

WRITE

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**Internet
Archive: Theft
or Public
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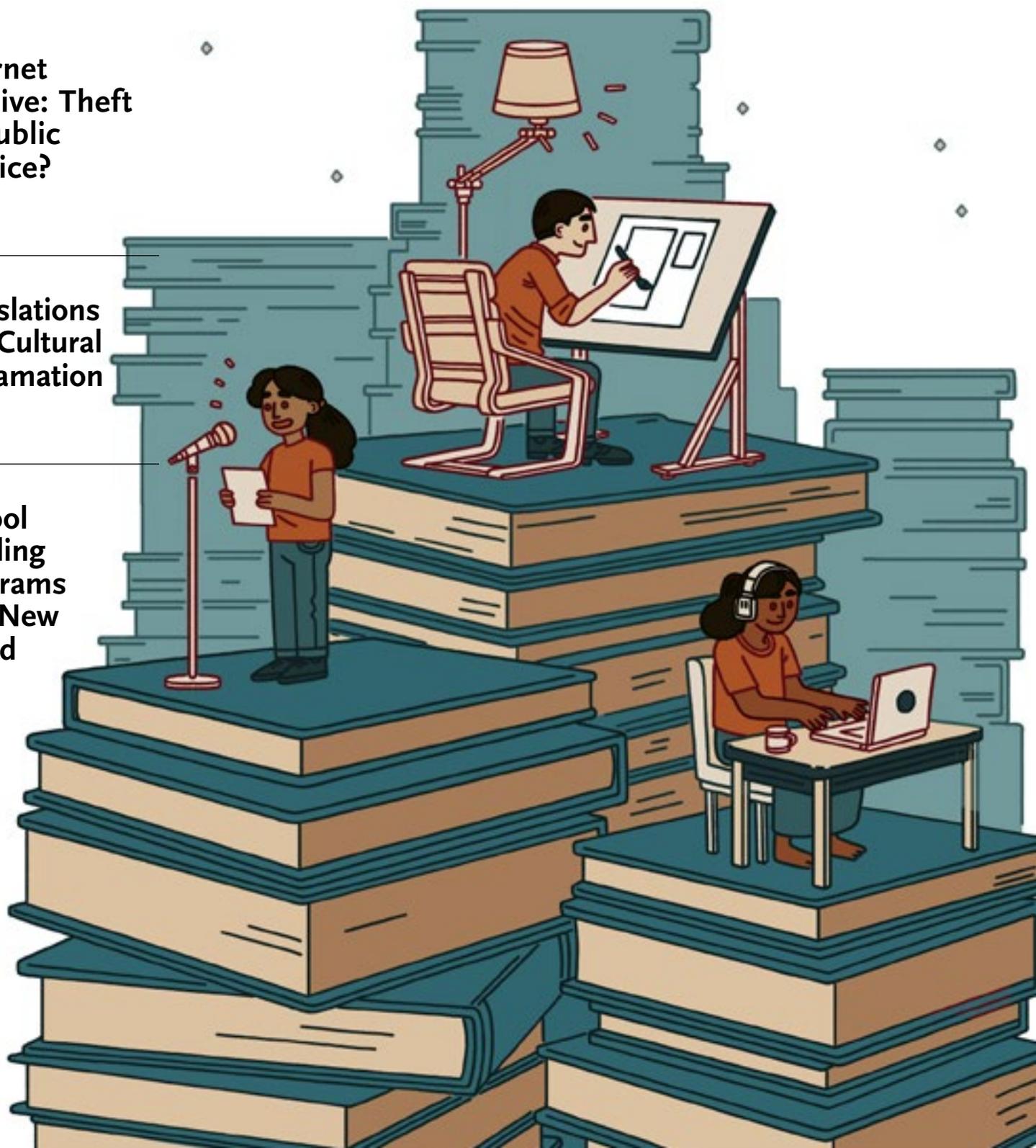
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Here we go, another turn of the big blue ball, TWUC's forty-eighth year, and my second (and final) as our organization's first two-year chair. This past year was filled with lovely moments, but also challenges. The importance of the work we do can at times feel overwhelming.

