

## **Toronto Poem Exchange – Canadian Federation of Poets**

The participating poets are;

Peter Austin – Two in the Bush

Richard Grove – Still Rockness, Things I'm not missing about Toronto, Frozen shutter  
finger

Tracy Repchuk – The History of Man, Saber Tooth Mist

Nora Groves – Old Love Letters, Because I'm Old

Donna Thompson - untitled

Richard Vallance - Suppose

Jean Burbidge - Dad

Ruth Walker – That far to Recollet Falls

Lloyd Graham – Notes from the Dominican

Peter Gilchrist – The Gift

*Tracy Lynn Repchuk – President and founder of the Canadian Federation of Poets, editor of Poetry Canada magazine, author of “The Poetry of Business”, and mom to 3 great kids. She has been published in Canada and the US, and dreams of the day when poetry takes over the world.*

***Find out more about the Canadian Federation of Poets and its members work at; [www.federationofpoets.com](http://www.federationofpoets.com)***

### ***The History of Man***

If I was here before, then why am I so blind?  
If I could go back in time, would I survive?  
Would I be who I thought I was?  
Could I live with myself if I really knew?

As spirit and body reconnect, my fragile vehicle wanes from my absence  
but the knowing more, has forever changed me  
I return from a journey equal to the wealth of a small nation  
where I witnessed my own self swallowed and chewed in the mouth of an overt

My clam like jaw aches from eons of suffering  
I weep on the beach, while ash-like sand caresses me  
from the wall of fire I return with my assumptions, limbs still in tact  
I shudder from visions only few lives recall

I have ground my coffee in the blenders of humanity  
and drank blood from the cups of mankind  
as I rise from my chair, having discovered centuries of truth  
I carefully place the secrets of the universe in my breast pocket

Amidst our catacomb nightmare I plead with the dark sky  
only to encounter infinite stars and perishing galaxies  
I smile from the flushing of energy, until I laugh aloud  
my small voice echoes like whispers on waves

My purpose erupts from crumbling crust and cascades down hillsides  
methodically collecting in yearning pools of solidarity  
where we are all recruited, but only a few dare to travel  
and with our consciousness clear, we set out to save us all.

Tracy Lynn Repchuk

## **Sabre Tooth Mist**

**For Rosemary Simpson**

Spring mornings dance with a brilliance of hope  
Graceful connections, as escarpments elope.

Stern rock faces, jagged with shale  
Dolomite, limestone for centuries prevail.

Parading clouds thunder above valleys and streams  
Biodiversity of life fulfills fantasy and dreams.

Swaying arms rustle announcing their fate  
Weak leaves gather avoiding the wait.

Autumn erupts with colours so true  
Towards wintery slumbers of a crisp tranquil view.

Magenta skies howl, purple splendor ignites  
Budding prospects in spring, new hope it invites.

Sultry summer hues, spontaneous earth  
Proliferates the cycles and gives way to rebirth.

On paper it's captured, impressionists crown  
Immersed in nature, it dons a new gown.

Change; the only constant in this landscape affair  
Connecting with treasures, eternally aware.

Tracy Lynn Repchuk

**\*\* Rosemary Simpson is an award winning pastel artist who recently had an exhibit at the Burlington Art Gallery. Saber Tooth Mist was the paper she used that allowed her to get 25 layers of colour, and allowed for the use of water and blending. This poem was written in response to her creations, which were landscapes from the Escarpment region.**

Richard M. Grove – Is a Canadian Federation of Poets member. He runs the Brighton Federation, and is the president of Hidden Brook Press, Canada Cuba Literacy, and is on the board of directors for the Canadian Authors Association in Toronto. Richard was selected as the Community Poet for Poetry Canada magazine in the Summer 2004 edition.

Still Rockness - Richard M. Grove

Red rock,  
it is nice to have a visit  
with you in January.  
I stood on you only months ago.  
Your firm rockness said, "*Press  
your bear pink feet on me.  
Dive from my shoulders  
of strength,  
sit on my smoothness,  
for I am rock.*"

I played on you in those long  
summer hours of sun.  
I will return next June.  
You will be smoother,  
more polished  
timelessly being – rock – for me.  
I look forward  
to seeing you then.

