



**THIS IS US**  
Diverse North Shore

Celebration of  
Poetry

# Event Program & Selected Works

March 2020



NORTH SHORE  
MULTICULTURAL  
SOCIETY



CENTRE FOR  
DIVERSITY AND INNOVATION  
Inclusion | Curiosity | Compassion



NSIIP  
NORTH SHORE  
IMMIGRANT INCLUSION  
PARTNERSHIP

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Immigration, Refugees  
and Citizenship Canada

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# Celebration of Poetry

If February 2020, we put out a call for the submission of poems about experiences of living or working on the North Shore. We asked members of our community to share their poems about diverse experiences of **belonging or not belonging, being included or not included, feeling connected or disconnected** in the community. This booklet contains a compilation of submissions received from diverse community members.



# This Is Us: Diverse North Shore

March 10, 2020

6:30pm - 8:30pm

West Vancouver Memorial Library

## Welcome

## Poetry Readings

[BE-LONG] – by Anita Movazzafi

Wittingly – by Me-An Laceste

Unrestrictive Covenant – by Don Robertson

RED HANDS– by David MacLean

SONNET – by Paul Birch (read by: Daniela Cohen)

Dreams Come True – by Tara Alavi

emptiness – by Fran Bourassa

Weaving Our Humanity compilation - by Andrew Warner

## Questions & Answers

## Reflections

## Closing

# [BE-LONG]

*By Anita Movazzafi*

I belonged to the mountains  
to Damavand with its mighty tip  
to the Alborz range and canyons  
I belonged to the sea  
to the Caspian in all its glory  
and the glimmering lakes of Marmaloo  
I belonged to a land far away  
One that I now can't go back to

When I first arrived I was excited  
Everything was new  
I could look out the window for hours  
And never get tired of the same new view  
After a while I started to feel lonely  
I started to feel like a bird with no song  
I felt like an apple in an orange tree  
I did not feel like I belonged

I was confused as to who I was  
I dyed my lush raven black hair blond  
I threw away all my old clothes  
And tried to erase the person i was back home  
I stopped speaking the language of my people  
And swirled only in my mouth  
The soft sounds of a tongue  
I grew up without

I had lost myself in so many ways  
And the day before I felt like everything would cave

I walked to Cleveland dam  
And all throughout the way  
I admired the north shore mountains who looked so strong  
And seemed like they were begging me to stay

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# [BE-LONG] continued

*By Anita Movazzafi*

I walked to the shore of the pacific ocean  
And saw in the reflection of the waves  
A me who I had never seen so clearly  
A girl with a familiar face

I found comfort in the mountains  
When I saw them I knew I was somewhere that was becoming  
home  
To see them everyday meant that I was growing older and wiser  
To see them meant that I was in places I'd know  
I found calm in the oceans  
To hear the waves crashing on the shore  
Was like a breath of fresh air filling me up  
Leaving me wanting more

I found happiness in white butterflies  
Who showed up in spring on the flowers  
Gracefully floating around  
For hours upon hours

It was in the nature of Vancouver that I felt like me the most  
It invited me in like a giving host  
And one day as I sat inhaling in the beauty of it all  
I felt like I truly belonged

# SONNET

*By Paul Birch*

As single as the last surviving auk  
Or a distant star alone in a dark, dark sky  
I look to find an explanation why  
No kindred spirit shares my lonely walk.  
The echo only answers when I talk  
And none but mirrors look me in the eye.  
My narrow bed is roomy where I lie  
Hearing the tiresome ticking of the clock.  
But minutes flow and night leads on to day;  
The coldest winter always ends in spring.  
Two rivers may run far before they blend  
But still they green the lands along the way.  
So time may in its hidden wisdom bring  
The means to serve before it brings a friend.



