

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR *I'LL GET RIGHT ON IT*

"An essential contribution to climate change literature, this book advances climate justice with voices not typically brought to the table. The urgency articulated in these itinerant voices is impossible to unhear and, I hope, impossible to ignore."

—**Madhur Anand**, Governor General's Literary Award-winning writer and director of the Global Ecological Change and Sustainability Laboratory, University of Guelph

"A moving, richly diverse collection that connects the dots between the climate crisis and our labour conditions. This collection doesn't shy away from reflecting the twin realities of dread and sorrow that come with working in a perpetual state of crisis. But it also moves us to process this collective climate grief through strengthening our bonds of solidarity. A powerful read for all of us trying to live, work, and resist during the polycrisis!"

—**Jill MacIntyre**, 350 Canada national organizer

"This collection sings through smoke, holding grief and humour with tender precision. We're welcomed as friends to witness the labour of living through climate crisis, where catharsis emerges from honest reflection, our DNA is found in trees, and hope dances peace into being."

—**Brigette DePape**, climate planner at Narratives and author of *Sun Compass*

"Poems in *I'll Get Right On It* arise from inside a wide slice of the workforce: a massage therapist, postie, teacher, sandblaster, even an invasive vegetation management technician. A call centre employee muses how people waiting endlessly on hold to have a problem solved are like how we're all waiting for "the fix" for climate change. A fisherman pens a new folk tune lamenting how a proposed mine's tailings will impact the salmon on which his livelihood depends. Presenting a more accurate picture of where we are as a society than either greenwashing corporate-speak or the environmental end-time doomsters, the voices of those whose jobs each day actually rebuild the world as it changes are well worth a listen."

—**Tom Wayman**, author of *If You're Not Free at Work, Where Are You Free?*
Literature and Social Change

“I am moved and awed by the power of labour in all the ways this anthology honours and holds up. Navigating the bleak depths and the bright sweaty surfaces of daily life, this book gathers an incredible range of workers’ voices, offering much needed lifelines and poetic corroboration that we need one another. Testifying to the dread and persistence, the weariness and the tenderness, of everyday people living with the grievous impacts of centuries of industrial-scale colonial extraction, these poems help readers to nourish the creative solidarity we need from the ground up.”

—Rita Wong, author of *Current, Climate* and *undercurrent*

“As we continue to work through never-ending catastrophes, this book reminds us to pause, look at our colleagues and comrades, and see that we are not alone. It shows us the beauty and the pain of the everyday and leaves us with the feeling that when we are together, we are truly powerful.”

—Ana Guerra Marin, *Iron & Earth*

**i'll get
right
on it**

Excerpt

POEMS ON WORKING LIFE
IN THE CLIMATE CRISIS

i'll get right on it

edited by

THE LAND AND LABOUR
POETRY COLLECTIVE

foreword by ANJALI APPADURAI



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*In memory of Palestinian activist, academic, educator, and journalist
Refaat Alareer, who dedicated his life to poetics and justice; and
Mi'kmaq poet, songwriter, and residential school survivor Rita Joe,
who taught us how important our talk could be.*

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FOREWORD

by Anjali Appadurai

It was in the year or two after COVID-19 swept the world that I began to feel the prick of scarcity. It was the scarcity of mobility, as wealthy nations began to tighten their borders and my family and I could no longer bring over family members from India. It was the scarcity of refuge from the heatwaves, droughts, and other climate-change impacts from which I felt helpless to protect my family. Then, in 2023 the economy heaved, inflation spiked, and as a nonprofit worker I suddenly found myself experiencing financial scarcity too.

It's long been said that people turn to poetry in times of great existential uncertainty — loss, love, transition, death. Then there's the poetry that accompanies you while you clock into your job with a pit of dread in your core too deep to put into words.

We work to survive, and in working we are forced to uphold the economic system, with its contrived sense of scarcity, that rules our lives. Without scarcity, the vast, jangling machine of capitalism would grind to a halt overnight. Even if you're lucky enough to do values-driven work, like I am, there cannot be any illusion that you don't belong to the system, for you must uphold it if you want to eat.

In late-stage capitalism, we wear scarcity as a permeating stink, an omnipresent intrusive thought. In these pages you will find a line in “Un día en la vida de un trabajador” by Ivan A. Salazar M. in which the labourer heads to work at dawn “with the weight of dreams on his back / and bills that whisper like old friends.” In “Reverie: Canada Postie Winter Picket Line” by Ron Romanowski, a striking postal worker yearns for the promise of a livelihood with the refrain, “what / if I had / a contract in my pocket?” Scarcity joins hands with precarity as employment becomes less permanent, more temporary, rarely assured.

And then there's the climate crisis, with its rising heat and its merciless inequity, covering us like a blanket with another layer of scarcity: the loss of home, the sirens of war, the precarity of wealth inequality. It's not just the

wildfires and droughts — it's also the cycles of austerity and authoritarianism fuelled by the crisis. It's the ripened conditions for the renewal of fascism, for profiteers disguised as populists to take advantage of our fear. It's the never-ending march of land theft, shape-shifting colonialism, the ongoing suppression of Indigeneity around the world, the reinforcing of borders. Resource scarcity triggers a war and the fossil-fuel industry greedily uses the opportunity to raise the price of oil. We are told there is no alternative to the system that drives the crisis before our very eyes.

Through all of this, we work.

As the climate crisis makes everything hotter and more scarce, the stakes of work get steadily higher. In "Building: A Psalm" by Kurt Armstrong, we read of the overworked body with its "aching lumbar, sweat-stained pits, and stiff wrists," a reminder that the body is ultimately only tender, vulnerable flesh. We think: what a price to pay for sustenance. Christine Lowther's "Leaf-Murmur" drily captures how high this price really is with the line "Not like you have kidneys that will cook under heat domes." The crisis surrounds us while we are forced to work; in Lia M. Markin's "Hold, Please," a call-centre worker puts a customer on hold while "Wondering how much longer / I can ignore the heat / creeping through the cracks, / the quiet, insistent way / the world burns and burns / while we wait."

The climate crisis feeds off scarcity and the two build on each other, cornering and closing in on us.

But something else happens when we feel that way. In this constricted space we encounter life itself in sharp relief — the threads of day-to-day existence that implore us to live for the sake of living. We cling to the lifelines of our relationships with human and nonhuman beings, to the beauty of the natural world around us, and to the sensations found in the interface between our bodies and our environments.

Along with varied stories of work, the poems in this volume are filled with glittering moments of connection. In "What If I Told You," Wet'suwet'en land defender Jennifer Wickham writes, "our DNA is in the trees," evoking a brief moment of timelessness, the sense of a grand continuum. In "A Warmth Remains, and Salt," Hari Alluri lulls us into the rhythms of landscaping work: "Arrange, // arrange again, dig with hands and spade, scrape the roots, place, cover / over, pat." In "Nechako (2000)" by Ella Soper, amid the bustle of a forestry worker camp, "Gusts, sweetened by the mountain's top, / carry on their backs laughter, loud complaint." In "Brooklyn-Queens Tornadoes" by

Davidson Garrett, a taxi driver caught in a storm befriends his passenger: “my yellow canary becomes a tortoise // trailing thousands of honking motorists. / I introduce myself to my lone hostage.”

This anthology is also filled with a steady resistance, a refusal to concede to the depravity of capitalism. In “Wiininaamowin, Air Pollution” by Renée E. Mazinegiizhigoo-kwe Bédard, the poet cries, “who takes care of the air? / i do! i do! i care! / i burn sage to decolonize it / to feed the spirit of the air.” In “The Advocate” by Ikeoluwapo B. Baruwa, a health and safety inspector tells us why they so carefully examine our gathering places: “I do this because you deserve more / Because I know life doesn’t hand out safety / Because the storms outside / The floodwaters, the rising heat / Are not just nature’s chaos.” Moments of care and of generosity offer us a glimpse into a world wholly opposite to the cruel logic of scarcity.