For those instances, there are blanket forts. I kid! But not really. We all have days we need to step back and fortify, especially during events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when “one more straw” is almost more than we feel we can bear. But we do, because we must. We find our strength and return to fight another day for better economic conditions for Canadian writers and public awareness of our work.

Thank you to all who attended our virtual AGM. It wasn't the gathering we planned, but it got the job done. It also offered a beautiful gift: Members who wouldn't ordinarily have attended were able to participate. As much as we have felt that in-person connection at an annual conference is vitally important, it has been a concern of National Councils over the years that for some, no matter the programs put in place to make attendance easier, this just isn't viable. This year we saw members from every region ask questions and offer comments, and also vote in elections and on a member-submitted motion. Thank you to our committees and task forces for your continued work and excellent reports. Thank you to our staff who worked out every anticipated hiccup in advance. It was wonderful to spend that virtual time with you. I hope those who partook also enjoyed the ensuing dance party. If you haven't yet read the AGM minutes, you can find them at writersunion.ca/agm-minutes-reports.

Right out of the gate we have our copyright battle to contend with. Executive Director John Degen is at the forefront, as he has been from his first day on the job in 2012. To recap: In 2012, Bill C-11 which amended the previous *Copyright Act* was passed despite a number of troubling elements, including an extended interpretation of “fair dealing.” In 2013, TWUC supported Access Copyright's lawsuit against York University for copyright infringement in its application of “fair dealing.” Access Copyright won the lawsuit in Federal Court, but York appealed. Backed by TWUC, the Association of Canadian Publishers, and the Canadian Publishers' Council, Access Copyright again prevailed on the question of whether York's copying was fair (it was not). However, the Federal Court of Appeal ruled York could not be compelled to pay tariffs established by the Copyright Board, despite their illegal copying. Ridiculous, and frustrating. And so we continue with an

appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Beyond copyright issues, TWUC continues to lobby for increased funding to the Public Lending Right Program, government support for greater awareness and recognition of Canadian books and authors, and other vital matters such as increased sponsorship of the Canadian Writers' Emergency Relief Fund which we have provided in partnership with our sister organization, the Writers' Trust. (P.S. Thank you to all who have contributed.)

This is where I admit to folding time. I write this a few days following our AGM, in 30-degree humid heat in the heart of New Iceland in Manitoba's Interlake region. Governments at every level are taking steps to reopen the economy, but as we've learned over the last few months, much can change in a very short time. I hope we've continued healing well and swiftly. I hope there have not been signs of a resurgence of COVID-19, though experts tell us we must anticipate this. Your National Council and staff continue to hope for the best but prepare for whatever may come to pass.

The spring lockdown caused authors to change the way we connect with our readers. Initially, many waived fees for readings and virtual presentations. This was welcomed and appreciated by readers who grappled to find their bearings, also educators suddenly trying to find ways to connect and inspire their students virtually. We found ways to reach out, show friends and strangers that we care.

However, “free” is not sustainable. I have heard many concerns from members about a digital devaluation, and it is worrying.

I encourage writers who have not already done so to resume charging for their work, whether virtual or in person. Our hosts need to know that there is no less preparation involved for a virtual presentation. It is oft the case that value must be assigned to a product or presentation for it to be fully appreciated. When we present for free, we devalue our own work and that of fellow authors. We cannot let potential hosts decide that if one author is unwilling to waive fees, they will easily find another who will. Let us pursue excellence, just as we do in our written work. Learn to use the technology. Learn about lighting and sound. Let us move forward with confidence, and get back to work.

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Writing Rights

When the World Presses Pause

By John Degen



The *Write* magazine publishing schedule is such that I generally have to look ahead and predict what might still be relevant for me to be writing about when you (dear reader) get this issue some months down the road. That little trick has become incredibly difficult of late. What will the world look like ... tomorrow? Next week? Next month?

Who can know?

