

# IQIwrite

the newsletter of the quebec writers' federation

February 2007 vol<sup>9</sup> no<sup>2</sup>

## KIDLIT: HOT SUPPORT: NOT

by Lori Weber



Canada is a country rich in children's literature. In the young adult (YA) genre, the list of talented writers is long and the genre itself is hot. In the children's market, picture books are notoriously difficult to publish; therefore, only exceptional manuscripts break through.

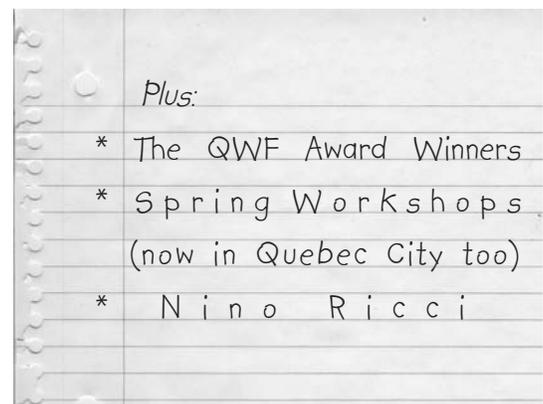
Here in Quebec, a new group of English writers, many of us members of the QWF, is having success in both the YA and children's markets. Gaining recognition within Quebec, however, is not easy.

According to Westmount-based writer Anne Renaud, "Very little is done to promote the work of English children's authors in Quebec. Most Canadian provinces have excellent reading programs and awards for children's literature, such as the Silver Birch in Ontario, the Hackmatack in the Maritimes, the Red Cedar in British-Columbia, etc. No such programs exist in Quebec." Renaud's first children's book, *A Bloom of Friendship: The Story of the Canadian Tulip Festival* (2004), was nominated for all three of these prestigious awards.

Jane Barclay of Pointe-Claire concurs. "I think an awards program would help to highlight the quality books that English Quebec writers and illustrators are creating." Barclay's three picture books (*How Cold Was It?*, 1999, *Going on a Journey to the Sea*, 2002 and *How Hot Was It?*, 2003) were all nominated for major awards, including the prestigious Mr. Christie Book Award.

"My name is better known in Ontario," Barclay continues, "because my books have been short-listed for awards that receive little recognition in Quebec."

Media coverage in Quebec is also a challenge. Only one of Barclay's books was reviewed by *The Gazette*, while Renaud's successful book was



**You've heard it before: Because children's lit is short, it's easy. "Nothing could be further from the truth," says Anne Renaud.**

*continued on page 7...*

# [Q]write

the newsletter of the quebec writers' federation

February 2007 vol<sup>9</sup> no<sup>2</sup>

**editor:** Byron Rempel

**contributors:** Monique Dykstra, Lori Weber,  
Lori Schubert

**printing:** Compo Art inc.

ISSN: 1499-7797

ISBN/ISSN 1195-0323

La Quebec Writers' Federation remercie le Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, et le Conseil des arts de Montréal, de leur appui financier. The QWF also thanks the Canada Council for the Arts and Canadian Heritage for their financial support, as well as QWF members for their generosity.

Conseil des arts  
et des lettres

Québec

CONSEIL DES ARTS  
DE MONTRÉAL

50



Canada Council  
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts  
du Canada



Canadian Patrimoine  
Heritage canadien

For submissions, more copies of QWrite  
or information about QWF:

(514) 933.0878

admin@qwf.org

1200 Atwater Avenue, suite 3

Montreal, Quebec H3Z 1X4

www.qwf.org

#### **Executive Director:**

Lori Schubert

#### **QWF Board of Directors**

##### **Executive:**

Peter Dubé, Acting President

Helena Lamed, Treasurer

Ami Sands Brodoff, Secretary

Ian Ferrier, Past President

##### **Directors:**

Marianne Ackerman, John Ayles,

Bryan Demchinsky,

Jon Paul Fiorentino, Linda Leith,

Allan Mass, Louis Rastelli,

Guy Rodgers, Derek Webster,

Merrily Weisbord



## Vive le Québec livre!

Don't separate yourself from all the special advantages of being a QWF member in 2007 — renew your membership dues today. Otherwise, you'll miss out on a distinct advantage over other writers, including a monthly e-newsletter providing tons of opportunities for contests, calls for submissions and public

events, plus this swank quarterly newsletter, QWrite. Add to that an ever-growing list of benefits and discounts available to QWF members, and it should be easy to see that as a QWF member you'll always have special status.

