem is faith [insert denomination here], riddled by meaning. Solve it.

Renée Sarojini Saklikar is a Vancouver poet.
DE: What started you writing?
RT: I certainly didn’t choose it consciously. I wanted to be a politician, but questioned how much of myself I’d have to sacrifice to fit the role. A similar logic nixed any chance of following in my father’s footsteps as a United Church minister. Then I spent a good while (and a Bachelor’s Degree) deciding not to be a historian, at least not directly. Through it all, poems and poets began accumulating in my mind: Al Purdy, WC Williams, Jack Gilbert, John Newlove. My own poems followed, fairly naturally. Then one day I had a book. In hindsight it seems like a natural progression – my political, spiritual, and historical concerns have all found a place of congregation, and articulation, in poetry.
DE: Who are your mentors, inspiration?
RT: My mother has taught me the most, followed closely by my wife. My father is in there too, though he died when I was only 12, so his lessons have become mythologized, for better or worse.

Aislinn Hunter has had the greatest influence on my writing, both via her own work (especially her 2006 collection *The Possible Past*) and her personal advice and guidance. A number of other writers have generously granted me some of their time and insight at one point or another along the way, and I am grateful to them all.

As for inspirations, the list would be hopelessly long and convoluted. Let’s just summarize it as “everything I can remember.” Oh, and the things I’ve forgotten. They’re probably in there somehow, too.

DE: How long have you been writing?
RT: The first poems in my notebooks date from late 2000, though I didn’t publish anything until 2004 and didn’t have the guts to introduce myself as a writer until my book came out in 2011.

DE: In her book *Little Eurekas*, when talking about teaching poetry, Robyn Sarah says: “It’s as if poetry were a virus, and school exposure a mass vaccination program. A small dose in elementary school, a booster in high school, and you’re immune for life. The tiny minority who contract the virus from the vaccine can go onto university programs and learn, from senior fellow-carriers, how to keep it under control through a regimen of critical theory.” What part did school play in your relationship with poetry?
RT: More-or-less the virus scenario as described by Robyn—*Little Eurekas* is an excellent book, by the way. I did have one fantastic poetry teacher in high school though: Marja Van Gaalen. I still left high school with no serious interest in poetry, but she helped ensure I was receptive enough to poetry that it might have a chance to influence my life further down the road. I owe her a great deal for that.

I wasn’t part of the “tiny minority” that took English or Creative Writing at university. I was, however, negatively affected by starting to write while on campus (pursuing my History degree). I developed an “academic” understanding of the writing community, filled with structures and hierarchies, and based upon advancement through intellectual competition. Thank goodness I eventually graduated and came to my senses.

DE: What is your writing process? Where do you write best?
RT: I write out my first few drafts by hand in a notebook, until I feel like I’ve made most of the major edits and the poem’s general structure is set. Then I type it up on the computer for the endless punctuation-enjambment-word-choice fiddling that inevitably follows.

I write more during the day and edit more at night, though if I’m really chasing down a poem I’ll do it all in one go. For me, it doesn’t matter so much where I write as where my mind is when I write. I need to be focused and clear-headed. I find this incredibly hard to do living in the middle of an easily-distracted and easily-distracting city and culture. I think this is part of the reason why I find myself writing less, and reading, editing, blogging, etc. more, as those are creative enterprises I can undertake while partially distracted.

The more I think about it, the more I realise I should probably move. Or unplug my router, at least.

DE: Is there something about your writing process that you think is unique?
RT: No, though I haven’t spied on enough writers to have a good representative sample.

DE: What is your favourite word?
RT: I use “perchance” a lot. Poetry is all “perchance,” isn’t it? I don’t think I have a favourite word, though. I have writer’s block these days, and the words aren’t getting along with one another. Why pick a favourite and risk having jealousy drive them further apart?
DE: What inspired your book?
RT: My poems kept looking up at me like prisoners in isolation cells. They’d rattle tin cups back and forth on the metal bars. I told them that there were many others just like them, but they didn’t believe me. To prove it, I set them all loose in a manuscript, which is sort of like an exercise yard for poems. That manuscript eventually became The Other Side of Ourselves. I check in on them from time to time – they seem much happier now that they have company. I think they might be putting together a baseball team.

DE: In an interview with Michael Hingston (Too Many Books in the Kitchen blog) you said, on writing poems: “But if you keep at it this, miraculous things happen: people read your work, take it into themselves, and turn it into something more beautiful and mysterious than you ever could have imagined on your own.” I have often been surprised with the way my poems speak to others, which has made me think a lot about how a poem means. What does a poem say? And who is it saying it to?
RT: When I think about the question of what a poem says, and to who, and how it transforms itself from reader to reader, I always return to those lines from Larkin’s poem, “Water” -- “And I should raise in the east / A glass of water / Where any-angled light / Would congregate endlessly.” I think of how the light is both gathering in the glass from all directions, and also refracting through the glass in all directions (one such direction being towards the eye of the speaker). Poems function much the same way, and I think that’s part of what Larkin was getting at. I write a poem with myriad intentions, and a reader comes to a poem with myriad expectations. Reading a poem involves a constant shaping and reshaping of those expectations. It’s a process that is partly in the author’s control, partly in the readers’, and partly hidden away in their individual subconsciouses. Personal history, familiarity with references and language, mood, breadth of previous reading, etc., etc., all modify the experience on both ends.

What’s really wonderful to me about Larkin’s particular metaphor is that the “things” doing all the work are light and water – these fundamental elements we so often take for granted because of their simplicity, or “obviousness.” I feel the same is true for poetry, that those subjects in poems that are the most basic are also the most resonant (cast off the most “many angled” light).

I can’t tell you with certainty, then, what one of my poems says, or to whom it might reach. All I can do is craft the glass, pour in the water, hold it up to the light, and hope a ray or two flash out all the way to the reader.

DE: Words are inadequate to translate being. When we lend ourselves to work on a poem what are we hoping for?
RT: That this compromise with our limitations still fosters enough of a connection to justify the effort. Writing a poem is an attempt to create an intimate connection (via a “mass” medium) with someone, or many someones, the author has never met. In other words, it’s an attempt to push one’s circle of communion beyond the normal limits of one’s partner, family, close friends. An attempt to widen empathy and pathos, not only among people, but across time. To bridge generations, centuries. Shakespeare’s sonnets are still busily at work doing just that.

DE: Which word do you most overuse?
RT: “Perhaps” (see above). I’ve been accused of liking the run-on sentence too much (many of my poems are one long sentence), so maybe “and” as well.

