

Opal

Writers Magazine

WRITER RETREATS

- *Mystic Saturna Island, BC*
- **Can't Afford to Get Away?**
Make your home your retreat.
Here's how!

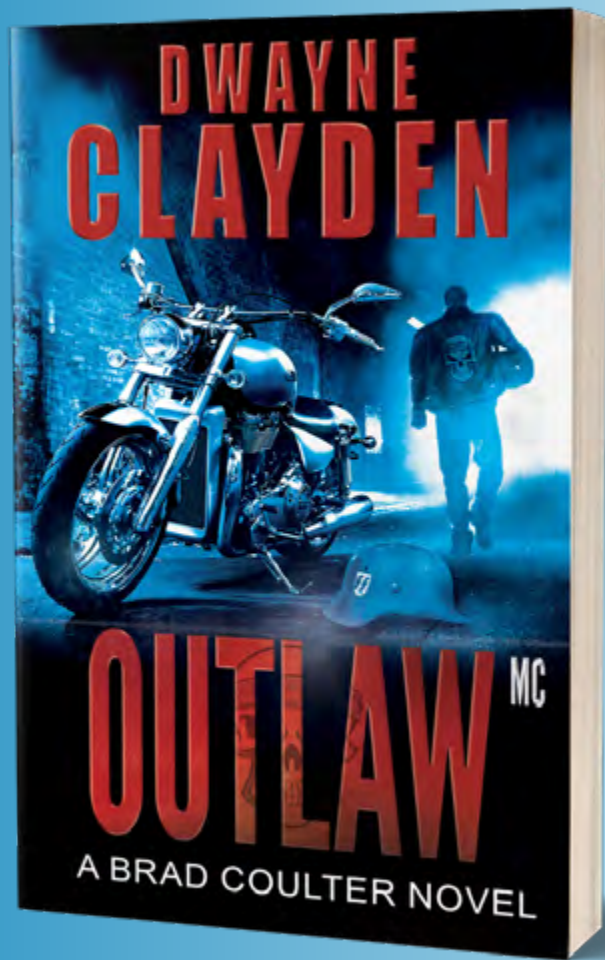
DO YOU KNOW HOW TO GIVE CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK?

This
Marketing Myth
is **KILLING**
Your
Audience
Engagement!

**5 TIPS
TO A
JOYFUL
ENTREPRENURIAL
LIFE**

Is it a
Hobby
or a
Business?

NEW RELEASES - CALGARY AUTHORS



Book Launch - Outlaw MC

March 14, 2019

7 pm

Bowness Seniors' Centre

6422 31 Ave NW, Calgary, AB T3B

1K2, Canada

OUTLAW MC, the sequel to # 1 Best Seller CRISIS POINT, puts Brad Coulter and TSU in the middle of a biker war. No one is safe as the war spins out of control. After several murders, the violence continues with attacks on fellow officers.

Who's their next target—Sergeant Brad Coulter?

The consequences of failure are unimaginable, yet stopping the war will bring an even greater threat to the city.

Opal Writers Magazine

Connecting Writers, Authors, and Readers

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Photo credit: Harrison Kim
Saturna Island, BC



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AT HOME

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IN EVERY ISSUE

Young Readers
Associations and Group Events for
Writers.

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Constructive
Feedback - Part 2



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Mystic Saturna Island

This is a truly mystic place, much of it
is part of the new Gulf Islands National
Park.

Photo credit: Harrison Kim
Saturna Island BC

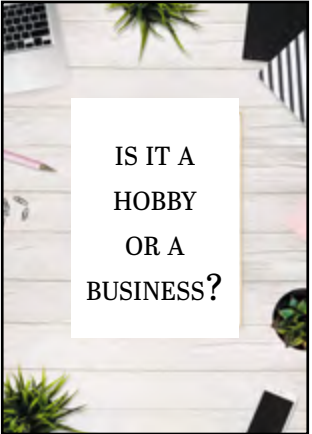
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THIS MARKETING
MYTH IS KILLING
YOUR AUDIENCE
ENGAGEMENT!



5 TIPS TO
LIVING A JOYFUL
ENTREPRENURIAL LIFE

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Marching Along

by Jean Kay

What drumbeat do I march to?
Is it the best beat for me?
Am I always trying to please others?
Is that my true destiny?

It's March—a time for new growth that sprouts up from within.
What I envision, I can do,
all I need do is begin.

Hibernation season is over,
it's time to start anew,
make new goals I can achieve
and prepare to follow through.

March to my drum at my pace,
I'm the one I need to please,
and as I do, others will see
they can march alongside with ease.

Guided, loved and protected,
I march through life my way,
counting my blessings as I go,
ensuring I'll have a good day.

Keeping Motivated

by Dee Mago

Remember the last issue when I mentioned the three basic rules that will help you stay active?

Is it March and you are still not able to master the three rules? Well, no problem, I will be suggesting a few things that will help you to stay accountable, reduce frustration, and get you closer to your goals. These suggestions will apply to anything else in life and I am sure you can see how this will even apply to your writing business.

Tip 1: Tracking – Are you currently using any way to track your food or physical activity? Maybe it is time to start daily journaling.

Tip 2: Scheduling – This goes back to priorities: (check previous issues of *Opal Writers' Magazine*) put yourself first. Set realistic time and days that you can workout for at least 5 minutes and respect that time as you would respect a meeting with a client.

a) You can schedule your workout for first thing in the morning before everyone wakes up.

b) You can schedule it for mid-afternoon when your energy levels are high enough to perform a high-intensity workout.

c) You can schedule it after your kids go to bed or with your kids in the evening.

Tip 3: Choices – What is that one thing that you are going to keep track of and schedule as a new activity?

For example:

a) "I am going to track my daily water intake."

b) "I will create daily reminders to drink 8 glasses of water a day."

c) You are choosing to work on water intake.

Respect your "Me Time" as you would respect a meeting with a client. This is about you, you deserve it. You got this!

My goal is to provide you with little key strategies that will help you to be closer to your goals, be healthier, stronger, happier, and more confident. Live day by day purposely.

THIS Marketing Myth Is Killing Your Audience Engagement!

By Catherine Saykaly-Stevens

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES



"What's your reach?"

It's the shiny bauble of online marketing: increasing the number of people who look at our content.

Is Increasing My Number of Followers What's Most Important in My Social Media Marketing?

It is not!

While it is important to grow your followers, it is not what's most important. The best thing you can do, right now, is to engage your current following, no matter how small.

100 engaged fans are more impactful than 10,000 apathetic followers

The first glance at someone's high follower count may be impressive, but if no one engages with you or your content it's not impressive, begging the question, "What's wrong with your followers?" People are aware that you can 'buy followers' and then all credibility is lost.

In the long run, a real audience will interact when you give them content they love. All their activity of liking, commenting, and sharing will put your posts in front of more people, earning more followers.

Here are five Engagement Factors to keep in mind when creating and posting content:

- Know who your target audience is: post purposeful content for them

- Create content your target audience craves: use words, images, and videos to attract them

- Use simple tools to increase your good content: i.e. find the right keywords and hashtags

- Promote more than your own material: share content of non-competitors who share your audience

- Seek sharing partners in advance, especially for announcements

Start this 1 habit this week and improve your engagement results going forward.

Step 1: Imagine creating social posts that inspire action. What would that action be for each post? Create social posts with the idea of people engaging it. Think of how people can take action.

- Create a filler post – Action: None or a Like

- Create a cute post with thought – Action: Like

- Create a post that inspires thought – Action: Comment

- Create a post that mimics the way your audience thinks and agrees with – Action: Like, Comment, Share

- Create a graphic post with 3 useful tips to increase high sharing – Action: Like, Comment, Share

- Comment on a colleague's intriguing post – Action: Like, Comment, Share (with their audience, too)

- Create a downloadable takeaway they can click to get – Action: Click through to website/landing page and exchange their email for your downloadable item

Step 2: When creating social posts always consider what the action would be. Is that the response you seek? Do you see how your current audience and working with even a few key colleagues can make more of a splash online?

