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2024/2025

Annual Report

Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia



Image: Kyle Miller, 2024

Prepared by
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Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

We started the year welcoming four new Board members—Becca Babcock, Habiba Diallo, Lindsey Harrington, and Cory Lavender. It's been great to have them on board (pun intended!) as they each bring unique perspectives and expertise to the work we do behind the scenes. They have fit right in with the returning Board members, and it feels like they've always been here.

It's been a busy and productive year for the Board as we've focused on efficiency, outreach, and planning for the future.



In December, staff and Board participated in a full-day WFNS Strategic Planning Session led by Joe Britto. We were fortunate to be joined by Sylvia Gunnery (long-time member, past Board member, and past Board President) and Anna Quon (Halifax's Poet Laureate, long-time member, and past Board member as well) as we drew out our visions for the future of the Writers' Fed. And we dreamt big! The Strategy & Policies Committee is now working hard to put our visions into actionable items for the years to come.

As part of our efficiency work, the Membership Committee—led by Danica Roache—presented a new points-based system for applying to the Writers' Council. After lots of hard work, the new system was voted in and has taken effect. This will make the application process more transparent, for those applying to the Writers' Council, and more objective, for future Boards approving the applications they receive.

One of our outreach efforts was taking the Writing Rumble on the Road! I'll let the chair of our Fund Development Committee, Whitney Moran, provide the details in her report, but WFNS took the annual Rumble to New Glasgow and had a great time! We're always looking for ways to reach communities who may be under-represented by WFNS, so if you have an idea of where you think the Rumble should go next, or a community that could use some engagement in another way, please let us know.

Our financials have been in great hands with Oriana Duinker, Carol Shilibeer, and Michelle Elrick leading the helm. We are ending the year in good financial standing, and I want to thank Carol for her thorough financial reports to the Board, her expertise, and her guidance as we navigate the current (and somewhat unpredictable) economic climate. The costs of Jampolis have settled out now that the new deck and heat pumps have been installed, and we've adapted to the costs that come with owning a property. The Jampolis retreat and residencies—both self-directed and sponsored—filled up quickly this past year, and if you are fortunate enough to attend one in the future, or visit the cottage for an event, I highly recommend looking through the guestbook for all the wonderful things people have to say about their stays. A special thanks to Terry Pulliam for keeping the cottage well-stocked and warm and being such excellent caretakers.

I also want to extend my appreciation to all the chairs of the committees—Becca Babcock, Lindsey Harrington, Tiffany Morris, Whitney Moran, Philip Moscovitch, Danica Roache, and Carol Shilibeer—for leading us through some of the less-glamorous but nonetheless important work that keeps WFNS running. One of our Board's Directors-at-Large, Kevin MacDonnell, has reached the end of his term, and I'd like to thank him for his contributions each meeting, his active engagement in committee work, and his kind demeanour. We will miss you and wish you well!

We ended our last 2024/2025 Board meeting on a high note as we discussed how WFNS will celebrate its

50th Anniversary in 2026! With that in mind, we voted in the creation of a new ad-hoc 50th Anniversary Committee, which will be tasked with exploring how to best celebrate this huge milestone. If anyone has any ideas or would like to be involved with the planning of this event, please reach out and let us know.

I want to end with a note of gratitude for the staff of the WFNS—Oriana, Andy, Linda, and Dea. They are some of the hardest working people I've ever encountered, and they continue to surprise me with how much they can accomplish in a single day. It's been wonderful to work alongside you.

Lastly, thank you to all members of WFNS, the people who make this organization so wonderful to be a part of. It's been a privilege to serve as Board President this past year, and I'm looking forward to what's to come in 2026.

Warmly,

Joanne Gallant

President

Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

I think I speak for all WFNS staff when I say the past year has sped by in a happy, productive blur! As you read our Annual Report, I hope you'll be pleased to see that our flagship programs are strong and steady and that we're continuing to add new, fun events and programs to our busy schedule.

One way that I want to continue to make WFNS engaging and accessible to our membership across Nova Scotia is by hosting more of our events and programs outside of HRM. A highlight for me this year has been strengthening our connections with writers in Pictou and Antigonish Counties. With the help of their dynamic library network and grassroots writing community, we sent WFNS members donalee Moulton and Sal Sawler to the region in spring of 2024 for in-person workshops. In the fall, we took our Writing Rumble on the Road to New Glasgow, where we engaged ten enthusiastic and eager writers in a hilarious, face-paced writing relay that really drew a crowd. We also partnered with Read by the Sea (RBTS) to present Books on the Breeze, a monthly off-season reading and workshop series featuring past RBTS authors. Slowly but surely, we hope to strengthen similar connections in other counties across the province.



An especially heartwarming event was our Just My Type poetry pop-up for Valentine's Day. I had the pleasure of spending a morning at the Wolfville Farmers' Market with Ami McKay, Angela Reynolds, and Blanca Baquero as they typed poems on-demand for all sorts of lovely recipients. Meanwhile, at the Halifax Brewery Market, we had Lindsey Harrington and Aren Morris slinging poems. Kudos to Lindsey for the event idea! We raised funds for the Maxine Tynes Nova Scotia Poetry Award and raised the spirits of all who chanced upon our typewriter tables. It was a fantastic way to raise awareness of WFNS among the general public and to get more local writing out into people's lives!

Back at 1113 Marginal Road—the longtime home of the Fed—we've been making an effort to spruce up our office and make better use of it as an event space. Fresh coats of paint (with each staff member choosing the colour for their respective corner of the office!) and some significant reorganization projects have made our work space more comfortable and productive. With the help of my colleagues at the other cultural federations, I spearheaded the return of the Cultural Federations of Nova Scotia holiday party. After the long hiatus of the famous holiday gathering, it was amazing to have our shared event space filled once more with members and staff from all eight organizations! In this space, we also hosted the shortlist announcement for the Atlantic and Nova Scotia Book Awards in March, a literary trivia night in April, and our Celebration of Emerging Writers in early June—as well as over a dozen WFNS members for book launches and public readings. Our home is your home, so please get in touch if you want to use our space for an event.

Speaking of events, I want to give a special shoutout to WFNS Program Manager Andy Verboom for creating a resource I've long wished to see on the WFNS website: our new Literary Events Calendar. This public calendar displays so beautifully what we all knew to be true—that Nova Scotia has an incredibly active literary scene. Festivals, book launches, readings, workshops, and more can be submitted by WFNS members through an easy-to-use event submission form on the calendar.

I'd like to give a big thanks to the WFNS team for another productive and congenial year. We enjoyed and appreciated having **Dea Toivonen** join our staff as a part-time Social & Outreach Coordinator in the fall. Dea helped ease everyone's workload and really raised our social media game and outreach activities. Program Manager **Andy Verboom** reached his 5-year anniversary at the Fed and continues to be the backbone of all of our communications, website features, and member resources. Having reached her

10-year anniversary at WFNS this past year, Program Manager **Linda Hudson** continues her important work of overseeing the peer-assessment components of our programming and Writers In The Schools, a vital arts education program. Residency Attendant **Terry Pulliam** continues to take good care of our beloved Jampolis Cottage in Avonport. I'm so grateful to work with a team who shows so much dedication to and enthusiasm for the local literary community.

As we head into our 50th year as an organization, I look forward to learning more from members about WFNS's history and brainstorming ideas for how we can celebrate this important milestone!

Sincerely,

Oriana Duinker

Executive Director

Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

The mandate of the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia (WFNS) is captured in our Mission Statement:
To foster creative writing and the profession of writing in the province of Nova Scotia; to provide advice and assistance to writers at all stages of their careers; to encourage greater public recognition of writers and their achievements; and to enhance the literary arts in our regional and national culture.

Fulfillment of our mission is guided by our core values:

1. We value the diversity of writers in all regions of Nova Scotia and are inclusive of all backgrounds, abilities, and languages represented in the province. We value all genres of writing and strive to create a welcoming, accessible, and supportive atmosphere for all writers.
2. We value the practice of writing and the importance of developing our skill and craft as writers.
3. We value writing as a passion and a profession. We strive to represent the interests and protect the rights of all writers.
4. We value community building among writers. We encourage writers to connect to readers, services, and resources. We have an appreciation for writing and a commitment to supporting its role in the life of Nova Scotians. We value the contributions of Nova Scotia writers regionally, nationally, and internationally.
5. We value the inherent skills and resources of our community and, where possible, will use the skills and resources of our membership and community at large.
6. We value professionalism and conduct ourselves with a high level of integrity. We are resourceful and creative in how we manage our organization's operations.

Membership

As an arts service organization with a mandate that is provincial in scope and inclusive of all established and emerging writing practices, WFNS serves members throughout Nova Scotia. General Membership dues (\$65, or \$30 for students, the underwaged, and those on fixed incomes) can be paid at any time in the calendar year. At the end of December, 2024, WFNS had 783 members in good standing.

