

## Gail Nyoka Living Her own Story

**An interview by Deborah Dunleavy**

At the heart of Storytelling Toronto is a very gifted and modest woman of incredible talent. Gail Nyoka keeps the inner workings of our organization moving very smoothly from day to day, week to week, and month to month. And when she is not in the comfy confines of our office at the Artscape Wychwood Barns she is busy creating new storytelling programs, developing new plays and writing new books. Her muse is never lazy!



**How long have you been working as the administrator for Storytelling Toronto?**  
I've been at Storytelling Toronto for just over three years.

**How long have you been in Toronto? What brought you here from England?**

I've been in Toronto, on and off (and have also resided in Ottawa, the Peterborough area, Hamilton, and Guelph), since I was a teenager.

When people ask me what brought me to Canada, I jokingly say that the 'bad child' was sent to the colonies. Although I wasn't actually bad, I was different from my mother's idea of what I should be. I was sent to live with an aunt in Toronto who was a real battle-axe. Forty years later, I'm still here!

**Let's take a look at a typical day at the helm of Storytelling Toronto. What do you do on a typical day?**

What's typical depends on the time of year. In the summer time, I work with a designer to make our program brochure. When they're printed I send them out to To-

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## Recovering and Creating Tales from a Community

**Lorne Brown talks with Bernice Gei-Ying Hune**

On a Monday morning in late June I am strolling along Robert Street, in my old stomping grounds of the Kensington Market area in Toronto. I am on my way to storyteller Bernice Hune's home, kitty corner across from the Lord Lansdowne Public School. Robert Street is very leafy; tall trees line the road. Almost directly in front of Bernice's house is a traffic-calming narrowing of the street which is positively luxurious in its greenery. The 3-storey brick row-homes have individual peaked roofs, redolent of an earlier Toronto. I feel at home in this neighbourhood – the Kensington Market is a few blocks away and the old Number 8 Hose Tower still stands tall, a proud sentinel.



Bernice greets me at the door and we proceed to a delightful room at the back of the house and sit down at a table. I plug in my little digital recorder and away we go.

**Tell me a bit about your background.**

I was born in Toronto. Part of old Chinatown was expropriated for Toronto's City Hall. On the civic square, there was a theatre. On Sunday afternoons there were movies in Cantonese. The stories of old China were larger than life in that theatre. Sometimes there were opera performances - a stylized telling of tales.

My Grandmother had little English. It was her sayings and fables that I heard in my head when I began to tell stories to children. These timeless tales continue to delight audiences.

**Helen Porter was an important influence on you.**

Yes; I took a course from her and she encouraged me to create my own stories.

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# A NOTE FROM THE EDI-

 Pippin is brimming with exciting news this time around. I am so impressed with the dedication of our tellers to keep the spoken word not only alive but vibrantly so.

As editor I get the first glimpse. I loved learning about Gail Nyoka's passion for writing and telling stories. I enjoyed finding out about Bernice Gei-Ying Hune's journey along the pathway of her heritage. From the cutting edge influences of the FooL Festival to the traditional re-enactments of historical storytelling it is proof positive that the art of storytelling is a much diversified art form. Let's give kudos to all who continue to stretch the crea-

tive boundaries of their artistry through research, innovation, collaboration and imagination. You are the leaders paving the way for the tellers of tomorrow.

As the snow flies from the heavens, may you find warmth and renewal in the fellowship of family and friends. Peace and Goodwill to all.

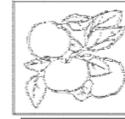


*Every Friday night since 1978 storytellers and listeners have been gathering in downtown Toronto. Each evening is hosted by an accomplished storyteller. Anyone is welcome to tell a story. Every Friday night is unique.*

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PIPPIN is the newsletter of  
Storytelling Toronto



**The Storytellers School of Toronto** is a registered, non-profit organization that provides a creative home for a community of storytellers,

listeners, and story-explorers. Our mission is to inspire, encourage and support storytelling for listeners, tellers and those who have not yet heard. Since 1979 we have been providing courses and workshops; holding gatherings, festivals and events to celebrate and present the art of storytelling; supporting the creative work of storytellers; and producing publications about storytelling and storytellers.

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# The First Night of FooL at the Owl Cafe

Submitted  
by Bob  
Sherman

On October 18, 2012, I listened in at the first of three nights of storytelling at the Rustic Owl Café, collectively billed as a “warm-up storytelling series” prior to the main weekend of the 2012 FOOL festival in

Toronto. Well, if this was a warm-up act, I could hardly wait for the main event!

The Café was a great space for storytelling – intimate but not crowded – and the audience of people ranging in age from their 20s to their 70s was eager and appreciative. The storytellers were all very engaging, despite the majority being relative newcomers to telling.

Hodari Clarke adapted a few Haitian stories from Diane Wolkstein’s book “The Magic Orange Tree” in a way that meshed his animated personal style perfectly with the material of the stories, as if the stories were made for him. We all loved his telling, and the laughter poured out of us.

Jennifer King told a couple of thoughtful stories, including the heart-warming “Come Again in the Spring”, by Richard Kennedy, in which Death is outwitted by an old man who, aided by his feathered friends, finds a way to secure a few more months to enjoy

his life in the woods. Jennifer’s confident, accomplished style deeply engaged both heart and mind.

I was especially waiting to hear Hugh Cotton, who I had been privileged to hear a few times before. His main story was Alice Kane’s version of Seven Wild Geese, a beautiful wonder tale. Hugh’s telling style drew listeners in, driving the plot ahead with his voice, his body and his passion for the story. He tells – and makes his listeners feel – as if that story, in that place, with that audience, is the most important thing going on in the world for as long as he is telling.

Finally, as a treat, we listened to Dan Yashinsky, FooL’s artistic director, tell one of the gentle, wise stories of which he has an inexhaustible supply, a story which perfectly drew to a close the evening and its theme, “Enjoy the world gently, for when it is broken it is so difficult to mend.”



## FOOLISH HAPPENINGS

Just as Pippin is going to press, so to speak, the doors of FooL are opening. As Director Dan Yashinsky said in an earlier communiqué, “This will be an amazing series of urban campfires happening at the Rustic Owl, the Barns, and the Art Gallery of Ontario.”

