

VOICE

∞ VOLUME 25
∞ SPRING 2018
∞ DEPARTMENT OF
ENGLISH & THEATRE
∞ ACADIA UNIVERSITY

Representing Acadia at the Annual Atlantic Undergraduate English Conference at Mount Saint Vincent, March 2-3, 2018



*(L. to R.) Erica Marrison, Micah Carruthers, Emily McClean, Laura Bullock, and Athena Grantwell.
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THEATRE REVIEWS

The Last Days of Judas Iscariot

By Erica Marrison

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ATLANTIC UNDERGRADUATE
ENGLISH CONFERENCE

AUTHORS @ ACADIA
Patty LaBoucane-Benson
& Kelly Mellings
Rebecca Thomas
Gord Hill
Alexander McCall-Smith
Alison Smith
Gerald Gloade
Catherine Martin
Elder Joe Michael
Steven Heighton
Liz Howard
BOOK LAUNCH
Wanda Campbell
TWENTY MINUTE TALKS

STAFF
Laura Bullock
Luke Campbell
Athena Grantwell
Erica Marrison
Sarah MacDonald
Kelsey MacGowan
Emily McClean
Christna Stubbs
Ashley Wells
Lance La Rocque (Faculty Advisor)
Wanda Campbell (Layout)

*If you would like to help
with Voice 4, contact
lance.larocque@acadiau.ca
Phone: 585-1146*



For the Acadia Theatre Company's fall 2017 production the students put on a performance of *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* under the direction of Dr. Michael Devine. Depicting the final days preceding the infamous Judas' demise, the play written by Stephen Adly Guirgis details the trial following Judas' betrayal of Jesus Christ. To set the scene Denton Hall's lower theatre was reimagined as Purgatory, and assembled in a Christian cross, the central piece taking shape among the full audience. This setting became the perfect display for the production's many tableaux, offering a true centre stage.

By employing evocations of Judas' imagined, troubled youth, alongside hilarious testimonies from witnesses such as Mother Teresa, Sigmund Freud, and Satan, Judas' trial is a multi-day process of questioning by way of memory, varying perspectives, and narratives. As the story moves between past and present, and features a multitude of characters, Acadia's actors played varying roles, moving throughout differing accents and costuming to embody new characters. With standout performances by Stephanie Clervi, Katie Chevel, and Robin Moir, each character brought their own wit and tenacity to the evening.

With a variety of perspectives, executed both through script and the locality of actors on the abstract stage, in uncensored, modern language, *The Last Days* was both comical and provocative, suggesting that those of Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, and the audience interrogate their own perspectives on what constitutes truth, fairness, and forgiveness.

(From top) Robin Moir, Lewis Coverdale, Sarah Surette, Stephanie Clervi



Michael Devine as Butch Honeywell and Nile Whidden as Judas

Toying with the long-examined question of what truly happened to Judas, the show questions our understandings of history and story, demonstrating the many possible understandings of a single life.

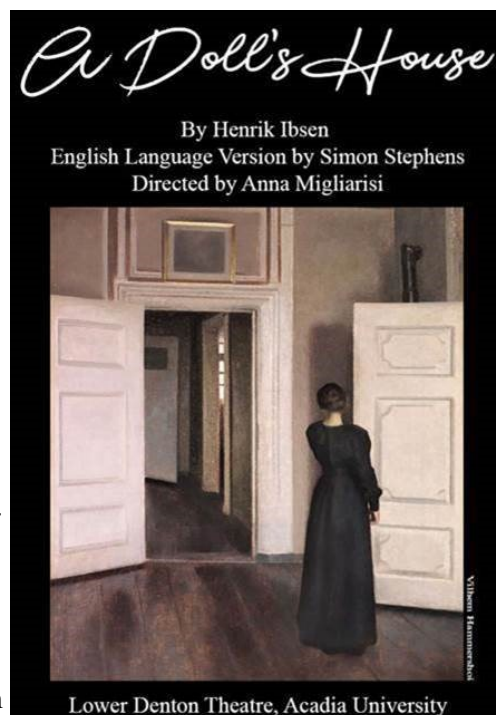
Faith is questioned, the conversation is heated, but the conversation takes place, and it's dimensional. The play demonstrates that faith is essential for our survival as a species.

~Michael Devine
Director's Notes

A Doll's House By Luke Campbell

Watching the Acadia Theatre Company's performance of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* is engrossing, dramatic, and immersively uncomfortable, as it should be to watch a family's relations fall into disarray. Dr. Anna Migliarisi has done an impressive job of directing by taking Ibsen's already compelling work, and breathing life into it inside the intimate Lower Denton Theatre, with the already established drama, added humorous elements that lighten up the mood at points, and an increased sex drive that makes the relationship between Norah

(Andrea Switzer) and Torvald (Zachery Craig) more fascinating. The first act opens with characters talking noticeably fast. The quick-talking scenes between Norah and



Torvald allows the audience to be introduced to Norah's bubbly persona, which is in stark contrast to her other side, both played brilliantly by Switzer. Craig's performance as Torvald embodies the snide, arrogant husband that the audience wants to sock in the face (in the best way possible). The supporting cast ranges from the depressed Dr. Rank (Joseph Brown), Norah's old friend Kristine (Ashley Wells), and the sympathetically devious Mr. Krogstad (Hunter Haas) all played very well.

As the play goes on the actors begin to speak noticeably slower as their characters take in the severity of the situation they find themselves in. The greatest moments, besides the cathartic final act, are when silence sweeps over the stage, and all the audience receives Switzer's face, usually crying or struck with horror.



