

east word

Let's Bookmark Nova Scotia's Literary Landmarks

by Sarah Emsley

"All of us are better when we're loved." The powerful last line of Alistair MacLeod's International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award-winning novel *No Great Mischief* is deservedly famous, and the final paragraphs of the novel, including that line, will soon be honoured on a Project Bookmark Canada plaque in Cape Breton, near the Canso Causeway. I'm writing to invite WFNS members to help support this particular project, the very first Bookmark in Nova Scotia, and to help make it possible to honour the work of many more writers with future Bookmarks around the province.

Project Bookmark Canada aims to create a literary map of Canada by placing text from fiction and poetry in the precise locations where those passages are set. The first Bookmark, unveiled in 2009 at the Bloor Street Viaduct in Toronto, was a passage from Michael Ondaatje's novel *In the Skin of a Lion*, and since then there have been 12 more Bookmarks across the country. From Vancouver, British Columbia, to Woody Point, Newfoundland, these plaques are mapping out what Kristen Den Hartog, author of *And Me Among Them*, calls a "literary TransCanada highway." It's fitting, I think, that the first Bookmark in Nova Scotia will be placed next to the TransCanada itself. And I know many of you will agree it is also fitting that the first Bookmark in our province will pay tribute to the work of one of Nova Scotia's most beloved writers, Alistair MacLeod.

The Bookmark for *No Great Mischief* was announced on October 3, at the Cabot Trail Writers' Festival, and Miranda Hill, founder and executive director of Project Bookmark Canada, says she hopes the future unveiling of this Bookmark will also take place at the Festival. Supporters of the project include Alistair MacLeod's



Alistair MacLeod (right) with his son Alexander at Read by the Sea, River John.



Michael Ondaatje (left), at the unveiling of the first Bookmark at the Bloor Viaduct, Toronto – a passage from his novel *In The Skin Of A Lion* – April 23, 2009.



WRITERS' FEDERATION OF NOVA SCOTIA
ISSN 1187 3531

1113 MARGINAL ROAD
HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA B3H 4F7
TEL: 902-423-8116
FAX: 902-422-0881

WWW.WRITERS.NS.CA

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: JONATHAN MEAKIN

E-MAIL: DIRECTOR@WRITERS.NS.CA

COMMUNICATIONS & DEVELOPMENT OFFICER:
ROBIN SPITTAL

E-MAIL: PROGRAMS@WRITERS.NS.CA

ARTS EDUCATION OFFICER: LINDA HUDSON

E-MAIL: WITS@WRITERS.NS.CA

EASTWORD EDITOR: PEGGY AMIRAUT

WFNS Board of Directors

PRESIDENT: SYLVIA GUNNERY

PAST-PRESIDENT/SECRETARY: LEZLIE LOWE

VICE PRESIDENT: JOHN J. GUINEY YALLOP

TREASURER: JUSTIN KAWAJA

MEMBERS AT LARGE: DON AKER, ANNE BÉRUBÉ,

ALICE BURDICK, GWEN DAVIES, ALISON SMITH

The Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia is a registered not-for-profit organization that operates with funds raised from membership fees, from fundraising endeavours, corporate sponsorship, with operating support from the Government of Nova Scotia through the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage, and with project assistance from the Canada Council for the Arts – all of whom we gratefully acknowledge for assisting us to make the work of the WFNS possible. The WFNS is a member of the Atlantic Provinces Library Association, Access Copyright, the Canadian Children's Book Centre, CANSCAIP (Canadian Society of Children's Authors, Illustrators and Performers), the Cultural Federations of Nova Scotia, the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), and the Nova Scotia Children's Literature Roundtable. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the editor or of WFNS.

Services and markets advertised or mentioned are not necessarily endorsed by WFNS. We reserve the right to edit manuscripts and letters. Copyright to bylined material remains with the writer and cannot be reprinted without the permission of the writer.

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

Le Conseil des Arts
du Canada



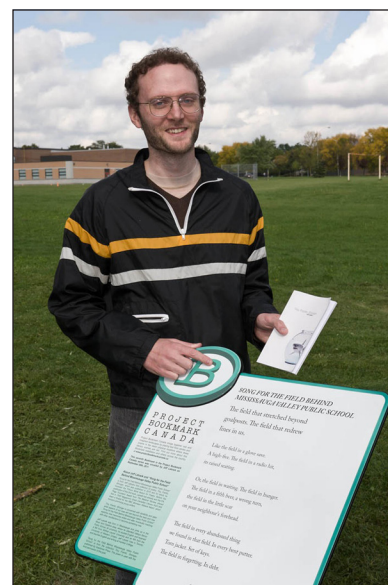
NOVA SCOTIA
Communities, Culture and Heritage

family, Destination Cape Breton, the Government of Nova Scotia, the Cabot Trail Writers' Festival, and many others – including the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia. Our President, Sylvia Gunnery, the WFNS board and staff, and many individual members have demonstrated enthusiastic support for the project from the very beginning, and it's been clear there's a tremendous desire to honour the work of Nova Scotia writers in general, and of Alistair MacLeod in particular, through partnering with Project Bookmark Canada to create permanent, physical markers that map our literary landscape.

