

City Poems

2022-2024

A project of Vancouver's poet laureate

Fiona Tinwei Lam

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Vancouver
Public Library's
Vancouver's Poet
Laureate page



City of Vancouver's
Vancouver's Poet
Laureate page



Vancouver Writers
Fest website

Contents

7	Preface
---	---------

11 **Stage 1: Winning Poems**

Established Poets

17	Susan Alexander, “Señákw” <i>First Place</i>
19	Leslie Timmins, “The Modest Contribution of Babies to the Protest at the Member of Parliament’s Office” <i>Second Place</i>
21	Kelsey Andrews, “To the Otter Who Snuck into the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Garden and Ate the Koi” <i>Third Place</i>
23	Julie Emerson, “Stanley Park Fir”
25	Evelyn Lau, “Atmospheric River”
26	Barbara Pelman, “Congregation Beth Israel”
28	Diane Tucker, “Fat Vancouver Snow”

Emerging Poets

30	Jeremy Chu, “Entertainment” <i>First Place</i>
32	Theresa Rogers, “the stone artist” <i>Second Place</i>
34	Donna Seto, “Contrasts” <i>Third Place</i>
36	Christina Barber, “Victory Square Lament”
39	Sandra Bruneau, “Alma”
41	Max Harper Campbell, “Near Commercial”
43	James Kim, “An Existence That We Can Call Home”
45	Vivian (Xiao Wen) Li, “The Garden, Echoes I and II”
50	Angela May, “single mother on Hastings”

Youth (Grade 12 or younger)

53	Adrian Yue, “ending credits for an ending of ‘chinatown’” <i>First Place</i>
55	Isabel Hernandez-Cheng, “Lotus Flower” <i>Second Place</i>
57	Sharon Pan, “Home at Vie’s” <i>Third Place</i>
58	Patricia Chen, “Lost in Chinatown”
60	Katie Evans, “Revival”
61	Debbie Li, “Lightless Fireflies”
62	Ya Xin Lu, “BBQ Meat Shops”
63	Nazifa Nawal, “Khupkhahpay’ay*: A Found Poem”
64	Crystal Peng, “In Google Maps, I explore Chinatown for the First Time”
66	Alice Stanciu, “The Town Where Time Stops”

69 **STAGE 2: Poetry Video Contest**

Additional poems for Poetry Video contest

- 74 Sadhu Binning, "Welcome"
75 Junie Desil, "This Was Meant To Be For Nora"
77 Joy Kogawa, "What Do I Remember of the Evacuation"
79 Alex Leslie, "Postcard home from English Bay"
80 Debra Sparrow, "Know Who You Are and
 Know Where You Come From"

82 *Poetry video awards*

SFU IAT 344 post-contest poems and poetry videos

- 91 Gary Geddes, "Gravity, Gravitas"
93 Chantal Gibson, "Ad Hominem"
95 Kuldip Gill, "At our Punjabi Market"
97 E. Pauline Johnson, "Lost Lagoon"
98 Rita Wong, "take a st. and"

Additional post-contest poetry video production

- 100 James X. Wong, "Found" (Mountain View Cemetery)
102 Fiona Tinwei Lam & Tecumseh Elementary, "Ode to Vivian Jung"

105 **STAGE 3: Geolocative App**

107 **Appendix**

- 108 Resources
109 Judges biographies
111 Vancouver Poems/Vancouver History
114 Acknowledgments

Preface

As one of several nominees for the Vancouver Poet Laureate position back in 2021, I had to propose a two-year Legacy Project. What immediately came to mind was a project involving poetry videos. Since 2009, I'd collaborated with animators and filmmakers on making poetry videos based on my own poems, often wondering why more local poets and filmmakers weren't involved, given the popularity of the genre in Germany, France and the U.S. Here was a fabulous opportunity, not only to engage the public with poetry after an arduous period of Covid lockdowns and isolation, but to kickstart the creation of a full fleet of poetry videos based on wonderful poems about local historical, cultural and ecological sites that could both spark and enrich the public's engagement with both poetry and place.

Why poetry videos? They can expand the reach of poetry by making it accessible to people across borders and backgrounds. Many people are intimidated or confused by poetry. Maybe they've had a bad experience in school with analyzing and dissecting a poem to death. They might not "get" a poem and turn away, thinking it's too difficult or esoteric. They might not know where to find a good poem among the shelves of poetry available. Poetry videos can allow a poem to be read and heard of course, but most importantly *experienced* through visual imagery, colour, pattern, music, narration and more. Filmmakers in turn might be inspired by a poem's metaphors and distilled, compressed language, which might serve as a spine or screenplay for a sequenced collage of visuals and sound design.

What's also very cool about poetry videos is that they can extend and deepen the meaning of poems because of how the images, music, and sound effects work in synergy with the spoken or written word. The visual images and sound design can tap into the unconscious, the unspoken, and universal, drawing upon the words and the white space of the poem on the page. The best poetry videos do much more than illustrate the poem: they create something new and even transcendent.

In order to set the stage for the generation of poetry videos for the City Poems Project, it was important to start with excellent poems by diverse writers about diverse sites. Building upon the 2006 anthology, *A Verse Map of Vancouver* edited by Vancouver's first poet laureate, George McWhirter, the City Poems Project commenced with a poetry contest in 2022 for youth, emerging and established poets. I wanted to encourage people to look at the city with fresh eyes and through a poetic lens. I reached out to community centres, neighbourhood houses, schools, writers groups, and community groups to see who would respond, and how they would respond. Would there be poems that would engage with difficult issues of conflict and loss and reflect upon the impact of urbanization, immigration and colonialism? As a first generation settler who has lived in Vancouver for over fifty years, I felt it was essential to acknowledge this area's complex, multi-faceted history. And indeed, many writers took up the challenge, as evidenced by the 250 plus wide-ranging poems that were submitted.

The City Poems Project's next phase involved working with five classes of post-secondary students to make poetry videos based on the shortlisted poems from the previous year's poetry contest, supplemented with a few other notable published poems to ensure representation. Many of the students were not familiar with working with poetry or with working in teams for video production. It was a journey of discovery for them, as well as for me. It was exciting to see the projects come together in the end, and to see several of them being selected for screening at poetry film festivals and other venues.

I was privileged to work with five adventurous and open-minded post-secondary instructors who took the leap to trust my vision and rearrange their courses around the making of poetry videos by student teams: David Gaertner (UBC), Kate Hennessy (SFU), Martin Rose (ECUAD), Christine Stewart (ECUAD), and Jay Tseng (SFU), along with SFU IAT teaching assistants Julian Iliev and Kenneth Karthik. Video poetry pioneers and advocates, Tom Konyves and Heather Haley, imparted their extensive knowledge of the genre to SFU students and participating instructors at the opening presentation of the poetry video stage of the City Poems Project.

I'm thrilled that the team at CEDaR (Community Engaged Documentation and Research) at UBC has gone even further with the City Poems Project to develop a geolocative app that will enrich people's understanding of the vibrant tapestry of histories and communities that have shaped the territories currently known as British Columbia.

I was very fortunate to work with supportive and helpful staff from the key institutional partners that oversee the Vancouver poet laureate position: the City of Vancouver, the Vancouver Public Library and the Vancouver Writers' Festival. It's important to note that the poet laureate position exists in this city because of the vision of philanthropist Dr. Yosef Wosk who set up an endowment fund through the Vancouver Foundation.

Finally, I want to thank all those who submitted poems to the Stage One contest, as well as the poets and post-secondary students who worked together to create poetry videos both during and after the official contest. I hope that the City Poems Project has served as a creative launching pad for everyone involved. May the seeds of poetic inspiration find fertile soil wherever they land.

Fiona Tinwei Lam

September 2024



Stage 1

Stage One of the City Poems Project was held from January to June 2022 to generate new site-based poems across the City. On January 16, 2022, the Vancouver-themed poetry contest was launched with an online reading and panel discussion about writing place-based poems. Hosted by the Vancouver Public Library and moderated by the Vancouver Poet Laureate, the event featured local poets Joanne Arnott, Junie Desil, Kevin Spenst, Evelyn Lau, and Alex Leslie. Posters were disseminated to local high schools, community centres, seniors' centres and neighbourhood houses. Besides being invited to high schools where she talked about the contest, the Poet Laureate also held a free, online "Crafting Poems about Place" workshop through the Vancouver Public Library, an online place-based poetry workshop in collaboration with Heritage Vancouver, and a hybrid live and online workshop at Historic Joy Kogawa House. A live workshop facilitated by the Vancouver Poet Laureate was also held at Vancouver's historic Mountain View Cemetery in partnership with Pandora's Writing Collective.



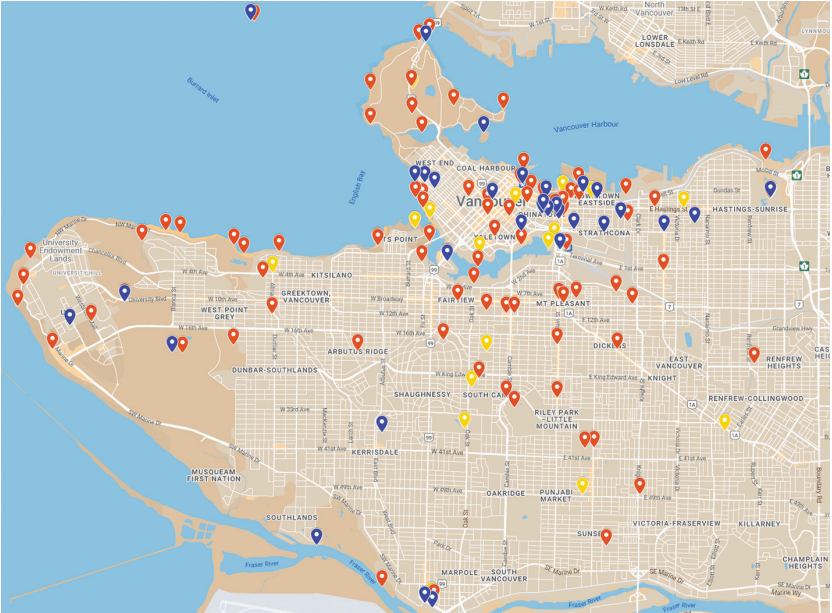
YouTube: Online reading and panel discussion

Of the over 250 poems submitted for the contest by youth, emerging poets and established poets about historical, cultural or ecological sites within the City of Vancouver, 27 (10 Youth, 10 Emerging, 7 Established) were chosen as finalists by three judges: Dr. Bonnie Nish, David Ly, and Rachel Rose. There were cash prizes for the top three winners in each category, as well as donated poetry anthologies from the Griffin Foundation and exhibition catalogues from the Museum of Vancouver.



Judges biographies

Vancouver City Poems 2022-2024

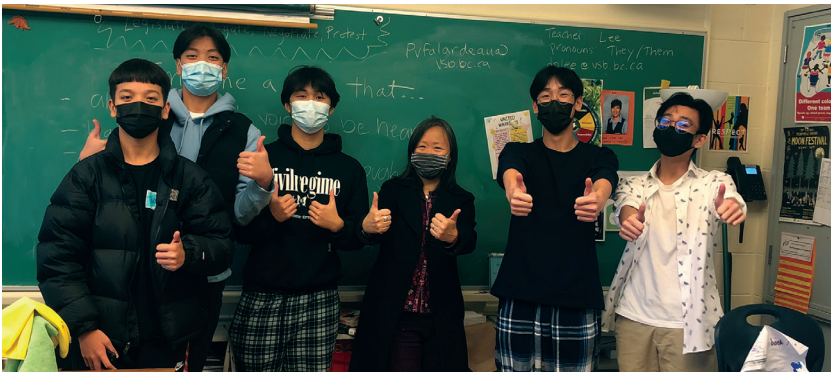


This map shows the locations referred to by the place-based poems submitted by participating poets. Poems by established poets are in yellow, poems by emerging poets are in red, and poems by youth poets are in blue.

Vancouver City Poems 2022-2024



Eric Hamber Secondary, Grade 11 Creative Writing



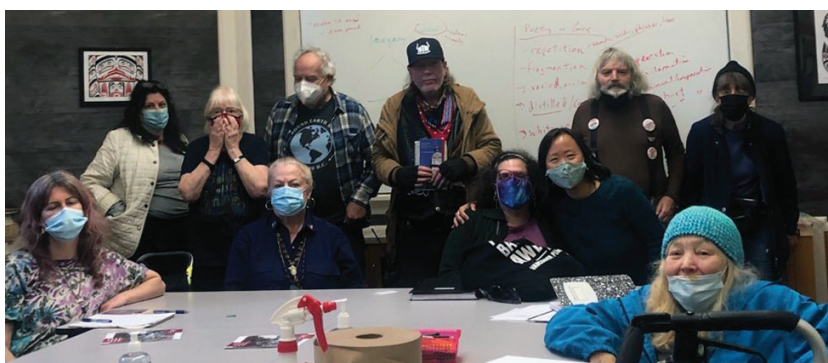
Windermere Secondary School, Grade 10 Social Studies



Tecumseh Elementary School, Grade 7



Magee Secondary, Grade 11 English Literature



Downtown Eastside Writers Collective, Carnegie Centre



Reading at Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden.



