



10
YEARS
10
AUTHORS



NELSON BC

10 YEARS 10 AUTHORS

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The Elephant Mountain Literary Festival acknowledges with gratitude that the land on which we gather is the unceded territory of the Sinixt, the Ktunaxa, and the Syilx, and is home to Métis and many diverse Indigenous persons. We honour and respect their role as storytellers and knowledge-keepers on these lands and waters.

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Supported by the Province of British Columbia



Canada Council
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du Canada





2012

Lisa Moore

2013

John Lent

2014

Jane Byers

2015

Fred Wah

2016

Grant Lawrence

2017

Eileen Delehanty Pearkes

2018

Rayya Liebich

2019

Iona Whishaw

2020

Roz Nay

2021

Tom Wayman

How the EMLF Came to Be: A Founding Member Looks Back

2012

WHAT A LITERARY CELEBRATION our first year was! We knew we'd started something good when some of the foremost figures from Canadian letters agreed to join us: authors **Lisa Moore** (*February*) and John Vaillant (*The Tiger*), Parliamentary Poet Laureate Fred Wah, spoken word poet Sheri-D Wilson (AKA "the mama of Dada"), and publishing professionals Vici Johnstone (Caitlin Press), Melanie Little (House of Anansi), and Sarah Ivany and Robyn Read (Freehand Books).

Our talented local authors were the queens and kings of the Gala Opening, and included Elena Banfield, Geordi Campos, Jennifer Craig, Anne DeGrace, Susan Andrews Grace, Ernest Hekkanen, Kindredheart (la marie), Will Klatte, Laura Landsberg, Paul Landsberg, Rita Moir, Eileen Delehanty Pearkes, and Samuel Stevenson.

There was a range of special events and courses: our Gala Opening, in which we paired fine wines to fine words; a spoken word cabaret and a spoken word workshop; a gala reading; a panel on publishing, writing the local, and shaping the local; and the opportunity for writers to pitch their projects to a literary agent.

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Newfoundland author Lisa Moore, whose novel February was longlisted for the 2010 Man Booker Prize.



W

HAT I REMEMBER: Anne DeGrace offered me a beer and a picnic under a big leafy tree almost as soon as I arrived. Was there a checked tablecloth? Am I making that part up? There was a half crescent of cool leafy shadow and the beer was cold. I felt welcomed.

My novel February had just come out. I learned that literary festivals were proliferating all over the country, festivals big and small. These Festivals ran with the help of volunteers. Lots of volunteers. It blew my mind how much work went into creating a festival, once I'd tried to help plan one myself. But the work is mostly invisible by the time the authors arrive. A hundred moving parts, like a big dance, everything timed to the minute, yes, but also unfolding with the appearance of ease and pleasure, even thrill. It blew my mind how seamlessly these festivals ran—especially this one, even though it was its inaugural year—how warm everyone was. Mostly, it blew my mind that people showed up to listen. Tons of people.

This act of showing up, by hired organizers, volunteers and the audience, seemed an incredible act of generosity. A willingness, a desire. I think it might be the case that all great bouts of generosity are revved by desire. Other kinds of generosity—the generosity lit by a sense of responsibility, say, or driven by self-discipline, are maybe watered-down things, compared to the generosity of desire, of really wanting to make something happen, to be a part of something.

At the Elephant Mountain Festival that year, the stories that people read on the stage, the talk about stories, poetry, and creative non-fiction, came alive through the human voice. The power of learning how the author hears the cadence of a sentence or a phrase. The peculiar intimacy of a human voice. Peculiar, because though it is intimate and singular, it's also shared with a gathering. The voice might come over a microphone, over the sun and green grass, over the breeze, over rows of chairs, people with sunhats, people waving programs like fans in the sultry heat, mildly chattering, then united in silence, lit up with listening, it might come over that kind of distance.

But when the voice arrives it's singular. It's Fred Wah's voice, or John Vaillant's voice, or Anne DeGrace's voice, and full of the waver of drawing breath, of speeding up and slowing down, performing, yes, but also just reading, just reading. And being read to.