The line up includes Jan Blake, Ron Evans, Jacques Falquet, Sonia St. Michel, Renee Rotibaille, Etienne Loranger, Hugh Cotton and many more. We do have notes from Hugh Cotton and Bob Sherman. We hope to hear more about the event in the next issue. If you attended a FooL event please send your reviews to Pippin at [teller2go@gmail.com](mailto:teller2go@gmail.com).

# Accepting the Talking Stick

## *A New Teller's First Steps*

### Submitted by Hugh Cotton

So there I am, standing at a mic in front of 30, maybe 40, people who have paid to listen. I am 20 minutes into an ancient Irish wonder-tale and have just said the words “. . . and as she walked along the river she was singing a song, and this is the song she sang.”

Last year this scene would have been unthinkable – this year it is wonderful.

At heart, there is no difference between the gathering described above and my listening (as a child) to a parable told from the pulpit by my father, telling my 3-year-old son an Anansi story, or listening with my Grade 4 class as a father tells a Bangladeshi ghost story that he learned from his grandmother.

The teller weaves a world and invites the listeners in. This essential similarity is part of what made it possible for me to sing to a roomful of people about magical Rowanberries.

Knowing and trusting the story (Alice Kane's Seven Wild Geese) was also vital. I had told that story every-day for a month - mainly to the bathroom mirror or my son, but also

while walking to work (wearing a cell phone headset decoy), and once to the full moon. I feel a deep, incomprehensible connection to the mysterious tale.

But there is another, more immediate and practical reason that I was being paid to tell a story - Dan Yashinsky. Dan gave a workshop for teachers after school at my school and I went. He encouraged me to tell to the generous, knowledgeable and perceptive crowd at 1001 Nights. He then invited me and two other new

tellers - Jenni King and Hodari Clarke – to tell at FOOL. Without this mentorship, it seems likely that the storyteller within me would have remained latent.

However, now that the journey is begun, I find myself constantly thirsty for stories and opportunities to tell them. I look forward to meeting you along the way.

*Hugh Cotton will also be part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> People From The Sky at LucSculpture (Greenwood and Danforth) at 7pm on November 24<sup>th</sup>.*



## Hallowe'en Happenings in Toronto

### Submitted by June Brown

Pumpkin candles glowed, ghosts and goblins peeked from the corners, and balloons and streamers festooned the railings at the 1001 Friday Nights' Hallowe'en celebration. This tradition, started several years ago, is now well established and happily anticipated.

Witch, June Brown and Jester, Goldie Spencer, co-hosted the evening. They entertained the crowd with riddles that brought out more than one groan, and poems that sent shivers up spines. The tellers served up

gristly tales of goblins, spooks and skeletons and Rod, in his amazing voice, recited the British classic *Albert and the Bloody Tower*. Of course this was followed by a group sing-a-long of "With Her Head Tucked Underneath Her Arm".

After a social break with yummy Hallowe'en goodies, the second half of the evening was given over to Bill Lalonde and Brian Heatherington, our



visiting tellers from the Brockville's 1000 Islands Yarnspinnners who came as part of the new Ontario Travel and Billeting exchange. Their tales kept the audience riveted. When the evening concluded the tellers from Brockville expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to tell their stories to a large, attentive audience and the Toronto listeners agreed that it was great to hear new voices and tales.

# Hallowe'en Happening

With Durham Folklore Storytellers

## Submitted by Heather Whaley

For the past seven years, Durham Folklore Storytellers has presented a community service program *Hallowe'en Happening* as part of the After School Program at Simcoe Hall Settlement House in Oshawa - a neighbourhood safe-place for sports, recreation, character development, leisure and creative activities.

Durham Folklore Storytellers member, Heather Whaley, arranges the annual event at Simcoe Hall Settlement House, where she has volunteered after school storytelling programs for the past nine years, and currently presents a monthly 'Cooking

Up Stories' program in the kitchen with the children. Each year she and her dedicated DFS friends dress to the hilt in costume and enter a dark cob webbed room with hanging skeletons, ghosts and creatures of the night, which is prepared by the staff and children of the centre, to share spook and spectre tales and tunes.

All who dare to enter feast on kitty litter cake, worm puddings, eyeball Jell-O and long, lanky finger foods (totally gross), to name a few of the tasty treats provided following the performance.

Joining in the fun with Heather this year were storytellers Doris Cherkas,

Enid DeCoe, Summi Siddiqui, and Kathleen Smyth PR, who took photos for the occasion; and special youth storytellers, Mya Emil, Sabrina Dewes and Kimberlyne Romero, who are proud graduates of an 8 hour, four-session summer workshop series led by Heather and Summi, with the support of remaining grant subsidy funds from Storytelling Toronto's former Storytelling in the Schools Program.

The girl's performances were well developed, adapted stories based on horror films they have watched and also consisted of Portuguese, French and Spanish family lore, with titles "The Devil's Curse" "Claws" and "The Queen of Art"!

## BOO!

### Submitted by Heather Whaley

Witches, spiders, goblins, skeletons, and story-book characters with charisma, swarmed Wynchwood Barns on October 24<sup>th</sup> for their annual Halloween Boo! at The Barns community event.



## at the Barns

For the third year in the row storytelling, arranged by Heather Whaley and Barns coordinator Mary Pattison brought Storytelling Toronto Storytellers and families together for an evening

the stage opened up to the audience for a spontaneous open Mic session that enticed youth and adults alike, to jump up and share in the fun. Eager faces dropped in horror when the evening ended at the projected time, leaving them dangling in the night air to anticipate coming back next year!



of festive stories, songs and poems! Along with Heather were featured performances by Irene Johnston and Kim Michele, who wowed the vibrant crowd with *Halloween Hoopla! Stories, Rhymes and Songs* from 6 – 7 p.m. for ages 8 and under, and *Tales of Horror, Legend and Lore* from 7:15 – 8:30 p.m. for ages 9 and over and adults.