The poet, even in the heart of struggle or of banality, connects us back to life — for in these conditions of scarcity we are hungry for life. Poetry brings us back to the framework of our bodies, the only real place we can build anything from. If we let them, verses can be both a balm and a compass for trying times. As Audre Lorde offers in her 1985 essay “Poetry Is Not a Luxury,” poetry illuminates our lives in ways that open new paths forward: “In the forefront of our move toward change, there is only poetry to hint at possibility made real.”¹

The hollow political theatre of today provides thin cover for the consolidation of wealth and power by corporate elites and authoritarian demagogues. It is an age of relentless extraction — from the earth, from our bodies, from our minds, from our creativity and intellect and spiritual depth. As those in power perform a garish dance of anti-intellectualism in an attempt to appeal to the everyday person, as oil-funded interests strike up a feverish chorus of “drill, baby, drill,” and as the wildfire smoke rolls in hotter and thicker each year — more than ever, working people must reclaim poetry, because it is our birthright.

While we strive for material well-being for all, our spirits need nourishment along the way. Anticapitalist Japanese poet Kobayashi Takiji compared the experience of being a poet and intellectual while also tirelessly advocating for the working class to “holding dual citizenship.”² In times like these, working people must collapse the space between these two worlds; today we all need to hold dual citizenship.

Luckily, we have help: the history of working-class poetry is rich and varied. It is a global movement, born in the first quarter of the twentieth century when capitalism was transforming the relationships between production, scarcity, and

work, and formalized further in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. We can draw inspiration from the defiant anticolonial verses of Jared Angira, the melodic solidarity of Pablo Neruda as he writes of the plight of salt miners in Chile, or — especially poignant today — Langston Hughes’ “Let America Be America Again,” a powerful socialist foil to today’s MAGA movement.

I’ll Get Right On It builds on this legacy and deepens it to match our present circumstance in the heart of the climate crisis. This collection reminds us that proletarian poetry is for all working people, telling our own stories as we live through extraordinary times. In reading these works, we are bolstered by the courage and humour of our fellow workers, by their resilience, by their vulnerability, and by the knowledge that our fates are intertwined.

Here we may find reassurance of our united struggle. And perhaps, with the help of these verses, we may remember life, and through it, a renewed solidarity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We consider writing and editing poetry to be gifts and acts of friendship. In describing this anthology as a gift, we follow Mississauga Nishnaabeg writer, musician, and academic Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and her book retelling traditional Anishinaabeg stories titled *The Gift Is in the Making*.³ If we give you a basket that is made in a traditional way, for example, the gift is not the object you are given but the ceremony of its making; the gift is the time taken to find the right tree, to offer tobacco for the tree's sacrifice of its life, and the process of turning that tree into something new. We are stewards of the gifts we are given, and by caring for them we care for the relationships that made them possible. We have many people to thank who were part of the making of this anthology.

First, we thank the poets who attended workshops, submitted poems, and agreed to publish with us. Thank you for sharing your perspectives, experiences, and insights, and for expressing your solidarity with other working people by being part of this project. Deep gratitude to the team at Fernwood Publishing, especially our editor and advocate Tanya Andrusieczko, for seeing the potential of this project and supporting us all the way through.

Thanks to brilliant author and lawyer Katl̥j̥a for being part of our initial planning and visioning for the anthology. We are grateful for your early advocacy to meaningfully include new poets and Indigenous and Northern writers.

Contributor David C. Brydges passed away while we were finishing this anthology. We honour David's passion and advocacy for poetry, and we are grateful to have known him as a fellow poet and friend.

The title of this anthology was inspired by a line from Hari Alluri's poem "Blessing Wednesday." Thank you, Hari! We are honoured by climate activist and politician Anjali Appadurai's stunning foreword — many thanks.

We are grateful to have been joined by guest workshop facilitators Ashley Qilavaq-Savard, Paul Akpomuje, and Adesoji Babalola. We also thank workshop host organizations Common Weal Community Arts in Regina (especially

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Tom Wayman, Yvonne Blomer, and Kathryn Mockler met with us early on to talk about what it's like to edit an anthology. Thanks for your honest and generous advice in those initial meetings, and for answering our follow-up questions along the way. Special thanks to Tom for mentorship, advice, and connecting us to work poets across Turtle Island.

We thank Mark Nowak for his lecture on social poetics hosted by the University of Manitoba Institute for the Humanities (UMIH) research cluster on Ecology, Canadian Poetry and Labour, led by editorial collective member Jamie Paris. And we thank the UMIH for hosting this and several other events related to work poetry during the 2024–25 academic year. Thank you to Vanessa Warne and Ekene Maduka for all of your hard work helping us facilitate the research cluster.

Our call for poems and information about workshops was shared widely by writers' unions, unions, environmental groups, radical/progressive publications, and individuals. Thanks to everyone who helped get the word out!

We acknowledge and send solidarity to labour, climate, poetry, and arts groups whose work inspired us, including our own unions, the Worker Solidarity Network, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, Indigenous Climate Action, the Migrant Rights Network, the Climate Emergency Unit, 350.org, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Council of Canadians, the Canadian Labour Congress, the FisherPoets, the Worker Writers School, CanLit Responds, and Labour for Palestine.

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We would like to thank the lands and waters that sustained us during this process. Our work is made possible by the imperfect but still very important environmental protection laws that make the Canadian environment livable, and we were sustained by the farmers who helped to feed us during a complicated economic moment. We wrote, ran workshops, and edited on different Indigenous lands, and we acknowledge that we are treaty people who are working towards meaningful reconciliation that is based on social and economic justice.

Last but not least, we thank our families, chosen families, friends, and colleagues for their support.

Excerpt

INTRODUCTION

Bless and bless

*the co-worker who reads my mind and throws me
keys, the one who leaves a mess
I have to clean, the one who snarks
the second one to make the first one laugh. Bless
I've been all three. Bless bucket and rake, bent
machine and hole in tarp. Bless
I'll get right on it.*

—Hari Alluri

Dear Reader,

We are the Land and Labour Poetry Collective, a collaborative group of six poets, writers, and editors who first gathered in spring 2024 with a shared commitment to climate justice and an idea to make a poetry anthology about work in the climate crisis. The collective includes poets and nonfiction writers who work or have worked in farming, geology, project management, oil and gas, research, teaching, editing, and manual labour. We come from different provinces on the lands currently known as Canada; we belong to different racial, gendered, and sexual identities. Some of us are settlers, some are immigrants, some are the children of immigrants, and some are descended from Black Loyalists and the Black Refugees who came to Canada in search of freedom. The diversity of our collective has shaped our collaboration and this anthology.

This project is rooted in cross-movement calls for a just transition on lands now known as Canada. Decolonial, labour, and climate movements are calling for our transition away from fossil fuels and to net zero greenhouse gas emissions to be rooted in the principles of climate justice — Indigenous rights; workers' rights and good green jobs; migrant rights; global equity; righting historical injustices including land theft, slavery, and environmental racism; and generally committing to leave no one behind. Indigenous and decolonial initiatives for climate justice like Indigenous Climate Action, the Decolonial

Solidarity movement, and Sacred Earth Solar are resisting extractive industries and governments while asserting and building Indigenous sovereignty and renewable energy systems. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (which went on strike and was mandated back to work in 2024, a year marked by government undermining of collective bargaining) is championing an innovative “Delivering Community Power” strategy that imagines post offices as hubs and postal workers as frontline workers in a new, just green economy. And the climate movement’s calls for a Green New Deal are gaining focus and momentum, for example with 350 Canada’s All of Us campaign calling for an Indigenous-led just transition funded by taxing polluters and billionaires. Despite these and other important initiatives, the cultural work of connecting the dots between movements, and between the issues of labour and climate change, is tentative and in its early stages. It is in this context that we imagined a poetry anthology that might help to do this vital work of connection.