**VANCOUVER POET LAUREATE'S
CITY POEMS CONTEST**
CALL FOR ENTRIES
JANUARY 16 - APRIL 15 2022

What historical, cultural or ecological sites in Vancouver intrigue, fascinate or inspire you? Is it the ancient Musqueam village of *əxsaʔəm*, or the Indigenous village of *Señákw* where Kitsilano and False Creek are now, *skwt̓səʔs* or Deadman's Island, Hastings Park where Japanese Canadians were interned during WWII, a historic building in Chinatown or Davie Village, Hogan's Alley, Coal Harbour where the Komagata Maru lay at anchor for 3 months in 1914, or one of Vancouver's gardens, hidden streams or remaining old growth trees? Here's your chance to write a poem that will provide a greater understanding of the origins and multi-layered history of the place we now know as Vancouver!

RULES

1. The poem must be original and unpublished.
2. Poems MUST relate in a significant way to a historical, cultural or ecological site within the area presently known as the City of Vancouver or the UBC Endowment Lands and provide a greater understanding of the origins and multi-layered history of the place we now know as Vancouver. (Poems about sites outside this area unfortunately will not be eligible.)
3. Word limit: up to 400 words per poem. Spoken word poetry: up to 3 minutes.
4. Maximum of two poems per poet.
5. Poems must be typed, 12 point font in Times New Roman or similar font. For spoken word poems, submit a print version plus MP4 recording.
6. A submission form located at <https://www.vpl.ca/poetlaureate> must accompany each submitted poem.
7. Submissions will only be received between January 16 - April 15, 2022.

ELIGIBILITY

Three categories for contest entries:
Youth (grade 12 or under)
Adults (who have not published a book)
Adults (who have already published one or more books)

AWARDS

First Prize for each category: \$300
Second Prize for each category: \$200
Third Prize for each category: \$100

Vancouver Writers Fest will also publish winning entries in their newsletter circulated to 14,000 readers. Winners will be announced in June 2022.

For more information, please email:
citypoemscontest@gmail.com

Street Map from 1909 showing Fairview, City of Vancouver Archives L601340. Image from Vancouver Heritage Foundation at www.vancouverheritagefoundation.org.

   Cultural Services

Winning poems

ESTABLISHED POETS



VPL Award Ceremony, June 11, 2022: Rachel Rose presenting Established shortlist.

Señákw

Susan Alexander

Three-kite man dazzles the afternoon sky:
thrust and zoom, synchronized twirl.
A slow bicycle booms out “Angel of the Morning.”
Kites as angels, as warriors, as flags,
as long-tailed birds, red and blue and white,
theatrical as pennants of the tents further off.

Three-kite man pulls strings, and we watch
his sails lift and kiss, then loop in all directions
like calligraphy, figure skaters, sea creatures.
*They'll be no strings to bind your hands
if my love can't bind your heart.*
Scene complete, the master drags air to earth.

Obedient kites land in line, upright and quiet.
Spectators clap while yachts motor by.
Parades of joggers and dogs. Picnickers,
Seigel's bagels loaded with smoked meat or lox,
look for spots unsullied by Canada geese.
What year did the Bard disperse its queues?

Aristophanes understood the power of withholding.
Lysistrata has lovers and generals falling like dominos.
The actors step out of character to talk of Señákw:
the land under our settler feet, of families marched
to a barge in 1913, and set adrift, a captive
audience forced to watch their village torched.

Susan Alexander is the author of two collections of poems, *Nothing You Can Carry* and *The Dance Floor Tilts*, from Thistledown Press. Her poems have appeared in anthologies and literary magazines in Canada, the U.K. and the U.S. She lives on Nexwlélexm/ Bowen Island, B.C., the unceded territory of the Squamish people.



**FIRST
PLACE**

In the gap, the sky turns mauve above transplanted maples.
Ice cream treats are failsafe, upwind from the Jiffy Johns.
Women were licentious and weak to Ancient Greeks.
Just touch my cheek before you leave me, baby.
Lysistrata reframes a tale, takes a stand
to stop her city's war with the weapons she has.

It's a mercy a tug spotted the castaways and towed
the village barge across the Narrows to their neighbours.
What is the thing that binds the heart? Vancouver
city fathers didn't need to fly a kite to test
citizen opinion on pillaged land. Even when they do,
someone is always holding the strings.

The Modest Contribution of Babies to the Protest at the Member of Parliament's Office

Leslie Timmins

Wordless in their bundles, buckled to breast or back,
their faces original and invariably round as their eyes
stare out at our motley assembly, waving our signs
at drivers turning the corner, Arbutus at Broadway,
as we wait for the Member of Parliament to show up.

Just down the hill at Khatsahlano beach, we've all seen
the mussels in their thousands curled against each other,
blue-stone shells forced open by blast-furnace heat,
and star fish splayed, dried-out and barnacles still
encrusted, but dead from the drain of the sea from the reefs
in the scorch of mid-day, an intertidal genocide.

You move over to stand with two schoolgirls at the curb
holding identical signs—*STOP Fossil Fuel Subsidies NOW!*
and join in their laughter when they hoot and cheer
as a woman in a tin-coloured Corolla pounds her horn,
beams at them, a funny look on her face,
a complicated sort of joy, like seeing a falling star—

"There is hope," Kafka said, "but not for us."

You glance at one of the organizers still on her phone,
no word yet.

Leslie Timmins is the author of *Every Shameless Ray*, a collection of poems. Her writing appears in publications in Canada, the United States and United Kingdom. As an activist and editor, she volunteers with WRAP to advocate for new refugees to Canada.



**SECOND
PLACE**

Over our white or blue pandemic masks, we look round
at each other, smile with our eyes, shake our heads
at someone's story about city folks buying up
island land, *bolt-holes*, someone says, *refuge*
from the wildfires burning in the east, smoke
and poisons blowing-in, and you wonder
Where will I run? with your beloved, dear friends,
good neighbours, *Where will we go?*

The young parents have stepped closer to the thin margin
of shade beside the building, their infants now milk-
or heat-dazed, lulled to sleep on a father's chest
or held up by a mother to catch a non-existent breeze,
a silent Greek chorus of irresistible tenderness,
as you look again at the impossibly new soft skin
of the impossibly young children,
a plenitude of the minimum
as Jimenez wrote, *that fills the world.*

What was it the old monks chanted
in their medieval stone halls—
standing all together as they asked
What are we here for?
and their answer, *Propter chorum*,
for the sake of the chorus,
as we wait for the Member of Parliament
to show up.

To the Otter Who Snuck into the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Garden and Ate the Koi

Kelsey Andrews

I'm told there are pictures of you on Facebook
scuttering through Chinatown like a long rat,
tourists happy to see a little nature.

I don't have a phone for Facebook
and I never saw you as I ghosted
those same streets, invisible.

On stony beaches
where rich people are housed,
otters live under docks and smell terrible,
musk and rotting fish.
I wonder, do they roll in the mess like dogs,
silver spangles adhering to their fur?

In the Garden, your concrete-bruised
paws were soothed by moss and mud.
All those koi caged in a stream
that didn't go anywhere.

I too was feral
but am caged now in luxury,
an SRO inspected periodically
for bedbugs.

The Park Board tried to catch you
but you winkled the fish
from their live traps
and laughed at them,
while I must be polite to the social worker
who scrunches up her nose

Kelsey Andrews
grew up in the
country near
Grande Prairie in
Northern Alberta,
then moved
to Vancouver,
and lives now
in Saanichton,
Vancouver Island,
on WSANEC
territory. Her
first book of
poetry, *Big Sky
Falling*, came
out in November
of 2021 with
Ronsdale Press.



when I get too near.

Buttons sold to the crowd
were printed “Team Otter” or “Team Koi”.
One you ate was fifty.
You tore the liver, the fatty bits
from the bright stomach,
left the rest.

Meanwhile they’re trying to tame me,
medicate me well
enough to get some kind of job,
stop winking money from Disability.

You disappeared one day.
No one saw you leave.

Stanley Park Fir

Julie Emerson

Aiming up, so far
above you, we are
in the sky, loving
light, we align leaves
precisely for sun,
aspire to be one
evergrowing swirl
galaxy of green,
arms up spiraling,
cumulus tickling,
ant-flavoured needles,
secret undersides:
narrow stripes of white,
our reserve of light
in the rain forest.
We are your mothers.
Eagles understand
how to be a friend
of wind, we're dancing,
risking death—a storm?
we ride it. Each mouse
gets a shaggy cone,
each squirrel its seeds.
We are your mothers.
Raccoons and humans –
could they be conscious?
Not only rootless,
unaware of roots
right below their feet.
We are your mothers.
Close to our lovers,
those cedars you carve,
amid splashy ferns
horsetail cavorts here
in season, we trees

Writer and artist
Julie Emerson's
books include
*Twenty Seven
Stings*, *The
Herons of Stanley
Park*, and the
illustrated novel,
*A Hundred Days:
A Botanical
Novel*. Her haiku
have won the
Vancouver Cherry
Blossom Festival
contest and been
anthologized.

have had centuries.
We accumulate
the honour of age
from thin supple skin
to thick reptilian.
Groins itching with voles,
sap-sucking aphids,
carbuncles, bruises,
when the crown teases
lightning we drop limbs,
live in cambium.
A scarf of soft moss
for cold, resinous
icicles glisten
on clingy lichen.
We are your mothers.
Distant skyscrapers
transparent cells, tall
rigid forms will fall,
put a plant on top.
So you want to walk
inside on wood; talk
about afterlife.
We are your mothers.

Atmospheric River

Evelyn Lau

After, you would join others at the beach,
greedy for a glimpse of wreckage—
barge slammed against seawall, containers
like a copper fort bricked against sky.
Scrawl of flip-flops, kelp lacing the bike path.
A fishing vessel propped against rocks, deck
at right angles to the shoreline, split open.

On TV, Merritt slept under a skim
of coffee-brown floodwater—
a city submerged, tops of trees and roofs
tickling the rippled surface. A month of rain
in two days, and farms in Abbotsford
morphed into private islands
on a vast inland lake, livestock paddling
through cranberry bogs. Zigzagged cars
strewn across the Coquihalla, a medley
of tree trunks and metal, mummified in mud.

During the storm you were on the bridge,
forcing your body against the wind like a mountaineer.
Savage sounds of banners snapping,
signs and awnings cracking, safety glass imploding.
Decades ago, you stood on this summit shredding
sheet after sheet of paper into the night ocean,
groping for courage to follow
their ghostly descent. Now you cling to life
like any stubborn old thing, clawing your way across—
headlights surging on one side,
swallowing sea on the other. The atmospheric river
breaching the banks of sky, swamping the horizon.

Evelyn Lau
is a lifelong
Vancouverite and
award-winning
writer who
has published
fourteen books,
including nine
volumes of
poetry.

Congregation Beth Israel, Oak Street 1955

Barbara Pelman

Barbara Pelman
was born in
Vancouver and
now lives in
Victoria, B.C.
She is active
in the literary
community in
the city, assisting
at Planet Earth
Poetry. She
has published
four books of
poetry and one
chapbook.

Every High Holidays we congregated on the stairs,
each of us in our new outfits, crinolines
scratching our legs. Who had the starchiest?
Whose new shoes the shiniest? Certainly
not mine. I stood on the edges of the crowd,
in my cotton dress, limp crinoline,
partially polished shoes. This was 1955,
I was twelve, when things like that mattered.

The synagogue brand-new then, another sacred space
for the Jewish congregants, so soon after the war.
Built in 1948, the pride of the Jewish community,
for those who wanted to sit beside their wives,
the wives refusing to sit in the balcony
like their immigrant mothers did, separate.
They wanted equality, in this country
they had been born into, not like their parents
who fled the pogroms in Russia, in Poland—
arriving in Vancouver with their passports
and not much else. Now their fathers
swayed under their prayer shawls
in the other synagogue down the road,
their mothers in the balconies, looking on.

Beth Israel, with its fortified walls,
its stained glass windows, its majestic staircase
where we lingered, waiting for the service
to begin. Rosh Hashana,
and I am twelve. My dress
was never velvet, or silk, or wool,
my shoes never from Ingledew's or Eatons.

But I was the Choir Leader's daughter
and could sit up in the choir-loft
looking down on all of the congregants.
I could peek through the latticed walls
and listen to my father's voice
soaring over the others, his high tenor
like the Angel Gabriel, or so I thought.
I could even look down on the Rabbi,
with his white *kittel*, his white *kippah*,
and pretend to listen to his sermon.