The later part second program took on a wonderful twist of fate when



# ***The Best Laid Schemes of Mice and Men***

## **Submitted by Molly Sutkaitis**

For months after I learnt that I had fulfilled the requirements to graduate from The School of Sacred Storytelling I had been looking forward to attending a retreat led by Bob Wilhelm. I had written and revised my program, bought my airplane ticket and double checked that my passport was in order. Then "Sandy" reared its ugly head and all plans had to be cancelled.

I have been a participant in Bob Wilhelm's online courses for four years. I also took a summer course in Hagerstown Maryland. Each week I received stories that were, for the most part, folk tales, which had the same lesson that was part of the

Sunday readings in Christian churches. Friday Oct 26, at 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling I mentioned the Retreat that was planned in Marriotville and I was questioned about the School of Sacred Storytelling. Brian Hetherington, who was already in Marriotville before Sandy struck, suggested I contact Pippin and share my thoughts.

I have been greatly helped by my participation in Bob's work. I tell every second Sunday to children under seven, I translate Bob's words into the language of an under seven year old. You can imagine how disappointed we all were when the Retreat had to be postponed till November 2013.

In early October I attended a Multi-

faith Festival of Bible Stories in Peterborough, Ontario. There were seventy-seven tellers from many different theological denominations. This really opened my eyes to the fact that biblical storytelling is alive and well. I think there is room for a Guild of Sacred Storytellers in Toronto. I will think more about this idea after the New Year. I always have found that Canadians welcome new ideas at the end of January when all the excitement of Christmas has petered out. I have already spoken to four tellers who would be interested in being part of a Guild of Sacred Storytellers. Interested people may contact me at [mollysutkaitis@hotmail.com](mailto:mollysutkaitis@hotmail.com).

## **Gail Nyoka cont'd**

*(Continued from page 1)*

ronto library branches. I get new cards made up for the September donation drive and get the letter done. Once those donations start coming in, I put the names and amounts in our data base and get tax receipts out.

When courses are coming up, I keep track of registrations and payments, send letters, make receipts and create certificates for the participants. At AGM time, I put together the booklet and arrange the venue. On an ongoing basis, I mail cheques, deal with email and telephone enquiries, make minor changes to the Web site, and keep our supporters up to date by sending out the email newsletters. That's some of what I do, but it might get pretty boring for everyone if I listed everything.

### **That sounds quite busy. What is the most challenging part of your job?**

Because I'm usually in the office only two days a week, I have to manage my time well, so that everything gets

done in a timely manner. There are times when that can be difficult.

### **What is the best part of your job?**

Storytellers are great people. I enjoy my interaction with tellers. I've learned a lot about storytelling since I've been here, and that has been a wonderful experience.

### **What challenges do you see us facing?**

It's important for Storytelling Toronto and the storytelling community to generate interest from new audiences and encourage new tellers. Initiatives such as the Storytent are helpful, but we also need to attract people who are dedicated to the art and willing to support the organization both financially and with their time.

### **What has impressed you the most since coming on board?**

Storytelling Toronto is run professionally on a small budget. Many people put in a lot of time and effort on a volunteer basis or for a small honorarium. The Toronto Storytelling Fes-

tival is an amazing effort with great quality.

### **And now for the artist. You are a winner of the Chalmers Canadian Play Award. Please tell us about the play and how this came to be.**

I developed an interest in stories from Africa, and came across one that I loved so much that I wanted to do something bigger with it. To create my play, I took the basic folk-tale from Zimbabwe and expanded the story. The tale is about a girl called Mella who saves her father by going to the cave of a snake. As I was researching all things Zimbabwe, I met a woman who told me about the role of the traditional N'anga. I liked the idea of having a magical helper in the story, and the N'anga became a major (and my favourite) character. I included African music and shadow puppetry, and the play, *Mella Mella*, was a hit with children and adults. It played at Young Peoples Theatre and toured in Ontario. It also played in Montreal.

*(Continued on page 11)*

# Diana Tso Takes Red Snow to China

It's been a tremendous journey full of hope, joy and struggles to give voice to a story inspired by the survivors and the 300,000 that were silenced in the Rape of Nanking. After *Red Snow's* birth in Toronto at Theatre Passe Muraille in January 2012 we are thrilled that it will be reborn at the international theatre festival in Shanghai, China November 2012. This is a significant year as it marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this holocaust. In the present political and personal struggles, hatred has reignited between two countries whose past war wounds have never healed, largely due to the Japanese government's responsibility of the Rape of Nanking and their compensation to the survivors, which has long been denied. I hope that *Red Snow's* story of love can help extinguish the fires of hatred with it's waters of peace and healing through art for change.

*Red Snow* is a story about a Canadian Chinese woman driven by her grandfather's silence and her own nightmares connected to a forgotten holocaust, to go to China in search of her grandmother's story. There she meets a Japanese Canadian man connected to the same history. Together they must reconcile the past with the present for the sake of their family.

I am grateful to many hearts who have given me strength to move forward in this journey as it takes a community to raise a

story and even a larger one to raise its voice on global stage. One of these has been the storytelling Toronto storytellers (Rubena Sinha, Jack Howard, Harriet Xanthakos, Norman Perrin) and *Red Snow's* musician, Patty Chan, who (along with many community members) sponsored "Voices for Snow", a music and storytelling event in support of *Red Snow's* international production.

The title reflects the metaphors for snow in connection to the play: healing, peace and rebirth from Winter's remembrance of death to Spring's birth of life anew. Since then we have most recently (with another generous sponsor) created a CD with music that was written for *Red Snow* (though not all the music ended up in the final theatre production), which will be launched in the Spring of 2013. However, we will have a limited preview edition that will be for sale during *Red Snow's* presentation at the festival in Shanghai.

Witnessing the recording of the music as I continued the tumultuous ride of self-producing this play again, was like healing waters and another

rebirth. The surprise for others and me is that I sing a version of a lullaby in the CD!

Another joy that has crossed our path is being part of the events for Holocaust Education Week. Joy Kogawa and I as well as Facing History & Ourselves, and CBC dialogued on the event titled, *Collective Amnesia: the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Nanking Massacre*. It reminds us of Elie Wiesel's words: "To forget a Holocaust is to kill twice." Here together, without borders, "we explored how art and education can lay the foundation of peace, reconciliation and healing for the victims, their communities, and our global community." It is vital to build bridges, share and speak our stories to move towards collective memory and our world's much needed collective healing.