+++++

Things I'm Not Missing About Toronto - Richard M. Grove

I'm not missing  
slush puddle hopping  
snow drift climbing  
sidewalk sliding.

I'm not missing  
elevator riding  
bicycles zipping, dodging  
taxi cabs edging, pushing, nudging, squeezing.  
One sided cell call listening.

I'm not missing  
the long incessant waiting  
for cheque cashing  
    grocery buying  
        movie watching  
waiting for weekends  
waiting for holidays

I'm not missing

fresh air wanting  
sunny day needing  
stars not shining

I'm not missing  
TTC standing, bumping, grinding  
more waiting.  
TTC the better way! – me scoffing.

I'm not missing  
garbage trucks clanging  
sirens squawking  
traffic honking  
traffic squealing  
traffic zigging zagging  
401 crawling  
DVP standing  
pedestrians ignoring.

I'm not missing  
pigeons pecking, flocking, cooing, pooing  
dogs barking, yelping  
owners thank you for scooping  
but I am missing  
Starbucks wafting  
poetry readings stirring.

+++++

Frozen Shutter Finger - Richard M. Grove

The wind pelts me with  
fine sharp crystals, almost ice  
blown over Lake Ontario  
from now dark setting skies  
of the northwest.

The untrod snow, soft  
is deep, immaculate  
sometimes up, over  
my knees, finding  
its way into warm crevasses  
as I trudge towards  
heaving, tectonic plates,  
flat beds of ice that creek,  
groaning against pushing winds  
its own weight slowly  
unperceptively crushing  
everything in its path.  
Snow whipping horizontally into blue  
sculptures frozen in time.

Hat, hood, scarf tied tight  
shelter me into a calm  
sense of serenity.  
Fingers freeze with poised camera  
click, camera back into coat  
against warm chest  
fingers tucked back into gloves, turning  
I face away from wind  
I am blown to a new moment of inspiration.

Richard Vallance – Is a member of the Canadian Federation of Poets, and a past rhyming judge for Poetry Canada magazine. His work has also appeared in Poetry Canada magazine, and he was the Federations featured poet in January 2005. He is a sonnet aficionado, and has some active groups for this.

Suppose

for/ pour mon bel ami, Louis-Dominique \*

Suppose we're here in Ottawa. Here's May.  
You will have flown in with azure Quebec  
dawn's earliest light, and found our Sun play  
in greening evolutions, while rays fleck  
sunned river waves to alight on ensigned  
Parliament's Peace spires limned! Now, pray, be still,  
dusk falling, as we stroll your canal, glenned  
tulips lowlit aound in dusk's accents.

"I love the Savannah Café", you will  
have said (or we – again), or lingered there  
a while, before we found the other still  
midst whippersnapper leaves playing what air?  
You'll find this warm scene familiar, perhaps,  
if memories, long on tears, fail to lapse.

(c) by Richard Vallance, 2003 & 2005,

\* Louis-Dominique Genest is my partner of 7 years and then some.

Ruth E. Walker is a member of the Canadian Federation of Poets and an award-winning poet and writer. She is a founding editor for the journal *LICHEN An Arts & Letter Preview*, and her poetry and fiction has been published in Canada, the UK and the US. She lives in Whitby with her husband and four children, and runs a series of popular creative writing workshops. She was the selected community poet in Poetry Canada magazine for Winter 2004/05.

## THAT FAR TO RECOLLET FALLS

This old dog comes to life  
just south of the French River  
every coarse black hair on guard  
nose low and searching  
ears back, then pricked. Ready  
for anything to snap.

The trail mirrors the river almost  
twist and turn for twist and turn  
so we're caught in the current  
leaping over desperate roots  
and rocks that rise and fall  
to trace a glacier's path.