Project Bookmark Canada would love to hear from anyone who's interested in supporting the creation of the *No Great Mischief* Bookmark and future Bookmarks in Nova Scotia, and in helping to add to the list of potential Bookmark passages. There are many ways to help out with these exciting projects.

You could make a donation directly to the *No Great Mischief* Bookmark, via the "Build a Bookmark" page on Project Bookmark Canada's website (www.projectbookmarkcanada.ca/build-a-bookmark). You could offer suggestions about potential sources of funding. (Each Bookmark costs \$10,000 to \$12,000.) You could read fiction and/or poetry to identify passages – imagined scenes set in real, identified locations, either in Nova Scotia or elsewhere in Canada – for future Bookmarks. You could share information and news about Project Bookmark Canada with friends, family, and colleagues. You could volunteer at festivals and other events.

You could offer to set up, or join, a Project Bookmark Reading Circle that focuses on, say, a particular area of Nova Scotia, or on poetry set in Nova Scotia, or on classic or contemporary fiction set here (or, for that matter, set



Jeff Latosik at the field mentioned in Bookmark 7. "Song for the Field Behind" by Alistair MacLeod appears in Latosik's first collection of poetry – *Tiny, Frantic Stranger* (Insomniac Press), which won the Trillium Book Award for Poetry.



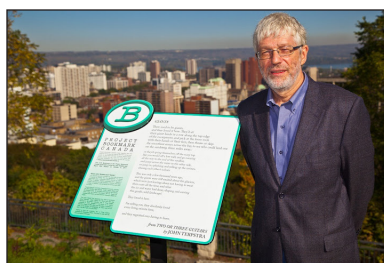
Terry Griggs at Bookmark 2 on the Waterfront Trail in Owen Sound, Ontario, September 2010. It features a passage from her novel *Rogue's Wedding*.

somewhere else in Canada, if there's a specific place you'd like to focus on and explore with your group). When you travel across Canada, you could visit, and celebrate, the existing Bookmarks, such as the one in Winnipeg, Manitoba – at the intersection of River and Osborne, at The Gas Station Arts Centre – that honours a passage from Carol Shields' novel *The Republic of Love*, or the one in Hamilton, Ontario, that marks a passage from John Terpstra's poem "Giants" (at Sam Lawrence Park).

If you haven't yet watched the video that was Sheree Fitch's contribution to the first "Page-Turner" fundraising campaign for Project Bookmark Canada, I encourage you to do so – www.projectbookmarkcanada.ca/home/2013/4/18/april-20-sheree-fitch-is-a-page-turner-are-you. In the video, Sheree – with several other Nova Scotia writers and WFNS members serving as a chorus – explains why the project is so important, and offers a suggestion for a future Nova Scotia Bookmark: "Project Bookmark Canada is an exciting initiative. It means we're going to be able to read our way across Canada. It means we're going to be able to go to places, like River John where I live, and go to the iron bridge that I can see from my office, and maybe see an excerpt from a wonderful book called *Scotch River* by my friend Linda Little." Sheree talks about how Canadian books "teach me what it means to be a part of this country, this landscape," and how they "help us know that we are connected from coast to coast."

I'm very happy to be supporting Project Bookmark Canada, particularly through my work on the WFNS Membership Committee. When I was growing up, my family made several summer trips across the country on the TransCanada Highway, from Nova Scotia (where I grew up) to Alberta (where I was born, and where most of my relatives lived), and I wish we'd been able to stop and read literary Bookmarks along the way. I'm excited about the prospect of visiting Bookmarks in various literary spots around Nova Scotia as well as in other parts of the country.

If you're interested in helping out, or have questions, please get in touch with Miranda and Project Bookmark Canada (www.projectbookmarkcanada.ca; @BookmarkCanada) or with me (semsley@gmail.com; @Sarah_Emsley). Let's celebrate great writing about Nova Scotia, starting with Alistair MacLeod's *No Great Mischief*. ■



John Terpstra at Bookmark 9 overlooking Hamilton, Ontario, October 26, 2011. "Giants" is from his poetry collection *Two or Three Guitars*, published by Gaspereau Press.



Miranda Hill, founder and executive director of Project Bookmark Canada, and Wayson Choy, author of *The Jade Peony*. *The Jade Peony* is Bookmark 12. At the southeast corner of Pender Street and Gore Avenue in Vancouver's historic Chinatown, are two plaques: one in English and one in Mandarin.



Bookmark 11 was at Woody Point, Newfoundland, marks "The Sea Breeze Lounge" by Al Pittman from his poetry collection *Thirty-for-Sixty*.



Bookmark 6 – a passage from *Fugitive Pieces* by Anne Michaels – was unveiled at College and Manning Streets, Toronto, on October 28, 2010.

New guidelines for the 2015 Atlantic Writing Competition

This is the season to be writing! The 2015 Atlantic Writing Competition's new guidelines have been posted, and the deadline for entries is set for February 2, 2015. There's a few changes this year, so have a look before submitting your manuscript. In particular, we've made changes to the adult novel and the young adult novel categories.

The AWC, as many of you are aware, is run on the strength of volunteer readers and judges in six categories. As everyone who enters receives a sheet of feedback on their piece – regardless of whether they are shortlisted – the competition represents a significant time commitment on the part of the readers and judges.