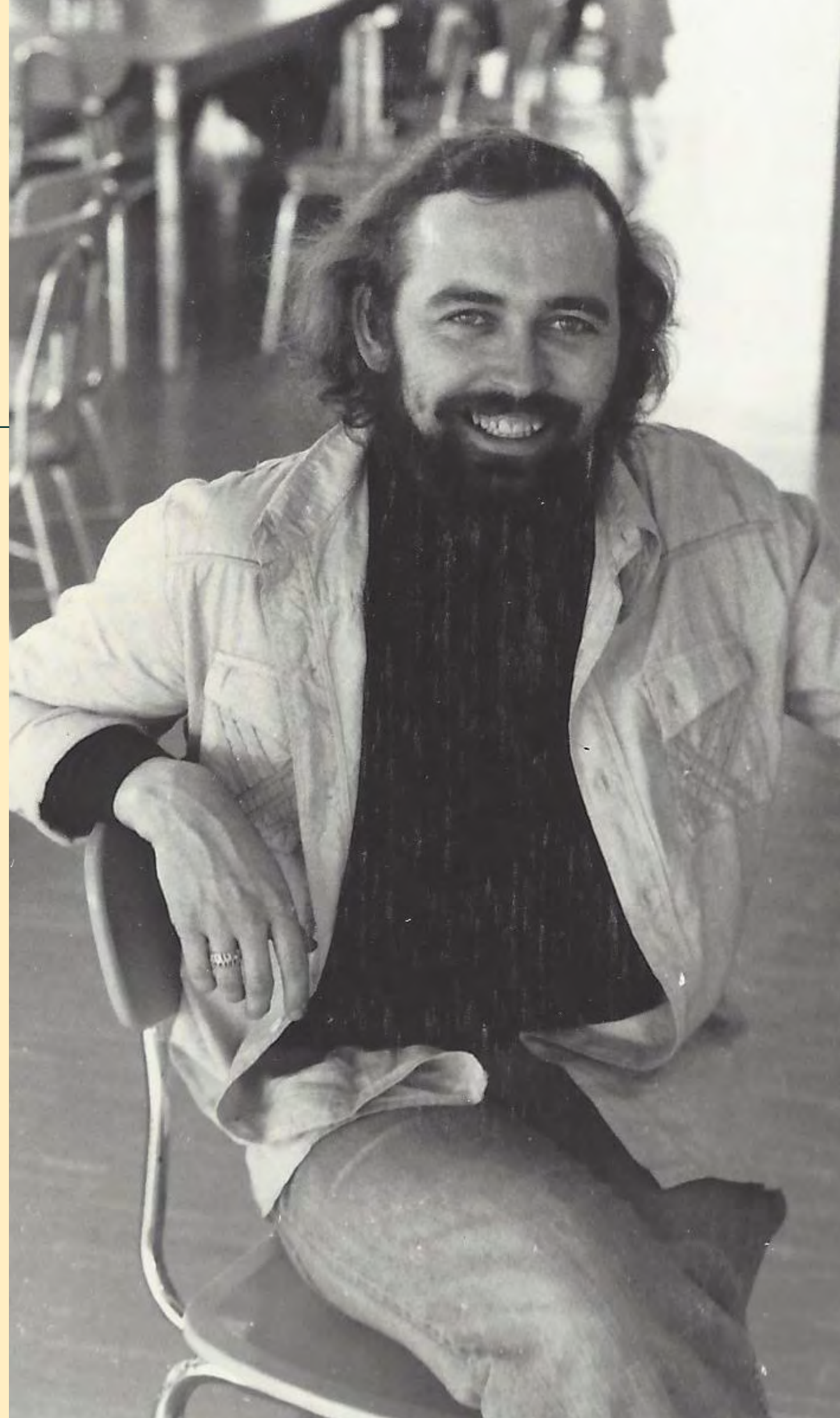
Every reading at every festival is different because the audience takes the reading and makes it their own. My favourite part of a festival like this one, the Elephant Mountain Literary Festival, has not changed since attended this one. It's the milling around later with the audience, those people who hang on to say a few words, to talk about writing. It's during those discussions I see how much people love literature. How much they desire it.

— *Lisa Moore*

2013


BUILDING ON THE SUCCESS of our inaugural year, we reached out to notable Canadian authors and were met with enthusiasm from Terry Fallis (*Best Laid Plans*), Camilla Gibb (*Beauty of Humanity Movement*), award-winning graphic novelist Pascal Girard, Okanagan College dean and celebrated author **John Lent**, spoken word artist Brendan McLeod, and Governor General's Award and Giller Prize winner M.G. Vassanji. Visiting publishers were Kristin Cochrane (McClelland & Stewart), Tracy Hurren (Drawn & Quarterly), and Howard White (Harbour Publishing). Our lovely locals included Elena Banfield, Jane Byers, Linda Crosfield, Art Joyce, Will Klatte, Magpie Ulysses, and Tom Wayman. We had lively panels, illuminating discussion, great inspiration, and a lot of fun.

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Poet, novelist, and singer-songwriter John Lent in Nelson in 1973, during planning for the MULTIFUSION literature and musical festival.

Hear Lent perform John Prine's "Ring Your Own Bell" onstage in 2020 [on Youtube here](#).



*M*Y HISTORY WITH EMLF goes back so far, it's hard for me to separate all its parts. As a young man of 25, I flew out to Nelson from Toronto in the fall of 1973 to teach Literature and Creative Writing at Notre Dame University of Nelson, and my love affair with Nelson began instantly and has never lessened. Though I moved away in 1976, I had met the love of my life there—the artist Jude Clarke—and Jude and I returned to Nelson almost every summer over all those years. I had been involved in creating literature and musical festivals in Nelson, like MULTIFUSION in the mid-seventies, and I also participated in many of these kinds of events in the 80s and 90s because of my ongoing friendships with Tom Wayman, Verna Relkoff, Ross Klatte, and Anne DeGrace.