Why Poetry?

Poetry has long been a medium for resistance here and around the world, in part because of the way it skirts the market economy and circulates primarily as a gift. Poetry has played a role in virtually every social-justice movement, including feminism, the civil rights movement, the movement against South African apartheid, and opposition to wars, including the Vietnam War and the ongoing genocide of Palestinians. As a creative form in which the usual rules of language may not apply, poetry encourages innovation in language, expression, and ideas. It also serves as a barometer for the sometimes-unnamed but still palpable feelings or moods shaping our cultures and worlds. People turn to poetry to articulate shared feelings and build community in moments of sorrow, outrage, and hope; this makes it an excellent form for building solidarity.

Wherever there is work there are work poems, songs, and stories. As a settler-colonial country built on resource economies, Canada has a rich tradition of poetry about all kinds of work done both in service of and in resistance to the dominant extractive economy, including logging, mining, trapping, farming, fishing, rail work, domestic work, office work, hospitality work, factory work, service work, work in health care, sex work, and more. Alongside this tradition are equally long-standing traditions often excluded from work poetry that are based in traditional and cultural work, Indigenous work, racialized work, migrant work, and the work of anticolonialism and decolonization, antiracism, feminism, anti-oppression, and social justice. Poems about work

circulate both inside and outside the literary establishment — published not only in books and anthologies but also in newspapers and pamphlets, shared not only at formal poetry readings but also at community and family gatherings, rallies, on personal social media pages, or in the midst of doing the work.

When we first met as a collective, we referenced Canadian poet Tom Wayman's work-poetry anthologies *A Government Job at Last*, *Going for Coffee*, and *Paperwork*⁴ as inspiration. Wayman's foundational work as a writer, editor, teacher, and scholar of work poetry makes a distinction between poetry written about the working class by outsiders and the *insider* work poetry he champions — written by workers about their own perspectives and experiences. Wayman celebrates literary writing about work, arguing that our working lives deserve as much (if not more) attention than more widely accepted subjects for poetry such as love or nature. We spend so much time at work, and work determines so much about our lives, yet Wayman's point remains true: this aspect of our lives where we are often disempowered, infantilized, and exploited receives suspiciously little literary attention. This lack of attention serves the status quo of an extractive racial capitalist economy; this is why Wayman asks, in the title of his recent book, *If You're Not Free at Work, Where Are You Free?*⁵ In our collaboration on *I'll Get Right On It*, we turned often to Wayman's anthologies and his critical writing to consider our commitments, methods, and selection criteria. We also had a sense of being part of a new, emerging tradition of work poetry.

It should not be surprising that the thirty-year dearth of work-poetry anthologies in Canada after Wayman's projects coincided with the ascendancy and dominance of neoliberal governments, markets, and ideologies that have promoted individualism and market-based solutions while eroding unions, communities of care, and solidarity among working people. While corporations and governments successfully used an emphasis on personal responsibility (for example, in the form of individual carbon footprints) to distract from their responsibility for the climate crisis and their failure to address it, literary attention was also being diverted away from unfashionable thematic concerns including labour. A turn away from narrative poetry or the lyric *I* and toward postmodern and conceptual poetries in many ways widened the chasm between literary culture and everyday or working-class cultures, often marginalizing racialized, poor, and non-university-educated poets.

With the emergence of social media and self-publishing as new means for sharing poetry not controlled by literary gatekeepers, and with Canadian literature seeking a path forward out of its dumpster-fire era⁶ when its complicity

in racism, colonialism, and sexism came to an ugly head, we are seeing what strikes us as a friendly, collaborative moment in poetry. The poetry that excites us today is intersectional and anti-elitist, often exploring and reckoning with issues like environmentalism, settler-colonialism, Indigenous poetics, Blackness and anti-Blackness, and labour in ways that celebrate and validate lived experiences. This has included several ecopoetry anthologies — like the collaboratively edited *The Enpipe Line: 70,000+ Kilometres of Poetry Written in Resistance to the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipelines Proposal*⁷ and *Watch Your Head: Writers & Artists Respond to the Climate Crisis*⁸ — and two new work-poetry anthologies, Amber Dawn and Justin Ducharme's *Hustling Verse: An Anthology of Sex Workers' Poetry*⁹ and Shane Neilson, Sarah Fraser, and Arundhati Dhar's *The COVID Journals: Health Care Workers Write the Pandemic*.¹⁰ With these anthologies as companions, we have been considering the politics and aesthetics of a work-and-climate poetry anthology adequate to our time.

Our Process

How is the changing climate affecting your work? Has your workplace or schedule been altered by environmental change? Do events like extreme heat, floods, or storms influence your working conditions or pose risks to you or your livelihood? Have your wages or plans for the future changed? What are you doing to innovate or adapt to new or different work demands? Maybe you feel the direct effects of warming temperatures. Or other aspects of climate change might have more influence over your daily life — more frequent extreme weather, changing ocean chemistry, eroding coastlines, drought, shifting ecosystems, or pressure on health and wellness.

—The Land and Labour Poetry Collective, first call for submissions

We opened our initial call for poems, first issued in late spring of 2024, with these questions, inviting worker-poets to send us insider poems about how heat, drought, flood, fire, and other climate impacts are affecting their work. That first call also laid out our commitment to support and prioritize new writers and writers from marginalized and underrepresented groups. We encouraged submissions about the realms of unpaid labour, subsistence and traditional labour, care work, and social reproduction in which racialized, gendered, migrant, and other underrepresented forms of labour are often performed. And we promised poetry workshops to support new and emerging poets.

While we saw a good response to that initial call, we also noticed some gaps. Most submissions were from our writer communities and literary networks, with our efforts to reach working people through unions and other labour and climate groups seeming mostly to have fallen flat. And we heard from several people that they saw no connection between their jobs and climate change. Although the questions above were ones we knew we wanted the submissions and ultimately the anthology to answer, we realized posing them in this way assumed the dots we are seeking to connect with this anthology were already connected in common-sense ideas about work and climate change — and that’s just not yet the case. We needed to step back and ask different questions to get the answers we were looking for.

By fall 2024, we had decided to extend our call, to make extra efforts to reach nonwriters and a greater diversity of working people, to welcome the submissions that were already coming in from outside Canada and reach out to work-poetry networks in the US, and to adjust our messaging to emphasize our belief that all workers are labouring in the context of the present climate emergency. Our fall posters, which we put up in our local grocery stores, libraries, union halls, universities, community centres, in labour and radical media, and on our website, read, “Hey Worker! We are seeking poems for an anthology about what it’s like to do your job (paid or unpaid), make a living, or just get by in our age of climate change and uncertainty.” This change in strategy created a boost, a shift, and more diversity in our submissions.

That fall, the editorial collective along with guest facilitators Ashley Qilavaq-Savard, Paul Akpomuje, and Adesoji Babalola offered a total of ten poetry workshops between us — six online and four in person (in Regina, SK; Brandon, MB; Winnipeg, MB; and Kingston, ON), attended by over 100 participants. We were inspired by American poet Mark Nowak’s book *Social Poetics*,¹¹ especially his writing on the radical tradition of the poetry workshop, his experience facilitating workshops as part of the Worker Writers School in New York City, and his commitment to redefining working-class literature to include and prioritize writing by immigrants, migrants, precarious and underemployed workers, prisoners, refugees, and other underrepresented workers. We also drew inspiration from the poems by Worker Writers School poets that are included in Nowak’s book — and used several of them as examples.