Below are the new guidelines for the novel category:

H.R. (Bill) Percy Novel Prize

Prizes: \$300 for the winning entry and the invitation to read at Word on the Street, Halifax.

Submissions: A complete fiction manuscript of no more than 100,000 words. The manuscript will be evaluated based on the first 80 pages or 20,000 words. First-round readers may read more than the first 80 pages, but they will not be required to. A one-page pitch letter must also accompany the excerpt. The pitch must include a synopsis of the entire arc of the novel, identify audience, and include the word count of the final piece. Note that judging in this category will place greater emphasis on the quality of the writing than on the pitch. Submissions may be in any genre including, but not limited to, historical fiction, literary fiction, mystery, romance, and speculative fiction.

The guideline change is similar for the **Young Adult Novel** category, except the upper end of the word count is 75,000 words.

This change was made not only to lighten the load on the readers – as you can imagine, it's difficult to find time to read and comment on several 100,000-word manuscripts – but also to encourage the craft of writing a pitch letter. As any published author will attest, writing a good pitch is an essential skill. We recently hosted the first chapter of our Anatomy of a Book series that focused on this topic. The Query Letter & the Pitch was hosted by author Stephen Kimber and editor Whitney Moran of Nimbus Publishing. If you weren't able to attend the session, you can find their notes in the members-only section of the website.

Those of you seeking a more comprehensive review of your manuscripts, never fear! We are in the process of re-launching the Manuscript Review Service. Details of that service will be coming in 2015.

In the meantime, polish up those manuscripts! We look forward to receiving them by February 2, 2015.

Competition guidelines can be found on our website: www.writers.ns.ca ■

Thank you

The WFNS would like to extend a sincere thank you to the volunteers who helped support our programming in 2014. We hope to work with you again in 2015!

A big thank you as well to all of our donors who supported the organization with monetary gifts and prizes. We greatly appreciate your support.

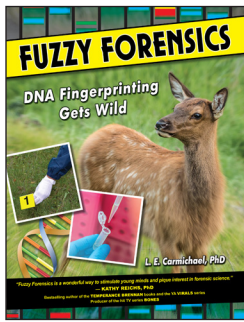
Email poetry workshop with John Wall Barger

Poet John Wall Barger is currently living in Dharamsala, India. He's offering A One-On-One Poetry Workshop for those interested in an in-depth series of email exchanges about their poems.

Each week for eight weeks the workshop member submits a different poem which Barger critiques in a 700- to 750-word email. That week the member responds to the critique and Barger responds to the member. After eight of these exchanges, one per week, in the ninth week the member writes a "conference letter" to Barger, topics initiated by the member, then Barger responds, and the member has an opportunity to respond again. Contact: johnwallbarger@gmail.com

John Wall Barger's poems have appeared in many journals and anthologies, including *The Cincinnati Review*, *Subtropics*, *The Malahat Review*, *Best Canadian Poetry*, and *The Montreal Prize Global Poetry Anthology*. His poetry collections include *Pain-proof Men* and *Hummingbird* (both published by Palimpsest Press).

Impressed – new books by members



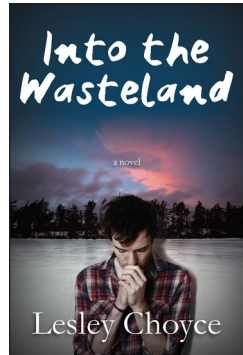
Fuzzy Forensics* *DNA Fingerprinting Gets Wild

L.E. Carmichael, PhD

**Ashby-BP Publishing October 2014
ISBN 9781928005032**

In this book, you'll discover how witnesses, conservation officers, veterinarians, and scientists join forces to solve countless crimes against wildlife, all around the world. Explore real cases that take you from the crime scene to the laboratory to the courtroom. See how DNA fingerprints are used to identify endangered species, match animal parents with their wild babies, and trace a furry victim's country of origin. Become a wildlife detective by tackling four crime-busting experiments. Containing vivid photos, interviews with experts, and hair-raising facts, *Fuzzy Forensics* will convince you that, scientifically, the only difference between solving human crimes and animal ones is the fur.

Scientist Lindsey Carmichael now writes for kids, teens, and occasionally adults and publishes under the name L. E. Carmichael. Her work has appeared in *Dig*, *Highlights for Children*, *Kiki*, and *Canadian Tales of the Fantastic*. Her published science books cover everything from animal migration to hybrid cars.



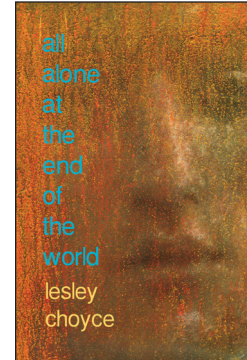
Into the Wasteland* *a novel

Lesley Choyce

**Red Deer Press October 2014 \$12.95
ISBN 9780888995226**

Dixon Carter has been off his meds for nine days when the world he knows falls in on him. Up to now, he's been trying to cope with his customary plunges into darkness and surges into euphoria. But now he's at a loss. How can he find his way out of the wasteland?

