

north shore WRITERS FESTIVAL



NORTH SHORE WRITERS FESTIVAL 2015 Final Committee Report

Committee Members:

Madeline Kozak & Meghan Crowe, North Vancouver
District Public Library;

Tara Matsuzaki, West Vancouver Memorial Library;

Heidi Schiller, North Vancouver City Library



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INTRODUCTION

The 16th Annual North Shore Writers Festival was held at the West Vancouver Memorial Library on April 17th and 18th, **sponsored by the Friends of the NVCL, NVDP & WVML.**

Each year, the tri-library organizing committee works collaboratively to provide a free gathering of the literary ecosystem on the North Shore. Writers, the North Shore Writers Association, all three public library systems, Black Bond Books, and engaged readers, all come together in a single weekend at a public library venue.

The Festival features the best Canadian authors — across genres and categories—on panels and in conversation with one another. While the Festival celebrates traditionally published books, we also highlight independently published authors' works. This Festival is supported by the Friends of the Library groups of all three libraries and sponsored by the North Shore News.



Samples of this year's artwork and promotional items.

Left: Festival Poster

Above: Festival Flyer



**“Who wants to become a writer?
And why? Because it’s the answer to
everything. ... It’s the streaming reason
for living. To note, to pin down, to
build up, to create, to be astonished at
nothing, to cherish the oddities, to let
nothing go down the drain, to make
something, to make a great flower out
of life, even if it’s a cactus.”**

—Enid Bagnold

SPEAKERS & EVENTS

***THE JAGUAR'S CHILDREN*: JOHN VAILLANT IN CONVERSATION WITH GRANT LAWRENCE**



John Vaillant, the bestselling and award-winning author of *The Golden Spruce* and *The Tiger*, discussed his fiction debut, *The Jaguar's Children*, with CBC personality and author Grant Lawrence.

Vaillant and Lawrence are extraordinary storytellers and despite having just met, developed instant rapport sharing insights on the writing life, the craft of fiction and journalism.

Attendance 141



Left: Grant Lawrence tweets a photo: "At the North Shore Writers Festival at my old hometown West Vancouver Library with author John Vaillant"

3RD ANNUAL LITERARY TRIVIA QUIZ NIGHT WITH HOST GRANT LAWRENCE



CBC Radio host and author Grant Lawrence returned to the library of his childhood to host the third annual Literary Trivia Quiz written by West Vancouver Memorial Librarian Julie Backer. Fourteen teams vied for trivia supremacy. North Vancouver District Public Library's Team 028.9 [a Dewey Decimal number for reading] narrowly edged Team Cleverly Beery, made up of local pub quiz aficionados, by a half point. This is NVDPL's second win as they reclaimed the top prize they won in back in 2013. Team Libairs from North

Vancouver City Library took third spot. Judging by the groans and laughter throughout the evening, competitors had a terrific time regardless of whether they won or lost. A member of the celebrity team of authors commented, "Fun is like winning!"



Attendance 86



SPEAKERS & EVENTS



THE HERO'S JOURNEY: THEME AND PLOT DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

Carol Cram, an experienced instructor and published author, gave an interactive workshop on The Hero's Journey: Theme and Plot Development which provided valuable lessons for both beginning authors and those who are already published but are seeking to add a new dimension to their work.

Sponsored by the North Shore Writers Association.

Attendance 73

LOCAL AUTHOR BOOK FAIR

Festival attendees and library patrons were able to interact with 18 local authors at the book fair.



A TRIO OF POETS

In honour of National Poetry Month, the Festival presented a panel discussion featuring poets Kayla Czaga, Rita Wong and Elaine Woo, moderated by the effervescent and capable Dina Del Buccia. The poets read their poems, shared their writing stories and gave advice on writing.

Attendance 47



SPEAKERS & EVENTS



LUNCH BREAK LOUNGE

Festival participants enjoyed extending the conversations struck up between events, snacks, and a literary fortune teller.

Attendance 65

WHERE STORIES COME FROM: AISLINN HUNTER IN CONVERSATION WITH DORETTA LAU

Doretta Lau and Aislinn Hunter discussed finding good writing material in the everyday world, and the art of playing with history and making things up.

Attendance 65



THE WRITER WHO IS MONTREAL: ZSUZI GARTNER IN CONVERSATION WITH HEATHER O'NEILL

The final author event of the Festival was Heather O'Neill and Zsuzsi Gartner in conversation. They captivated the audience with their discussion of literary conventions and La Belle Ville as muse.