Takeaway #1: Post content to engage your current audience

Takeaway #2: Keep the five Engagement Factors in mind when creating and posting content

Takeaway #3: Create posts that inspire people to a specific action

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How to Deliver Constructive Feedback by Taija Morgan

Following last month's discussion on the principles of constructive feedback and the importance of keeping your feedback truly constructive, this month's article includes a checklist of things to keep in mind while giving feedback and some notes on dealing with feedback on your feedback.

Delivering Feedback: A Checklist

Now, finally, I suppose you actually want to know how to deliver feedback? Well, here you go. This list doesn't cover everything, but it should give you a decent starting point. Keeping the principles in mind and avoiding the excuses for bad behavior, when you're reading or editing a piece of writing and leaving your comments (and/or tracked changes) behind, check your work against this checklist to ensure as much as possible that you're doing right by your writer. And more than anything, every time you are about to return a document with your constructive feedback, hold it against the standard measurement: Am I leaving this writer better than I found them?

- Am I tearing them down with any of my feedback? If I am, is it actually necessary and am I putting in the work to lift them back up?
- Am I lifting this writer up and leaving them better than I found them?

- If I'm criticizing something or pointing out an error, am I also providing a correction?

- Am I explaining the logic or purpose behind the corrections I offer?

- If I point out something abstract I think should be changed/improved, do I offer guidance on how to do so?

- Is my reasoning clear and sound?

- Can I back up my arguments with sources where appropriate?

- Is my criticism legitimate or is it truly just a matter of personal taste?

- Am I "beating any dead horses"—in other words, have I brought up the exact same point more than three times? If so, let them know you're going to assume they get it, flag it in a simple manner (e.g., "Repetition/R") only if absolutely necessary in the future or just correct it, and otherwise move on and stop bringing it up.

- What have I done to ensure that this writer walks away from this experience feeling empowered/inspired/excited?

- Have I challenged the writer to reach to new heights in their writing and given them a path to get there?
- Have I been clear on which of my comments are merely my personal thoughts/reactions/opinions and which should be taken into more serious consideration?
- Have I been careful not to impede on the author's voice and personal style, even if it might not appeal to my own preferences?
- When delivering feedback that's more critical, have I phrased it to focus on the writing itself, not the writer? (This is a small psychology hack adapted for editing. It's subtle but it goes a long way. It follows the common psychology principle: "Challenge the behavior, not the person." For example: "The sentence would be stronger if it was worded..." instead of "Your sentence would be stronger if you'd written it...")
- Am I treating them respectfully, not condescendingly, as equals and telling them only the truth without being hurtful?
- Am I paying equal attention to the piece's merits as I am to its faults?

- Am I making arbitrary changes?

- Have I attempted to include my reactions to the text from a reader's perspective for the author's benefit, not just from an editor's or fellow writer's perspective?

- Have I addressed all the areas that the author specifically requested?

Receiving Feedback on Your Feedback

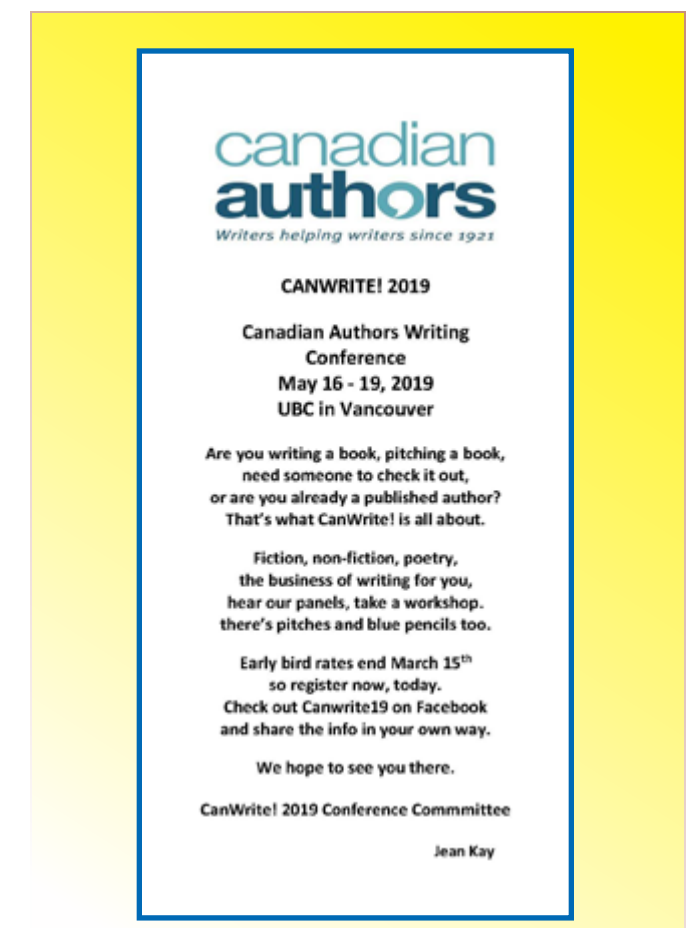
If you've followed all of this advice and proceeded with the utmost caution and respect in delivering your feedback...well, I'm not going to lie to you and claim you're guaranteed a good response. There's one other factor to weigh in here, which I touched on earlier: people don't always want honesty. Not even if they claim they do, not even if they think they do, and not even if they explicitly beg for it. Most people aren't ready for feedback. Unsolicited feedback is almost always a terrible idea, unless you really know the person and are attempting to help them avoid making an embarrassing mistake, and even then be sure to always, always provide such feedback in private.

Fact is, no matter how sensitive or reasonable you are—and even if you're only doing what was asked of you—the person on the other side of your feedback can still respond with defensiveness, anger, devastation, or they may not respond at all. It's important to recognize that all of those reactions, fair or not, are their way of dealing and

they have a right to deal however they need to whether you understand it or not. If someone lashes out, let it go and move on. If you can't make them feel better or help them, let it go and move on. Don't get caught up emotionally or get defensive yourself; exercise empathy and if you have to disengage, do so.

However, if you do your job well and can achieve that balance between honesty and kindness, delivering your feedback in a manner that empowers, encourages, and helps people grow, your chances of a positive outcome are very high. This is where lasting friendships and connections are made. This is where writers begin making leaps and bounds in their abilities, and the satisfaction you'll feel in helping them reach those new heights will be more than worth the effort. Not only that, but I know of no better way of improving one's own writing abilities than by teaching concepts to others. Editing for others and providing feedback forces us to put into words the things we often already know only intuitively, which makes us become more skilled with our own tools and in turn can push a writer to expand their knowledge base far faster and more broadly in a shorter period of time than they'd be able to otherwise. I always recommend to my authors that if they want to improve quickly, the fastest way to do so is to start beta reading and editing for others. By leaving people better than you found them, you'll be better for it, too.

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Make Sure Your 2019 Book Business Plan Includes

Collaboration

By Charmaine Hammond

Becoming and remaining a successful author doesn't happen by accident; it requires planning. One way to make 2019 your best year ever is to do a planning exercise called a Review and Learn. This is a process of reviewing the year that ended and planning what you will take forward and what you will leave behind.

I use this process with my corporate clients when I facilitate their team building sessions, strategic planning, and when evaluating projects and collaborations. And at Raise a Dream, we also encourage our author and entrepreneur clients to use this model for planning because it works.

How to Do a Review and Learn:
Asking these four seemingly simple questions will help you and your team uncover vital information for making decisions and plans about your book business:

- What worked well?
- What was a challenge?
- What did you learn?
- What will you do differently?

