

Windsor Voices

A National Poetry Month Collection Celebrating Windsor and Weather

Curated by the City of Windsor's Poet Laureate and Storytellers team

TEXT ONLY EDITION

How did we get here...

Late in 2023, the City of Windsor's Poets Laureate and Storytellers team launched the "Windsor's Voices" initiative to bring poetry to the community in an innovative way as part of National Poetry Month 2024. Windsor poets, storytellers, writers and photographers of all ages were invited to submit original poems, stories or photos on one of two themes: what Windsor means to you, and weather - the League of Canadian Poets' 2024 theme for National Poetry Month. This collection of creative works celebrates the neighbourhoods, events, traditions, landmarks, places, spaces, experiences, thoughts and inspirations that all reflect on what makes Windsor special. Through this initiative, the team delivers on the goals of the program, which include promoting poetry and storytelling to a wide and appreciative audience while strengthening the public's relationship to poetry, storytelling, and the creative arts. We hope that you enjoy these works.

"It's great to see this new initiative come forward from our poets laureate and storytellers. This will once again get poetry and stories out into the community while showcasing unique voices and perspectives that help to build and sustain a welcoming, diverse, inclusive and creative Windsor for all."

- Windsor Mayor Drew Dilkens

"Everybody has a story to tell, and yours is unique. Tell it in your own words, put your own spin on it, make it come alive in a way that will melt the hearts of everyone who is willing to listen. You have that magic!"

- Marty Gervais, Windsor's Poet Laureate Emeritus

"Upon hearing Windsor's many distinct and varied 'voices' over the years, I have come to learn that there is a certain harmony and pitch that is recognizable, a joyful rhythm at play, a uniquely innovative tone that is remarkably our own."

- Peter Hrastovec, Windsor's Poet Laureate

"I hope to see the city through the eyes of others, grasp new perspectives on the city – from the newest and youngest citizens, to the oldest."

- Chidera Ikewibe, Windsor's Youth Poet Laureate

"I hope we receive neighbourhood stories that reflect on everyday relationships and community traditions that span generations. As a kid growing up in Sandwich Town, I remember summer cookouts. The neighbourhood would gather in someone's backyard and party noon to night. Back then, the adults were your aunts and uncles, your friends were your cousins, and the village was raised by everyone."

- Tejai Travis, Multicultural Community Storyteller for the City of Windsor

Contents

Untitled, Poem, Marty Gervais
Still Wish, Poem, Serafina Piasentin
Untitled, Haiku, Dorothy Mahoney
Shouldn't We Make Ourselves Known?, Poem, Cassandra Caverhill
At the Marina in January, Poem, Laurie Smith
Untitled, Poem, Peter Hrastovec
Untitled, Reflection, Micheline Maylor
Untitled, Reflection, Chidera Ikewibe
511 Brock Street: The Red Brick House, Poem, Tejai Travis
Windsor, Early December, Poem, Jason Charles Temple
Windsor, Poem, Laura Bachynski
A Soft Snowfall, Poem, Dawn Christine Wilson
Untitled, Poem, Mary Ann Mulhern
Vanishing Act, Reflection, Benny Alexander
West End Windsor, Poem, Larry Hobson
Mid-April SW Ontario, Poem, Karen Sylvia Rockwell
Southern Extreme, Poem, Sasha Stasko
Olde Walkerville, Poem, Kevin Harvey
Settling on the Mouth of the River, Poem, Sarah Jarvis
Questions for the Me-teorologist, Poem, Vanessa Shields
Budimir, Poem, Alison Alleyn
Squint, Reflection, Regis Bogahalanda
White Christmases, Poem, Margaret Mio
The Wintery Lure of Tranby Park, Poem, Jessie Lee Jennings
Crack, Boom, Bang!, Poem, Christine Paris
Early Morning Thunderstorms, Poem, Alexa Boismier
My Windsor, Poem, Lillian Scheirich
Announcing, Poem, Ruth Ann Wilhelm
Untitled, Poem, Peter James Billing
What Windsor Means To Me, Reflection, Shirley Grondin
April Snow in Windsor, Poem, Farah Ghafoor
The Sunshine Collector, Poem, Meg Mooney
Behind the Window, Poem, Sarah Hussain
Peace, Poem, Yolanda Mejalli
Untitled, Poem, Donna Jenner
Untitled, Poem, Donna Laporte
Outside is a Thunderstorm, Poem, Art Williams
TBQ: The Empire, Reflection, Antonino Russo
Assumption, Poem, Bruce Grayson
Forecasting, Poem, Cristina Stenlund
The Straits in Winter, Poem, Jim Drummond
Untitled, Poem, Peter James Billing

Untitled
Marty Gervais

You can get lost in the maze of alleyways that run behind the huddle of neighborhood homes, especially when the fog rolls in like a slumbering ghost that dares you to wake it. Keep walking, it'll say. Keep silent, if you may. Keep moving till you find your way.