DE: What pet peeves do you have regarding writing, revising, publishing?
RT: How long it takes for a poem to go from composition to publication; publishers whose catalogues are full for three-plus years; and magazines that take 18-plus months to reply to a submission. The internet is slowly changing this via online submission forms and *gasp* self-publishing.

I should add, though—in order to undercut everything I just said—that I do think there is value to the slowness.
It sets the appropriate tone: poetry isn’t a get-rich-quick scheme, and writing shouldn’t be a passing whim: you better be ready to commit to drudgery and heartache, and still love it so much that it’s worth it, or you shouldn’t bother starting out.

As the internet makes the submission and publication processes faster, I won’t be surprised to see a “slow publishing” backlash. I’ve heard of a magazine, for instance, that moved to an electronic submission system but later abandoned it because of the amount of really terrible poetry they began receiving. Still, a world without SASEs sounds pretty wonderful to me.

**DE:** What keeps you awake at night?
**RT:** Thinking up answers to Q+As. My neighbour’s metronomic dog. Generic existential dread.

**DE:** Now that the book has been out for a year and you have sold out of the first print run and have unleashed the second run on the world—looking back on the past year, what thoughts, concerns, dreads, joys, anxieties, celebrations are you co-habiting with?
**RT:** Well, I love my book. I see its flaws, a little more with every reading. But more so, every reading I see anew those things I truly love about it, which is always a pleasant surprise.

After a year of external feedback on the book, I’ve come away with the sense that there is only a small overlap between your work and what is said about it: the hype, the reviews (good or bad), the comments from readers and listeners, etc. The noise that comes with a book is as much about the reader as it is the writer (Larkin’s any-angled light, again), and is often a repetition or amplification of the noise someone else made, instead of deriving from a close engagement with the text. This isn’t always the case, thank goodness.

Realizing that my book, and all books, are consumed and discussed this way was a bit disorienting (What is that person talking about? Did I say/do that, or is that just them? Can I really take credit for that?), but it also came as a relief. The book is out in the world, and the world is doing its strange thing to it. It’s out of my hands now.

The main lesson that I took from that is to make sure that I love and believe entirely in whatever I put out in the world (inevitable unforeseen imperfections and all). That way I’m tethered, and I can enjoy swaying around in the weird breeze of book noise, instead of being knocked over by it.

**DE:** Where do you see yourself going in the next year with your writing?
**RT:** Nowhere fast. But somewhere, slow. Hopefully I’ll look back into the distance and be amazed by how everything I once knew now looks so small.

**DE:** Which one of your skills as a writer/editor do you find most useful in life?
**RT:** Is empathy a “skill?” If so, I’ll say the empathy that comes with learning how hard it is to communicate with other human beings, especially when it comes to the soft, vital stuff that rests at the centre of our lives. It’s the knowledge that most of what we do and say with and to one another is some type of failure, and that that’s okay. We edit. We try again. Every once in a while we get something right despite it all.

**DE:** What was the question you wished I had asked, but I did not?
**Rob:** This one, until you asked it. Now I’m too flustered to think of anything.

Rob Taylor lives in Vancouver with his wife, Marta. He is the author of the poetry collection *The Other Side of Ourselves* (Cormorant Books, 2011), and his poems have been published in over 40 journals, magazines and anthologies. He is the co-founder and editor of One Ghana, One Voice, Ghana’s first online poetry magazine, and he is one of the coordinators of Vancouver’s Dead Poets Reading Series. He blogs at http://rollofnickels.blogspot.com/.

33
The Wailing Machines
by Rob Taylor

I wanted to say: look, this intersection, this place
where we have come together and stopped traffic,
is the only place we ever could have met, you and I –
pistons that never before aligned, even when the engine
was at rest, that had to wait until the whole contraption
burst and we were spilled out onto the pavement to see that yes,
all those hints – those darting noises, glints of steam and light –
held truth, that there are others as startled and ragged as ourselves,
and somehow gaining that knowledge seems worth all this blood
and bother and traffic lined up over the crest of the hill.
I wanted to say all of this, but my throat sputtered
which is why I merely waved as we were lifted away
and placed inside the wailing machines
we were only beginning to know to imagine.

“Susan Musgrave was honoured at a surprise gala presentation at Moka Coffee House, 1633 Hillside, Victoria, on Friday, March 30, at 7:30 pm. Both Patrick Lane and Lorna Crozier, as well as the 2010 award recipient, Wendy Morton, and Planet Earth Poetry host Yvonne Blomer, were part of the celebration.

“Musgrave has published more than 25 books over the past 40 years, including poetry, fiction, non-fiction, personal essay, children’s writing, and seven anthologies in which she has served as editor. She has been nominated and received awards in all six categories of writing, including the BC Book Award and the CBC Literary Award in poetry. She has taught many hundreds of people the art of writing in online and personal workshops and retreats. Her contribution to the community of writers is incalculable.

Her most recent volume of poetry, Origami Dove, published in 2011 by McClelland & Stewart, was short-listed for last year’s Governor General’s Literary Awards. Patrick Lane calls her one of Canada’s most remarkable and enduring writers. Her presence as a writer and teacher has changed this land of ours. Her books have named and placed us spiritually. Her artistic presence over the past 40 years has helped create who we are. She is as important to us as Emily Carr.”
Her continuing legacy will long endure. (Quoted from Spirit Bear Award press release)
A virtual Federation

What does that mean?

It means that we are giving up our bricks & mortar office space. With funding cuts, this is a good way to save dollars and focus our energies on what is important—our members.

So where is the Fed going to go in the meantime?

We’re going to be in your community! That is where you’ll find us. We want to build community and connect with BC writers and you don’t need a physical office space to do that.

We’re establishing a program that brings BC writers together in a new format for the Fed—Schmooze Nights. We are also actively recruiting Area Reps for a more hands-on, closeknit approach to community participation.

Each month in a community close to you, our Board members, Regional Reps and Area Reps will host evening or weekend schmooze events featuring some of our published Fed members or resource people who’ll be available to talk about their writing and adventures in publishing. You will be able to ask questions, discuss your favourite topics about writing, and network with other writers in a relaxed yet upbeat atmosphere.

So what exactly is a Schmooze Night?

Two or three published authors who write within a particular genre will be guests. For half an hour our guests will have opportunity to tell their story and answer questions put forth by the host to get the ball rolling. Then the evening is thrown open to everyone in attendance. The questions can fly and meaningful discussion about writing will ensue. After we’ll have some coffee or something a little stronger and then mingle, network, and build relationships. And just enjoy ourselves and being together.

