



*Newsletter  
of the Writers'  
Community  
of Durham  
Region*

May/June 2013

The Writers' Community of Durham Region encourages writers at all levels; offers opportunities for support, education and networking; and promotes the value of writers and writing.

# THE Word Weaver

Welcome back to the *WordWeaver!* I promise I will not put the editor's message smack on the front of every new edition, but given that this is the unveiling of the new look for the WW, I thought it wouldn't go amiss.

I want to apologize for how long this has taken. I know the members of the Board have been championing at the bit to get this to you - they're very conscientious about fulfilling ALL the mandates of the organization, including this one.

However, as you'll see in the ensuing pages, we've used the extra time to revamp the design and layout of these pages, and that whole process took longer than I had anticipated.

In this issue you'll see that we have launched a couple of new initiatives. M-E Girard and Kevin Craig contacted me about a regular column hunting

down and reporting on the best independently owned places in Durham Region to go and write if you need to get out of the house for a while. Their report on Wasted Space Café makes me wish I lived closer to Oshawa! Stay tuned for more great places to write near you.

And years ago member Fred Ford used to report on every breakfast for the WW. Since many of our members can't get out to breakfast every time, and since our breakfasts are a cornerstone of what we provide our members, we have reinstated this report. Each month we will have a summary of the speaker's talk, and any other important happenings from the morning as well.

I'll also be looking for reporters and photographers for other WCDR special events—for in-

*Sue Reynolds  
WordWeaver  
Editor*



stance, Words of the Season, or Books and Bevvies. Please contact me if you'd like to cover an event for the *WordWeaver*.

One thing that is staying is the writing challenge each month. There's nothing as inspiring as a deadline to a writer, so check out the challenge on page 11 and get your keyboard clicking!

The *WordWeaver* is a paying gig—for many of our members it is their first-ever paying publication. If you have an idea for an article, please send me a query at [wcdrwordweaver@wcdr.org](mailto:wcdrwordweaver@wcdr.org). As long as it is in some way writing related, I want to read it.

## Editor's Message

# Message from the Board

## Welcome back to the WordWeaver!

After a winter hiatus, the editorial reins are now in the hands of Sue Reynolds. Just as every other editor before her, Sue has put her own stamp on the look and feel of this important communication tool for the WCDR. Please let us know what you think about The (NEW) WordWeaver!

It's hard to believe it's May, and still feels like winter just left, but the cold is leaving the ground and I'm sure the spring bulbs and plants are wondering if they're on the wrong planet. But we have been busy! We enjoyed the wonderful suspense of the Amprosia Prose Contest countdown, and the announcement of the short list, followed by the winners at the March breakfast meeting. Congratulations to everyone who entered and placed so well again. We say goodbye to the wonderful tandem of Heather O'Connor, Theresa Dekker and Ruth Walker, who have successfully guided the WCDR prose contests for the last four years. Well done! The WCDR secretary, Phil Dwyer is heading up the new committee and I'm hearing good things about the next incarnation of this popular contest.

We also enjoyed reviewing the many applications for the WCDR Grants and Scholarships. Those ten worthy candidates received their certificates and cheques at the April breakfast. The WCDR is happy to be able to help

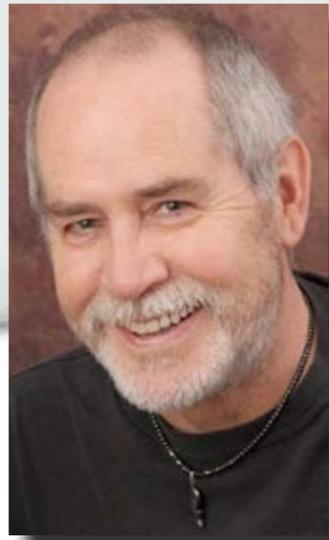
writers finance whichever aspect of their writing goals will move them closer to excellence in the craft of writing and possible publication. Once again we thank the generosity of the Mark Cullen family for contributing another substantial donation to the cause of promoting writing, and kudos to the Writescape and Inkslingers writing craft groups for donating as well.

If you recall, we have been surveying the membership at the recent monthly breakfast meetings and every time a person joins the WCDR or renew their membership. We have been gathering all of that data and we will be presenting a short presentation at the AGM meeting in June. Speaking of the AGM, the nominations to serve on the WCDR board are in, and we will have a new slate of eager volunteers to keep the fires burning. We have a dynamic group and it's a lot of fun!