Still Wish
Serafina Piasentin

A wish stirs the air and nothing else
stops the world from creaking –

It shifts through wisps of cotton white
carried by the river in the sky
ties the rain in a shoelace bow and waits
for the downpour.

It soaks up tear dropped saltiness and saturates
an oil to repair Earth's rusted hinges and separates.

Earth still creaks but now we hear it
in the stillness: fill with wishes.

Untitled, Haiku
Dorothy Mahoney

from the fog
wild turkeys
strut across crusted snow

Shouldn't we make ourselves known?
Cassandra Caverhill

-after a hike in Ojibway Prairie

I walk the cathedral aisle, a bundled bride
while huddled congregants of birch and oak look on.

Fallen rust and copper shards crunch
underfoot, giving me away. Ahead,

a coyote canters and then sits,
regally, upon an altar of awe.

We two, unsure animals
scrutinizing distances:

which of us is more wild;
which of us the most free?

At the Marina in January
Laurie Smith

although breathing is bitter,
the swans are in,
my love! we have to go down
and take pictures:
crystal wings diving for the impossible,
gulls photo-bombing geese,
wood ducks and mallards, last season's
cygnets nearly grown, they
are now ice floes, they are grace.

Untitled
Peter Hrastovec

Here, on this south shore,
stories were told,
poignant forest fables,
wonder-moon myths,
the generations reverent,
their gratitude
carved into ritual,
embedded in their soul.

Untitled
Micheline Maylor

Last week, I walked Riverside past Walkerville, past the Canadian Club factory, the scent of deciduous forest and yeast bloomed in my nasal passages, and took me back to Meldrum's clapboard house and the peeping Tom who loved my mother's legs, the single pane windows, and you, dad, hammering, fixing, leaning out further than any of us wanted to go from the mud that made us. The sun-yellow Datsun driving out west in November. Me sharing a seat with a tropical fern that would not make the journey west and become yellow in the cold, dry blare of the car vents. Back east, the river calls me to Amherstburg, to Lake St. Claire; listen to the bones of a thousand ancestors chiming. I told a short man with wild hair, I grew up on Ouellette and Riverside. He said, "no one is from there." I am from there, friend. Home is where your body knows the way, where all senses are tamed.

Untitled
Chidera Ikwibe

Emotional landmarks come with the changing tide — confuse the unassumed. Far off storms make waves that ripple at my shoreline. Sightlines are obscured by the amber waves of the never-setting sun. Headlines call to excuse the execution ... of trees. The stumps still stand, roots refrain rotting into ephemera. The burning once trees howl and snap on their should be pyres. Their olive branches extended ablaze then, simmer into white smoke. The downpour storm carries vestiges from the river out to the sea, to the banks of bombardment at my shore: oranges, watermelons, olives, poppies, fishnets without fishermen, while keys and house debris — slowly sink to the bottom. If a storm is not reported by the 6 o'clock news — did it ever really happen at all?

511 Brock Street: The Red Brick House
Teajai Travis

The red brick house
had a dirt floor with a purple hue
that held a musty scent of secrets
bootlegged in its warped spine.
Moonshine bodies kept still
the breadth of runaway fools
Who spilled wishes upon
a river that never sleeps and
is hard to forget.

Windsor, Early December
Jason Charles Temple

Snow floats softly while rain patters on the still soft ground
The haze of the grey dreary skyline casts its pall on crews putting up lights.
Slush on the roads, still no accumulation.
The wind turns to bite its ferocity into the canvas of the day.
Hats and mitts are out, even if it's too wet to use them.
The hills at Malden whisper of great adventure and my toboggan stirs once more.
Maybe it will be a white Christmas after all.

Windsor
Laura Bachynski

I couldn't wait to leave back in '82
Mountains called and skies vastly blue
The blue collar life would not hold me down
The theatre *out west!* The nightlife downtown!
But soon I would learn that my heart wasn't here
Dear Windsor and family draw me home every year
Lake St. Clair holds me captive like the memories I made,
The friendships I cherish, and foundations were laid
That established the values I hold to this day
Wait for me Windsor, home soon I do pray.

