

# eastword

## Inspiration – What inspires you to write

In the E-loop, we asked for articles about what inspires you and how you keep writing, what motivates you and keeps you writing? Here are some of the responses:

### The Red Chair

Baleigh McWade

In the overcrowded living room of my apartment, a large red recliner is wedged between the coffee table and a bookcase. I have a desk for my laptop, and a well-lit dining table, but when it is time to write, I gravitate to that chair. The coffee table holds all my notes, my coffee, my sketchbook – everything I could want to have on hand. As soon as I sit down, I feel like I've entered a private world, shut off from the clutter and tasks that fill my day-to-day life.

Initially, I didn't understand how a rocking chair with no lumbar support could possibly make me so productive. In the last few months, I have learned the secret of the chair. It has a weapon that keeps my butt in the seat – it is the preferred napping spot of two cats. Shortly after sitting down, while I am still arranging my laptop, one, then the other, hops on, looking for their sleep spot. By the time all three of us are comfortable, one is lying between my lap and the arm of the chair. The other alternates between the sliver of space between my waist and the keyboard, and lying on the foot rest of the recliner with his chin on my crossed ankles. With a fresh cup of coffee, I rarely feel the need to move for a couple of hours. It was this situation that helped me win National Novel Writing Month. 1,667 words per day comes much more easily when you are pinned to your chair by comfort and warmth.

I used to wonder what had first drawn me to writing in that chair, what kept me going there often enough for it to become a writing sanctuary. I thought back to my childhood, and remembered the Story Chair. It was also an overstuffed red recliner. It was the chair my brother and I sat in when our parents read to us. In fact, there



was a short time, when my brother and I were very small, when the chair could just barely hold both of us and our parents. It was the chair my brother and I sat in when I taught him how to read, and it was always the chair I went to when I read by myself.

Eventually the chair broke, and my parents got rid of it. Years later, I saw nearly the same chair on Kijiji. I bought it immediately. I hope it lasts until I have children, so I have a place to teach them to read, and to learn the joy of putting words on a page. In my mind, an overstuffed red recliner is the natural world of words. ■



WRITERS' FEDERATION OF NOVA SCOTIA

ISSN 1187 3531

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Typeset in Amethyst, an original type design by Jim Rimmer, New Westminster, BC. Printed offset at Gaspereau Press, Kentville, NS.



The Canada Council  
for the Arts

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## Inspiration or happenstance?

Joan Dawson

**W**hy write? For as long as I can remember I've enjoyed writing – from dreadful adolescent poetry to student essays in which I shamelessly manipulated words to disguise my ignorance of the matter at hand. My earliest legitimate writing was based on research in local history. I find it rewarding to get my thoughts down on paper, and pleasing to see them in print. Words and ideas come into my head while I'm doing things like washing dishes, taking a shower, or walking, when my body is on autopilot and my mind is free to explore. But I still have difficulty thinking of myself as a writer. Like the rest of my career, this has been a winding road with unexpected turnings.

I wrote my first book almost by accident, and certainly more by luck than good management. In the early '80s, I was asked by the rural museum at which I was a volunteer to attend a "research in progress" workshop, as I was the only member who lived in Halifax. I presented a paper on local history based on maps, and I was unexpectedly challenged to develop it into a book. The result was *The Mapmakers' Eye*. It was written in the old days of typewriters and scissors-and-paste editing, and after it appeared I vowed "Never again," and went on to do other things in my retirement.

**S**ubsequent books also came as a response to challenges of one kind or another, but, mercifully, with the assistance of computers. People quite often said, "When are you going to do another one?" But on one occasion a neighbour announced, "I hear your next book is going to be about ...". This was news to me, though perhaps I had mused about the topic, among others, in idle chatter at a party. But I did it anyway. I have responded to other challenges in the form of invitations to contribute to anthologies, even venturing into verse for one of them.

Neil MacGregor's book, *The History of the World in 100 Objects*, in which he writes about items in the British Museum and their background stories, has offered yet another unexpected challenge: what tales do objects in Nova Scotia museums have to tell? To find the answer, I have had a wonderful time driving all over the province, meeting some delightful museum curators and guides, and looking at their favourite treasures. Shall I succeed in telling their stories? What is round the next corner? We shall see.

And here I am, responding to your invitation to write about my writing. Perhaps it is no longer so much a challenge as a temptation for a compulsive writer. ■

*Joan Dawson's books include The Mapmakers' Legacy and Nova Scotia's Lost Highways. Her latest book is Nova Scotia's Historic Rivers.*

# Why do I keep writing ...

Sylvia Gunnery

I'm on page 59.

Susan has just said "This is all your fault, Hannah!" And in some ways it is her fault, but the only thing she can think about right now is getting Joyce back to Jerry's uncle's place. Clean her up and throw that dress in the garbage.

They're in North Bay and they've been to a wedding in a bowling alley. Can it be only a week since they left Halifax? I've already written a scene that happens near the end of the book where they're driving past Abbotsford toward Vancouver. I already know exactly how each sister will feel on the final page. And why.