GREAT THINGS are coming for the Federation of British Columbia Writers. Keep checking the website for breaking news in the new “Members Only” area. www.bcwriters.ca
by Bonnie Nish, Executive Director, Pandora’s

On February 16th 2012, Pandora’s Collective Outreach Society turned ten. Pandora’s began a decade ago around my kitchen table with the suggestion from Sita Carboni of starting a writing group. What was then known as Kits Writers is now a Charitable Organization with a considerable membership, hosting five monthly events, ongoing outreach workshops, scholarships for youth, writing contests and a multi-day literary arts festival (to name a few).

We have seen many talented people come through our mists and have been home to numerous blossoming friendships and love affairs. We have witnessed many fine writers go on to publish locally and internationally. We have been privileged to have many talented people come across our stages at open mics, events, and festivals. I take pride in what we are able to do for our community. This moves me in ways I never dreamed possible.

I am especially proud of our youth outreach. Every Tuesday for the last four years I have gone into Eric Hamber Secondary School in Vancouver, to work with what has become known as Writers in the Making. These young writers are enthusiastic, vibrant, and talented. Each year we make a chapbook of their work which they give to their families for Christmas. This year I hosted a party for them at my house and they did a small reading for their families. For the second year now we have invited them to feature at Twisted Poets alongside established writer kc dyer. This year it will be on April 19th at The Prophouse Café in Vancouver.

As we get closer, I watch their fear and excitement grow, yet I know they wouldn’t give up on this opportunity. For the past seven years we have also given one youth we have worked with a scholarship to the Vancouver Library Book Camp. The last few years the recipients have come from this talented group. This year the recipient is Dedie Kanda. Wise beyond his years, he awes us all each week as he humbly shares his work with the group. Never sure that what he has written has meaning, he is always applauded by his fellow students as he is learning to take pride in what he does.

Other aspects to supporting young writers are our poetry contests. We have many talented young writers submitting work. Chelsea Comeau is one such poet who has now gone on to become a young adult. I am awed by her work. I encouraged Chelsea to read at an event so I could hear her.

Now I am happy to say Chelsea is included in many of Twisted Poets readings and is exploring her possibilities as a writer as she grows older. In March, when she read with us at the Word Whips at the Sidney and Gertrude Zack Gallery, I heard people gasp at the end of her poem. They were as amazed at the depth, maturity, and strength of this young woman’s words as I was when I first read her work. I have no doubt she is on the verge of exploding onto the literary world. These are the exciting writers of our future and I am proud Pandora’s has been able to mentor a few.
Alice Died in Wonderland

by Bonnie Nish

At the end of the forest
the Caterpillar waits for answers
puffs heavy questions into the evening air.
“She will come,” he mumbles.
Sun-flowered thoughts
trip up and down his windpipe,
sweet essences float above his head
and his eyes roll toward heaven.
“She must come,” he whispers
Grasping spindled legs
around the sweltering hookah
holding onto earth becomes as necessary as breathing
as difficult as a moon landing
He listens to the disappearing wind.
“She will not come,” he cries.
leans deeper into smoky deliverance.
He is utterly alone.

Published in Quills poetry magazine, March 2004

On February 16th more than 80 of us marked the occasion of
Pandora’s tenth year with a celebration of words and music at a
fundraiser party at the Prophouse (home of our Twisted Poets Literary
Salon). Many faces appeared from over the years. Readers such as
James McCann, David Campbell, Ruth Kozak, Steve Duncan, Taslim
Jaffer, Mary Duffy, Dennis E. Bolen and Daniela Elza graced our stage,
talked a bit about Pandora’s, and shared their work. There was
laughter, there were tears. Jess Hill, C.R. Avery, and Geoff Berner
completed the night with song.

And, of course, there was cake. It felt like coming home.

Bonnie Nish is founder and Executive Director of Pandora’s Collective Outreach Society, a
Charitable Organization in the literary arts based in Vancouver, BC. She is also Executive
Producer of the Summer Dreams Literary Arts Festival, an outdoor festival now in its 8th
year.

Published widely, you may view some of her work (both poetry, prose and book reviews)
in The Toronto Quarterly, Quills, Wordworks, and online at blueprintreview.com,
hackwriters.com and greenboathouse.com.

Bonnie is currently finishing her Masters in Arts Education at Simon Fraser University and
beginning her PhD in Expressive Arts Therapy at the European Graduate School in Saas-
Fee, Switzerland. She lives in Vancouver with her teenagers who include her dog Cody
who believes he is the most poetic one in the family. www.pandorascollective.com.

And there was cake. An Edible Pandora’s Box!—from
Cakeaters Edible Art.

Bonnie Nish, Daniela Elza and Timothy Shay at the party

Rob Taylor

C.R. Avery
a shoreline to stand on

the mist pauses (only for an instant)
in the elbow of the mountain

the thin blue horizon—a vein that opens up
into our dreams

you look into the distance to where
a new order might emerge might
make itself apparent.

what is the sound of one mind
filled with wonder?

of a hand reaching for the golden lines
racing along the shallow bottom of a lake?

the map we got at the corner store is useless here.

it does not mark the place where you ran
your fingers through the ivy and the rustling
did not just remind you but turned you into
rain.

poetry is this attempt to know
how these words become
a shoreline we can stand on

Daniela Elza
“Poetry can be an intense physical experience,” Wigmore says. “My experience of the world is real; my interpretation of it through poetry can give people a true experience of it themselves. All of these moments are intense and if someone can feel that, I’m excited because it means I’m doing my job.”

the char, surface-feeding on salmon fry, sluggish after winter, spun and took a spoon and hook, sunk it deep in the gill plate

downtown you might be accosted for money or to buy drugs, where the man who offers crystal meth says sorry like a gentleman when he sees the baby in the pack on my back, says didn’t see the little bugger, dreadfully sorry, ma’am / so ask: does the cost outweigh the benefit of ripping a half-burned building down? we could do it with our teeth but when the rafters are exposed will the homeless teem out like rats or secrets and we’ll feel shamed we sleep so warm at night?

While there are poets scattered across the north, Prince George has made itself a centre of sorts with long-established writers sticking around, and newer ones – like poet Rob Budde at UNBC – organizing readings and forums. Federation member Al Rempel’s *understories* came out from Caitlin in 2010 and Sarah de Leeuw’s *Geographies of a Lover* is hot off the press from NeWest.