Joseph Brown as Dr. Rank, Zachery Craig as Torvald Helmer and Andrea Switzer as Norah.

The staging is also exceptional at times, especially in Brown's final scene as Rank. The increased sexuality between characters adds a great deal of contrast between the healthy relationships and the Helmer's rocky marriage.

While *A Doll's House* was playing from March 22-24, and

29-31 it broke ticket sales records, and for good reason. Everyone came together to deliver a performance worthy of Ibsen's work. The full house thoroughly enjoyed it throughout every act where a great show was presented in every moment.



Andrea Switzer as Norah Helmer and Hunter Haas as Nils Krogstad



By Ashley Wells

The difference between Minifest and any other Acadia Theatre production is that Minifest is completely run by students! This provides an amazing opportunity for real-world experience where students have to problem solve and think creatively without the instruction of a faculty member. Out of hundreds of plays submitted internationally, this season the Acadia Theatre Company put on seven short shows! A little fun fact about this year's Minifest is that this was the first time since 2005 that there has been more than six plays done! There was: *Stranger Danger* directed by Stephanie Clervi (Third Year Theatre Major),



Confessions of a Generation directed by Ashley Wells (Third Year Theatre Major), *Young Blood* directed by Maddi Mackinnon (Third Year Theatre Major), *Tactile Creatures* directed by Chelsea St. Rose (Third Year

Theatre Major), *Love Somebody* directed by Amanda Ernst (Fifth Year Theatre Major), *What's A Little Axe Between Friends* directed by Andrea Switzer (Fourth Year Theatre Major), and *She's Not There* directed by Josephine Jarvis (Fourth Year Theatre Major). If you have yet to see an Acadia Theatre Company production, you should check out our Facebook page and Instagram to stay tuned to when we have shows coming up! They are really something to see.

<https://www.facebook.com/AcadiaTheatreCompany/>
Instagram: acadia_theatre





Three Weird Sisters aka Lance LaRocque, Coplen Rose, and Kevin Whetter

ACADIA ENGLISH SOCIETY SOCIAL EVENTS

Bad Poetry Night

By Athena Grantwell

On Thursday, October 12th, the Acadia English Society executive team and members met at Just Us! Café in Wolfville for the annual Bad Poetry night. This event was the Acadia English Society's first event of the year, and was met with laughs from the crowd as students, professors, and community members courageously read aloud bad poems. Some of the pieces were published works, such as pop song lyrics that when read rather than sung were hilarious. Others were originals, written as pre-teen diary entries or assignments for middle school. The night's highlights included a slow reading of Bruno Mars's lyrics to *That's What I Like*, a variety of middle school creative assignments, and poems that were too bad to stay locked up in a diary.

Spook-tacular Halloween Party

By Athena Grantwell

On October 27th, members of the English Society dressed up as their favourite book characters and headed to the Vaughan Library Quiet Room for the Spook-tacular Halloween Party. Spotted at the party: The Cat in the Hat, Buster and Arthur, Hagrid and Hermione, and other spooky characters. Party-goers were well fed with poisons and potions (also known as cream soda and root beer), chips, sweet treats, and pizza! The room was decorated to create a haunted

look and set the tone for the spooky activities that took place. A highlight of the night was a game that resembled *Speak Out*, only with a creepy twist where players read aloud Halloween-themed jokes with glow-in-the-dark vampire teeth. The night came to a close as awards for the best and spookiest costume were handed out, and everyone left with a treat bag in hand.



Athena Grantwell, Sarah MacDonald, Kelsey MacGowan

Gaspereau Press Open House

By Sarah MacDonald

This year Gaspereau Press, located in Kentville, opened up their doors to present their workspace to the public. Anyone was able to join in on the experience and see what happens behind the famous books that we all know and love. So many local artists have been featured in Gaspereau Press throughout the years; they have made an established name for themselves. Experiencing the open house only heightened this knowledge.

Inside there was a plethora of large machines and mountains of paper. They had stations set up throughout the building where you could see different sections of the printing process. A lot of these sections came with a hands-on experience where you could physically handle the machine with the help of a worker. Here, we were able to make various posters and cards to take home and show others. The machines seemed simple on the outside but were quite complicated and demanded physical strength and determination. The workers there did not skip out on a daily workout.

By pressing ink onto paper and rolling the equipment in different ways, we were able to create our own pieces of art. Each one was slightly unique because they were created by new hands each time and everyone was extremely grateful for the help we received from the workers there.

One of the best experiences from the day was creating our own books by choosing the paper, picking the words on the cover, and sewing it together. All of this was possible with the generous guidance of many different workers who aided us through the process. Each person was able to create a small booklet

of beautiful Gaspereau paper with their own word or saying on the front. We were shown how slugs were made, combinations of letters put into a machine and melted together, and how to use it to press ink onto the cover. Finally, by using thread and needles, they were bound together, and our own unique books were created! This open house was extremely fun and informative and allowed so many people to see inside the mind of Gaspereau Press.

Guy Fawkes Night

By Kelsey MacGowan

The English Society and History Society decided to collaborate for this

event to celebrate Guy Fawkes Night, which is also known as Bonfire Night. It marks the anniversary of the discovery of a plot organized by Catholic conspirators to blow up the Houses of Parliament in London, England in 1605. People light bonfires and set off fireworks to celebrate this event.