Since May 2012, when I was driving past Abbotsford toward Vancouver, these three sisters have been inside my imagination, interrupting me, demanding that I figure out what's going on in their lives and what it all means. Sometimes they remind me of me. Or of the summer my sister and I drove across Canada with her German Shepherd dog. Or of the girls I overheard on the Toronto

subway. Or of one of my former students, Tiffany, who stopped in the baking needs aisle at the Superstore to show me a photo taken at her wedding in Cuba. She's wearing a brilliant red dress and hugging her younger sister Rachel in that way sisters do when they've been there and back together.

I'd introduce you to the sisters in my book, but they're not complete yet. There are still so many blank pages. I can't just leave them there in the shadows beside the church with Joyce passed out on the grass and Susan so angry and Hannah trying to get the situation under control. It would be a kind of betrayal. After all the distance they'd travelled between home and here, after everything they'd done together and talked about and hoped for.

So I keep writing. ■

*Sylvia Gunnery's lives at Crescent Beach on the South Shore. Her latest books are Game Face (James Lormier) and Emily for Real (Pajama Press).*

# Writing as a way of life

Deanna Foster

My life revolves around writing – I could not imagine being me without the written word as a part of my life. I have been fortunate enough to never struggle with the discipline or drive to write; in fact when I go long amounts of time without writing my mind feels stale and I go into a little funk. With a busy toddler and another arriving in a few weeks, my time to write is extremely limited. Gone are the evenings and weekends of sitting at my computer for hours, engrossed in the world of whichever novel I was working on at the time. But for the sake of my mental health and to sustain the writer within, I've had to find time and drive to keep writing.

I write in my mind constantly: when I'm walking, falling asleep, or waiting around for an appointment. I always have some story or world I can dip into to develop new ideas or scenes. I find walking, and combining music with the walk, inspirational. It helps to clear the mind and think of new parts of a story. I know many people turn to music to help them write, but for me I need, and recommend, music that you can

both write and create to. I rely on "epic" music. One of my favourite bands/composers is Two Steps from Hell. Not only do they keep my fingers flying as I type, but also help to create potential scenes that pair with the music.

Success is often an excellent motivator, but as many writers know it is extremely difficult to be successful in the publishing market. When you're at the gym shedding the calories, let success be your motivation to go back again. But when it comes to writing you can't let rejection, or lack of time, or whatever the reason, keep you from it. Read Kipling's poem "If" to find those scraps of determination when life as a writer feels bleak. I've yet to be published for my fiction and that genre is my passion, but I don't let it stop me. Even if I'm sneaking in a few pages over my lunch hour, or a few paragraphs in my Moleskine notebook in the evening, I still need to write or I lose an important part of who I am. And if you are a writer, write because it's part of who you are. ■

*Deanna Foster is the author of A History of Hangings in Nova Scotia (Pottersfield Press).*

# On keeping on

Sheila Martel

I am certain my love of story grows from my girlhood, where, during Cape Breton winters, sharing a strong pot of tea to welcome visitors who told stories passed many a cold eve. Forty years later, when I gather with family, hometown friends and my St. F.X. crew, our main activity is still story: the telling of how life is, how it was and how we hope it will be. I write because I am entirely committed to story; narrative is how I perceive and make sense of the world.

It is as true as it is tedious that writing requires showing up at the empty page over and over again. Because I started diary-keeping at 11, I journal daily. I don't have a choice; if I skip more than two days, I feel ungrounded and out of sorts. Longhand in the morning is best. As a baby boomer, the pen and scribbler fit just right. Journaling serves to empty top-of-mind concerns and ideas. I shred the notebooks once any usable lines or themes are transferred to the appropriate folder on my iPad. I also turn to journaling when I feel stuck, which jumpstarts my creative process again.

My compass is always set to story, to character, to setting. The genres of composition that feel most natural for me now are dialogue, song lyrics and poetry. Relatedly, in business, I produce interviews and prompt people to define, reclaim and live their unique stories.

The locations where I write are significant to me. I am moved by place, by great and simple architecture, and natural settings. I often write at home, journaling in the living room, but most "real" writing happens at the dining room table, because of the light. I have a home office, but it's more of an incubation space, really. It's off-limits to others and essential when I need privacy. I work at libraries all the time; coffee shops are noisy, but they can do in a pinch. Picnic tables and blankets near trees in parks are delightful locales. I journaled while lying down on the carpet in front of the Christmas tree.

My top-notch practice is dedicating a specific time to writing every weekday. Even a compact session can be mega-fruitful. A couple years back, I had occasion to be an escort (not that kind of escort!) on a private van, which transported middle-school students from one school to another. The driver and I arrived 10 minutes before dismissal. I brought along a hard-covered notebook and wrote dialogue. A few months later, I had a draft of a one-act play. I was amazed at the amount produced during a rhythmic, intentional, tiny segment of time.