Lesley Choyce's words are spare, vivid, and very accessible for teenage readers. He is the author of many novels for young adult readers including *Jeremy Stone*, nominated for the Governor General's Award for Children's Literature.



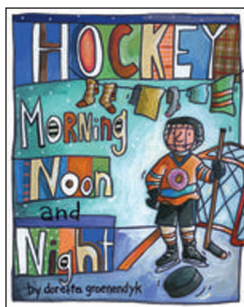
all alone at the end of the world

Lesley Choyce

**Ekstasis Editions September 2014
\$23.95 ISBN 978-1-77171-063-3**

In this hauntingly lyrical and always surprising collection of Lesley Choyce's latest poems, he offers his unique observations of life in all its wonders. Geographically the poems range from his home in Nova Scotia to Greece, England, Ireland, Italy and New Jersey. Along the way, the poet falls into a well, drives to the English Channel, hangs up laundry, makes lasagna, and has an epiphany while mailing a letter on a snowy day. He learns lessons inside a cancer ward, fights the hostility of an empty page, encounters a world of contradictions and flees from the dark dreams of a North Carolina casino. There are poems of death here but also of healing and hope. In "Reinventing the Poet," Choyce examines what is needed to revitalize the poet and the poem, but also the necessary ingredients for breathing life and vitality back into every waking moment.

Lesley Choyce is a novelist and poet living at Lawrencetown Beach. He is the author of 86 books for adults, teens and children.



Hockey Morning Noon and Night

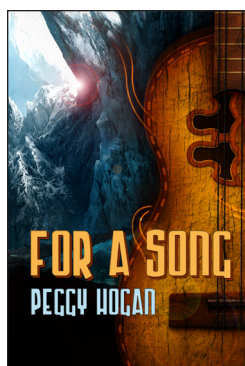
Doretta Groenendyk

Acorn Press Canada \$12.95

ISBN 9781927502303

Hockey Morning Noon and Night is a warm, light-hearted story about one little boy's love of the game. Based on her seven-year-old son's real-life obsession with hockey, author and illustrator Doretta Groenendyk has created a delightful book for young budding stars, with bright, colourful ink and acrylic illustrations.

Doretta Groenendyk, a painter, writer and teacher, lives with her husband and three children in the Annapolis Valley. Doretta is the author and illustrator of several picture books. Her art can be seen on her website (<http://doretta-art.com>)



For a Song

Peggy Hogan

Double Dragon Publishing

www.double-dragon-ebooks.com

Blat (an unfortunate name for a singer) is a Touring Minstrel. While researching material for a song and following clues in an ancient text, he stumbles upon an unknown society of people who are being drained of their life-force by the illusive and sinister Brothers of the Watch. He recruits a brilliant but unstable scientist to help him to fight the Brothers and their leader, who has become truly unhinged. Blat believes that music can block the Brothers' mind control and composes a simple song to teach his fellow captives. If the song does not work, the Brothers' plan to subjugate Whitecap Island will be unleashed at the dark of the moon.

This is Peggy Hogan's first published novel and she attributes this achievement to her second prize placing in the 34th Atlantic Writing Competition in 2011. She lives in New Glasgow, Prince Edward Island, where she is working on her next novel.



Somewhere I Belong

Glenna Jenkins

Acorn Press Canada, November 2014.

ISBN: 9781927502273 \$12.95

www.acornpresscanada.com

P.J. Kavanaugh's father has died and his mother moves the family from Boston to her home in Prince Edward Island. The winter is harsh, the farm chores are endless, and his drunken-bully teacher is constantly punishing him. And he longs to return home to Boston. P.J. gets himself and a friend into a heap of trouble. When he has a chance to return to Boston to see Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig play in a charity ballgame, his mother won't let him go, as doing so would reward his bad behaviour. But he soon finds an ally in Uncle Jim. "I wouldn't give up yet; there's still time."

Glenna Jenkins' first novel is historical fiction based on a true story. Her short stories have appeared in *Jilted Angels: A Collection of Stories* and *Riptides: New Island Fiction*. She also coaches and edits for beginning and intermediate fiction and non-fiction writers and provides editorial services for economics scholars whose first language is not English. Glenna lives in Lunenburg.



***Ni'n na L'nu:*
les Mi'kmaq de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard**

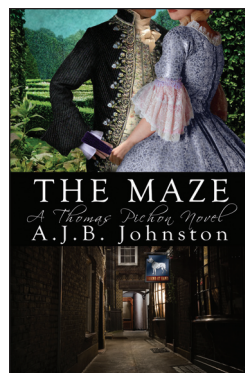
A.J.B. Johnston and Jesse Francis
La Grande Marée of NB.
www.lagrandemaree.ca
October 2014
ISBN 9782349723154

The French translation of the award-winning book *Ni'n na L'nu: The Mi'kmaq of Prince Edward Island* published by Acorn Press Canada.

This lavishly-illustrated book focuses on the Mi'kmaq of PEI, an island which for thousands of years has been known to them as Epekwitk – “cradle on the sea.” The story of the Mi'kmaq is one of adaptation and perseverance across countless generations in the face of pervasive change.

Jesse Francis is Manager of Joint Projects for the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI and Parks Canada.