Until next time,



James Dewar  
President



The Writing Fairy® Eat My Dust Column

# Get Out of the Swamp

by Dorothea Helms

I'm a logical person, which sounds good on the surface, but it's a curse. Trust me. The world is full of illogical people and happenings, and it frosts my fairy butt that I have trouble making sense of what's going on. For example, why do networks preface inane shows like "The Real Housewives of Vancouver" with the warning "The following program contains mature subject matter"? And why does my husband criticize me for watching "The Real Housewives of Vancouver," when he is a big fan of "Swamp People," during which the most intelligent exchange of dialogue is "Shoot, shoot" ... "I forgot the ammo."

The only industry that frustrates me more than television is publishing. Writing, in particular. OK, writers. I mean, would you apply for a job in a department store and tell the Human Resources people that

you'd be happy to work for what they paid in 1979? Pretty wacky concept, isn't it? Yet, the average freelance writer in Canada today makes LESS than he/she did decades ago.

Or how about this? I invite you to come and repair my leaky plumbing, then tell you that my cash flow is a bit low right now, so I'm not paying trades people at the moment, but I'll keep your name on file, and maybe someday I'll have enough money to pay for things like this. And oh, you can sign my pipes and I'll show your name to everyone, which may get you more non-paying work. Would you agree to work for me?

Of course not. Yet writers continue to fall for the old "We don't have the budget to pay writers now, but we intend to someday" line and the hackneyed "You get a byline and expo-

sure." I've never seen writers in the checkout line at Zehrs paying for groceries by flashing a magazine or newspaper with their bylines in it.

Some writers still produce for no remuneration or miniscule amounts of money – sometimes without realizing it. I get occasional calls from writers who have accepted assignments and have no idea how much, or even if, the client will pay. If you consider writing a hobby and don't care, or if the client is a nonprofit organization or charity to which you want to donate your services, then fine.

If, however, you intend to make a part-time or full-time career of writing and the client is a for-profit business (which most publications are), find out up front. Instead of asking

"Do you pay?," ask "How much do you pay?" If the answer is nothing, run, run like the wind. If no money changes hands, you do not break even. You have put wear and tear on your computer and perhaps paid long-distance charges and/or racked up mileage during your research, and you've used time that could have been better spent on a paying gig.

Don't become an ill-prepared 'Swamp Writer.' As a successful freelancer, your ammo includes when to say "No" to jobs that don't pay.



Read more about Dorothea Helms, a.k.a. The Writing Fairy®, at

[www.thewritingfairy.com](http://www.thewritingfairy.com)



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Breakfast  
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Vasilevski  
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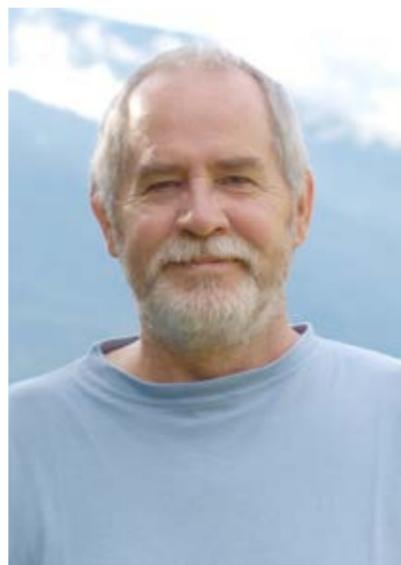
# Who's Who?

by Barb Hunt

It seems that everyone knows who this outgoing man is that's been the veritable ring-master of The Writers' Community of Durham Region for the past few years, but do we really know James Dewar? What was the journey that brought him our way? And what's he up to now?



## James Dewar



**WW:** We first got to know you as a poet. Did you always write poetry?

**JD:** Yes, when I was younger. Poetry then short stories. I studied English and History at York University and that's how I met Irving Layton. I didn't realize at the time how important that experience was. And then I put it all away. You know, love and marriage and kids. I'd taken teaching at UofT, but only taught high school for 4 years because during those Ray-Days, the union stuff just drove me nuts! So, I turned to banking.

**WW:** No time for poetry?

**JD:** Oh, I still wrote, but it went into a drawer. My bank job got me public speaking. I'd hung around bands as a kid and learned from Dad how to be quick-witted. I didn't mind being heckled. So they got me 'hosting' events like the Board of Trade. And writing speeches. I got to be very comfortable and organized in that role. After 23 years I retired.