What I do know is that the last three months have been unlike any I've known in my life. Having successfully isolated my family, and transferred my work to a hastily put-together home office, I found myself working long, long days. Days without my usual hour-long commute (each way), without the travel to and from offsite meetings, and without the many evening events I attend on behalf of the Union. Theoretically, that's a lot of freed-up time. It should have felt a little bit like a vacation, but as I'm sure you know from your own experience, it did not.

Work from home has no natural on- or off-switch. Emails arrive relentlessly, as do Zoom meeting invitations, carrying with them the hope and expectation of immediate response. In a global crisis, suddenly everything starts to feel a little bit like an emergency. That includes shopping for the family, helping kids with daytime schedules and remote schooling, cooking, cleaning, and trying not

to succumb to the panic that every headline and social media post is suddenly pushing.

I'm very proud of the work of the Union through the first three months of the COVID-19 lockdown. We have transformed work processes and standard Union protocols in every area of the business. We've raised and diverted a lot of money to help with emergency relief. Mostly, we've carried on our focus on writers' rights as though a phrase like "business as usual" actually has meaning in such a time. I'm happy to have played my part alongside stellar work from staff and National Council.

But one thing I've done very little of over the past three months is write. I mean my own writing — the creative work that brought me into this industry, and that I have always managed to keep going no matter the circumstances. Until now. I have tried to fit it in and have found that it's just not there. I've heard enough from other writers during this time to know I'm not alone in my dry spell. Good for Shakespeare, writing *King Lear* during the plague. It ain't happening over in this part of the lockdown.

Be kind to yourself right now. If the words have not been coming, give them time. They will flow again. And when they do, the Union will be here to help them along.

Editor's Note

By Rhonda Kronyk



As we move into another month of the pandemic and another month of caution about how we connect with each other, I find that I must consciously look after my mental health. About two and a half years ago, my writer friend and I started a weekly email that she named Sunny Side Up. Every Sunday, we email each other with the good things that happened during the week. Even when we feel like the week didn't go well, we always find at least a small nugget that we can feel good about and share that goodness with each other.

Sunny Side Up is more important to me now than ever. It's a reminder that I need to take the time to see the random good things that happen each day and that I need to intentionally find ways, large or small, to make good things happen. Sometimes, it's

as simple as sitting back from my desk and listening to the birds chatter to each other as they empty the bird feeders. Other times I'll take a weekday afternoon off and enjoy one of the beautiful parks in Edmonton's river valley or one of the nature sanctuaries that are close to the city. Some days, even getting chores done around the house is worth celebrating.

This issue has some articles about how writers are coping with the hurdles we're facing. The authors show us that, even when it feels like 2020 will keep challenging us, we have many positives in our lives. They may not be as numerous or obvious as we'd like, and they may show up in ways we don't expect, but if we take the time to look for them, we'll see them as bright spots of goodness that we can appreciate and share with others.

The Art of Translation

A Conversation with Arianna Dagnino, Miriam Körner, and Yilin Wang



Arianna Dagnino



Miriam Körner



Yilin Wang

Rhonda Kronyk talks with authors and translators about the complexities of having books translated for international markets. The interview has been edited for clarity and length.

For many of us, book translation is a mysterious subject that we may not have thought a lot about.

Getting books translated can help authors break into new markets. Yet many authors do not know what translators do or the many hats they have to wear. Translators need to be writers, code switchers, language and culture experts, and researchers — all while considering the author's intentions and the needs of readers. It is not enough to know two languages to translate literature, especially when cultural reclamation is becoming a larger discussion among translators.

RHONDA KRONYK: Given that publishers make the majority of the decisions about whether a book will be translated, can you give us a sense of whether authors can be part of the discussion?

ARIANNA DAGNINO: From my experience working with the European market, if you know an established translator, you can send the manuscript to them. If they like the manuscript, they can act as an ambassador and promote the book to a publisher that they work with. It's all about building networks.

YILIN WANG: It is often dependent on the company. I know some publishers that ask for recommendations from the author. And some authors have a translator who has been translating their work, and publishers will often work with that translator. Some translators also communicate with the author, which is one way authors can be involved.