Some bear here before us  
left scat under the tree that sets  
canine teeth on edge and eyes  
scanning for large dark shadows  
moss and lichen upended, drying;  
the grubs beneath long gone.

Smell it first then hear it  
the rush of water squeezed in a fall  
a place of portage and accident  
current and undertow  
where the river steps down  
explodes, eddies and drifts.

Up there, a hawk plays thermal tag  
sailing with a practiced ease  
eyes sharp for small quick shadows—  
in the surface calm before the rapids  
a loon cruises, dives and comes up  
but not where we can see him.

Ruth E. Walker  
[walkwrite@sympatico.ca](mailto:walkwrite@sympatico.ca)

## Donna Thompson: Is a Canadian Federation of Poets member from British Columbia.

I am a poet of the universe  
You will find I speak in terse  
Whom am I you wonder why  
I speak so bold, I am not shy

Emerging from the shell within  
Publication helped my life begin  
Reclused like a hermit, the writer dwells  
In solitude she writes and tells

I speak of the adventures entertaining my mind  
An eccentric human the genius kind  
Different is recognized claims Henry David Thoreau  
A naturalist and author who's words that I borrow

The writer within started at seven  
I was a poet before age eleven  
Escaped to my fantasy, a world within  
I hid away from annoying kin

Developed my passion, I aim now to write  
A novel or two, perhaps something of fright  
An overnight success is what it'll be  
Here I come the writer in me

I can speak with a simplistic view  
Universally understood of more than a few  
Complexity is more for a serious work  
The educated mind of the university jerk

Of course we know the word jerk doesn't fit  
I used it to rhyme, no offense not a bit  
"Jealousies of the intellect" its been stated  
I'm the real jerk my ego's inflated

So out of my shell I present a tall tale  
Visions of yesterday from whence does prevail  
The seeds that were growing in my garden so well  
Has bloomed to maturity, the fruits which will tell

Nora Groves: Is a Canadian Federation of Poets member living in Oakville, ON. I am a senior citizen, living in a Seniors' Apartment Complex. I have written poetry all my life and find it very rewarding, especially as an expression of one's feelings and experiences.

### ***OLD LOVE LETTERS***

The old lady tenderly lifts  
A stack of envelopes  
Now yellowed with age,  
And as she sees once again  
The familiar handwriting  
Tears begin to spill from her eyes.

She hugs the letters to her  
And weeps at the thoughts  
Crowding into her mind;  
Memories of her loved one  
Who left this earth years ago.  
The one she had vowed to love,  
Honour and obey  
And to whom she had been faithful  
Through Thirty eight years of marriage.

One by one she opens the envelopes  
And with misty eyes reads the words  
Of love and devotion  
Penned more than fifty years earlier,  
Before they were married.

With deep emotion she remembers  
The many occasions when her beloved  
Would drive quite a distance  
In his ancient ramshackle car  
Following a day of hard manual labour  
To spend a few precious hours with her.  
Arriving back home late at night,  
He would sit on his bed  
And write a brief note  
Expressing his deepest feelings  
Before he retired for the night.

*Honoria A. Groves*

## **BECAUSE I'M OLD**

*Because I'm old  
Please don't assume I'm stupid.  
Although I use a hearing aid  
I still can understand,  
If you will just take the time.*

*Because I'm old  
Don't feel I am not interested  
In your young lives.  
I want to know what's happening  
And long to hear your hopes and dreams.*

*Because I'm old  
Please do not ignore me.  
I love you and care deeply  
About my family and friends,  
And this world in which we live,  
Including all life's problems.*

*I may not be as agile  
And I may tire easily,  
(Taking unexpected naps),  
But this does not mean I'm bored.  
I cannot do a lot of things I used to do,  
But I still want to help in some way  
And need to feel needed.*

*Although I'm old  
I am not pessimistic.  
I thank God for every single day.  
Each dawn is a gift  
And I try to make the most of each hour  
For life is still good,  
Even though I am old!*

*Honorita A. Groves*

Peter Austin: Is a Canadian Federation of Poets member from Toronto, ON. Peter teaches English at Seneca College and writes poems and plays in his spare time. He has been published in Canada, the USA and the UK. He lives in Toronto, with his wife, 3 daughters and too many pets. Peter was a winner of the Spring 2005 Rhyming poetry contest for Tess.