**WW:** With your whole life in front of you?

*James Dewar hosting the literary portion of the Ajax Festival of the Arts in 2010*

"What I'm proudest of as WCDR President is fulfilling our mandate to look after everyone — beginners, intermediate and advanced."

**JD:** Darn right. That was in 2002 and I wanted to get back to poetry so I began hanging around the Toronto poetry scene. Of course, I was really nervous and had no faith in my work. Classic newbie.

**WW:** When did you join the WCDR?

**JD:** In 2004. I think it was the combo of poetry readings in Toronto and the WCDR that bolstered my confidence. I just followed my passion – writing.

**WW:** And you met Sue.

**JD:** That totally changed my life. And not the way you're thinking. My life began to revolve around writing. I started freelancing for Metroland and got back into teaching. Another of my passions.

**WW:** So, tell me about your writing.

**JD:** I finished my first novel – *Men on the Surface*. That took 5 years. I'm working on the second novel and have a few poetry books on the verge of completion.

**WW:** Congrats!

**JD:** Thanks. But what I love is teaching poetry. And then publishing. Oh and building websites. I'm so busy, it's hard to find the writing time.

**WW:** The WCDR is a busy place too.

**JD:** WCDR tapped right into my love for showing people how to do things. Helping them develop skills. And it's been wonderful drawing younger people to the organization. We've got such a great vibe going on the WCDR board right now. It gives me such confidence going forward.

**WW:** I guess it's that time?

**JD:** Oh, I'm looking forward to keeping fewer plates spinning in the air.

**WW:** It must be gratifying to have accomplished so much. Mini-workshops. Blue Pencils. Scholarships. Agent workshops.

**JD:** It is. I want writers to know that no matter how far you get, you might always have that fear. I say, just do it! Push yourself to get better and better. I tell people, be your own hero! And then try to professionalize yourself. Divorce yourself from your writing enough not to take feedback personally. Irving Layton used to list 3 responsibilities: admit you're a writer, write, and then deliver it to the world. It takes strength to deliver, and if you don't succeed, keep at it.

**WW:** It's been quite a ride.

**JD:** One last thing. What I'm proudest of as WCDR President is fulfilling our mandate to look after everyone – beginners, intermediate and advanced. We encourage writers to ease in through smaller circles and mini-workshops and work their way up to agent pitches. Simple and supportive. That's why it works.

*James hosting his monthly poetry series in Toronto Hot-Sauced Words.*

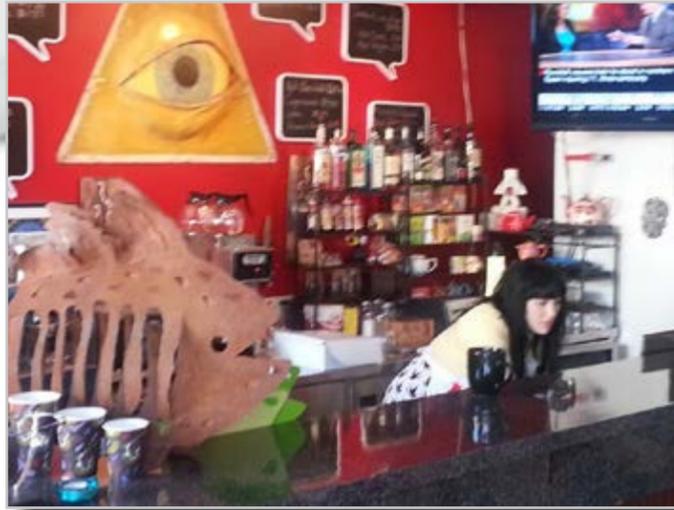


# Write Here, Write Now

Not all of us writers are lucky enough to have an office. Or maybe we have one, but it's too close to the screaming kids, the piles of laundry, and the sink full of dishes. Plus, there's no one there to make us coffee.

And maybe we're a little tired of the same old mega coffee chains. Maybe it's time to support the local writer-friendly hangouts in Durham Region. But where are these places? Your new and improved *WordWeaver* will now include a regular column featuring our adventures in discovering some of the best writing spots in the region. Don't forget to check out the Report Card for a quick glance at venue attributes.

Our first stop is the funky little art café known as **Wasted Space**, nestled in the heart of downtown



Oshawa. We entered the cozy locale reminiscent of Andy Warhol's Factory: walls sprinkled with an array of works by local artists, colourful couches, chairs, window seats, and a bar serving both alcoholic beverages and specialty coffees and teas.