MIRIAM KÖRNER: Being bilingual, I retained the German rights

and later sold them to a German publisher at the Frankfurt Book Fair. The German publisher asked if I would be interested in doing my own translation.

ARIANNA: You can build this type of flexibility into your contract. And it's easier to build the relationships that you need if you want to be part of the decision with independent publishers than with big publishing companies.

RHONDA: One of the things we talked about when preparing for this discussion is that translators need to consider culture and cultural reclamation and the many ways these concepts are part of their work. From your perspective, where does that begin?

ARIANNA: When we talk about cultural reclamation in Canada, we have to differentiate between Indigenous Peoples and everyone else because it's a whole different story and we need to work with it differently.

MIRIAM: I live in an English/Cree-speaking community, and I work with Elders to tell their stories. Because I do not speak Cree, we communicate in English. But there are so many words that are untranslatable. For example, the Cree word for woman is "iskwēw." I was told the word can also mean fire. Behind that is a worldview of understanding women as fire keepers literally by tending to the fire and symbolically by keeping the community together. All of this is contained in one word: iskwēw. And we translate it simply as woman. There is a whole knowledge and wisdom that is tied to the language and to the land that is lost in translation. I know I have to be very aware of that when I collaborate with Elders, but being aware of it and trying to capture the broader meaning rather than sticking to exact word-by-word translation is a way for me to try to bridge that gap. But it's our problem as readers to figure out [not the person who speaks the original language]. There seems to be an expectation that Indigenous language speakers always have to explain to people who do not speak their language or lack understanding of their culture.

RHONDA: That leads to something else that can be hard to come to terms with: As with writing and editing, translating texts is creative as well as technical, especially in terms of culture.

ARIANNA: We can't use Google translator to express the richness and wealth of the culture that is behind the language. As humans, we are much deeper than machines, which can't translate the meanings behind the words. That's the main role of the translator. We are a bridge between cultures more than just a bridge between languages.

YILIN: This reminds me of discussions about #ownvoices and cultural appropriation. There is a history of books being translated in colonial ways, and they can erase a lot of cultural elements. There are examples of Chinese classic texts that were translated by

European orientalist who did things like switch Chinese names for French names. It's a violent way of translating, and every time I translate, I have to push back against it.

RHONDA: How far do you push back so the original language is honoured even when publishers often privilege English readers?

YILIN: This depends on the text. For example, in poetry, form is also content, so I have to think about metaphor, the subtext, and the artistry of the language, not just the ideas. In that case, it's more important to preserve that. But if you only need information or facts, it is different.

MIRIAM: Things are changing, but we still only have two official languages. Even books that have both an Indigenous language and English are still geared towards English speakers. When we talk about cultural reclamation, we also need Indigenous writers who write for Indigenous readers and don't have to feel the need to have to explain themselves.

YILIN: Over time, I do see more discussions and more openness. Approaches to translation are changing in Canada, and there is more awareness about cultural knowledge and the background of the translators. I think there are more editors trying to look for #ownvoices translators. It's also important for publishers to be open to translation styles that privilege the source language.

ARIANNA: There is a different sensibility for readers and publishers here than in America. Our multicultural policies allow publishers to be more experimental and open to cultural diversity.

MIRIAM: I think in Canada we are a little more sensitized to accepting and learning languages and having them become part of our cultural identity. In the German translation of my novel, one of the characters who spoke English as a second language fell flat. I tried to capture the way English is spoken in a Cree community. Like "my husband, she just went to the grocery store" to reflect the differences between gender representation in Cree and in English. You can't translate that into German and have it sound authentic.

RHONDA: When we think about inclusion and cultural reclamation, one of the discussions I frequently have in my work is whether or not to italicize non-English words. Is this something you encounter as translators?

YILIN: Yes. For example, we don't italicize all non-English words, so why italicize any? Italicizing can create an "othering" effect depending on how you use it in the translation. The more we translate words, the more they become normalized. Japanese words like sushi, kimono, and ninja have all been introduced into English. But we aren't at that level with many other languages.