Gillian Wigmore’s *Dirt of Ages* (due out this spring from Harbour – all the excerpts quoted here are from that collection) will ride into town with her very particular kind of energy:

you have no horse. what tragedy!
your own heart aching for a hot hairy body beneath you and the possibility of travel

Get out your oylskins because, more than poetry most men seem to be writing these days, her work vibrates with physical energy. Her language clanks, pivots, slaps you around, and will get you wet.

twenty and thirty five below for weeks it feels like and me my skin scaling and cracking, you itching, both of us watching the ice creep up the inside of the window what is it you want, and me, what rough path are we taking this time unplowed, paved over with drip ice from back before it froze then melted, then froze again why are you staring, what is it you want - come back to bed I’m bleeding

I first met Wigmore at the Wired Writing studio in Banff and later worked with Rolla poet Donna Kane and (then) Prince George poet and bookseller George Sipos to publish her first collection, a chapbook called *home when it moves you*. Later, Caitlin published the full-length collection, *Soft Geography*. The landscape of home, of the Nechako Valley, plays a significant role in her work. “Because people already think they know about the North, I really want to represent the landscape honestly and give them an honest reaction to a modern life here.”

It’s a reaction that addresses social issues head on.

“There is definitely an element of violence in the poems, partly in response to the violence here in Prince George. If you show things as they really are, then people who have an idea of how things are and don’t see past that, well, they may be moved.”

by Sheila Peters

Put on your all-weather gear: Gillian Wigmore’s poetry gets ele(mental) in a hurry
And not just moved emotionally, Wigmore insists, though that is a start. They may be moved to take action on a civic level. She is planning her own submission to the joint panel reviewing the proposed Northern Gateway pipeline proposal. But as a mother with two young kids who’s also working full time, she doesn’t have much space for anything else.

“I try to go to events here, but mostly I just have my head down working. I think the isolation is good for me – it keeps my poetics clear. Whatever it is, it suits me right now.”

Those poetics have been shifting. Wigmore says the poems in Dirt of Ages came from a wider perspective. “After Soft Geography I had nothing left to write and so I started writing in response to art, to totem poles, to other poems – not just in response to life, which is what I had been doing. It’s taken me beyond the Nechako Valley.”

But that shift hasn’t altered her work’s physicality.

(from “bather at spring”)
just this: a spring rimmed with astelia
and the naked length of a man
his gaze down, the great bulk
and meat of him, tawny
muscled, the mountain air
pinking the tips of his nipples
the dark hair standing stiff

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**KUDOS FOR THE FED**

From: Shannon Linden [mailto:lindenshannon@mac.com]
Sent: February-23-12 7:29 AM To: president@bcreaders.ca
Subject: Thank you from a Kelowna writer

Dear Candice:

In response to this morning’s letter from the Vox, please know:
I am grateful for the work of the Federation, both previously paid employees (who undoubtedly put in many volunteer hours as well) and the many volunteers who have worked long and hard over many years, to create a vibrant and supportive organization for BC Writers. I have personally benefitted from the Fed’s support, not only with information gleaned, links to contests and calls for submissions, but through workshops I’ve attended in Vancouver, and as a visiting author with the OTP program.
I will absolutely do my utmost to encourage new membership, particularly among high school students I have the opportunity to mentor.

Thank you to everyone who gives so much of themselves for the benefit of us all. Your work is sincerely appreciated.

Kind Regards,
Shannon Linden
Freelance Journalist, Author, & Educator
Kelowna, BC
Architecture and writing share an idea of the poetics of space. One can read a city and find a home in the text, for example. In November 2011 I presented a case study of Thursdays Writing Collective at a conference on writing where I met an architect from the Netherlands, Mark Proosten, who uses literature to inform his architectural practice. We were struck by how collaboration would deliver something unique to both our crafts and curious about what could happen if the relationship between poetic and architectural space were turned over, or renovated, to include an aspect of social justice.

Thursdays Writing Collective, which I direct, is a four-year old program of free, weekly drop-in creative writing classes for members of Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, an area challenged by poverty-related issues and beloved by residents for its optimism, activism, and creativity. The Downtown Eastside experiences tremendous pressure from developers while housing for residents remains inadequate and frequently substandard. Some of the people I write with every Thursday afternoon from 2-4pm spend part of the day waiting in lines for cheques, a bed, food. The blank page is a rarity: a place of opportunity.

We write together in a nonhierarchical environment with an eye towards self-determination; our group includes various racialized, genderized and class identities of people of diverse backgrounds. The sessions we hold in the third floor classroom at Carnegie Community Centre are what participants call an “oasis,” “a jam session,” and “a playground.” Sometimes the creative flow heads towards confronting systematic marginalization related to poverty, mental health, addiction, abuse, and prejudice. Sometimes we write from invention and whimsy.

We’ve been experimenting with the link between physical space and text since our last chapbook’s guest editor, Michael Turner, introduced us to the term “wordsquatting.” Wordsquatting echoes the 93-day occupation of the beloved Woodward’s department store in 2002 by housing advocates. Much like the physical act of squatting in a building in order to claim it, we use wordsquatting as a way of moving into a text by borrowing sentence structure, inserting our words, erasing others, using a line or section of someone’s work, or doing homophonic translations. It’s an immensely empowering tactic.

What grew out of conversation with Mark Proosten, who is passionate about literature and community, is The Stanza Project, a one-year collaborative investigation of literary and virtual space. During weekly writing sessions, which are open to all Downtown Eastside writers, Thursdays Writing Collective has begun writing about notions of shelter, accessibility, housing, home, indoor/outdoor, public/private. We plan to read poems, fiction, memoir and literally write on – and into – Mark’s architectural designs, blueprints, images, and models he sends from the Netherlands.

Using Mark’s drawings as prompts we’ll build a literary environment of our own design. Then we’ll send our writing and “invaded” architectural drawings back to Mark so he can use them to invent new buildings and architectural drawings. We’re hoping to feed the loop of creativity with public input when we read from and discuss this shared practice at festivals in the fall. We’ve been invited to exhibit our investigation at UBC’s Liu Institute for Global Issues Lobby Gallery and want Mark to join us in 2013 for the launch of a publication that will include his drawings and commentary. Already Thursdays participants have considered quotes by Roland Barthes and Wim Cuyvers and related them to their own experiences. As Vancouver’s Arthur Erickson wrote, “space has always been the spiritual dimension of architecture. It is not the physical statement of the structure so much as what it contains that moves us.”
the Heart of the City, Spirit Rising, Candahar Art Bar at the Cultural Olympiad, The Word On The Street, V125 Poetry Conference, Memory Festival and numerous artistic collaborations with diverse literary communities, including UBC Law students. The Collective, directed by Elee Kraljii Gardiner, has published five chapbook anthologies with the support of Canada Council for the Arts, City of Vancouver, Simon Fraser University, and Carnegie Community Centre.

