



Opening doors
What poetry is this? / 2

Description

An alt view of our world in Words and Music

By **Wanda Potrykus**

Newer Canadians – Some came by choice, others were forcibly uprooted from their homes and brought here, some were born here. The last two hundred years has seen unprecedented global migration to the continent indigenous peoples call Turtle Island and we, in our northern portion call the country of Canada. Presently, our great land of Canada is a melange of many different peoples, cultures and spiritual beliefs and non-beliefs. We are light skinned and dark skinned, red, white, black, brown and yellow, we speak a cacophony of tongues and we are all living in a period of great change. It is a time that has been foretold in the prophesies of many aboriginal cultures all over the world. To many, it appears evident that this world of ours is in decay, the systems mankind has built and valued are falling apart...

We must be the change we want to see in the world

The Anishinaabeg have a prophecy for this period: they call it the time of the 7th Fire and they believe we all have a role to play in it. We must be the change we want to see in the world. There are choices that need to be made, paths to be taken, doors to be opened. Everyone, especially our indigenous peoples, all need an equal place at the negotiating table in order to create the more balanced future we all need and some of us crave. But are we ready to listen and open those doors? What or who will touch our heartstrings? Have we reached the tipping point yet?

Barbadian sensibilities, island energy, Canadian values

Deanna Smith and Jason Selman are Canadians of Barbadian descent who play music and perform spoken word and slam poetry. They are also married to each other, so for a **Words and Music** first, they will be performing together as a husband and wife team, on our stage in the park, which promises to be a very high energy experience. I, for one, can't wait to see it. Meanwhile, they tell me (with a big smile) that it was literally words and



music that brought them together because in 2009, Deana began attending Kalmunity, the collective that they still both perform with almost eight years later. She met Jason and... “The rest, as they say, is history.”

Deanna (D-NA) Smith describes herself as “a Bajan-rooted, Montreal-flowering poet enjoying her love affair with words as a speech-language pathologist and an active member of the ‘Kalmunity Vibe’ collective”. She is a gifted spoken-word performer whose Caribbean background and Montreal reality inform her artistic creation.



Deanna (D-NA) Smith

Image: courtesy of the performer

She says her creative work is rooted in her experience as a descendent of the African Diaspora, who thinks in two languages, and who is a daughter, wife, mother, and neighbour of the many displaced peoples of Turtle Island. Deanna has been fortunate to perform in many venues across Canada and have led workshops with participants aged 18 to 80.

She joined Montreal’s Throw Poetry Collective in 2009 and was among one of its most active organizers for over five years. She was on the collective’s 2009 and 2010 slam teams to the Canadian Slam championships, and she was Montreal’s 2010 grand slam champion. Also in 2010, Deanna joined the Kalmunity Vibes Collective and published her first chapbook entitled *Full Circle – Poems in the Next Degree*. She has participated in the Migratory Words Writers’ circle and the Banff Centre’s Spoken Word Program, and performed at a number of festivals. In 2011 she represented Montreal at the Vancouver International Poetry Festival’s Canadian Individual Poetry Slam competition. In 2012, she joined the Board of the Quebec Writers’ Federation (QWF). Currently, she is exploring new paths in her writing life.



Jason "Blackbird" Selman
Image: Melika Dez

Jason 'Blackbird' Selman is a Montreal-born poet and trumpet player of Bajan heritage and a second time performer at Words and Music. He is the author of *The Freedom I Stole* and co-author of the poetry anthology *Talking Book*, which chronicles the writings of the Kalmunity Vibe Collective (of which he is a founding member). He is also the producer of the Intimate Sky performance series. He has had the privilege of working with the Black Theatre Workshops Youth Works program for many years as their Poetry/Spoken Word Coordinator as well as being a youth coordinator at the Y Teen Centre in the Westmount Recreation Centre. Alone and in partnership with his wife Deanna, he leads poetry workshops. His work is grounded in the themes of ethno-musicology, surrealist expression, love and the intersection of masculinity and emotional vulnerability.

The future belongs to the young...

Last but definitely not by any means least, Words and Music is pleased to welcome back for the second year in a row, our young Westmount poet and aspiring playwright **Leah Annia Plante-Wiener**, who wowed the audience last year, so much so that we just had to have her back again.