There are two types of membership:

- **General Membership** is an annual designation open to anyone with an interest in creative writing, regardless of writing experience or place of residence. Benefits include eligibility to participate in members-only resources and programs, discounted registration and program fees, subscription to the members-only newsletter, and voting rights at General Meetings. General Membership is also required to activate the benefits of Writer's Council Membership.
- **Writers' Council Membership** is a permanent designation that is open (by application) to General Members who (1) have produced a professional body of work and (2) have developed the literary skills to provide literary instruction, assessment, and/or mentorship. Writers' Council members are eligible for numerous competitively compensated opportunities through WFNS programs, including instructing adults (through workshops) and youth (through Writer In The Schools); providing peer assessment for programs and awards; mentoring and advising newer writers; and giving public talks and readings.

Governance

The Board of Directors of the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia is a governance board, holding legal authority and fiduciary responsibility for oversight of WFNS's mandate and of the implementation of WFNS's mission. The Board's role is to govern the affairs of WFNS within relevant legal and legislative requirements for a nonprofit and charitable organization, to develop and implement Board policy, and to ensure the stability and viability of WFNS.

The Board engages an Executive Director, who is responsible for the management and day-to-day operations of WFNS. The Board and the Executive Director draw on the work of Standing Committees and Ad-Hoc Committees to help advance governance and operational activities.

Board Structure

The Board of Directors consists of no fewer than 8 and no more than 12 Directors and a Past-President position. A maximum of four Directors may be General Members, and the remainder must be Writers' Council members. Directors are elected by the membership at the Annual General Meeting. The term of office is normally two years, and a Director normally serves a maximum of two consecutive terms. The Board Officers are President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary, and these Officers have roles and responsibilities in addition to the core duties of all Directors. The Past-President position is a non-voting ex-officio Board Member.

The Board normally meets six to eight times a year. Board Committees meet between Board meetings in order to advance the responsibilities outlined in the Committee Terms of Reference and prepare any information or recommendations for review and action at Board meetings.

2024/2025 Board of Directors

President:	Joanne Gallant (Halifax)
Vice President:	Whitney Moran (West Dover)
Treasurer:	Carol Shillibeer (Glace Bay)
Secretary:	Rebecca Babcock (Halifax)
Directors-at-Large:	Habiba Diallo (Halifax)
	Lindsey Harrington (Dartmouth)
	Cory Lavender (Gunning Cove)
	Kevin MacDonell (Bedford)
	Tiffany Morris (Halifax)
	Danica Roache (Dartmouth)
	Steve Vernon (Halifax)
Past-President:	Philip Moscovitch (Glen Margaret)

Staff

Executive Director:	Oriana Duinker (Halifax)
Program Manager (Arts Education):	Linda Hudson (Halifax)
Program Manager (Membership Services):	Andy Verboom (Halifax)
Outreach & Social Coordinator:	Dea Toivonen (Halifax)
Residency Attendant (Jampolis Cottage):	Terry Pulliam (Hantsport)

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) Committee

The EDIA Committee oversees the improvement of programming and of communication and outreach practices to create more equitable opportunities for member and public participation and to eliminate barriers to participation created by discrimination and bias on the basis of race, ethnicity, (dis)ability, gender, sexual orientation, and other protected classes under Canadian law. The EDIA Committee also works with the Strategy & Policies Committee to ensure WFNS policies are equitable.

Composition

- Chair: Tiffany Morris (Director-at-Large)
- Habiba Diallo (Director-At-Large)
- Cory Lavender (Director-At-Large)
- Danice Roache (Director-At-Large)
- Dea Toivonen (WFNS Outreach & Social Coordinator)

Chair's Report

The inaugural year of the EDIA Committee focused primarily on the positionality of the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia. The committee was happy to begin this work by evaluating the WFNS Solidarity Statement. Members discussed the wording of the statement and identified areas for potential improvement and growth. The committee came away with deep appreciation for the moment in which the statement was initially written and its passionate, empathetic, and action-oriented language. Tone and positioning were great; the object became to expand the language rather than to excise or revise.

In terms of outreach, the committee collaborated on social media posts affirming the importance of EDIA work for writers and for WFNS. Moving forward, the EDIA Committee will provide additional support for WFNS social media outreach to ensure that the audience is made aware of opportunities for equity-deserving groups, as well as the general work that WFNS does to promote EDIA. The EDIA Committee also identified possibilities for outreach through presence at powwows and posters at cultural and student centres and in university English departments.

Internally, the EDIA Committee has also planned workshops and discussions to take place in-person prior to the second meeting of the 2025/2026 Board of Directors in September. These will enable the Board to be introduced to other members and become familiar with committees, their functions, and their roles. This meeting will also include facilitated discussions on inclusion, education on microaggressions, and a Treaty-education workshop.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee advises the Board on matters relating to the finances of the organization and provides financial information to help the Board and Executive Director make fiscal decisions and plans.

Composition

- Chair: Carol Shillibeer (Treasurer)
- Oriana Duinker (Executive Director)
- Joanne Gallant (President)

Chair's Report

See the AGM document Financial Statements for 2024/2025 Fiscal Year.

Fund Development Committee

The Fund Development Committee assists the Executive Director in the implementation and evaluation of a range of fund development strategies that identify and solicit support from public, private, and corporate sectors.

Composition

- Chair: Whitney Moran (Vice President)
- Joanne Gallant (President)
- Lindsey Harrington (Director-at-Large)
- Kevin MacDonell (Director-at-Large)
- Angela Reynolds (Writers' Council member)
- Oriana Duinker (Executive Director)

Chair's Report

As always, the Fund Development's mandate was to raise \$10,000 for the year. This year we raised a total of **\$10,217 through fundraising events and general donations.**

This was the first calendar year with two Writing Rumbles. We decided to take our biggest fundraising event to a rural area of Nova Scotia—to serve as outreach while raising money for WFNS programming. Oriana worked closely with New Glasgow writer Sarah Butland to organize two teams of Rumbles: the Shore Things (Sarah “The Wrangler” Butland, Denise “The Spark” Flint, Emily “The Alliterator” MacNeil, Megan “Megatron” Coffin, and TP “The Walloper” Wood) and the Strongly-Lettered Words (Paula “The Pen Pusher” Romanow, Lauren “The Linguist” Forbes, Angela “Built Tough” Ford, Thekla “The Technician” Altmann, and Colleen “The Befuddled” Hawley). The *Pictou Advocate* ran a story in the lead-up to the event.

Unfortunately, Oriana came down with COVID the morning of the Rumble, but she had everything organized, so Andy Verboom and Whitney Moran had it in hand. We took the rumble to New Glasgow's Showbox Cantina, where the writing relay and readings took place from 3pm to 8pm. The venue and crowd were fantastic, and total funds raised were **\$2,154**, going toward Jampolis Sponsored Residencies. This is lower than our usual Rumble funds raised, but we knew we were taking a risk going on the road, and it was well worth the connections made and how gracious the Pictou County writers were to have the WFNS come to their community!

As Oriana stated in her ED report to the Board that month, “The outreach and community-building aspect of this event was as important as the fundraising.”

This marks the beginning of the Rumble on the Road edition of the Writing Rumble, which will happen every second year, with the remainder of the Rumbles taking place in HRM.

We continued our **Silent Write** nights, with a handful of monthly events raising a total of **\$630**. The event occurred in-person at the WFNS office, as well as at satellite events in Chester, Lunenburg, and Canning, and online. Numbers have varied but we continue to receive really positive feedback from attendees, so we'll try to host this event when we can. It has proven a great way to organize low-cost events outside of HRM and connect regional writers to writers in HRM.

On February 8, 2025, we hosted a very fun new Valentine's bespoke poetry pop-up event—Just My Type—

simultaneously at the Halifax Farmers' Market, with poets Aren Morris and Lindsey Harrington, and at the Wolfville Farmers' Market, with poets Angela Reynolds (who provided hand-sewn "poet" badges), Blanca Baquero, and Ami McKay. Whitney Moran and Oriana Duinker were there to help facilitate. Poems were also available online from poets Lindsey Harrington, Dea Toivonen, and Jen Colclough from February 1 - 10. We had budgeted \$1,000 in revenue for this fundraiser, counting on a third location at Lunenburg Farmers' Market, which unfortunately had to cancel because of the weather. Even so, the response was incredible, and we raised a total of **\$1,165** for the Maxine Tynes Poetry Award!

While our total amount of public funds raised was a bit lower in 2024/2025 than in years past, we are so happy that we tried some new things, went to new places, and spread the word on WFNS across the region, all while raising money for our beloved Fed!

Membership Committee

The Membership Committee oversees the development of strategies for WFNS membership engagement and the growth of membership throughout the province. The Membership Committee also reviews applications for membership in the Writers' Council.