### Two in the Bush

As governor of Texas,  
You seemed to own a spine,  
But now, sir, you perplex us.  
You signed, in ninety-nine,

A piece of legislation,  
Permitting them to yank  
The plug on vegetation  
With nothing in the bank;

Why, just the other day, sir,  
Despite its mother's hex,  
They took the tube away, sir,  
From ailing baby 'X'.

But now, you stun the nation  
By jumping on a plane,  
Truncating your vacation  
To legislate *again*,

Upon the selfsame matter –  
To keep alive or waste –  
And now, it seems, the latter  
No longer suits your taste.

What swayed you? Was it Terri?  
That sadly vacant gaze,  
As bright, once, as a berry,  
As sweet as JonBenet's?

Her folks, perchance, and neighbours?  
Compared to whose crusade  
The son of Zeus's labours  
Were, what? - a panty raid?

Or was it just a ruse, sir  
(How masterful, your knack!)  
To make a little news, sir,  
A long way from Iraq?

[In March 2005, President Bush cut short his vacation and flew back to Washington to intervene on behalf of Terri Schiavo, a woman in a 'permanent vegetative state'. Earlier that month, in Texas, a baby was euthanized – despite its mother's wishes – under a bill signed into law in 1999 by (then) Governor Bush]

Peter G. Gilchrist, is a Canadian Federation of Poets member from Edmonton, AB. Peter writes mainly in rhythmic, rhyming forms. He has been published in a variety of print and electronic magazines and recently participated in an anthology of paddling poetry entitled "Paddle Tracks" which was compiled in an effort to assist the Canadian Canoe Museum in Peterborough, On. You can read more of Peter's poetry on his website, at [www.pgilchrist.ca](http://www.pgilchrist.ca).

## **THE GIFT**

He shuffled through the dust on blistered feet  
towards a stand of trees that seemed to drift  
on endless waves of suffocating heat.  
Each painful step he took was one more gift.

A salty crust patrolled the lines that mapped  
his leathered neck and rimmed his bloodshot eyes.  
An old hyena stopped to watch and snapped  
the air behind him. Vultures filled the skies.

He hobbled on. In prison he had learned  
that pain is just a fragile state of mind,  
but every night his troubled dreams returned:  
the maggots gorged on friends he'd left behind.

His only crime was one of faith. He taught  
what he had learned: that men should live without  
a master's chains. The ruling class did not  
condone that view. Their soldiers sought him out.

The beatings were routine. His ribs were cracked  
so many times that pain became a friend,  
a sharp, familiar stabbing pain that wracked  
his wasting frame and never seemed to end.

His fellow inmates died in swollen mounds  
of abject misery. He knew he'd meet  
an equal fate. He sensed the coursing hounds  
of Death pursuing him on padded feet.

And so he fled. One night when darkness swept  
across the veld and clouds blocked out the light  
he climbed the prison wall and slowly crept  
beneath the waiting camouflage of night.

For months he travelled trails and dried-up streams  
that led him south, towards Caprivi Strip.  
Each crimson sunset bled from anguished screams  
of Africa and stained her battered lip.

He crossed the Okavango after dawn

and walked towards a brilliant golden hand  
that reached for him with every ray it shone.  
A welcome spread across the glowing land.

He dared to dream of freedom now, and ached  
to hear his children chase each other 'round  
the yard outside his home where sunlight baked  
the grass that struggled through the trampled ground.

He longed for Flora's touch each time he slept  
to soft cicada symphonies that filled  
each lonely night. He prayed, and sometimes wept  
in gratitude; the baying hounds were stilled.

By custom, most Umbundu men will break  
the ground for garden plots. Their wives will then  
maintain the crops. The fathers also make  
a plot to give each child who reaches ten.