In the end, I write because I can't not write. Says Margaret Atwood: "... to be an artist is not altogether a choice. The God of Art picks you." Chosen or cursed, write or wrong, this is my path. ■

*(Sheila Martel is a Cape Breton-born-and-raised producer, writer and dreamer who lives in Maryland. She participates in regular writing exchanges and Skype sessions with colleagues she met at a WFNS workshop in 2012.)*

## The author's path

Mike Parker

I was born and raised in Bear River. Like scores of other Nova Scotia communities, it was built upon lumbering and shipbuilding. Bear River was a "hot point years ago for guiding" and as the "gateway to the interior of southwestern Nova Scotia" it became a mecca for sportsmen entering the land of The Tent Dwellers.

My father Malcolm (Mal) Parker grew up hunting, fishing, trapping, and guiding throughout the backcountry of Bear River. Later in life, when raising a family dictated a career change to proprietor of the Bear River Trading Company – a country general store selling groceries, hardwares and dry goods – his passion for the woods never waned until the day he died, literally. On more than one occasion Dad said he could think of no better place to die than in the woods. In 1980 he got his wish. After a day of heavy paddling, a couple of drinks and a few hands of cards, Dad went to bed in the camp bunk and never woke up. Just as he wanted it.

With Dad's passing came the sudden realization that all the woods stories I had grown up hearing many times over were gone. Not gone from our memories, but gone in the sense they would never again be told in the way that only someone who has lived the life can spin them. Strange the hand fate deals, but had Dad lived another 20 years, I might not have turned down the author's path, as all or most people of his generation interviewed for my first book would have been gone as well.

I then spent four years travelling Nova Scotia with a tape recorder, interviewing the last of the old-time woodsmen whose reminiscences and tales formed the basis of my first book, *Guides of the North Woods*, a compilation of oral and written history piecing together the story of Nova Scotia's guiding tradition. Many books [fourteen] have followed but none have been as near and dear to my heart as the first. ■

*From the introduction of Mike Parker's latest book, Into the Deep Unknown: The Land of The Tent Dwellers – A Trip Through the Wilds of Nova Scotia, published by Pottersfield Press.*

# Inspiration and cows

Steve Vernon

My inspiration came from a young New Brunswick girl named Lucy – who sent me my first piece of fan mail for *Sinking Deeper: Or My Questionable (Possibly Heroic) Decision To Invent A Sea Monster*. She lives in New Brunswick and the letter was sent to me through her local library.

This is what it said.

Dear Steve Vernon,

My name is Lucy. I belong to the Hackmatack book club. How were you inspired to write this book? I really like sea monster books, especially this one. Most of them I read are from Halifax, N.S. I am from Halifax too. I love your book so much! Are you going to write any more books? Bye.

Love, Lucy.

This is why I write YA. The gift of being able to touch a young person's imagination is absolutely precious and rare and wonderful.

I wrote Lucy a reply.

April 16, 2013

Dear Lucy,

I want to thank you very much for your kind letter.

I'm very excited to be a part of the Hackmatack Award Program and I am glad to hear that you enjoyed reading *Sinking Deeper*.

You asked what inspired me to write this novel. Well, I'll tell you. Inspiration is a little like that nagging little brother who will sneak up and grab you by the ear and start whispering words into it. Inspiration will pester you until there is nothing else to be done but to get up from wherever you are comfortable and to go out and create the thing.

Whether you are a writer or an artist or just a talented jump-roper figuring out how to jump over that big old green neon jumping rope in a brand new and exciting way – like maybe with one arm tucked behind your knee-cap and your eyes closed tight shut – inspiration is what will wake you up in the morning and get you started through the day.

Inspiration is something that grows in your imagination. You grow enough of it and your heart and spirit will just inhale it on up, just as natural as somebody breathing in and out.

You don't need any kind of encouragement to remember how to breathe now, do you?

Inspiration works the same way as breathing does. We all do it – kids and adults alike.

The only real trick is to learn how to recognize it. So how is that done?

Well – recognizing inspiration is easier for kids like you than it is for old grown-ups like me.

Recognizing inspiration is a little like seeing cows. Let me explain.

Think about the last time your parents drove down the road out to the country – most likely going somewhere. And there you are sitting in the back seat looking around for something to see.

And then you see it.

Parked behind a big farm fence, chewing on a cud the size of Wisconsin.

A cow.

"It's a cow!" You'll say. "It's a big freaking cow!"

Odds are the grown-ups did not see that cow. They were way too busy watching the road and thinking about income tax and talking about baseball statistics and chewing on their own grown-up cuds.

Their imaginations were cluttered with the rattle of newspaper and time clocks and gray old ink.

But you spotted that cow – right out there in the green field. Maybe you gave it a name – called it Georgina or Murgatroyd or Lumbago. Maybe you gave that cow a set of cow-wings and sent it off to the moon to look for moon-pickles.

Maybe you sang it a little cow song or dressed it in a moo-moo or honked its horns real loud.

That's imagination talking.

That's inspiration talking.

So – what inspired me to write *Sinking Deeper*?

Well, it might have been a cow – but actually it was a real life sea monster that inspired me.

I wrote that novel thinking about Old Ned, the Lake Utopia monster in New Brunswick.