Everyone I knew sat in those seats,
the polished pews, the raised *bimah*
in front of us, where the Rabbi and Cantor sat.
We gathered at Friday services, where my father
came down onto the *bimah*
to raise the *Kiddush* cup, bless the wine.
We met at *bar mitzvahs*, morning services,
lingered over sandwiches and tea, after.
The Rabbi inquired about our health,
asked about our lessons. Were we preparing
for our own *bat mitzvahs*? A new tradition,
the world opening up for women.

Beth Israel, so different now, renovated
in 1993, its grand staircase gone,
the choir loft gone, my father's voice
an echo in my mind. *Hashkivenu*
he sang, *let us lie down in peace*.

Fat Vancouver Snow

Diane Tucker

for Sheila and Carmen Rosen

In Norquay Park a man sits smoothing a snow fort,
a graceful, C-shaped wall of white.

All around him he's greened the winter ground,
though fists of fat snow keep falling, falling.

Vancouver native

Diane Tucker
has published
a young adult
novel and four
books of poems,
most recently
*Nostalgia for
Moving Parts*
(Turnstone
Press, 2021).
Her poems have
been published
in numerous
anthologies and
in more than
seventy journals
in Canada and
abroad. She lives
in beloved East
Van.

When it hits plus-2 degrees, even the snowflakes
huddle together for life, become pom poms
of snow, loose knots of snow, snow eggs breaking
on the man next to me at the intersection,
filling his afro with pearls, black and silver.

Up the hill swim sculptures of giant salmon
slipping in and out of the sidewalk—how name them,
these salmon refusing burial? How in Squamish
Snichim say “Salmon with a Mouth Full of Snow”?

Winning poems

EMERGING POETS



VPL Award Ceremony, June 11, 2022: Fiona Lam presenting Emerging shortlist on behalf of David Ly

Entertainment

Jeremy Chu

For the Marco Polo Restaurant

Language begins
at the crunch of siu yuk,
its rugged hide, and continues
through the rhythm of laughter,
the blues of evening vapor
among brass horns hoisting the dizzy
swing of conversation

A collection of lips
pressed against mouthpieces
while some press themselves
against others, you hear so much
more music than music,
you hear bodies knowing

their way. They move
within the moments between syllables,
their record spinning in the spaces.

Wherever alleyways and city blocks,
there is the flight of bodies,
dancers on midnight
folding into the neighbourhood,

the crackle of shoes
atop sidewalks and the crackle
of a wild microphone
are the same voice

Jeremy Chu is a
Filipino-Chinese
poet, writing
as a guest on
the unceded
territories of the
Skwxwú7mesh
(Squamish),
Səlilwətaʔ/
Selilwitulh (Tsleil-
Waututh) and
xʷməθkʷəy̓əm
(Musqueam)
Nations. He has
been featured
in *W49*, *Pocket
Lint*, and *Capsule
Stories*. His
writing wonders:
How does love
reveal itself as
it crosses The
Pacific?

FIRST
PLACE

and forever,
when high notes settle
on these blanketfall evenings
it is no new thing, because
settling only comes
after a lay of the land.

the stone artist

Theresa Rogers

is tending to his cairn
again, gently balancing

one jagged stone
on to another

until each is poised
impossibly on its own

thick sea rock pressing
into mussel shells

bruised and broken

each day brings
a new topology

along the curved seawall
of the far Northwest

lined with silver trees—
cavenio sagrada (Españoles)

or cascaras to those
who first paid witness

still, his sculpted birds

won't wing or birth
as they keep vigil

Theresa Rogers
is a teacher and
poet living in
Vancouver. She
has published
poems in *English
Bay Review*,
*Cape Cod Poetry
Review*, *Cape Cod
Times*, *Uppagus*
and other venues.
She received an
MFA from Antioch
Los Angeles.

**SECOND
PLACE**

in cold winds
and king tide swells

asking only
for one last moon

before starting their slow
slide back to the sea

Contrasts

Donna Seto

The chipped wooden cane of my century-old grandmother
beats haphazardly against the damp asphalt.
drumming to a history of broken dreams
fossilized by grey-black gum
chewed by absent ancestors.

Donna Seto is a writer, academic, and artist from Vancouver, B.C. Her work has been published in *The New Quarterly*, *Ricepaper Magazine*, and academic journals. Donna is working on her first novel, a collection of short stories, and an illustrated book on Vancouver's Chinatown.

A mustached man on East Pender,
a has-been accountant with a southern Chinese accent
my grandmother once mistook as her late husband,
hollers across the crowd of Sunday shoppers
that his gai lan is fresher, greener, and crisper
than his competitor's on Keefer.

His calculated eyes full of adulterous ambitions,
the slight upturn of his lips resembling a smile
that women once swooned over
during better times.

"On sale, poh-poh," the man who is not my grandfather says.
"Bargain—
Ninety-nine cents a pound."

The man's village accent echoes
down the paint-splattered street,
sending pigeons flocking
from frayed electric lines.

Hushed chatter
of forgotten rice patties and fermented fish
sundried on an old laundry line
above a charcoal fire
in a blackened hut,
no different from the one
my grandmother once called her home.

The tattered shoes on my grandmother's unbound feet



THIRD
PLACE

shuffle alongside graffitied walls and broken windows.
Post-apocalyptic scenes of a war-torn past made present
except this is not a war,
 at least not the kind with guns and grenades.

Hungry tastebuds dance to the rhythm of fat
glistening on golden roast ducks strung out
on silver hooks in a butcher shop window on Gore,
 laminated with grease as thick as the layers of paint
 on its exterior.

“The city donated paint to fix this graffiti problem,”
the butcher tells my grandmother,
breathing out a drawn-out sigh while waving his cleaver,
“We suffer there, we suffer here.
 Who did I wrong in my past life?”

My grandmother’s cataract eyes squint
at the shadows that flicker to the glow
 of a red paper lantern,
 while pale-skinned tourists watch
 the fat drip from carcasses
 like raindrops cascading to the ground
 from rooftops.

A hipster waltzes into the butcher shop,
in designer jeans he claims are from Value Village,
but he purchased on a whim from Nordstrom.
Belly full of foie gras served on heirloom sourdough,
he washes down with a
 \$7 oat milk latte, while k-pop blasts
 from his thousand-dollar earbuds
 as he snaps a photo
 of my century-old grandmother.

“Authentic china-doll poh-poh,” the hipster says
 as he shares the filtered snapshot with the world.

Victory Square Lament

Christina Barber

Monument in Victory Square
Erected there, a solemn prayer
Grey granite obelisk in stead
Marks the passing of our dead
One Great War laid innocence bare

Christina Barber is a Vancouver teacher and writer. She is an avid reader with a passion for Canadian history and literature and blogs about her reads. She loves to learn about Vancouver's history and to explore its natural areas.

Bagpipes skirl, lead in to this affair
At ease, remove the caps they wear
On lapels flare Poppies crimson red
Our monument in Victory Square

Veterans, in honour standing there
While the flypast drones the air
Last Post, Reveille resound overhead
Hymns sung; poetry read
Promises made, burdens to share
Our monument in Victory Square

Witnessed by a thousand eyes
April city springs to cries
Of *Strike!*; workers, jobless, veterans attacked
To standoff, police were quick to react
Flee to the Square, strikers stabilize

When delegates returned with no replies
McGeer took steps to neutralize
With odds, against them, stacked
Witnessed by a thousand eyes

Rationale: countering Communist spies
Mayor's moment to self-aggrandize
God Save the King! Read the Riot Act
Anger, resentment boiled, tensions cracked
Trek-on-to-Ottawa!, the crowd decries
Witnessed by a thousand eyes

Faraway shores
March sons, proudly, while the crowd roars
Saluting past the monument
The Lost Generation too cognizant
Sacrifices, demands of wars

Weary feet-body-mind deplores
Hailing bullets, like spring downpours
On a distant continent
Faraway shores

Home again, seek simple splendours
Remembrance beyond memorial gym doors
Standing tall, humble monument
Yours too, for those lost, the complement
On beaches, valleys, fields, lie scores
Home now, those faraway shores

All ye that pass by
Who stand under November's sky
What of others there, who make do?
Downtrodden, forgotten, seen through
Poverty, the Square does magnify

Against tyranny, soldiers solidify
For freedom and peace fortify
The plinth recalls, "*Is it nothing to you?*"
"All ye that pass by"

The many who hurt, who cry
To be seen, heard and to ally
Wherefore did we lose those of virtue?
Their name liveth for evermore?
Walking there, turn not a blind eye
All ye that pass by

Monument in Victory Square
Erected there, a solemn prayer
Grey granite obelisk in stead
Marks the passing of our dead
Too many wars laid innocence bare

Bagpipes skirl, lead in to this affair
At ease, remove the caps they wear
On lapels burn Poppies, crimson red
A moment of silence ...

Veterans, in honour standing there
While the flypast drones the air
Last Post, Reveille resound overhead
Angelic voices rise, tears shed
Promises made, burdens to share
Monument in Victory Square

Alma

Sandra Bruneau

Along Alma, the mountains bedazzle the bay
below. The roadway dips down and meanders
past Almond Park, our rallying point.

Vancouver is peaks, parks, and promenades,
no less than sales and shipping. Always, we've
gathered on streets to dream dreams, contest
plans. Alma is today's stage.

Our demonstrators—bathers, climbers, gardeners,
walkers—wend north to the bay. We hoist home-
brewed blue-yellow flags, dozens of signs.

Traffic stops. Lights hesitate, pedestrians stare,
throngs grow. Like a steady flowing river, we
move north—loving nature, peace, justice, and
civil liberty.

Alma is a river in Crimea flowing northwest from
mountains to Black Sea. Our hand-drawn placards
tell that over a century past, allied forces beat back
the Russians, but the Russians overtook the land
again, and with it, the Alma.

Ukrainians fought as underdogs to retake the land.
More than once did they battle, short of victory,
hundreds of lost lives.

This time, it will be different. We'll help them—
we who walk and ride freely along Alma.
We'll raise the common consciousness.

As a former
teacher and
present
community
activist, Sandra
Bruneau likes
to express
her thoughts
about what is
happening around
her in poetic
form. She has
written poems
for pleasure for
many years, and
since 2017 has
been active with
the UBC Emeritus
group devoted
to reading and
analyzing poems.

Vancouver City Poems 2022-2024

There's talk of Ukraine's Alma and ours. We send
supplies and medics, house refugees, and meet in
high places. Constancy encounters no roadblocks.

The Ukrainian Spirit lifts ours. We are afire with
what we should and can do. We organize, gather
donations, take names, march to downtown.

Muralists and gardeners speak of blue and yellow
sunflowers along Alma. Along both Almas.

Near Commercial

Max Harper Campbell

Here is the building
 where I used to live and here is where
 my aunt used to live
 and my other aunt
and there
 a friend of the family

Here is the balcony
 where I looked at the sunset
sometime as a child
 bloom of orange all over the sky
 like seventeen suns setting
 and the sound of the sky crying happily

Anime TV
 late night 1990s
Britannia library
 and what it meant to be a human being

 something that has only confused me more
 now that I see how small Britannia
 library really is

And here is the place
 that burned down and broke
my young heart that felt
 that when I lost a part of the street
I lost a part of myself

The swimming pool in snow
 through windows

Max Harper
Campbell lives
in Vancouver. He
has published in
the *Salt Chuck
City Review*, the
Orsmby Review,
and translations
of the Indonesian
poet Chairil
Anwar in
Columbia Journal
and *Lunch Ticket*.

Somehow the street
 will never smell so concrete again
the wild feeling
 of a child of the time
when the city was not so expensive
 and we could feast on light

An Existence That We Can Call Home

James Kim

Sitting quietly by the First Narrows
remembering The Lost Salmon-Run,
of the ravenous yearning for strength,
unaware of the consequences that will
devastate our community,
shattering the solace seen in the sea.

Rumbling throughout the city of glass.
Making space for something new, though
no one asked.
It was for the greater good, they said.
They lied
and we could not believe them.

They sought power
to feed a starving greed
to gross and gluttonous excess.
Though they never thought
it came at a cost.
And they did not believe us.

We have only
 the memories,
 the stories,
 the truth to guide us,
ground us to an existence that we can call home.
When they tell us to never forget,
we must remind them
we have never forgotten.

James Kim has been writing poetry since his first year of his undergraduate career. He's currently in pursuit of a Master's of Art in Counselling Psychology: Art Therapy. He's always known poetry as a way to express one's emotions.

Vancouver City Poems 2022-2024

We are taught by
 our parents,
 our peers,
 our people,
we could not trust those who break promises made.

For the marginalized communities of Stanley Park, both new and old.

Note: First Nations villages, as well as Chinese, Portuguese, Hawaiian, and mixed-race inhabitants, were forcibly displaced by civic authorities to make way for what we now know as Stanley Park.