At the start of the event a movie was played featuring Richard Hammond in the BAC. The movie explained what Guy Fawkes Night is about and attempted what Guy Fawkes failed. It was interesting to watch this and see if Guy Fawkes pulled off his attempt of blowing up the Houses of Parliament how much damage would have been done. After the movie we went to the KCIC to have a bonfire. After the bonfire was lit an effigy was placed into the bonfire; this is a tradition done in England during Guy Fawkes Night. Once the effigy had burned we roasted marshmallows and had smores.



Words on Tap

By Sarah MacDonald

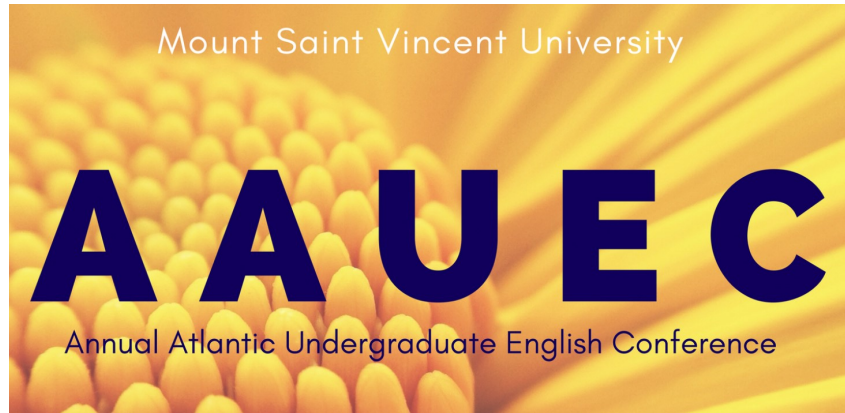
Acadia English Society's *Words on Tap* event was held at Paddy's this year and featured many unique and wonderful pieces. By coming together to read, enjoy and experience, a very open and supportive atmosphere was created. This event was also in conjunction with the Estuary creative journal launch and featured the freshly printed bundles. Some of the readings from the book were shared between the group which added a new perspective to each of them.

Both professors and students dropped by and shared their own work as well as the work of others. Professors Jon Saklofske and Copen Rose gave a riveting reading of *William Shakespeare's Star Wars* by Ian Doescher. They truly embodied their characters and footage of this as well as other photos from the night can be seen on the English Society's Instagram page.

Each reading was entirely unique which really made the night a wonderful experience. There was poetry, short stories, chapter readings and more performed throughout the night and each added a new look into the world of literature. *Words on Tap* is always one of the most successful events thrown by the English Society and this year was no exception. Between delicious food and entertainment, the hours flew by in a matter of minutes. Acadia English Society would like to thank everyone who came out to the event, professors and students alike. These are the moments that make planning worth it in the end and was the perfect ending to the school year. Hopefully next year will be even better and we look forward to seeing everyone in the new year!

estuary

estuary enjoyed another successful year with Micah Carruthers at the helm as editor. The print issue was launched at Words on Tap with readings from some of the six poets and eight short story writers represented. The cover art this year was by Ashley Hazel who had several photographs in the volume.



A Few Notes on AAUEC 2018



Athena Grantwell: The 2018 AAUEC at Mount Saint Vincent University was a great educational experience. I was given the chance to present my creative work in the presence of special guest, El Jones, at the ArtFest, which was an amazing opportunity. It was great to get to know other English students from other universities and to hear what they are learning and writing about. I encourage students to submit their work to next year's AAUEC because it is a great chance to network, present your work, and get to know people who share a passion for literature.

Check it out online at <https://english.acadiau.ca/get-involved/estuary-arts-magazine.html>

Bake Sale

By Kelsey MacGowan

The Acadia English Society put on a Valentine's Day bake sale held at the SUB. This bake sale was to raise funds for AAUEC. The Acadia English Society raised over \$100 from this bake sale. We would like to give a huge shout out and thank you to the English professors who made it possible for us to reach our goal for our

AAUEC funds. Your kindness has not been forgotten and we appreciate it so much for not only supporting us, the English Society, but AAUEC.



Erica Marrison: This was my second year presenting at the conference, and after a great experience in 2017 I was far more relaxed going into it this time around. It can be nerve-wracking to share our opinions and ideas with peers and professors, specifically in ways that we may not have done before in the classroom, but the AAUEC has taught me to be excited about receiving questions and criticisms, as well as to hear the insights presented in the work of others. To any returning Acadia students, I would definitely recommend attending!

Emily McClean: The AAUEC was one of the best weekends of my second year. I loved the opportunity to get to know my fellow English majors better, as well as see the amazing work that is being done in other English programs all over Atlantic Canada. I'm very grateful for all the hard work that went into making this conference such a success.



∞ AUTHORS @ ACADIA ∞

PATTY LA BOUCANE-BENSON AND KELLY MELLINGS

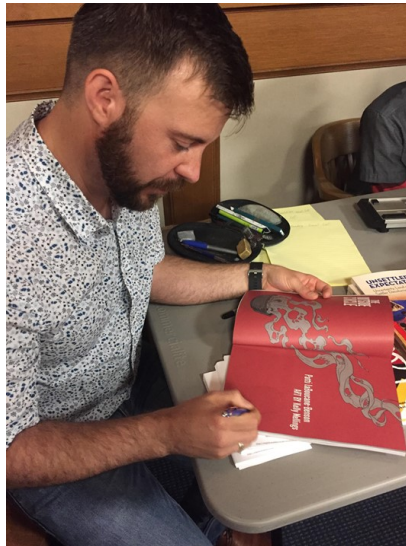
By Erica Marisson

On September 25th Acadia welcomed both the writer and illustrator of national bestselling graphic novel, *The Outside Circle*, to present for the first *Authors @ Acadia* event of the year. The presentation began by Indigenous elder Joe Michael recognizing Acadia's location on traditional unceded Mi'kmaq territory. The English department's own Dr. Andrea Schwenke Wyile then introduced the author Patti LaBoucane-Benson and illustrator Kelly Mellings, and the beautiful work they created.