I was also thinking of the Miller Lake monster, here in Nova Scotia, that was originally nothing more than a torn-up tree stump that somebody painted to look a sea monster – mostly because they were inspired. Then a group of Boy Scouts got together and started painting that lake monster even fancier. Then, when somebody decided to steal that old sea monster's head – (and the thought of a headless sea monster is pretty scary, don't

you think?) – then somebody else made another sea monster head.

And it all started with the gift of inspiration.

So that's what inspired me. The idea that some little kid could actually create an entire sea monster out of nothing more than a single wistful dream.

Y'see, I remember what it was like to be a kid.

Kids are a way lot more powerful than people want to believe.

Kids have a firm grip on the key to their imagination.

Kids believe in monsters.

Lastly, you asked me if I was going to write another book.

Yes I am.

I'm writing one right now.

Yours in storytelling,

Steve Vernon ■

## Trouble (on) writing

### Showing up

Susan Drain

*Trouble is a nine-year-old Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever, who has retired from hunting, showing, obedience trials, and raising puppies. Her new home has many advantages (not least of which is that there are no puppies anywhere) but it has one real disadvantage. The new Human-In-Charge, though reliable about food and walks and squeaky toys, has to write. And whatever writing is, it is not as easy, apparently, as retrieving ducks or weaving figure eights or keeping a sit-stay. Why anyone would voluntarily take on more writing than absolutely necessary is more than Trouble can figure out. Nevertheless, Human-In-Charge has decided to try blogging about writing. At this point Trouble sighs deeply and goes to sleep. Perhaps writing is like having a flea: nagging and irritating and irresistible. You can follow Susan's blog at [www.troublewriting.wordpress.com](http://www.troublewriting.wordpress.com).*

Trouble's wants are few; her needs even fewer. She needs to be fed, watered, and given the opportunity to relieve herself and to exercise. She wants stimulation, toys, something (anything) to retrieve, belly rubs, and proximity to the Human. Life is better for all of us when she gets what she wants. Human gets up on a schedule, gets fresh air and exercise, learns new things (rally obedience!), takes regular relaxation sessions (tension and belly rubs are utterly incompatible, even if it's not your own belly), and enjoys – even basks in – companionship.

Then comes January. It's cold. Often very cold. Cold enough to frost a furry face. And it snows. Deep enough to cover a toller. And Human remembers that she'd rather hibernate than heave herself outdoors, swaddled in a parka and swathed in scarves. Don't forget the mittens. Two pairs.

But she does. Because Trouble is sitting at the door.

One day, someone told me that I'd be a good writer, eventually – when I was grown up and had something to say. So I got on with other things, and a very long time passed.



One of those other things was teaching students. I had lots of useful advice for them, such as not to wait for clear ideas before starting an essay. "How do I know what I think till I see what I say?" I'd say to them. "Listen to E.M. Forster if you won't listen to me. Get writing."

Or not to wait around for inspiration or the perfect moment. "Inspiration is for amateurs," I'd quote Chuck Close, "the rest of us just show up and get to work."

And if you'd asked me, I'd have said that I practiced what I preached. Despite the pleasures of procrastination, I'd show up at my desk and write until I knew what I was going to say in that memo, or that report, or that scholarly article.

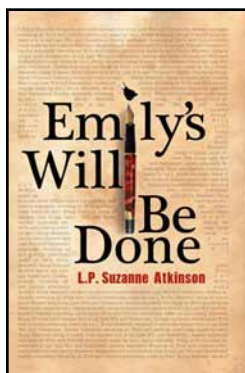
But it was years before I thought to apply the same advice to the question of discovering what else I might have to say.

It isn't easy. At least with memos, or reports, or scholarly articles, there's a rhetorical situation that needs to be addressed, a conversation, professional or academic, to be entered, and a mass of material to hand. When I show up to see if I have anything else to say, I feel a bit like Trouble venturing into the snowy wastes. There's nothing to see when the snow is deeper than you; nothing to convince you that there's anything to be found.

But there is always something, even in January. Even when the screen is as blank as the back yard in a blizzard. But you have to show up. ■



# Impressed – new books



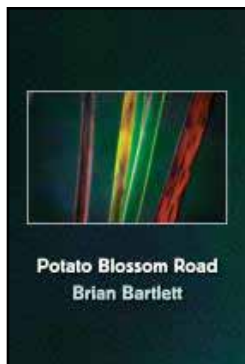
## ***Emily's Will Be Done***

**L.P. Suzanne Atkinson**

**Friesen Press, July 2013, \$13**  
**ISBN 978-1-4602-2531-8**  
**ebook 978-1-4602-2532-5**  
<http://lpsabooks.wix.com/lpsabooks#>

After the sudden death of her friend Emily, Suzanne Atkinson found herself the sole executor of what turned out to be a very complicated estate, compounded by mystery and wrapped in layers of lessons learned. Atkinson winds her way through necessary steps, holding tight to a friendship lost, and persevering amid the torment of beneficiaries, banks, and unanswered questions. *Emily's Will Be Done* not only tells the story of executing an estate fraught with difficulties, it tells a story of love and loss, of a lonely woman layered with enigmas and surrounded by secrets, of how friendship may well transcend life itself. You will discover the many facets of Emily as you uncover the mysteries of the executor role along the way.