Just look for the yellow membership form enclosed with this issue. A cheque for \$20 will keep you a member of our distinct society. And a cheque with a little something extra for the Quebec Writers' Federation will help us continue the battle for recognition of our writers throughout Canada (you'll also get a tax deduction). Merci! ☒

## member news

**MaryAnn Hayatian** has recently published two books. Set in Montreal, *Love is Blind, but the Neighbours Ain't*, is a novella about university and career life in the 1970s. Her other book, *Eden Anna and the Secret Closet*, is a children's story about a 4-year-old girl and her curious imagination. Her books are available in local and online bookstores.

Following her "amazing QWF mentorship with **Maxianne Berger**" in 2005-06, **Elena Johnson** has had numerous poems published, including: a poem in Issue 2 of *carte blanche*; a poem in *Carve*, Spring 2006; a poem in *GUSTS*, Spring/Summer 2006; and three poems in *GUSTS*, Fall/Winter 2006. She is looking forward to doing two readings in Montreal this February.

*The Boomers*, the latest chapbook of *The Amsel Chronicles* from **Philip Amsel**, relates the history of a family from World War Two to the present, in a variety of literary forms.

**Michael Varga** will see his first fiction in print with the upcoming publication of the story "The Crossing" in the *Dalhousie Review*, Spring 2007. ☒



## QWF hires new administrative assistant

### INTRODUCING JULIA KATER

QWF is delighted to have hired Julia Kater, graphic designer and folk-roots musician, as its new part-time administrative assistant. Julia works Tuesdays and Fridays. Her background as an independent artist in Montreal has made her appreciate the importance of organizations like QWF, which foster artistic development and community growth. She's particularly excited about the opportunity to work on the events, programs and activities that encourage emerging writers to interact with established ones, and that create cultural forums where audiences and writers are brought together. ☒

The Art Services Kit makes life easier

## ASK for you

Those artists and their acronyms

ELAN is pleased to announce the launching of the Arts Services Kit (ASK), a FREE new tool on its website for artists and arts service providers. ASK is funded by Canadian Heritage and goes right to the heart of why ELAN was created—to share resources and contacts between artists. ASK provides a listing of arts organizations, a funding database, and tip sheets on applying for grants. The central component is a directory of service providers in Quebec. The directory ranges from listings of proofreaders/editors, rehearsal space rentals, relaxation therapists, to accountants who are sensitive to the challenges faced by freelance artists. Whether you are an arts service provider who would like to sign up to list your service, or an artist looking for a service or information on training/professional development and funding, ASK is for you!

<http://www.quebec-elan.org/en/ask/>

Membership with ELAN is free to Quebec artists and provides information on events, frequent updates about arts in Quebec, advocacy, and other items of interest to artists of all disciplines. If you are interested in becoming a member, sign up today. Go to our <http://www.quebec-elan.org> or call ELAN directly: 514.935.3312. ☒

**ELAN**  
ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTS NETWORK



Canadian Writers' Foundation turns 75

## Rescuing writers since 1931

Our greatest writers can still live in poverty

The Canadian Writers' Foundation, Canada's premier organization to assist Canadian writers in need, marks its 75th anniversary this year. Since its inception in 1931, the Foundation has provided approximately \$1.5 million to more than 70 writers.

Over the years, the CWF has paid annual stipends to writers such as Alfred Desrochers, Norman Levine, Dorothy Livesay and E.J. Pratt. These are some of Canada's greatest writers, yet, due to illness and old age, they were unable to sustain themselves with the bare necessities of life in their later years.