*For more information on Red Snow or if you'd like to support our international production through a donation, we would be most grateful. Please visit [www.redsnowcollective.ca](http://www.redsnowcollective.ca) (a tax receipt will be issued for donations of \$20 or more)*



## GUILD UPDATES

Kathleen Smyth is the new Public Relations Coordinator for the Durham Folklore Storytellers. Their new website is [www.durhamfolklorestorytellers.ca](http://www.durhamfolklorestorytellers.ca)

The Guelph Guild of Storytellers, founded in the early 90's, promotes the oral tradition of storytelling. The group enjoys original, traditional, liter-

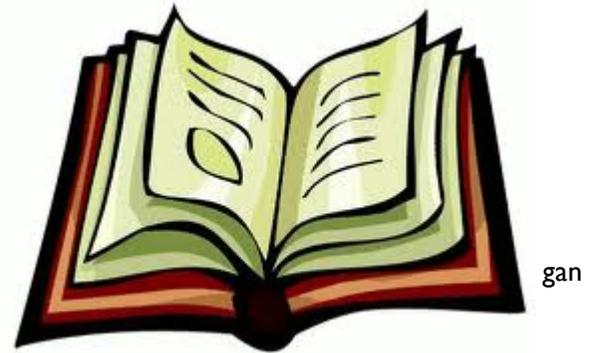
ary and personal stories. They have two concert series and monthly business / coaching meetings. Please check the guild website for current information. [www.guelpharts.ca/storytellers.or](http://www.guelpharts.ca/storytellers.or) contact Sandy Schoen at 519-767-0017 or by email at [guelph-story@gmail.com](mailto:guelph-story@gmail.com)



## FROM THE TALEWINDS COLLECTION

Norm Perrin shared some of his favourite storytelling books at the "New Wisdom Old Wisdom" gathering. To set up an appointment to browse the shelves contact Norm at [talewind@web.net](mailto:talewind@web.net)

- The Storytellers Sourcebook by Margaret Read MacDonald
- Tales for an Unknown City by Dan Yashinsky
- Favourite Folktales by Jane Yolen
- Juba This and Juba That by Tasjian
- Tales Alive in Turkey by Warren Walker Ahmet
- Yiddish Folktales edited by Beatrice Silverman Weinreich
- Fearless Girls, Wise Women, Beloved Sisters by Kathleen Ra-
- Riddle Me, Riddle Me Ree by Maria leach
- Northern Lights by Irina Zheleznova
- Fireside Tales of the Traveller Children by Duncan Williamson
- The Sea of Gold by Yoshiko Uchida



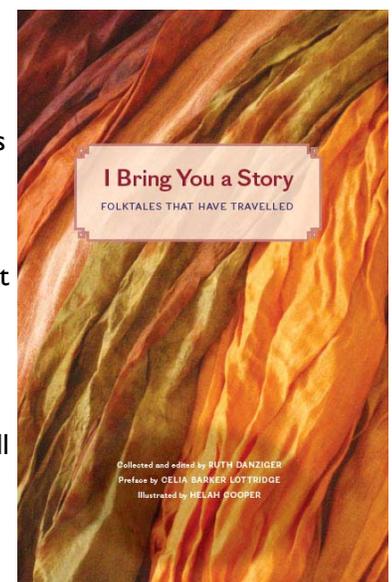
## BOOK NOOK

*I Bring You a Story, Folktales that have Traveled*, a new collection of stories, was launched at the FOOL Festival on November 11th. The stories were collected by Ruth Danziger from people associated with the Parent-Child Mother Goose Program as participants, teachers or friends of the program.

The tellers come from scattered parts of the world, India, Pakistan, Eritrea, Somalia, Iran, Ecuador, and many more and each of them remembers stories told to them before they came to Canada. There are all kinds of stories among the twenty-three in the collection-- humorous, wise, romantic, and adventurous. Storytellers and readers will find tales that they will want to tell and to reread.

Ruth has included a short introduction to each story, telling something about the teller and how she or he heard the story. Reading the book gives a wonderful picture of how stories are passed on and how they travel. The book

is a quality paperback and is suitable for libraries and schools as well, of course, for your library. It will be available through the Parent-Child Mother Goose Program website ([www.nationalpcmgp.ca](http://www.nationalpcmgp.ca)) and at many storytelling gatherings. All proceeds will go to the Parent-Child Mother Goose Program. *I Bring You a Story, Folktales that have Traveled*; Collected and Edited by Ruth Danziger, Preface by Celia Lottridge (ISBN 978-0-9916873-0-5) - For information about ordering email [mgoose@web.net](mailto:mgoose@web.net). \$20 plus shipping.



# ***New Wisdom Old Wisdom***

**Submitted by Brenda Byers and June Brown**

The campfire glowed red in the twilight as the lusty chants from the paddling voyageurs drifting over the tree tops. We were paddling down the most dangerous lake in Canada, Lake Winnipeg, under the direction of Zabe MacEachren a Kingston storyteller. This campfire and storytelling session was just one of the many enjoyable happenings that took place during the 'New Voices and Old Wisdom' gathering on June 8, 9 and 10th, 2012, near Grafton, Ontario. It was an historic event for Ontario tellers. Never before, had so many of them gathered for the sole purpose of connecting with each other.

Ontario is a vast province with about 18 storytelling groups. The distance between groups, our winter weather, the time and date of storytelling meetings, (usually a week day or night) the cost of travel and motels, make visits between tellers almost impossible. The consequence of so many obstacles is that most storytellers have few opportunities, other than the internet, to share experiences and stories with tellers outside their geographic area. To address this problem of 'not knowing each other,' Brenda Byers and June Brown, as co-reps for 'Storytellers of Canada/Conteurs du Canada', decided to sponsor a gathering of Ontario tellers. The underlying goal was to make connections. Tellers who were emerging would have an opportunity to meet established tellers, formal guilds would meet with

informal groups, eastern tellers would meet western tellers and northern tellers would meet southern tellers and SC-CC members would meet non-members. At the end of this gathering we hoped people would have stronger connections.