ARIANNA: We should consider this on a case-by-case basis. Sometimes, italicizing words can be a way of honouring other languages. One of my books is set in South Africa and I used words from several local languages. In that case I prefer to have them italicized, and I added a glossary for the book. The more you encounter these words in the text, the more they become part of your vocabulary.

YILIN: It also depends on the language pairs in which you are working. It brings up issues of multilingualism. Sometimes I translate poems by Chinese Canadian poets who are writing in Chinese and/or English, and for them, the two languages often have a co-existing relationship. One language isn't more foreign than the other, and I want to convey that. I don't want to make the Chinese appear different through italics.

MIRIAM: We had this discussion at the Indigenous Editors Circle in Saskatchewan in 2015. And we're still having it. And I think that's fair. We have to do what is best for the individual author and text and what is respectful to honour the intention of the original text. If you make a conscious choice that is made out of respect, then you don't fall back on "Well, we've always italicized it." As a matter of fact, in one of my Cree-English collaborations, the English translations are italicized.

ARIANNA: In the end, it's about being able to have an open discussion between the publisher, the author, the editor, and even the imaginary reader. That's how we can respect the totality of a project.

RHONDA: No matter what you do as translators, you may still have readers push back against your work. How do you mitigate that?

ARIANNA: I find that it's important to include additional information that helps the reader. If we try to explain concepts and language in the text, we can lose the rhythm of the original language. Translator's notes, glossaries, and footnotes can make the book become a journey of discovery for the reader while keeping the original words. For example, Chinese translators need to be able to keep the rhythm and the poetry that is part of Chinese literature and which can get lost in translation. Instead of culturally appropriating that kind of literature, readers need to be exposed to the culture shock of reading literature in ways they may not be used to reading.

YILIN: That's the beauty of translated literature. A translator who I respect says that he sees translating as a way to disrupt and contribute to the target language. You're bringing in new traditions, words, and ways of storytelling to the language you are translating into.

MIRIAM: I wrote a young adult novel where a non-Indigenous youth befriends an Inuk boy and his family. The boy's grandparents only speak Inuktitut to the protagonist which is true

to my own experience when I stayed in Nunavut communities. My editor wanted me to include English translations to the Inuktitut, and I said no. I want the reader to experience what it is like to be immersed in a culture and not to understand the language. Some readers didn't like it, but letting an Indigenous character speak the language without feeling the need to translate everything is one way to honour the language, and my editor was very understanding of that.

RHONDA: It can be difficult for writers to pass their books on to editors. Is it similar when you know your work is in the hands of a translator?

YILIN: It's important to find a balance when it comes to an author's involvement in the translation process. Ideally, authors should be open about talking to the translator and answering their questions about the text. But authors also have to recognize that they're not the translator, who knows more about cultural differences and how the target language works. Authors need to trust the translator.

ARIANNA: I approach this process with great openness. Translators are artists; they are writers in themselves and they have to put a lot of work into a project. Once I send a manuscript to a translator, it's no longer mine, it becomes their writing project. There are infinite versions of a text depending on how it is being translated and how it is being read.

Arianna Dagnino is a bilingual writer (Italian/English), literary translator, and lecturer. She has published books in both languages of fiction and nonfiction. Among them, The Afrikaner (Guernica, 2019), a woman scientist's quest into the African wilderness. Its German translation will be launched at the FBM 2020. With her colleague Dr. Ernest Mathijs, she has also written a screenplay based on the book. Arianna teaches Italian Studies at the University of British Columbia. She is a member of The Writers' Union of Canada and of the Literary Translators' Association of Canada.

Miriam Körner translated her debut novel, Yellow Dog (Red Deer Press, 2016), after the rights were acquired by Oetinger Taschenbuch, Germany in anticipation of Canada's role as Guest of Honour at the FBM 2020. She is currently working on her third novel with generous support from SK Arts and the Canada Council for the Arts. Miriam lives with her partner and their ten sled dogs near mistahisākahikanihk in northern Saskatchewan where she collaborates with Elders on English/Cree picture book projects.