Celebrated writer June Callwood states: "The Canadian Writers' Foundation, to my certain knowledge, has been helping writers through poignant difficulties for decades. I asked for help a few years ago for a distinguished writer who was having a bad time. There was an investigation, there was a quick decision, and the person was rescued from the humiliation of absolute poverty. This organization deserves the help and gratitude of us all."

The initial campaign for the CWF was spearheaded by Pelham Edgar, head of the Department of English at Victoria College (as it was then known) at the University of Toronto. He travelled across the country in July 1931 to fundraise and to set up regional committees who would recommend eligible writers. Funding was also provided by the federal government. The first beneficiary of the Foundation was Sir Charles G.D. Roberts. When government funding ceased in 1973, the Foundation was forced to rely solely on contributions from private sources. Raymond Hull, co-author of *The Peter Principle*, was an important benefactor. Using interest from its capital investments, the Foundation continues to assist needy writers.

The Foundation's volunteer board is comprised mainly of writers from across the country and is currently chaired by Gilles Frappier, former CEO of the Ottawa Public Library.

For more information on the Canadian Writers' Foundation, or to find out how you can support its work, please contact:

Suzanne Williams

Executive Secretary

Phone: (613) 256-6937

Fax: (613) 256-5457

E-mail: [info@canadianwritersfoundation.org](mailto:info@canadianwritersfoundation.org)

Website: [www.canadianwritersfoundation.org](http://www.canadianwritersfoundation.org) ☒

On November 22, 2006, the Quebec Writers' Federation held its annual Awards Gala at the Lion d'Or in Montreal. This year's event was hosted by Anne Lagacé Dowson, of CBC's "Radio Noon." Five literary prizes and a Community Award were presented.

## Translation Prize (\$2000)

Sponsored by Pierre Lapointe

**Lori Saint-Martin et Paul Gagné**

*La clameur des ténèbres*

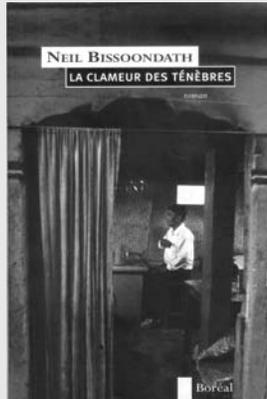
Éditions du Boréal

a translation of

*The Unyielding Clamour of the Night*

by Neil Bissoondath

Cormorant Books



## Mavis Gallant Prize for Non-fiction (\$2000)

Sponsored by Champlain, Dawson, Heritage, John Abbott, and Vanier Colleges

**Sherry Simon**

*Translating Montreal:*

*Episodes in the Life of a Divided City*

McGill-Queen's University Press



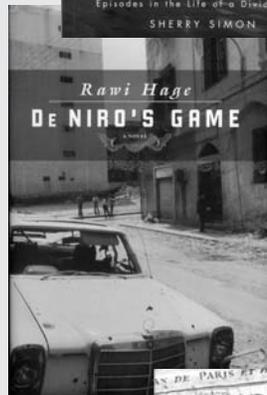
## McAuslan First Book Prize (\$2000)

Sponsored by McAuslan Brewing Inc.