Composition

- Chair: Danica Roache (Director-at-Large)
- Cory Lavender (Director-at-Large)
- Rebecca Babcock (Secretary)
- Lindsey Harrington (Director-at-Large)
- Tina Capalbo (Writers' Council)

Chair's Report

Since the last Annual General Meeting, we have welcomed 21 professional writers to the WFNS Writers' Council fold: Renée Belliveau, Gina Brown, Lindsay Gloade-Raining Bird, Clare Goulet, Lindsey Harrington, Claire Horn, Joseph Howse, George K. Ilsley, Melissa Kuipers, Susan LeBlanc, Mireille Messier, Sue Murtagh, Anne O'Connell, Sara O'Leary, Norma Shepherd, Lana Shupe, Tricia Snell, Sarah Sweeney, Nancy Waldman, Christine Wu, and Vivian Zhou.

General Membership numbers remain high: as of June 6, 2025, WFNS has 728 General Members.

This year, the Membership Committee revamped the application process for acceptance into the Writers' Council. Taking into consideration the ever-changing world of publishing, we felt that the stream-based system in place for evaluating Writers' Council applications was inadequate. We have introduced a points-based system that will provide a holistic yet structured approach to reviewing applications. This new application process recognizes the myriad ways an author may gain the necessary experience to become a member of the Writers' Council. It also allows for unsuccessful applicants to see the areas in which they need more experience—and hopefully give applicants new ideas for specific literary activities that will not only help them join the Writers' Council but also broaden their writing skill set and writing community.

Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee conducts the recruitment, selection, contract negotiations, performance evaluation, and release of the Executive Director. The Personnel Committee also assists in the review of the Personnel Policy and in any processes concerning appeals and grievances that may be necessary.

Composition

- Chair: Philip Moscovitch (Past-President)
- Joanne Gallant (President)
- Whitney Moran (Vice President)

Chair's Report

The Personnel Committee carried out its regular duties over the course of the year — approving vacation time, conducting the Executive Director's job evaluation, and offering advice to the Executive Director as requested.

Two noteworthy issues did arise this year and were satisfactorily resolved.

1) It came to our attention that WFNS staff member Linda Hudson has been entitled to three weeks of annual vacation as of 2019. However, neither Linda nor any other current staff or Board members were aware of this until September, 2024. As a result, WFNS owed Linda a total of four additional weeks of vacation or the equivalent in cash. Linda opted for the cash payment. Treasurer Carol Shillibeer and Executive Director Oriana Duinker averaged Linda's salary for the four years, and WFNS paid her a lump sum to settle this issue, to the satisfaction of all parties.

2) An issue arose with respect to regular caretaker duties at Jampolis Cottage, and who was performing them. This issue did not have any negative impact on guests and residents at Jampolis. Terry Pulliam is employed as the part-time Residency Attendant, but he regularly called upon the assistance of one or two other individuals (who are not contracted employees of WFNS) to help with the turnover duties. The Personnel Committee had concerns about work being undertaken by other individuals without a contract, and so Terry has agreed to manage the turnover duties without assistance going forward.

Programs Committee

The Programs Committee oversees the development of WFNS programming and acts as a resource for generating ideas, for feedback on plans, and discussion of policy implications in relation to programming.

Composition

- Chair: Lindsey Harrington (Director-at-Large)
- Oriana Duinker (Executive Director)
- Habiba Diallo (Director-at-Large)
- Cory Lavender (Director-at-Large)
- Allan Billard (General Member)

Chair's Report

As many previous Programs Committee initiatives, such as Jampolis Cottage, are up and running smoothly, the 2024/2025 Programs Committee turned its attention to two projects important for WFNS members.

Nova Writes survey and program realignment

A survey was developed, launched, and promoted by the committee, resulting in input from 107 writers regarding the logistics, entry requirements, and prize offerings of the Nova Writes Competition. These were analyzed and discussed, resulting in the following new format that was launched in 2024-2025:

- Each Nova Writes entrant receives ~100 words of developmental feedback from a volunteer reader (valued at \$25).

- Volunteer readers are recruited by WFNS for their literary skills and professional experiences as writers, editors, booksellers, librarians, or teachers. The team of readers in each prize category collectively selects a prize shortlist of up to four entrants. Feedback is returned by email after the shortlist is announced.
- Each finalist for a prize receives an additional ~200 words of developmental feedback from that year's judge for the prize (valued at \$50).
- The winner of each prize receives a full manuscript review (~500 words of developmental feedback) and a one-hour advisory session with that year's judge (together valued at \$245), as well as compensated publication in the annual Nova Writes anthology (\$50) and a compensated reading opportunity at the annual Celebration of Emerging Writers (\$75), where the anthology is launched.
- Each finalist and winner also receives a contributor copy of the annual Nova Writes anthology and may purchase additional copies at cost.

Book Awards residency requirements

WFNS had received feedback from members that the current eligibility requirements for the Nova Scotia Book Awards were too rigid. They required entrants to be full-time residents of Nova Scotia who have lived in Nova Scotia for at least two consecutive years immediately prior to the submission deadline date. This excluded those who had temporarily relocated for reasons such as familial obligations, education, or health needs.

As such, the Programs Committee completed a sector scan of other provincial and national book awards and their residency requirements, reviewed trends, and will be putting forth a proposal to the Board during summer of 2025 to modify the requirements.

Other programming work

The committee has also supported staff in new initiatives that fulfill their mandate, such as the Off the Page monthly reading series, which offers emerging writers the opportunity to read from works-in-progress in a friendly community space and to network with other writers and readers. To maximize reach and staff capacity, some events have been combined this year, such as the combination of the cider launch for Message on a Bottle and the Celebration of Emerging Writers (including the Nova Writes Competition winners, Alistair Macleod Mentorship Program graduates, and Emerging Writers Prizes recipients) into a social event for members and others.

Many in-person events have occurred at the Writer's Federation Board Room, such as write-ins, a Christmas gathering, and the aforementioned Celebration of Emerging Writers. This reduces the Federation's costs and enhances member connection with the Federation space and its resources. All in all, it was a productive and rewarding year for the Programming Committee.

Recruitment & Nominating Committee

The Recruitment & Nominating Committee ensures that appointments to the Board of Directors are conducted in accordance with WFNS By-Laws. The Recruitment & Nominating Committee also identifies, recruits, and nominates candidates for available positions on the Board in order to recommend a full slate of candidates (and no more than a full slate) at Annual General Meetings while ensuring that the General Membership is informed beforehand about the process of nominating candidates from the floor during Annual General Meetings. The Recruitment & Nominating Committee also recruits representatives from the WFNS membership for the purposes of member representation on committees where appropriate.

Composition

- Chair: Philip Moscovitch (President)
- Cory Lavender (Director-at-Large)
- Tiffany Morris (Director-at-Large)

Chair’s Report

As of May 23, 2025, the WFNS board has two members at the end of their first two-year term who are seeking re-election (members can serve for two consecutive two-year terms), one member ending their term and not seeking re-election, and one vacant seat. The vacant seat was previously filled by Joe Britto, who resigned from the Board in January, 2025. The Board decided not to fill this seat for the remainder of the governance year.

Director	Member status	Role in 2024/2025 governance year	Consecutive years served (as of AGM 2025)	Status (as of AGM 2025)
Whitney Moran	Writers’ Council & General Member	Vice-President	3	Continuing
Tiffany Morris	Writers’ Council & General Member	Director-at-Large	3	Continuing
Carol Shilibeer	General Member	Treasurer	3	Continuing
Kevin MacDonell	General Member	Director-at-Large	2	Director retiring: election required
Joanne Gallant	Writers’ Council & General Member	President	2	Seeking re-election
Danica Roache	General Member	Director-at-Large	2	Seeking re-election
Becca Babcock	Writers’ Council & General Member	Secretary	1	Continuing
Habiba Diallo	Writers’ Council & General Member	Director-at-Large	1	Continuing
Lindsey Harrington	Writers’ Council & General Member	Director-at-Large	1	Continuing
Cory Lavender	Writers’ Council & General Member	Director-at-Large	1	Continuing
Steve Vernon	Writers’ Council & General Member	Director-at-Large	1	Continuing
[Seat vacant]	n/a	n/a	n/a	Seat vacant: election required

The Recruitment & Nominating Committee was tasked with recruiting and endorsing two members to stand for election to a first Board term: those candidates are Renée Hartleib and Sonja Boon.

While the Committee endorses certain candidates, any member of WFNS may run for a position on the Board. Notices to this effect were included in email communications with the membership, on the WFNS website, and in the *Subtext* newsletter.

Strategy & Policies Committee

The Strategy & Policies Committee sets and maintains the strategic direction of WFNS through the development of a five-year strategic plan and annual assessment of that plan. It also develops and reviews policies and By-Laws that provide policy governance for WFNS.