The presentation began with LaBoucane-Benson. She used a PowerPoint presentation to move throughout scenes of her novel while offering corresponding facts and statistics about lateral violence, intergenerational trauma, and the flaws in our national prison system. Grounded in the fact that she wrote *The Outside Circle* for her doctorate dissertation, LaBoucane-Benson was able to connect her in-depth research on Indigenous cultures to her book, noting that the best way for Indigenous peoples to heal is through their own traditional practices. In addition, she stressed to the audience that each individual has a significant role to play in reconciliation: "I remain convinced that truth (evidence), dialogue (connectedness) and story-telling (art) are the most important tools in our collective reconciliation Journey."

Following LaBoucane-Benson was the upbeat (and hilarious), Kelly Mellings. Mellings guided the audience through a series of his drawings for

The Outside Circle, from the initial stages of creating images to correspond with Patti's writing, to the final results that we see in the novel. In opposition to LaBoucane-Benson's serious side of the work, Kelly was jovial and keen to show us how he was able to allow an



audience of readers to connect with the story through images. This made for a wonderful presentation, as the audience was informed about both historic and current cultural problems, but given an example of a positive solution through Mellings' art. Additionally, Mellings' told the audience how he uses the novel to confront those who contribute to stereotypes about Indigenous peoples, retelling a story of an "ignorant, loud man" on his flight to Nova Scotia. Rather than lecture the man, Mellings kindly gifted him a copy of *The Outside Circle* – an act of calling in rather than calling out. With over 50 people present at the event, and rave reviews over the following days, it is safe to say that *The Outside Circle* has been a hit within the Acadia community.

REBECCA THOMAS

By Erica Marisson

On October 4th *Authors @ Acadia* was fortunate enough to welcome another incredible guest to the Acadia campus. Rebecca Thomas, self-proclaimed "protest poet" and Halifax's official poet laureate, arrived Wednesday night to perform a reading in correspondence with the two day *Mawio'mi: Circle of Hope* event hosted at Acadia, which was organized by Dr. Cynthia Alexander and Dr. Andrea Schwenke Wyile. Rebecca Thomas' work, which focuses largely on Indigeneity in Canada, was a perfect match for all that was being critiqued and celebrated during the *Mawio'mi*. After a day of events across campus to further Acadia's work toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, guests gathered in the KCIC garden room. The space was happily full, leaving guests' heads weaving to see the podium. Dr. Schwenke Wyile introduced the poet, singing her praises, before Thomas came to the stand.

As expected, Thomas stepped up to the podium with her characteristic strength, humour, and humility. She began by recognizing the traditional unceded Mi'kmaq territory Acadia stands upon, then read "Canada: A Creation Story." With this she grasped the attention of each audience member with her ability to so wittily subvert the commonly known history of Canada's "discovery." She proceeded to read four more poems, "Ancient Memories," "Pennies," "North America Rehashes Dating History," and "What Good Canadians Do." Like any incredible artist, she had the audience in tears with one poem and laughing with the next.



WHAT ARE YOU AND I DOING TO CONTRIBUTE ?

After closing out on her readings, which focused on Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women, Canadian settler stories, the commodification of Indigenous tradition, her own experiences as a Mi'kmaw woman, and more, Thomas was met with a standing ovation by all. In a room of now inspired guests Thomas was asked one question: what would her advice be to the young people in the audience that want to move forward with Indigenous reconciliation? With a calm but resounding invitation, Thomas answered: "talk to the people that aren't here."

GORD HILL

By Erica Marrison

Following two days spent in Fredericton at UNB's Peace and Friendship Treaty Days event, Indigenous activist, writer, and artist Gord Hill came to Acadia on October 25th to deliver a presentation on Art and Resistance. Hill was welcomed by Dr. Andrea Schwenke Wyile, who too had attended UNB's Treaty Days; in light of what was learned in New Brunswick she preceded Hill's talk with arguably the most necessary question in activism right now:

With a nearly full house in the KCIC auditorium, Hill began his discussion entitled, Indigenous Graphic Art and its Role in Maintaining History and Struggle. He started by presenting an image of the red cedar tree, which is symbolic of the unification of culture. He continued in this fashion, showing the audience a multitude of Indigenous cultural symbols such as "big houses," various crests such as the sea monster, bear, and the "raven eating light," as well as a wampum belt.

While he physically presented the imagery through a slideshow, Hill did not display any written work. He employed the Indigenous oral tradition by strictly telling a history of resistance among Indigenous peoples in Canada and globally, rather than writing it, as well as representing that very resistance through imagery.

*No Pipelines - Bear and
Wolf Defenders
~Painting by Gord Hill*

Hill moved throughout historical events and the present, maintaining the interest of his diverse viewers; while he spoke to current pipeline issues he also brought up events such as the Oka crisis of 1990, emphasizing that while events such as Oka were horrific in many ways, the resistance demonstrated by Indigenous peoples during that time was second to none. It was that note that he left us with: while society so often focuses on the problems associated with needing to resist, Hill centered the presentation on the notion that several centuries of resistance are nothing if not inspiring. He encouraged attendees to make art, to use their voices to resist, while seeking and finding inspiration in those who resisted long before today's activists began.