Suzanne Atkinson is now retired and lives on the South Shore of Nova Scotia.



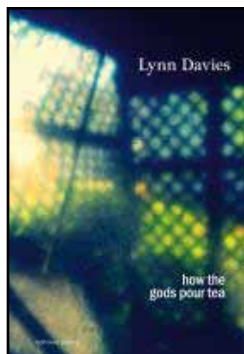
## ***Potato Blossom Road***

**Brian Bartlett**

**Ekstasis Editions \$22.95**  
**ISBN 978-1-77171-019-0**  
[www.ekstasiseditions.com](http://www.ekstasiseditions.com)

*Potato Blossom Road* is a book of seven haiku montages, immediate as a series of crisscrossing paths through a forest. Ranging from an uninhabited small island and Elizabeth Bishop's childhood house to the streets of Halifax and the films of Charlie Chaplin, these gatherings of haiku are alternately observant and intimate, succinct and expansive, subtle and full of vitality. They offer echo-chambers of images, events, and words. Bartlett concludes his collection with a personal essay about reading and writing haiku, challenging some common assumptions about the form.

Brian Bartlett is the author of six full-length collections of poetry, including *The Afterlife of Trees*, *The Watchmaker's Table*, and *Wanting the Day: Selected Poems* which won the Atlantic Poetry Prize.



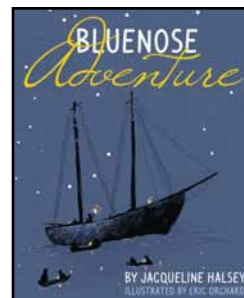
## ***how the gods pour tea***

**Lynn Davies**

**Goose Lane Editions, Oct 2013**  
**9780864924230 pb \$19.95**  
**9780864925701 e**

This new collection by Lynn Davies abounds in departures: words and communities die, trout-lilies and passengers vanish, even the King and Queen of Fairies disappear. Her powerful imagination blends observation and fancy, passion and playfulness, producing strikingly fresh metaphors. Some poems give simple weight to the details of everyday life; others evoke an imaginative world. Throughout this magnificently fresh collection, the ocean, the rain, and the river suggest something big on the move in our lives even when we feel stranded. Displaying a dexterity of tone and an understated bravura, she writes of the extremities of losing and then awakening, honouring gratitude with "as many words as new leaves."

Lynn Davies is the author of three collections of poetry. She lives in Fredericton, New Brunswick.



## ***Bluenose Adventure***

**Jacqueline Halsey**

**Illustrated by Eric Orchard**  
**Formac Publishing \$16.95**  
**ISBN 9781459502802**

Arty is a 10-year-old boy who gets the chance of a lifetime – he's hired to go on the maiden voyage of the schooner *Bluenose* in 1921. Arty learns his way around the ship amidst the dangers, excitement and intrigue of working on a fishing schooner. When Arty climbs to the top of a mast and spots another ship heading toward *Bluenose* on a collision course, even the captain is grateful for his help.

In this story, based on the real experiences of young boys who worked on board *Bluenose* in the 1920s, Jacqueline Halsey has created a book that celebrates the story of the ship and her famous captain Angus Walters.

Jacqueline Halsey's previous books include *Peggy's Letters*, *The Gran Plan*, and *The Terrible, Horrible, Smelly Pirate*.

# President's report

Sylvia Gunnery

In late August of 1976, I returned to Halifax from Banff where, as an unpublished writer, I had taken part in five intensive weeks of writing workshops, experimenting with W.O. Mitchell's freefall method and searching for what I would write and why. Trying to get past those timid feelings of being an imposter in this world of writers. Barely had I unpacked my suitcase back home when I learned that the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia would be officially incorporated on September 1. The world of writers was right here, in my own neighbourhood, knocking on my door! Of course, I joined right away.

Now your Fed is looking forward to its 40th anniversary in 2016. Forty years of supporting writers at all stages of their careers, not only in Nova Scotia but also including the other Atlantic provinces through programs such as our Atlantic Writing Competition and our Writers' Federation Literary Awards, which includes the Evelyn Richardson Memorial Award for Non-fiction, the Atlantic Poetry Prize and the Thomas Raddall Atlantic Fiction Award. It's an exciting time for all of us.

The Strategic Planning Committee has been making a wish list of all the ways we can celebrate. Starting with our 2014 Annual General Meeting, a public panel discussion will be added to the Saturday events, giving us a chance to reflect and also look forward



together (perhaps, in that first year, on the topic of writer and influence). In 2016, we hope to begin our 40th AGM on the Friday evening with the first annual keynote presentation/lecture by one of our own members. Again, the public will be invited to this event to share in our celebration of Nova Scotia writers and writing.

To make sure the WFNS goes forward with as much input as possible from our members, we've been developing a membership survey that should pop into your inbox very soon. This will be your chance to make your mark, say your piece, get that nagging concern off your chest, cheer on the programs that have worked for you, and help to keep the path clear for all the writers who'll walk along it in the future. When you finish the

survey and click "send," we'll be waiting right here to read your views and start looking for trends.