A Soft Snowfall
Dawn Christine Wilson

I watch the snowflakes
In slow gravitate
As little broken pieces
Of the clouded sky

Snow too soft to mould
No bear could hibernate
Under this frail blanket
Snowfall like a sigh

Untitled
Mary Ann Mulhern

When I began to teach
In St. Thomas, ON
The priest warned
“Never go Windsor way”

Fate brought me here
Where I found poetry
Black Moss Press
Published nine of my books

Windsor is the best!

Vanishing Act
Benny Alexander

It is an afternoon in early or late October, depending on the year; and as the first frost blankets itself across the front lawns of Riverside Drive, for some reason, fall has only now finally begun to breathe colour into the leaves like skin left out in the sun and the gardens in Jackson Park have begun to wrinkle and shrivel down to the roots, cracking under the weight of the cold. Now, in lieu of red roses, green grass, and sunflowers, we have death and snow; not a fair trade if you ask me. Autumn in Windsor, comes into our lives and vanishes as quickly as frames in a movie, as freak snow in the summer. A delicate snapshot in time too precious to appreciate, until it's gone. How many moments pass us by without a farewell, such as a smile from a passing stranger, or a sunset over the Ambassador Bridge, colliding with its reflection in the teal-ish hue of the Detroit River. Here's a tip, take a minute; stop for some small talk, smell the nature in Optimist Park, call your mother.

West End Windsor
Larry Hobson

feelings still running deep
the west end was the tough end
my world and my cocoon
all I knew and all I experienced
shaping me and teaching me
lifelong lessons with lifelong memories
tears, fears and good times too
my heart will always lie in West End Windsor

Mid-April SW Ontario
Karen Sylvia Rockwell

Sweet Home Alabama streams from the Alexa Dot
in this tiny tidy fenced yard where daffodils dance on a soft breeze
under the mottled shade of new growth buds on our mammoth maple

we recline in freshly scrubbed Adirondack knock-offs
in shorts and flip-flops just retrieved from winter storage bins
we sip raspberry ginger cider on ice from bright coloured plastic goblets

April fools or not we live this day as if spring has come!

Southern Extreme
Sasha Stasko

We are the southern extreme of Canada grand
Spanning both urban and rural land
With a sparkling skyline on river reflects
Bridges to America while tunnel connects
Cars and residents, trades and skill
A determined populous, brimming with will
A cultured, diverse, resilient crowd
For Windsor our home, we stand proud

Olde Walkerville
Kevin Harvey

In Olde Walkerville
It is wintertime
the freshly fallen snow
delicately whitens
the stone church of St. Mary's
and the cemetery
strewn with green and red wreaths
The snowdrifts blow
between the black iron gates
of Willistead Manor
where I have walked
since I was a child
The winter wind
howling through the treetops
carrying along the scent
of the fireplaces
from the stately houses
which flank the Manor
constantly reminding me
of another time

Settling on the Mouth of the River
Sarah Jarvis

In this town, we are an eddy at the River mouth,
swirling as it collects us from the beginnings:
Three Fires, settlers, Freedom Seekers, dreamers.
Not a birthplace for us all; flotsam drawn in.

My homeland is not here, but I understand
my circle is here: life-sustainers, healers, faith siblings,
wordsmiths' words greet me at the door of a clinic;
whose song raises me beneath the city square spire.

Not my birthplace of wildwind North Sea, steadfast castles, greenest glens;
yet a place to raise a voice, words to hear, a roundel of union River-swathed.

Questions for the me-teorologist
Vanessa Shields

are you so deep you can't hear thunder?
so dark you can't see moon, sun, miracle?
how still is your current without feeling the whole
water body unskinned fog-held?
inside your rainstorm, what windows take the beating?
can we meet in the snow pile – love-driven and dizzy
weather veins tunneling seedlings thirsty? Where
are you without someone to hold your atmosphere?

Budimir
Alison Alleyn

Our stroller shakes on an uneven sidewalk
A wrapper crinkles, small sticky hands reaching (always reaching).
We have walked the same path countless times this summer
Crossing the ditch, then waiting for the walking man to tell us to go
Yet when we enter that space, both old and new, there is novelty.
We are unquiet. *Yes, we can borrow one more. Yes, we can stop at the park.*
What is it about a library that smells so good?
What is it about a library that feels like home?
The answer is somewhere in that packed stroller, full of everything good.
Children and books.