# emptiness

*By Fran Bourassa*

Clothes strewn on the bedroom floor  
shapeless,  
after I desert them

I stare at them

And at the unmade bed  
the stack of unread books  
and last night's red wine  
staining the glass

Loneliness  
is like this  
It makes you see  
the abandonment in everything

On my hike, I keep to the trail  
alongside the dry river bed

What was once covered  
now bared  
just a clutter of rocks, garbage  
a graveyard of dead tree limbs  
Twigs and branches  
wave like hands in the passing breeze  
as if they are a crowd keen with questions  
I ignore them, I don't ask anymore  
Where you are

I can't bear to look up over the scarred bank  
A blue sky sets a line for happiness  
There's the green pride of spring bursting on the trees  
an ovation of blossoms  
Red wing blackbirds, chickadees, flutter so effortlessly on the wind

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# emptiness continued

*By Fran Bourassa*

and lovers on the walking path, arms around each other, so close  
their shadows marry them  
I once believed something more would become of me  
That somewhere, I would stumble upon you

At home  
I climb into the unmade bed  
Pour another

Moonlight falls broken into my room through the tangle of trees  
Stars streak a black sky  
Something wild runs across the cut grass tonight  
I shut the curtain



# Unrestrictive Covenant

*By Don Robertson*

Restrictive covenant on the title of the property  
Imprint on paper and on mind  
whose in, whose out  
skin color counts  
Whiteness the currency for social propriety

Blurred now restricted on the title of the property  
imprint on the mind grandfathered in  
what neighbor? What next?  
A fence will work  
high not porous protection against social sobriety

Entitlement fenced in the furrows of the brain  
secure in the comfort of sameness  
impervious to variation  
Mind set  
against the profusion of color and neighbours with a name

A child bursts happily through the front door  
school out a friend brought home  
colors don't match  
friendship an unrestricted covenant  
The future has arrived with sameness ignored.

A child shall lead us it has been said  
Get ready  
Get set  
Go to the door of the day that is here  
Fall into line we are going to be led

# Dreams Come True

*By Tara Alavi*

You don't need wings to fly;  
When you think,  
You imagine,  
You design,  
That's time you can touch the sky.

You don't need a lot of things to move;  
When you start,  
You stand up,  
You fight,  
That's time you can say: I'm improved!

You don't need to be born from a land;  
When you're welcomed,  
You're beloved,  
You feel proud,  
That's time the world see your smile,  
'cause:  
Here's Canada!  
Your home and native land!



# RED HANDS

*By David MacLean*

Listen to me listen to me

These hands my red hands

In the air we pray no sing no die

My black hands waving

Right and left pushed into the earth

Cry red cry white we could count

At two it's over yes done

No time no time just digits thrashing

Yes afraid of the ocean the wave

Listen to me listen to me

So beautiful this air this wind

Red hands waving

Silent

# Wittingly

*By Me-An Laceste*

I was a foreign overseas nanny  
who came under the caregiver program  
to look after the precious little ones  
that was in nineteen ninety, my blessed year indeed  
I was quite young myself and very naïve  
but full of hopes and dreams to achieve  
with heartfelt gratitude for the opportunity  
the Great Canada has conferred upon me  
one fine day-off I ventured in a big mall  
I stood at a window to admire the display  
of the assortment of clothing, mannequins in fine array  
thought to enter, to get closer, to see better  
dare to try some on, perhaps feel the quality  
curiosity must have registered on my yokelish face  
to someone, looking from the inside out, towards me  
excitedly, I got ready, my feet to enter in  
not even four steps from where I started  
I was greeted, or blocked shall I say, by a lady  
sophisticated as she looked, I was surprised to see  
how high her eyebrows arched looking down at me  
her aristocratic, sculptured, chiselled nose  
towered over my signature flat, unflattering holes  
she made me feel unwelcome, in no uncertain terms  
with her arms tightly crossed, nicely paired with insolence  
told me outright, using no words at all  
there's nothing here you can afford  
so you better scoot back out the door  
in this split-second of a muted exchange  
I was not able to utter a thing, not even a silent grumble  
too dumbfounded to open my mouth to say  
the rush of thoughts that flooded my offended head  
instead, me and the antiquated rubber shoes I wore  
swiftly turned around to timidly join  
with the pride I seemed to have left