So in the spring of 2013, I was thrilled to come as a reader and be part of EMLF 2013, held mostly at the Hume Hotel, my old stomping grounds. It was a great festival, vibrating with incredible excitement and enthusiasm. There were wonderful readings by writers like Terry Fallis, and there were fascinating panels on publishing. I was on one with Tom Wayman and Howard White, and it seemed to me it presented such an honest and realistic view of the writing world and the writing life. And that's the thing about EMLF, and that's the thing about Nelson: there has always been such honesty and obvious talent associated with this annual festival, and it's why it has become, in its own quiet way, one of the best literary festivals in Canada, where every writer wants to be every summer.

There's a spiritual and magical hum in my head when it comes to Nelson and writing. For me, Nelson is at the very centre of an astonishingly wide literary world. Congratulations to everyone who makes this festival happen. We owe you a lot.

— *John Lent*

2014

AN ALL-STAR CAST of visiting authors in 2014 included novelists Angie Abdou (*The Canterbury Trail*) and Donna Morrissey (*The Deception of Livvy Higgs*); poets Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm and Gary Gottfriedson (both Indigenous writers), and Barbara Curry Mulcahy and Mary Pinkoski; mystery writer Gail Bowen; publishing legend and author Douglas Gibson; author and musician Sid Marty; and host of CBC Radio's *Writers & Company* Eleanor Wachtel, joining West Kootenay authors **Jane Byers** and Deryn Collier. From the publishing side of things we welcomed Craig Shemilt (Island Blue Print).

The opening social was a mix of visiting authors and locals, and as ever, a lot of fun. Eleanor Wachtel and Gail Bowen rocked the Capitol Theatre. Audiences were engaged by our Mystery and Indigenous Publishing panels, a self-publishing presentation, a youth storytelling workshop, and Douglas Gibson's multimedia presentation, "Stories about Storytellers," on the Civic Theatre stage.

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Poet, essayist, memoirist, and short fiction writer Jane Byers lives right here in Nelson, with her wife, her two children, and her dog.

Check out her website at janebyerswriter.com.



LEPHANT MOUNTAIN LITERARY FESTIVAL has always held a very special place in my heart, not least because it is in my hometown and I have read there a number of times. It also mirrors my growth as a writer. It was in 2012 that I signed up for a 1:1 session with a publisher. At that pitch session I was able to convince Vici Johnstone, owner of Caitlin Press, to take a look at my poetry manuscript that had been languishing on her slush pile. The rest, after publishing three books with Caitlin Press, is history. It was at the 2014 festival that I read from my debut poetry collection, *Steeling Effects*, in the Anglican Church annex. One of my highlights from 2014 was watching and listening to Eleanor Wachtel onstage at the Capitol Theatre. She is every bit as charming in person as she is on CBC Radio's Writers and Company.

*Fast forward to 2017, when moments before I was to take the stage I received notification that I had won a Goldie Award for my second poetry collection, *Acquired Community*. I was congratulated by none other than the brilliant and eloquent Marsha Lederman, Globe and Mail arts columnist and EMLF panel moderator. She happened to be sitting beside me in the audience and couldn't help but notice my excitement. I also shared that moment with fellow writer and EMLF organizer, Leesa Dean. I felt like I was exactly where I wanted to be, with a beautiful community of readers and writers in Nelson, rather than in Chicago at the Goldie awards gala that evening.*

One of my favourite EMLF traditions is each local author being paired with local wine and beer at the 100 Mile Gala. I had the pleasure of being paired with a 2014 Baillie-Grohman Estate Pinot Noir. It is my favourite local winery, and I love the wine. That the talented writer and all-round witty and lovely EMLF committee member Anne DeGrace takes the time to write brilliant wine pairings for the authors is remarkable, and definitely a festival highlight.

I won't be the first to mention the intimacy of a small-town festival, where connection with the audience and with other writers is expected and flows easily. From lunching with Marilyn Bowering, because our writing group won the meal in a raffle, to mooning over my writerly crush—Camilla Gibb—as an audience member, to sharing parenting stories with Jill Barber, the festival holds so many special memories.

Here's to ten more good years, and the return of in-person audiences. By then we will hunger for hugs and the collective excitement of listening to writers read and of raising a glass to the written word, not from the isolation of our computers but together in one room.

— *Jane Byers*

2015


CREATIVITY WAS FRONT AND CENTRE at the fourth Elephant Mountain Literary Festival in July 2015. The 100 Mile Gala at the Adventure Hotel celebrated the local with readings, food, and Creston wine pairings, in an event that has become a festival favourite. Daytime Saturday panels explored the creative process with local luminaries and special guests, including celebrated authors who also appeared on stage at the Capitol Theatre at the Saturday-night All-Star Reading: Governor General's Award winner Kate Pullinger, Commonwealth Writer's Prize winner Marina Endicott, and beloved songwriter and memoirist Bob Bossin. A pre-festival writing intensive with **Fred Wah** and a youth storytelling workshop rounded out EMLF's offerings.