Squint
Regis Bogahalanda

I lean against the railing, letting the jagged chips of paint press against the pads of my fingers. The river's mist forces my eyes into a squint. With the light obscured, my vision sharpens, and I scan the melting Detroit skyline. My eyes catch the blue band haloing that one building I can never identify—oh wait, it's red now. Never mind. I don't know why it does that. I bow my head to the water throwing itself against the rocks and roll my eyes. I flip around and stare at the Canadian land I've been standing on the whole time, backlit by the envious Detroit sky. I shield my eyes from the wind and squint down Huron Church's long legs, my eyes traveling up MacDonald's Hall's abandoned body before darting to the crown of Laurier's head. My cloudy breath floats in front of me, but I'm more focused on the breathing of the city. That's what I came for. The blinking water, the laughing wind, the living, breathing City of Windsor.

White Christmases
Margaret Mio

What ever happened to all that snow
Mom talks about from years ago?
White Christmases with lights aglow
Lopsided snowmen in a row.
Kids on toboggans going fast
All bundled up in mitts and hats.
They'd make tall forts and angels too,
White Christmases my mother knew.

The Wintery Lure of Tranby Park
Jessie Lee Jennings

standing at the window
Christmas Cactus flower droops succumbing to the dry heat in the
room outside a wall of grey-white mist emanates from the oval of
wild things damp pearl fingers unfurl seep through cracks in the
window frame thoughts of leaving unspool let lungs inhale cool
wetness let bare skin be touched by snow-powdered twigs let
ears hear the park's silent symphony

Crack, Boom, Bang!
Christine Paris

It came in unexpectedly,
Deep, damp, darkness swallowed brave blue skies.
A quick calamity of clouds covered us
As whirling winds combed through the green grasses
Parting its blowing blades like strands of hair
Forcefully furrowing the once serene surroundings.

Bothered birds suddenly soar into black heavens
Leaving the leary lands behind.

Lighting cuts a path of lingering light.
And smashing sound sends as rushing/running for safety.

Early Morning Thunderstorms
Alexa Boismier

curling soft into a binding early morning
desperation howling weight crawls hesitates
clouds fold and ache impatiently between bites electric

My Windsor
Lillian Scheirich

Welcoming, warm and embracing.
Indigenous, Immigrant, rich with history and memory.
Neighbourly, nostalgic, effulgent generosity.
Diverse, dignified, caring, learning and sharing.
Scintillating, and passionate, cuisine, music and art.
Original, Ontarian, proudly and fiercely Canadian.
Radiant, invigorating, vibrant and thriving.
.....Windsor, My City,
.....My Heart, My Home.

Announcing...
Ruth Ann Wilhelm

Ojibway called this morning
The sun shone, the snow melting quickly.

The forest is different in winter
I feel the dormancy of the trees
as my eyes follow the trunks high in the sky.
No way to know which trees will soon bud
which are long dead
preparing to fall.

Untitled

Peter James Billing

come walk with me today & let us whisper happiness so loudly that others mistake it as theirs

as smiles are gathered & shared like wildflowers on the very winds of change

let them mistake yellow petals strewn as theirs as well

soon these floral seeds will ground us & form a multitude of colour for all to see as they walk amongst a field of joy
and know that as Windsor

What Windsor Means To Me

Shirley Grondin

I think that we are two seniors who enjoy an early morning walk, to see the sun rise, hear the birds songs and watch the city wake up. That is how we met a few years ago, while walking the Grand Marais trails. Shared a greeting with the wave of a hand and a smile, each time we met.

Two years into the COVID pandemic, we met on the trails and were so excited to see each other, we spoke - but we spoke different languages - a disappointment in not being able to understand each other.

A few months later, we met again on the trails, used a universal language and gave each other a hug!

April Snow in Windsor

Farah Ghafoor

This year, happiness arrives winged, startling us with its warm voice.

We bloom, blush, and wrap ourselves in its heat.

Then, grey snow fills the air, like dust quieting our dreams,
and happiness darts out of view. I left and almost let the cold strangle my roots, saw my petals fall one by one in the mirror.

When I returned, however, I found the knotted vestiges of past years in the earth. *Of course!* I thought. You remember it too, right?

That after the rain and the snow and the shoes of children,

there awaits a life of seasons so bright

they might awaken your heart like a seed.

The Sunshine Collector
Meg Mooney

The old man is sitting on the bench again.

Today nestled under a worn blanket, a red hat, leather gloves, two sweaters and a scarf pulled up over his nose.

He reveres the passing gaps between clouds,
the escaping sun rays seep through his eyelids.