Two conversations I've had recently about being a member of the WFNS just came to mind. One was with an unpublished writer who's working on her first novel. She seemed unenthusiastic about the Writers' Federation, though she did mention knowing we had writing workshops. She told me she was setting her writing aside because right now there's so much else that needs to be done.

The second conversation was just two days ago, and it was with a published writer who had let her membership lapse. She spoke about feeling ashamed (that was her word) that she wasn't getting enough writing done, that she wasn't finishing books fast enough.

I want these two writers to meet. I want them to sit together and talk about those daily things that always need to be done and those feelings of shame or guilt we build up like walls between us and our writing. Maybe each writer would see herself in the other. Recognize something that would shed a light and keep her writing. This is what membership in the Fed is all about, isn't it? I've been convinced it is, ever since I joined 38 years ago. ■



# Mentorship program writers

**W**FNS' Mentorship Program is heading into its thirteenth year (it started in 2001) and has proven to be one of our most successful and popular programs.

This year's line-up of writers are:

## **Lindy Weilgart (memoir) mentored by Kathleen Martin**

Lindy Weilgart is writing a book about a research voyage she undertook on a 13-metre sailboat studying sperm whale dialects, sailing 50,000 kilometres across the South Pacific and back, accompanied by her then husband, five-year-old son, and 10-month-old daughter. While most of her writing has been for scientific publications (about 30 published papers), she has had popular articles published in *American Baby*, *Natural History*, *American Scientist*, and *The Christian Science Monitor*, among others. This is her first book.



Lindy has studied whales since 1982, and her M.Sc., Ph.D., and post-doctoral studies were all in the field of whale vocal communication in the wild. She has been specializing in underwater noise pollution and its effects on whales since 1994. She is currently a Research Associate in the Department of Biology, Dalhousie University, and was previously employed as Scientific Advisor by Okeanos. She also serves as Scientific Advisor for the International Ocean Noise Coalition, and is a Scientific Expert on the German government's Antarctic Commission.

## **Nolan Pike (YA fiction) mentored by Jaime Forsythe**



## **Rita Wilson (poetry) mentored by Anne Simpson**

Rita Wilson lives and writes on the bank of the Caribou River. She's been surrounded by words always – as an English major, teacher of young children, reader, and writer of journals and report cards. She is now pursuing her lifelong desire – as a freelance writer, with articles published in *Saltscape*, poems in *Fathom*, *The Antigonish Review* and *Northern Cardinal Review*. She is a former winner of the poetry category of the Atlantic Writing Competition. Poetry is her current passion; it's the lens through which she's looking at the world in her immediate vicinity. She's also working on a kids' book about poet Elizabeth Bishop. She's thrilled to be part of the mentorship program.



## **Maureen Ryan-St. Clair (fiction) mentored by Dana Mills**



Maureen St. Clair is an artist, peace educator, and social activist. She holds a Master's degree in Adult Education with a focus on women's self and community empowerment through participatory education. Maureen travels between Nova Scotia and Harford Village, Grenada. She works as an associate for The Coady International Institute and full-time artist/peace educator in Grenada. She has always had a passion for writing and in November 2012 she began writing her first novel, a story that explores the complicated lives of two Caribbean-Canadian women. Sola and Judith discover the cost of love through the deep conditioned

assumptions, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours they and the world around them hold. It is a story of unraveling universalisms within all of us. You can check her peace and art work out at [www.maureenstclair.blogspot.com](http://www.maureenstclair.blogspot.com).

**Marie Solis (fiction) mentored by Elaine McCluskey**

Marie Solis says, "As a former undergraduate student at Dalhousie University where I doubled in English and Creative Writing and graduated with honours, I eat, live, and breathe the written word. I'm a bit of a magpie when it comes to writing stories: many of the characters and places I write about have been pickpocketed or scavenged out of my own experiences living and traveling in a plethora of different countries throughout Southeast Asia and Europe. Consequently, I love writing about people from other places; I love writing little glimpses into their lives, their cultural and personal histories and their origins, because (I suspect) it is my own way of coming to terms with my own."

"I currently live in Halifax, work in Dartmouth, and write in my spare time. Other interests include traveling, poring through books about the history of the earlier half of twentieth century, and comic book superheroines."