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Fred Wah was the 1984 winner of the Governor General's Award for poetry, was Parliamentary Poet Laureate from 2011 to 2013, and in 2013 became an Officer of the Order of Canada.

[Click here](#) to watch Fred Wah read his recollections about the festival and his early years in Nelson.



I GREW UP IN NELSON and my sleepy eyes met Elephant Mountain every morning as I got ready to go to school or to work at my father's restaurant, the Diamond Grill, on Baker Street. I grew up in this beautiful city to a life that has always been intensely cultural. The historical resonance of the original Kootenay School of Art, the Nelson Summer School of the Arts, and Notre Dame and David Thompson universities, led me to the Kootenay School of Writing, a fulcrum of writing activity that thrived in Vancouver and Nelson and has led, thankfully, to the Elephant Mountain Literary Festival, fostered, gratefully, by former DTUCKERS Verna [Relkoff] and Tom Wayman, among many others. That sense of community energy is part of EMLF's roots in the "local," a theme I've shared with Tom in presenting at Elephant Mountain in the past. Both of us have been adamant in our poetics that the "local" is the true and real centre of our cultural life. Of course a major energy for the local is how it is informed by attention to the larger community of writers and artists. I've read this piece at Elephant Mountain several times; it's from an early book of mine, Loki is Buried at Smoky Creek:

“Writing would have a lot to do with ‘place,’ the spiritual and spatial localities of the writer. I see things from where I am, my view point, and I measure and imagine a world from there. Who I am is where I am. Oaxaca, Vancouver, the Kootenay River a thousand years ago or today, my father's father's birthplace, become ‘local’ to me and compound to make up a picture of a world I am native of. Writing sometimes remembers this image, and sometimes it has to make it up. Malcolm Lowry thinks of himself as ‘a great explorer who has discovered some extraordinary land ... but the name of the land is hell ... It is not Mexico of course but in the heart.’ Writers are wonderers. And wanderers. The American poet Ed Dorn reminds us that the stranger in town is interesting because he at least knows where he has come from and where he is going. Writing is sometimes useful that way, not so much with news of the world out there but as some measure of an ‘insidedness’ we carry with us and renovate during our lives.

Out there, of course, is only meaningful in its correspondence to in here. I've lived in the ‘interior’ of British Columbia and such a qualification affects my particular sense of what the world (out there) looks like. We go ‘down’ to the coast, which is the exterior, the outside, the city. The spaces between here and there are part of a vast similarity. The towns become predictable (thus memorably comfortable) in their activities and appearances. Castlegar and Prince George, though specifically themselves, share certain aspects of distance, colour and taste. One feels at home nearly anywhere there are rivers, pulp mills, trucks, the mysterious gravel roads further inward, and similar ‘local’ inhabitants. Down and out there the exterior becomes more, and leads to other cities and countries. But all of it, out there, is measured from in here. In the particularity of a place the writer finds revealed the correspondences of a whole world. And then, of course, the surprising and unexpected holes in that world.”

— Fred Wah

2016

NEW AT EMLF 2016 were the Holley Rubinsky Memorial Blue Pencil Sessions, named for the late Kaslo author and mentor, featuring our Writer-in-Residence, novelist and children's author Caroline Adderson. Ten writers benefited from one-on-one critique, and nearly 100 people packed the Nelson Public Library for a free talk on the writing craft.


More readers and writers than ever enjoyed presentations and panels: at the Hume Hotel, the 100 Mile Opening Gala—a festival favourite—featured songstress and children's author Jill Barber, CBC broadcaster and memoirist **Grant Lawrence**, and local award-winners, along with food and Creston wine pairings. Friday night's Reading the Earth panel at the Capitol Theatre enhanced great words with great images on the big screen, brought to us by Richard Cannings, Briony Penn, and J.B. MacKinnon. Daytime Saturday panels with guest presenters and local experts explored ecological writing, children's writing, and publishing. Saturday Night Live! brought us back to the Hume, where Caroline Adderson and CBC broadcaster, author, and all-around funny guy Bill Richardson charmed the house.

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Grant Lawrence is the author of three award-winning memoirs: Adventures in Solitude, The Lonely End of the Rink, and Dirty Windshields.

He is podcasting Dirty Windshields chapter by chapter, for free: Listen to the [prologue on Apple Podcasts](#), or browse the [podcast page on his website](#).



HAPPY 10TH ANNIVERSARY to the Elephant Mountain Literary Festival! I remember arriving in lovely Nelson for the 2016 festival with my whole family in tow, including my brand-new six-month-old, Grace. Baby Grace rolled off the table in the Hume Hotel when I was setting up my books—my wife Jill Barber, who also performed, was not happy! That bad-dad blip aside, we had a blast. Some of the other authors we rubbed shoulders with were the always hilarious Bill Richardson, the aptly named Briony Penn, and the ever-inspiring J.B. MacKinnon.