ALEXANDER MCCALL SMITH
by Erica Marrison

After a flight in from Edinburgh, Scotland and an introduction from Dr. Kate Ashley, Alexander McCall Smith joyfully took to the stage of Denton Hall's auditorium on November 25th to speak to *The House of Unexpected Sisters*, the eighteenth novel in his famed series, *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*. However unconventionally, McCall Smith began by speaking not to his writing, but instead to his current, and seemingly favourite, pastime: The Really Terrible Orchestra. In his words, a group "for people that couldn't be in a real [orchestra], or even a generally bad one." He and his wife began the music group for themselves, and others, to indulge in music playing, no matter their skill level. With the orchestra's title McCall Smith was met with a great deal of laughter, which seldom silenced for the remainder of his presentation. With all of his accomplishments – 20 million copies of his works sold, his novels published in 46 languages, a member of the Booker Prize reception panel, and 10 honorary doctorates – his long discussion of this music group, and emphasis on its "terrible-ness," demonstrated a refreshing humility.

A self-proclaimed serial novelist, *The House of Unexpected Sisters* exists as McCall Smith's 50th book, offering him a large body of work to speak to. In telling the origin story of the series, he begins both with inspiration from the celebrated film *Out of Africa*, as well as a woman he once met in Botswana, who he's dubbed "the chicken lady." Her life, McCall Smith claimed, was so interesting that he began what he thought would be a short story. Now an eighteen-novel



series, his protagonist Precious Ramotswe, the only female detective in Botswana, is a beloved character by many. Precious, enjoys "fat cakes," tea, and people – as the everyday woman who experiences peculiar adventures, she continues to endear readers, as well as inspire the writer who created her. This desire to imbue a normal life with a small sense of adventure and oddity, it seems, is McCall Smith's domain.

He soon thereafter had the crowd laughing again, this time at his tales of Bertie, the six-year-old protagonist of his 44 *Scotland Street* series. Most recently, Bertie's friend, Tofu, has lost his parents – two vegans who have consequently died of starvation. McCall Smith makes no apologies to vegans here, just chuckles to himself, a laugh that is echoed by under-the-breath snickers of audience members. Bertie's story, McCall Smith proceeds, is about freedom. The young boy pursues his desires, demonstrating time and again the ability to do what he wants in the

way he wants to do it. In this, the young character is much like his senior creator. In fact, it appears that this is what Smith does best; he tells his jokes and his stories, just as he wants. And here he is, 50 books in, and the public still can't get enough.

ALISON SMITH
By Staff

On Thursday, January 25th, in The Quiet Reading Room, Alison Smith was well received by an appreciative audience as she read from her new book. As the writers at the press aptly put it, 'Exploring the domestic epics of relationships, childbirth, and par-

enting, as well as societal issues like patriarchy and justice, Smith discovers that often "we barely know how feelings think.'" Smith is no stranger to Acadia, having completed an MA degree in the Department of English and Theatre (uniquely exploring the idea and practice of restorative justice, working with prisoners and their poetry). Smith has published several books with Gaspereau Press, *The Wedding House*, *Six Mats and One Year*, and *Fishwork, Dear*. Tonight, she read from her new book *This Kind of Thinking Does No Good* (Gaspereau Press 2018).



GERALD GLOADE:
30 January 2018

By Erica Marrison

Gerald Gloade offered a presentation at Acadia as part of the Mi'kmaw Storytelling series, hosted by Dr. Andrea Schwenke Wyile and Dr. Cynthia Alexander. Regarded as an artist, carver, and educator, Gloade is renowned for his work both locally and internationally as a graphic artist and cultural teacher. He began his presentation by speaking to his educator role, telling tales of Glooscap. Gloade explained that while there are hundreds of Glooscap stories, the Five Islands story seems to dominate the discourse. Gloade noted the importance of Nature in these types of stories, such as the giant beaver often associated with the Cape D'or Scenic Area. Stories like "How Beaver Got His Tail," demonstrate the ever-present importance of animals and nature in Canadian Indigenous cultures.

In correspondence with telling stories, Gloade emphasized Indigenous languages as "verb-based," and oral-based languages. While most stories were conveyed orally, there were in fact Mi'kmaq hieroglyphics, which few people can read – Gloade is one of the few people. In fact, he now gets paid to travel to the Smithsonian museum to decipher ancient hieroglyphics, which so few can understand. Gloade used this experience through the Smithsonian to enter a conversation on "two-eyed seeing," a method of learning by which traditional knowledge is paired with modern science and technology to improve upon both

facets. Gloade used the example of spruce root, which he remembers being a healing agent in his childhood. Today, he explains, it is proven that spruce root is full of acetaminophen and is currently being tested in a lab at CBU. Because these traditional ways of knowing the world, such as knowing that when strawberry blossoms peek the Mi'kmaq know the trout is coming in,



served Indigenous peoples for so long, scientists are becoming interested in working with such concepts. With so many new developments and recognitions, Gloade can continue his educating in many ways, whether it be through art, the classroom, or the outdoors.