Although we designed and planned the workshops with a commitment to supporting new writers, it was through the experience of running the workshops that we developed a clearer sense of what that support might look like.

The participants encouraged us to consider how we would help them go from being workshop participants and new or first-time writers to becoming anthology contributors. We adapted our workshop design to include more examples of workers' form poetry (like haiku, pantoum, and concrete poems), which we found to be good entryways for new poets, and we offered to help participants revise their poems after the workshops. The people we met in the workshops shared their wisdom, their lived experience of work in the climate emergency, and their powerful poems, and we are honoured to include many of them as contributors to the anthology.

By the end of 2024, we had received far more poetry than we could fit in one anthology. We are pleased to share with you this selection from a large and growing area of poetic and popular attention and concern. *I'll Get Right On It: Poems on Working Life in the Climate Crisis* is a political art project that has caused us to rethink our likes, tastes, and ideas about what makes a good work poem and a good anthology. The poems in this collection are rooted in a variety of jobs and perspectives, and in a range of poetry traditions, from spoken-word to concrete, pantoum to free verse, protest song to storybook, and more.

Connecting the Dots between Work and Climate

Not long ago, it was possible to speak of climate change as something that might someday impact the way people work. It is now clear that climate change is already impacting our daily lives and the way many of us work today. We see this reflected in the poetry of *I'll Get Right On It*.

Where, when, why, and how we work are changing as once-uncommon extremes become ordinary, weather becomes more erratic, and many folks gain first-hand experience preparing for or responding to more frequent disasters. Sometimes the connections between causes and effects are direct, as in the downpours and flooding a roofer contends with in Gabriel "ArchAngel" Ehijie's poem "Undefeated: A Roofer's Haiku" and the hotter-every-year conditions as a teacher and her students try to learn in Catherine Parcaud's "Sweltering College Classrooms."

In other cases the links between the changing climate and labour conditions are more nuanced, such as a young job-seeker making a white-knuckle drive through a "Storm of a century" for a job interview in Caleigh Miller's "Good Indian." Climate-related disabilities and health conditions can reduce people's ability to do paid and unpaid work; and global warming further

endangers people with disabilities, as Sydney Taylor depicts in “sacrifice,” which contemplates how climate events such as floods and fires pose unique threats when “hospital workers flee” and “my wheelchair won’t work in the water.”

Some industries are taking an opportunistic approach to climate change, extracting as many resources as they can while they still can, or expanding into new markets and resource frontiers opened by global warming. Ross Belor’s “Bitumen Refining and Its Outcomes: A Short Course” reflects on this kind of work in an extractive industry (“We didn’t care how they got it out of the ground. We were heroes”), followed by the disillusionment and grief that came after retirement and an awakening around climate change (“we were not heroes, I watched / California burn”). With the majority of mining companies globally headquartered in Canada, Adhika Ezra’s “Bad Actors” describes the expansion of resource extraction in the Global South as “hungry men [swallowing] cities as vitamins for growth” and points to the hypocrisy of Canada treating migrants (including those from climate-affected regions) as “wastewater, the runoff / After *cheap foreign labour* has been wrung out of the body.”

Seasonal changes and more frequent extreme weather events impact local tourism and modify farming practices and growing seasons. We see extreme weather impacts in Claire Gordon’s poem “Beaver Creek Bushwork” about cleanup of the “seriously heinous carnage” after the bomb cyclone that hit BC while we were making this anthology. In Credell Simeon’s “Islanders Prepare for Category 4,” “Tourism stands in traumatic pause” — one of the impacts of Hurricane Beryl that Grenadian islanders have no choice but to “Bear.” Trisia Eddy Wood’s “The Horses Still Need Fed Today” concerns the unthinkable but necessary planning for “ways to evacuate a herd / of twenty-seven horses” in a wildfire, while Leslie Kaup’s “a farmer’s lament” hints at the adaptations farmers have no choice but to make in consecutive drought years.

Daily work schedules in industries like construction and agriculture are changing to avoid peak temperatures and extreme heat. At the same time, other workers continue to labour in increasingly unsafe conditions, while workplaces or labour regulations fail or refuse to adapt. Ray Owen’s “The Song of the Invasive Vegetation Management Technician” describes a job the speaker says he will do for one last season and “no more”: “By mid-July, the baking ground is belching H₂S / And UV rays and wildfire smoke make Hell of all the rest // I’m swimming in my coveralls, their seams are crusted white / And it’s been too hot to sleep this week ’til very late at night / But up I get at four a.m.; my debts won’t pay themselves.” Workers are drawing attention to unsafe conditions,

and as temperatures, cost of living, and corporate profits rise, baker Levy Abad calls on workers to “Rise, Get Organized.”

Some folks are working to mitigate the impacts of climate change through research, technology, revitalizing traditional practices, community work, education, and innovation in their fields. We see these kinds of work in aquatic biologist Tazi Rodrigues’s “above epilimnion, warming too,” journalist Lindsay Bird’s “Interview at Sea,” and Cree and Anishinaabe educator Lance Guilbault’s “Climate Adversity,” which depicts the absurdity of how climate change both affects his students’ ability to learn and propels him to teach. Mike Bagamery writes in “Serving La Barriere Park” about his climate activism, citizen science, and acts of DIY invasive species removal. Others find themselves working in roles that respond to extreme weather, disasters, and the changing environment — from naturalist Karen Loucks’s notes documenting the march of invasive species in “An Inordinate Number of Insects (Field Notes from a Naturalist)” to a front-line health-care worker “nursing refugees of / Climate crises / Corporate injustice / COVID-19 hellfire / Geopolitical racism / Medical disparities” while enduring the insufferably “nice” relations of whiteness in Lena Palacios’s poem “Nice People Weather Speak.”

Beyond labour that directly interfaces with the effects of climate change, many people simply need to work more hours or stay in unhealthy or exploitative situations to afford basic necessities that are increasingly expensive due to climate change in combination with other societal challenges. Kate Siklosi writes in “bioX” about the tradeoffs of labour in the region known as Chemical Valley: “the orange glow of a good life: pensions and / scholarships and generous salaries paid / at the cost of cancers, death, settlement / payments and everything you could want / and need.” In Myla Chartrand’s “May I Help You?” a retail worker does a job to which she sees no alternative, thinking, “Miss when I didn’t know how much trash there really is.” The sandblaster in Rob Madden’s “I Strap the Suit On” thinks about more than this specific job when he says, “this is what I do. / obliterate something to keep something else / from falling apart.” Looking back on his work for Manitoba Highways and Manitoba Hydro, Duncan Mercredi’s poem “blue collar memories” concludes simply with “my hands hurt.”

When we consider the feelings and moods worker poets convey about work in the age of climate change, we note an undercurrent of deep grief and sadness, exemplified in Hanako Teranishi’s poem “A Prayer for Fish” in which a server in a Japanese restaurant honours and mourns the life of a bluefin tuna,

an endangered species turned into “pink gold” by the risk of its extinction; and Shosone-Bannock poet and storyteller Ed Edmo’s observation “there has been something / that has disappeared / from my mother earth.”

There is much to grieve, but perhaps the most pervasive mood of *I’ll Get Right On It* is irony, rooted in the disempowering climate- and work-related feelings of repressed urgency, complacency, futility, despondency, isolation, shame, despair, betrayal, and dread. The current strategy of extractive industry, the billionaire class, and our federal and provincial governments is climate delay — setting net-zero targets without implementing the changes needed to meet them, while promising and depending on questionable and as-yet unproven technological fixes such as large-scale carbon capture and storage and geoengineering. In the poignant language of several call-centre workers featured in this anthology (“The phone is ringing” is an urgent refrain in Jessica Smithies’ “Fire Season”), working people are effectively being told to “hold,” to stay calm while the house burns around us. Meanwhile, Fiona Conway’s poem “988” tries to respond to a child calling into a suicide line, “so afraid of the way / her breath warms the world.”