A dusting of snow caresses his shoulders, yet the old man still does not yield.

He spends his hours meticulously bottling up sunshine,
only to sell it to strangers
with a resolute *hello*.

Behind The Window
Sarah Hussain

I used to feel what you feel, Earth,
Anger as lightning bolts rip through the sky and lash onto you unprovoked,
Sadness as water pours and camouflages your tears,
Happiness as you are hugged by the rays of the sun afterward,
And one day, when I'm strong, I'll join you again, and we can weather the storms and
bask in serenity together,
But for now, I'll watch you, from behind this window,
Where is it dry, still, and silent but safe nonetheless

Peace
Yolanda Mejalli

SEE the beauty of the Ambassador Bridge at night.
LISTEN to the various languages surrounding you.
TOUCH the art pieces along your path.
TASTE the peaceful night air.
SMELL the nature that surrounds you.

FEEL the beauty and peacefulness of Windsor within you as you walk towards the
Ambassador Bridge.

Untitled
Donna Jenner

" the trees cast off their summer's green
and left their branches barren clean.
Their colors, so to say goodbye
they stretched their arms
cast to the sky"

Untitled
Donna Laporte

T-shirted children
play ball hockey
In the driveway
on Christmas Day.
The warm Windsor weather
wraps itself around them
like a hug.

Outside is a Thunderstorm
Art Williams

Outside is a thunderstorm
Commanding and demanding that all take heed;
me, the trees, the flowers, the dogs, the squirrels, and the bugs.
Mother robin is on her nest.
She too is looking above,
using this moment to reveal the Creator to her chicks.

"The sparrow herself finds a home and the swallow a nest for her brood; she lays her young by your altars." (inspired by PSALM 84:3)

TBQ: The Empire
Antonino Russo

Coming out of the Windsor Tunnel would wind you smack dab in front of the animated neon sign depicting a butcher with cleaver in hand chasing a terrified chicken and pig, TBQ Restaurant. If you went straight up Dufferin you would be mesmerized by a plate glass window tantalizing your taste with a wall of pork ribs sizzling, basting in their own juices on rotating skewers against fire brick rotisseries. As we got older Saturday entertainment consisted of going Downtown to watch the latest movie at the Capital, Palace, Vanity or Odion theatres and ending our night at TBQ with a coffee and delectable pastry, my favourite, Hot Fudge Ice Cream Puff, oh man. Jimmy would be at the door in his beret to greet you with, "how many are you folks?" and Earnie would already have "his" red stool at the soda fountain counter with an earphone cord hooked to a transistor radio, giving the play-by-play score of the Tigers game. We'd enjoy our desserts (I'd finish Bridget's as well), drive our dates home and call it a night. These were the wonderful days that nourished Tony & Bridget's youth. We are grateful to TBQ for being an integral part of that youth.

Assumption
Bruce Grayson

As I walk beside the river
I remember your touch.
We danced 'til dawn after The Grotto closed
The campus dark but dotted with the lights
Of those who could not sleep.
We walked and talked
Of our futures yet to be, I remember
You invited me back for the coffee
We would never have

Forecasting
Cristina Stenlund

We model patterns, track pressure
tune barometers to measure for change
map trends on a timeline
search for familiarity
We hope tomorrow
looks like yesterday

The Straits in Winter
Jim Drummond

Ice gathers at the mouth, a cold back up forms,
Eagles swoop, their unsuspectingly prey forlorn.
From the Peche to the Belle ice sheets scatter,
Warm water, cold air then the mist is what matters.
A crossing is there and then it is not,
But its fall out continues like it or not.
The island that fights remains wintery white,
While icebreakers continue to keep channels right.
Toward the Bois Blanc the ice continues its flight,
Until, at last the Eire lake comes into its sight.

Untitled
Peter James Billing

just for a moment on this puff gray autumn day, revel in being a kid

kicking leaves
soup spitting laughter
adventures of nonsense
halloween mischief and of course
road hockey

and just for this very moment
imagine yourself in ol' Riverside

a place of no pucks
no cups
no money, just
Kid vs Kid
Street vs Street
Bragging Rights!!

Battling it out to be...
The Road Hockey Crew of The Year

Thank You

To all those who submitted poems, stories and photos, and to...

Our Submission Reviewers

Marty Gervais, Poet Laureate Emeritus

Peter Hrastovec, Poet Laureate

Chidera Ikewibe, Youth Poet Laureate

Teajai Travis, Multicultural Community Storyteller

Theresa Sims, Indigenous Storyteller

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