Yilin Wang is a writer, editor, and Chinese-English translator. Her fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction have appeared in Clarkesworld, The Malahat Review, Arc Poetry, Grain, CV2, carte blanche, the Tyee, Toronto Star, and elsewhere. Her short fiction and poetry translations have appeared in Pathlight: New Chinese Writing and Samovar. Yilin has served as a translator for writers, filmmakers, and various arts organizations. She has an MFA in Creative Writing from UBC and is a member of 2020 class of Clarion West Writers Workshop.

Written but No Stage to Perform on



I know how to reach even the most reluctant writer while in their classroom, but digital is a whole new world.

BY DWAYNE MORGAN

Some six years ago, when I first pitched my idea to the York Region District School Board, I had no idea what would come from our decision to work together.

Understanding the importance of nurturing a new generation of storytellers, I suggested creating a board-wide poetry slam competition, available to students in grade seven and up. In just a few years, we had fifty schools and over 250 young people each year, writing and performing their work at school and in the competition.

For many of these students, their writing club or team has kept them connected to school. Teachers have often been amazed by the students who have gravitated to this opportunity. More often than not, the “disengaged” or the “troublemaker” takes up their pen, and for the first time, shares things about themselves that make their external disposition make sense. Young people find themselves in their ability to share but also in having people listen. The three minutes they have on stage often represents a rare moment in time, when they are the focal point, the centre of attraction, where they and their story are the only things that matter. It is hard for me to articulate the pride I feel in watching those young people take up space and affirm themselves, their thoughts, stories, and lived experiences.

Each fall, I begin facilitating in-school workshops to get the students excited about the idea and assist the teachers with how to help their students create pieces of spoken word poetry. I work with a team from the school board to coordinate the dates and locations for the quarterfinals, semi-finals, and finals. This year was no different — until it became extremely different.

As we prepared for the quarter-finals, our plans were put on hold due to COVID-19. We held out hope that we would be able to proceed, but it wasn't meant to be. The obvious collateral damage

of the school closures was having hundreds of kids with poems written and no audience to share them with. But I have a deeper understanding of that damage.

During the first year of the initiative, I was pulled aside by a father with tears in his eyes after his daughter performed her poem. He shared that his daughter identified as a lesbian, and he was struggling with it, but through her poetry he was able to understand, connect, and finally support her in the ways that she needed from him.

I have countless unexpected success stories that have left me heartbroken about not being able to see this year's initiative to fruition. The poetry has always been the vehicle to more, and I'm left wondering about those whose light would have been turned on by standing on that stage. Sure, there's an economic hit that I feel personally from the cancellation, but that hurts much less than the hit from not being able to help these young people find their voice and another piece of themselves.

While the school board has shared their commitment to trying again next school year when we enter our new normal, I've had individual schools get in touch with me to discuss what we might be able to do digitally. I know how to reach even the most reluctant writer while in their classroom, but digital is a whole new world. As writers we should begin exploring it more, as we may see other pandemics in our lifetime, and those who've prepared during this one will be in the best position to pivot when that time comes.

I've sat in a room by myself and filmed lessons with instructions that can be distributed to students. We've set times for live broadcasts so that the students can interact with me, ask questions, listen to me share my work, and get feedback on their writing. It's all a little new and weird, but exciting at the same time because it's forcing me to embrace technology in a new way and re-imagine how this can be utilized moving forward. Having this experience and these modules now allows me to reach out to school boards, regardless of geography. Technology breaks down geographic barriers that once limited our reach. I can now see the opportunity in all of this, and my job is to embrace the uncertainty of it and move boldly towards a new future that will integrate the physical with technology in new ways.

Dwayne Morgan is a two-time Canadian National Poetry Slam champion, with thirteen collections of poetry, and performances in eighteen countries around the world. Morgan is a 2013 inductee to the Scarborough Walk of Fame and has performed for dignitaries including former President of the United States Barack Obama.