The Garden, Echoes I

Vivian (Xiao Wen) Li

i.

smooth river leads to quiet
winter dust on my fingers
frozen, with stars in water,
lantern fish in the wind.
I've longed for herons in my sleep,
jade water in trembling eyes,
for mountains to retire on,
cranes crooning a monsoon song.
In the garden, across generations,
stones weigh us to the earth, as the living
hums with the remembered, still slumbering

ii.

Leaning on the white wall a few steps from Moon-Gate,
river flowing like thrumming glass,
an echo-chamber reaching into golden souls
and verdant depths deep beneath rocks
yīn tiān, yīn for melancholic, hopeful—
the borrowed view of the park, cornered by hum-drums
of cars.

A crow perched on the drip tiles
wavers and soars beneath helicopters,
its partners driving gnats and insects underneath waves
of garden homes. They told me at the entrance
to walk slowly, enjoy yīn and yáng, to harmonize
with the spirit still lingering here 36 years since
its conception
fighting against the thrall of capitalism
the pond beats on in stolen land,
the Georgia Viaduct trembling as she
remembers who she could've been.
I glance down, witnessing Tàihú Rocks rising
from the knuckles of my interlaced fingers—

Vivian Li is
a queer, 1.5
generation
Chinese Canadian
immigrant with
creative works
published in *The
Fiddlehead* and
CV2, among
others. A MFA
graduate in
Creative Writing
from UBC and
longlisted for
the 2024 CBC
Short Story Prize,
she is looking
for a home
for her debut
experimental
novel.

Vancouver City Poems 2022-2024

the canyons and rivers, the hills of the college,
the inclines I skipped up with my grandmother
to purchase bird-feeders and sweet mochi.

The alpine winds above,
my feet itching to run into the verdant field
sparkling with coins. Is it too early to retire
to the mountains like Zhūgě Liàng and wait for scholars
to knock on my thatched cottage when my return is
imminent?

iii.

past the look-out point:
red fences, fields,
Boys of the Old Testament playing soccer.
Cars flying by hum
with the whispers of bamboo.
Fuchsia, plums, bamboo, chrysanthemums—
as magnolias bloom, pink,
each a curled sweet center unfurling,
toes as curled as gumdrops.

White orchid lips open over the water,
heads adorned with Nature's warmth,
leaning to catch their eyes in the reflection.
The tour guide said they were either
seeking validation,
or bowing to the garden in respect.

Stepping over Moon-Gate, we watch underneath
to relinquish the shadows we've pulled inside.

The pond pillows out her dress,
smoothes over the ripples in her body.
A mallard duck and his partner squabble
as they swim over, preening,
spirits reaching into the water,
into the Ting's reflection of heaven.

Witness light spilling as drops of Spring
sparkle onto my head.

The Garden, Echoes II

i.

Ink-flowers peach and shy,
tulip-bulbs,
flame candles. Within broken rocks
and sparrow wormholes,
the woman in red plays the gǔ qín—
underneath the pavilion head,
the young spruce-wood chair echoing
her mezzo-soprano voice beneath cherry blossoms.

Lingering alone:

to long for the scent of a song.

ii.

water spills through the head of heaven,
sky and pond interlacing fingers and foam—
Western winds blowing to China, to the graves
of my grandfather and grandmother.
Memorial,
the yellow-shirted me who spun,
responding to
“beauty” at fourteen. When we bowed before
the tablets with faces
foreign to us. The ground chilling on my palm—
when these stone tiles reveal faces
we remember,
how long will our memories last?

iii.

In this garden built
to bridge between West and East, chillier on this
south pavilion,
bamboo, cherry blossom. The ink of a general has
not yet dried.
Go, the black-and-white pieces sing. Find
prosperity, propel mind to action.

Brushes hang, vertical behind the jade statue
of Guān yīn, merciful
to us who stumble by.

Rocks, smooth-edged and rising,
tiny mountains. Perhaps Chén Xiāo broke them
in his youth,
testing the strength of his love
for his entombed mother.
The two-plank bridge to the Tīng
closed off with bamboo sticks.
Beyond, a waterfall cascades over stones.
My fingers freeze from excess yīn,
fog haloing my fingers.

iv.

Intangible Threads

in tessellated moments,
a spiral;
straight edges. Gold pins leading to the edge of a quilt
or dark hole.
Spreading in straight formations, a building
swallowed by pride. Above,
remains of pinwheels thread
dangle silver beside to white.
Echoing threads of factory,
woven quilt, her maternal line's lineage.
Her father, represented
by factories, thick paints on canvas. Her mother,
thread and textiles,
the woven fabric of Sūzhōu's creators.
Herself, caught between
West and East.

v.

Mountains emerge through rhombi and trapezoids,
dancing along the edge of what remains;
white space in black and silver; divide, sparkle.

A shirt unfolded,
a pomegranate blooming open,
stairs in parallel falling to earth,
opening sky and 天堂 to us.
And in the hallway connecting canvases
to passersby,
the sound of an artist resounds: 苏向

vi.

like paintings, the shadows on walls
are the shadows of the world
they are recording the stone, trees, everyone,
and everything,
breathing, ever-changing, momentary—
transient homes for the passersby—

single mother on hastings

Angela May

she left clues, memories, dots of inhabitation:
a man frozen at a cutting board, a woman hanging laundry,
a child at the inlet, collecting shiners,
all of them making home a speckled thing,
shaping city into light, stacked high, set adrift

Angela is a mixed Japanese Canadian writer, artist, and activist based in Vancouver, B.C. She is also a PhD Student in the Department of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University. Her creative and community writing has been published in *emerge 20*, *The Bulletin/Geppo*, *Nikkei Images*, *The Volcano*, and other forums.

she spun mischief into whereabouts,
and settled in for the journey, letting
the man, the woman, the child become themselves,
letting the city speak its volumes, which were soft but
stuck—the string section caught in arched-back G,
home as dough, éclair,
delicious in its warmth, in the mud
or chocolate
of tending

she spelled these thoughts with leftovers:
maze gohan, the little bodies of rice
turned dry and hard from the leaving,
mice scurrying at her feet, in the streetcar,
its course mapped and remapped to avoid the traffic
of spirits

she releases steam like a punk city
she is street
spinning stories, twisting words.
curated and bullshitless,
she beckons, sidelong in the current,
self undone, oxydized, woman as fresco.

the streetcar stops; and now exiting, she is set loose
coins to sewage, doubles drained, x's marked, bills split,
she has arrived, she who was destined to get
the dirt and deal with it, to become
dirty herself—so that when some unexpected freight
a celestial tug at the hem
looks up, open-mouthed,
releasing the truth about story
the child, in operatic lustre, uncanny and horrid and gaping
and miraculous,

i now can live with a roommate ancestor,
in this city, up the stairs, down the hall, and in the middle
on the left;
so that i now can prick my finger,
run it along the walls,
read the loom of the lion, learn
the infrastructure of lessons

Winning poems YOUTH



VPL Award Ceremony, June 11, 2022: Rachel Rose presenting Youth shortlist on behalf of Bonnie Nish.

ending credits for an ending of 'chinatown'

Adrian Yue

serene cerulean seats sating
the rain. she
envelops my skin with her pink
raincoats covered with salmon factory
stains. stains of yonder yearly reawakening from the rain.
the rain comes
and goes. judiciously gracing us
then leaving us. everything is temporary. it always is.

the verdigris gets peeled back, like layers of mandarin
orange, mandarin chop suey neon---flash
of picked away families---flash
of hopefuls who came, who made the voyage by air
like migrating birds flying over the pacific.
like the lost trail. our great-uncle. my great-uncle.

red bean ice, red bean me. second generation commodity.
the 20 bus' embrace
caresses me gently, expunges all of its \$4.50 plate
of rice fendi and slowly sinks me into her song.
sung in

that perfectly mismatch-toned cantonese
while
being lulled

to sleep i was only four.
yet i knew forty bus routes forty ways to the heart
forty words that penetrate the souls of an adult with my
tai zee and *ngoi*.

she lifts me across the technicolour plains, just as
the movie was about to end. the panda
and the red streetlight legacies

Adrian Yue (he/
they) is a second-
generation poet,
painter, and
creative who was
born and raised
in Vancouver.
Their work details
themes of loss,
connection, and
time. Through
writing, they are
able to transform
their thoughts
into tangible
pieces of prose
or poetry. When
not writing, they
enjoy gardening
and music.



**FIRST
PLACE**

and then
like the elders, gold rock, nothing gold can stay she
hoists me atop her head as i
watch the ending of the movie.

i lived it.
the 20 bus taking me into the thick
into the plot twists and turns into
the perms which held
the tears of her sister as she walked to start the film.

i watched as she ended it.

burned and blazed like *gum gook yuen* her kidney failed
while the lights went dim,
while the tong fell silent.

sequoias being felled.
even though there are always different bus drivers,
something feels similar.
im watching the film again, not the live stream. but the film.
its ending again.
i can feel it as the seats become woven plastic. it ended
a long time ago. i just sit

there. my bosom nudged into the mattress,
the red streetpost stares at me.

and sleeps, the grocer falls into the abyss. the series comes to an end.

the verdigris was peeled back, then a new coat of copper,
half raw
Industrial-chic
Inner city gentrification “verdigris green”
slapped over it. For the ending credits

Are cheap, but the broken queues are long.

Lotus Flower

Isabel Hernandez-Cheng

Filthy water
Squalid streets
From filth they bloom
Morning dew delicately sat on a petal
Industrious tears fill the eyes of Chinese pioneers

An arduous odyssey
A single man's journey
In hope for promised gold and glory
His family patiently waits for an indefinite date
Sorrowful evenings

Two lonely hearts stare at the solitary moon

For a privileged price
He can hope for half a humble life

Thousands of miles away from home
In this Chinatown
He walks down Shanghai alley
And sees familiar faces
He hears tense Chinese opera
A discovered sense of calm in his home dialect

In a society where he is not welcomed
Chinatown embraces and empowers
He can find a clan amidst the rundown streets
Where in this foreign land he finally belongs

Bright red lanterns decorate the streets
Enticing neon welcome signs flash as he walks by
A steamy smell arises from a bamboo basket of chashu bao
Shop owner's wife beckons him in

In 2022, Isabel Hernandez-Cheng was an eighth grade student attending York House School in Vancouver. She enjoys studying social studies and English language arts. She took inspiration for this poem from a visit to several exhibitions about Chinese history in Chinatown.



The muddy pond in which lotus flowers bloom
Chinatown, the muddy pond in which he flourishes
He came as a seed and planted himself in this
neighbourhood
Unassuming and taken advantage of
Chinatown is where he finds his worth
He will give and give before he fights for his rights
Sacrificed sons lost to war
Fighting for a country that they needed to prove their worth to

The alluring lotus flower
Like the Chinese immigrants
Who found their home in Chinatown
Came from a pond of struggles and inequalities
Yet bloomed, so beautiful and strong

Home at Vie's

Sharon Pan

A drizzle, a dash, a sprinkle of fine oil on heated pans

Harmonious rhythms ring from the band playing
on the stage

Warmth flutters up in your chest

The heat wraps around your heart like a blanket
on your stomach on a cold winter day, stroking
the patters of your heartbeats

A magnetic pull, strumming the strings of your veins

Clatters of wine glasses

Chatter in a crowded room rises

The sweetness crawls into throats

Crushed garlic and gravy mixing, creating a flavourful taste
that stays in your mouth

Shadows dance in a celestial light cast from the rays
of the sun, flickering behind thin curtains

All the dreams of life branch from this stage

A drop of happiness creates inspiration for everyone

At Vie's Chicken and Steakhouse

In 2022, Sharon
Pan was in Grade
7. She likes cats,
writing, and
eclairs.



Lost in Chinatown

Patricia Chen

My identity is held together by a series of dashes,
A jumbled code only some understand.

And only some will understand the pain of being
held together by wiry stitches.

The pain of unintentionally erasing a piece of themselves,
In search of something that better glues their loose parts
together.

The pain of scratching at the mind's interior,
Relentlessly digging for eternity for one
of the many voices lost within their own head.

Perhaps it's the fault of a young, oblivious child.
Being introduced to a new world,
With new voices, new views, new tongues.
A new identity.

Can we blame society's washing machine?
Rinsing the child of the old world,
Wringing her dry?
Hung on a wire to be freshened, as the breeze whisks away
any last droplets of the tattered child.

Society hands her a needle and chicken wire, preparing her
to stitch herself up once she starts to remember.

She explores a worn out street with heavy pockets.
Stained windows reveal shelves upon shelves of dried roots,
and traditional medicine.
Seagulls and geese rest on brick ledges
Overlooking streets that house dumpling businesses,
\$10 hair perms, and polished jade pendants.

In the nooks of the alleyways, there are doors that lead to
butcher shops filled with chilled flesh,

In 2022, Patricia
Chen was a
student at
Windermere
Secondary School
with a passion for
expressing herself
through visual
art and literature.
She enjoys
reading, creating
art, and writing
poems inspired
by her thoughts
and experiences.

Vancouver City Poems 2022-2024

loading docks for struggling grocers,
and kitchens with overworked parents.