That year, I was putting the finishing touches on my book Dirty Windshields: The Best and The Worst of the Smugglers Tour Diaries, about my rock band's touring adventures in the 1990s and 2000s. At the Hume event, I read an entry from Nelson. It didn't make the final book, so in the spirit of the festival's 10th anniversary and this entry's 30th anniversary, I'd like to share it with you again now:

“Friday Dec 6, 1991

We hit up a new town this weekend in our fair but vast province of British Columbia for some new Smugglers fun. Namely, the beautiful mountain ville of Nelson. We kind of wrongly assumed that Nelson was somewhere just past Hope, like an hour or something, but we were really very sorely mistaken. This drive took FOREVER, through all sorts of mountain ranges in wind, rain, sleet, and heavy-duty snow. It was freaky. Our guitarist Dave was at the wheel for most of it, and quoted Danny Glover from Lethal Weapon when he looked over at me: “I’m too old for this shit.” (Dave is 19.) I swear we were driving for at least twelve hours. Speaking of movies, our drummer Bryce thinks that the TV show Roseanne is filmed in Nelson! Uh, yeah, that’d be Roxanne! Typical drummer! Hey, what did the drummer get on his math test? Drool!

So anyway we slid into snowy Nelson about ten minutes before we were supposed to go onstage at an old Masonic Hall on the main drag of Baker Street. The street was all lit up for Christmas, which reminded me of Bedford Falls in my sister’s all-time favourite Christmas movie, It’s A Wonderful Life. (Okay, yes, I like it too.)

And yeah! The drive was worth it. The all-ages show was filled with swarms of smiling, pent-up, really nice, Interior vegan mountain-type children in homemade knitted clothing who all really, really wanted to dance to the Smugglers beat. The promoters were two happy, open-minded girls named Michelle and Erin, who lived in a very odd Scandanavian church at the end of Baker Street. We slept in pews on exercise mats covered in cat hair.

The next morning we drove straight back to Vancouver, but we had a great time and hope to return to frosty, friendly Nelson one day. Maybe next time we’ll even meet John Goodman, right Bryce? Ha ha. Hey, what’s the difference between a drummer and a large pizza? A pizza can feed a family of four! Just kidding, Bryce ... Sort of....”

— Grant Lawrence

2017

WHAT AN INTERESTING MIX we had in 2017. Headliners were Lee Maracle, celebrated Sto:Loh author; Joy Kogawa, whose novel *Obasan* is a Canadian classic; and multi-talented Fred Stenson, who doubled as our Writer-in-Residence. *Globe and Mail* Western arts correspondent Marsha Lederman interviewed all three on stage after their readings, which was such a nice addition that we invited her back in 2018.

The 100 Mile Opening Gala celebrated four recently published local authors: poets Jane Byers and Emily Nilsen, fiction writer Leesa Dean, and creative non-fiction author **Eileen Delehanty Pearkes**—each hilariously paired with a Kootenay wine. Panel discussions focused on creativity and featured Calgary poet laureate Micheline Maylor, movers and shakers in the local arts, and our visiting writers. In 2017 we said goodbye to Executive Director Lynn Krauss (off to new things in Vancouver) and welcomed incoming ED Natasha Smith.

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Born in the U.S. and a resident of B.C. for 35 years, Eileen Delehanty Pearkes brings a bi-national perspective to her explorations of landscape, history and the human imagination on both sides of the border. She was Nelson's 2017 Cultural Ambassador.

Watch her talk about her festival memories [here](#).



W

HEN I MOVED TO NELSON from Vancouver in 1994, I embarked on a 25-year journey of discovery as a writer, with every step of the way supported by Nelson's unique and vibrant literary culture.

Soon after relocating, I learned about a proposed literary conference called Terrain, tapping into intellectual discourse on land, people, and place. It drew nearly 100 people to its weekend events in 1997. The grassroots organizing committee included Tom Wayman, Verna Relkoff, Ross Klatte, Chris Robertson, Don Gayton, and me. Without knowing it at the time, we formed a kernel for what would eventually re-emerge as the EMLF.

As a Nelson greenhorn, what I encountered in organizing Terrain was something I had not seen in the competitive world of graduate school and urban centres. While we organized, we also supported each other's work in an unflinching way. This vibrant community measures a writer's success not based on being "published" (whatever that might mean), but because of the common love of craft and self-expression that we all share.

Supporting literary production is Nelson's greatest cultural talent. The work I am now known for was born in that first encounter with the Terrain organizing committee. Writers who are nurtured here never worry too much about their own success versus the success of others. They just get behind whoever needs to be gotten behind, at any given moment.

Twenty years after Terrain, at EMLF 2017, I was participating as somewhat of a local celebrity, having recently been anointed the city's Cultural Ambassador. (We take what we can get!) The highlight of that year's festival for me was the author and wine pairing, hosted by local arts supporter extraordinaire, Anne DeGrace.