Climate dread permeates every aspect of contemporary working life. As our bosses and our governments assure us that they are working on it, and that we are going to be ok, and as we are hired to convey the same empty reassurances to other working people, young workers like the speaker of Alison Holliday’s poem “where do you see yourself in five years?” count their days and mark their calendars by ominous climate records like “*the hottest day of my life so far*.” Smoke, wildfires, floods, storms, evacuations, pollution, environmental racism, and other threats form the backdrop of countless poems in this collection. It is hard to make connections, to build coalitions, and to do the work of fixing things when we are frozen with dread, yet it is under such conditions that we urgently need to do exactly these things. Throughout *I’ll Get Right On It* we see examples of workers’ ironic, ambivalent, frustrated, and bold refusals of apathy and despair, for example Zahra Tootonsab’s use of flames and smoke to link students’ Palestine solidarity with the climate justice movement: “we wreak / wildfires tired of your bullshit” and “I am the smoke of revolutions to continue / choking you out.”

We find hope in poems that resist the ideas that no one cares or that we are powerless. Early childhood educator Mhao (em) Palevino sees promise in the compassionate children she cares for, the speaker in Brad Fougere’s poem “Barry” contemplates organizing a union at the grocery store, and Jean Clipsham continues her raging-granny activism in “Climate Action Is My

Retirement Job.” Artist Kanin Gosbee honours persistence and the shifts it produces: “Still, we persist // Another load of laundry / Cycles repeat, But change.” Many poets find hope in the land — foxtail barley for oil sands construction worker David C. Brydges, a summer of gentle rain and blooming flowers after years of flooding and drought for farmer Jennifer deGroot, and gardening and writing as ways “to plant the seeds of peasant futurisms” for Sanita Fejzić. Inuk poet Ashley Qilavaq-Savard finds “clarity and vitality” and “the self-realization of resilience” in a “ferce” snowstorm. Such moments of kinship and care matter as antidotes to despair and points of connection among working people.

How Poetry Builds Solidarity among Working People

*People forget that pearls are
made from grief — jewelled evidence of wounds sustained while
siphoning toxins from the turbid torrent of capitalism.*

—Eesha Nilan

The poems in *I'll Get Right On It* are rooted in the contributors' distinct and seemingly isolated insider experiences of the work it takes to thrive, survive, or just get by in the age of climate change. Like the pearls “made from grief” described in Eesha Nilan's poem “Emotional Labour,” however, these poems are materially and analytically linked as individual emotional and creative products of the shared experience of enduring the conditions of life under late capitalism and in the climate emergency. Taken together, they demonstrate what it means to say, as Nilan does, that resilience “is cultivated among us not within us.” Together, the poems do the important emotional labour of moving from the individual to the collective — a movement of social poetics that encourages working people to recognize common experiences, feelings, and causes. Like the image of individual bodies gestating pearls or poems amid the ravages of climate change, or like the string of t-sounds in *toxins*, *turbid*, *torrent*, and *capitalism* that resonates across Nilan's words and resembles a string of pearls, something resonates from one poem to another. It is in this sense that we see this anthology using poetry as a site for connection, for being seen, understood, and heard, and for forming shared analyses of power and theories of change — in other words, as a tool for building solidarity and climate justice.

Nilan depicts solidarity as emotional labour — a kind of work that is essential to the survival of our communities and ecosystems yet that is often

racialized, gendered, unpaid, and underappreciated. While doing the emotional labour of making this anthology, we have thought of our work, similarly, as a form of friendship. We believe that in a climate emergency there is an urgency to the politics of friendship, rooted in a real sense of kinship among working people, with communities outside our own, and with planetary life. Friendship is more than a feeling; it is a set of activities, a way of behaving towards another, that is based on a desire for mutual flourishing. We must care about the suffering of people we do not know, who we may never encounter, and who are not even born yet. In short, we have come to a moment in time when we must treat strangers as friends.

The title of this anthology was inspired by a line from the poem “Blessing Wednesday” by our friend and contributor Hari Alluri. The poem is a list of blessings, or of things to bless — things that might usually be framed as difficulties or complaints about the poet’s job or his coworkers. When Alluri writes “Bless / I’ll get right on it”¹² he is both complaining about and honouring the ways workers respond to commands, to urgency, or to responsibilities fairly or unfairly placed on them. People who struggle to make ends meet, who are facing mounting precarity and insecurity, and who must work for a living have little choice or control over a destructive economy that churns out pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, threatening our communities and planetary life. Yet here we find ourselves, with our leaders, the corporations we work for and depend on, and the tech-bros who buy and sell our data bent on their profit and our destruction. “I’ll get right on it” can be interpreted as an individual worker’s expression of indifference, futility, resignation, or resistance. In the spirit of friendship and solidarity — and in the potential movement from *I* to *we* — it is also an expression of readiness. It shows that working people together have the power and the potential to organize, to care for one another, to struggle, and to “get right on” the project of demanding and building a greener and more just world.

And so, dear reader, we welcome you not just as a reader but also as a friend. Our hope is that, by reading this anthology, you will feel a connection with the working people whose poems are gathered here, and that together we will build our regard for each other and our wider communities, along with networks of solidarity, action, and care.

In solidarity,
The Land and Labour Poetry Collective

Excerpt



Excerpt

THE CONTRIBUTORS

Levy Abad writes for *Pilipino Express* in Winnipeg. He has two published books about Filipino activists and musicians in Winnipeg, *Giving Back, Paying Forward* and *Rhythms and Resistance*. He was a member of a workers' cultural group of the May 1st labour movement (KMU) in the Philippines. Currently, he works as a baker/oven and stacker operator.

Ruchini Abayakoon is a PhD candidate in the environmental humanities, exploring the intersection of postcolonial studies, environmental justice, and Sri Lankan literature. She is also an earring maker, writer, emerging plant mom, and avid people-watcher.

Peace Akintade-Oluwagbeye, Saskatchewan Poet Laureate, is an African-Canadian interdisciplinary poet and chorus-poem playwright residing in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Organically from Yorubaland Nigeria, Peace explores the intersectionality of the artist community by dipping her honey-stained fingers into poetry, dance, performance art, critical research, and the theatre world. Peace is a recipient of the RBC SaskArts Emerging Artist Award and the Platinum Jubilee Queen's Medal.

Paul Akpomuje is a doctoral candidate at Queen's University. His work explores visa stories, poetics of migration, identity, black studies, and social justice. He co-convened The Poetics of Migration, an event that intersects poetry with community stories to unpack issues of displacement and belonging, immigration paperwork, and the onerous work of travelling while black.

Hari Alluri is author of *Tabako on the Windowsill* (Brick Books, 2025), *The Flayed City* (Kaya, 2017), and chapbook *Our Echo of Sudden Mercy* (Next Page, 2022). A migrant poet, editor, and facilitator whose work includes dock crew, warehouse, construction, landscaper, and bookseller, his award-winning writing is published widely.

Anjali Appadurai is Director of Campaigns with the Climate Emergency Unit and the Director of the Padma Centre for Climate Justice. The Padma Centre is a hub for diasporic communities across Canada to build power around issues of climate and economic justice. Anjali has worked as a climate activist and campaigner for over fifteen years.

Kurt Armstrong is a builder, writer, and lay Anglican minister. He lives in the West Broadway neighbourhood of Winnipeg with his family.

Mike Bagamery lives in Winnipeg, Manitoba, on Treaty One territory. He is neurodivergent/“disabled.” He has served as an organizer for the Canadian Council on Invasive Species, as a parliamentary intern through GreenPAC, and as a fundraiser for the Wilderness Committee. He provides holistic research for mass movements.