Attendance 72



SPEAKERS & EVENTS

WRITERS + READERS RECEPTION

The Festival was capped off with refreshments and mingling at the Reception which featured music, door prizes, the announcement of the winner of the North Shore Writers' Association's writing contest and speeches by Pat Cumming and David Carter. Hosted by the acclaimed and charming CBC radio personality and journalist, JJ Lee.

Attendance 65



THANK YOU!

The festival relies on the strength of our partners, volunteers, and supporters. We could not have pulled off another highly successful year without the help of the following:

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARIES:

- The NVCL, NVDPL, and WVML **Friends of the Library**



- The **North Shore News**, for their media sponsorship



- The **Fresh Street Market**, for donating food for our Lunch Break Lounge



- **Julie Backer**, for her fabulous trivia mastery

- The **West Vancouver Memorial Library staff**, especially Chad Arsenault for his technical support on Friday night and throughout Saturday.

- The **North Shore Writers Association**, especially Cathy Scrimshaw, for helping to organize *The Hero's Journey* writing workshop and the Local Author Book Fair



- **WVML Friends of the Library** for the beautiful flower arrangements
- **Village Taphouse** for donating gift certificate prizes for the trivia contest
- Our amazing bookseller, **Black Bond Books**
- The social media volunteers from **SLAIS**



PUBLICITY & PROMOTION

THE NORTH SHORE NEWS PUBLISHED AN INTERVIEW WITH HEATHER O'NEILL:

Twisted tales from a magical realist: Montreal's Heather O'Neill experiments with perspective in her novels

ERIN MCPHEE / NORTH SHORE NEWS

APRIL 17, 2015



The Writer Who Is Montreal: Zsuzsi Gartner in Conversation with Heather O'Neill, Saturday, April 18 at 4 p.m., part of the North Shore Writers Festival, today and tomorrow (Friday, April 17 and Saturday, April 18), at the West Vancouver Memorial Library. Free. northshorewritersfestival.com.

Heather O'Neill recently came across a great quotation by fellow Montreal-born writer Mavis Gallant.

"Perhaps a writer is, in fact, a child in disguise," wrote Gallant, a Governor-General's Award-winning author of short stories who spent much of her adult life in France and passed away in February 2014.

"I thought that was just perfect," says O'Neill. The quote spoke volumes, offering insight into her own unique and celebrated approach to storytelling.

In her two award-winning novels, 2006's *Lullabies for Little Criminals* and last year's *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night*, O'Neill wrote from the perspective of youths navigating the inner city streets of Montreal. In *Lullabies for Little Criminals*, 13-year-old motherless Baby finds herself in a relationship with a dangerous pimp, and in *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night*, twin Nouschka, 19, tries to find her own identity apart from her erratic brother and their father, a legendary Québécois folksinger who's fallen on hard times.

O'Neill, reached Monday at her home base of Montreal, says she's continually drawn to younger perspectives in her writing because as main characters, they offer an opportunity to describe things in new ways. Often, a child's perspective, in contrast to an adult's, has yet to be categorized, allowing them to see the world through a fresh set of eyes.

"If the child sees a person who an adult would perceive immediately as a loser or a bum, or an addict, the child might see that person for their other qualities, like might see them as a storyteller, or someone's who's really funny, or someone who's very generous," she says. O'Neill also views writing from younger perspectives as a means of enabling her to experiment with "imagistic metaphorical writing." "(For) children, the line between what's real and not real is kind of thin and they live in the land of make believe. With my metaphors I kind of leap back and forth from the mundane things to magical realist



PUBLICITY & PROMOTION

possibilities. I think that's why I was drawn to a child's perspective. I'm not always going to write from a child's perspective. My characters are growing up," she says.

Maybe so, however, hot off the presses and welcomed into the hands of her legions of fans is O'Neill's first short story collection, *Daydreams of Angels*, intended as a "book of magical tales," she says, for grownups. "The collection I kind of conceived as a whole. I wanted it to be seen like one of those old anthologies of children's literature that I used to get for Christmas in the '70s. They would just have little chapters from Dickens novels and then a fairytale, and then an Aesop fable and then a story from the Bible. So I wanted it to be like one of those big children's compendiums but then they would all be dark and for adults and with my own sort of twisted, perverted, little trademark things stuck in there," she says.

O'Neill also set out to showcase the family storytelling tradition, casting light on the mythology that people can grow up with, hearing children's tales from parents or grandparents and keeping them alive.

"I find that is so much in the fabric of our imagination. Not only what we read, but the stories that are part of our family lore," she says.