It's not just because I am a true oenophile that I loved Anne's pairing of my work with the 2014 Vintage Estate Chardonnay by Fruitvale winery Soahc. It's because her explanation is perhaps the best description of the ups and downs of a writer's life. "Clearly, life's not easy for a grape, but these feisty fruits rose to the challenge—stronger for the experience." She goes on: "Adversity has wrought a bright, stony-spiced acidity, while sweet triumph bestows a finish of herbal meadow flowers..." We can all find ourselves there, whether we like Chardonnay or not.

It turns out that the winemaker Soahc takes its name from chaos, spelled backward. Yet another apt comparison that Anne took advantage of! "If there's any chaos here, it's what can happen when truth is told." That's right. Chaos from truth. As writers, when we speak the truth, we must be sure that we are as spicy, acidic, and delicious as each of us can be.

— *Eileen Delehanty Pearkes*

2018

CREATIVE COUPLES was the theme of EMLF 2018. Giller winner for fiction Esi Edyugan and her husband, novelist and acclaimed poet Steven Price, charmed us with their words and humour. And we invited multi-genre, multi-award-winning writer Susan Musgrave and her husband, novelist, essayist, and erstwhile bank-robber Stephen Reid: We were saddened when Stephen passed away shortly before the festival. Susan showed strength and courage as she chose to honour her commitment as Writer-in-Residence. She thrilled us by meeting local writers, talking on the writer's craft, and joining the Saturday Night Live! event.

We hopped things up with the 100 Mile Opening Gala, pairing local authors Art Joyce, Jordan Munteer, and **Rayya Liebich** with Nelson Brewing Company beers, and the beer theme carried through micro-brewery events with Selkirk creative writing students, offering onsite readings and our own Clinton Swanson on sax. Panel discussions went into creative coupledness, considered risk and resilience, and offered a glimpse into the world of mystery writing, not quite answering the question of whodunit, but coming pretty darn close.

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Nelson poet Rayya Liebich teaches children, youths and seniors, helping others write their own stories.

*[Click here](#) to hear her read three prose poems from her forthcoming collection, *Min Hayati*, in stores July 2021.*

I JOINED THE EMLF COMMITTEE IN 2017, having recently come out of the closet as a writer and in hopes of finding a literary community. This energetic group of writers has kept me engaged, connected, and very busy planning the annual festival ever since. We are a mixed bunch with diverse literary passions including poetry, mystery, children's writing, fiction, and graphic novels. We are connected by our love of the written word and a desire to showcase local talent and invite writers from afar to re-enliven our reading and writing community. We meet every two weeks for the entire year to dream up programs, invite presenters, battle the budgets, cheer for grants, and look ahead to a weekend of inspiration. Like being a writer, such devotion is a little bit nutty and wildly fulfilling.

I am grateful for the opportunities I've had as a presenter and a listener at the festival these past four years. A highlight was reading at the 2018 local gala alongside Jordan Munteer and Sean Arthur Joyce. Having my very own wine pairing crafted by Anne DeGrace was a real treat. Winning the Carver Award for emerging writers in 2019 came at time when I was considering giving up on my writing dreams, and this affirmation was the boost of encouragement I needed to carry on.

As a committee member, I am particularly proud of how we have adapted to the ever-fluxing COVID restrictions, to make sure that nothing gets in the way of creativity. Last year's outdoor Wild Grapes gala and the Meadow Edition of Wine and Crime in Blewett were spectacular. I feel incredibly grateful to live in this beautiful rural place and to be part of a community willing to go above and beyond to make sure artists are celebrated and heard.

I look forward to the next ten years of EMLF, watching how the festival grows and changes and being somewhere in the background cheering everyone on and feeling lucky to have found a lively literary community of my own.

— *Rayya Liebich*

Loves

from *Min Hayati*, Inanna Publications
(Toronto, 2021)

*She loved white
flowers, black
olives
drenched in oil*

*new
paperbacks, ancient
calligraphy
spun in gold*

*floating
in the Mediterranean,
strolling across
green meadows*

*writing
with a Mont-Blanc fountain
pen, reading Home
and Garden*

*morning light
on snowy peaks, Beethoven's
Sonatas
by night*

*the scent of
jasmine, glazing
onions
in butter*

*bright
colours, cashmere
twin sets*

and me.

2019


IT WAS A YEAR OF WORDS, music, and cross-pollination that left us intrigued, inspired, and satisfied. We introduced two workshops aimed at emerging writers: Lyric-crafting with Stephen Fearing, and Write for the Screen with Ian Weir. Both were fully subscribed, and participants had a great time. Lyric-crafters strutted their stuff for the rest of us, and yes, we really did sing along. Write for the Screen drew writers looking to specialize in that skill, as well as fiction writers looking for insight into plot and character development.