Composition

- Chair from January to June, 2025: Becca Babcock (Secretary)
- Kevin MacDonell (Director at Large)
- Carol Shilibeer (Treasurer)
- Sylvia Gunnery (Writers' Council)
- Oriana Duinker (Executive Director)
- Chair from June to December, 2024: Joe Britto (Director at Large)

In 2024/2025, the committee was tasked with preparing the WFNS's strategic plan for 2026 through 2031. In December, under then-Chair Joe Britto's guidance, staff and Board members, as well as Writers' Council members and members at large, were invited to attend a hybrid strategic planning session at the WFNS office in Halifax and online. At this full-day session, participants took part in visioning activities to identify key organizational strategies and initiatives to guide the organization in the coming five years.

In January, 2025, Joe Britto decided to resign his position as Director-at-Large and, thus, as committee Chair. The remaining committee members continued the work of translating the visioning activities to a strategic plan with Becca Babcock as the new committee Chair. The committee has spent the winter and spring months drafting a strategic plan, with the intent of presenting it to the Board in the summer of 2025.

In May, the committee also presented policy revisions suggested by WFNS staff to the Board for approval.

PROGRAM REPORTS

Alistair MacLeod Mentorship Program

Since 2001, the Alistair MacLeod Mentorship Program has supported the development of emerging writers in Nova Scotia who are on the cusp of professional publication and who are committed to their writing and creative development. It is a disciplined, focused, and supportive one-on-one apprenticeship program through which writers expand and hone their craft.

Through this program, WFNS pairs professionally published writers with emerging writers, taking care through an assessment process to match mentoring authors' experience and craft with emerging writers' project goals and draft manuscripts. Writers from across Nova Scotia — with projects in all forms and genres of fiction, non-fiction, and poetry — are welcome to apply.

The program helps emerging writers overcome barriers to their growth and development, provides mentoring authors with an opportunity to refine their mentorship and instructional skills, and reaffirms the creative conviction of everyone involved.

Two cohorts of the MacLeod Mentorship Program run over the fiscal year, including the 22nd cohort, who began their work in December of 2023 and finished in June of 2024:

- Fiction: Apprentice and winner of the Charles R. Saunders Prize **Theo Feehan-Peters** (Inverness) was mentored by **Tom Ryan** (Dartmouth)
- Fiction: Apprentice **Dana Mount** (Sydney) was mentored by **Chris Benjamin** (Halifax)
- Memoir: Apprentice **Storme Arden** (Three Mile Plains) was mentored by **Donna Morrissey** (Halifax)
- Memoir: Apprentice **Elizabeth Jeha** (Halifax) was mentored by **Sandra Phinney** (Yarmouth)
- Poetry: Apprentice **Janelle Levesque** (Halifax) was mentored by **Alice Burdick** (Mahone Bay)

The 23rd cohort of the MacLeod Mentorship Program just wrapped up their work and participated in the Celebration of Emerging Writers (in-person at the Cultural Federations of Nova Scotia, Halifax) on June 11, 2025:

- Fiction: Apprentice **Jennifer Stewart** (Halifax) was mentored by **Carol Bruneau** (Halifax)
- Non-Fiction: Apprentice **Melizza Goertzen** (Halifax) was mentored by **Evelyn C. White** (Halifax)
- Geriatric Sci-Fi: Apprentice **Roberta McGinn** (Halifax) was mentored by **Elaine McClusky** (Dartmouth)
- Afrofuturist Sci-Fi and Eco-Fiction: Apprentice and winner of the Charles R. Saunders Prize: **Nailah Tataa** (Halifax) was mentored by **Julian Mortimer Smith** (Yarmouth)

The duration of the Mentorship program was shortened from five to three months in 2024/2025 due to budgetary constraints. We will continue to assess the best balance between the best length for a productive mentorship and the number of participants we can accommodate, based on funding each year.

Book Awards

Book Awards administered by WFNS celebrate and promote excellence in writing from Nova Scotia and from Atlantic Canada. The number of titles submitted each year is a testament to the diversity and quality of writing from our region. Although jurors have the unenviable task of selecting one winner for each award, each year's shortlists introduce local, national, and international readers to a tremendous body of work and the vibrant culture of the region. WFNS administers and acts as steward for two Nova Scotia Book Awards

and three Atlantic Book Awards.

All awards are given annually, with the exception of the biennial Maxine Tynes Nova Scotia Poetry Award (established in 2020 and first awarded in 2021). All WFNS book awards are supported by endowments.

WFNS's Nova Scotia and Atlantic Book Awards are presented at two ceremonies held during the same week. The 2025 Evelyn Richardson Non-Fiction Award (\$2,000) and the Maxine Tynes Nova Scotia Poetry Award (\$2,000) were presented as part of the **Nova Scotia Book Awards Gala**, hosted by author Lindsey Ruck on June 2 at Brightwood Golf and Country Club (Dartmouth). WFNS's 2025 Atlantic Book Awards — the J.M. Abraham Atlantic Poetry Award (\$2,000), the Ann Connor Brimer Award for Atlantic Canadian Children's Literature (\$5,000), and the Thomas Raddall Atlantic Fiction Award (\$30,000) — were presented as part of the **Atlantic Book Awards Gala**, hosted by CBC's Amy Smith on June 5 at Paul O'Regan Hall, Halifax Central Library (Halifax).

In the fall of 2024, WFNS's Nova Scotia and Atlantic Book Awards attracted **128 total submissions** from publishers and self-published authors (compared to 170 submissions in fall of 2022):

- 34 submissions for the Evelyn Richardson Non-Fiction Award
- 23 submissions for the J.M. Abraham Atlantic Poetry Award
- 12 submissions for the Ann Connor Brimer Award for Atlantic Canadian Children's Literature
- 46 submissions for the Thomas Raddall Atlantic Fiction Award
- 13 submissions for the Maxine Tynes Nova Scotia Poetry Award

Winners, finalists, and juries for the 2025 awards are listed below.

Evelyn Richardson Non-Fiction Award

Winner: Andrea Currie, *Finding Otipemisiwak: The People Who Own Themselves* (Arsenal Pulp Press)

Finalists:

- Martin Bauman, *Hell of a Ride* (Pottersfield Press)
- Dean Jobb, *A Gentleman and a Thief* (HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.)

Jury: Sonja Boon, Lezlie Lowe, Darryl Whetter

Maxine Tynes Nova Scotia Poetry Award

Winner: Cory Lavender, *Come One Thing Another* (Gaspereau Press)

Finalists:

- Alice Burdick, *Ox Lost, Snow Deep* (Anvil Press)
- Annick MacAskill, *Votive* (Gaspereau Press)

Jury: Basma Kavanaugh, Nanci Lee, Sadie McCarney

Ann Connor Brimer Award for Atlantic Canadian Children's Literature

Winner: Valerie Sherrard, *Standing on Neptune* (DCB Young Readers)

Finalists:

- Chad Lucas, *You Owe Me One, Universe* (Harry N. Abrams)
- Rebecca Phillips, *The End of Always* (Second Story Press)
- Hannah D. State, *Journey to the Dark Galaxy* (Glowing Light Press)
- Gloria Ann Wesley, *Shovels not Rifles* (Formac Publishing Company)

Jury: Charis Cotter, Martha Langille, Chad Lucas

J.M. Abraham Atlantic Poetry Award

Winner: Douglas Walbourne-Gough, *Island* (Goose Lane Editions)

Finalists:

- Clare Goulet, *Graphis Scripta / Writing Lichen* (Gaspereau Press)
- Annick MacAskill, *Votive* (Gaspereau Press)
- Johanna Skibsrud, *Medium* (Book*hug Press)
- Bren Simmers, *The Work* (Gaspereau Press)

Jury: Abena Green, Kathy MacConnell, Shannon Webb-Campbell

Thomas Raddall Atlantic Fiction Award

Winner: David Huebert, *Oil People* (McClelland & Stewart)

Finalists:

- Carol Bruneau, *Threshold* (Nimbus Publishing & Vagrant Press)
- Mark Blagrove, *Felt* (Cormorant Books)
- Charlene Carr, *We Rip the World Apart* (HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.)
- Susie Taylor, *Vigil* (Breakwater Books)

Jury: Sarah Butland, Dian Day, William Ping

A number of literary events led up to the two book award ceremonies, including the following:

- **Writing the Truth: An Evening of Non-Fiction.** May 29 (7:00pm) at the University of King's College. Readings and conversation with finalists Martin Bauman, Andrea Currie, OmiSoore H. Dryden, Dean Jobb, and Bee Stanton. Hosted by Simon Thibault.
- **YA! Meet The Authors.** June 3 (4:00pm) at the MacPhee Learning Centre. Readings by finalists Chad Lucas, Rebecca Phillips, Hannah D. State, and Gloria Ann Wesley. Hosted by WFNS's Oriana Duinker and Digitally Lit Youth Ambassador Jorja Walker.
- **An Evening of Short Stories.** June 3 (7:00pm) at the Inverness County Centre for the Arts. Readings by finalists Allison Graves, Amanda Peters, and Susie Taylor. Hosted by Alexander MacLeod.
- **J.M. Abraham Atlantic Poetry Reading: Live at The Carleton.** June 4 (7:00pm) at The Carleton (Halifax). Readings by finalists Alice Burdick, Clare Goulet, Annick MacAskill, Johanna Skibsrud, and Bren Simmers. Hosted by Tara Thorne.
- **A Fiction Fête.** June 4 (7:00pm) at the Chester Playhouse. Featuring readings by finalists Carol Bruneau, Mark Blagrove, Charlene Carr, Lesley Crewe, Shawn Lawlor, Susan LeBlanc, and Susie Taylor. Hosted by Sarah Hampson.