Ikeoluwapo B. Baruwa is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University, Canada. He has served as an occupational health and safety officer at PSAC 901, Queen’s University. Currently, he is a certified joint health and safety committee co-chair and a steward in the Faculty of Education.

Jessica Bebenek (she/her) is a queer, chronically ill poet & interdisciplinary artist who has earned her living as a cashier, a waitress, an independent publisher, a childcare provider, a teaching assistant, a textile artist, a risograph printer, a bookmaker, a community workshop leader, a professor, and, somehow, a poet. Find Jessica online at www.jessicabebenek.art / @notyrmuse.

Dr. Renée E. Mazinegiizhigoo-kwe Bédard is Anishinaabeg, Kanien’kehá:ka, and French Canadian. She is a member of Dokis First Nation, Ontario, Canada. Currently, she is an Assistant Professor at Western University in both the Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies Department and the Indigenous Studies program. Her research primarily focuses on Anishinaabeg women, motherhood, traditional knowledge, and maternal culture.

Ross Belot is a poet, photographer, translator, filmmaker, and op-ed writer on climate change inaction. Before all that, he worked for over three decades in the fossil-fuel industry. His latest poetry collection is *Moving to Climate Change Hours* (Wolsak & Wynn, 2020). He lives in Hamilton, Ontario sometimes.

Lindsay Bird is a poet and documentary maker. As a journalist, she’s interested in covering contemporary realities of rural Canada, as well as climate change. Her first poetry collection, *Boom Time* (Gaspereau, 2019), is a semi-autobiographical collection set in the oil sands of Fort McMurray.

Jon Broderick has been a commercial salmon fisherman since 1976, first as a deckhand seining in Kodiak, then gillnetting in Southeast Alaska and, since 1988, running the family set net outfit each summer in Bristol Bay, Alaska. He, his wife Doreen, and most of his family live off-season on the Oregon coast.

David C. Brydges is a Construction & General Workers Union Local 92 member in Edmonton, Alberta. He is artistic director of Spring Pulse Poetry Festival in Northern Ontario and “Poet Emissary” for the Ontario Poetry Society. David published two chapbooks about the oil sands, *Anthologies of the Misshapen* and *Crude Truths*.

Jane Byers has published two memoirs, *Coming Home from the Candy Factory* (2025) and *Small Courage* (2020), and two poetry collections, *Acquired*

Community (2016) and *Steeling Effects* (2014), with Caitlin Press. She was the 2018 Writer in Residence for SFU's Archives of Lesbian Oral Testimony and is an ergonomist. She has poems and essays published in anthologies and literary journals including *Best Canadian Poetry 2014*. Find more on her website: janebyerswriter.com.

Ellen Chang-Richardson is an award-winning poet, multi-genre writer, judicial assistant, and co-founder of Riverbed Reading Series. The author of *Blood Belies* (Wolsak & Wynn, 2024), their work has appeared in *Augur*, *Grain*, *Plenitude*, *Room*, *Watch Your Head*, and more. They write to shine a light. Find out more at www.ehjchang.com.

Myla Chartrand is a writer, storyteller, and an avid lover of words of all kinds. Her previous job as a minimum-wage retail employee now shapes both her creative endeavours as well as her approach to the global climate crisis.

Rina Garcia Chua (she/her/siya) is a creative and critical scholar from the Philippines, with publications in magazines and journals worldwide. She has been a migrant mother, an advocate for migrant rights, a university instructor and administrator, and an ecopoet. Rina is the author of the poetry collection *A Geography of (Un)Natural Hazards* (Sampaguita, 2025).

Jean Clipsham is a retired public health nurse/nurse practitioner. Her poem is about how climate-change action has become the focus of her life in retirement and about ageism, which exists even in the climate-change movement.

Fiona Conway worked on Canada's national suicide crisis line (now 988) between 2021 and 2023, where she often encountered the despair very young people felt about their future in a rapidly warming world. Fiona is now studying medicine, hoping to work with children, and keeping their fear in mind.

Renee Cronley is a writer from Manitoba who stepped away from nursing to prioritize her children and has been channeling her knowledge and experiences into a poetry book about nursing burnout. Renee can be found at www.reneecronley.com.

Jim Daniels is from a family of Detroit autoworkers. His grandfather worked for Packard, his father worked for Ford's, his brother worked for Chrysler's. Jim also worked at Ford's — it paid for college. A retired educator, Jim now tries to honour this history, and these lives, in his writing.

Jennifer deGroot lives and works with her family on Big Oak Farm near Morden, Manitoba. Her days are filled with raising kids, making food, gardening, cheesemaking, beekeeping, tending chickens and sheep, natural dyeing, sewing, knitting, friends, reading, walking, teaching English to new Canadians, and a whole lot of dishwashing.

Justene Dion-Glowa is a queer Métis internationally published author, artist, and death doula. Their award-nominated debut collection, *Trailer Park Shakes* (Brick), was released in 2022. They have been diligently working within the non-profit industrial complex for 13 years, hoping that someday something they do will change someone's life for the better.

Amanda Donnelly lives in Winnipeg, Manitoba, on Treaty One territory, where she works as a massage therapist. She is a mother, wife, coffee-lover, and retro video game enthusiast.

Martin Durkin is a Canadian writer with three published books; he also works in security. His stories have appeared in *The Bay Today* from North Bay, Ontario. In 2024 several poems and stories were published in the anthology *Otherwise Engaged*, vol 14. Security has been part of Durkin's ongoing narrative.

Trisia Eddy Woods (she/her) is the author of *A Road Map for Finding Wild Horses* (Turnstone, 2024). A former editor for Red Nettle Press, Trisia's writing has appeared in a variety of literary journals and chapbooks across North America. She and her family, both human and nonhuman, reside in Treaty 6 territory.

Ed Edmo is a Shoshone-Bannock poet, playwright, storyteller, tour guide, and lecturer/consultant on Northwest tribal culture. He grew up in Celilo Falls on the Columbia River. The river was a welcome playmate that never had been called in for dinner. He watched the falls being flooded March 10, 1957. He has the thunder of the falls in his heart.

Gabriel "ArchAngel" Ehijie is a Canadian based Nigerian spoken-word poet, screenwriter, and aspiring filmmaker. The 2021 winner of the Institute of Afrikology Resource Centre's "Heritage Month Poetry Competition" and co-author of the book *Isles* (Soyos, 2022) is an alumnus of the University of Regina, with a season's experience in residential roofing.

Kristian Enright is a Treaty One writer who will be publishing a full-length book of poetry called *Postmodern Weather Report* (Turnstone, 2025) that deals with climate change. He is also working on several other projects, including a long poem and a collection of short stories called "The Book of Conversations."

Adhika Ezra is an Indonesian social studies graduate student and organizer. His hope is sustained by the communities that surround him — communities made of people who embody care and refuse to be apathetic in a society that normalizes violence.

Sanita Fejzić is a poet, playwright, and writer who grows tomatoes, strawberries, peppers, lettuce, beans, cucumbers, radishes, and other edibles. The child of Bosniak peasants, Sanita is the first in her family born in the city. She lives on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabeg people in Ottawa.

Brad Fougere is an IWW member working to build an independent shopfloor committee at his workplace on unceded unsundered Mi'kmaq territory. He plays bass in post-metal band Burdened and is more hopeful than his poem might suggest.

Alex Gallo-Brown is a labour organizer and writer who lives in Seattle. He is the author of *Variations of Labor* (Chin Music, 2019), a collection of poems and short stories, and *The Language of Grief* (2012), a collection of poems.

Davidson Garrett is a poet and actor living in New York City. He drove a yellow taxi for 40 years to supplement his artistic pursuits. Davidson is the author of two poetry collections and is a member of the Worker Writers School led by the poet Mark Nowak.