Red lampposts line the asphalt as a towering structure
marks the entrance to the street:
Vancouver Chinatown Millennium Gate.

Xie Shan roofs cut the air as orange tiles contrast
with blue sky.

She can envision the dances of decorated lions
coursing through the street.

An old woman's face filled with harsh wrinkles
taps her shoulder,

Breaking the trance.

"Do you speak Chinese?"

A choked sound doesn't escape.

The old woman walks away, and in a desperate attempt
to follow the woman, she trips
from the weight of her pocket.

In a frenzy, she clutches the needle and wire, furiously
digging into the frayed splits on her skin.

This anguish is so newfound.

Yellow flickers from lampposts as dusk pours over
the quaint town.

What is left of her?

Piles of detached memories.

Faint visions of her younger self.

Tangled chicken wire, and the damned needle
that came with it.

I sit in a red pool that matches Chinatown's red lampposts.
Perfectly.

I look around at my darkened surroundings.
I find myself lost in the alleyways of Chinatown.

Revival

Katie Evans

In 2022, Katie Evans was a grade 11 student at Point Grey Secondary. She has lived next to this forest on the traditional territory of the Musqueam nation her whole life and loves writing poetry.

I am here,
trees climb the sky,
reaching for stars,
pulling them down in rain.
The ground is buoyant,
alive with moss
and decay
or rebirth.
Wind pulls branches
into swaying dances,
giving them life
through movement.
Roots stretch—
a tapestry
connecting the trees,
bringing their dance to the ground
so even the saplings can sway along.
Leaves rustle,
feathers rustle,
wings beat
to the rhythm of the wind.
I am part of this dance.
Those wings are my own.
I am alive

Lightless Fireflies

Debbie Li

Fireflies were always quite nice to see, for they glowed ever
so brightly.

With beauty comes vulnerability.

But people took advantage and trapped them in jars
So that they could enjoy their light for themselves.

They planted seeds of houses in what were the jars.

This jar was different than the land they flew in,
the land called *čəsnaʔəm*.

They came to the small village and
infected the fireflies with diseases, and viruses
that they were unfamiliar with.

Many fireflies lost their light, forgot how to glow.
In *čəsnaʔəm* they left their things as they died off.
Those things became *décor* and display
without their permission.

They were placed in the ancient Musqueam Museum.
The fireflies lost their land, lost their culture,
lost their village.

Fireflies were always quite nice to see, before
they lost their light because you stole it away.

In 2022, Debbie Li was a 14-year-old who was attending York House School. She has a passion for writing poetry and prose, as well as creating art pieces.

BBQ Meat Shops

Ya Xin Lu

I wasn't here in 1970
when a hundred golden-brown ducks lined the windows
of this street
and a thousand voices flew raucously
char siu rou!
niu rou ga li!
bai zhuo gai lan!

In 2022, Ya Xin Lu was a Grade 11 student at University Hill Secondary School. She loves to write speeches and hopes to study Political Science. As a Chinese-Canadian immigrant, she is fascinated by the rich history and culture of Vancouver's Chinatown, as well as Vancouver in general.

and little footsteps pattered on the concrete
begging mama for just one treat
while big laughs bounced off watery glass
onto salty air and sweet grass

I wasn't here in 1975
when the white men came knocking on the door
rows of *kao ya* thrown on the floor
voices dead
air sour
bullshit about cooking temperature spewed for hours
because buttered steak raw is bourgeois
but *char siu* pork tended fully is deadly

I wasn't here in 1976
when my people rose a whole association to oppose
the people who took our laughter when they left
Voices turned redder than red
marching up Parliament Hill ahead

I am here in 2022
when a few golden-brown ducks line the windows
of these streets
and a dozen voices walk peacefully
Try all they please
No one can take away this salty breeze

Khupkhahpay'ay*: A Found Poem

Words Gathered from Commercial Drive

Nazifa Nawal

who gather heritage and reconciliation for the renewal

of britannia

respect and welcome families from the drive

every child matters

britannia

honor survivors whose land and culture shape

future generations who make police afraid

and communities safe

empower teens from exclusionary politics

reconciliation is disaster support

history is a legacy

acknowledgement was a choice

negligence was authentic in

a colossally mishandled city

east van with no consent

unceded territory

grandview woodland

Nazifa Nawal
(she/her) is a a
first-generation
immigrant
from Dhaka,
Bangladesh. As
an uninvited
settler moving
into the Britannia
Community,
she feels it
is extremely
important for
her to pay her
respects to the
unceded lands
and make efforts
to commemorate
its history.

*Squamish name for “cedar”

In Google Maps, I Explore Chinatown For the First Time

Crystal Peng

In 2022, Crystal Peng was living in Vancouver, B.C., editing for the Flat Ink and reading EX/POST. When not writing, she spends her time propagating succulents, listening to the Goldberg Variations, or in a Wikipedia rabbithole about oysters.

Millennium gate. Snow, dirtied, clots curbs. Cars drift: junks over Pender; Huangpu runs in asphalt, shimmering with Pacific brine. Street lamps flooding red, imperial in the half-light, flicker hidden dragons to life: origami shadows, exfoliating walls. I, yellow girl on Google Earth, follow the floating arrows: a tourist's trail, a hero's journey, a kind of homecoming. I, riding the following seas, rail tracks, rushes of gold back to Shanghai, Shanghai Alley (these streets named for mainland cities, traffic jams¹, strange flowers²). I, sock-eyed and yellowing in streetview light, swarm upstream, past curdling technicoloured graffiti, past snakes of vape smoke, past faux-neon signs with the characters I can no longer decipher. Here, I am trying to find myself again. Take root. Propagate. Sow millet kernels into Yangtze basin as my ancestors did eight thousand years ago. Flock within this quarter like my compatriot immigrants to safety, to shelter. Tributaries gathering, bloodlines conglomerating, like wool on a spindle. Here, I am trying to find my country again. No: I am trying to remind myself that there is nothing of me to find here, only discards and parodies from another era. A diorama of a nation, a miniature of a civilization, a caricature of what I'm supposed to be. A yellow girl lost in an uncanny landscape, inaccessible by time. A yellow girl whose country is a museum in her heart. A yellow girl who was never really here. So each time a tone slips from

1. Chinese name of Carrall Street is 卡路, which translates to "jammed road."

2. Chinese name of Keefer Street is 奇花, which translates to "strange flower."

my tongue, muddied & bleached, I am crossed, like the
perpetual bus wires, shamefully unpatriotic and bulbous like
December lanterns. Each time I try to cross these millennial
boundaries and go to the town which boasts a country, the
stone lions melt me with their adamant gaze and I am a
visitor to myself again.

The Town Where Time Stops

Alice Stanciu

Walking along the charming cobblestone streets.
Arrays of old buildings exposed by brick display themselves—
Look at me! Look at me!

Alice Stanciu
has always been
passionate about
the architecture
and unique styles
of old buildings
and locations.
As someone
who is very
observant of their
surroundings,
she finds poetry
an amazing way
to convey her
feelings and help
people see the
beauty of the
things around
them.

Reclaimed wood and details are strewn along the block.
I'm caught in the moment, staring at the big old clock.
Tick tock, tick tock
The hour strikes six.

Bound by whistles, steam, and a playful little tune,
The sun starts to set, and the wind rushes around town
On such an Autumn day,
As I pass by the old maple tree,
Near Water and Carrall Street
A warm crimson building stands,
Two stories high.
A quiet place yet still so full of life.

I blink once,
Then again,
Processing the cast-iron windows,
Defined fascia boards,
And golden keystone trims
... It must be Byrnes Block.

A place once full of cedar and maple trees,
Went from being trodden by the Coast Salish people,
To becoming a town overcome by settlers.
Once burnt down in a tragic fire,
Then later rebuilt again.

And even so,
The place resisted through all the rights and wrongs,
And all the lefts and rights of history
From Granville to Vancouver,
Or the toppling of Gassy Jack.
The place continues to be
A symbol of perseverance and reconciliation.

Surrounded by spherical incandescent lamplights,
Night has taken its place,
And I realize where I stand.
A place where time holds its breath,
So warm and enchanted—
Glorious, Graceful, Gastown

Stage 2

Stage Two of the Project involved a contest for post-secondary students from pre-selected local public post-secondary courses in film, animation, media studies or digital studies to make poetry videos based on a curated list drawn from the shortlisted emerging and established category poems from Stage One. Supplemental published poems about local sites were added to ensure representation. Instructors of the following post-secondary institutions agreed to have their students participate in the contest as a course project:

- Simon Fraser University: IAT 344 (Moving Images)
- University of British Columbia: FNIS 454 (Indigenous New Media)
- Emily Carr University of Art & Design: 2DN 211 (2D Animation)
- Emily Carr University of Art & Design: Foundation 160 (Core Media Studio)

Although their poems were not included on the list of poems for the post-secondary students to make poetry videos for the poetry video contest, youth finalists had the opportunity to learn how to make their own videos during a special workshop run by the EL Mashup Collective (Dora Prieto, Michelle Martin and Daniela Rodriguez) held at Moberly Fieldhouse.

After the awards ceremony, there was a free public screening of a selection of the post-secondary videos on Saturday, September 16th with the Word Vancouver Festival 2023 at UBC Robson Square. Two of the youth poetry videos were also included at this event.



Word Vancouver
YouTube

Vancouver City Poems 2022-2024

In early 2024, a program of 14 selected City Poems poetry videos was selected for screening on the Mount Pleasant Community Arts Screen for the period of May 2024-April 2025. A similar set of City Poems poetry videos was included as part of an online City Poems program with Houston's REELpoetry festival in April 2024, both co-curated by MPCA curator Alger Ji-Liang and the poet laureate.



Mount Pleasant
Community Arts
Screen website

Students were strongly encouraged to submit their poetry videos to other festivals, which has led to a few of the City Poems poetry videos being selected for screenings at poetry video festivals and other events in Banff, Montreal, Seattle, Wellington (New Zealand), Copenhagen, and elsewhere.



REELpoetry festival
website

Because of the potential educational content of the poetry videos (for teaching about local history as well as teaching poetry or film), a teachers' resource list containing links to 14 poetry videos and related poems has been compiled. This has been provided to the Vancouver Heritage Foundation to possibly supplement its Heritage Study Guide for Teachers. Additionally, two City Poems poetry videos have been chosen for rotational screening at the Chinese Canadian Storytelling Centre in Vancouver.



Teachers' resource
lists



"Postcard Home from English Bay" playing on the MPCAS screen

Vancouver City Poems 2022-2024



Emily Carr University, 2DN 211 (2d Animation)



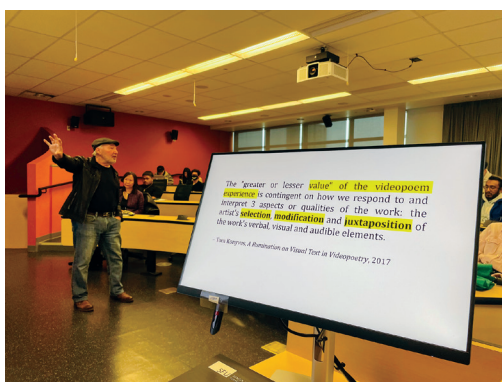
Emily Carr University, "Contrasts" team with poet Donna Seto and instructor Martin Rose at Chinatown Storytelling Centre



Emily Carr University, Foundation 160 (Core Media Studio) with instructor Christine Stewart and poets Theresa Rogers and Sandra Bruneau



Simon Fraser University: IAT 344 (Moving Images)



Tom Konyves visits IAT 344 class



University of British Columbia: FNIS 454 (Indigenous New Media) with author and artist Debra Sparrow

Additional poems for Poetry Video contest

In order to ensure diverse representation of sites and communities, these five poems were added to the roster of poems to be considered by student teams who would be making poetry videos.

Welcome

Sadhu Binning

I often speak
to the grass
the trees
and the river
they never tell me
I wasn't welcome
I've heard the wind
chatting with leaves
not once a note of hatred
the rain and the snow
touch me on my shoulders
as many other friends do
the birds come every morning
and sing outside my window
welcoming me into a new place
a new day
why weren't they consulted
when the decision was made
to send my Komagata Maru away

Sadhu Binning,
a retired UBC
language
instructor, has
authored and
co-authored more
than eighteen
books of poetry,
fiction, plays,
translations
and research,
including his 1994
bilingual poetry
collection *No
More Watno Dur*.
His works have
been included in
more than fifty
anthologies both
in Punjabi and
English.

Note: The infamous S.S. *Komagata Maru* incident in 1914 involved a steamship of 376 passengers from India being denied entry by the Canadian government. The ship was detained in Vancouver's harbour for two months without food, water, or medical care before it was forced to return to India where many passengers were killed or imprisoned.