Planning is everything and we tried to cover every detail from food to travel. After many hours of work we had a varied program with lots of opportunities over three days to interact with other tellers, have fun and learn something new.

On the morning of the opening day we arrived at the site with great enthusiasm. We had great weather, good attendance, a well-planned program and volunteer support from Anna Kerz and Connie Hubbarde. As we entered the house we breathed a sigh of relief. The hard part was over. All we had to do was run the program. This state of smugness lasted until we turned on the water. When a silky brown mud poured from the tap we knew we were in trouble.

What was missed in our preparations was a contingency plan for a total pumping failure. Some fast thinking, bottled water, a port-a-potty and signs posted around the site saved the day. As people arrive we told them to pretend they were camping, and they did.

Our first event was a wine and cheese, followed by a tell-around under the stars. We heard stories old and new and we discovered that the real Hermione in the Harry Potter stories was probably a storyteller from Peterborough!

On Saturday there were meet-and-

greet sessions, two excellent workshops led by Heather Whaley and Norm Perrin, a discussion about storytelling in Ontario led by Bruce Carmody, and opportunities for fellowship and fun with a mystery lunch, a pot luck supper, tell-arounds and a 'Trivial Pursuit' with a storytelling theme that took everyone through the woods.

The trail wound its way beside and over a babbling stream, past century old trees, cedar groves and drifts of royal ferns. Storytelling questions dangled from the trees and bushes testing the group's memory and storytelling knowledge. (Can you name 3 stories that feature footwear?) Long cedar benches were placed in two strategic spots and as the hikers sat they listened as storytelling giant, Bob Sherman and wood fairy, Deborah Dunleavy told them a tale. The hike was one of the highlights of the weekend.

As the weekend unfolded, we knew our goal of connecting tellers had been achieved. All around us we could see clusters of tellers who had never met before deep in conversation. We could hear laughter and people making plans to meet again. When the gathering ended forty tellers went home with new storytelling ties, a stronger connection to the art of storytelling and our province.

In September, an Ontario 'travel and billeting program' will be launched to build on the connections made at the Gathering. This is good news for storytellers and Ontario communities. They will now be able to hear new stories and new storytelling voices.

## stories Going Round

The Durham Folklore Storytellers told at the Uxbridge Fair, as part of the Uxbridge Library's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. The lineup included storytellers Doris Cherkas, Enid DeCoe, Lucy Brennan, Heather Whaley, and Dianne Chandler.

Ariel Balevi toured to the Weaving Words Festival in Sharon Ontario this past September as well as to the Saw Gallery in Ottawa

and the Mekic Gallery in Montreal.

Author/storyteller Laurel Dee Gugler spent the last week of September touring rural Yukon schools and libraries. She reports a beautiful autumn season, and a wonderfully satisfying experience.



Laurel Dee gugler on tour in the Yukon

## On the Trail with Pauline

After setting my tent up with my gear inside on the cold windy Heights of Queenston on October 11, I returned home to dress in hoop skirts and head to the lovely town of St. George. The Haldimand Quilters Guild listened to my historic stories and legends about quilting across this great country of ours.

October 12 was education day at Queenston Heights. Not too much storytelling involved this time, people just wanted me to play my instruments and sing. But then songs do tell stories.

Saturday was public day at the Heights. The last estimate we heard was 20,000 people in attendance. What a rush! My story CD's and busi-

ness cards were flying off the table, always a good thing! There were people in attendance from all parts of Canada and the U.S. One of my CD's went back home to Calgary and several to the States as well as communities across Ontario.

Struggling with my canvas in the cold, the wind and the rain I couldn't help but stop and think what it must have been like 200 years ago. Those soldiers didn't have canvas for protection against the weather.

The most popular of the stories I tell is Laura Secord and there were several government dignitaries who sought me out to have their picture taken with me.

October 19 and 20 and again on October 26 and 27, dressed in widow's weeds, I told Hallowe'en stories and legends at Lang Pioneer Village. From Lang Pioneer Village I rushed off to Queenston on October 28 to tell stories of Women in Upper Canada during the War of 1812.

November gigs include stories of 1812, quilting, and Royal weddings in Burlington, Hamilton, Jordan and then off to the town of Dutton for their home business promotion event. I am looking forward to my Christmas bookings in various communities, I hope there isn't too much snow.

### ALICE KANE AWARD

The Alice Kane Award is an annual award presented by Storytelling Toronto in memory of Alice Kane (1908 – 2003). One of the co-founders of The Storytellers School of Toronto, Alice was a much beloved storyteller whose mastery of the art of storytelling made her an inspiration to many.

The award is offered annually to a person or persons who wish to advance the art of storytelling through research, innovative projects, or through their own personal development as a storyteller.

The Alice Kane Award is \$1,000. If there is more than one recipient, the money will be shared equally. The recipient(s) is/are selected through a juried process. The deadline is February 28, 2013.

For more information go to:

<http://www.storytellingtoronto.org/site/the-alice-kane-award/>

**Info: (416) 656-2445 or [www.storytellingtoronto.org](http://www.storytellingtoronto.org)**

### ANNE SMYTHE AWARD

The Anne Smythe Travel Grant was established to honour the memory of Anne Smythe, an active and well-loved member of the storytelling community. As a teller and author, she believed strongly in the value of travel and adventure in the development of a storyteller's art.

The award is designed to support the work of an active storyteller through the provision of funding to support travel expenses related to a storytelling project. To apply for the Anne Smythe Travel Grant, storytellers should complete and send the application form to Storytelling Toronto describing your travel plans and budget, as well as how the proposed trip will enhance your storytelling work. The purpose of the travel could include research, mentoring, participation in conferences and festivals.

The Anne Smythe Travel Award is a grant of \$500. The recipient(s) is/are selected through a juried process. The deadline is January 15, 2013. For more information go to: <http://www.storytellingtoronto.org/site/the-anne-smythe-travel-award/>

## Gail Nyoka cont'd

(Continued from page 6)

### What is it that you love about storytelling?

There's magic in hearing a well-told story. I like it when I can get completely involved in hearing a story and in telling a story. It's great when your audience is enraptured.