A.W. Glen is a Winnipeg-based musician, writer, and editor. She recently published her first novel, *Bukowski's Broken Family Band* (2024), on Transistor 66 Records. She once worked herself into a panic doing freelance editing for environmental NGOs, but she's currently enjoying gentler work as the managing editor for *Contemporary Verse 2*.

Claire Gordon's (she/her) ecofeminist interest was first sparked while working in provincial parks assessing hazard trees, clearing and bucking windfall, maintaining trails, and building boardwalks. Recently, she's been participating in slope and stream channel stabilization with Redd Fish Restoration. Claire is a writer and photographer (35mm) based in Yuułu?if?ath (Ucluelet, BC).

Kanin Gosbee is both a father and an artist, therefore it is his job to reflect the world we live in. Through his own experiences as well as others that inspire him, he breaks down concepts and reforms them into something that is more digestible for an audience.

Lance Guilbault is Cree and Anishinaabe from Fisher River Cree Nation and Roseau River Anishinaabe Nation. He believes that sobriety is life. Writing and teaching are passions for Lance, trying to inspire his students to walk upon Mother Earth mino-pimatisiwin, in a good way. Tobacco down, prayers up.

Yolanda Hansen lives and writes on Treaty 4 where she works with the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild and is a mom to two energetic boys. Her work has appeared in *Briarpatch*, *Deep Wild Journal*, and *Mantis* and is supported by SK Arts. She lives in Regina with her family.

Carla Harris (they/she) is a neurodivergent disabled, queer enby writer, performer, and interdisciplinary artist from Treaty 4 territory, living in Regina, Saskatchewan. They have had publications with the League of Canadian Poets, *Antilang*, and Frog Hollow Press. Harris teaches creative improvisation and is constantly writing in unconfined #CripTime.

Alison Holliday is a Scottish Immigrant living on Treaty One Land in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She graduated from the University of Manitoba in 2023 and has been working part-time jobs in theatre production and retail since. Her day-to-day labour consists of selling things, database mass reduction, and waiting for the phone to ring.

Olivia Ingram has mostly worked as a barista in non-unionized cafes in so-called Vancouver. Their art examines how urban spaces and subjects are shaped by moments, class, and geophysical capitalism. Olivia's poetry has been published in independent magazines and an experimental-writing anthology. They hold a couple of English degrees from Canadian universities.

Keith Inman worked as a steamfitter and troubleshooter (troublemaker) in the paper industry. Now, over fifty libraries worldwide carry his books. Some of Keith's favourite pastimes are canoeing, gardening, and maintaining his old limestone home, with his wife, in Niagara. The Indo-European language says his name means "of the forest."

James Croal Jackson is a Filipino-American poet working in film production. His latest chapbook is *A God You Believed In* (Pinhole, 2023). Recent poems are in *Iterant*, *Skipjack Review*, and *The Indianapolis Review*. He edits *The Mantle Poetry* from Nashville, Tennessee. Find more information at jamescroaljackson.com.

SJ Jones is a mixed-race African Nova Scotian and white settler. They are currently a PhD student in the History Department at Dalhousie University where they are researching the significant agricultural contributions made by the enslaved and free Black population in 18th-century Mi'kma'ki. They tend a flock of 12 Icelandic sheep.

Leslie Kaup lives in southern Minnesota with her husband, Bill, and various critters. She is a cook, farmer, activist, antiques dealer, and writer.

Karen Loucks (formerly Chester) lives on Vancouver Island, BC, the unceded traditional territory of the lək'wəḡən speaking peoples. She worked as a park naturalist for many years. Her poetry has been published in several anthologies, was longlisted for the CBC Poetry Prize (2023), and won the High Marsh Press chapbook contest (2024).

Past Tofino Poet Laureate **Christine Lowther** has published four poetry collections and edited two poetry anthologies. Her memoir *Blockade: Diaries of a Forest Defender* was published in 2025 by Caitlin Press. Her two day jobs are Assistant at Vancouver Island Regional Library in Tofino's Legion basement, and cleaning at Tofino General Hospital.

Rob Madden is a writer and labourer living on the traditional and unceded territories of the Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh nations in the City of North Vancouver, BC. “I Strap the Suit On” was inspired by sand-blasting work. He is currently employed by Canada Post.

Lia M. Markin is a Colombian-Jewish poet and writer whose work explores identity, trauma, and migration. Drawing from years of experience in call centres, healthcare, and working with marginalized communities, her writing delves into themes of survival, displacement, and systemic inequities.

M.S. Marquart (she/her) is a disabled, mixed race Asian American emerging poet. Her writing seeks to shed light on the hidden daily lives of people living with long COVID and myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS). You can find her on Instagram at @m_s_marquart or at www.msmarquart.com.

Caitlin McCullam-Arnal (she/her) is a paid Data Collections Clerk and substitute teacher. For free, she loves her six cats, two dogs, and a partner who is a farmer/rancher. She worked for an oilfield service company in Treaty 4, southwest Saskatchewan, where she now lives. Her work-in-progress includes a novel and a poetry manuscript about cougars.

Leah McInnis is an artist and researcher from Fort McMurray, AB. She has worked as an arts administrator, educator, designer, technician, consultant, and assistant in cities throughout Canada to support her studio practice. Leah is currently working on an Interdisciplinary PhD in Media & Artistic Research at the University of Regina.

Duncan Mercredi is a Cree-mixed (Métis) writer/storyteller born in Misipawistik aka Grand Rapids, MB and now lives in Winnipeg, MB. His poem “blue collar memories” covers his blue collar days working with MB Highways and Manitoba Hydro.

Caleigh Miller (she/her) is a Métis woman from Saskatchewan who now calls the Yukon home. She works in Human Resources, advocating for diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion, and consideration of a Northern and Indigenous lens to make work better for people.

Lisa Mulrooney is a teacher in Stony Plain, Alberta. For 12 years, her husband worked rotational shift work at remote oil sands sites near Fort McKay. A former Poet Laureate of Stony Plain, Lisa co-founded Parkland Poets’ Society and holds a master’s in creative writing from Teesside University, UK.

Lorri Neilsen Glenn, author and contributing editor of fifteen titles of poetry, nonfiction and scholarly work, was Halifax’s first Métis Poet Laureate. Professor Emerita at Mount Saint Vincent University and a University of King’s College MFA mentor, her latest book is *The Old Moon in Her Arms: Women I Have Known and Been* (Nimbus, 2024).

Eesha Nilan is a neuroqueer writer in their forties who turned to poetry while on a career sabbatical due to disability. Their work weaves themes of hybridity, queer ecology, and coming into age as a second-generation South Asian immigrant and interdisciplinary educator living in K'emk'emeláy (Vancouver).

Cole Osiowy is a young man, born and raised in Winnipeg. In 2023 he dropped out of art school to hang Christmas lights for a living.

Ray Owen is a seasonal labourer and aspiring writer who moves around Western Canada. He is passionate about the environment and the modern application of mythology.

Lena Palacios is a queer, disabled, mixed-race Chicana with Tepehuana and settler ancestry. They play with their cats/muses, Sonny, Sher, and Kimchi, when not writing on the run. She won the 2024 Quebec Writers' Federation's carte blanche prize and was shortlisted for *The Fiddlehead's* 2024 Creative Nonfiction Contest and *The Malahat Review's* 2025 Open Season Awards (Poetry).

Mhao (em) Palevino is a 29-year-old immigrant from the Philippines. Most of her past work aimed at serving marginalized sectors and the environment. Now here in Canada, she does her best to still be an advocate for others through her new path in early childhood education.

Catherine Parceaud is an English as a Second Language college teacher at a francophone Cégep in Rimouski, Quebec. She has also taught French and English primary school in Nunavik, Northern Quebec.