This Was Meant To Be For Nora

Junie Desil

i dreamt Jimi last night
tight purple pants frenetically
keeping beat
sequins, scarves and pink feather
boa jamming and getting
down to
Voodoo Child
wah wah pedal squealing

a lullaby

i dreamt Jimi last night
fell asleep thinking about
his grandmother Nora

827 east georgia street

i wanted my thoughts to permeate my dreams
have a conversation inspire
something if not epic at least
sit at her knees
grandmother to granddaughter like
pass history
future tense

talk community

but damn that sexy intro to
Vietnam War (Machine Gun)
kept intruding in my dreamscape

Junie Désil is
a poet born
of immigrant
(Haitian) parents
on the Traditional
Territories of the
Kanien'kehá:ka in
the island known
as Tiohtià:ke
(Montréal),
raised in Treaty
1 Territory
(Winnipeg).
Junie's debut
poetry collection
*Eat Salt/Gaze
at the Ocean*
(TalonBooks,
2020) was a
finalist for the
Dorothy Livesay
Poetry Prize.

i wanted to do more than a passing nod
to a fierce woman
who cofounded the African Methodist Episcopal Church

823 jackson street

floats hazily in my dreams all bright neon-y
pink-y purple
to Jimi's acid guitar riffs
Nora nods her head
claps
Bible in hand
what a trip.
i dreamt Jimi last night and this was meant to be for Nora

What Do I Remember of the Evacuation?

Joy Kogawa

What do I remember of the evacuation?
I remember my father telling Tim and me
About the mountains and the train
And the excitement of going on a trip.
What do I remember of the evacuation?
I remember my mother wrapping
A blanket around me and my
Pretending to fall asleep so she would be happy
Though I was so excited I couldn't sleep
(I hear there were people herded
Into the Hastings Park like cattle.
Families were made to move in two hours,
Abandoning everything, leaving pets
And possessions at gun point.
I hear families were broken up.
Men were forced to work. I heard
It whispered late at night
That there was suffering) and
I missed my dolls.
What do I remember of the evacuation?
I remember Miss Foster and Miss Tucker
Who still live in Vancouver
And who did what they could
And loved children and who gave me
A puzzle to play with on the train.
And I remember the mountains and I was
Six years old and I swear I saw a giant
Gulliver of Gulliver's Travels scanning the horizon
And when I told my mother she believed it too.

Joy Kogawa's
best known work
is the award-
winning novel,
Obasan. Other
publications
include *The
Rain Ascends*,
Itsuka, *Emily
Kato*, *Gently
to Nagasaki*,
Naomi's Road,
Naomi's Tree, and
poetry, *From the
Lost and Found
Department*.
Born in
Vancouver, B.C. in
1935, she lives in
Toronto, Ontario.

And I remember how careful my parents were
Not to bruise us with bitterness.
And I remember the puzzle of Lorraine Life
Who said "Don't insult me," when I
Proudly wrote my name in Japanese.
And Tim flew the Union Jack
When the war was over but Lorraine
And her friends spat on us anyway.
And I prayed to God who loves
All the children in his sight
That I might be white.

Postcard home from English Bay

Alex Leslie

Nostalgia is a territory. Chainsmoking seagulls do yoga on the horizon at dawn. English Bay organized into lanes with flaming buoys for swimmers to do their drive-by banking. The bridge shut down for candidates who launch down the inlet on robotic wings, competing for votes. People tread water below to witness, swallow the new Pacific vaccine. The famous building with the tree growing out of its roof drinks rainwater, spits mercury into the teacups of developers. Acid rain rainbows the parade tie-dye, the marchers photograph their chemical shadows and post in Renaissance filter, reflections in oil paints. Pride bellyflops into a harbor of profit. The portrait artist hired by the Mayor works until sunset, then lies down in the surf and dissolves, skin floating off clear as a jellyfish, black formal tails trailing ink. It is so beautiful here. This child will draw your caricature for free by throwing a glass of coins in your face and raising his fingers to catch the bent light that arcs off your cheekbones. Blink and you'll miss the moon inspecting its own bruises, reading Captain Vancouver's letters home by the lights of a thousand rigs, miniatures available in bottles for collectors and investors. Visit soon.

Alex Leslie has published two books of poetry and two books of short stories, most recently *Vancouver for Beginners* which was shortlisted for the City of Vancouver Book Prize and won the Western Canada Jewish Book Prize for Poetry from the Lohn Foundation.

Know Who You Are and Know Where You Come From

Debra Sparrow

For my grandfather, ShWienuum (Edward Sparrow) born in 1898 in a Musqueam village at the mouth of the Fraser River. He died in 1998 at the age of 99 and one half years.

Debra Sparrow is an esteemed Musqueam weaver, artist and knowledge keeper who has dedicated over 25 years to reviving the art of Musqueam weaving. Her work can be seen in various museums and institutions in Canada and the U.S., including the Museum of Anthropology and the YVR airport.

Driving along the shoreline
of what is now called the City of Vancouver,
my grandfather, ShWienuum beside me,
and one or more of my three children
in the back seat, listening to him
 tell us the histories
of our great lands,
 the same histories
his grandparents told him
as they drove along in horse and buggy,
 and the same histories
their grandparents told them,
walking along these shores
or in canoe.

300 years of stories
are still being passed on.
ShWienuum can rest, knowing
as I have, as he did
what we share
as people of this land.

Blessed to have this time with him,
I will take with me into the future
the success and integrity
of our people.

I know who I am,
I know my history,
and I know where I come from.
My roots are planted firmly in the very soil
that my ancestors are buried in.

I am connected,
my children are connected,
and my grandchildren will be connected.

We will be here
another millennium
as we have been
for nine millennia past.

When asked of the First Nations people:
“Who said this land belonged to you?
There are no signs on a mountaintop.
It is not written anywhere.”

Anywhere you open the earth,
the evidence is there.
 It is written
 in the earth.

Poetry video awards

After launching the second stage contest with a panel discussion and screening of sample poetry videos at the Vancouver Public Library, submissions opened in December/January and closed on April 22, 2023 with judging in May. Judge Heather Haley selected the top three poetry videos according to these criteria:

1. Artistically deepens, extends and/or transforms the meaning of the poems through the synergy of sound, text, and/or image.
2. Demonstrates creativity, originality, ingenuity and/or inventiveness.
3. Engages viewers/listeners.

The post-secondary student poetry videos were also posted on the [Vancouver Public Library's YouTube Playlist](#) for Audience Choice voting from April 26 to May 25, 2023.

The Museum of Vancouver hosted the awards ceremony and screening on June 11, 2023.



YouTube: VPL playlist
of nominated poetry
videos



Audience Choice Prize (ECUAD)

This was meant to be for Nora

Based on a poem by Junie Desil

Emily Carr University of Art & Design 2DN 211 Animation

- Deanne Angelina Emery
- Emilio Terrazas Rocha
- Carola Campa Garcia
- Rachel Christina Kearney
- Luna Davies
- Lingjun Mi
- Mingyang Pan



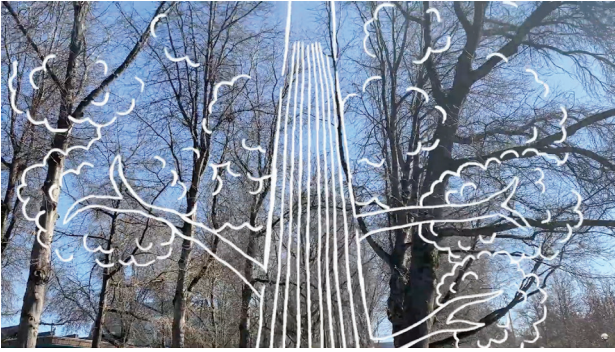
Audience Choice Prize (SFU)

Diaspora

Based on the poem “Entertainment” by Jeremy Chu

SFU IAT 344 (Term One)

- Kayla Canama
- Tingting Liu
- Andrea Huang
- Eleonora Shive



Audience Choice Prize (UBC)

Know Who You Are and Know Where You Come From

Based on writing by Debra Sparrow

UBC FNIS 454

- Madison Harvey
- Olivia Carriere McKenna
- Cass Minkus
- Sofia Bergman



First Place

Contrasts

Based on a poem by Donna Seto

SFU IAT 344 (Term Two)

- Brian Baldueza
- Nanop Yansomboon
- Wilson Pham



Second Place (tie)

What do I remember of the evacuation

Based on a poem by Joy Kogawa

Emily Carr University of Art & Design Foundation 160 (Core Media Studio)

- Kris Reyes
- Hoang Son Vu
- Poppy Suro
- Sodam Hong



Second Place (tie)

An Existence That We Can Call Home

Based on a poem by James Kim

SFU IAT 344 (Term One)

- Xinran Han
- Delai Gao
- Minyang Zhang



Third Place

This was meant to be for Nora

Based on a poem by Junie Desil

SFU IAT 344 (Term Two)

- Yen-an Huang
- Hanako Oba
- Dongmei Han
- Joanne Kim



Best Animation

This was meant to be for Nora

Based on a poem by Junie Desil

Emily Carr University of Art & Design 2DN 211 Animation

- Deanne Angelina Emery
- Luna Davies
- Emilio Terrazas Rocha
- Lingjun Mi
- Carola Campa Garcia
- Mingyang Pan
- Rachel Christina Kearney



Best Documentary-Style Video

Welcome

Based on a poem by Sadhu Binning

SFU IAT 344 (Term Two)

- Kais Neffati
- Bhalinder Oberoi
- Ishmael Togi
- Minh Truong



Best Visual Storytelling

Know Who You Are and Know Where You Come From

Based on writing by Debra Sparrow

UBC FNIS 454

- Robert Burns
- Delanie Austin
- Bea Lehmann
- Rachel Williams



Honourable Mention

The Stone Artist

Based on a poem by Theresa Rogers

SFU IAT 344 (Term Two)

- Grace Yang
- Brandyn Chew
- Jalene Pang
- Erin Yeonjae Choi



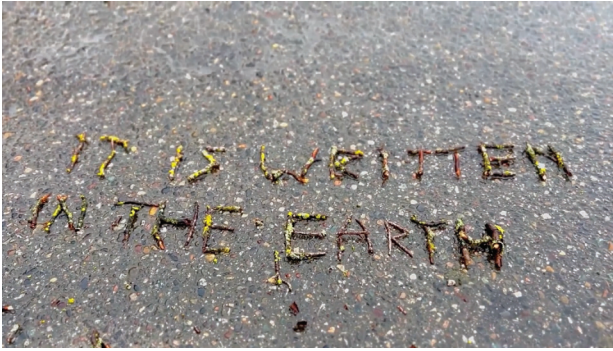
Honourable Mention

Entertainment

Based on a poem by Jeremy Chu

SFU IAT 344 (Term Two)

- Christy Fang
- Cici Tan
- Vito Fan
- Calvin Lin



Honourable Mention

Know Who You Are and Know Where You Come From

Based on writing by Debra Sparrow

UBC FNIS 454

- Maddy Nowell
- Kira Doxator
- Claire Everson
- Eva Moulton

SFU IAT 344 post-contest poems and poetry videos

Although the official poetry video contest had passed, SFU IAT instructor Kate Hennessy approached the poet laureate to continue the production of poetry videos in her course. As a result, a new set of students made a new batch of nine site-based poetry videos based on five different local poems chosen by the laureate. These new poetry videos were screened at the Vancouver Public Library on April 4, 2024. They are also posted on the [VPL YouTube Playlist](#).



YouTube: VPL poetry
video playlist

Poet laureate with instructor Kate Hennessy
and teaching assistant Kenneth Karthik



Gravity, Gravitas

Gary Geddes

No warning, unless you count
vibrations, sudden shrug
before the bridge collapsed.
I felt it all right, stomach
rising to my throat. My god,
I thought, it's going down.
No time for philosophy;
no time for analysis. Simply,
I'm going to die.

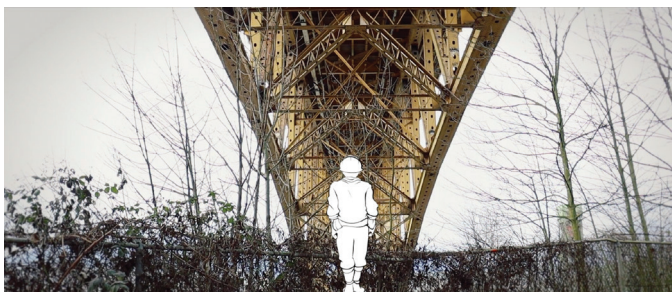
The question
is not did you feel fear—of course
I felt fear—but the stages,
changes in intensity, a moment
of almost exhilaration, facing
the ultimate, a self-pitying
cringe in anticipation of pain,
the whole spectrum,
the works.

I thought of my kids,
their faces hearing the news,
my wife's hand inching across
an empty bed, my car left parked
in the employee's compound
and the Little League tournament
next weekend.