Though it appears small

at first glance, there is a larger room at the back complete with a stage, a comfy leather couch and several high bistro sets. The venue hosts a large variety of artsy events—open mics, musical acts, and visual art shows—however, the daytime hours are quiet and conducive to extended sessions of laptop loitering and coffee guzzling. Although the clientele is mostly comprised of twenty-somethings, the atmosphere is inviting and perfectly attuned to the creative needs of writers of all ages.

Instead of the brisk in and out of coffee-chain patrons, the homey vibe will lull you into several hours of productive writing. In other words, it's totally chill. The staff is more than accommodating. They're excited at the thought of

The *WordWeaver's* new column on the hottest spots in Durham Region, to hole up, drink a hot beverage and write.

By roving writer-reporters

## M-E Girard & Kevin Craig

even more creative types invading a space envisioned specifically for that purpose.

M-E's mohawk fit right in, but so did Kevin's grey hair. M-E loved the fact that she could park

for free on the premises, while Kevin went gaga over the cranberry super-charged butter tarts. We both thought it was cool that, though the menu was small, most of the items were brought in from local

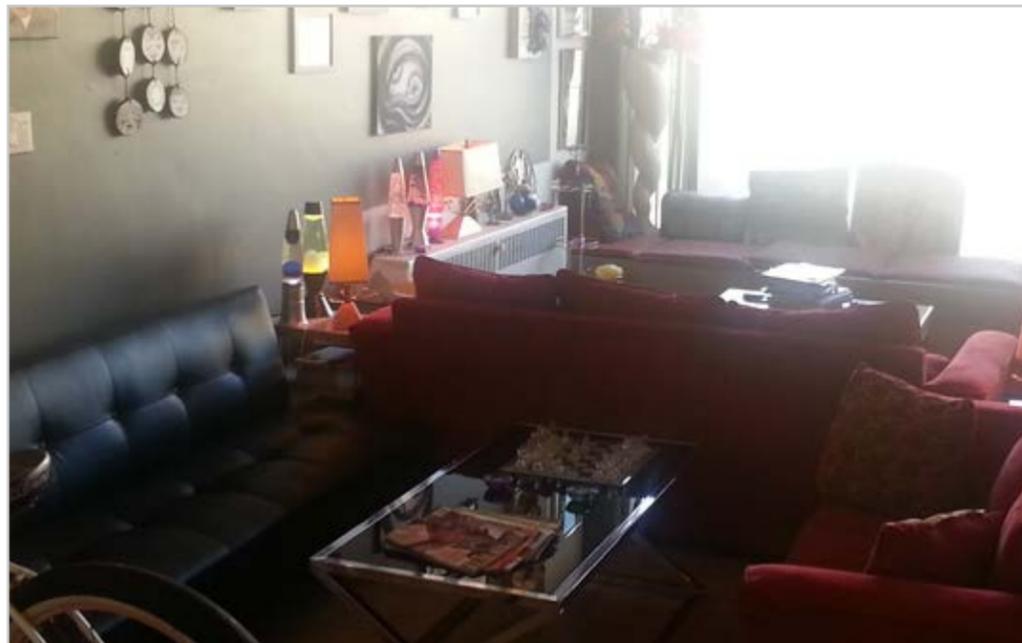
businesses.

Who could you imagine running into at Wasted Space? Writer Hunter S. Thompson, or maybe WCDR member Dustin Cormier.



### REPORT CARD

- **Connectivity:** free Wi-Fi (with password), several electrical outlets and available power bars
- **Parking:** free lot beside building
- **Facilities:** single female stall/single male stall, clean and beautifully decorated
- **Food & Beverage:** limited menu mostly comprised of hot beverages, alcoholic drinks, sandwiches and baked goods
- **Atmosphere:** quiet and mellow with staccato bursts of traffic throughout the day, evenings are noisier with regular events scheduled
- **Seating:** several couches, chairs, barstools and window seats in the front room and bistro sets in the back
- **Hours of Writer Friendliness:** Not open for the early-bird writers, more suited to the afternoon writer crowd



**Wasted Space Art Café**  
74 Celina Street  
Oshawa, Ontario  
Mon-Sat: 11am-9pm, Sun:  
1pm-7pm  
[info@wastedspace.ca](mailto:info@wastedspace.ca)



# You Shoulda Bin There!

February 2013

## Lena Coakley's Seven Tips About Story

by Tobin Elliott

**Lena Coakley, author**

In February I had the pleasure of attending the WCDR breakfast meeting with author Lena Coakley, and her talk on *Seven Tips About Story*. She offered these invaluable tricks of the trade:

1. Learn plotting from screenwriters. It sounds formulaic for us creative types, but it does work. Lena read a small section from one of the three books she recommended and it sounded unbelievably restrictive, but it also gets the job done. In use, it's not restrictive at all. It's a guide.