Ensure you record your answers to these questions, as each time you begin a new project related to your book, plan a campaign or launch, implement a new system, or build new collaborations, this information will help ensure you don't repeat challenges and mistakes.

Planning for Collaboration:
If your list of "things to do differently" includes boosting your bottom line, one such strategy for authors is building collaborations and relationships with local businesses and corporate sponsors. Sponsorship is a form of marketing where brands, companies, and/or businesses pay to be associated with various events, projects, campaigns, launches, products, etc.

There is also a movement of smaller businesses getting more involved in sponsorship as they see the tremendous benefit of working in collaboration with partners and sponsoring events and projects. Collaborations like this may help introduce sponsors to a new or wider audience, showcase their products and services, and support the community where they live and work.

The first 40 sponsors I worked with to support my book projects were all local and small businesses

(and people that I knew... so, no cold calling). Making local connections positioned me well to begin building relationships with bigger businesses/sponsors and the energy that was created by the sponsors was incredible. My social following increased, events filled up because of their local influence, I sold a lot more books, and together we made a bigger difference in the world. So as you begin to plot out your 2019 book marketing plans, take a few minutes to do the Review and Learn process and explore ways that collaboration and sponsorship can help you get your message and book into the hands of readers around the world.

Charmaine Hammond, CSP, MA, BA is a 4-time bestselling and award winning author and professional speaker who works with authors to build collaborations and partnerships to help raise their dreams through sponsorship. www.RaiseaDream.com

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Your Social Media Profile Photo II

DOES YOUR PHOTO CONVEY A UNIFIED IMAGE ACROSS ALL YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS?

Even with a good recognizable photo showing eye contact with the viewer, if every photo is different in each account, how would that come across to your visitors?

Consider your brand - your distinguished, distinctive characteristics.

CREATE A SINGLE PHOTO ACROSS YOUR ACCOUNTS.
As your visitors arrive they are always greeted with a familiar theme and know the account is yours.

The only reason you should have different photos on each account is if you actively appeal and connect with each account's audience demographics in a unique way. (I.e., a hipper clothing and pose in Instagram; a classic business suit head shot in LinkedIn.)

Other uniform brand considerations are your message, colors, taglines, supporting graphics, etc.

IS IT TIME TO CHOOSE A SINGLE HEAD SHOT THAT BEST PROJECTS THE IMAGE YOU WANT THROUGHOUT YOUR ACCOUNTS?

See you online,
Catherine Saykaly-Stevens | *The Networking Web*



www.TmorganEditing.weebly.com

Taija Morgan | Editor and Author

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YES! THIS IS THE BOOK THAT DOES IT ALL

Many 'How To: Lose Weight, Get Fit, and Live in Peace' books are instructional. Those may be best for assembling simple furniture, but life requires more than a framework of 'do this' and 'do that'.

'Happy Naked' links instruction with real live situations. Real people have real stories. You are a real person. You deserve the opportunity to marry direction with self-identification.

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*Giving constructive
Feedback.
Read it on page 8*

TAJIA MORGAN**PROFESSIONAL EDITOR & HORROR AUTHOR**

While writing my first book, I realized that everyone has a book in them, and everyone has a voice that deserves to be heard. After that, I started my own editing business—T. Morgan Editing Services, a service for writers in all genres (fiction and non-fiction, traditionally published or indie/self-published) who are looking for professional editing to make their writing stand out. I also write deliciously disturbing fiction as contemporary horror author J.J. Reichenbach.



*Find out how to engage
your audience on page
7*

CATHERINE SAYKALY-STEVENS

Catherine is currently the owner of The Networking Web where she specializes in Audience Growth and Fan-Engagement Social Media Consulting and Training for group courses or for one-on-one consulting. She trains authors, entrepreneurs, writers, and speakers how to quickly and easily make a shift in your work to bring audience growth, increased fan-engagement, and expedite reach & influence, resulting in more sales.

**Sandra Fitzpatrick**

Writes the financial Business for Authors and Writers column. She lives in Calgary, AB and in addition to running her own accounting business she is also a published author.

*Is it a Hobby or a
Business on page 22*



*Have an 'At Home Retreat'
See my article on page 26*

BARBORI GARNET

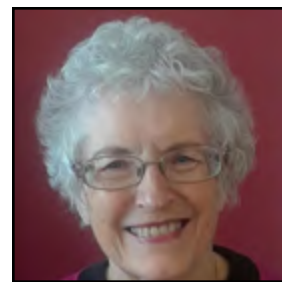
Barbori Garnet is a Creative Arts professional – writer, artist and musician – based in Calgary, AB. She finds lots of inspiration from and enjoys being in her family's fruit, vegetable and perennial garden and likes to spend time in the mountains. Barbori has a BFA in Painting & Drawing and an MA Communications in Public Relations.

**JEAN KAY**

Poet

Jean Kay has written a poem at the start of every morning since Oct 1997. Her books, Morning Light, and Christmas Poetry to Inspire are available on Amazon. Jean is published in newsletters, anthologies, magazines, Coffee News, and she sells framed poems, bookmarks, and prayer cards. Her speciality is creating commissioned poems for birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, retirements, etc. Jean is a professional member of Canadian Authors Association. Jean wrote the music and lyrics for Canada, our Canada, a song to honour Canada's 150th anniversary. <https://poetrytoinspire.com>

*See my poem on page
6*

**BARBARA SHORROCK**

Barbara is a retired Calgary Realtor and avid gardener. She is a member of the Calgary Horticultural Society and has been writing the monthly column for Opal magazine for four years.

**GONE
FISHIN'
...back
next month**



*See my Book Review on
page 23*

STELLA CONSTANCE

Multi-projects content writer and community educator with over 30 years of experience working with different organizations (including educational institutions, governmental and non-profit organizations). Projects span from the fields of education in institutional settings to sustainable community development to technical writing / editing.



*Are you still motivated?
See page 6*

DEE MAGO**DEE HEALTHNFITNESS**

I have been struggling with my perception of what a perfect body is. That is why I created Dee Health n' Fitness. Through my vision and mission, I am committed to creating an impact on the planet, as well as future generations to help and influence you to have an easy, simple and sustainable lifestyle that allows you to go back to the basics and connect with the self, while using exercise as a tool.



**LIBERTY FORREST
INTERNATIONALLY
RENOWNED PSYCHIC AND
MEDIUM, AUTHOR**

*See my article on page
18*

Opal GUEST WRITERS**Harrison Kim**

I worked 30 years at the Forensic Psychiatric Hospital as a teacher, and am writing a memoir on the subject. Though I have been published in literary and other magazines, it was decades ago. I haven't written seriously for many years, and am just beginning again now after retirement.

Looking for a Writer Retreat? See page 24



DON HOWDEN has been a home theatre and home automation expert for the last 20 years.

Serving Calgary and surrounding area
www.smilehometech.com

*Improve Your
Home Theatre on
page 27*

**Charmaine Hammond**

helps authors, speakers, and entrepreneurs raise their dreams, launch their books, and make a bigger difference in the world through collaboration, partnership, and sponsorship. Charmaine is a 4-time best-selling author with five books and is authored in seven others.

*See my article on page
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Sherile Reilly

Sherile writes Contemporary Romance, Women's Fiction, and Historical Paranormal Romance. Sherile's latest book is "The Curse of the Lord of Darkness".



*Joyful Entrepreneurs Tips
on page 14*

5 Tips
To Living a Joyful
Entrepreneurial Life

By Sherile Reilly

Whether you are a writer, author, or entrepreneur owning your own business can be a struggle. The following five tips will make life more enjoyable and easier:

BE KIND TO YOURSELF

There will always be more to do and the work is never-ending. So enough with the negative self-talk! Give yourself credit for your accomplishments.