### As a storyteller how would you describe what it is that you do?

I usually use a slightly theatrical style. I am sometimes asked to do things for African History Month, so I have some African stories that I tell, and I'm a fan Celtic mythology. I find that personal/family stories I've told have gone over well with audiences.

### What kinds of stories are you drawn to?

I like things with a bit of an edge. When Luigi was in Toronto he said there's a version of Little Red Riding Hood where the wolf makes a paté from the grandmother. Little Red Riding Hood eats some of it, and the grandmother's cat tells her she's a bad

girl. That's the version I'd like to tell. I haven't been able to find a copy of it though.

### Are you working on any new projects - plays, novels, storytelling performances?

I'm working on several projects (which is perhaps why it takes me so long to get any of them finished). At the moment I'm working on a storytelling/theatrical piece about a female resistance leader from Zimbabwe. She has intrigued me for a long time, so I was happy when Zimbabwean Rainos Mutamba, agreed to work on it with me. He'll bring Mbira music and ritual elements to the story, as well as authenticity. This is for an adult audience, but I'm writing a book for children which I will return to as soon as my storytelling piece is completed.

I'm also working on a young-adult novel. I've had a hard time getting this manuscript published, so I want to make a few changes to it before I send it out again. I'm also collaborating with an artist on a graphic novel – that's on hold until the artist and I get our

schedules co-ordinated. It is research intensive, and we have to get together for some of the research.

### Has your childhood had an influence on you as a storyteller? If so please share how.

I recently wrote a storytelling piece for Nuit Blanche that was about some childhood experiences. I called it *Stories Untold* because they were things that happened when I was very young, but I didn't tell anybody about until recently.

### Has there been a mentor or person you look up to who has inspired you?

Lynda Howes has been both influential and inspirational. I took the First Steps course with her, and she was also one of my instructors in the Further Explorations program.

### Do you have a favourite quote or book or both?

*In the Skin of a Lion*, by Michael Ondaatje. I love his lyrical style of writing. One of my favourite quotes is also from Ondaatje (*Divisadero*). "We live permanently in the recurrence of our

## Bernice Hune cont'd

(Continued from page 1)

A story entitled "Leung Leung" came about when a child asked me to teach him a Chinese word. Children love to holler 'Leung', over and over until the room shakes like thunder.

For young children, I tell "Leung Leung" as a participation story about a wondrous dragon. For older children, it grows into a tale about Toronto's red rocket train. Eglinton was the last subway station in the 1950's. I went to school there. Growing up ethnic has its funny insights too.

"Umh jun lai" is Cantonese for "it was not permitted". It was adult talk. Community leaders were at our supper table. Around children, they did not dwell on the past, so that our futures would be bright.

My Father was born in Canada. In 1919, Vancouver had 210 Chinese

families. An astonishing small number when the building of the railway involved 17,000 Chinese workers. When the CPR was completed in 1885, the Government imposed a \$50 Head Tax for every Chinese person entering the country. It increased to \$500. As such a sum would buy a house, even the most frugal wage earner would toil years before sending for a family member.

In 1923, the Head Tax was replaced by the Chinese Exclusion Act. This devastating legislation lasted until 1947. During this 24 year period, less than 50 Chinese people entered Canada. My Mother was one of the lucky few. Her extraordinary visa and her beautiful singing voice became the basis of a story entitled "Shoes for Shui Hing".

The road to justice stretches from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Prime Minister. When Stephen Harper apologized on

behalf of the Government of Canada, the few surviving Head Tax payers were frail of age. It was a symbolic, yet moving gesture for those of us present in the House of Commons. Many of us had traveled on a train dubbed 'The Redress Express' that had crossed the country. The voices on board inspired the creation of a family reunification story entitled "The BaBa Shirt". The shirt is as blue as the Pacific, the ocean that once separated a Father from his beloved family.

### May, was Asian Heritage Month. I understand you were on both sides of Canada telling stories.

I was selected for the TD-Canadian Children's Book Tour, thanks to SCC, and I asked to go to British Columbia.

In my storytelling, much as I love the old legends, I'm also very con-

(Continued on page 12)

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cerned with things Canadian. Asian Heritage Month often seems to reflect the culture that Asians brought to Canada; I think it is important to share stories of what happened to them [here](#) in Canada.

**Personal stories are very important.**

I like to call them community stories. Stories about the struggle for the rights of full citizenship belong to all Canadians.

My work is also concerned with oral history. As a child I sat at my parent's table listening to the stories of Dock Yip, Canada's first Chinese lawyer, and Jean Lumb, the first Chinese-Canadian to be awarded the Order of Canada - neither lived long enough to hear their government's apology. Only years later have I the skills to weave their tales into stories of my own, and the means to record similar histories.

**I knew Doc Yip and Jean Lumb from my early days in Kensington. They were very influential people.**

Yes, they were. I think that on the whole we don't know that much about Pacific immigrants to Canada, but we know more now than we did ten to twenty years ago. One of the things that storytelling does is it keeps stories from a certain time period alive.

**A valid comment, I think; our school curriculum stresses things from somewhere else, not our Canadian stories. That's a role we storytellers have today, to tell Canadian stories.**

I think that's very important, especially in the time period I'm referring to. The majority of Asian (Chinese) people in our country today have come after 1967; their sense of Canada is based on whatever we can tell them of our stories. The newer arrivals are much different in education and wealth; my work focuses on the small part of the community I come from,

which is the early Chinese community. My experience out west gave me grist for the mill! There is so much history of Chinese immigrants on Vancouver Island.

To the newly vibrant and successful Asian immigrants who came to Canada more recently, I expect that such experiences will also become a part of our oral tradition.

Because the community I came from was much overlooked - they were not invited to be in the picture of the Last Spike, for example - it's taking a long time to recover these stories.