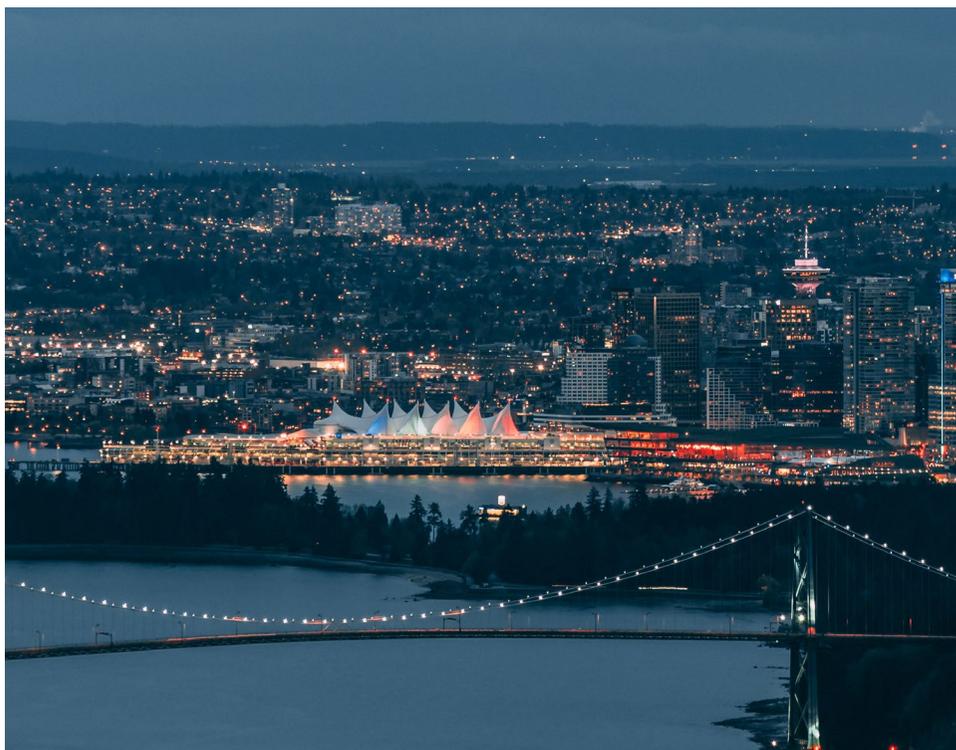
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# Wittingly continued

*By Me-An Laceste*

at the entrance to this posh snobbish place  
where you can say beauty and ugly  
in one short breath, no effort at all  
where you can see elegance and crudeness  
exist in the same space, truly, a grandstand play  
I felt so little in my already small, skinny frame  
Belittled, looked down, frowned upon, judged  
was it my nose, the telltale sign?  
was it my unpolished look?  
was it the way I carried myself?  
was it the clothes I wore that weren't up to her taste?  
Should any of it make a difference? Did any of it matter?  
whatever she saw in me that ill-fated day  
was what made her behave in that condescending way  
how she displayed her reaction to me  
was what she wittingly showed me about her



# Weaving Our Humanity

*By Andrew Warner*

Story, Journey, Open-Minded Learning  
Powerful, Courageous, Beautiful, Radical Kindness

Here, I feel timeless  
We're in the spotlight on stage  
In an open-mic-like audience  
I'm in awe of us.

All of us are human  
Beneath our hair and clothes  
We're just skin and bones  
Or meat sacks...

We all smile  
Like gardens on rainy days  
With teeth like trellises for laughter to climb  
As it blooms.

I smile like the cartoon Grinch  
I giggle like a strobe light and  
I laugh like I just got pinched.

Your smile might make the mould at a dentist's office. It's beautiful!  
Your laugh might make the mountains move it's so loud – I love it!  
Your giggle, unlike the Guggenheim, is free!

Our culture is our humanity  
Sharing stories is What Makes Me Happy, so  
Thanks in advance for telling me your tapestry.



CENTRE FOR  
**DIVERSITY AND INNOVATION**

Inclusion | Curiosity | Compassion

We envision communities where everyone feels they can thrive, belong and be included.

Our mission is to educate and empower the public, communities, businesses, organizations and workplaces about diversity and inclusion so that everyone feels safe and included.

[theCDI.ca](http://theCDI.ca) | [cdi@nsms.ca](mailto:cdi@nsms.ca)



NSIIP is a coalition of community agencies and institutions focused on improving the settlement outcomes of new immigrants. We work collaboratively to support North Shore residents and organizations, and ensure all immigrants have opportunities to fully participate economically, socially, and civically.

[www.nsiip.ca](http://www.nsiip.ca)



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