More info at www.thursdayswritingcollective.ca, on Facebook’s The Stanza Project or Thursdays Writing Collective pages, on Twitter: “eleekg” and http://mlproosten.net/

After Robert Kroetsch

by Elee Kraljii Gardiner

For Fred Wah

Inside you are the same:/different ideas and contagions as last winter/summer. The rain is sharpening into icicles. Sometime soon spring will betray again in different ways. Punctuate the schedule with fists and pump proud ideals in the parking lot, running towards the other guy in anger. Struggle into his embrace, grapple with the physical sameness of anger/love. This looping of humanness --- we only have X amount of emotions to choose from, we have already told all our stories.

“And the poem – this is a wordsquatting shortie I wrote in Thursdays with Fred Wah at the table. He brought in this line of Kroetsch's and I pushed my way into it. “The line was, ‘every year is the same:/different.’ I can't remember which Kroetsch poem it is.”

Space has always been the spiritual dimension of architecture. It is not the physical statement of the structure so much as what it contains that moves us.

~ Arthur Erickson
The Way of the Poet-Warrior

Fifteen years ago, when I was at the height of my career as a fact-hungry environmental journalist, if anyone had told me that I would fall silent for a decade and emerge as a poet, I would have laughed out loud. And if this soothsayer had forecast that I would spend those voiceless years wandering the steamy mists of Taoist internal alchemy while losing myself in a 1,000-year-old martial art no one has ever heard of, I would have asked her to share her wacky tobacky.

However, this was my fate when I began studying the ancient Chinese martial art of Liuhebafa in 1997. It is a pursuit that has forever changed my life and, most notably, my creative output. Today, every poem that manifests through me is shaped and informed by this arcane martial practice.

In fact, now I can no longer delineate where the poetry of my body leaves off (as I surge through what is called the Liuhebafa sequence each day beside the sea) and the poetry of the street – or the planet – begins.

From “Twilight on Esplanade Street:”

Roll me the curled lip of chainlink, the ragged kerf of metal fang on flattened psyche scraping under. Play me the singsong down staircase of white-crowned sparrow flinging last hope off creosoted hydro pole. Weight me with peeled logs strapped to flatcars travelling nowhere – lifeless old bones. The memory of falling, rolling. Coming undone.

What mechanism is at work fueling this fusion of physical and mental realms? Perhaps it is the image-dense language of Liuhebafa itself, encrypted in metaphor all these centuries to safeguard its coveted recipe for internal alchemy – a personal transformation of Phoenix-like proportions. Or perhaps it is the form’s legendary promise of immortality.

Once the metaphors have been decoded, the names of the 66 individual movements of Liuhebafa provide a detailed set of instructions for transformation at both an anatomical and metaphysical level.
And they create their own poetry in the process:
Stop cart and ask directions / Hold horse at cliff / Close
door, push away moon / Part clouds, see sun

When these movements/verses are expressed through
the human body, they become poetry at a cellular level.
The Qigong work (“energy cultivation”) that underlies
Liuhebafa has also become seminal to my poetry. In Five
Element Theory (which forms the basis of Traditional
Chinese Medicine), each of the body’s five major organs
represents one of the planet’s five elements: fire, earth,
metal, water, wood.

In Healing Sounds Qigong, each organ is ‘awakened’ with
its own unique sound that any of us can make. The organ’s
specific virtue is also thereby awakened and becomes
available to us in our life and deeds. For example, the
kidney’s element is water; its colour is blue or black, and
its virtue is strength. A deficiency in kidney energy
manifests as fear.

Recently, I discovered that my newest poems (all eco-
poetic in theme) were organizing themselves around
these five elements and their associated colours and
virtues. My poems were spontaneously deploying
themselves to heal the planetary body using the Healing
Sounds Qigong model devised for the individual body!

Lately, I have been doing my best to distil the most potent
elements of Liuhebafa and Qigong so that I can transmit
them to other poets and aspiring poets in my Pen &
Dragon series of courses and workshops. In teaching these
classes that combine the bodywork of Liuhebafa with the
energy work of Qigong and the creative output spurred by
writing prompts, I have been amazed by the results.
People are experiencing transformation in their lives in a
single short course (or sometimes a single class session!) that
would take years to achieve when taking a Qigong or
martial arts course by itself, with no poetry-writing
component. I have witnessed many dramatic examples of
the inherent power of combining martial arts with
creative writing.

I have come to the conclusion that for these ancient
practices to be most effective—at least in a teaching
environment—the bodywork and energy work of
Liuhebafa and Qigong must be accompanied by a
structured opportunity to immediately manifest the
creative energies that have been awakened and set in
motion. Otherwise you go to class week after week, year
after year, stir up your energies each night in class, then
go home and go back to your ‘ordinary’ life. Immediate in-
class writing (especially poetry) is a wonderful way to
manifest these awakened energies because it offers a
means to look inside and see what is normally hidden from view.

If you are in Nanaimo on April 28 (World Tai Chi &
Qigong Day), join me beside the sea at Maffeo Sutton
Park at 10:00 a.m. for a free lesson. Find out for yourself
what happens when Green Dragon Stretches Claws or
Red Dragon Stirs Water. Just be sure to have your
notebook and pen handy when the floodgates open!  

Kim Goldberg is an award-winning poet, journalist and the author of
six books. Her 2007 poetry collection, Ride Backwards on Dragon,
was shortlisted for the Gerald Lampert Award. Her RED ZONE
collection of poems about urban homelessness has been taught at
Vancouver Island University and elsewhere.

She teaches Kung Fu for Writers and her other Pen & Dragon courses
at Vancouver Island School of Writing in Victoria, and privately in
Nanaimo and beyond. Contact her at goldberg@ncf.ca.

Notes:
The full version of “Twilight on Esplanade Street” first appeared in
The New Quarterly, Fall 2011. “Spawn” first appeared simultaneously
in the anthologies Imagination and Place: Weather and Igniting the
Green Fuse, both released in March 2012.
Spawn

by Kim Goldberg

Under the bluest sky of the year, I stood at the edge of my world and watched the flickerflashing churn of brimming life, the sea gone white with sperm – the stench and smoky spew of diesel-powered winches winding in their nets, beating out the fish. I watched the shooting stars cascade into the darkened hold to be later stripped of roe for Japanese markets. The yawning emptiness between electrons in the salty air – packed tight today with sirens’ wail and squaggling song from four thousand gulls and brant aloft beyond the endless snowy drift of milt whipped thick and scattered into bands of froth along a tideline with no vanishing point at all.