Coffee Chats program and Manuscript Review Program

Launched in 2020, the Coffee Chats program enables WFNS members at all career stages to seek advice and inspiration from professional authors. Coffee Chats provide writers with affordable, subsidized access to the advice of professional authors on a wide range of topics related to the writing life, such as overcoming creative blocks and challenges, establishing healthy writing practices, and planning for publication opportunities. The program fee for advice-seeking writers is \$40; advisors are compensated \$65 for the 30-minute conversation, with the difference subsidized by WFNS.

Launched in 2016, the Manuscript Review Program enables WFNS members at all career stages to receive developmental advice for re-vamping, re-visioning, or re-conceiving a literary project that needs a fresh pair of eyes. Each manuscript review provides developmental advice for re-vamping, re-visioning, or re-conceiving a literary project that needs a fresh pair of eyes. The program fee for review-seeking writers starts at \$100 and increases with manuscript length; reviewers are compensated the full amount of the fee.

WFNS facilitated 9 advisory sessions and 11 manuscript reviews in the 2024/2025 fiscal year.

Ellemenno Visual Literature Prize

Established in 2023, the Ellemenno Visual Literature Prize recognizes creativity that bridges the formal divide between contemporary literary arts and visual arts in Nova Scotia, accepting both literary submissions (that respond to, incorporate, or creatively ‘translate’ visual artworks) and visual submissions (that respond to, incorporate, or creatively ‘translate’ literary works). The winning writer or artist receives a cash prize (\$250) along with digital publication and a featured interview on the WFNS website.

The Ellemenno Prize was established in recognition of textile artist Marilyn Smulders, who made significant contributions to Nova Scotia’s literary landscape during her tenure as WFNS Executive Director from 2017 to 2023. The prize is named for Marilyn’s screenprinting and quilting moniker, Ellemenno.

The 2025 prize was awarded to **Sonja Boon** (Halifax) for the textile work, *At Sea (Casket Cloth and Mourning Shawl)*, which responds to the diary of Alice Ann Coalfleet, “Six Years of Fortitude and Tragedy,” held in the Dalhousie University Archives. Sonja is a mixed race writer, researcher, flutist, and teacher based in Kijipuktuk. Her memoir, *What the Oceans Remember: Searching for Belonging and Home*, appeared in 2019, and she has published nonfiction, poetry, and fiction in a range of journals, including Riddle Fence, Room, Geist, Pinhole Poetry, and Unlost as well as in anthologies. She is passionate about life stories and the myriad ways these stories emerge: from traditional diaries, letters, and memoirs to archival ephemera. Her work attends to the relationship between text and textiles and to the ways that women’s lives have historically been stitched rather than written.

Finalists:

- **Doretta Groenendyk** (Canning) for the painting *We Just Swim*, which responds to Bonnie Tsui’s *Why We Swim* (Algoquin Books, 2021) and a musing by surfer and activist Dave Rastovich: “We forget our bodies as we know them and we just... swim.”
- **Jamie Samson** (Halifax) for the poetic sequence *Still, Life.*, which responds to three paintings—each, in Jamie’s words, “reflecting on a particular part of the working person’s day”: John Brack’s *The Breakfast Table* (1958); Salvador Dali’s *Living Still Life* (1956); Antoine Vollon’s *Mound of Butter* (1875-85).

Volunteer jury: Carol Shillibeer, Marilyn Smulders, Andy Verboom

Emerging Writers Prizes

WFNS administers three prizes for emerging and early-career writers, each of which recognizes barriers to literary creation and supports writers as they advance book-length works-in-progress — completing, revising, and/or submitting them for publication — and as they undertake creative writing mentorships and professional training to advance their literary careers.

Writers eligible for more than one prize are required to submit only one submission package. All three prizes are assessed by a single Emerging Writers Prizes jury. The 2024/2025 jurors were Jon Tattrie, Sherry D. Ramsey, and Brittany Oakley.

Charles R. Saunders Prize

Introduced in 2023, the Charles R. Saunders prize provides the recipient with time, space, and one-on-one mentorship as they complete, revise and edit, and/or submit work for publication. One prize (\$1,000 cash and a \$2,000-value literary mentorship through the Alistair MacLeod Mentorship Program) is awarded

each year to an emerging or early-career writer with an in-progress work in speculative fiction or in nonfiction that shows promise and career-advancing merit. Priority is given to writers from equity-deserving communities, including but not limited to writers who have faced marginalization on the basis of disability, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality.

2025 recipient: Nailah Tataa (Halifax) is a ritual-based writer, artist, and facilitator in Kijipuktuk. They are currently working on an article for Visual Arts Nova Scotia and learning the craft of writing about curation. Nailah's prize-winning submission is an excerpt from their collection of interconnected stories exploring afro-futurism and speculative eco-fiction. They are developing their manuscript through a three-month MacLeod Mentorship with Julian Mortimer Smith.

Elizabeth Venart Prize

Introduced in 2021, the Elizabeth Venart Prize provides the recipient with time, space, and professional development support as they complete, revise and edit, and/or submit work for publication. One prize (\$1,000 cash, \$200 in advisory sessions through the Coffee Chats program, and a \$550-value one-week residency at Jampolis Cottage) is awarded each year to an emerging or early-career writer working in any genre of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, or writing for children/YA whose work-in-progress shows promise and career-advancing merit. Eligible writers are women and/or other marginalized genders (including but not limited to Two-Spirit, trans, nonbinary, and fluid genders).

2025 recipient: Jaime Jacques (Halifax) studied journalism at Toronto Metropolitan University, is the author of *Moon El Salvador*, and has published her poetry in places like *Rattle*, *Rogue Agent*, *Variant Lit*, and *Birdcoat Quarterly*. She is a poetry reader for *PRISM International*. Jaime's award-winning submission is an excerpt from a poetry chapbook-in-progress, her debut, which addresses themes of privilege, inequality, neocolonialism, trauma, and healing.

Senator Don Oliver Black Voices Prize

Introduced in 2023, the Senator Don Oliver Black Voices Prize provides the recipient with time and space as they complete, revise and edit, and/or submit work for publication. One prize (\$5,000 cash) is awarded each year to an emerging or early-career writer working in any genre of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, or writing for children/YA whose work-in-progress shows promise and career-advancing merit. Eligible writers are Black and/or African Nova Scotian.

2025 recipient: Natasha Thomas (Halifax), a tenth-generation African Nova Scotian, is a playwright, composer, and theatre artist. A graduate of NSCC's Music Arts program, she blends music and storytelling as director of The Beyond Imagination Puppet Crew. She is part of the Black Theatre Workshop program and has stage-managed for Dartmouth Players, Halifax Fringe, and Neptune Theatre's 2023 Chrysalis Program. Natasha's prize-winning submission is an excerpt from her play, *Freedom Runs Two*, a cantata for a puppet theatre, that tells the history of African Nova Scotians from slavery to modern days through the eyes of a child and his grandmother.

Jampolis Cottage Residency Program

Introduced in 2023, the Jampolis Cottage Residency Program welcomes emerging, established, and professional authors from Nova Scotia and beyond. Through residencies and retreats, it provides committed writers with space and inspiration for focused development of their works-in-progress. Located on the shores of the Minas Basin in Avonport, Nova Scotia, Jampolis Cottage is a lovingly maintained and updated 230-year-old Georgian colonial house that welcomes emerging, established, and professional authors from Nova Scotia and beyond.

Cottage Facilities

After the significant renovation projects undertaken in spring of 2024 (rebuilding the deck, adding a wheelchair ramp to the back door, and installing heat pumps), we have slowed down on renovation projects for the moment until we can secure funding for our next projects: insulating the basement foundation walls and expanding and renovating the ground-floor bathroom to increase accessibility.