**Rawi Hage**

*De Niro's Game*

House of Anansi Press



## A.M. Klein Prize for Poetry (\$2000)

Sponsored in memory of Sydney Weisbord

**Susan Elmslie**

*I, Nadja, and Other Poems*

Brick Books



## Paragraphe Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction (\$2000)

Sponsored by Paragraphe Bookstore

**Rawi Hage**

*De Niro's Game*

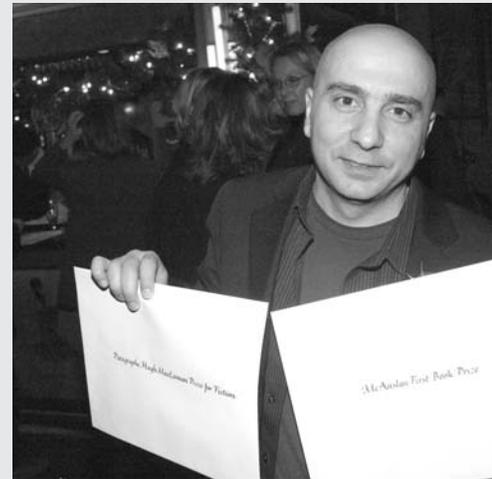
House of Anansi Press



## Community Award

**Julie Keith**

# The 2006 Awards



Photos: copyright Studio Iris  
for more photos and coverage, go to [qwf.org](http://qwf.org).

# 6 QWF wards



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP  
LEFT: Scene-setting  
**Jazz-a-licious** was  
back at this year's  
awards to put everyone  
in a festive state of

mind; they played to a **full**  
**house** at the Lion d'or cabaret.

The ebullient **Sherry Simon**,  
winner of the Mavis Gallant  
Prize for Non-Fiction, smiles  
beatifically down on the gather-

ing. CBC radio host **Anne  
Lagacé Dowson**, self-professed  
lover of books and friend of  
writers, led the crowd through a  
*vedette*-studded night; some of  
them appeared on the cover of  
the **program**. Translation Prize  
sponsor **Pierre Lapointe** con-

gratulates **Lori Saint-Martin**  
and husband **Paul Gagné** for their  
French distillation of Neil  
Bissoondath's *The Unyielding Clamour of  
the Night* (itself a prize-winner last  
year). And **Rawi Hage**, nominated for  
*De Niro's Game* in just about every liter-  
ary circle this year, took home two  
awards, one for first book and one for  
fiction. Just call him Rawi Two Two.

☒



**WANT TO WIN AN  
AWARD YOURSELF?  
START WITH A QWF  
WORKSHOP**

Now in Quebec City too!

For the first time ever, QWF is offering two  
of its acclaimed workshops off-site this spring.  
*Monologue Boot Camp: Write It! Develop It! Deliver It!*  
is being held in two downtown Montreal venues  
in collaboration with the Quebec Drama  
Federation. During an intensive 16 hours over the  
course of one week, participants will write, devel-  
op and present their own five-minute monologues  
under the guidance of director/playwright/dra-  
maturge **Bryden MacDonald**.

And we're especially pleased to be presenting  
*Word/Craft: An Introduction to Poetry Writing and  
Practice* at the Morrin Centre in Quebec City. This  
workshop will be led by **Aurian Haller**, a poet,  
musician and academic who has published poetry,  
reviews and articles in journals and anthologies in  
Ireland, Australia, the United States and Canada.  
His book, *A Dream of Sulphur*, was released in  
2000 by McGill-Queen's University Press.

We're also importing a couple of bigwigs with  
valuable information for emerging and established  
writers. **Marian Dingman Hebb** will tell you  
everything you need to know about *Copyright and  
Other Scary Things* on May 5, and **Suzanne  
Brandreth**, of Toronto's famed Cooke Agency,  
presents a day-long seminar on March 24 called  
*Agents and Authors: Working Together*.

For descriptions of these and eight other fab-  
ulous spring workshops, and bios of the work-  
shop leaders (including **Anita Rau Badami**,  
**Susan Elmslie**, **Jon Paul Fiorentino**, **Muriel  
Gold**, **Taras Grescoe**, **David Homel**, **Peter  
McFarlane** and **Leo Saint-Pierre**), go to  
[www.qwf.org/workshops](http://www.qwf.org/workshops).