All of this on the same day that the radioactive cloud from Japan’s nuclear disaster was scheduled to reach our shore – all of us together in this self-made retroactive cloud with no vanishing point at all.

We tipped and scattered clamshells in the froth, our lifeline lost beyond the endless rift cleaving molten rock and magma from four thousand songs and plants. The salty air packed tight today with sirens’ wail in Japanese markets, while the yawning emptiness of our elections echoes in a darkened hold to be later stripped and sold as fish bait. We watched the shooting stars cascade into a diesel-flowered meadow binding all our heads, beating while it burned until the stench and smoky spew was traded for the flickerflash of atomic churn. And the sea was gone under the bluest sky of the year, as we stood at the edge of our world.
You believe in the writer in your life...

now help them believe in themselves

One year membership "I Believe in You" gift certificates now available
Federation of BC Writers
www.bcwriters.ca
USHERING IN A NEW ERA

Candice James

The Federation of BC Writers continues to undergo major changes that will benefit our membership now and in the long run. It is my privilege to be at the helm during this time of transition and I foresee great things for the very near future.

In keeping up with the world of expanding and commanding social media and online networking—and with the help of a very able and conscientious Board—we have escalated the Federation to a virtual organization: we’ve upgraded our website to be an interactive presence for members. The new website has (or soon will have) many enhanced features including: a Members Only, password-protected area which will allow you to update your own profiles. Members will have access to our new digital version of *Wordworks*, the *Vox*, newsletters, literary reference materials, publishers, calls for submissions, contests, online workshops and forums that will not be available to non-members.

“Launched” will be a separate entity from *Wordworks*, and will be posted in the public section of the website to afford visibility and promotional support to our members. We’re hoping to have an annual “Launched” magazine printed each year with all the books members have released within the calendar year. The website upgrades will continue with more and more benefits forthcoming for our members. This is an exciting time to be a member of the Federation!

In a quest to interact with our members at a community level we have begun to recruit Area Representatives within many of the urban and suburban/rural areas of our six provincial Regions. Area Reps will give our members a better sense of involvement and the availability of many more local events, contests, meetings and workshops. Area Reps will report to and be mentored by their Regional Representatives. Fostering writers groups in our communities will be a major focus. We will also be reassessing our Regions and likely be revamping our six existing Regions into smaller areas for a closer-knit and better functioning Federation. Anyone interested in becoming an Area Rep should email the Regional Rep for that area, or the Federation of BC Writers at info@bcwriters.

The past year or so has seen the Federation’s government and gaming funding significantly reduced. This has been a hardship on the Federation financially, but we have rallied to the call by making the necessary changes to ensure the viability and stability of the Federation. We have weathered the storm and are now sailing on smooth waters as we continue to grow and foster literary endeavours within BC. Please read on for all the news about members’ literary action in all regions of our province.

I look forward to great things for the Federation of BC Writers as 2012 continues to unfold. The next Annual General Meeting will be held May 17th in Richmond, BC. Hope to see you there!

Sincerely, Candice

The Federation of BC Writers receives support from

[Logos and social media icons]

Find us on Facebook and Twitter
Focus on the Regions
The second annual Kamloops Writers Fair in Nov. 2011 was a success judging by the feedback. Sylvia Taylor was a popular keynote speaker and will be coming back for a return engagement in the future.

Member Kay Knox won a local short story contest in Dec. in her Clearwater community. She also writes a regular column for the North Thompson Times called “Trekking Tales” which explores her love for the BC outdoors.

Several Central members were published in the local Interior Author’s Group Anthology, Blue River, Dark Waters. Among them is Dana Ramstedt who also did the final edit as well as the layout. Other members included Eleanor Witton Hancock, Ted Joslin, Kay Knox, Sylvia Olson, Denis Robertson, Trica Saxby, and Wendy Weseen. The book also includes a lovely comment from Fraser Valley Rep Ben Nuttall-Smith.

In February author Patricia Donahue was presented with the award for literary arts at the Okanagan Arts Awards, black tie event. She is the founding member of the Okanagan Writers’ League and was recognized for her novel, Mighty Orion-Fate published by Borealis Press in 2010.

In March, Sharon Stern’s play, Shout Sister had its world premiere at the Globe Theatre in Regina. It is a play set in New Orleans in the 1930s and is the story inspired by the life and music of the Boswell sisters which celebrates their music and their journey to commit to an artist’s life.

Gail Anderson-Dargatz has a new website up and invites everyone to check it out. She has asked many of Canada’s best writers to offer guest blogs. Recent blogs include Eva Stachniak, whose latest book, The Winter Palace, was just recommended by Oprah and is now on the Globe & Mail’s bestseller list; Giller nominee Mary Novik and CBC personality Jen Sookfong Lee as well as many others.

www.gailanderson-dargatz.ca
At the Surrey International Writers’ Conference, ten volunteers looked after the Fed table and solicited seven new and returning memberships as well as ten renewals.

During Surrey Writers’ Conference, the Surrey Board of Trade presented the 19th winner of the Surrey Board of Trade Special Achievement Award to Ben Nuttall-Smith in recognition of his work as a writer and his significant contribution to the community of writers.

**Manolis Aligizakis’** two poems won the 2nd poetry prize at the Festival InterArtia in 2011.

His short story “Birthday” also won the 3rd prize in the same festival. His translation book, *Yannis Ritsos-Poems*, was selected as one of the five best of the year by a reviewer at The Black Sheep Dances. [http://www.theblacksheepdances.com/](http://www.theblacksheepdances.com/)

**Max Tell** released his 6th audio CD in October, *The Heart Shaped Tree*. Inspired by William Shakespeare’s classic, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Heart Shaped Tree* tells the compelling and inspiring story of two young people whose friendship tears down the wall of bigotry that has plagued their two feuding families for generations.

**Joei Carlton Hossack** had a story published in *Chicken Soup for the Soul - O Canada*, released November 1, 2011.

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**Ursula Maxwell-Lewis** continues to sell ongoing bi-weekly newspaper travel columns to Black Press Group (Lifestyles). Her travel column series for *Today’s Senior* is entering decade two. She is also editor/photographer of *Spotlight on the Arts* for the Surrey Arts Council, and sells assorted freelance tales and photos to assorted other publications.