CATHERINE MARTIN:
6 February 2018

By Erica Marrison

A crowd gathered in the KCIC meeting room on Tuesday to hear from Catherine Martin, an artist of many trades, based in Millbrook First Nation, Truro, NS. Introduced by elder Joe Michael, he and Dr. Andrea Schwenke Wyile praised Martin's work as a writer, film producer, film director, teacher, drummer, activist, and as she demonstrated

to us, basket weaver. Having served as the Chair of Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) she boasts a wealth of knowledge about her culture and that of Indigenous populations across Canada.

For her session Martin taught basket weaving by telling a story. She called upon an audience member, a third year Acadia student, to participate in her story telling process. The student played the role of Martin's granddaughter, teaching her various techniques of weaving. As she did so, Martin detailed a history of her peoples – modes of transportation, traditional crafts, hospitality, and more. In this she was able to employ the Indigenous tradition of oral-based learning, particularly through story telling, to teach

all those watching about her history. This mode of educating allowed for each of us in the audience to connect with Martin beyond the binary of teacher-student. Rather, she created an environment that simulated a community – an elder teaching young people. For her, she explained, basket weaving was a necessary craft, as she used to help produce baskets and sell them to put food on the table of her large family.

Having experienced various oppressions throughout her life as an Indigenous woman, Martin maintains this art, among other forms, to connect to her roots. Now, as an activist, educator, and artist, she has a platform from which she is able to express her history, sharing stories through various mediums.

ELDER JOE MICHAEL:
6 March 2018

By Erica Marrison

Elder Joe Michael is a very important member of the Acadia University community, repeatedly attending events to share his knowledge of his own cultural heritage and that of Indigenous populations across the nation. For this conversation he welcomed the public to learn about the tradition of the talking stick, a task he carries out by carving and producing his own to sell and gift.

Joe began this conversation with the song “Old Man Carver” from a compilation album entitled *Native North America*, released in 2014. He allowed this song to play as he unveiled many of his own talking sticks – some complete, others in-process – and passed them around the circle we had formed in the KCIC meeting room. Though traditional to use the stick, Joe explained that really any object would work, be it a rock, stick, or feather. It is the respect shown through silence when someone is holding the object that is most significant.

For Joe the emphasis is on demonstrating respect and being vulnerable, as he explains, “speaking from the heart.” This emphasis on showing respect begins immediately as he cuts down the small tree out of which he chooses to make the stick. Joe speaks to the tree before cutting it down, saying, “I’m going to take you home and respect you.” This act becomes a way of giving the stick significance and value before it comes into use. After taking it home and allowing it to dry out Michael cuts the wood into as many pieces as he can get from it, prior to removing the bark and approximately three stages of sanding. Once the stick has been sanded down Joe begins painting. The designs can be requested or Joe will paint something traditional such as an eagle or turtle, or perhaps simply

a series of colours with cultural significance. These depictions serve as personal or cultural markers and offer meaning to the object at hand.

Joe explained the ways in which talking circles are used as well – particularly used in times of healing or sadness - there is even a talking stick at the Supreme Court of Canada. These sticks can also be used in correspondence with other traditions, such as smudging, which maximize the experience as a healing process. At the core of his presentation was Joe’s emphasis on the talking stick as a cultural symbol, and the fact that culture takes time to establish and grow. Joe often questions: “what seed can I plant to non-Indigenous peoples to establish community?” Fortunately for members of the Acadia community, he calls our university a second home, one that – largely on behalf of Dr. Schwenke Wyile and Dr. Cynthia Alexander – has welcomed him with open arms. He has planted many seeds of wisdom in our academic and cultural community, encouraging each of us to lead more compassionate, thoughtful lives.

STEVEN HEIGHTON
By Erica Marrison

Touring *The Nightingale Won’t Let You Sleep*, his most recent novel, Ontario-based author Steven Heighton stopped by Acadia on Feb. 12th to perform a reading of his work. Dr. Andrea Schwenke Wyile introduced Heighton, acknowledging his many accomplishments – writer of fourteen books, a

New York Times Book Review Editors’ Choice, his fiction and poetry published in ten languages, along with being the recipient of a multitude of awards. Despite his many achievements it was with great humility that Heighton took to the podium in the KCIC Auditorium, beginning with an anecdote of memory from his first and only experience at Acadia many years ago. After attending a homecoming costume party in the early 80s – a visual that led current Acadia students of the audience to let out a collective chuckle – Heighton remembers the train ride home as being one of the first times he began writing.

Though very fascinating to hear of his latest novel, a tale of a soldier suffering from PTSD, the real treasures of this Authors @ Acadia talk were the words of wisdom Heighton offered on his writing process. He began this conversation in discussing first lines of

poetry, explaining how they arrive in unexpected ways (he detailed one that arrived to him in an email), but that when you know them, you simply know. For him the first



line signifies something new but is never determinate of where the poem will go. Additionally, he explained the importance of reading for a writer, particularly as it helps one to evolve and become a better reviser. Though, Heighton claimed, there are many writers who fear that if they read they will inadvertently copy another writer, he disagrees. He offered the audience the advice that reading will maintain your writing as ever-evolving.

Further, the term Heighton dubbed, “retro-research,” has become his method of inquiry when writing novels, stories, and poetry that is grounded in fact or a specific event. The “retro” aspect stems from Heighton conducting his research after his writing takes place, so as his creative energy for the project doesn’t get lost or buried in fact. It is this emphasis on maintaining his creativity, above all else, that led into his final comment on self-doubt.