Remember, QWF workshops fill up fast, so  
don't delay. ☒

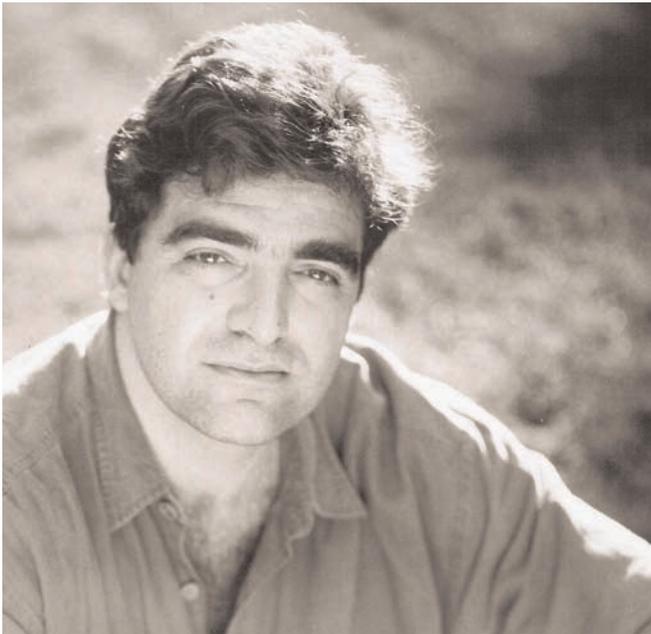
**SEE PAGE EIGHT FOR COMPLETE  
WORKSHOP SCHEDULE**

Writers Out Loud special collaboration

## Lives and Testament of Nino Ricci

The focus is on Montreal

We kick off our Writers Out Loud series this year with a special collaboration with the Lower Canada College Speakers' Series on February 15, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. Best-selling author Nino Ricci will read from his novel in progress, which is set in Montreal, and will be interviewed by Montreal's most book-loving radio host, Anne Lagacé Dowson. The event takes place at the Chamandy Auditorium at Lower Canada College, 4099 Royal Avenue. Tickets are \$12, and can be purchased in advance at LCC's main office (4090 Royal Avenue), online at [www.lcc.ca](http://www.lcc.ca), or at the door.



Nino Ricci's first novel, the best-selling *Lives of the Saints*, garnered international acclaim, appearing in over a dozen countries and winning a host of awards, including, in Canada, the Governor General's Award for Fiction and the *Books in Canada* First Novel Award, and in England, the Betty Trask Award and the Winifred Holtby Prize. It was followed by *In A Glass House* and *Where She Has Gone*, which completed the trilogy that *Lives of the Saints* began. *Where She Has Gone* was shortlisted for the Giller Prize for Fiction. The *Lives of the Saints* trilogy was adapted for a miniseries starring Sophia Loren, Fabrizio Filippo, Nick Mancuso, Sabrina Ferilli, and Kris Kristofferson.

Born in Leamington, Ontario, to parents from the Molise region of Italy, Ricci completed studies at York University in

Toronto, at Concordia University in Montreal, and at the University of Florence, and has taught both in Canada and abroad. He now lives in Toronto. He is a past president of the Canadian Centre of International PEN, a writers' human rights organization that works for freedom of expression.

Nino Ricci's most recent novel is *Testament*. It was the co-winner of the Trillium Award as well as being shortlisted for the Commonwealth Prize for Canada and the Caribbean and the Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize.

Anne Lagacé Dowson has been called the "Oprah of Quebec". As host of Radio Noon, broadcast across Quebec on CBC Radio 1, and the Radio Noon Literary Salon, she interviews as many authors as humanly possible. As a life-long bibliophile, from a family of printers, typographers, and booksellers, she is of the conviction that an author is a gift from God for radio. Anne holds a Masters degree in Canadian Studies from Carleton University and is fluently bilingual. She is a franco-Ontarian with deep roots in Quebec, and two children who yell at each other in both official languages. She has been Arts Reporter, news reporter, and producer at CBC Radio, has hosted Home Run and As It Happens, and was a founding producer of "C'est la vie," a programme about life in French-speaking Canada. She is very happy to celebrate the work of so many productive and fascinating Quebecers who write.