To ensure better communication throughout the Fraser Valley, **Loreena Lee** is now Area rep for Abbotsford, **Susan Carr** is Area Rep for Langley, Fort Langley, **Rosemary Rigsby** is Area Rep for Ladner, Tsawwassen, and **David Blinkhorn** is Area Rep for North Delta & North Surrey. An Area Rep is pending for South Surrey, White Rock.
Rebecca Kool is eagerly anticipating the release of her new iBook, *Fly Catcher Bay*, re-worked with new illustrations done in Japanese manga-style characters. The story’s the same but... well, you’ll have to see for yourself! Rebecca’s 2012 KAMISHIBAI 4 KIDS storytelling gigs held March 28/29, FVRL’s WORLD CULTURES took her to Hope, Yarrow, and Langley.

Ben Nuttall-Smith’s second novel, *Secrets Kept / Secrets Told* was released in January by Libros Libertad and he is included in this year’s *Quills Canadian Poetry Magazine*. Apart from book launches and reading, Ben has given workshops at the Surrey Art Gallery “From Scribbles to Publication” and for the Fraser Valley Writers School.


Heidi Greco’s had a busy half-year, reading at Twisted Poets, TWS, Pen in Hand (Victoria), North Delta Writers Series and Poetic Justice. She performed with Sandy Shreve on Gabriola, in a fundraiser for the PK Page Trust Fund, and led a 6-week poetry workshop for the Fraser Valley Writing School.


She created and taught a whole-day writing-envisioning workshop for kids and families on “Building Our Future City Together” for the Surrey Arts Centre, and was a feature reader and panelist at Surrey Reads and Writes at City Centre Library’s one-day public event.

Sylvia read from her upcoming memoir and poetry works at Writers International Network, Poetic Justice, Fed of BC Writers’ fundraiser, Under The Bed, and Slam Central. She taught creative writing classes for the City of White Rock, and judged the annual Surrey Young Adult Writers competition, White Rock/South Surrey competition, and was one of three national judges for the Manitoba Writers’ Guild Eileen McTavish Sykes first book award.

Doris Riedweg’s new novel, *Water in the Wilderness*, a sequel to *Still Waters*, has been released by Libros Libertad Publishing. Launch was held on Saturday, March 31 at Milner Chapel Hall, 6716 – 216th St., Langley.
Over 80 people came out to ArtSpace in Prince George in September for the launch of Vivien Lougheed’s latest book, Sidetracked: The Struggle for BC’s Fossils. Vivien subsequently gave readings in Kelowna, Williams Lake, Vancouver, Kitimat, Terrace, Houston, etc.

Congratulations to Haida Gwaii member Margo Hearne who placed third in the 2011 Literary Writes contest and read “Angels Appearing” at The Word On The Street. Her advice: “I recommend all writers to take a stab at all contests. We may not win, but the experience is well worth it and if one is lucky enough to win and can afford to travel, give it a go. I’m a strong believer in writers helping writers!”

Fed members Norma Kerby, Kathy Bell, Anastasia Ledwon and Joyce Helweg joined other northern writers for a series of workshops, a sonnet workshop with Gillian Wigmore and two performance/storytelling sessions.

Thanks to Hilary Crowley for organizing our sponsorship of the documentary, Louder than a Bomb, as part of The Travelling World Community Film Festival in March in Prince George.

While in Smithers, Vivien Lougheed gave a travel-writing workshop at the second annual Rural Writers in Residence event, partially sponsored by the Fed.

Sylvia Taylor, the Fed’s former executive director, also gave workshops and provided a great link to the organization as a whole.

Thanks to Smithers members Morgan Hite, Amanda Follett, Joanne Campbell and others who organized the retreat. Plans are already in place for the 2012 event – so set aside the Oct 11-14 dates for the fall.
The Fourth Annual Ymir Palace Retreat was held on November 4, 5 and 6, 2011, bringing together writers from the Southeast Region for a weekend of writing, sharing, and laughter.

Heather Haake started each day with inspiring writing practices. On Saturday night, everyone participated in a reading. Joining us for this retreat were: Mary Audia, Cynthia Quinn-Young, Randi Jensen, Patricia Rawson, Heather Haake, Linda Crosfield, Wai Yin Fung, Doreen Zaiss, Susanne Shaw, Natasha Jmieff, Maddy Harlamovs, Arlene Previn, Dorothy MacKay and Monica Averill.


On January 9, 2012, the Kootenay Literary Competition announced the winners of this year’s awards with a celebration at the Hume Hotel in Nelson:

**Fiction award:**
First place: *The Louisiana Alligator Purchase* by Martina Avis
Second place: *In Country* by Bill Macpherson

**Creative non-fiction award:**
First place: *Keep Your Promises* by Cricket Carroll
Second place: *Reminisce with Me* by Kristen Sommerfeld

**Poetry award:**
First place: *actaeon sound from a tree planter's journal* by Jordan Mounteer
Honourable mention: *Teleology* by Elena Banfield

**Emerging writer award:**
First place: *Enter Chaos* by Shelby Cain
Second place: *Chaos in the Kootenays* by Cindy McCallum Miller

**Youth Grades 7 to 9:**
First place: *The Wooden Boy* by Rebecca Bracewell
Second place: *Charlotte’s Scientific Belief* by Gillian Wiley

**Youth Grades 10 to 12:**
First place: *Mrs. Shaw* by Trilby Buck
Second place: *The Apotheosis of Man* by Kevin Milde

Ernest Hekkanen and Margrith Schraner have just published the 15th Anniversary Issue of The New Orphic Review, entitled "Literary Gift Box."

Ernest Hekkanen and Margrith Schraner traveled to the Scandinavian Cultural Centre in Burnaby, B.C., where Hekkanen then gave two readings at FinnWest, from his collected short stories and *Wintering Over: Poems Strewn on Snow*. They sold a great many books. Margrith Schraner’s book: *The Reluctant Author: The Life and Literature of Ernest Hekkanen* sold out and now has to be reprinted. Hekkanen gave a reading at the Nelson Public Library on August 30th, where he officially launched *All Night Gas Bar*, and *Ten Story Autoposies*, and *Wintering Over: Poems Strewn on Snow.*
This winter Christine Lowther had poetry published in *subTerrain* and *Other Voices*, and also had a poem accepted by *Poetry is Dead* magazine.