A.J.B. (John) Johnston is the award-winning author of several books on the history of Atlantic Canada. John was made a chevalier of France's Ordre des Palmes académiques in recognition of his many publications on the history of the French in Atlantic Canada.

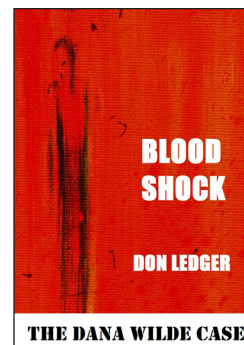


***The Maze:*
A Thomas Pichon Novel**

A.J.B. Johnston
Cape Breton University Press
ISBN 978-1-897009-76-5
EPUB 978-1-927492-71-0
\$19.95

Introduced in *Thomas, A Secret Life*, Thomas Pichon returns to continue his adventures in *The Maze*. Like the streets of his 18th-century Paris home, Thomas Pichon's life is full of twists and turns. Despite winning his wife's forgiveness for an extramarital affair, Thomas and his lover, Hélène, are caught a second time, and decide that it's time for new beginnings – in London. As a writer, Thomas tries to make literary sense of the chaos of the life and language of a city teeming with excitement and danger. Hélène finds her own way out of the maze.

Well-established as a non-fiction writer, A.J.B. (John) Johnston has also turned his hand to fiction in this series of historical fiction novels featuring Thomas Pichon in the 1700s.



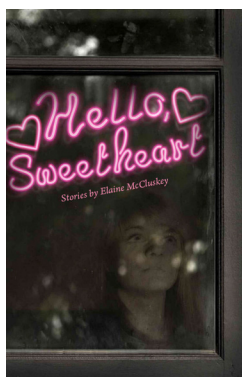
Blood Shock

Don Ledger
available at Amazon.com, Amazon.ca
www.donledger.com

A serial killer strikes near the small town of St. James, West Virginia. Sheriff Dana Wilde, a transplant from a homicide squad in Washington D.C., suddenly has her hands full as one body after another shows up on her turf. A cop from New York City arrives with a case of his own which he thinks might be connected. Is that the real reason he's in her town, or is it because he and Wilde had an affair? The media attention catches the eye of a hired killer out west. Young, beautiful, and deadly she races across country to the small hamlet. She has a mission of her own and someone she might have to kill, but on her own dime.

People are dying fast. When it looks like Wilde has the identity of the killer, things get personal. And nothing seems to be what it appears. It's the work week from hell.

Don Ledger is the author of several books, including *Swiss Air Down: A Pilot's View of the Crash at Peggy's Cove* and *Maritime UFO Files*.



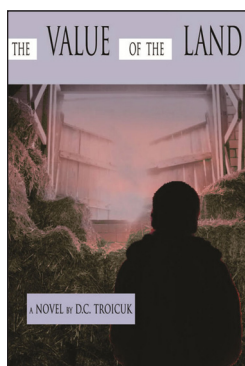
***Hello, Sweetheart*
Stories**

Elaine McCluskey

Enfield & Wizenty \$19.95
ISBN 978-1-926531-99-1

Hello, Sweetheart is darkly humorous, gritty, and touching. McCluskey's unassuming Canadian towns are populated by dreamers and disappointment, killers and collaborators, VLT junkies, sinister drug-testers, and a dangerous stay-at-home dad named Mugsy. It exposes the frailties of people – marginalized people, forgotten people, and grieving people – but never loses sight of their humanity. Edgy and at times disturbing, this collection of short stories will take you places you don't expect to go.

Elaine McCluskey lives in Dartmouth. She writes fiction and teaches journalism. Her books include two short story collections – *The Watermelon Social* and *Valery The Great* – and a novel, *Going Fast*. Her short fiction has appeared in many Canadian literary magazines, as well as anthologies such as the *Journey Prize Stories*.



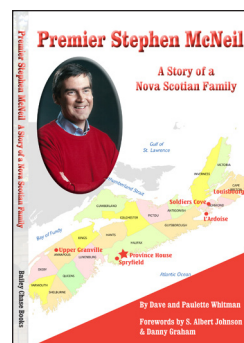
The Value of the Land

D.C. Troicuk

Boularderie Island Press
boularderieislandpress.com \$21.95
ISBN 978-1-926448-02-2

Living in Toronto, after years of estrangement, Dixon Peach is reluctantly drawn back into his family, when his grandfather offers him an opportunity he can hardly refuse. If Dixon will move back home and claim his inheritance – the family farm in Cape Breton where he grew up – the old man will finance the development of a golf course on the property. Dixon must come to terms with his resentment toward his father and his guilt over the death of his little brother. Only then can he make a choice that will not only determine his own future but bring full circle the conflicting hopes and dreams of three generations.

D.C. (Donna) Troicuk lives in Cape Breton. Her short fiction has appeared in several literary magazines and anthologies. Her first collection of short stories, *Loose Pearls*, was published by Cape Breton University Press. *The Value of The Land* is her first novel..



***Premier Stephen McNeil*
*The Story of a Nova Scotian Family***

Dave and Patricia Whitman

Bailey Chase Books
www.davewhitman.ca

The McNeils and Mombourquettes established a joint heritage that first began in Cape Breton and continues in Upper Granville, in the Annapolis Valley. Stephen McNeil, Nova's Scotia's current premier and the twelfth of 17 siblings, was eight years old when his father died suddenly. It thrust the family, led by his mother, Theresa, into some challenging, yet rewarding, times. Older brothers and sisters took on new roles and created a bond that continues to this day. The book describes the family's story and Stephen's rise in provincial politics.