Gary Geddes
has written
and edited fifty
books of poetry,
fiction, drama,
translation,
criticism, non-
fiction, and
anthologies and
won a dozen
national and
international
literary awards,
including the
Lt.-Governor's
Award for Literary
Excellence and
the Gabriela
Mistral Prize from
the government
of Chile. Born in
Vancouver, B.C.,
he now lives on
Thetis Island.

I recalled
the acceleration of gravity,
thirty-two feet per second
per second. And the graph:
time versus velocity.
I might have been falling
in slow motion, given
the kaleidoscope of images.

I'd just released my tool belt
when I hit the water.



Screenshot from the video, "Gravity, Gravititas"

Ad Hominem

Chantal Gibson

How we see a thing—even with our eyes—is very much dependent on where we stand in relationship to it.

—Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (88).

in the mornings i walk past your statue
to catch a train across a river with your
name on it, to work at a university that
still bears your name. i have to look up
follow the diagonals of your waistcoat
the open sails of your collar, the winded
kerchief knotted round your ample neck
angular jaw, closed mouth, classic nose
centered, blocky, slightly more than an
eye-length wide, all this to get to your un-
bounded stare, your immortalized gaze.

Chantal Gibson is an award-winning writer-artist-educator living on the ancestral lands of the Coast Salish Peoples. Working in the overlap between literary and visual art, her graphic poetry collections *How She Read* (Caitlin 2019) and *with/holding* (Caitlin 2021) bring a critical lens to the historical representation of Blackness across cultural media.

**TO COMMEMORATE THE DISCOVERY VOYAGE
DOWN THE RIVER BY SIMON FRASER 1808**

Vancouver City Poems 2022-2024

on the way to campus, I return to my lesson:

- focus on the argument
- avoid personal attacks
- distinguish your ideas from others'
- credit those from whom you borrow
- don't take what's not yours

as I journey down the hallway to my classroom
deeper inside the belly of another ship, my USB
employee ID jangling from the branded lanyard
round my neck, the irony ~~the fucking weight of~~ is not

lost on me. in the evening, i return home against
the tide. *Stow-low. Stó:lō.* i take the long way not
to look at you. i know it's just a matter of time be-
fore the river takes her name back, the valley and

the canyon too, til we stop saying yours out loud
and kern it to the nub—til we go the way of *KFC*
and our descendants forget what the F stands for.
i know it's just a matter of time before you're de-

faced, beer piss, red paint, *Booster Juice*, til they
wrap a chain around your neck and drag n dump
you in the river. some muddy part of me wants
to gouge your eyes out, bitter the sculptor got
them first, while another keeps a watchful eye on
the rising condo markets—and settles for a little

bird shit.



Screenshot from the video, "Ad Hominem"

At Our Punjabi Market

Kuldip Gill

Betis (daughters) and bhenjis (sisters) hear the cry,

Come buy saris, come buy our cholis!

Come buy, come buy

petticoats, chunis, salvar/kamiz,

bangles, and bracelets,

surma and mehndis

bindis and nose rings,

creams to whiten your skin,

or try threaded bow-like eyebrows.

Come buy, come buy!

How shy she looks, her mother frowns,

but bhenjis know the sheers are fine.

They twirl to see the lenghas line.

Oh, bhenji, make it mine, make it mine.

Together the beti and bhenji aspire.

Add it to the bill, they whisper

and conspire to the merchant's

cries: *Come buy, Come buy!*

Come buy! Come buy! The windows scream.

The same dollars for two of anything.

Hindu videos, stock of best English-Punjabi dictionary,

new brass images of gods and goddesses.

In the Guru ka Bazaar, *come buy, come buy.*

Gifts to the hundreds of wedding guests

in the beti's dowry—a crown for her husband;

the bride's home appliances. *Come buy!*

In gold jewelry shops—more per block than anywhere,

bracelets and jeweled everything. *Come buy, come buy!*

Our Indian groceries. Garlic, ginger, heaps of eggplant,

capsicum, okra, mustard greens and cauliflower.

Come smell the lentil and buy our spicy chai.

Kuldip Gill was born in Faridkot District, Punjab, India and immigrated to B.C. at age five. Gill's first book of poetry, *Dharma Rasa* (Nightwood Editions), was a winner of a BC Book Prize in 2000. Kuldip Gill passed away May 2009. Her second book of poetry, *Valley Sutra*, was published posthumously.

Come buy our golden sweets,
burfis flavoured pistachio, peppered cashews,
almond, figs. *Come buy, Come buy!* Star fruit, ginger root.

Come buy, come buy your daughter's pots and pans,
lunch boxes for her children, Main and 49th:
A bazaar, a cirque du soleil of sound and smell.
Come buy in the Punjabi vernacular, Hindi,
Urdu, Tamil, Telegu, Tagalog,
Fiji-bat, Italian, Greek,
Mandarin and any other. *Come buy!*
Come buy! Come buy! At our Punjabi Market!



Screenshot from the video, "At Our Punjabi Market"

Lost Lagoon

E. Pauline Johnson

It is dusk on the Lost Lagoon,
And we two dreaming the dusk away,
Beneath the drift of a twilight grey—
Beneath the drowse of an ending day
And the curve of a golden moon.

It is dark on the Lost Lagoon,
And gone are the depths of haunting blue,
The grouping gulls, and the old canoe,
The singing firs, and the dusk and—you,
and gone is the golden moon.

O lure of the Lost Lagoon—
I dream to-night that my paddle blurs
The purple shade where the seaweed stirs—
I hear the call of the singing firs
In the hush of the golden moon.



Screenshot from the video, "Lost Lagoon"

Emily Pauline Johnson, also known as Tekahionwake ("double wampum"), was an acclaimed poet, writer and performer of European and Mohawk heritage. She published three collections of poetry and *Legends of Vancouver*, a series of stories told to her by Squamish Chief Joe Capilano. Born in 1861 on the Six Nations Reserve, she died in 1913 in Vancouver, B.C.

take a st. and

Rita Wong

sewage wafts up at the corner of fifth and st. george
slosh gurgle downhill through indifferent pipe grid pipe grind
your teeth pipe miles and miles of pipe underneath our feet

smell water rushing under the manhole covers
one pipe carries drinking water
another carries away your toilet flush
pipe down, pipe plastic, pipe slime, pipe
time

corner the hydrant bursts chlorinated
water shoots exuberant into sky

coincidence, haunting, or the stubborn stream's refusal to be
confined?

what's lost? not just the streams but the people
who stole them from the salmon who swam them

re-pair tributary with daylight
twin riparian zone with home

detourne st. george toward chief dan george
Geswanouth Slahoot's spirit knows these uncaded streams
Snauq Staulk, te Statlōw



Screenshot from the video, "take a st. and"

Additional post-contest poetry video production

Two additional poetry videos, “Found” and “Ode to Vivian Chung”, were produced by the poet laureate. They are available for viewing on the [VPL YouTube Playlist](#).



YouTube: VPL poetry
video playlist

Found

James X. Wang

for Unknown Chinese Men buried in Mountain View Cemetery

James X. Wang
is a writer,
physician,
and Chinese-
Canadian settler
on the unceded
Indigenous lands
of Vancouver.
His poems have
been published in
Canadian literary
magazines and
two collaborative
chapbooks
("Brine" and
"Adventitious
Sounds"). He is
a member of the
emerging poets
group, Harbour
Centre 5.

We used to play
up the hill, bunkered under granite wings.
I wander tall among ancestors now
footsteps buoyed on the breeze.
Stone islets stay supine.
They beckon to me, a roster call
of Chius and Chins
Suens and Lees.
Here in no man's land
I am every man's son.
They beg me to crouch, to smell
the moss transfused with tangerines
to touch my beating palm to the earth.
I tell them of my voyages up the hill
surveys of shipwrecked sirens.
They nod along their dandelion heads.
I ask if they are lost.
Wingbeats inscribed their epitaphs
dragonflies floating in Toisan wind
atom by atom, a pilgrimage to pillars of dust.
Some are called home
to the mountains, some to the sea's rising tide.
The rest go with me
back up the hill.

James Wang submitted this poem for the City Poems Contest 2022. The poet laureate shared it with staff at the Mountain View Cemetery, which put the poem on public display and commissioned a poetry video for its annual All Souls event in the autumn of 2023. The poetry video, made by Analee Weinberger and the poet, James Wang, was also included in the City Poems Program screened at the Mount Pleasant Community Arts Screen.



Screenshot from the video, "Found"

Ode to Vivian Jung

Fiona Tinwei Lam and Grade 5/6 students from
Tecumseh Elementary School

At the segregated Crystal Garden Pool,
crystal clear waters,
crystal clear rules.
Shimmering, shining pool of dreams
for those of the right race.

A cento
assembled
and arranged
by Vancouver
Poet Laureate
Fiona Tinwei
Lam from lines
selected from
poems by Grade
5/6 students
at Tecumseh
Elementary
School 2023-24.

It started small:
like a bright star shining,
Vivian waited in line, ready to learn,
needing a swimming and water safety certificate
to become a teacher.
Pool staff tried to turn her away.
“You can’t enter here!”
But she knew she was right.
Born in Merritt, B.C.,
she too had sung *Oh Canada* all her life.

Her coach and fellow students refused
to enter the pool without her.
Those friends, those allies,
fighting for the rights of all Asians and Blacks,
united in courage,
the courage to say
“We are equal.”
They didn’t back down.
Doors that were closed
were then flung wide open!

Diving board springing,
unfiltered laughter—*Splash!*
Vivian jumped off the diving board
into refreshing freedom,
into equality so clear and clean.
The pool gleaming, sparkling, glittering,

now accessible to everyone.
Imagine the pride she felt—
Exclusion from pools no more!
When she broke the colour ban,
she broke down rigid minds,
made a whole city know she was right,
and swam into teaching for 35 glorious years.

What a wonderful teacher she would become!
An inspiration:
First Chinese Canadian teacher
hired by the Vancouver School Board,
coaching girls volleyball teams
to City Championships,
sharing her love of softball, dance and phys ed
at Tecumseh Elementary for decades.

How can we solve inequality?
Thank you, Vivian and allies,
for showing us the way!



Screenshot from the video, "Ode to Vivian Jung"

Tecumseh Elementary School's Anti-racism Committee organized a fundraiser for a school mural to honour Vivian Jung, the first Chinese Canadian teacher hired by the Vancouver School Board in 1950 who taught at the school for 35 years, and also played a role in desegregating a local public pool. The poet laureate was asked to assist a grade 5/6 class taught by Thomas Aaron Larson in writing poems about her legacy. The students' poems became part of a poetry and art booklet to fundraise for the school mural. An audio-recording of the students narrating the cento poem and collages made by students from two other classes were integrated into a poetry video made by videographer Analee Weinberger..



Tecumseh Elementary School, Grade 5/6

Stage 3

Geolocative app

This phase of the City Poems Project combines the power of poetry, technology, and community perspectives to transform how students, educators, and the public engage with our urban environment through the development of a geolocative cell phone app that will serve as a bridge between geography, language, poetics, and technology. With a focus on accessibility, diversity, and inclusion, the geolocative app project aims to spark student and public engagement with poetry and deepen their connection between place and narrative by inviting them to immerse themselves “inside the stories” of Vancouver’s places and poems.

The laureate is collaborating with the team at CEDaR Space (Community Engaged Documentation and Research) at UBC’s Institute for Critical Indigenous Studies as they develop the app. The project is being overseen by Professors David Gaertner and Daisy Rosenblum with current Research Project Manager Mohsen Movahedi, CEDaR Lab Supervisor Dante Cerron, and CEDaR Coordinator Sara MacLellan, with design and development support from students and faculty in the Centre for Digital Media. The team has reached out to UBC instructors across various departments, including First Nations and Indigenous Studies (FNIS), English Language and Literatures (EL&L), Geography, and Creative Writing (CRWR), to explore the incorporation of the City Poems app into their classrooms to enhance the learning experiences of students across disciplines.



First Phase poems:

- “Contrasts” by Donna Seto
- “Found” by James Wang
- “Know Who You Are and Know Where You Come From”
by Debra Sparrow
- “Postcard home from English Bay” by Alex Leslie
- “This Was Meant To Be For Nora” by Junie Desil
- “Welcome” by Sadhu Binning
- “What Do I Remember of the Evacuation” by Joy Kogawa
- “Lost Stream” by Fiona Tinwei Lam



Vimeo: Introductory
guide to the
Locative Audio app

Appendix

Resources

City Poems Contest

fionalam.net/poetlaureate/citypoemscontest

Vancouver Poems and History

fionalam.net/poetlaureate/vancouverpoems

Poetry Video Resources (information and contests)

fionalam.net/poetry-video-resources

A Guide for Local Poets (reading series, courses and information)

fionalam.net/poetlaureate/additional-resources-for-writers

Vancouver Poet Laureate Blog about school visits, workshops and public

fionalam.net/category/vancouver-poet-laureate-2022-2024/

Events and Activities

fionalam.net/poetlaureate/events-activities

Judges

Bonnie Nish is Executive Director of Word Vancouver and Pandora's Collective Outreach Society. She has a Masters in Arts Education from Simon Fraser University and a PhD in Language and Literacy Education from the University of British Columbia where she teaches. Bonnie's first book of poetry, *Love and Bones*, was released by Karma Press in 2013. Her book, *Concussion and Mild Brain Injury: Not Just Another Headline*, was published by Lash and Associates in 2016. Her book, *Cantata in Two Voices*, co-written with Jude Neal was published by Ekstasis Editions.