DO YOUR RESEARCH, BUT GIVE YOURSELF A TIME BUDGET

So many people loose time in research mode and they leave themselves with little time to meet deadlines. This is an unnecessary stress. Set a research limit and stay within it.

INVEST IN YOUR EDUCATION

The time, money, and effort that you use to educate yourself can payoff in enabling you to make smarter decisions. (From taking courses on story structure, I learned how to plan an entire book. When an editor made suggestions for some big changes in my manuscript, I knew how to do them).

When you invest in your education things become easier. Education allows you to make better choices for your business. Jobs can become easier and faster to do.

BALANCE – THIS IS FOR EVERYONE

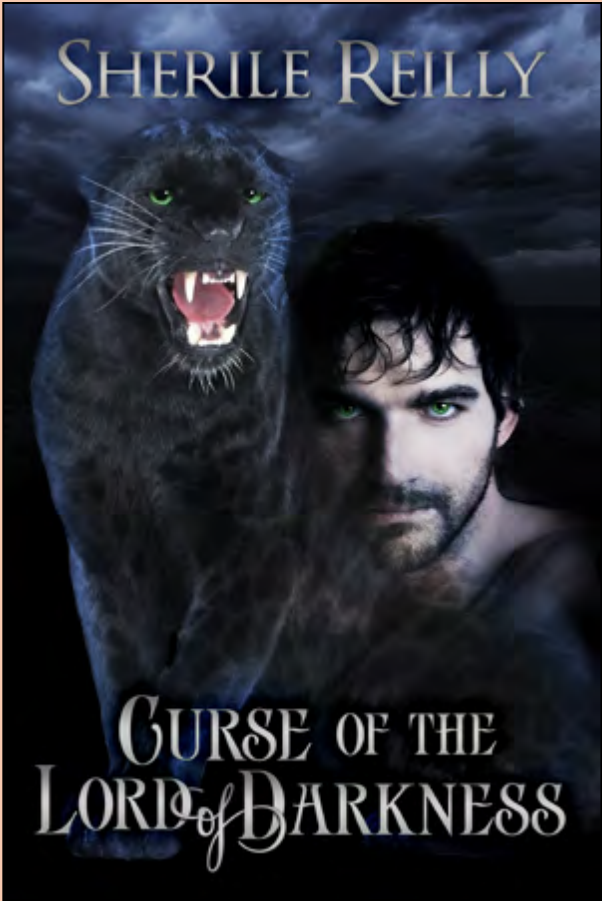
You can't work a 20-hour day and enjoy life. Lack of balance in your life is something that sneaks up on you. You think you're doing fine, but if you haven't been paying attention to your diet, the amount of sleep and exercise you get, it has a way of catching up with you. When scheduling your work week don't forget to include time for a lunch break and exercise.

CELEBRATE YOUR WINS

Celebrate your wins can give you the energy and the motivation to continue your work. Love what you do. Do what you love.

There may be long periods of time when you're not making profit, even struggling to make your business work. Your passion is your motivation to keep going when times are tough.

Enjoy your journey!



In 1895 Connecticut, Alexander Winslow dreads the midnight hour when darkness permeates his soul, spasms of pain slash his body and hours of torment begin. Afflicted by an ancient family curse, Alex endures a nightly transformation and is doomed to stalk the countryside, searching for prey. Seeking refuge from her greedy uncle who wants her killed, New York heiress, Victoria Northcote, flees to Connecticut and seeks refuge with a family friend. However, the friend is dead and Alex, the new master, has his secret to guard and he doesn't welcome Vicki. Alex is intrigued by the captivating woman who is his guest, while Vicki is inexplicably drawn to her mysterious, taciturn host. Together, they seek how to break the curse, while Vicki's deceitful uncle continues to threaten her life.

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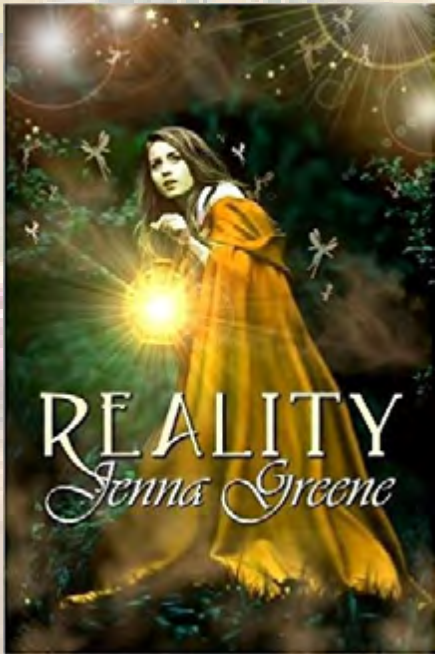
Short fiction, poetry,
and **non-fiction** guaranteed
to **challenge your imagination.**

Join us for adventures
into ***the fantastic.***

Jenna Greene



JENNA GREENE is the author of the acclaimed Young Adult Fantasy series, *Imagine!* She is a middle school teacher, dragon boat coach, enthusiastic dancer, and semi-professional napper. She lives in Lethbridge, Alberta with her husband (Scott), daughter (Olivia), and dog (Thor, dog of thunder).



REALITY

Three young Elementals discover they no longer have full control over their magic, a fact that is both unsettling and could put lives in peril. As a group known as the Coalition rises in power, its anti-magic sentiments spread from the small village of Sorc all the way to the kingdom of Areth. Amidst all this turmoil, Kat decides to take on a new quest, one that will affect Becky's future. Venturing into territory more hazardous than any they've seen before, both girls strive toward a goal they know has little hope of success.



IMAGINE

A fierce wind and a blast of green light during a strange storm causes everything to change for Katharine Bowers and Becky Thatcher. The girls wake up in Oren, an entirely different realm than their earthly city. They meet Enalie, a fading magical presence who sets an incredible destiny before them... then simply disappears. Left alone to fend off creatures that hunt them in the night, they must relay a magical heritage that doesn't make sense, and – if possible – save a world that they know nothing about.



HERITAGE

As Becky tries to adjust to life back on Earth, in Oren, Prince Eston suffers under the deadly effects of broxide poisoning. While Cristox Savu joins with an unlikely friend as he attempts to save his people from extinction, Leda and Jamee, two of the three Naturals, those born with magic, struggle to defend the sanctuary of the Painter's Valley. And, even as they finally face the feelings they have for each other, Kat and Ino must evade the Coalition's clutches as they journey to discover what is affecting magic across Oren--before it is too late and magic, and an even deadlier enemy, destroys Oren and everyone Kat cares about.



REBORN

Those who bear marks on their skin are doomed to a life of slavery. Lexil has seven.

Sold into servitude, Lexil must deal with brutal punishments, back-breaking labor, and the loss of every freedom. When a young child she has befriended faces a horrible fate, she must intervene to protect her, no matter what the risk.

With the help of a boy named Finn, the trio flee into the Wastelands. There, they must evade those who hunt them while trying to survive a barren landscape. Lexil must face challenges she's never imagined existed, all while learning what it means to truly be reborn.

If You Got Into It You Can Get Out Of It

By Liberty Forrest

"Oh, no! How did I get into this? How did this happen?"

Does this sound familiar? I'm sure we've all been there. Perhaps that's where you are right now. And if you are, the good news is that if you got into it, you can get out of it.

Okay, it's true that there may be some aspects of your situation that you cannot change. If, for example, you're sitting in a car that you just wrapped around an enormous tree a moment ago, you can't rewind about ten seconds and take it all back. After all, life isn't like one big shoelace that you can just undo whenever you want.

The point is that you made some choices, the consequences of which have got you all tied up in knots and you don't know where to begin to fix the mess you're facing.

First of all, just for a moment, forget where you are.