Self-Directed Retreats

Formerly called “Self-Directed Residencies,” Self-Directed Retreats (one or two weeks in length) are open to Nova Scotian, Canadian, and international writers. Applicants should apply in creative groups (of two to five) but may also apply as solo writers. Self-Directed Retreats are private and provided at-cost: a base rate of \$440 per week + \$110 per week per creative resident. There is no additional charge for essential companions (personal attendants, service animals, or dependants or domestic pets who require care) or for creative or social guests.

Self-Directed Retreat applications are deemed successful or unsuccessful (if missing elements) by WFNS staff and are not ranked by merit. Interested writers may subscribe for email notification whenever Self-Directed Retreat applications open; as of June 3, 2025, this email list has 207 subscribers, up from 151 subscribers a year prior.

In the 2024/2025 fiscal year, 25 Self-Directed Retreat weeks were undertaken at Jampolis Cottage by 67 creative residents (an average of 2.7 residents per week), who paid \$18,900 in residency fees (an average of \$282 per resident per week).

In the 2025/2026 fiscal year, we anticipate 23 Self-Directed Retreat weeks will be undertaken by approximately 54 creative residents (an average of 2.3 residents per week), who will pay approximately \$17,000 in residency fees (an average of \$315 per resident per week).

Our lower estimate for the average residents per week in 2025/2026 is informed by the 18 Self-Directed Retreats that have already been scheduled for the fiscal year (up to December, 2025). Our higher estimate for the average fee payment per resident per week in 2025/2026 results from our 10% increase of Self-Directed Retreat fee rates in October of 2024; this fee increase impacted only part of the 2024/2025 fiscal year but will impact the entirety of the 2025/2026 fiscal year.

Sponsored Residencies

Sponsored Residencies (one to four weeks in length) are primarily open to permanent residents of Nova Scotia; the Atlantic Indigenous Writer’s Residency is open to permanent residents of any Atlantic Canadian province (NB, NL, NS, or PEI). Each successful applicant is provided with free, private residence and a \$2000 honorarium. Low-residency and split-residency options are available to accommodate writers with work and care commitments. There is no additional charge for essential companions (personal attendants, service animals, or dependants or domestic pets who require care) or for creative or social guests. A travel reimbursement fund is available to successful applicants.

Sponsored Residency applications are assessed by a peer assessment jury.

The following writers undertook their Sponsored Residencies in 2024/2025:

- **Cory Lavender** (Gunning Cove), recipient of the Delmore "Buddy" Daye Residency (sponsored by the Delmore "Buddy" Daye Learning Institute)
- **Janelle Levesque** (Halifax), recipient of the William & Elizabeth Pope Residency (sponsored by

the Robert Pope Foundation)

- **K.R. Byggdin** (Halifax), recipient of a Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia Residency
- **Asher Cookson** (Halifax), recipient of a Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia Residency

The 2025/2026 peer assessment jury consisted of Julie Bull, Guyleigh Johnson, and Gugu Hlongwane, who met in March, 2025, to assess applications.

The following writers will undertake their Sponsored Residencies in 2025/2026:

- **Trevor Silver** (North Preston), recipient of the Delmore "Buddy" Daye Residency (sponsored by the Delmore "Buddy" Daye Learning Institute)
- **Michelle Porter** (St. John's), recipient of the Atlantic Indigenous Writer's Residency (sponsored by Amanda Peters)
- **Christine Wu** (Halifax), recipient of the Robert Pope Foundation Residency (sponsored by the Robert Pope Foundation)
- **Les Tyler Johnson** (Halifax), recipient of a Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia Residency
- **Amy Saunders** (Portuguese Cove), recipient of a Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia Residency

Sponsored Retreats

We currently offer one Sponsored Retreat, the **Oliver-Craig Black Writers' Retreat** (two weeks in length), which is open to Nova Scotian writers. Each successful applicant is provided with free, shared residence; a \$500 honorarium; and the instruction, mentorship, and advice of a distinguished Black or African Nova Scotian author. A travel reimbursement fund is available to successful applicants.

Sponsored Retreat applications are assessed by the same jury as sponsored residency applications.

The 2024 Oliver-Craig Black Writers' Retreat took place at Jampolis Cottage in August, 2024. Participants were **Jessie Nervais** (Halifax) and **Natasha Thomas** (Halifax), under the mentorship of **Evelyn C. White** (Halifax).

The 2025 Oliver-Craig Retreat will take place at Jampolis Cottage in August, 2025. Participants will be **Trevor Silver** (North Preston) and **Tracy Pinder** (Beaverbank), under the mentorship of **Wanda Taylor** (Toronto).

Nova Writes Competition

First established in 1975—and having undergone many changes in name and description in the intervening decades—the Nova Writes Competition currently accepts original, unpublished entries from emerging writers in four short-form categories: short story, essay, poetry, and middle-grade / young adult fiction. Standalone excerpts from long-form works are permitted in all categories.

The Nova Writes Competition supports emerging writers in Nova Scotia—and more established writers exploring new forms—through developmental and publication opportunities. All entrants receive feedback from competition readers; finalists receive additional feedback from judges; and winning entries are published in the annual Nova Writes anthology.

The WFNS Programs Committee administered a survey specific to Nova Writes in the fall of 2024, ascertaining which aspects of the competition were most valuable to participants. Based on the feedback we received, WFNS staff revamped the Nova Writes program in several significant ways:

- We enlisted volunteer readers from WFNS membership to provide an initial round of feedback on all entries and selected finalist works for consideration by category judges. This helped to lower the

- program expenses and provided an engaging volunteer role, which many members were keen to fill.
- We shortened the period between submission and receiving feedback so that entrants didn't have to wait for months to receive feedback on their submissions.
- We contracted a single judge for each category to provide a second round of feedback on all finalist entries, to select a winner, and to work with the winner to polish their manuscript through a manuscript review and an advisory session.
- We retired the moderate cash prizes (\$250) for category winners but increased the value of winning each category (to an approximate \$400 value) through the addition of a manuscript review and advisory session.
- We published the Nova Writes Anthology, containing the winning entries in all four categories.
- We retired our French language category, Le prix Felix Thibodeau de la forme courte, due to historical low submission numbers.

We received 70 entries by the 2024 deadline (42 short fiction, 7 short nonfiction, 15 poetry, and 6 YA/children's) which is comparable to last year's 68 entries.

The winners were announced in *Subtext* and were invited to read from their entries at the Celebration of Emerging Writers, held on June 11 at the Cultural Federations of Nova Scotia (1113 Marginal Road, Halifax).

Winners, finalists, and judges for the 2025 competition are listed below.

Budge Wilson Short Fiction Prize

Winner: Sophia Lindfield, "two girls at the end of the world"
 Finalists: Cass Harmond, Beth Ann Knowles, Mary Anne White.
 Judge: K.R. Byggdin

Silver Donald Cameron Essay Prize

Winner: L. M. Hicks, "Helicopter Down in the Barrens"
 Finalists: Michelle England, Sophia Lawrence
 Judge: Sandra Phinney

Joyce Barkhouse Young Adult Fiction Prize

Winner: C. C. Bligh, "Going Back Home"
 Finalists: Lorenda Barkhouse, Baleigh McWade, Willian Pitcher.
 Judge: Sara O'Leary

Rita Joe Poetry Prize

Winner: Susie DeCoste, *Sea Changes*
 Finalists: Ava Cranhill, Grace Hamilton-Burge, Kristen Stark
 Judge: Annick MacAskill

Writers In The Schools (WITS) program

Each year, the Writers In The Schools (WITS) program facilitates visits by approximately 40 to 50 professional writers (WFNS Writers' Council members) to schools throughout the province, where they provide presentations, workshops, and readings for approximately 20,000 P-12 students. This in-school arts education program encourages students' enjoyment of Nova Scotian literature and engages them in the

development of literacy skills. With funding support from the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Arts Nova Scotia, WITS pays professional writers participating in the program at a rate of \$175 for a half-day visit and \$350 for a full-day visit.

We promoted the WITS program across the province by producing an engaging poster with a commissioned illustration by WITS author/illustrator Lauren Soloy, as well as a brochure that listed as many participating authors as we could squeeze in. These materials were sent by mail to every school in the province in September of 2024. To better assess the efficacy of the mailout for our promotions, we now ask teachers to tell us in their WITS application forms how they heard about the program.

In September of 2024, we held a mandatory info session for all participating WITS authors. In this session, Briana Corr Scott presented strategies for delivering engaging classroom presentations and self-promoting to schools and teachers. We also introduced the WITS cohort to our newly developed WITS promotional toolkit, which included social media graphics for each author, an elevator pitch for the program, and an interactive map of all schools in Nova Scotia (including contact information for school administration).

Increasing our promotional efforts (and equipping WITS authors to promote themselves) seems to have grown interest in the program. Our visit numbers bounced back to pre-pandemic levels!