### Upcoming Writers Out Loud dates:

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| March 29, 7:30 p.m.: | Bill Brownstein, author of <i>Schwartz's Hebrew Delicatessen: The Story</i> , interviewed by William Weintraub at the Eleanor London Public Library, 5851 Cavendish Blvd., Côte Saint-Luc, Québec. Tickets \$3.00  |
| April 16, 8:00 p.m.: | Mark Tewksbury & Zoe Whittall, interviewed by Peter Dubé at Bar Boa, 5301 St. Laurent. Doors open at 7:00 p.m.   |
| May 3, 7:30 p.m.:    | Sherry Simon, author of <i>Translating Montreal: Episodes in the Life of a Divided City</i> , (winner of the QWF Mavis Gallant Prize for Non-Fiction) at the Eleanor London Public Library, 5851 Cavendish Blvd., Côte Saint-Luc, Québec. Tickets \$3.00 ☒ |

## KIDLIT SUPPORT, continued

completely overlooked. Monique Polak, a Montreal young adult novelist and QWF member, has published five novels – only one was reviewed. I have had a similar experience. Although my own first novel, *Klepto*, was named an American Library Association Paperback of the Year, I have yet to be reviewed in *The Gazette*.

Day's Lee, Brossard-based author of the picture book *The Fragrant Garden*, has had more luck in this regard. "Being a Chinese author in Quebec is an advantage because there are not as many here as there are in Toronto and Vancouver and that helped in getting media attention. Unfortunately, my book will never reach the French readership unless it is translated and that's frustrating."

---

### Monique Polak and I were part of a panel entitled "Drugs, Sex, and Alcohol in Young Adult Literature." The audience was packed.

---

Self-published Montreal children's author Lp Camozzi (*Pasta Pazoo. More Better Spaghetti*) agrees that gaining recognition in Quebec is difficult, but he goes on to say that "it is possible if you are creative and entrepreneurial in your approach."

At least one local publication seems to have a real commitment to helping Quebec's English-language YA and children's authors get the word out: *The Montreal Review of Books* has been very supportive, due in part to the enthusiasm of Carol-Ann Hoyte, the Quebec representative for the Canadian Children's Book Centre (CCBC).

Awards and publicity are two topics of frequent discussion at the meetings of Quebec members of CANSCAIP (Canadian Society of Children's Authors, Illustrators and Performers), an organization that offers support and inspiration to artists for children.

Another topic is the mentorship program run by the QWF. We'd like to see the program include both children's and young adult fiction, in order to nurture new local talent. The interest is there, as evidenced by the fact that the QWF's one-day workshop on children's writing, led by Rachna Gilmore, had a waiting list.

One of the misconceptions about children's writing is that, because it is short, it is easy. Anne Renaud says she hears this all the time.

"Nothing could be further from the truth," she says. "The

amount of research and reading that is required of me when I am writing a [children's] non-fiction book is the same as if I were writing for adults. In fact, I need a more in-depth understanding of the subject matter, as I cannot assume my readers will understand the more abstract concepts."

Day's Lee says, "Since becoming published, I am astonished at how many people think writing and publishing for children is a breeze."

Writing for young audiences, and doing it well, is definitely not a breeze. Voice is one of the main difficulties.

Dorval writer Bonnie Farmer, who has published two picture books (*Isaac's Dreamcatcher* 2001, *ABC Letters in the Library* 2004), says, "One of the challenges of writing for young people is being able to speak their language. Their language is timeless and ultra current at the same time."

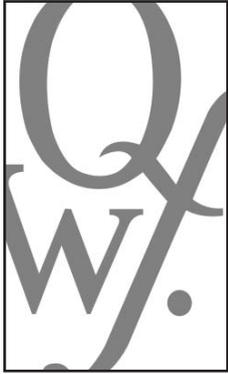
Monique Polak, whose latest YA novel is *All In*, agrees: "The main challenge is getting the right voice. And not writing down to our audience."