When questioned about this insecurity as a writer, Heighton assured the audience that it is inevitable, especially as a creative person – it is one of his greatest challenges as a writer. However, Heighton claims that an understanding of the ego is how he combats this persistent fear. When he lets his ego go, never allowing himself to feel like a “great writer,” the fear of failure greatly diminishes. If he is never great, never finished, he is always in process and the falling distance is far smaller. That said, Heighton continues to wake up and write in the early hours of the day as he has done for years. Though he claims that his early days of notepad carrying have since

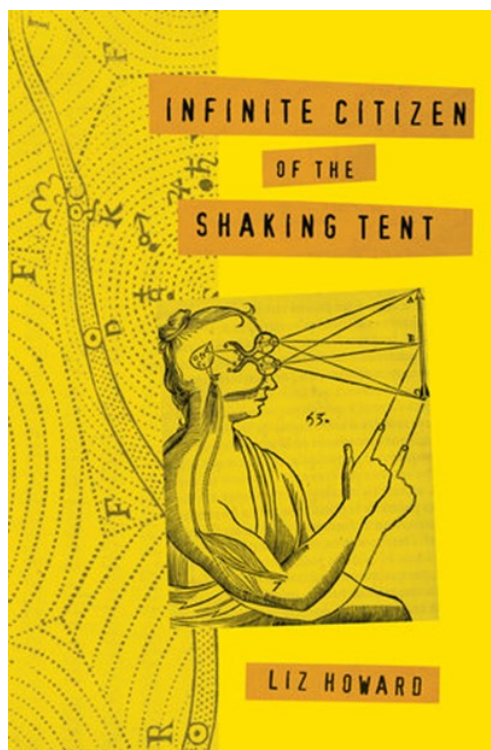


evolved into scribbles on restaurant napkins and receipts, he continues to produce thought-provoking works and his career continues to flourish in varying forms.

LIZ HOWARD

By Laura Bullock

On March 12, 2018, poet Liz Howard spoke in the KCIC Auditorium. Howard read from her Griffin Poetry Prize-winning collection *Infinite Citizen of the Shaking Tent*, as well as some more recently published poems.



Howard is both the youngest poet to win the Griffin Prize, as well as the first poet to win the prestigious award with a debut poetry collection. The event began with words of welcome from Elder Joe Michael and Dr. Andrea Schwenke Wyile, who spoke about the territory and significance of Mi’kmaq history in the Annapolis Valley region, and offered a few anecdotes of their earlier discussions with Liz Howard. Much of Howard’s work combined diction from Howard’s background in neuroscience and psychology with references to nature, Indigeneity, and colonization. For example,

the poem “Terra Nova, Terra formed” juxtaposes imagery of the isolated landscape of Northern Ontario with experiences of marginalization faced by Indigenous populations: “fetal alcohol syndrome, oil drums sunk / to the bottom of every lake, the aurora borealis / an overdose along the magnetized pole” (Howard 16-18). The contrast between Howard’s earlier and more recent poems was evident in both the style and subject matter; her more recent poems were less cryptic than those from *Infinite Citizen of the Shaking Tent* and discussed more personal subject matter. Howard’s recent poetry discussed her own experiences of grappling with her father’s death, and included many familiar references to Halifax and the East Coast in works such as “Knaussgard, Nova Scotia.” In this poem, Howard incorporated allusions to Indigenous myth and culture into her own experiences following her father’s death and struggles with alcoholism; the allusion to “Paugak, / the cursed

Anishinaabe skeleton / who flies through the Boreal forest, / is said to consume the livers of his victims” (36-39) connects Anishinaabe myth with the significance of the liver in alcohol-related diseases. Howard’s delivery was solemn and understated, which amplified the challenging subject matter of her poetry. During the question period, Howard frequently made long pauses before answering, and responded minimally to the audience’s questions; she confessed, “I feel like a burnt-out lightbulb.” Although Liz Howard expressed exhaustion, her poetry nonetheless generated a haunting and thought-provoking event.

BOOK LAUNCH:
WANDA CAMPBELL
by Staff

Entering the Acadia art gallery on the evening of October 12th, audiences experienced an array of gorgeous saris hanging behind Laurie Dalton, gallery curator, as she introduced Wanda Campbell. The occasion marked the launch of Campbell's new book *Kalamkari and Cordillera: Poems of India and Chile* (Inanna 2017). The book revolves around Campbell's experiences growing up in India and her trip to Chile, often focusing on both the beauty of place and the struggles of women and girls, as in the beautiful poem, "Cradle Swing." Here the context, Andhra, is far removed from western myths, "I am a daughter // of snow but for me / no cruel queen and her huntsman / with liver and lungs //... here a girl has it hard— / parents could choose to abort or abandon // if she does survive / her sari is a cradle / tied to a rafter." During the reading, Campbell revealed interesting stories and facts: about a Chilean earthquake, the mysterious

difficulty of getting a visa to travel to India, the meaning of kalamkari (pen craft), and much more.

At the end, the appreciative audience had many questions. Campbell joked that in her creative writing classes she makes her students work with traditional forms and techniques, so she thought she should practice what she preaches. *Kalamkari and Cordillera* explores many forms, drawing on the shape poem, the sonnet, the villanelle, and the kyrielle, to name a few. The poems are sharp and insightful, often with a powerful political edge, as in "Spinning Wheel," a play on *Sleeping Beauty*: "...she has never heard the fairy tale // no longer

cares for / kisses though would welcome a / century of sleep // Gandhi was shot dead / long before she was born and / now his wheel has gone". Wanda Campbell's book launch was a unique experience — eliciting many interesting questions and comments from the audience — introducing me to an excellent collection of poetry.