**Kim Goldberg** offered her Kung Fu for Writers workshop at the Galiano Literary Festival in February. In March, she launched her Pen & Dragon School in Nanaimo, offering courses that combine martial arts with creative writing. She presented poetry at the GAIA Activism Day of Gathering in Nanaimo. And her poem “Spawn” appeared in the anthology *Imagination & Place: Weather.*

*Melissa’s Wish List* was published in Nov. 2011. Author **Ron Rosewood**, of Duncan BC wishes to bring this finding Mr. Right theme, Romance/Suspense/Adventure to members’ attention.

It is available on Amazon.com and Smashwords.com as well as the Vancouver Island Regional Library system. For more information contact ronrosewood@yahoo.ca.

**Madeleine Nattrass** won 3rd prize in the 2011 Free/Press Writer’s Collective Poetry contest and has a postcard story in the latest issue of *Other Voices* as a result of entering a contest as part of Women Writers Week in Edmonton held every summer by the University of Alberta Dept. of Extension.

**Judy Millar** (Nanaimo) was a finalist in The Writers’ Union of Canada’s 19th annual Short Prose Competition for Developing Writers for her short story, “Takin’ Care a Daddy.” (She was a finalist in 2009 as well.) Judy also won first prize in Hamilton Arts Council’s Creative Keyboards short fiction contest for her story, “Cracks.” In November, she and fellow-writer Cindy Shantz presented their writing in performance (as WordChickz) at Qualicum Acoustic Café in Qualicum Beach. Judy was a featured reader at Nanaimo’s WordStorm reading series in January, 2012. She is currently shopping a collection of her short stories (tentatively entitled *Vital Signs*) to publishers.
Mary Ann Moore read as part of Literary Luminaries for Heritage Week at the Nanaimo Museum in February and at Planet Earth Poetry in Victoria in March. She led Writing Life, a six-week women’s writing circle in Nanaimo during January and February. Among the book reviews Mary Ann had published was “The Life and Art of Mildred Valley Thornton” in the Vancouver Sun on January 21, 2012.

M.A.C. Farrant’s new book, her 12th, The Strange Truth About Us, was released by Talonbooks in late October; her reviews of Taking My Life by Jane Rule, and Rin Tin Tin – The Life and Legend by Susan Orlean appeared in the Globe & Mail in the Fall of 2011; her review of Susan Musgrave’s Origami Dove appeared in the Vancouver Sun in September 2011; she participated in the launch of the anthology, Framing the Garden (Ekstasis Editions), edited by Linda Rogers, in December 2011; her non-fiction story appeared in the anthology, Slice Me Some Truth, Wolsak & Wynn, late 2011.

M. Elizabeth Symons had two poems published in The Dalhousie Review.

Pat Smekal’s poem, “The O’Reillys of Dunbar Street, 1946” was published in the Vancouver Special Issue 125 of subTerrain, and “Separations, and No Name for This” appears in Radiant Among Yellow Willows, edited by Patrick Lane (Leaf Press). Sales of her mini-book, Grief, Feeling Your Way Through (Jupiter Publishing, 1996) now exceed 20,000.
Heather Conn read three creative nonfiction pieces in July for the Creative in the Creek event in Roberts Creek. Her children’s book, Gracie’s Got a Secret (MW Books) was published in September.

She’s teaching writing at Capilano University (Sechelt) and continues to edit books and do magazine freelance writing.

Heather Conn

Julie H. Ferguson co-presented All Aboard the Electronic Express! How to Self-publish and Sell Your eBook with mystery author Debra Purdy Kong last February and also had a profile of Anthony Dalton and a travel piece on Le Camargue published.

Julie H. Ferguson

IM & Sunshine Coast Region

by Daniela Elza
Fed IM & Sunshine Coast Representative

Bucket List

Take the next Step
JOIN THE FED

Take unfinished manuscript out of the drawer
Join the Federation of BC Writers
Take a Fed Workshop - improve my writing skills
Finish Manuscript

57
1. Central – Regional Rep: Sylvia Olson
   Area Reps:
   Kelowna    Shanon Lindon
   Salmon Arm    Shirley Jean Tucker
   Penticton    Michelle Barker

2. Fraser Valley – Regional Rep: Ben Nuttall-Smith
   Area Reps:
   Surry-North Delta     David Blinkhorn
   Abbotsford     Loreena Lee
   Ladner, Delta, Tsawwassen    Rosemary Rigsby
   Langley-Fort Langley    Susan Carr
   White Rock-South Surrey    Edi DePencier

3. The North – Regional Rep: Sheila Peters
   Area Reps:
   Needed

4. The Southeast – Regional Rep: Patricia Rawson
   Area Reps:
   Needed

5. Van Island & Islands Region – Regional Rep: David Fraser
   Area Reps:
   Tofino    Joanna Streetly
   Salt Spring     Lorraine Gane
   Ladysmith    Caroline Davidson
   Nanaimo    Mary Ann Moore
   Duncan    Mary Beth Nelson
   Sooke    Deb Clay

6. LM-Sunshine Coast Region – Regional Rep: Daniela Elza
   Area Reps:
   Coquitlam-Poco-Pt. Moody    Pandora Ballard
   New Westminster    Valerie B. Taylor
   Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows    Katherine Wagner
   Bowen Island    Bernice Lever

We’d like to see Area Reps in all the major towns & cities or sub-regions of the Big Six. What’s involved? Communicating with your fellow writers and with your Regional Rep – getting literary news about events and opportunities and local goings-on out by liaising with your Regional Rep; and—if you’re willing—participating in local Federation events – maybe even initiating one yourself. If you know of an area not represented by a area rep below, feel free to nominate yourself to your Regional Rep.
Especially for Poets

For youth
Contests for young poets
BC High School Slam Championship - Apr 10–14
Young Poets Canada

For cowboy poets
BC Cowboy Heritage Society

Get your poetry on public trans
Poetry in Transit

Poetry and R&R
Poets Cove Resort & Spa

Vancouver & lower mainland
Vancouver Poetry House

Poetry events in Canada
List of Poetry Events

Poetry festivals
Vancouver International Poetry Festival
Apr 23–28
Gabriola Poetry Festival
Van Slam
Vancouver Poetry House-Van Slam

Get Published
Poetry markets for Canadians

Get Published
Links to Poetry Markets
Arc Poetry Magazine
Places for Writers
Poets Laureate
List of BC Poet Laureates

Poetry Blogs
The Daily Dish, for the Love of Poetry
BC Poetry Blog
Pagan poetry & verse
BC poets
Canadian Conetent Poets and writers

Poetry meet-ups all over BC
Meet-up Search
World poetry
World Poetry Map

Poetry organizations
Canadian Federation of Poets
The League of Canadian Poets
Canadian Poetry Association

Hold Ctrl key + Click to follow all links