Examples of short stories featured in *Daydreams of Angels* include: "Dear Piglet," depicting a naive cult follower; "Snow-White and Rose-Red," exploring the struggle of two young women in occupied Paris; and "The Ugly Ducklings," the story of generations of failed Nureyev clones in post-Soviet Russia. O'Neill has received a number of high-profile accolades for her works. Her debut novel, *Lullabies for Little Criminals*, won the 2007 Canada Reads competition, the Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction, and was a finalist for the Governor General's Award for Fiction and the Orange Prize. *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night* was shortlisted for the 2014 Giller Prize and has been longlisted for the 2014/2015 Encore Award for the Best Second Novel. O'Neill is beyond grateful for all of the honours that have been bestowed upon her.

"It's wonderful because it allows you to continue what you're doing. With each thing, I feel a little more confident going back into the fictional realm. I'm working on a novel now, I do feel more confident than I did with the other ones, so that's a great feeling. So you can take risks and be more experimental. I don't know, I just feel a little happier in my place, in my imagination. It's sort of like people have said, 'Yes, you may go there,' as opposed to just feeling like, 'Well I'm here. Nobody cares. Does that mean I'm insane?'" she laughs.

When asked where her interest in storytelling is derived, she says it goes back to her childhood and a lifelong love of books and literature. "Since I was quite young I wanted to be a writer. I loved it when I was a kid, being able to write. I always kept journals. It's what I did all the time. I would go to the library, I had this grocery cart, and I would come back with 15 books. And I would scribble about things that I had seen in my journal. It started off as a lot of fun. But it's always like, that's where the initial



PUBLICITY & PROMOTION

impulse comes, but then to actually get good at your craft, you have to slave away for at least a decade of torturous failures and rejections. But you know, it's like that, any profession is difficult. Now there's just no turning back. Even if I wanted to stop, I'm qualified to do absolutely nothing else," she says.

O'Neill's first two novels developed conceptually as character studies of sorts, the result of her fascination with people with big, interesting or odd personalities.

"I was always inspired by that as a kid so then I wanted to create my own characters that were really full of life, and kind of philosophers. I had the desire also to create characters who came from different walks of life who weren't normally seen as being particularly bright, or having any sort of integrity or nobility. So kind of the lower classes and to find characters from there but describe them in a way that people would really relate to them and really understand their journeys and what was special about them," she says.

O'Neill is currently in the throes of writing her third novel, a process she's thoroughly enjoying. A historical work set in 1930s Montreal, she's anticipating its release in the next year or two.

A major difference between the new book and her previous two works of fiction is her choice of narrative point of view. Rather than continuing on using first person, she has adopted third person this time around, giving herself a bit of a break. "Just being able to leave one person's head, it's kind of nice. I feel more like an author somehow when I'm writing third person," she says.

O'Neill is among the featured authors at the North Shore Writers Festival, back for its 16th year, being presented today and tomorrow at the West Vancouver Memorial Library. The free celebration of Canadian authors is presented by the West Vancouver library in addition to the City and District of North Vancouver's.

Tonight's programming gets underway at 7 p.m., featuring John Vaillant in conversation with Grant Lawrence, followed by the Third Annual Literary Trivia Quiz Night, also hosted by Lawrence.

Saturday programming kicks off at 10 a.m., with a writers workshop and local author book fair, followed by a number of author panels throughout the day; for example, *Where Stories Come From*: Aislinn Hunter in Conversation with Doretta Lau at 2:45 p.m. O'Neill will cap off the festival at 4 p.m. in a presentation entitled *The Writer Who Is Montreal*: Zsuzsi Gartner in Conversation with Heather O'Neill. A public reception will follow.



PUBLICITY & PROMOTION

THE NORTH SHORE NEWS PUBLISHED A PHOTO WITH OUR LOCAL AUTHORS:



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northshorewritersfestival.com



PUBLICITY & PROMOTION

THE NORTH SHORE NEWS FEATURED A FULL PAGE BRIGHT LIGHTS HIGHLIGHT ON MAY 17:

A10 • North Shore News • Sunday, May 17, 2015

BRIGHT LIGHTS *by Kevin Hill*

North Shore Writers Festival



Mary-Ann Yazedjian, Melanee Koponen, Tony Biondi and Katie Stobbart



William Ellis, Cheryl Nobles, Axel Conradi and Moira Thompson

The 16th annual North Shore Writers Festival, a celebration of Canadian authors presented by the North Shore public libraries, was held April 17-18 at West Vancouver Memorial Library. The free, two-day affair included conversations by authors including John Vaillant and Aislinn Hunter, as well as writing workshops and a literary trivia quiz night. The weekend was capped off with a writers and readers reception hosted by CBC radio personality and writer JJ Lee. Guests were invited to mingle with fellow festival-goers over refreshments, listen to music performed by the James Prescott Trio and hear the announcement of the winner of the North Shore Writers' Association's writing contest.