Forget the fact that you're seriously in the soup and look ahead. Never mind what's wrong just now; what do you want to be right? Push aside all the bits that are upsetting, distressing, or fill-in-the-blank. Yes, you can. You are in control of your thoughts. You get to choose what goes on in your head. Your life or the situation may feel out of control at the moment but there are some parts you can control. The only constant is change, so hold onto that knowledge and begin by changing your thoughts.

Set all your worries to one side for a moment. Forget where you are, and see where you want to be. Just close your eyes and focus on what you want. Do not think about how you want this or that to stop, because then you're still focusing on what you don't want. Be very clear about this. Focus on what you want.

This is an extremely important difference and it is vital to your ending up where you want to be as quickly as possible.

Once you've got the hang of it, it becomes quite simple to flip negative thoughts into positive ones. Then hold that vision.

As you're looking to the future and seeing where you want to be, don't be thinking, "Thank heaven that situation is over!" - because then you're still focusing on the situation.

To demonstrate my point, if you're rushing to get to an important appointment and you're worried that you're going to be late, don't be thinking, "I don't want to be late!" -

because then you're still focusing on being late and you're more likely to trip yourself up with little things that do, in fact, delay you to the point of being late.

Instead, think about everything going smoothly so that you arrive on time.

Every time you focus on what's wrong, change that image into the vision of what you want and hold onto it for a few moments. Not only will it lift your spirits, it will also keep you focused, feeling positive and moving forward.

As for more immediate help with "how to get out of this," find one thing you can do today to take a step toward the way out. Perhaps you've been so distracted by the problem(s), your house is a bit of a disaster or there's a ton of filing or unopened mail waiting for you. Pick just one thing you think you can do today and do it. Make a dent in that mountain of laundry. Tidy up one room. Brush your hair. Do something. Anything. Just do one thing that begins to move you toward where you want to be. It doesn't have to be huge - but it can be, if you're up for it.

Do at least one of those "somethings" every day. If you can do more than one, go for it. That's great! Every one of them will just make you feel better and give you more energy. And you know why? Because you'll be taking control of your life again.

The more you feel like you're in the driver's seat, the more you'll enjoy looking through the windscreen and seeing that vision for your future.

Each time you see it, it's not going to seem so far off in the distance. Each time you see it, that vision will become a little clearer. And that will only make it easier for you to know exactly which roads to take and where you need to turn in order to get there.

You might well be in a really enormous mess. But you can unwrap the car from that massive tree trunk. You can get the front end repaired or rebuilt.

The tree will heal, and so will you.

Yeah, you got yourself into this. But you can put yourself back behind the wheel and get out of it, too - one mile at a time.

Just see where you want to be. Then hold that vision...

...



Photo credit: Artem Bali

Young Readers



Adam Boczek

Shelby The Cat by Don M.Winn
Book Review by Adam Boczek
Grade 3, St. William School, Calgary

Have you ever been bullied? Have your friends ever dared you to do something bad? If yes, Shelby The Cat by Don M.Winn, can help you choose what to do right.

The story is about a cat named Shelby who is friends with other animals like mice, birds, squirrels, rats, and dogs. He is kind, loving, and caring for all creatures in need. Also, there is a dark side of the story. A group of alley cats, who are lazy, mean, and cruel to others, want to bring Shelby to their negative side.

I was reading this part of the story with worry, because Shelby would get scratched up by angry cats and get seriously hurt. This is an example of bad peer pressure when other people make us do things we do not want to do and are wrong for us. It can happen to anyone in our lives.

This book gave me some answers about what to do in the situations just like this. I really recommend everyone reads such a powerful printed work.



ARE YOU A STUDENT INTERESTED IN WRITING BOOK REVIEWS?
It is easy! Pick your favourite book, write a short review of about 200 words and we will publish it in the next magazine issue. Email Kay at editor@opalpublishing.ca



The Anatomy of a Book

I	D	T	O	O	S	S	A	O	E	N	C	S	T
C	N	E	A	D	I	N	R	E	V	O	C	D	O
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C	H	P	I	I	T	N	T	R	C	T	O	X	N
O	N	D	O	R	C	I	D	B	H	A	C	X	R
N	C	C	E	S	I	A	S	H	G	T	S	R	O
T	O	N	T	I	R	V	T	B	E	T	E	I	S
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N	T	D	T	C	H	V	B	T	O	C	O	S	D
T	B	X	S	C	R	H	S	R	C	N	C	E	D
S	C	O	P	Y	R	I	G	H	T	T	R	R	T
D	P	N	C	H	A	P	T	E	R	S	A	S	R
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O	I	N	D	E	X	G	C	T	E	E	S	H	S

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Is it a HOBBY or a BUSINESS?

By Sandra Fitzpatrick

Many people wonder when they should start to declare their creative hobby as a business and what the difference is.

A hobby is an activity that you don't expect to earn more than the cost of your materials.

A business is an activity that you expect to earn income in excess of any costs.

It's reasonable to start as a hobby. Find out if you enjoy that creative endeavour before you jump into the idea of a business. Nonetheless, keep track of your expenses and any income. That way you won't be caught off guard when you realise in January that you made a lot of money last year and now you don't have any receipts for what you bought.

Your records can consist of an envelope full of receipts. Use a receipt book to acknowledge sales or have invoices (yes, paperwork is a thing.) Even a notebook or spreadsheet where you list sales and what you bought can make your life easier come tax time.

Some questions I've been asked over the years:

Do I have to charge GST from the start?

No. When your income from sales/services is >\$30,000 per year from Canadian sources, then you have to start charging GST. Choose the yearly payment option.

What about my day job?

You can have a business and a day job. Or several businesses. Income or losses from a business will affect your taxable income. You should set aside money from income to pay the resulting taxes, GST, and CPP (which is now 10.5% in 2019).

What receipts should I keep and for how long?

Receipts from the store are best. The CRA has no idea what you bought if all you have is your credit card transaction list or your debit transactions. Receipts show what you bought, when and where. If you are buying some personal and some business items at the same time, please pay separately.

Meals are for meetings or in attendance at an event. They aren't every time you go on date night or stop for a snack or coffee. Note on the back of the receipt who was with you and what you talked about or did.

You should keep receipts and relevant info for seven (7) years after that year. 2019 information should be kept until 2027. You can keep it in physical or digital form, but be sure you store digital files in various methods. Realising that your receipts (or early stories/novels) are on a hard-shell floppy and you have no way to access it is a bad day. (I know this feeling and I now have a solution.)

I'm going on holiday and also plan to do business related things.

Vacations are wonderful. If you can partly justify some of that time as a business expense, great! Document the business activity. Receipts from museums, or from your conference booking, along with meals, travel expenses and so on. If you are presenting at an event, keep anything that shows your involvement.

Divide business days by the total time away. Pro-rate the big expenses (travel and hotel), and claim the direct costs of the business part of your time away. You can't claim all of the family's meals unless they are working for your business.

Where can I get the business tax forms? My personal tax package doesn't have them!

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/forms-publications/forms/t2125.html>

Is there a different filing date for business people?

People claiming business income don't have to have their return in until June, but any taxes or GST owing are due on April 30th.

Can I move income to my partner or (at least teenaged) child, since they don't make much money?

They must have a role in your business or be part owner of your corporation (dividends). The CRA gets cranky without paperwork, so submit invoices and pay through the business account. They must claim the income, btw. The per hour rate should be reasonable: Paying a teen \$50/hour to do 20 hours of filing a week will raise red flags. Don't be greedy.

As always, consult experts if you have questions.