Judy Parceaud was born near London, England in 1940. She moved to Windsor in 1947 with her family where she grew up cherishing nature and open spaces. In 1963 she moved to Canada as a young bride, settling in Northern Quebec. Thrifty and frugal values have guided her throughout her life.

Marjorie Poor is an editor for a provincial government. She is also the editor of *Prairie books NOW* and a fiction editor at *Prairie Fire*. Her poems have appeared in *Vallum*, *CV2*, and *Prairie Fire*, and her chapbook of centos, *Voices [That] Haunt Us*, was published by JackPine Press in 2024.

Ashley Qilavaq-Savard is an Inuk poet, writer, artist, and filmmaker born and raised in Iqaluit, Nunavut. Her first book of poetry, *Where the Sea Kuniks the Land* (Inhabit, 2023), explores themes of decolonization, intergenerational trauma, language, and love for Inuit Nunangat.

Bonnie Quan Symons has had her poems published in journals in Canada, the United States, and Australia. She worked for Canadian universities and hospitals as a secretary/program assistant. She currently works at BC Teachers' Federation in Vancouver, Canada. She belongs to Pandora's Collective, Poetic Justice, and Writers' International Network (WIN) Canada.

Tazi Rodrigues (she/her) is a writer, aquatic biologist, and data wrangler for her neighbourhood pollinator garden. From Winnipeg, she currently lives on the unceded land of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation (Ottawa, ON). Her poems have recently appeared in *Arc Poetry Magazine*, *CV2*, and *The Malahat Review*.

Ron Romanowski is from North End Winnipeg. He was a postal worker, shop steward, and union activist. Injured on the job, his CUPW contract allowed him to retire, using his writing to remain active in progressive politics. Ron's tenth book of poetry, *10,000 Dancers Working Off Broadway*, was published by Augustine Hand Press in spring 2025.

Ivan A. Salazar M., a passionate poet from a rich literary tradition, captures the human condition in his work. As the author of three bilingual poetry collections, *Temporal Echoes* (2024), *Weaver of Dreams* (2025), and *If You Head South* (2025), he bridges cultures through his words.

Christina Shah works in heavy industrial sales in Vancouver. Her poetry has appeared in numerous journals, was shortlisted for 2021's Ralph Gustafson Prize, and was selected for *Best Canadian Poetry 2023*. *rig veda* (Anstruther) was released in 2023; *if: prey, then: huntress* (Nightwood) in fall 2025.

Kate Siklosi is a poet, publisher, scholar, and third-generation oil and gas worker in the Chemical Valley of Sarnia, Ontario for a few summers where she worked as a labourer in several petrochemical plants. Her current work is in employment equity, and her creative work includes *Selvage* (Invisible, 2023) and *leavings* (Timglaslet, 2021). She is co-founding editor of Gap Riot Press.

Credell Simeon is a Black Canadian who was born and raised in Grenada, where she visits often. She currently lives and works in Saskatchewan. She is a passionate writer, storyteller, and published researcher in data science. Her powerful storytelling brings light to the need for communities to build climate resiliency and sustainability.

Sabrina Spenser Smith is a former roofer from Regina who currently works as a copywriter in Winnipeg. In 2023, she published her first poetry collection, *A Brief Relief from Hunger* (Gordon Hill), which explores the toxic drug crisis in British Columbia.

Jessica Smithies is a queer writer currently living in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She currently works full time for an insurance brokerage. Her piece "Fire Season" reflects her experience working in a call centre during the 2023 Kelowna fire. In her free time, Jessica enjoys writing, reading, and playing with cats.

Nearly 30 years ago, **Ella Soper** worked in BC, planting black spruce seedlings and cottonwood poplar whips, climbing high into the branches of mature evergreens and pruning her way down, and burning slash. She now lives in

Ontario and has a daughter who works in the Interior as an Archeological Field Technician.

Dani Spinosa has too many jobs and not enough job security. She works as an adjunct professor, a software developer, a publisher and founding co-editor at the feminist micropress Gap Riot, managing editor of the *Electronic Literature Directory*, President at the feminist literary journal *Canthius*, and an amateur gardener.

Sydney Taylor is a spoken word poet and multidisciplinary artist from Treaty 4 territory. They have done paid and unpaid work in environmental activism and disability justice. Disabled organizers often perform uncompensated and unrecognized labour for our communities, and Sydney's poem is a nod to the work they do while barely staying afloat themselves.

Luana Terán is a queer woman from Barranquilla, Colombia. She moved to Canada in 2023 and is studying creative writing in college. She previously worked at a medical call centre assisting patients with chronic pain and is now working at a coffee shop.

Hanako Teranishi (they/them) is an MA student at Simon Fraser University. They are a writer, poet, and writing tutor. They volunteer with multiple Japanese Canadian community organizations. Their first jobs were in the food and service industry. They worked at a Japanese restaurant in Winnipeg for four years as a server.

Zahra Tootonsab is a poet-activist and PhD candidate at McMaster University. Her doctoral project uses poetry to explore the relationship between water, sheltering, and decolonial flourishing from so-called Canada to Iran. Her work (in/with/about community) embodies how decolonial sheltering/living can address the challenges of the global climate crisis.

Jennifer Wickham is a Cas Yikh (Grizzly House) member of the Gidimt'en (Bear/Wolf) clan of the Wet'suwet'en nation. She has been writing poetry since childhood and has published one collection titled *I'm a Real Skin* (2013). She is an artist, trained high school educator, director/producer of *YINTAH* (2024), and Gidimt'en Checkpoint Media Coordinator.

Evan Woelk Balzer is a project coordinator at the Nature Conservancy of Canada, where he facilitates prairie grassland stewardship across Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. He works collaboratively with cattle producers, Indigenous communities, and ENGOS, among others, to pursue a thriving future for Canada's prairie grasslands.

THE LAND AND LABOUR POETRY COLLECTIVE

Moni Brar comes from a long lineage of subsistence farmers and has worked in 14 countries. She has worked as a fruit picker, tree sorter, customs officer, academic, swamper, and international consultant. She is a winner of *The Fiddlehead's* Poetry Prize and the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Emerging Artist Award.

Jenna Butler (she/her) is the author of six books of poetry and creative nonfiction, including *Revery: A Year of Bees*, finalist for the 2021 Governor General's Award for Nonfiction. Butler works as a writing teacher, editor, and off-grid organic farmer in northern Treaty 6.

Samantha F. Jones is a poet, editor, and earth scientist based in Moh'kins'tsis (Calgary, Alberta). She is Black Canadian and white settler with roots in Nova Scotia, Québec, and Ontario. Her poetry collection, *Attic Rain* (2024), is available from NeWest Press. Sam is currently a University of Calgary PhD Candidate researching Arctic carbon cycling.

Jamie Paris (he/him) is an English literature Instructor in Winnipeg, at the University of Manitoba, where he teaches students about poetry, the works of William Shakespeare, and critical race theory. He is a mixed-race (Black, Scottish, and Métis), neurodiverse writer whose creative work has previously appeared in *Prairie Fire*.

Kelly Shepherd used to work in construction; "Mothballing Mould Bay" is about environmental cleanup in the North. His third poetry collection, *Dog and Moon*, was published by Oskana in 2025. *Insomnia Bird* (Thistledown, 2018), his second, won the 2019 Robert Kroetsch City of Edmonton Book Prize. Originally from Smithers, BC, Kelly lives on Treaty 6 territory, in Edmonton.

Melanie Dennis Unrau is a white-settler poet, editor, scholar, parent, and climate organizer from Treaty One territory and Métis homeland in Winnipeg. She is the author of *Goose* (Assembly, 2025), *The Rough Poets: Reading Oil-Worker Poetry* (MQUP, 2024), and *Happiness Threads: The Unborn Poems* (The Muses' Company, 2013).