Dave and Paulette Whitman were born and raised in the Annapolis Valley, graduated from Acadia University, became teachers and raised a family. Now retired, Dave and Paulette have written 12 books, mostly about the local history of Annapolis Valley communities.

A Career in Verse

by George Elliott Clarke

*The long poem *Traverse*, written mostly in a one-day marathon, presented George Elliott Clarke an opportunity to reflect on more than 30 years as a practicing poet. This piece originally appeared in the April 2014 edition of *Quill & Quire*. George has won the Governor General's Award for Poetry. He teaches at the University of Toronto and is the current poet laureate for the City of Toronto.*

T*raverse* is a happy accident. I wrote it without knowing that I was writing a book-length poem. Its genesis was whimsical: 30 years after writing my first poems – really, songs – on July 1, 1975 (at age 15), I found myself back in my home city of Halifax. I spent most of July 1, 2005, writing 854 lines reflecting on my adult life as a poet.

The writing was a one-day marathon. I crafted 61 free-verse, “sonnet” stanzas, with absolute liberty granted to line lengths. Diction was also freely engaged, mixing “black” registers of speech and idiomatic expression with the standard, Oxford-Webster terms. The antecedent form of *Traverse* is, I hope, the folk-blues ballad, and I have come to think of these stanzas as “Rap sonnets,” for they should be read aloud. I titled the resulting poem “Thirty Years: 1975-2005,” and, in 2006, began to publish portions sequentially.

When Barry and Michael Callaghan of Exile Editions approached me last October [2013] to ask about creating a book out of the long poem, I realized that I should add nine stanzas as a coda, basically, updating the story to 2013. The final pieces in the book were written on December 1, 2013.

T*raverse* is autobiographical, more or less, and so it is accordingly frank. I never thought the poem would appear as a book, but once it became apparent that it would, it did behoove me to render some incidents in a dodgy, sketchy, euphemistic, or circumlocutory manner. Moreover, I had to withhold names and places, here and there, to protect truly innocent persons who cared for me and gave me love, never expecting that these gestures would be commented upon in a poem whose vision must be personal – or eccentric – and therefore open to interpretation.

I do feel good about the writing. The poem just “flowed,” as the cliché would have it. It also felt good to wonder about the astonishing future that my early pursuit of letters created for me, a lad outta Africadia

– that archipelago of historical black communities in Nova Scotia, born some 250 years ago out of slavery and resistance to slavery, and victimized ever since by illiteracy, poverty and injustice (i.e., racism).

Traverse covers 38 years of my life. Although the incidents in the book are quote-unquote true, I have forgotten many events, and I likely haven't indicated sufficiently just how unusual it was that a 15-year-old, working-class “coloured” guy from the wrong end of Halifax should have decided to pick up coloured markers (not pens or pencils) and begin to compose tuneless “songs,” delighting in creating each one in a rainbow array of tints. But I started out thus.

I won my first poetry prize when I was 21, for a manuscript based on Africadian history. [Eastword Editor's note: George won the WFNS Writing Competition, now the Atlantic Writing Competition.] That led one of the judges, Lesley Choyce, to offer me a publishing contract with Pottersfield Press, and so my first book [*Saltwater Spirituals and Deeper Blues*], came out in 1983, when I was 23. I showed the book to my father, who was a railway worker (he later became a taxi driver). He stunned me by looking at it and setting it aside. I think he was feeling regret for not having pursued his own artistic talent. Later on, he became so proud of me that he was always talking me up to passengers in his taxi, including a certain Alistair MacLeod. The poem “Taxi,” from my 2011 collection *Red*, is about two of his customers who disbelieved his claim that he had a poet for a son.

When I got my doctorate in English from Queen's University in 1993, I was only the fifth native-born Africadian in 200 years to obtain this degree. My mother attended the convocation, and stood there with tears in her eyes, for she had pioneered early childhood education in Halifax in the 1960s and '70s. Before Alexa McDonough led the NDP in Nova Scotia and nationally, she worked for my mom, and was my kindergarten teacher.

There has been so much serendipity in my life as a poet. I can complain of nothing. (I've even met the Dalai Lama!) I feel blessed to have worked at Queen's Park, on Parliament Hill, and as a social worker, newspaper editor, and publisher, and I have a decades-old biweekly newspaper column in the Halifax *Chronicle-Herald*. I am especially blessed to be a dad.

Best thing is: I've not stopped revelling in this art that I came to almost four decades ago. I pray I might be permitted to author a few more books – including, maybe, *Traverse*, Too. ■

Getting published

by Glenna Jenkins

When my first novel, *Somewhere I Belong*, was launched on November 1, someone asked me whether I was proud about having been published. My immediate answer was “no.” I felt grateful that my publisher had taken a risk on an unknown author and relieved that the process of writing, rewriting, and revising was finally over. I was happy, for sure, but not proud.