The three recommended books were:

*The Anatomy of Story* by John Truby

*Story* by Robert McKee

*Writing Screenplays That Sell*

by Michael Hauge

2. Know what your character wants before you start your story. A major piece of any story is a character striving to get what they want: the girl, the boy, fame, or anonymity. They may not even know what they want...but the writer needs to know this. Without a character with a desire, there is no story.

3. The want must escalate. A strong story builds that desire over the course of the story. They might want it, but by the end of the story, it should be an un-

wavering need. Building that is an essential part of the story. It builds the suspense and the reader's engagement.

4. Every story should have a plot and story arc. The character needs to want something, which is the plot arc. In the Wizard of Oz, Dorothy wants to go home, and her want grows throughout the story. The character needs to need something, as well. This is the character arc. Dorothy needs to understand how much home means to her.

It's more interesting if the want and need clash. On the surface, Dorothy's want and need seem congruent, but she only wants to go home because she's in a strange place and home is safe. Dorothy runs away from problems. Now, Dorothy must face them. When she does this, then she is ready to go home and never run again.

What characters need is often necessary to achieve what they want. They have to grow to overcome the final obstacle.

5. Save the bunny. A character arc pitfall is to make the protagonist too unlikeable at the start. Saving the bunny is a euphemism for giving your flawed, unlikeable character a situation in which they are shown in a better light to give the reader something

to care about. The protagonist is still flawed, but they do something nice to counteract their flaws.

6. Mind the gap. This is the difference between what the reader expects to happen and what does happen. Starting a story, readers often have a strong expectation or suspicion of what will ultimately happen. What does happen should be both surprising to the reader, yet still logical.

Also, your protagonist should face a final obstacle that is different from what they had anticipated all along. Did the reader in you just perk up thinking about that?

7. Use the objective correlative. It's another way to hint at the emotions of the character without describing a physical reaction. Lena illustrated this with a scene from the Godfather, when Michael Corleone prepares for his first kill.

The subway train, though subtle in the scene, rumbles and shakes, an objective correlative for his emotion. As he enters the bathroom, the rumbling is there. As he searches for the gun, all is quiet. Then, as he is about to leave the bathroom, the sound is back again as he readies himself.

These are absolutely brilliant and valuable tips. Use them. They'll make your story better. When it is, thank Lena Coakley.

**Tobin Elliott**

teaches an evening Creative Writing class at both Durham College and Trent

University (Oshawa). He's published two novellas and a short story and has a new novel, novella and short story (so far) coming out in the next year. Find out more at [tobinelliott.com](http://tobinelliott.com)



Each month only about one third of our members make it out to breakfast. For several years member Fred Ford used to do a recap each issue to summarize the speaker's talk. We're doing a new take on this and looking for a member to "report" on the breakfast each month. Please contact the editor if you'd be interested in doing one of these summaries. Usual *WordWeaver* rates apply. [wcdwordweaver@wcd.org](mailto:wcdwordweaver@wcd.org)

## Daniel Scott Tysdal's World of Misfit Wonder

March 2013

**Daniel Scott Tysdal** is an unconventional poet.

In March 2013 WCDR members had a chance to experience Daniel for themselves. Tysdal's presentation was as alternative as is his poetry. His PowerPoint overheads were interrupted several times by "incoming messages" from Stephen Harper and Justin Bieber.

His first book, the widely acclaimed *Predicting the Next Big Advertising Breakthrough Using a Potentially Dangerous Method* illustrates one of his points—that in poetry one should explore what he called "the fitness of form"; Daniel admits that he is enticed by forms that do not fit—he says he explores "Wonder Writing and the Misfit".