**Past participants and published books**

The list of emerging writers who have participated in the program who have gone on to publish is both long and impressive:

Marilyn Iwama (2001-02 with Sue MacLeod): *Skin Whispers Down*, Thistledown Press, 2003

Genevieve Lehr (2001-02 with Sue Goyette): *The Sorrowing House*, Brick Books, 2004

Ami McKay (2002-02 with Richard Cumyn): *The Birth House*, Knopf, 2006.  
 #1 Canadian Bestseller  
 CBC Canada Read's Finalist  
 Evergreen Award. Presented by the Ontario Librarians' Assoc.  
 Fiction Book of the Year – CBA Libris Award  
 Author of the Year – CBA Libris Award  
 Book Design of the Year (Kelly Hill) – CBA Libris Award  
 Booksellers' Choice Award – AIBA  
 Long listed for International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award

Ryan Turner (2003-04 with Richard Cumyn): *What We're Made Of*, Oberon Press, 2009

Emily Holton (2004-05 with Donna Morrissey): *Dear Canada Council & Our Starland*, Conundrum Press, 2008

Amy Jones (2004-05 with Linda Little): *What Boys Like*, Biblioasis, 2009  
 2008 Metcalf-Rooke Award

Shandi Mitchell (2004-05 with Sue Goyette): *Under This Unbroken Sky*, Penguin, 2009  
 Simultaneously published by Penguin Canada, Weidenfeld & Nicolson (UK) and Harper Collins (US) in August 2009.  
 Sold in nine countries, including translation rights for Chinese, Hebrew, Dutch and Italian.  
 Won the 2010 Commonwealth Regional Prize for First Book (Canada/Caribbean), the Thomas Head Raddall Fiction Award, the Margaret and John Savage First Book Award, and the 2012 Kobzar Literary Award.  
 Longlisted for the IMPAC Dublin Literary Award.

Jacob Mooney (2004-05 with Lesley Choyce): *The New Layman's Almanac*, M&S, 2008

Christine McRae (2006-07 with Marilyn Iwama), *Next to Nothing*, Wolsak and Wynn, 2009

Keir Lowther (2006-07 with Bill Kowalski), *Dirty Bird*, Tighrope Press, 2012  
 Shortlisted for the Relit Award  
 Winner: 2013 Margaret and John Savage First Book Award  
 Shortlisted for the 2013 Thomas Head Raddall Atlantic Fiction Prize

Jan Coates (2008-09 with Gary Blackwood), *The Hare in the Elephant's Trunk*, Red Deer Press, 2010  
 nominated for the 2011 Governor General's Literary Awards  
 finalist for the Ann Connor Brimer Award  
 received a starred Kirkus Review  
 the USBBY Honour List, 2011

Judy Dudar (2008-09 with Sylvia Gunnery), *I Spy a Bunny*, Nimbus, 2009 ■

# Remembering Ours

## Phil Dinn

Philip Dinn lost his battle with cancer on November 21, 2013, at the age of 64. Phil was a stage and screen actor, writer and musician. Artistic Director of Jack Five Oh Theatre Productions, Phil wrote and co-wrote over 25 main stage theatre productions and productions for young audiences in the past 25 years. As an actor he appeared in many films, including *The Boys of St. Vincent*, *Random Passage*, and *Jesse Stone: Sea Change*. As a founding member of the internationally acclaimed folk band Figgy Duff, Philip wrote and arranged the collected Folk Songs of Newfoundland material for the band and toured extensively in Canada and the UK. His publications include *Stars in the Sky Morning* and *Peg Bearskin*. Philip won the Silver Medal at the New York Awards for Radio and Television. ■

## Bruce Armstrong

Bruce Armstrong, a long-time member of the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia, died January 22 at the age of 80. The magician, broadcaster, actor and writer was also known as Uncle Max on the CBC-TV kids' program Max Museum. He edited *The Encyclopedia of Suspensions and Levitations*, and wrote *Sanctuary: Halifax's Parks & Public Gardens*, with photos by John Davis, and *Touchstones: Encounters With the Spirit of Nova Scotia* with photographs by Karen Nieuwland.

Bruce won the Evelyn Richardson Award in 1982 for his book, *Sable Island*. In her remembrance of Bruce in *The Chronicle Herald*, Elissa Barnard quotes Harry Thurston, a four-time winner of the Richardson prize, who calls it a modern classic. "I think it is one of the finest natural history books that has come out of the region," said Thurston. "It stands many years later as the definitive book on Sable Island. Bruce was a friend and a mentor and a model. He provided a model of inspiration for my book on the Bay of Fundy. Bruce had a strong interest in the spiritual aspect of nature." ■

# Who's doing what

■ *N'in na L'Nu: The Mi'kmaq of Prince Edward Island* (Acorn) co-written by Jesse Francis and **A.J.B. (John) Johnston** will be honoured on February 18 with a heritage award in Charlottetown. The award goes to both the book and the exhibit of the same name at the Confederation Centre Art Gallery.

■ **Joshua Brown** reports his first publishing credit appeared in *The Barnstormer*, an online journal that "aims to celebrate the intersection of sports and humanity with good writing." Wherein you'll find his short fiction piece entitled "August in Their Hearts" – "a middle America tale about the mythology of football" Check out <http://thebarnstormer.com/august-in-their-hearts/>.

■ **Elisabeth Gold** is part of a group of 26 clinicians from around the world invited to write a chapter for a book edited by Dr. Patricia Dobkin of McGill University, to be published by Springer Press. "Mindful Clinicians" are narratives and stories of a person each writer has worked with, told with the person's consent.

■ **Teresa O'Brien** has been shortlisted for the Bridport Prize, and her short story, "Yes, That's My Boy" will appear in the Spring edition, 47.1 of *The Windsor Review*.