He wasn't there to break the ground this year.  
His hoe lay idle in the shade beneath  
a baobab. A solitary tear  
dropped gently into dust and formed a wreath.

A thousand miles, and maybe more, he walked  
on feet that bled with every step. His face  
was chapped and badly cracked. His mouth was chalked.  
He hobbled slowly on in God's embrace.

One heavy afternoon he saw a mist  
ascend above a tall mopane tree.  
He knelt and prayed. *The smoke that thunders\** kissed  
the Rev'rend John Kapuka. He was free.

A painting hung within our home, of two  
apostles at the tomb of Christ. 'Though John  
was first, it wasn't he but Peter who  
went in to find that Christ's remains were gone.

In Dondi, Grandpa Sid received a note:  
"Remember well the picture on our wall,  
the first to come is here", my father wrote,  
and Flora wept when Grandpa came to call.

The months that followed must have dragged for John,  
although he never let it show. He found  
what work he could, and shortly after dawn  
one day I watched him start to break some ground.

He danced across the soil. Each rhythmic swing  
his borrowed hoe inscribed implied a hand  
above an ochre drum. I heard him sing.

His words of thanks poured out across the land.

His friends had found a way to get his wife  
and children out and ‘though he had to wait,  
he knew they’d come. A vastly better life  
awaited them. He danced to celebrate.

On Christmas Day, when church was done and all  
the toys and gifts lay strewn across the floor,  
our new adopted uncle came to call.  
He stood and smiled and waited at our door.

“I have a gift for each of you.” He said.  
His empty hand stretched out to point the way,  
and five excited children cheered. He led  
our greedy throng to where the presents lay.

A hectare, more or less, of garden spread  
in five symmetric plots that greened the land.  
I understood. I leaned my tousled head  
on Uncle John and gripped his calloused hand.

- 
- Mosi-oa-Tunya – “The smoke that thunders” – Victoria Falls

Jean Burbidge – is a Canadian Federation of Poets member based in Campbellville, ON. She writes from her farm and childhood home. She was featured as the Federation's March 2005 poet of the month.

Dad  
JL Burbidge

A man born to the land,  
Each field knew the touch of his hand.

Walking behind his horse  
And plough was life to him.  
The first spring chocolate furrow  
Across a winter-worn stubble,  
Clean, straight and narrow,  
Wisdom carved there.

Wooden barrels of apples  
Riding the wagon replete,  
Woven baskets swaying  
From ladders reaching high,  
Horses' fretful neighing  
To be on the move.

In sweating, hot summer sun,  
Layered high, the hay  
Brushes low-hanging branches  
Along the lane to the barn.

Horses strain and snort  
Pulling logs from the bush  
Creating now ditches,  
Roads to the future.

Old trees cut with thoughtfulness,  
Leaving young growth for us.

Lloyd Graham – Is a member of the Canadian Federation of Poets and hails from Cavan, Ontario. He is also the Vice President of the Canadian Authors Association Toronto chapter.

### **NOTES FROM THE DOMINICAN**

Hey Zeus (our waiter, Jesus, eh)  
Rum this, rum that and everything  
Les femmes du monde  
Get naked, bare their breasts  
Cause of some unrest  
Entre les femmes and leurs maris

Tides roll in  
Whistles bring back the rentals  
Breasts, breasts everywhere  
Uh, huh, L.C.  
“That’s how the light gets in”  
That’s how the bright gets in  
That’s how the might gets in  
“Ring the bell,” any bell  
Let the games of life begin  
Continue for those with experience  
‘cause they come in pairs, you know  
‘cause they come in pairs.

The tide continues to roll in  
As it has been doing forever  
Serape bikini bottoms  
Stuffed breasts o’er flow their tops  
Rum this, rum that  
Rum in everything

YIKES!