**The Department of English and Theatre's
Twenty-Minute Talks
Lecture Series**

Featuring:
Jon Saklofske
"Spreadable Jams: Using Game Jam Paradigms to
Encourage Innovative Social Scholarship"
and
Paul Barrett and Christna Stubbs
"Digitally Reading Canada Reads"

Friday, March 23
12:00-1:00pm
BAC 235



**DIGITALLY
READING
CANADA
READS**

*By Christna
Stubbs*

If you would have told me a few months ago that I would have this much fun working on an

academic research project, I would have probably laughed in your face. Yet, here I am having the best time. Since the beginning of this year, I've had the privilege of working alongside Dr. Paul Barrett and English major Laura Bullock here at Acadia on an amazing project: "Reading Canada Reads: Big Data, Mass Reading, and Canadian Public Culture". The goal of the project is to understand the effectiveness that a mass event such as Canada Reads can have in fostering reading on a national scale.

Much of the project centers around us attempting to map the geography and demography of the show and ultimately answer various questions such as: Who makes up the Canada Reads audience? Where do they live? When and how are they listening to the program? Does hearing about a book lead to reading a book? What are readers' responses to the books and broadcasts? Are these responses consistent across geographic and demographic boundaries? Do listeners' responses reinforce or challenge the broadcast's official narrative?

Before I made the decision to join the team, I was skeptical since I didn't necessarily know what to expect. However, I was pleasantly surprised when I realized that I would essentially be getting paid to do what I loved most: scroll through social media feeds, read books, and watch and listen to people argue about books. For a few hours each week, I'm required to spend time scrolling through the Canada Reads Twitter feed, reading and documenting hilarious tweets from viewers; I get to read the books that would be debated during the seasons, and I'm also required to watch and transcribe seasons that I'm usually assigned. All in all, I'm having a great time, and learning a lot about Canada along the way. Another important job that I am tasked with is to document any interesting findings that I discovered as I watch each season of Canada Reads. I was able to talk about a few of these findings during the "Twenty Minute Talks Lecture Series" back in March.

During the lecture, I focused mainly on what I thought interesting after watching and transcribing Canada Reads 2015. The theme for this season was Breaking Barriers. For those of you that missed the talk, I focused on three aspects of the season that stood out to me:

- ♦ Panellists felt that the book that all of Canada must read should be about something ALL Canadians can somehow relate to, not just a minority of Canadians.
- ♦ There seemed to be a moral link to the text that the panellists believed should win.
- ♦ The panellists seem to imply that the literature written by Canadian immigrants is not allowed to be "too forceful" in its barrier breaking.

All three of these points were rather compelling; however, what really got me invested in this season were the

heated debates that occurred regarding the lack of morality in the book that can be easily described as the underdog of the bunch: Raziel Reid's *When Everything Feels like the Movies*. This Young Adult novel follows a homosexual teenage boy called Jude and has been rather controversial due to its graphic language and sexual content. In fact, many Canadians felt such contempt for the subject matter in the novel that there was a petition distributed throughout Canada for the text to be stripped of its Governor General's Award on the premise that it was just too crude and vulgar for the young adult audience. Naturally, these very same ideologies about the text were expressed by various panellists during the season, who were concerned that not only wouldn't Canadians read the text, but it would be very difficult for them to get a few pages in because of the language. What struck me immediately after listening to the criticism about the text was: How would they be sure that Canadians wouldn't be able to get a few pages in? How would they know that all Canadians were sensitive about the graphic language and sexualized content? Is it that they're just being naïve about morality in the country, or is there something more going on in regards to their reservations about the text? Panellist Craig Kielburger argued: "Every single page has graphic, graphic sexual references, graphic, graphic language... My fear is that we're not gonna get to the real issues that's so desperately needs to be covered of homophobia and bullying because Canada won't go five pages into the book." While Kielburger held firm to his beliefs about the text as the debate progressed, panellist Elaine Lui, who defended Reid's controversial novel, did an exceptional job in explicating the urgency of the novel's subject matter and the relevance of the language to many readers, young and old. As a result, many panellists were

swayed from their initial reservations about the text and began to argue for a text like Reid's to win Canada Reads. By Day Four of the debate, I (and many audience members) was convinced that Reid's text would have a chance at winning the competition despite the controversy; however, the novel was voted off.

As I recovered from the fact that Reid's text was voted off by not just one, but all of the panellists (except Lui, of course), I couldn't help but assume that the panellists believed that there is an inherent conservatism that needed to be in the novel that won in order for all of Canada to read it. While many arguments against the text centred around it not being suitable for young readers, some panellists also assumed that it would be an issue for adult readers as well. But, how could they be so sure of this? I spent much time pondering this after the season ended, and after re-watching, I came to believe that they simply didn't feel at all comfortable allowing a book with such provocative content to win Canada Reads. In my opinion, Raziel Reid's book best exemplified the theme of the season. It broke multiple barriers, and each day of debates Lui effectively expressed the barriers that were broken in the novel. Yet, the text didn't win despite Lui's exceptional efforts.

This led me to think about many important questions that I hope to resolve or negotiate further as I watch other seasons: Is there a *specific* type of book that has to win? Are they looking for a specific type of book to represent Canada? One that is less controversial or graphic? One that best represents the kind of Canada or "Canadian ideals" that they hope to perpetuate to the rest of the world? I realize that it may be difficult to answer all of these questions, but I do intend on making every effort to as I continue my work on the project.



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