Sandra Fitzpatrick
Fitzpatrick Financial Services

BOOKS

Skeletons in My Closet: Life Lessons from a Detective

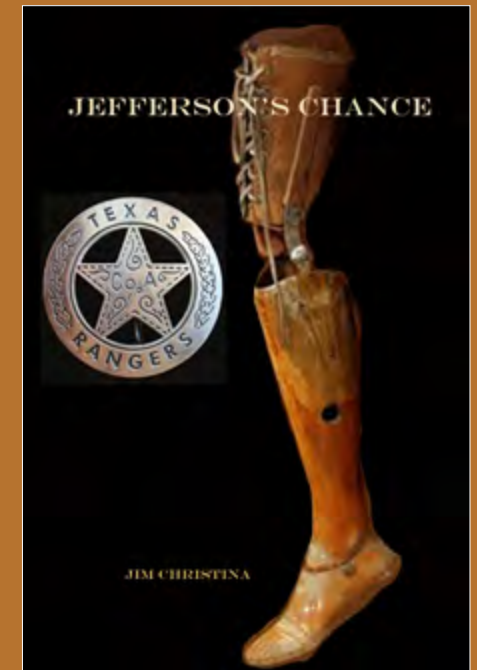
By Dave Sweet with Sarah Green

Book Review by Stella Constance

Dave Sweet with Sarah Graham write a compelling book, *Skeletons in My Closet: Life Lessons from a Detective*, that looks at the interactive relationships between the public and the police force in being able to prevent or solve crimes. Sweet brings his experience and observations having worked with a large western Canadian police service as an active-duty veteran homicide detective. At the same time, Graham brings her knowledge of facilitating for distinctly different social groups to the book.

Sweet delves into how community structures and individual choices affect human behavior in preventing, helping, or hindering criminal acts. He looks at the root of people's choices, not just in their final act, but also the smaller events (factors) that lead up to the act itself. And as such, Sweet and Graham create morals or offer wisdom statements to guide readers on creating healthier life choices. In addition, Sweet also looks at some of the psychology/sociology behind people's behavior, such as groupthink, in helping their readers understand better the apathy behind people not reporting crimes (versus they're doing so, if they were alone), or its role in influencing people to perform the crime itself (where they would not have done so, if they were alone). Sweet's storytelling of various true crimes often illustrates patterned community perceptions and behaviors.

Therefore, the book's content becomes an excellent source for providing social indicators (trending signs) for urban planners, law enforcement, social work, educators, and active citizens, in their work to provide safer urban environments. Hence, *Skeletons in My Closet* is an excellent read for community development specialists and active community members, who wish to expand their current knowledge, to create safer and healthier experiences in their neighborhoods and communities at large.



Jim Christina was born into an Air Force Family in 1949.

For years a character had been rolling around in his mind, and in 2008, the character became the Hunter and the series was born. They are stories of an aging man, Hunter, and his protégé in Arizona in the last half of the nineteenth century.

The stories are gritty, raw and accurate in their depiction of the lives and times of the main characters.

"If you are looking for Louis Lamour, you won't find him here. If you are looking for a walloping good story, turn the pages and start reading."

Jefferson's Chance,
by Jim Christina
AN EPIC STAND OF BRAVERY,
PERSEVERANCE AND A
WILLINGNESS TO DIE FOR WHAT
THEY BELIEVE.



MYSTIC SATURNA ISLAND

by Harrison Kim



In Shakespeare's "The Tempest" Prospero, the Wizard, and his daughter Miranda are stranded on an island paradise. Saturna Island would be a perfect place to present the play, high up on Mt. Warburton Pike, the 337-meter mountain rising straight up from the sea. It is easy to imagine Prospero casting his spells out to the waters. This is a truly mystic place, much of it part of the new Gulf Islands National Park.

Wild goats navigating spectacular bluffs, fog swirling round historic lighthouses, vistas of turquoise blue seas and shadowy islands in the sunset, as far as the eye can see...just a few of the dreamy sights on this small but naturally diverse island. For a writer, it's a great place to find quiet, view wildlife, let hours and days flow by while you write and hike and bicycle. There's a restaurant, a store, and several resorts, and only about three hundred and eighty full time residents. They're extremely friendly; during the "Tour des Isles," a June Gulf Islands trip-a-thon, the tour guide showed my wife and I around the Saturna. This "Tour des Isles" is a must for a retreat; you can meet locals, imbibe samples at wineries, and take in musical events.

East Point Park, at the far northeast of the island, is a great place for whale watching. At Winter Cove, a peaceful boat harbour, a walker can follow a trail to view and hear tidal currents roar between Saturna and Samuel Island, and at Narvaez Bay or the Pike a hiker can gaze out over the Gulf and San Juan islands system. There's a good trail from the high point of the Pike right through to Narvaez Bay, through varied landscapes ranging from grasslands and firs



to rainforest to marshy streams lined with ferns and skunk cabbage.

I camped on Warburton Pike many times, before it became part of Gulf Islands National Park. Now, you can't camp up on the Pike, but you can meditate there as summer light follows the sun's sky circle, dawn til dusk. Narvaez Bay has a federal government campsite, for those who like to rough it. There are also a number of good B and B's on the island, such as Saturna Lodge and Breezy Bay, most open three seasons of the year.

It has great Pacific Coast ambiance: the giant Douglas firs and the eagles, ravens, and wild goats, and even apple trees on the slopes. Often, when I camped, the goats would be milling about the tent, most active at dawn, just as the sun rose up over the hill behind me. I suppose in "Tempest" terms the feral goats could be considered the island Calibans, just as the eagles and the hummingbirds could be the Ariels.

There are pebble beaches at East Point, an area of eroded sandstone rock formations, and at Russell Reef on the north coastline many intertidal pools where little crabs and colorful sea anemones dwell. At Taylor Point you'll find stands of old growth trees, and a historic quarry where sandstone was taken to build the Legislative Buildings in Victoria. You'll have to get there by kayak.... there's much excellent kayaking around Saturna. You can paddle out to Tumbo Island, an ecologically protected area with sandy, driftwood-covered bays, a great place for beachcombers. Seals, orcas, and other wildlife swim by. The birdwatcher may see oystercatchers, pacific wrens, hooded mergansers, buffleheads, and more.

For the writer, the quiet of Saturna might be the most inspiring thing. When you're in quiet, all sorts of sounds slowly become apparent, sounds that you did not hear before: birds calling, deer munching, the movement of a cricket in the grass. When there is quiet, there is room to think, there are few distractions, and if you are by the sea at Saturna, there's the rhythm of the waves to move you into reverie and new perception. And at night, of course, all the stars, casting sparkles over the dark sea and the shadowed, fir covered island.

Ferries to Saturna Island leave Tsawassen Terminal on the Mainland once a day, and Swartz Bay on Vancouver Island at least twice per day, depending on the season.

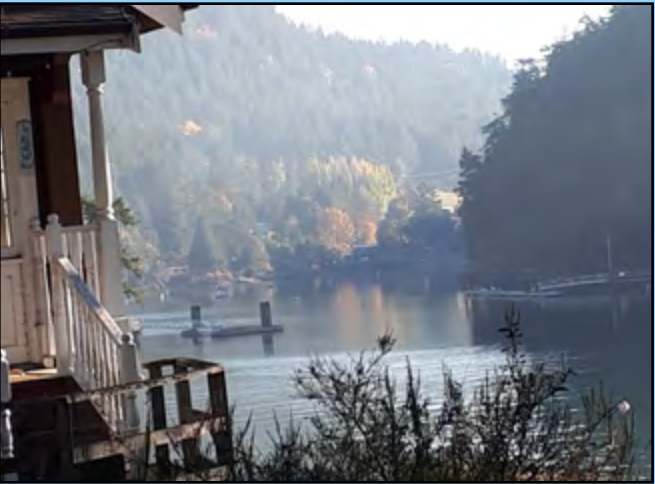


Photo credits: Harrison Kim
Saturna Island, BC



The Writing Retreat at Home

by Barbori Garnet

In the previous five issues (October 2018 to February 2019) of *Opal Writers' Magazine*, I have written about self-directed writing retreat places located in southern Alberta. But what if you do not have the time, funds, etc., to go away on a self-directed writing retreat? The next best solution is to treat yourself to a retreat at home. So, how do you make that happen?