An Italian cheer leading squad  
Two Germans duel doing dominoes  
Whale on the beach  
Whale on the beach  
Birds building nests  
Showers... not usual  
Envelopes sealed by the humidity  
Pepper delivered in plops  
salt; not at all  
Rumba, salsa, disco, Macarena music  
Hot, wet, green, and flowering  
Jurassic Park vegetation  
Driftwood and tree roots  
Worn smooth by years of  
Wind and rain and butts

Wrist band  
House band  
Rum with this  
Rum with that  
Rum with everything.

Dinner is served  
Mexican tonight  
Bo Derek look alike  
(and others)  
Pass into and out of sight  
Braided hair, plastic chairs  
Voices form a din  
(thinking things that could pass for sin)  
German, Dutch, Spanish and French  
With English smattered here and there  
Music comes and goes  
A local jazzing things up  
Put some coffee in the cups  
Hey! it's not all rum you know  
Why after supper there's Amaretto.

Sun block forty-five; a.k.a. shades of night  
A strong wind moves the clouds  
And the sun again shines  
And the beach bunnies applaud  
I know Leonard!  
" There's a crack,  
A crack in everything;"  
I know Leonard!  
" That's how the light gets in!" (gee)  
Long beach walks  
Watch the clouds pushed to the horizon  
Sunshine reveals the spirits  
They (the most beautiful ones)  
Walk the beach, mostly in pairs  
Absorbing the sun and the stares  
Smell the lotions  
A signal to begin  
The sunburn / suntan game.....

The ensemble shower,  
Oh, a good quarter hour  
The right way  
To wash off the sun block, sea salt and the sand  
Soaping one another, lathering up the hands...mmmm.

Off to dinner; seafood surprise  
I saw it in her eyes  
Crackling' fried chicken for me.  
Mr. Playa Nacho competition

yeah, huh... our entertainment for this night  
Some big slug from YYZ  
Wins two bottles of Dominican champagne  
And a T-shirt two sizes too small  
He was with Bo  
(little did he know)  
I'd seen her hooters too!

Up to TOPS, the room with a beat  
There the rhythms  
Were turning up the heat  
We danced; the locals  
Pranced and strutted  
Around the edge of the dance floor  
Beers in hand they rutted  
We tried, we died  
Sleep felt like a lot more fun  
Tomorrow  
We'll be up with the sun.

just how does a man get a rest  
When everywhere he turns, he turns  
There always seems to be women's breasts!!  
Long beach walks  
New butts, new shins  
'Chewy' made his debut  
Into the whiplash early  
What was this poor boy to do?

Walked 'till noon East; uh no, west  
Or just left then right  
Simple. Tomorrow  
we'll reverse.

A warm long afternoon  
Stephen King pour elle  
Seulement le gawking pour moi  
(pour moi)  
The beach jammed  
Water crowded  
Jet skis, kayaks, banana boats, and people  
we two, too  
Water warm; salty eyes  
Shower, banana mama, lotions  
A la toilet... line ups everywhere  
Wait for a drink; wait to pee

Looked in the mirror  
Quite a scare  
That was me with the  
Albert Einstein hair.  
(My brush!!!!)

He played with us this morning  
Pleasant enough through breakfast.  
Beach towel umbrellas  
A deluge; took refuge  
Back in the room  
Shooshed the maid  
To the SUN-GOD, a sacrifice we made  
It worked.. to the playa!  
Spent our hour and fifteen  
Thinking the sky azul  
Bring 'em on  
If they wanna show 'em  
I'll oblige and do the looking'  
Gracias.

Lunes; the week ends.  
Every day has sprinted into the next  
A little wet, a little hot  
A lot of azul  
me; a little rojo  
No more mananas  
Au'jourd'hui we head home  
To dream our dreams  
Plan a new place to roam  
Sweat on the brow; creamed skin  
No more holas! from time-share men  
No more banana mamas  
Well that is after six p.m.  
Waves crashing the beach  
Soon a sound far from reach  
Snow plows slushing in the snow  
Back to winter we grudgingly go  
Too soon the hooters hidden  
Too soon ends  
Our week in this Dominican Eden

Lloyd Graham