Writer-in Residence Marilyn Bowering mentored and gave us plenty to think about. Crime writers Judy Toews, **Iona Whishaw**, and William Deverell were good sports when being paired with B.C. wines. Saturday Night Live! presenters Marilyn Bowering, Stephen Fearing, and Ian Weir were riveting. Our panel discussions, as always, offered up great food for thought with topics around education, dark stories, and the “state of the art” across the disciplines. Bill Deverell enthralled with his craft talk, “Guilty as Charged.” Holly Hyatt and Stephen Fearing both brought musical sensibilities to EMLF 2019, along with the poetry of their words in song.

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Iona Whishaw grew up in Canada, Arizona, and Mexico. Winner of the 2021 Bony Blithe light mystery award and a Lefty Award nominee, she released her latest mystery, A Lethal Lesson, in April 2021. A passion for history and her family's WWII intelligence work inform the spirit of her period novels.



THE YEAR I WAS AT THE EMLF in gaspingly beautiful Nelson, I was thrilled to find wonderful Canadian poets Marilyn Bowering and Fred Wah also in attendance. Listening to Wah and Bowering, and then to Judy Toews and William Deverell, with whom I appeared to talk about writing mysteries, I found myself asking, as one does: What is the intersection of poetry and mystery? It was a real revelation when I hit upon this idea, and I credit the intimate and thought-provoking atmosphere of the festival.

I always considered the two forms unlikely chums at opposite ends of the literary continuum. One could be tempted to observe that the one captures the ethereal, the intangible, the abstract, and the other lives hard on the ground where the rough stuff happens. But now I saw that is the very place where what they have in common begins.

Both deal in spiritual uncertainty, and both explore the very gritty core of what it means to be human. Both forms are littered with clues, which the reader is put to work making sense of. There is the economy of expression required for both forms ... the sort of clarity where the author leaves out extraneous words and material, but leaves in what is critical to the final understanding.

Listening to Marilyn Bowering describing standing in what she called “liminal space,” neither in nor out, but suspended between the inner and outer worlds, made me understand in a new way what it is that poetry captures. Poets write with extraordinary precision, and often poems live on the edge of our consciousness, moving between the solid world of fact, and the half-remembered world of dreams and symbols.

And I realized, listening to William and Judy talk about their work, that mysteries are written with that kind of precision as well. Authors carefully polish and highlight feelings, behaviours, landscapes. They lay out, but do not necessarily explain, all the many intangibles of the human condition that underlie the commission of a particular crime. Evidence is presented and left to be considered. Both forms require readers to make sense of gathering evidence, to consider the loss that is often the heart of both poem and mystery.

These were the kinds of thoughts I was having after my wonderful weekend in Nelson. That is because great festivals trigger imagination. Whether it is geography, the warmth of the attendees, the wonderful panels designed for real substantive discussion and exploration, the opportunity to mix with authors outside of one’s own genre, or some other magical je ne sais quoi, EMLF made me feel I’d been at one of those wonderful dinners where all your favourite people are gathered, and discussion is animated and stimulating.

A very happy tenth anniversary to EMLF, and all its many, many organizers, and writers past and future. Long may she sail!

— *Iona Whishaw*

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ONE THING THAT IS A CONSTANT in this changed world: writers keep writing, readers keep reading, and Nelson, B.C.'s, Elephant Mountain Literary Festival con- tinues to celebrate both.

Last year the annual festival did not go ahead as originally planned. A summer series of readings by local authors was held out-of-doors in compliance with provincial COVID guidelines. We welcomed local authors Sarah Butler (*The Wild Heavens*), journalist Jayme Moye, **Roz Nay** (*Hurry Home, Our Little Secret*) and Judy Toews (*Whiskey Jack Road*).

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Nelson writer Roz Nay's debut novel, Our Little Secret, was a Canadian bestseller and won the Douglas Kennedy Prize for best foreign thriller in France. She has lived and worked in Africa, Australia, the U.S., and the U.K.

[Click here](#) to watch her reflect on the festival and present the prologue from her next thriller, The Hunted, in stores July 2021.

I JUST WANTED TO TAKE A MINUTE to thank Elephant Mountain, really. I have had such a nice experience with them, especially last year when we had that outdoor reading. It was gorgeous ... It was so lovely and lantern-lit. And I just appreciate everything that the festival does for local writers, and to bring other talent in from around the area.

The Hunted: Prologue

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A hand over my mouth wakes me, the skin of it tinny with metal and salt. I gasp awake and squirm. Beside me, Jacob's face looms, his eyes ghostly-wide. He's bunched my mosquito net around his shoulders, as if emerging from a cobweb.

"Stevie," he whispers, his voice hoarse. "It's not safe here. You're not safe." Still he presses his briny hand across my mouth. I push at his wrist and sit up.

"What's happened?" I whisper. "What are you doing?"

He's panting, and I notice his hair is slicked against his forehead and his shorts are soaking wet. Behind him, bush babies screech lunatic catcalls into the trees. For more than two weeks we've been on this dive camp and I still haven't gotten used to their screams.

"We have to get out of here." Jacob pulls on a shirt, puts a shaky finger to his own lips. "Right now. Don't make any noise."