SCHEDULE IT IN YOUR CALENDAR

First, start by booking time off in your calendar so that you can see that you have reserved it for writing. Then, remove as many distractions as possible. Whether you have time for a retreat which is three hours or three days long, minimizing or taking away distractions—moving your laptop away from the tv, letting the phone go to the answering machine, preparing meals and snacks ahead of time—will help you focus and concentrate to the greatest degree possible on your writing.

FIND YOUR SPACE

Next, set up a writing space where there will not be too many interruptions or, at the very least, where you can leave your work out and come back to it. Nothing is worse than having to always put everything away and then take it all out again. Having a dedicated writing area does not require much space. All that is needed is the right amount of room where you can have your writing tools in place.

KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE

Before starting your at-home writing retreat, take the time to set some goals and outcomes. Knowing what it is that you want to accomplish during your writing time can assist in keeping you on track and focused in your work. Plus, at the end of your retreat, you will be able to look back and see how much progress you made which should encourage you to keep going.

MAKE YOUR SPACE YOUR ZEN

Depending on what inspires you, you may also like to have plants, music, natural light, motivational quotes, or other items included in your writing space to make it as easy as possible to keep persevering even when it seems difficult. Your writing area should be a place you look forward to being in and cannot wait to spend time in.

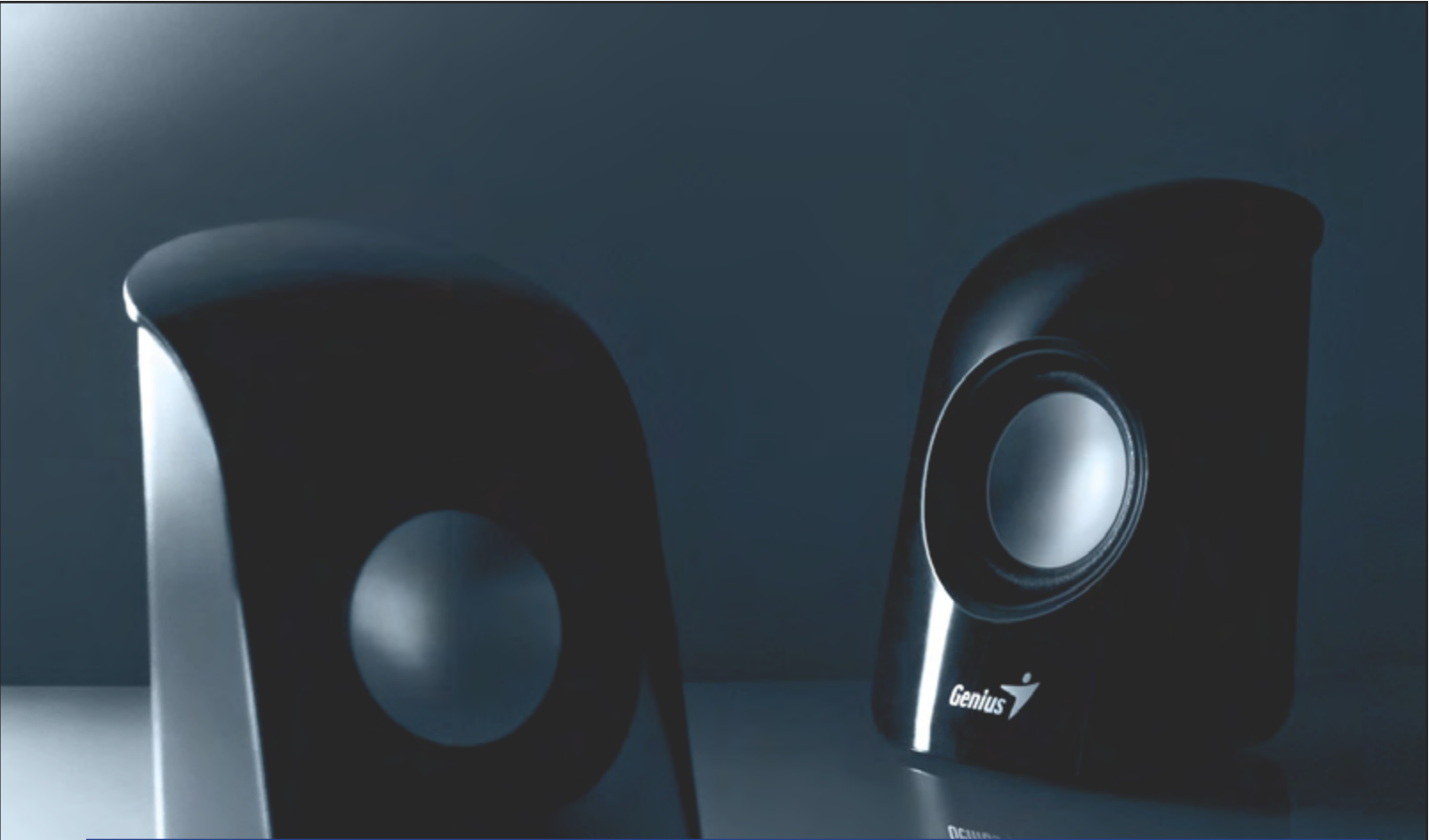
IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT WORK

And last, but not least, do not forget to take breaks. If you were away at a retreat, you would at least take breaks for meals. For your at-home retreat, set aside the same time you would for meals and perhaps even going on a walk around your neighborhood. Taking breaks can help with providing fresh, new ideas and energy for your writing. Just make sure not to get sidetracked during your break times by starting to tackle the pile of laundry, or sort mail.

By taking a few steps ahead of time to get ready and be prepared, a self-directed writing retreat at home might just be the solution and answer for you. Similar to going away on a retreat, an at-home retreat will provide you with the time and focus needed to complete writing projects and goals.



...



Three Ways to Improve the Sound Quality in Your Media Room

By Don Howden

Generally, people have no idea that there are ways to improve the sound in their media rooms (TV room or home theatre room) without upgrading or expanding their audio equipment setup.

At a minimum, the acoustical properties of your room will represent fifty percent (50%) of the total sound quality of a media room setup. You can have the most expensive high performance speakers in an acoustically challenged room and still get a 'meh' sound.

Room acoustics is a complicated subject, but there are three simple tips that will help you with most media room setups.

1 HARD SURFACES

If your room has many hard surfaces (i.e. tile / hardwood floor, glass or mirrors, bare walls) then add some sound absorption materials to the room. This could mean adding or thickening drapes for your window coverings, a heavier throw rug between the television and the main seating position, softer / fabric art pieces in the room, adding tapestries or other soft wall art, different furniture (cloth covered as opposed to leather), bookshelves filled with books.

You will notice a big reduction of sound reflections in your room. Sound reflections muddy or muffle the sound quality particularly in the dialog range. So, if you notice that dialog in your watching is particularly hard to hear without cranking up the volume, some additional sound absorption materials.

2 TOWER / BOOKSHELF SPEAKERS

Speakers are often placed too tight to a wall either behind or beside the speaker. Most speakers need a bit of breathing room so that the adjacent wall doesn't influence the speaker's sound quality. A good rule of thumb is to keep the speaker a minimum of 12" from back wall and 18" to a side wall.

3 CORNER SETUPS

My simple advice is to try your best to avoid it. It is very hard to produce good stereo imaging from a simple two speaker corner television setup let alone trying to create any sort of proper surround setup.

Go ahead and try these three simple tips in your media room to increase your sound quality. Sound is a significant part of any viewing experience whether it watching a hockey game or your favorite superhero movie series.

Happy Viewing!

...