David Ly is the author of *Mythical Man* (shortlisted for the 2021 ReLit Poetry Award) and *Dream of Me as Water*, both published under the Anstruther Books imprint at Palimpsest Press. He co-edited *Queer Little Nightmares: an Anthology of Monstrous Fiction and Poetry* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2022) with Daniel Zomparelli. David's poems have appeared in various publications such as *PRISM international*, *The Puritan*, *Arc Poetry Magazine*, and *Best Canadian Poetry 2021*.



Rachel Rose's fiction debut, *The Octopus Has Three Hearts*, was published by Douglas & McIntyre in 2021, and was longlisted for the Scotiabank Giller Prize. She is the author of four collections of poetry, including *Marry & Burn*, which received a 2016 Pushcart Prize, and was a finalist for a Governor General's Award. Her memoir, *The Dog Lover Unit: Lessons in Courage*



from the World's K9 Cops, was shortlisted for the 2018 Arthur Ellis award for best non-fiction crime book. A former fellow at The University of Iowa's International Writing Program, she was Poet Laureate of Vancouver from 2014-2017.

Heather Haley is a Vancouver writer, singer, and videopoetry pioneer. Known for pushing boundaries by creatively integrating disciplines, genres and media, Haley published "The Edgewise Café," one of Canada's first electronic literary magazines, and ran Visible Verse, a videopoem festival while producing her own critically acclaimed videos. She is the author of poetry



collections: *Sideways*, *Three Blocks West of Wonderland*, *Skookum Raven* and a novel, *The Town Slut's Daughter*. As AURAL Heather with Roderick Shoolbraid she released CDs of spoken word song, "Princess Nut" and "Surfing Season." Her work has toured Canada, the U.S. and Europe and appeared in a wide range of periodicals and anthologies.

Vancouver poems and history

Vancouver-based poems

Books

- Oana Avasiloichioaei, *feria*, 2008
George Bowering, *Kerrisdale Elegies*, 2008
Wayde Compton, *Performance Bond*, 2004 and *49th Parallel Psalm*, 1999
Henry Doyle, *No Shelter*, 2022
Phinder Dulai, *dream/arteries*, 2014
George Fetherling, *The Sylvia Hotel*, 2010
Gary Geddes, *Falsework*, 2007
Chelene Knight, *Dear Current Occupant*, 2018 (lyric prose/prose poetry)
Christopher Levenson, *Getting to Know You*, 2014 (illustrated, letter-press printed book)
Alex Leslie, *Vancouver for Beginners*, 2019
Daphne Marlatt, *Liquidities: Vancouver Poems Then and Now*, 2013 and *Vancouver Poems*, 1972
George McWhirter, editor, *A Verse Map of Vancouver*, 2009
Jane Munro, *False Creek*, 2022
Sachiko Murakami, *Rebuild*, 2011 and *The Invisibility Exhibit*, 2008 (about the missing and murdered women of the Downtown Eastside)
W. H. New, *VVR*, 2011
Meredith Quartermain, *Vancouver Walking*, 2005
Philip Resnick, *Footsteps of the Past*, 2015
Allan Safarik, editor, *Vancouver Poetry*, 2000
Bren Simmers, *Hastings Sunrise*, 2015
George Stanley, *Vancouver: A Poem*, 2008
Michael Turner, *Kingsway*, 1995
Diane Tucker, *Nostalgia for Moving Parts*, 2021
Betsy Warland, *Lost Lagoon/lost in thought*, 2020
Jim Wong Chu, *Chinatown Ghosts*, 2018

A sampling of individual Vancouver-themed poems

- Sadhu Binning, "Welcome" (about the Komagata Maru incident) from *No More Watno Dur*, 1994
Earle Birney, "November Walk Near False Creek Mouth" in *Collected Poems*
Henry Doyle, "Washroom Journals: Prep" from *No Shelter*, 2022
Marilyn Dumont, "City View" sequence in *Green Girl Dreams Mountain*, 2001
Mercedes Eng, "how it is" (from *The Capilano Review*, Spring 2018, pp 8-11)
Chelene Knight, "Dear Current Occupant, Apartment on Clark Drive, Above the Convenience Store" and "955 East 10th Avenue" in *Braided Skin*, 2015
Joy Kogawa, *What do I remember of the evacuation*, 2009
Fiona Tinwei Lam, "Lost Stream" from *Odes & Laments*, 2019

Vancouver City Poems 2022-2024

- Evelyn Lau, "City Centre" from *A Grain of Rice*, 2012, "The Chinese Museum" from *Tumour*, 2016
- Alex Leslie, "Postcard Home from English Bay" from *Vancouver for Beginners*, 2019
- Lee Maracle, "I'm Home Again" in *Manoa* 25, no. 1, 2013: 17-20.
- Tariq Malik, "X Marks the Spot" in *Unmooring the Komagata Maru: Charting Colonial Trajectories*, 2020
- Sachiko Murakami, Project Rebuild (a public poetry project related to housing known as "Vancouver Specials" which includes a number of poems and "renovated poems" by local poets). www.sachikomurakami.com/pr/about.php
- Michael Prior, "Minoru", "The Night", "Richmond", and "Steveston" in *Burning Province*, 2020
- Philip Resnick, "Vancouver" from *Footsteps of the Past*, 2015
- RC Weslowski, "PNE Love Affair" from *My Soft Response to the Wars*, 2021
- Isabella Wang, "This Winter in Gastown" in *Pebble Swing*, 2021
- Phoebe Wang, "The Japanese Garden" (Nitobe Memorial Garden) and "Wreck Beach" in *Admission Requirements*, 2017
- Jim Wong-Chu, "hippo luck", in *Chinatown Ghosts*, 2018
- Cease Wyss, "Ode to Madeline Deighton" (from *The Capilano Review*, 3(35), 94, 2019)
- Jennifer Zilm, "Vancouvering" in *First-Time Listener*, 2022

Vancouver history

Websites

Vancouver Heritage Foundation Heritage Finder
www.vancouverheritagefoundation.org/discover-heritage/heritage-site-finder/

Places that Matter
placesthatmatter.ca/

Museum of Vancouver
museumofvancouver.ca/

Heritage Vancouver
heritagevancouver.org/

xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam—A Living Culture)
www.musqueam.bc.ca/our-story/

Musqueam Territory Place Names Map
www.musqueam.bc.ca/our-story/our-territory/place-names-map/

Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Ḱxwumixw (Squamish Nation)
www.squamish.net/about-our-nation/

Vancouver City Poems 2022-2024

səlilwətaʔ (Tseil-Waututh Nation—People of the Inlet)

twnation.ca/our-story/

Vancouver Public Library's This Vancouver

vpl.arcabc.ca/thisvancouver

Vancouver Public Library Local History Collections

www.vpl.ca/digital-library/local-history-collections

Video

B.C.: An Untold History (especially segments 3 and 4 in relation to Vancouver) (www.knowledge.ca/program/british-columbia-untold-history)

360 Riot Walk: a 360 Video Walking Tour of the 1907 Anti-Asian Riots in Vancouver in 1907 (<https://360riotwalk.ca/>)

Sampling of nonfiction books and authors

John Atkin

The Changing City: Architecture and History Walking Tours in Central Vancouver, 2010

Strathcona: Vancouver's First Neighbourhood, 1994

Skytrain Explorer: Heritage Walks from Every Station, 2005

Books by Aaron Chapman

Chuck Davis, *The Chuck Davis History of Metropolitan Vancouver*, 2011

Wade Compton, *After Canaan: Essays on Race, Writing and Region*, 2010

Books by Daniel Francis

Gary Geddes, editor, *Skookum Wawa: Writings of the Canadian Northwest*, 1975

Gary Geddes, editor, *Vancouver: Soul of A City*, 1986

Derek Hayes, *Historical Atlas of Vancouver and the Fraser Valley*, 2006

Pauline Johnson, *Legends of Vancouver*, 1911

Books by Michael Kluckner

Eve Lazarus, *Sensational Vancouver*, 2014 and *Vancouver Exposed: Searching for the City's Hidden History*, 2020 and her blog, *Every Place Has A Story*

Bruce Macdonald, *Vancouver: A Visual History*, 1992

Paul Yee, *Saltwater City: Story of Vancouver's Chinese Community*, 2006

Acknowledgments

These local site-based poems were included on the list of curated poems considered by post-secondary teams for making poetry videos for the City Poems Project. Thank you to the following poets and their publishers:

Sadhu Binning, “Welcome” from *No More Watno Dur*, Mawenzi House Publishers, 1994. Copyright © 1994 by Alex Leslie. Used with permission from the author.

Junie Desil, “This Was Meant To Be For Nora.” Commissioned for the January 2022 launch of the City Poems Project. Copyright © 2022 by Junie Desil. Used with permission of the author.

Gary Geddes, “Gravity, Gravitas” from *Falsework*, Goose Lane Editions, 2007. Copyright © 2007 by Gary Geddes. Used with permission of the author and Goose Lane Editions.

Chantal Gibson, “Ad Hominem” from *with/holding*, Caitlin Press, 2021. Copyright © Chantal Gibson 2021. Used with permission of the author and Caitlin Press.

Kuldip Gill, “At our Punjabi Market” from *A Verse Map of Vancouver*, edited by George McWhirter, Anvil Press, 2009. Copyright © 2009 by Kuldip Gill. Used with permission of her family and estate.

E. Pauline Johnson, “Lost Lagoon” from *Legends of Vancouver*, David Spencer Limited, 1911. Copyright © Pauline Johnson 1911. Reprinted in *Flint and Feather: The Complete Poems of E. Pauline Johnson* (Tekahionwake), Leopold Classic Library, 2016.

Joy Kogawa, “What Do I Remember of the Evacuation” from the graphic poetry book, *What Do I Remember of the Evacuation*, Scholastic Education Canada, 1985 and *A Garden of Anchors*, Mosaic Publishers, 2003. Copyright © 1985 by Joy Kogawa. Used with permission of the author.

Alex Leslie, “Postcard Home from English Bay” from *Vancouver for Beginners*, Book*hug Press, 2019. Copyright © 2019 by Alex Leslie. Used with permission from Book*hug Press.

Debra Sparrow, “Know Who You Are and Know Where You Come From” from *A Hurricane in the Basement and Other Vancouver Experiences*, Portrait V2K, The City of Vancouver Millenium Project, Vancouver, 2000. Copyright © 2000 by Debra Sparrow. Used with permission of the author.

Rita Wong, “take a st. and” from *A Verse Map of Vancouver*, edited by George McWhirter, Anvil Press 2009. Revised and reprinted in *undercurrent*, Nightwood Editions 2015. Copyright © 2009 by Rita Wong. Used with permission of the author.

There were numerous organizations that collaborated with me on various parts of the City Poems Project, including the Asian Canadian Writers’ Workshop, the Centre for Digital Media, the Chinatown Storytelling Centre, the Chinese Canadian Museum, the Downtown Eastside Writers Collective, Dr. Sun Yat Sen Garden, Emily Carr University of Art & Design, grunt gallery, Heritage Vancouver, Mount Pleasant Community Arts Screen, Museum of Vancouver, Pandora’s Writing Collective, *Ricepaper Magazine*, the School of Interactive Arts & Technology (SFU), Tecumseh Elementary School, the CEDaR team and the Institute for Critical Indigenous Studies at UBC, the Vancouver Heritage Foundation, and Word Vancouver.

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Vancouver City Poems 2022-2024

A very special thank you to my sister, Shona Lam, whose invaluable ongoing administrative and website support was crucial for the City Poems Project to come to fruition, including the all-important set-up for submissions to both the poetry contest and the poetry video contest. Thank you to family members Ted, Robbie, Bruce, Linda, and Vern who had to put up with my intense schedule and workload (and their spillover effects) over the past three years.

Finally, I want to express my profound gratitude to the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh peoples whose unceded, ancestral lands have provided me with a home and a place within which to grow, learn, work, and flourish.



Here are the exciting results of the innovative, collaborative City Poems Project initiated by Vancouver's sixth poet laureate to stimulate public engagement in poetry about local historical, cultural and ecological sites within the unceded, ancestral territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh peoples that we now know as Vancouver.

Winning poems from the city-wide contest are showcased, along with poems from other well-known local published poets. Read about the award-winning videos made by student teams based on the poems. Find out about promising next steps, including the development of a geolocative app.

City Poems is a launching pad for future collaborations, integrating the distilled language of poetry and the visual impact of film and video.



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