And I didn't think I had been published through some stroke of luck either. I had put in a lot of hard work. For years, I had studied the short story and novel forms on my own, through writing groups, and through formal writing courses. I read, and continue to read, the best fiction on the market. I study writers' techniques. I look for their methods in writing dialogue, in creating settings, in shaping the personalities of each character, and in plotting out a believable story. If I find a book to be badly written, I immediately put it down: I only want to study from masters of the craft.

I sought out advice from published authors. I applied for opportunities to study under award-winning writers, and was awarded these opportunities because I had presented polished fiction with well-crafted story arcs and compelling characters. I was grateful for having been accorded a number of excellent learning opportunities. But not proud. I listened to advice, revised where directed to do so, and submitted and resubmitted until I got it right. And I never argued with a more experienced writer or editor on any aspects of my writing. In short, I left my ego out of it.

Learning the craft of fiction is a process. It's like learning a new language in that it takes time to absorb all of the elements of fiction writing and to synthesize them into the writing. It took years to learn how to write a good story, and years more to understand the elements of the novel. I joined writing groups and sought feedback. Some, I gladly accepted, some I rejected outright. (If you join a writing group, you will find that most members are well intended, but that some understand the craft of fiction and others don't have a clue as to what they are talking about.)

And once I had completed what I thought was a compelling story, from beginning to end, I set out in search of a publisher. This is, perhaps, the only process

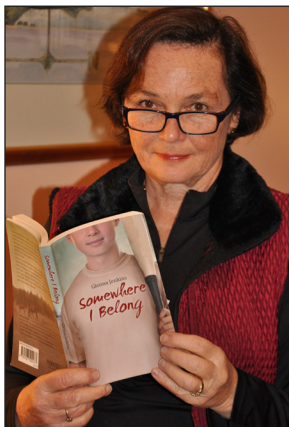
wherein I can truly say that I had a stroke of luck. I had already been published, in a short story anthology, by the first press I approached. When I presented my letter, story synopsis and two sample chapters to Acorn Press Canada, the publisher replied within three months and asked me for the full manuscript. She wanted to send it to her editorial board for review. Several months later, I had a contract. And I had only approached one publisher. There followed a several-weeks-long editorial process between me and the structural/copy editor Acorn Press had chosen, and another couple of weeks of copy editing by their in-house editor.

As I also work as an editor, members of my writing group and some of my close friends wondered why I needed one. Everyone needs a second set of eyes. Writers can be too close to their work; few have the ability to see both the forest and the trees. My editor noted issues with the story arc and the arcs of two major characters.

I followed up on every suggestion and, in the end, *Somewhere I Belong* became a much better book than it otherwise would have been. Both my editor and my publisher noted how easy I had been to work with. My reply was that I had left my ego out of the process. Having received my publishing contract, there was no way I was going to argue with an experienced book editor, particularly when my publisher was picking up the tab. I wanted *Somewhere I Belong* to be the best book possible. I wanted it to be well received on the market, and I want to write a sequel and publish that too.

Getting published is a long and arduous process. It takes a lot of work. Your writing has to be concise and well crafted. Your story and characters have to be believable and compelling. You have to be willing to make numerous adjustments to your manuscript before it goes to press. And you have to know what good writing is, leave your ego out of it, and let those more experienced in the writing and publishing process help you produce the best book possible. Here is a terrific website that offers some eye-opening advice on getting published: www.ian-irvine.com/publishing.html. ■

Glenna originally wrote this piece for her website www.glennajenkins.com



Last year's language, next year's words

by Jonathan Meakin, Executive Director, WFNS

*For last year's words belong to last
year's language
And next year's words await another
voice.*

– T.S. Eliot, “Little Gidding”

There is a joke in the Writers' Federation about the location of our office being on the corner of Terminal and Marginal Roads. Apparently, the joke has been around a while, so no doubt many of you have heard it before. Yet that old joke was new to me and I found it amusing. It's a reminder that for someone (relatively) new to the organization, last year's words may still find another voice. Or another listener.

Throughout 2014, the WFNS Board and staff demonstrated that your federation is neither terminal nor marginal. Instead, we have aimed to be creative, innovative, and progressive in our program delivery, while affirming the WFNS mandate to represent a province-wide membership of writers at all stages in their careers and working in all forms or genres.

Our vigour as an arts service organization is in providing a portal, a hub, for resources, services, and programs that connect writers of all backgrounds with each other and with readers. Through thoughtful planning and careful consultation, we have refreshed our programs and services in both significant and subtle ways to support the WFNS mandate. And yet informal and impromptu “meet-and-greets” with members in Mahone Bay, Sydney, and Halifax are a reminder that



Jonathan Meakin introducing Whitney Moran and Stephen Kimber at an Anatomy of a Book workshop.

opportunities to gather do not always require extensive planning or resources.

In 2015, the Federation will continue to represent and support members, their growth as writers, their work, and their voices – whether those members joined the WFNS community three weeks or three decades ago. Through established programs and new initiatives, we will work to support the craft, business, and promotion of writers; embrace a greater diversity of writing and publishing practices; and provide equity-seeking groups and communities throughout Nova Scotia with better access to our services.