WFNS also engages youth through our March Break and summer creative writing camps. In summer of 2024, Linda Hudson facilitated three summer camps:

- “The Art of Writing” (Ages 10 – 14) (July 8 to July 12, 2024, at NSCAD Port Campus). Instructors: Lindsay Ruck, Peter Counter, Whitney Moran, Joanne Gallant, and Cooper Lee Bombardier.
- “Creative Writing for Kids with WFNS” (Ages 11 – 14) (July 15 to July 19, 2024, at Lunenburg School of the Arts). Instructors: Nancy Rose, Stephanie Domet, Cory Lavender, Jo Treggiari, and Sal Sawler.
- “Writing Program with WFNS” (Ages 12-19) (Aug 12 to Aug 16, 2024, at MacPhee Centre for Learning). Instructors: Sal Sawler, Joanne Gallant, Peter Counter, Stephanie Domet, and Cooper Lee Bombardier.

As summer of 2025 approaches, three summer camps are scheduled:

- “The Art of Writing” (Ages 10 to 14) (July 7 to July 11, 2025, at NSCAD Port Campus).
- “Creative Writing for Kids” (Ages 11 to 14) (July 14 to July 18, 2025, at Lunenburg School of the Arts).
- “Writing Program with WFNS” (Ages 12 to 19) (Aug 11 to Aug 15, 2025, at MacPhee Centre for Creative Learning).

Events

The 2024/2025 programming year saw a strong return to in-person event delivery, with most of WFNS’s literary events offering members the chance to gather in-person. WFNS hosted, partnered in the presentation of, or had a strong outreach presence at the following events:

- **Atlantic and Nova Scotia Book Awards Shortlist Announcement**, April 15, Trident Booksellers and Café (Halifax). Audience: 45
An event to publicly announce and celebrate the finalists for all Atlantic and Nova Scotia Book Awards. Hosted by **Oriana Duinker**, **Paul McKay**, and **Crystal Joy Garrett**.
- **WITS: Where We Are, Where We’re Going**, May 16, Virtual Webinar. Audience: 60
WFNS staff provided an overview of the Writers In The Schools (WITS) program, including the application process, funding sources, and what to expect in the classroom.
- **Message on a Bottle Launch**, May 23, Brewery by Quinn’s Arms. Audience: 25
In collaboration with Island Folk Cider, WFNS launched “The Fruit Bat” at an event hosted by **Andy**

Verboom (WFNS staff members) and **Lindsey Harrington** (the WFNS Programs Committee member who initiated the collaboration with Island Folk in 2023). The event offered guests a chance to sample the cider and enjoy live readings of several of the submissions by **Steve Vernon, James Lee, Lindsey Harrington, John Ure, Arianna Lehr** (a finalist), and **Jamie Samson** (competition winner).

- **WRING IN THE SPRING Book Fair**, May 25, Glasgow Square.
WFNS attended this regional book fair to promote WFNS programs and sign-up new members.
- **Author Library (Atlantic Book Awards Festival)**, May 28, Halifax Central Library. Audience: 20
WFNS helped organize a “human library” of finalists for the Atlantic and Nova Scotia Book Awards. After participating authors read selections from their finalist works, the public could “sign out” an author for a 10-minute conversation. Authors included **Charlene Carr, Vicki Grant, Heather Fegan, Sherri Aikenhead, Karen Pinchin**, and **Brandon Doucet**. Hosted by **Oriana Duinker**.
- **Celebration of Emerging Writers**, May 29, Café Lara (Halifax). Audience: 40
This annual event celebrated the achievements of the participants in three of our emerging writers’ programs: the Alistair MacLeod Mentorship Program, the Nova Writes Competition, and our Emerging Writers prizes. Mentorship graduates, Nova Writes winners, and the recipients of the Elizabeth Venart Prize, Charles R. Saunders Prize, and Senator Don Oliver Black Voices Prize all gave readings of their work in this public event. Readers included: **Kyle Hooper, J.P. Smith, Blue Bailey, Dana Mount, Elizabeth Jeha, Janelle Levesque, Theo Feehan-Peters, Habiba Diallo**, and **Janice Sampson**. We toasted their success and enjoyed cake (always a feature at this event)!
- **Writing the Truth: An Evening of Nonfiction (Atlantic Book Awards Festival)**, June 1, The Dart Gallery (Dartmouth). Audience: 12
A celebration of the nonfiction books that were finalists for the NS and Atlantic Book Awards, including readings from **Ray Cronin, Heather Fegan, Karen Pinchin**, and **Kelly S. Thompson**. Hosted by **Simon Thibault**.
- **J. M. Abraham Atlantic Poetry Reading: Live at The Carleton (Atlantic Book Awards Festival)**, June 2, The Carleton (Halifax). Audience: 35
A celebration of the finalists for the J.M. Abraham Atlantic Poetry Award, including readings from **Joe Bishop, Matthew Hollett, Sadie McCarney, Fawn Parker**, and **Harry Thurston**. Hosted by **Sue Goyette**.
- **Nova Scotia Book Awards Gala**, June 3, Brightwood Golf Course (Dartmouth).
The Evelyn Richardson Award was presented at this gala, along with the literary awards within the Dartmouth Book Awards umbrella.
- **Fiction Fete (Atlantic Book Awards Festival)**, June 4, Lunenburg School of the Arts. Audience: 43
A celebration of the fiction books that were finalists for the NS and Atlantic Book Awards, including readings from **Charlene Carr, William Ping, Violet Browne, Shelley Thompson, Michelle Wamboldt**, and **Leo McKay Jr.** Hosted by **K.R. Byggdin** and **Oriana Duinker**.
- **Atlantic Book Awards Gala**, June 5, Halifax Central Library.
The Ann Connor Brimer Award for Atlantic Canadian Children’s Literature, the J.M. Abraham Atlantic Poetry Award, and the Thomas Raddall Atlantic Fiction Award were presented at this gala, along with other literary awards that are Atlantic in scope.
- **Silent Write Meet-Up**, June 11, WFNS office and online. Participants: 16
An opportunity for writers to gather in-person or in a shared Zoom room and commit two hours to writing (on their own projects) together. Registration by donation. This recurring meet-up also offered writers a chance to meet other members and find support for their work.
- **Mystery Fiction Workshop with donalee Moulton**, June 22, New Glasgow Public Library. Audience: 19
A one-off regional workshop organized in partnership with members in New Glasgow.

- **Jampolis Open House**, June 29, Jampolis Cottage (315 Bluff Rd, Avonport) Audience: 45
A public reading and open house at our writing residency. Featured readers included **Adam Foulds, Shelley Thompson, Angela Reynolds, Alison Smith, and Sydney Smith**. We also celebrated author/illustrator Sydney Smith's 2024 Hans Christian Andersen Award for Illustration for lifelong achievement. Activities included a spot-the-gnome challenge based on **Lauren Soloy's** *The Hidden World of Gnomes* and a 'story walk' of the picture book *Sidewalk Flowers* (illustrated by Sydney Smith).
- **The Mountain and the Valley: Virtual Book Club**. July 17, on Zoom. Audience: 36
A partnership between WFNS, Home First Theatre, and Two Planks And A Passion Theatre (who were collaboratively presenting *The Mountain and the Valley* at Ross Creek). **Alexander MacLeod** led an engaging one-off session on this Nova Scotian classic for those interested in knowing more about the novel behind the play.
- **Silent Write Meet-Up**, September 25, WFNS office (Halifax), Chester Arts Centre, and online. Participants: 33
An opportunity for writers to gather in-person or in a shared Zoom room and commit two hours to writing (on their own projects) together. Registration by donation. This recurring meet-up also offered writers a chance to meet other members and find support for their work.
- **Booktoberfest**, October 5, Halifax Central Library. Audience: 300+
A celebration of recent, local books by Nova Scotian authors. The literary fair featured 58 Nova Scotian authors and 9 Nova Scotian publishers. Four free creative writing workshops were offered by authors **N.L. Blandford, Lorri Neilsen Glenn, donalee Moulton, and Tricia Snell**.
- **Kjipuktuk Authors Showcase & Industry Night**, October 8, Lighthouse Art Centre (Halifax). Audience: 16
Indigenous Futures Canada organized an event that showcased Mi'kmaw authors **Danica Roache, Amanda Peters, Tiffany Morris, and Raymond Sewell** in conversation with **Mercedes Peters**. WFNS assisted with promotion and outreach.
- **Scary Stories at Sherriff Hall**, October 30, Dalhousie University (Sherriff Hall). Audience: 40
Scary Stories featured horror writers **Brittni Brinn, Elliott Gish, and Tiffany Morris** in the Victorian Lounge of Shirreff Hall. Presented in partnership with Dal Libraries.
- **Writing Rumble on the Road**, October 24, The Shoebox Cantina (New Glasgow). Audience: 42
We took our annual fundraiser on the road to New Glasgow to engage writers in that region. Two teams of five writers faced off to chain write two stories over the course of an afternoon. Writers each took 45-minute shifts where they picked up where their previous teammate left off, incorporating befuddling prompts along the way. The event ended with a reading of the two teams' stories, with much audience laughter. Participating writers collected sponsorships leading up to the event, and we raised \$2,135 in support of our sponsored residencies at Jampolis Cottage. On the team *The Shore Things* were **Sarah Butland, Denise Flint, Emily MacNeil, Megan Coffin, and TP Wood**. On the team *The Strongly Lettered Words* were **Paula Romanow, Lauren Forbes, Angela Ford, Thekla Altmann, and Colleen Hawley**.
- **Hal-Con**, November 8 - 10, Nova Convention Centre (Halifax).
WFNS had an exhibitor's table throughout the Hal-Con weekend. We handed out free zines and "emergency writing prompts" featuring the work of local speculative fiction writers and promoted our programs, especially the Charles R. Saunders Prize.
- **Silent Write Meet-Up**, November 19, WFNS office (Halifax), Lunenburg, Canning Public Library, and online. Participants: 28
An opportunity for writers to gather in-person or in a shared Zoom room and commit two hours to writing (on their own projects) together. Registration by donation. This recurring meet-up also offered writers a chance to meet other members and find support for their work.
- **"A History Exposed" exhibition tour with Dr. Afua Cooper**, November 22, Pier 21 (Halifax). Audience: 9
An opportunity for members to learn from fellow WFNS member and former Halifax Poet Laureate **Dr. Afua Cooper** through a guided tour of the exhibit that she co-curated.