**Speaking of these stories - tell me your Doc Yip story.**

I heard this story from the horse's mouth, as they used to say. Doc was born in Vancouver but he always had a slight accent. He learned English in Chinatown and went to Columbia University. Every year he applied to the Osgoode Hall Law School but every year he was rejected. Finally, he showed up wearing his World War II uniform; then he was accepted!

**And tell his son Alfie's story.**

Alfie Yip told me the tale of Yip Sang, his grandfather riding out from a railway camp in the 1880s, his saddle bags full of gold, to plight his troth to the beautiful daughter of an Indian Chief, only to get cold feet when the engagement was to be sealed with a berry pie. As Alfie said, "Who knows what would have happened if the pie had been a Chinese dai tart?"

Other storytellers have other stories. Immigrant history is relatively new; of course Canada is relatively new, too. So our role as oral tellers is more significant than we might realize.

**Do I have the right, as a non-Chinese, to tell a Chinese immigrant story?**

We never used to have the phrase "voice appropriation" but now we do, and I think that's healthy. I think story-

tellers choose a story (and often the story chooses the storyteller); if it's not your background, take extra care. The introduction to the story will be very important. Remember not to saddle small children with too much history!

Many of these stories are universal stories; some say we are living in a post-racial generation.

The best way I think for a storyteller to retrieve a story is to know the person whose story it is really well. Stories are a bridge, and as time goes by, the bridge strengthens.

**You have had difficulties retrieving stories in your community.**

Yes. Chinese are often defined by generations, and certain things are not spoken across generations.

**I found that out when researching Chinese laundries; many Chinese preferred not to speak about it.**

Yes, the Chinese have their head tax stories and the Japanese their internment stories; they don't like speaking about difficult times.

For some years now I have called my repertoire of stories, new and old, "Tales from Gum San", or "Gold Mountain", the name that Cantonese voices called Canada when they worked in the 1850's gold fields along the Pacific coast.

**You said that in May you told stories on both sides of Canada.**

Yes; I also told in the Canadian Museum of Immigration in Pier 21, and in a Halifax library. May was quite an experience!

*It was time for lunch. Before the pot of tea could be put on and the salmon served, I tried to think of a good closing line:*

*"We all need to tell our own story," I said. And Bernice added the perfect corollary: "And listen to others!"*

# Listings — Fall into Winter 2012

Every effort has been made to present current information. Sometimes the completion and delivery of Pippin is subject to the volunteer hours available to produce it.

## GATHERINGS



**1000 Islands Yarnspinnners** present **Tales in the Evening** on the third Monday of the month at 7pm at the Brockville Museum, 5 Henry St. December 17: Legends From the Lands of Ice and Snow; January 21: Bravely Where Women Dare to Go; February 18: Vows, Promises & Oaths Not Broken. Info: Deborah Dunleavy 613-342-3463 or [teller2go@gmail.com](mailto:teller2go@gmail.com).

**1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling** continues every Friday evening at 8pm at the Innis College Café, Sussex Ave. and St. George St., Toronto. Suggested donation: \$5. Open to all who wish to listen or tell. (416) 656-2445,

[www.1001fridays.org](http://www.1001fridays.org)

**The Baden Storytelling Guild**, formerly at The Story Barn in Baden, now meets on the 4th Friday of the month, at The Button Factory, 25 Regina St. S., Waterloo. Membership and info: Mary-Eileen McClear, [maryeileen@thestorybarn.ca](mailto:maryeileen@thestorybarn.ca) <http://thestorybarn.ca>

**The Brant Taletellers Guild**, welcomes tellers and listeners to its monthly gatherings September to June, 7 – 8:45pm, on the first Wednesday at the Station Coffee House and Gallery, besides the Brantford VIA Station. Visitors welcome. Fair Trade coffee, Steam Whistle beer, wine and snacks can be purchased during meetings. Info: Barbara Sisson, email [taletellers@bizbrant.com](mailto:taletellers@bizbrant.com) or phone (519) 756-0727.

**Bread and Stories:** Dan Yashinsky, Storytelling Toronto's storyteller-in-residence, and a roster of other storytell-

ers host **Bread and Stories** most Saturday mornings 10-12am at the Artscape Wychwood Barns, 601 Christie St. In winter we're indoors at the Storytelling Toronto office, Suite 173. Open to storytellers, listeners and those who like to "talk" story. Come and be mentored as you try out new or familiar stories. [dan\\_yashinsky@hotmail.com](mailto:dan_yashinsky@hotmail.com).

**Cercle de conteurs de l'Est de l'Ontario (CCEO)** se réunit aux soirées de contes libres une fois par mois dans diverses communautés de l'Est ontarien. Renseignements: Guy Thibodeau,

[guythibodeau@rogers.com](mailto:guythibodeau@rogers.com), [www.cceo.ca](http://www.cceo.ca)

**The Dufferin Circle of Storytellers** meets the 1st Thursday of the month, 7:30pm. Info: Nancy Woods, (519)925-0966.

**The Durham Folklore Storytellers (formerly Durham Folklore Society)** meets every 3rd Thursday, 7:30-9:30pm in the Seniors Day Activity Room, Northview Community Centre, 150 Beatrice St. E., Oshawa. Info: Dianne Chandler, (905) 985-3424, [storyteller@explornet.com](mailto:storyteller@explornet.com) or [www.durhamfolklorestorytellers.ca](http://www.durhamfolklorestorytellers.ca).

**The Guelph Guild of Storytellers** meets at 7pm on the second Wednesday of each month at the main branch of the Guelph Public Library, 100 Norfolk St. Open mike for 5-minute stories. Experienced tellers with longer stories are encouraged to contact us in advance for a spot on the program. Info: Sandy Schoen, (519) 767-0017, [guelphstory@gmail.com](mailto:guelphstory@gmail.com), [www.guelpharts.ca/storytellers](http://www.guelpharts.ca/storytellers).

**Storytellers All** is the monthly storytelling gathering hosted by Micki Beck at the main branch of the Belleville Public Library on the 4th Saturday of the month, at 3:00pm. Training workshops will be combined with story sharing. Info: Micki Beck, [bumbleberry@sympatico.ca](mailto:bumbleberry@sympatico.ca)

**The Hamilton Storytelling Circle** meets once a month, from September to June. We meet on the third Monday from 7:30 pm to 9pm, with some exceptions. People should contact me at [barrythestoryteller@gmail.com](mailto:barrythestoryteller@gmail.com) to get more specific info.