As the Board and staff of the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia develop a plan for the next three to five years – a plan that will guide us to and beyond our fortieth anniversary in 2016 – it is exciting to imagine what the Federation

might look like as a proactive and responsive arts service organization attuned to the voices, both past and present, of its members. How might the Federation assist members with their increased agency in the creative economy in Nova Scotia, Canada, and internationally? What strategies might drive our advocacy for writers and writing? How might we help hone the craft of writers throughout the province in their own communities? How might partnerships with more organizations and agencies assist WFNS with program delivery and with developing new readers, audiences, and stakeholders?

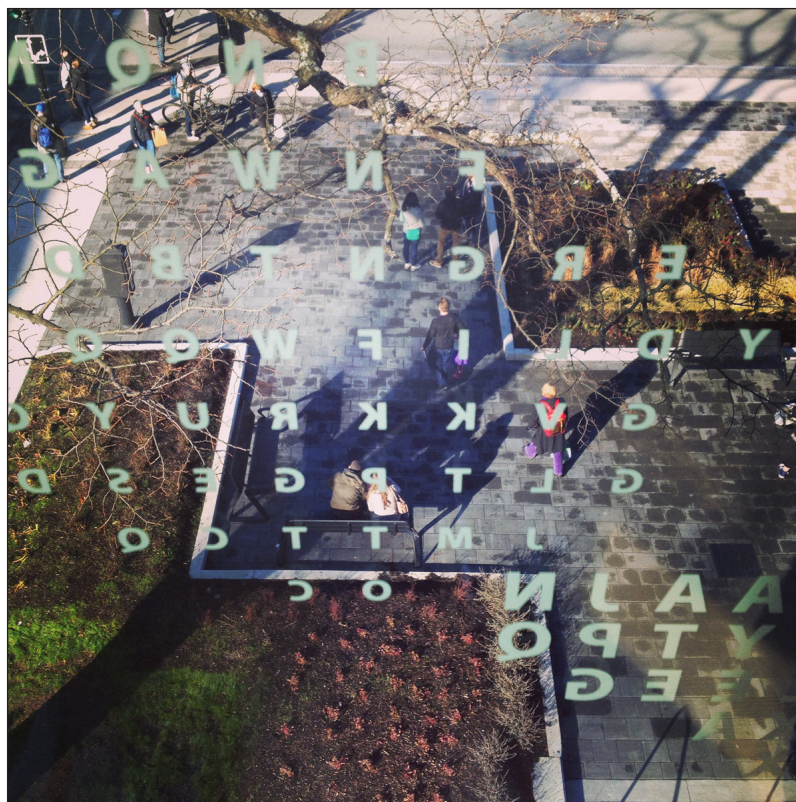
Although there is much to discuss, we have already acted on feedback from the member survey earlier this year. In November, we launched Anatomy of a Book, our professional development series, along with additional sessions devoted to social media and, in partnership with our friends at the

Artists' Legal Information Society (ALIS), to contracts and copyright law.

The Regional Coordinator program, an initiative designed to help facilitate our programs throughout Nova Scotia and augment the 'unity through diversity' of members' voices, will launch in January. In the new year, we will rethink *Eastword* as part of a comprehensive communications and development strategy. And during 2015 we will offer more formal and informal opportunities to gather, network, and converse. These kinds of initiatives build on and replenish the WFNS mandate, just as ongoing conversations with members will help chart our future course.

And perhaps the future is now, a few blocks from Terminal and Marginal is a glinting abutment of geometrical forms and of commingling, congregating light. On Saturday, December 13, the Federation participated in the opening celebration of the Halifax Central Library with a series of readings by our members. As we stood and spoke and listened among the extraordinary, palpable excitement and energy on that day, we couldn't help but be inspired by what Halifax Public Libraries had accomplished by reimagining what a library could be. Halifax Public Libraries have been brave, bold, and innovative in their planning of the new building, creating a resource that is relevant, responsive to the needs of the community, welcoming, and inclusive of all who can contribute to, and benefit from, its services.

The importance of our being invited to participate in this significant event for Halifax and Nova Scotia should not be lost on any of us. The invitation recognizes



A view from the Halifax Central Library.

the role of the Federation and its members among the communities this bright beacon of a new library serves. The members we asked to participate were drawn randomly, which was the fairest way we could select members for the limited spots to participate in this memorable opportunity. The resulting writers of poetry, fiction, non-fiction, teen fiction, and picture books included a founding member of the WFNS, a member from Sydney (along with a contingent of friends and family), and a newly published member who had developed her craft as a writer through several WFNS programs. In short, the readers representing the Federation during the celebration provided a fortuitous cross-section of our membership.

As a cultural and communal space, the Halifax Central Library listens to where we have

come from and gives voice to where we are going – not in any prescriptive sense, however, but rather in the context of the sight lines of Citadel Hill and the letter forms poised in walls of glass, in walls of light. The voices on opening day, of WFNS members, and of the throng of curious and inspired citizens, are both new and old, both inherited histories and the emerging present.

As we plan for and look beyond the 40th anniversary of the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia in 2016, we should aspire to this level of service, emboldened simultaneously by our history and by emerging opportunities. As part of this planning, we will be looking to existing and potential members to both celebrate the legacy of the WFNS and look toward the future. We look forward to hearing your voice. ■