One example of such a form is mixing poetry and advertising together, both visually and verbally. He experiments with creating folding poetry a la Mad Magazine. He plays with the language of poker and of Mo-



## You Shoulda Bin There! continued

March 2013

### Daniel Scott Tysdal

uncle Edmund from Saskatchewan through documents and pictures, and then revealed that this uncle was actually completely made up.

One concept he returned to over and over in his talk was that of wonder. Most of his poetry begins with some kind of wondering, he said. And just to make us understand why this is so important, he quoted Janet Burroway: “Unless you make them wonder, they will not turn the page.”

and in *Quill & Quire*. She also co-wrote *Don't Stop Believin': The Unofficial Guide to Glee*, and tweets a lot @booksin140.

One thing she did right off the bat was encourage WCDR members to enter the CBC's writing contests including Hyperlocal. She mentioned that after May there would be a Crime Writing Contest through the Canadian broadcaster, so keep your eyes open for that one and others—she also mentioned that CBC now has contests and prizes for writing spread throughout the year, including the three prestigious prizes that get published in *EnRoute* magazine.

Erin shared her secrets for collecting the vast array of information she needed to produce the *Glee* book (Google Alerts and RSS feeds, amongst other Internet trolling). And she also underscored what we hear over and over these days—how important it is to do your own marketing. She admitted that her most recent book (*Best Served Cold: the Unofficial Companion to Revenge*) is not doing as well as the *Glee* book and she attributed that partly to not having the same time to stay on top of it.

### Erin Balsler

town in his poetry.

He talked about the notion of “accidental sense” citing the misquoting of voice messages by voice recognition systems as an example.

And he also urged us to think about the “Ranges of the Real”. First of all he introduced us to his great

## Erin Balsler's Glee-ful April talk

April 2013

April's breakfast saw the energetic Erin Balsler addressing the WCDR members.

Erin had a lot to say for herself; she's a writer, producer, and a columnist for the CBC. On air, her work has appeared in several CBC shows, including Radio One's *As It Happens*, *Q*, *The Next Chapter*, *Metro Morning*, *Fresh Air*, *Here and Now* and more. Online, she produces *CBC Books* and the *Canada Reads* website. Her work has appeared on *Open Book Toronto*, *Torontoist*,



## Word Weaver CHALLENGE

It used to be that something would happen, and there would be no record of it because no one had a camera. Now everything can be caught at any moment because we're never without our cell phones, so we're never without our cameras either.

For this issue's WW challenge, write a cell phone poem of no more than 24 lines, or write a 500 word prose piece based on this picture. What is being



captured? Why? Who is doing the capturing? And what does it mean for the target of the lens?

Send us your best words in the best order by June 15, 2013.

**Deadline for WW Challenge: June 15th, 2013**

## WCDR Member Bill Swan Wins The Red Maple™ Award

Swan's book, *REAL JUSTICE: Fourteen and Sentenced to Death*, was selected from a list of 10 nominees and announced at the OLA's Forest Festival at Toronto Harbourfront.



The book is the story of Steven Truscott, a Grade 7 student at the Royal Canadian Air Force Base in Clinton, Ont. who was charged with the murder of a classmate and sentenced to hang. The case was instrumental in the abolition of the death penalty in Canada.

The Red Maple™ Award

**Congratulations Bill!**



reading program is offered for the enjoyment of students ages 12 to 13, in Grades 7 and 8. This program includes a Fiction list every year and every other year Red Maple also offers a Non-Fiction list. This program aims to get readers engaging in conversation around the books and encourages them to use critical thinking while reading.

# New WCDR Members, Welcome!

Christine Walsh  
Julie Kellman  
Margie Alexander  
Mary Stevens  
Catherine Rees  
Marlene Mitchell  
Terri Korkush  
Quinn Doherty  
Ed Leung  
Jennifer Gibb  
Lisa Jones  
Liz Brasier  
Eileen Whitney  
Helene Henderson  
Amanda Ford  
Terry Taln

Spencer Haze  
Chris Van Steen  
Jeff Timothy  
Victoria Mitchell  
Beth Craig  
Lisa Molinaro  
Karen Danyluk  
Jason Forbes  
Wendy Lewis  
Kari Klassen  
Landy Ing-Anderson  
Janice McCabe  
David Wray  
Stacey Paterson  
John Fok  
Nilawan Hughes  
Sam Hiyate



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[www.wcdr.org](http://www.wcdr.org)

*WordWeaver* subscription:  
\$12/year (six issues).

Editor/Desktop Publishing: Sue Reynolds

We welcome your input!

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