Doug and Mariette MacLeod

Festival organizing committee members Meghan Crowe, Tara Matsuzaki and Heidi Schiller



Samantha Walkey, Maria Ortiz and Barry Jakel



The James Prescott Trio: Mike Allen, James Prescott and Peter Mynett



Reception host JJ Lee, Meagan Fairbanks and Amber Lin



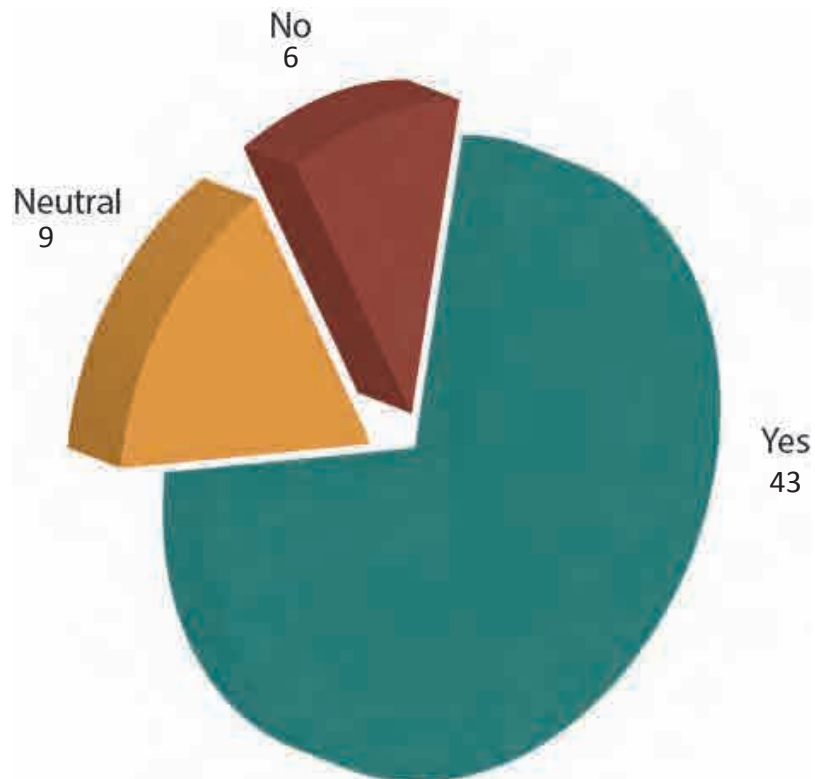
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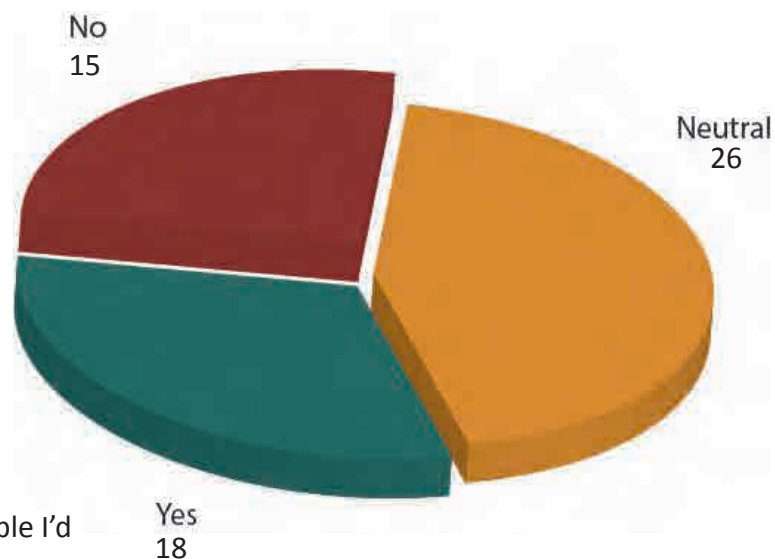
Andrea Westcott, Zsuzsi Gartner and Heather O'Neill

SURVEY RESULTS

DID YOU FEEL AN INCREASED SENSE OF COMMUNITY BELONGING?



DID YOU BUILD USEFUL RELATIONSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS?



COMMENTS:

- "Emphatic yes!!!"
- "No, spoke to people I'd spoken to before"





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north shore WRITERS FESTIVAL



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#NSWF



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Public Library



west vancouver
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North Vancouver
City Library

Friday, April 17 & Saturday, April 18

At West Vancouver Memorial Library
1950 Marine Drive, West Vancouver

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