WRITERS' FEDERATION OF NOVA SCOTIA

Writers helping writers

Since 1976, the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia (WFNS) has built on this foundational philosophy — **"writers helping writers"** — to support the craft of creative writing, the business of being a writer, and the promotion of Nova Scotia writers as integral to the province's cultural life and creative economy.

Our **800+ annual members** come from all career stages and parts of the province and engage in a diverse range of forms, genres, and writing practices.

writers.ns.ca/**Membership**

WFNS **General Membership** is open to anyone with an interest in writing, regardless of their writing experience or place of residence. General Members receive access to members-only programs and resources, discounts on program and registration fees, and our weekly email newsletter full of literary news, events, and opportunities.

WFNS is based in Kjipuktuk, Mi'kma'ki, ancestral & unceded Mi'kmaq territory.

writers.ns.ca | contact@writers.ns.ca
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Written for WFNS by Sal Sawler

RECOMMENDED WFNS PROGRAMMING

writers.ns.ca/**Workshops**

Our annual **in-person & virtual** creative and professional development workshops invite writers with similar interests to gather, share, and learn from experienced authors.

writers.ns.ca/**Programs**

Our annual programs facilitate direct writer to-writer assistance.

The **Alistair MacLeod Mentorship Program** supports writers who are on the cusp of book-length publication through disciplined, focused, and supportive one-on-one mentorships with experienced authors.

The members-only **Coffee Chats** program and **Manuscript Review Program** help writers seeking affordable career/creative advice and developmental feedback on works-in-progress

The **Jampolis Cottage Residency Program** hosts group retreats and solo residencies in Avonport, Nova Scotia.

The **Micro-Anthology Series** provides publication opportunities for emerging and established writers of romance, speculative, and crime & mystery fiction.

The **Nova Writes Competition** offers feedback on all entries and publication of the winning entries in an annual print anthology.

RECOMMENDED WFNS RESOURCES

writers.ns.ca/**Resources**

Our free public resources help writers to orientate within the writing and publishing landscape and plot their course forward.

Atlantic Publishers & Periodicals indexes the many presses and literary magazines based in the four Atlantic provinces and links to Canada-wide indexes.

Our **Literary Service Directory** features editing, design, publicity, and other freelance services provided by WFNS members.

Organizations for Writers showcases other provincial and national sources of creative instruction, professional development, and arts grants.

Our **Professional Development Guides** provide samples of the experience and expertise gathered by our members.

writers.ns.ca/**Calendar**

Our public **Literary Calendar** features Nova Scotian literary events organized by WFNS, by its members, and by local publishers, literary magazines, independent booksellers, libraries, universities, arts centres, and nonprofits.

WFNS **General Members** can also submit events to the Literary Calendar and book free in-person (Halifax) or virtual event space.

So You've Written a Book— Now What?

Traditional publishing de-mystified

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WHAT YOU NEED TO SUBMIT

That depends on what you've written and who you're submitting to. First, you need to decide if you want a literary agent to represent you and to manage the submission process.

If aiming for one of the "Big 4" Canadian publishers (Hachette; HarperCollins; Macmillan; Penguin Random House), you will need an agent in order to submit at all.

If planning to submit to a mid-sized or small traditional press, your next stop should be the submissions page of the press's website, where you'll find a checklist of their submission requirements. **Don't skip this step**: each press's requirements are a bit different, helping them assess hundreds of manuscripts per year.

Whether you submit directly to a publisher or start by submitting to an agent, there are a few basic things you'll need to have ready.

- **Fiction**: complete draft + fiction query letter + literary CV
- **Nonfiction**: incompete draft + nonfiction pitch letter + literary CV
- **Poetry**: complete draft + selection of strongest poems (10 – 15 pages) + literary CV

A **literary CV** (curriculum vitae) lists your past publications, readings & performances, and other literary activities, accomplishments, & contributions.

SUBMISSION PROCESS

First, make sure your work is as strong as possible. If you have no other feedback options, you should, at the very least, put your manuscript away for a few weeks and then giving it one more fresh-eyed polish before submitting.

Follow the required method of submission, whether by snail mail, email, or submission management platform (like Submittable).

Once you've sent off your manuscript, tresist the urge to refresh your email for hours on end. It's going to be 6 weeks to 6 months, on average, before you hear back. It's possible you won't hear anything at all, as some publishers only contact authors if they want to make an offer. Polite follow-ups are okay and expected—but only once the estimated turnaround time has passed.

PUBLICATION CONTRACTS

If you have an agent, they'll take care of most of the details for you—but they should keep you in the loop. If you don't have an agent, consider having a lawyer look over the publication contract, which will outline **deadlines and other expectations**.

Ensure you're able to deliver further drafts and revisions on time and that you're comfortable with the press's commitments.

Most traditional contracts include an **advance on royalties**—the lump sum due to the author upon signing. Royalties will go to the press until any advance is paid off. After that, the press will start sending you royalty cheques. But some advances never get paid off, meaning the author never ends up receiving sub-sequent royalties.

EDITING PROCESS

Once the contract is signed, an editor pro-vided by the press will offer **developmental edits**—overarching, big-picture feedback for major revisions and restructuring of your manuscript. Next, you'll move onto **content editing** (or 'substantive' or 'line' editing), when a press editor will take a close look at your writing—by page, paragraph, and sentence—to suggest minor revisions to style and organization. **Copy editing** will flag errors in language, style, fact, & formatting. As author, you should sign off on all changes before your manuscript goes to print.

It can be difficult to let go of your work and allow it to be edited, but it's very important—for the book, for your reputation, and for your relationship with the editor—to go into the process with the idea that **your editors are partners** and not adversaries. You don't have to accept every change, but you do need to consider your editors' recommendations carefully. If a recommendation is off-base, respectfully explain your point of view; your editor should be respectful in return.

PRODUCTION PROCESS

After the editing is 'done,' your editor will pass yout manuscript to the production team, who will paginate and format the text, add images and other design elements, and begin (or continue) the process of cover design. Some publishers allow design input from authors; others don't. If design input is important to you, negotiate your say during the contract stage.

When your manuscript is formatted, usually a few months before your publication date, you'll be given **a final chance to review** the formatted pages—the 'proofs'—before they go to print.

SHARING YOUR BOOK WITH THE WORLD

You can help make sure your book gets into as many hands as possible by connecting with your publisher's **marketing team** at least a couple of months before your book is published. You'll need to know what marketing the publisher is responsible for so that you can fill any gaps in publicity yourself. It helps to remember that your publisher is there to promote your book but not (necessarily) you.

Yypically, your publisher will advertise, pitch coverage to media, and mail out review copies and award submissions—but you'll be responsible for building your author platform, doing interviews and Q&As, and organizing reading and speaking events. It's also important to know that profit margins are stretched quite thin in this industry—and that's why it's so important to maintain a strong, communicative relationship with your publishing team. You need to know upfront what they plan to do so that, if you want more, you can either **learn to do it yourself or consider hiring a personal publicist**.