Actually, to be truthful, we wanted all of last year's Words and Music performers back again... we were just constrained for time... it's only a two-hour event after all... so Leah and Jason will have to carry the mantle for all of them and we'll work hard to have them back sometime in the future, if we can manage it.



Leah Annia Plante-Wiener
Image: Virginia Elliott

Leah Annia is a Grade 12 student at Bishop's College School where she has participated in school choirs, concert bands and school plays. Leah's written works have already been published in poetry and short-story anthologies. She has won awards in various writing competitions, including an international essay contest (which meant a trip to England for tea at Buckingham Palace) as well as Westmount's own McEntyre Writing competition. She has also won various public speaking competitions.

Earlier this summer, Leah worked as a counsellor at the Theatre Academy of the Segal Centre in Montreal and currently she is attending the summer program of the Shakespeare School at the Stratford Theatre Festival in Ontario but she'll be back in time for Words and Music.

Leah Annia brings the worldview perspective of the young bilingual Canadian, Quebecker, Montrealer, and Westmouter, who, although she is at home in her environment that doesn't mean, as her poem last year showed us, that she is complacent about it and that she doesn't see some of the problems facing us as we move past the truth of our past and into our future.

... and the world to all of us

So what do you think? Intrigued, interested, bemused? Why not come to look and listen for yourselves? No need to knock, simply walk right up to the stage under the big maple tree, sit down and allow our Words and Music to open the door to whole range of possibilities

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Save the date: **Sunday, August 20, 2017**



Place: Under the maple tree on Willow Point by the Lagoon in Westmount Park

Time: 2 pm to 4 pm

Rain venue: The Mouton Noir cafe on top of the green roof of the Westmount Recreation Centre

Note: Since this event includes poetry as well as music, it is best to sit closer to the stage rather than across the lagoon in order to hear better as the words can get distorted as they float across the water. Bring a picnic, your lawn chair or a blanket and find an alt view of our world in the words and music of the land we all call home.

My Canada Is Red

Celebration of Canada 150+

I have long said: My Canada is red...and
White and black and brown and yellow
Fellowship is important as we share the land
Standing up together, hand stretched out to hand

It's a time of great changes
Fear and sickness of mind ranges
Far and wide, both out and inside
All over the world is decay
Dismay writ large on every face
Grace in defeat
Is a neat concept
But not one I subscribe to

You and I must dry our tears
Push away our fears
We must accept
Not reject the mantle
Of the rainbow warrior,
Or we'll be sorrier
When our world implodes
Oh yes, the scolds will have a heyday
Pray their way will not be ours

Say is this the time of the 7th fire?
Dire straits have come upon us
We must choose to remake ourselves
As the Anishinaabe legend foretells
Ground swells of discontent
Is this what's meant by the prophecy?
Whether you agree or no,
We must make it so

The systems man has built and valued
For so long are falling down
We are drowning in our own filth



Cutting down our trees

Plasticizing our seas

Silting up our rivers

The lifeblood of our earth

There is a dearth of leadership

We must exert a grip on the downward slide

Take pride in our ability to alter it

Bit by bit strange as it may be

Surely you can see it must be done

One way or another sister and brother

Must come together to begin the healing now

Feeling and compassion must triumph over greed

We need to rearrange and change

Flesh must be ruled by the spirit

To give the alt way a chance

Or do the Dance of the Departed

Outsmarted by our own complacency

Nations lining up against nations

We must learn to live it

Spirit over flesh come what may

No more gray areas or nefarious deals

To benefit the few over the many

Are there any other options out there on the air?

Speak now or prepare to gasp your final breath

True death is one way out for you

But I prefer the opposing view

But most importantly it must be said

Far and near, let's make it so

Today and forever it is clear

My Canada is Rainbow Red.

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Wanda Potrykus

Read also [Opening doors – What poetry is this? / 1](#)

Feature image: Andrew Burlone



Wanda Potrykus is a writer, editor, translator and poet. A graduate of McGill, she has spent most of her career in marketing communications, PR, event and media relations specializing in international aviation, telecommunications, education and the marketing of the arts.

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