- **Crime Will Tell: A Celebration of Crime Writing**, December 7, Halifax Central Library. Audience: 100
Presented in partnership with Halifax Public Libraries, a cozy celebration of crime writers, featuring two panel discussions: a Crime Fiction panel, featuring moderator **Jane Doucet** and panelists **Tom Ryan** and **F. Colin Duerden**; and a Non-Fiction panel, featuring moderator **Stephen Kimber** and panelists **Maggie Rahr** and **El Jones**.
- **Info Session with the Alliance of Independent Authors**, January 15, on Zoom. Audience: 30
Hosted in partnership with ALLi, hosts **Natasha Blandford** (WFNS member) and **Matty Dalrymple** (ALLi member) discussed the ins and outs of self-publishing, insights on ethical publishing practices, and Alli resources for indie authors.
- **The Raddall Readings: Michelle Porter in conversation with Amanda Peters**, February 5, on Zoom. Audience: 42
Presented in partnership with Dalhousie Libraries, this annual reading with the winner of the Thomas Raddall Atlantic Fiction Award featured **Michelle Porter** (*A Grandmother Begins the Story*) in conversation with **Amanda Peters** (*The Berry Pickers*).
- **Just My Type: A Valentine's Fundraiser for WFNS**, February 1-8, Halifax Brewery Market, Wolfville Farmers' Market, and online.
For this new fundraiser, we set up local poets with typewriters at two farmers' markets in NS a week before Valentine's Day, and marketgoers could buy a custom poem (three sizes offered) for their loved ones. It was hugely successful, raising \$1,165 for the Maxine Tynes NS Poetry Award. Poets in Halifax were **Lindsey Harrington** and **Aren Morris**. Poets in Wolfville were **Ami McKay**, **Angela Reynolds**, and **Blanca Baquero**. We also offered online poem sales, written by **Lindsey Harrington**, **Jen Colclough**, and **Dea Toivonen**.
- **Nova Scotia Talent Trust Information Session**, February 24, on Zoom. Attendance: 6
WFNS staff member **Andy Verboom** hosted Nova Scotia Talent Trust Executive Director **Andrea Urquhart** for an info session specifically geared to literary applicants.
- **Atlantic and Nova Scotia Book Awards Shortlist Announcement**, March 31, Cultural Federations of Nova Scotia (Halifax). Audience: 70
An event to publicly announce and celebrate the finalists for all NS and Atlantic book awards. Hosted by members of the NS and Atlantic Book Awards Boards of Directors.
- **Books on the Breeze**, Jan – May, 2025, Pictou and Antigonish Regional Libraries.
WFNS has been co-presenting a series of readings and workshops with the Read By the Sea Literary Festival in Pictou County. Celebrating the festival's 25th anniversary, these events are bringing audience favourites from past program years. To this date, Books on the Breeze has presented the following authors:
 - January 9-11, Pictou Library: **Linda Little** (audience: 23)
 - February 22, Pictou Library: WFNS **Lorri Neilsen Glenn** (audience: 24)
 - March 22, Westville Library: **Alexander MacLeod** (audience: 29)

Workshops

Workshop offerings include:

- **creative writing workshops** (focusing on the craft side of writing),
- **professional development workshops** (focusing on the logistical and business side of writing),
- **intensive workshops** (blending creative and professional instruction while emphasizing peer feedback), and
- **masterclasses** (reserved for early-career, established, and professional authors).

Spring 2024

- “Solarpunk: Writing Futures with Resiliency” with **seeley quest**. April 2 to April 16 (7/12

participants)

- “Writing Grief: A Poetry Workshop” with **Ben Gallagher**. April 2 to 23 (5/12 participants)
- “Investigative Techniques: Researching the Narrative Nonfiction Book” with **Sherri Aikenhead**. April 3 to 17 (6/12 participants)
- “Fiction Intensive: The Short Story” with **Sharon English**. April 10 to May 8 (3/6 participants)
- “A Speculative Fiction Expedition” with **Sherry D. Ramsey**. May 7 to June 4 (7/12 participants)

Fall 2024

- “The Art & Business of Picture Book Making” with **Emma Fitzgerald**. Sept 22 & 29 (12/12 participants)
- “Foundations of Poetry” with **Alice Burdick**, **Basma Kavanaugh**, and **Nanci Lee**. Sept 24 to Oct 29 (12/12 participants)
- “Foundations of Nonfiction: The Personal Essay” with **Darryl Whetter**, **Sandra Phinney**, and **Sonja Boon**. Oct 2 to Nov 27 (12/12 participants)
- “Foundations of Fiction” with **Carol Bruneau**, **Dave Beynon**, and **Jessica Scott Kerrin**. Oct 2 to Nov 27 (12/12 participants)
- “Taking Care of Business,” Nov 14 to Dec 5 (8 participants):
 - “Get Your ‘Gram On” with **Lindsey Harrington**
 - “Have Fun While Writing Seriously” with **Sarah Butland**
 - “Sweaty Palms and Breathlessness: Preparing for Stressful Presentations” with **Sonja Boon**
 - “Submitting to Literary Journals & Periodicals” with Allison **LaSorda**

Winter/Spring 2025

- “Worldbuilding for a Series” with **Paula Altenburg**. Jan 19 to Feb 9 (7/12 participants)
- “Fiction Intensive: The Short Story” with **Sharon English**. Jan 22 to Feb 19 (6/6 participants)
- “The Journey Within: A Journalling Workshop” with **Habiba Diallo**. Jan 23 to Feb 13 (4/12 participants)
- “Taking Care of Business,” Jan 30 to Mar 6 (22 participants):
 - “Magic for Writers: Giving (& Receiving) Powerful Feedback” with **Trecia Snell**
 - “Strategic Planning for Career-Focused Authors” with **Donna Jones Alward**
 - “Pitch Your Nonfiction Book” with **Jon Tattrie**
 - “Hook, Line, & Publisher: Writing a Successful Fiction Query” with **donalee Moulton**
 - “Promoting the Hell Out of It: Building a Book Promotion Plan & Relationships with Booksellers” with **Wanda Baxter**
- “Make the Dead Come to Life: Nonfiction Research” with **Jon Tattrie**. Feb 4 to Feb 25 (5/12 participants)
- “Going Deep and Letting Go: The Creative Art of Revising Poems” with **Margo Wheaton**. Feb 4 to Feb 25 (8/12 participants)
- “Unravelling Time: Writing Historical Mysteries” with **donalee Moulton**. Feb 25 to Mar 18 (3/12 participants)
- “Making Memories Work for You: Memoir & Personal Essay” with **Sandra Phinney**. Mar 10 to 31 (12/12 participants)
- “Navigating Income Streams for Writers” with **Sherry D. Ramsey**. Mar 13 & 20 (4/12 participants)
- “Get It Right: Finding Your Voice in Writing for Children & Youth” with **Sylvia Gunnery**. Mar 25 to Apr 15 (5/12 participants)
- “Poetry Intensive: Organic Structures” with **Basma Kavanaugh**. April 1 to Apr 29 (6/6 participants)
- “Making Memories Work for You: Memoir & Personal Essay” with **Sandra Phinney**. Apr 10 to May 1 (12/12 participants)