**The Montreal Storytellers Guild** meets

the 4th Tuesday of the month at the Westmount Library. Info: Christine Mayr, [christinemayr36@yahoo.ca](mailto:christinemayr36@yahoo.ca)

**The Ottawa Storytellers** meet for their Story Swap on the first Thursday of the month, 7pm at Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington St, Room 156, free admission. Info: [info@ottawastorytellers.ca](mailto:info@ottawastorytellers.ca)

**The Ottawa Storytellers** also sponsor Stories and Tea every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month at The Tea Party, 119 York St., Ottawa, 7pm. Suggested donation: \$8 or pay what you can. Info: [info@ottawastorytellers.ca](mailto:info@ottawastorytellers.ca)

**Storytelling Circle** meets every Tuesday at 2:15pm at #6 St. Joseph Street, an artistic resource centre for people at a crossroads in life. All are welcome. Info: Molly Sutkaitis, (416) 239-1345

**Stories Aloud**, formerly at The Story Barn in Baden, is now held at The Button Factory (Waterloo Community Arts Centre), 25 Regina St. S. on the 2nd Friday of the month, from September to June. 8pm. Info: <http://thestorybarn.ca>. Suggested donation: \$5

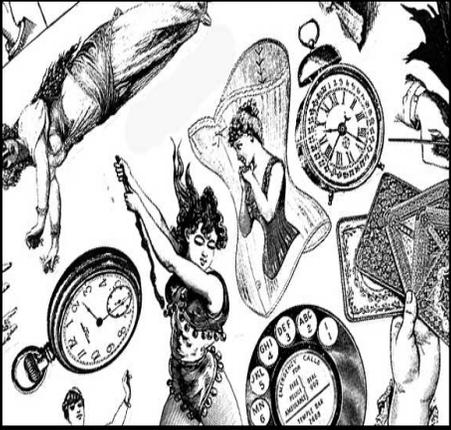
[maryeileen@thestorybarn.ca](mailto:maryeileen@thestorybarn.ca).

## PERFORMANCES



**The Legless Stocking** (Lorne Brown and Cathy Melville) opens a season of music and storytelling with La Maison des Contes, December 1, 7:30pm. Stories, ballads, songs and tales from our French heritage. With Sylvie Belleau, Marie-Lynn Hammond, Marylyn Peringer, Donna Dudinsky. At The Butler's Pantry, 591 Markham St., Toronto. Admission \$22, \$17 if ordered by November 22. Doors open for dinner at 6pm. Info and tickets: (416) 656-2445 or <http://www.storytellingtoronto.org/site/legless-stocking>.

## WORKSHOPS



**The Parent-Child Mother Goose Program** is offering a Teacher Training Workshop the weekend of January 25 (9:30-4:30) and January 26 (9:30-3:30). The workshop includes the philosophy and objectives of the program, use of rhymes, songs and story, and how to run a program. Included is a training manual, a booklet of rhymes and songs, and other resources. Facilitator: Ruth Danziger. At the Centre for Social Innovation Annex, 720 Bathurst Street, Toronto. \$320/\$280 early bird fee by Dec. 20. Info and registration: [mgoose@web.net](mailto:mgoose@web.net), or (416) 588-5234, x21. [www.nald.ca/mothergooseprogram/workshop.htm#on](http://www.nald.ca/mothergooseprogram/workshop.htm#on)

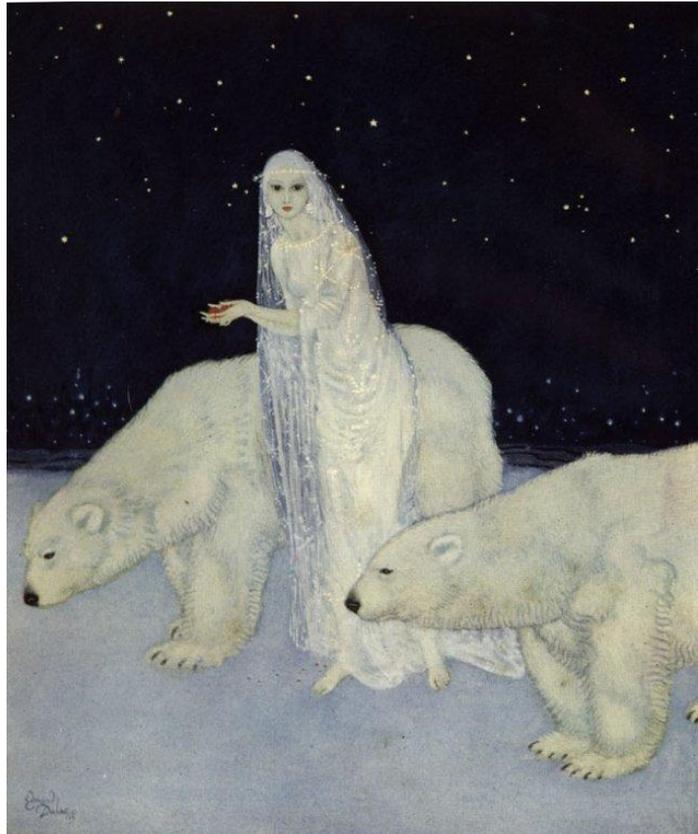
## WHATS UP?

What's new with you? Where are you telling stories? What new books have you read? Whoe did you hear telling stories? Send your submissions to Deborah at [teller2go@gmail.com](mailto:teller2go@gmail.com)

SUBMISSION DEADLINE  
FOR NEXT ISSUE:  
**February 1, 2013**

## STORYTELLING TORONTO COURSES

**Master Class** for experienced storytellers, led by Celia Lottridge. 7 Thursday evenings, January 10 – February 28, 2013 with a one-week break. Location: private home. Fee: \$375/\$350 early bird; deadline December 20. Info: (416) 656-2445 or [www.storytellingtoronto.org](http://www.storytellingtoronto.org)



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