■ **Brian Bartlett**, author of six poetry collections, will publish his first book of non-fiction prose, *Ringling Here & There: A Nature Calendar* later this year with Fitzhenry and Whiteside.

■ **Sheldon Currie** and **Carol Bruneau** are among the writers featured in *Running the Whale's Back: Stories of Faith and Doubt from Atlantic Canada*, an anthology published by Goose Lane Editions and edited by Andrew Atkinson and Mark Harris. Writers explore the multiple facets of what we call "faith" through a unique eastern vantage point. Through a mixture of styles and themes, the full breadth of Atlantic spirituality is revealed.

■ Several Writers' Fed members are nominated for the Ontario Library Association's 2014 Forest of Readings awards. **Valerie Sherrard** is up for the Silver Birch Express Award for *Counting Back from Nine*, a novel in free verse published by Fitzhenry & Whiteside. Up for the Red Maple Fiction Award is **Cynthia d'Entremont** for *Oak Island Revenge* (Nimbus Publishing). Nominated for the White Pine Fiction Award are: **Lisa Harrington**

for *Live To Tell* (Dancing Cat Books), **Jill MacLean** for *Nix Minus One* (Pajama Press), and **Don Aker** for *Running on Empty* (HarperCollins). In the Evergreen Award program, **Donna Morrissey** is nominated for *The Deception of Livvy Higgs* (Viking Canada). And in The Golden Oak Award, **William Kowalski** is nominated for *Something Nobel* (Orca).

■ **E. Alex Pierce** was Writer in Residence for the Shelburne County Arts Council (SCAC), thanks to grants from The Canada Council for the Arts, The Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage, and The Municipality of the District of Shelburne, all secured by Susan Hoover at SCAC. Supported by the Western Counties Regional Library system, Alex offered individual meetings with writers at the McKay Memorial Library in Shelburne and the Lillian Benham Library in Lockport. An eight-week workshop at the Shelburne library rounded out the program. The program conducted throughout the fall of 2013 culminated in a public reading at the Osprey Arts Centre with participants from workshops and individual meetings. Alex read from her new work, an extensive project which centres on the Sable River and its environs. Her website is [www.ealexpierce.com](http://www.ealexpierce.com)

■ The Book Festival in May at Ullapool on the shores of Loch Broom in the Highlands of Scotland has a tradition of inviting Canadian guests. This year it's two writers from Cape Breton: poet and storyteller Lindsay Marshall of Potlotek First Nation, and **Frank Macdonald**, the author of *A Forest for Calum* and *A Possible Madness*.

■ Look for **Linda Little**'s latest book in April, when Roseway Publishing will release the River John writer's novel *Grist*.

■ **Meghan Marentette**'s debut children's novel *The Stowaways* (Pajama Press) was selected for Resource Links Magazine's Best Books of 2013. Also included in the magazine's picks are: **Jill Maclean** for *The Hidden Agenda of Sigrid Sugden* (Fitzhenry & Whiteside) and *Nix Minus One* (Pajama Press); **Philip Roy** for *Me & Mr. Bell* (Cape Breton University Press) and *Seas of South Africa* (Book 6 in The Submarine Outlaw Series from Ronsdale Press); **Budge Wilson** for *The Best Worst Christmas Present Ever* (Scholastic Canada); **Lesley Choyce** for *Crash* (Orca Soundings Series, Orca); **Vicki Grant** for *Triggered* (Orca Soundings Series, Orca); **Sylvia Gunnery** for *Game Face* (Sports Stories Series, James Lorimer & Co); and **Pamela Hickman** and Jean Smith Cavalluzzo for *Italian Canadian Internment in the*

*Second World War* (Righting Canada's Wrongs Series, James Lorimer & Co.) Resource Links can be found at [www.resourcelinksmagazine.ca](http://www.resourcelinksmagazine.ca). The magazine is published five times a year, and is Canada's national journal devoted to the review and evaluation of Canadian English and French resources for children and young adults.

■ The WFNS Board has approved two new members for Writers' Council: **Allison Lawlor** and **Natalie Corbett Sampson**.



■ Poetry Collection Brings African Nova Scotian Experience to the Classroom: On January 16 **George Borden** (right) joined Tony Ince, the Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs and the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage, to launch *I Never Heard Their Cry! Selected Poems of George Borden*.

A new resource featuring poems by **George Borden** will give Nova Scotia students an opportunity to explore African Heritage. In the summer of 2011, George donated his poetry collection to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development so it could be shared with students. The department published the collection and, in the spring, will provide it to high schools as part of a local authors package. Additional copies will also be given to African Canadian Studies 11 and English 12: African Heritage classes.

"Our Black story has not been told as it should have been, and only in a very few cases by Blacks. I'm trying to correct that," said George, an author, poet, and songwriter from New Glasgow. He has written children's stories and gospel songs, and has published a trilogy of poetry works recounting the Black experience from Africa to modern day Nova Scotia. His work has also been published in numerous anthologies and provincial and national newspapers and magazines.