EVENTS

Wordfest - Calgary

February & March 2019

Wordfest Presents Eileen Myles



Join us for an evening with renowned poet, novelist, public talker, and journalist, Eileen Myles. They will be presenting their latest poetry book called, *Evolution*, which has been called, "Chicken soup for the queer soul" by Ashley Tomaszewski of the Literati Bookstore. They will also be presenting their book, *Afterglow: A Dog Memoir*, about their relationship with their pit bull named Rosie. This event includes an on-stage interview and audience Q&A, followed by a book signing. Cash bar available.

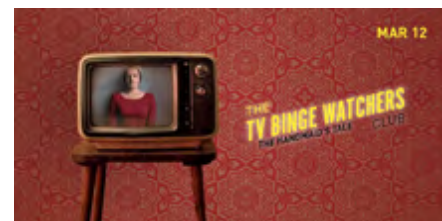
Date/Time: March 6th @ 7 PM - 8:30 PM

Location: DJD Dance Centre, 111 12 Ave SE

Link: <https://wordfest.com/session/wordfest-presents-eileen-myles/>

Cost: \$20.00

TV Binge-Watchers Club: The Handmaids Tale



Finally, a "book" club for people who don't only read books – and are obsessed with episodic television. We know you're dying to talk about your favourite on-demand series, so we've created a monthly opportunity to geek out with your fellow small-screen aficionados. Next up is *The Handmaid's Tale* (a month ahead of the release of the third season). Hosted by Shelley Youngblut, Wordfest's CEO & Creative Ringleader. Cash bar available.

Date/Time: March 12th @ 7PM - 8PM

Location: Memorial Park Library, 2nd Floor, 1221 2nd Street SW

Link: <https://wordfest.com/session/the-tv-binge-watchers-club-the-handmaids-tale/>

Cost: \$10.00

We've Read This Book Club



Have you vowed to wean yourself off Netflix and get some serious reading done this winter – then have a great chat about what you've read with an equally engaged group of book lovers?

Come prepared to delve into Tommy Orange's national bestseller, *There*. The book has been called, "A gripping deep dive into urban indigenous community in California: an astonishing literary debut!" by Margaret Atwood and a "Sweeping and subtle...pure soaring beauty" by Colm Toibin of *The New York Times*.

This event is hosted by blogger and book reviewer Anne Logan of ivereadthis.com, and is part of Wordfest's monthly book club series on the top floor of Memorial Park Library.

Date/Time: March 27th @ 7PM - 8PM
Location: Memorial Park Library, 2nd Floor, 1221 2nd Street SW

Link: <https://wordfest.com/session/weve-read-this-book-club-4/>

Cost: \$10.00

Wordfest Presents Ann Hui



Don't miss this tantalizing event with Ann Hui, *The Globe* and *Mail's* national food reporter. Part

memoir, part history and part road trip, *Chop Suey Nation* is the sweet and sour story of immigration told through the kitchens of small-town Canadian Chinese restaurants, including Calgary's iconic Silver Dragon. Calgary's beloved Julie Van Rosendaal will be doing the on-stage interview, followed by an audience Q&A and book signing. This event will leave you feeling hungry.

Ann-Hui

Date/Time: March 25th @ 7PM-8:30PM

Location: Patricia A. Whelan Performance Hall, New Central Library 800 3 Street SE

Link: <https://wordfest.com/session/wordfest-present-ann-hui-julie-van-rosendaal/>

Cost: \$15

Wordfest presents Jennifer Robson



The perfect night out for fans of *The Crown*: don't miss best-selling author Jennifer Robson as she presents her new novel about one of the most famous dresses of the 20th Century — *Queen Elizabeth's wedding gown* — and the fascinating women who made it. In the tradition of something old and something new, you're invited to come wearing attire from your special day. Yes, it's a rare opportunity to dust off your own wedding dress, bridesmaid dress or tux. Hosted by Jenny Howe of CBC Radio's *Homestretch*, this event includes an on-stage interview and audience Q&A, followed by a book signing. Cash bar available. And yes, Jenny and the Wordfest staff are all going to dress bridal (or groom-al) for this special occasion!

Date/Time: April 2nd @ 7 PM - 8:30 PM

Location: Memorial Park Library, 2nd Floor, 1221 2nd Street SW

Link: <https://wordfest.com/session/wordfest-presents-jennifer-robson/>

Cost: \$15.00



WEEKLY SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL MARKETING TIPS

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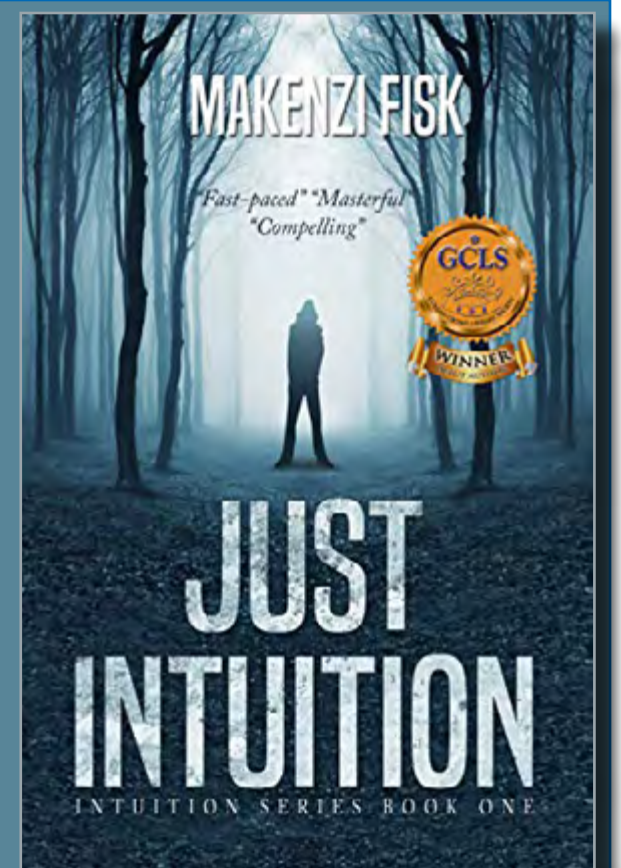
BUSY PROFESSIONALS DON'T HAVE TIME TO WASTE TRYING THINGS THAT DON'T WORK.

A fiery blast in a northern Minnesota town takes the life of an elderly woman. Was it really an accident, or was it murder? Officer Erin Ericsson wants to find out, and she's not going to be deterred by anyone, especially not the investigating detective. One thing is for sure, someone in the close-knit town likes fire, and no one is safe.

Erin's girlfriend Allie has a secret, a gift she's been hiding all her life, but it may be their only way. Can Erin convince her to face her nightmares and unmask the killer before it's too late. Together they use their skill, and a bit of intuition, to solve an escalating series of deadly crimes. Their search leads them through unforgiving back woods and face-to-face with evil.

"Fast-paced" "Masterful" "Compelling"

Makenzi Fisk was awarded 2015 Debut Author for *Just Intuition* by the Golden Crown Literary Society. *Just Intuition* was also a Finalist in the Mystery/Thriller category for GCLS and Rainbow Awards.



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September/October

Fall

November/December

Winter



March 6, 2019

Opal Writers' Magazine

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Informs and educates writers and authors about writing, publishing, marketing, illustration and graphic design. Maximum word length 1000 words.

Sub-feature Article

Includes *Writer Retreats, Social Media, Business*
Maximum word length 1000 words.

Feature and sub-feature articles are informative, educational, or entertaining.

An article should not be promotional and does not promote any product, service, or brand. Articles should be no longer than 1000 words in length. We will often provide a stock photo to accompany the article if one is not provided.

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Opal Writers' Magazine is a wonderful platform to hone your writing skills and gain some recognition for your writing and your expertise. We welcome all queries. We are fast to respond to you and will never leave you wondering if anyone actually works here. Our loyal writers usually continue to write for the magazine for a year or more before moving on - some have never left.

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