In 2006, the Blue Metropolis Festival, recognizing the importance of children's literature, increased the number of events for young people. Polak and I were part of a panel entitled "Drugs, Sex, and Alcohol in Young Adult Literature." The audience was packed and the enthusiasm for the genre, tremendous. There is a real recognition that young people want books that speak to them. And adults, be they teachers, parents or librarians, want books that help young people develop a love of reading.

After all, the young readers of today will become the adult reading public of tomorrow.

*Lori Weber's latest YA novel, Strange Beauty, was published by James Lorimer in 2006.* ☒





## QUEBEC WRITERS' FEDERATION WORKSHOPS SPRING SESSION 2007

Workshops take place at the QWF office, Suite 3, Atwater Library unless otherwise indicated.

Evening workshops: \$170 per course (\$150 for QWF and QDF members and for Quebec City workshop) • Saturday sessions: \$75 each for full-day workshops, \$40 for half-day workshop • Call to register and for cancellation policy • Payment by cheque to Quebec Writers' Federation, 1200 Atwater, Suite 3, Montreal, H3Z 1X4, by PayPal (additional fee - please check with office), or by cash at the QWF office (by appointment).

For more information: (514) 933-0878 info@qwf.org www.qwf.org  
QWF gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the Canada Council for the Arts.



Canada Council  
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts  
du Canada

### Full workshop descriptions and bios of workshop leaders are at [www.qwf.org/workshops](http://www.qwf.org/workshops).

#### EIGHT-WEEK EVENING WORKSHOPS

##### SHORT FICTION: IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS

MONDAYS, 6 to 8 p.m. – March 5 to April 30 (No class on March 26)

Led by **Anita Rau Badami**

##### FEATURE FILM SCREENWRITING IN THE REAL WORLD

MONDAYS, 8 to 10 p.m. – March 5 to April 23

Led by **Leo Saint-Pierre**

##### TOOLS OF THE TRADE: POETRY AND THE ART OF MAKING

TUESDAYS, 6 to 8 p.m. – March 6 to May 1 (No class on March 20)

Led by **Susan Elmslie**

##### CREATIVE NON-FICTION: TRUE STORIES

WEDNESDAYS, 6 to 8 p.m. – March 7 to April 25

Led by **Peter McFarlane**

##### MEMORY TRICKS: WRITING THE PERSONAL ESSAY

WEDNESDAYS, 8 to 10 p.m. – March 7 to April 25

Led by **Jon Paul Fiorentino**

##### WORD/CRAFT: AN INTRODUCTION TO POETRY WRITING AND PRACTICE

WEDNESDAYS, 7 to 9 p.m. – March 7 to April 25

Location: Morrin Centre, 44 chaussée des Écossais,  
Quebec City

Led by **Aurian Haller**

##### FICTION IN ALL ITS FORMS

THURSDAYS, 6 to 8 p.m. – March 8 to April 26

Led by **David Homel**

##### MONOLOGUE BOOT CAMP: WRITE IT! DEVELOP IT! DELIVER IT!

Offered in collaboration with the Quebec Drama Federation

Locations: QDF and Conseil des arts de Montréal

MONDAY, March 19, 6 to 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, March 23, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 3-6 p.m.

SUNDAY, March 25, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.; 2 to 5 p.m.; 7 to 9 p.m.

Led by **Bryden MacDonald**

#### SPECIAL INTENSIVE SATURDAY WORKSHOPS

Full-day Saturday workshop times include a break for lunch.

##### AGENTS & AUTHORS: WORKING TOGETHER

SATURDAY, March 24, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Led by **Suzanne Brandreth** of The Cooke Agency, Toronto

##### TRAVELLING WITH AN APPETITE: TRAVEL AND FOOD WRITING

SATURDAY, April 14, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Led by **Taras Grescoe**

##### CAPTURING MEMORIES: HOW TO DEVELOP A COMPELLING FAMILY STORY

SATURDAY, April 21, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Led by **Muriel Gold**

##### COPYRIGHT AND OTHER SCARY THINGS

SATURDAY, May 5, 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Led by **Marian Dingman Hebb**, arts, entertainment, and copyright lawyer