It must be close to midnight: The hut is quiet—the cluster of volunteers all asleep—some of us on the cement floor, others on ramshackle beds bought from the local village. Jacob stands and stuffs items into my backpack. A book, my journal, my bikini top. His pack lies bulging on the floor. What's the matter with him? He's never this urgent, this intense. He's the placid boy, a chameleon in any room.

"Jacob, stop! Don't put that in there." I struggle out of my sleeping bag and grab Tamsin's T-shirt from his hand. I glance at her bed across the aisle from me, but I can't quite make out her shape.

Jacob snaps my backpack closed and pushes it into my chest, knocking me back a step. Down the row of sleeping bodies someone shifts and cries out—a Larium dream, the nightly

anti-malarial horror for anyone taking those pills. Jacob swallows, his chin strangely pocked with sand. A straight line of blood glistens by his ear lobe as if he's wrenched it free of a fishhook, but when I reach up toward his neck, he flinches away.

"Come on," he says, and I stumble out of the hut after him into heavy blackness, my brain foggy and clogged.

The generator has long since shut down for the night. Above us the stars blaze unchallenged. Jacob hurries past the smoking fire pit, the earth oven, and the long table under the riveted shelter where we eat. Inside Duran's office, a streak of light is shining. He must be awake, catching up on paperwork with his headlamp on. If something is unsafe, shouldn't we be telling him? Instead, Jacob goes straight to the rear of Duran's Jeep and throws his backpack in, gesturing for me to hand over mine.

"You're borrowing Duran's car? Jacob, tell me what's wrong." I cling to my pack, the air around me thick with spices and heat. In our seven years together, I've never seen him this fitful or angular. Whatever's happened, it's somehow changed the shape of how he moves.

"There's been—" he begins, his throat sounding gummy and thick, but then he stops and ducks down, squinting at the knotted path that leads down to the beach. I follow his gaze but it's impossible to tell what's moving toward us and what isn't. When he speaks again, his voice is so quiet, it's terrifying.

"He's coming for you. Get in."

— *Roz Nay*

2021

How the EMLF Came to Be: A Founding Member Looks Back

LIKE A LOT OF WHAT HAPPENS in Nelson, B.C., especially with regard to education and the arts, the Elephant Mountain Literary Festival began with a dream. The province's second university, Notre Dame University of Nelson (1950–1977), began with the vision of a priest out fishing in the Kootenay River who saw rising on the hillside above the city a university. NDU's successor institutions, David Thompson University Centre (1979–1984) and the present Kootenay School of the Arts, were the result of Nelsonites refusing to let go of their dream of a four-year post-secondary institution.

KSA opened in 1991, an initiative of the former DTUC Support Society. When in 2002 KSA lost what provincial aid it had been able to garner, the KSA administration shut two of its nine departments: drawing and painting, and writing. Fired faculty from those departments started the artist-run centre that became Oxygen Art Centre.

Although a lot of non-credit courses in the arts were and are offered by Oxygen, the dream of restoring a credit creative writing program in Nelson remained



The first EMLF in 2012, at the rented Art Therapy Institute venue. Committee members confab between sessions, at bottom from left to right: Tom Wayman, David Lawson and Shannon Griffin-Merth (speaking).

with Verna Relkoff and myself. Verna had been on the founding committee for ksa, and both of us had taught in and administered its writing program. We also had the idea of showcasing the local interest in writing and reading by organizing a summer literary festival. Our thinking was influenced by the former Kootenay Lake Summer School of the Arts, which ran in Nelson for many years. We were also influenced by the pedagogical approach of Fred Wah, who headed dtuc's writing program. Fred, having grown up in Nelson in the 1950s, understood the need for artists and arts students in a remote mountain valley to be in touch with artistic endeavors in the wider world. He had organized annual field trips for dtuc writing students to Vancouver and Toronto to meet with writers, editors, and publishers.



During the 2020 pandemic, the festival persevered with outdoor readings that made the most of Nelson's local literary riches and natural beauty in a two-event series entitled EMLF: The Meadow Edition. Here, CBC Books "Writer to Watch" Sarah Butler reads from her novel, The Wild Heavens, for the dedicated social-distancing crowd.

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Our idea for the festival was to bring the wider world of Canadian writing, editing and publishing to Nelson readers as well as writers, while celebrating local talent. We rounded up a festival committee in 2011, and by August had registered a sponsoring non-profit, the Kootenay Literary Society. We applied for grants for a July 2012 festival. Nationally and regionally known authors, publishers, editors, and agents agreed to participate.

Though subsequently a few times our nostrils have been barely above the financial waterline, and though year after year the amount of effort demanded of our hardworking committee members has skyrocketed, we were off. Our wonderfully loyal audiences have expanded along with the festival.

Although the dream of a Banff Centre–like institution in the area remains on hold, emlf has continued to shine. In these mountain valleys, however, as ndu, dtuc, ksa, Oxygen and emlf show, one would be foolish to underestimate the power of a dream.

— *Tom*
Wayman



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