

# Poetry in York Region at an 'all-time low'

From page 18.

Organizer Dorita Kozak, who has written poetry most of her life and performed it for about five years, said poems allow one to connect with others by "exposing" oneself.

When asked why she writes, the King Township resident responded, "Why do I breathe? It's like breathing. You take something in and give it out."

Ms Kozak said the poetry nights were about to shut down when she took over last June. Since then, she noted, poets who wrote in rhyme or abstractions are now experimenting with free verse and relating personal experiences.

But Taun Brown, a Newmarket resident who helped start the first organized readings in his town six years ago, said poetry in York Region is "at an all-time low".

Back when he started, poets would not be able to recite more than one poem each because

there were too many people wanting to read.

"Most of the kids who have read here have gone on to college or university," he explained, adding poetry is more of a popular pursuit in Toronto because of its subcultures.

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Imagine magazine publisher Cameron Aiken agreed.

"Downtown they take themselves very seriously, whereas in York Region, it's more of a relaxed atmosphere. It's not as much about the quality of the work,"

Mr. Aiken, whose publication covers the region's art and poetry scene, said.

"A lot of people don't associate culture with York Region. They think they can only find it downtown."

Mr. Aiken, who has attended readings for more than 11 years, said poetry groups are producing a diverse mix of work in the region.

Everything goes here, from "cute and cuddly" love poems to the apocalyptic ramblings popular with high school students, he said.

But those groups must build alliances if they hope to improve York Region's literary scene, he added.

"It seems as though there are isolated groups that keep to themselves. I find it's very isolated within each community," he said.

"The artistic community is notorious for not promoting itself well and being stuck in its own little world. It's about reaching out."

# Book captures wonder of snow days

*Snow Day*, written & illustrated by Werner Zimmermann, North Winds Press 1999, hardcover \$18.99

Winter has been playing games on us this year.

The impassioned, one-day-wonder storms (I think there have been three of them) that have teased us over the last couple of months make the very notion of a "snow day" laughable, yet, who knows?

In *Snow Day*, author Werner Zimmermann has perfectly cap-

tured the highly mixed feelings about the season.

Through the eyes of a child, the story is about the pure magic of an unexpected day off school, the gift of all the possibilities that can be realized in this 12-hour stretch: snow angels and snow forts, hockey and hot chocolate. The children in this book are as wild and free as the falling snowflakes and for the child who reads, or is read to, this book will immediately recognize the excitement. Only adults will see

the other adults in the book digging out their cars, shoveling their walks and getting blocked by the snowplow's leftovers just as the job is done. Your child will see none of this and instead focus on the pure fun and wonder of a winter storm. This is probably a good thing that will rub off on those of us who may have forgotten the wonder part, especially because (as I look out my window writing this), it's snowing. (Ages 4-8)

— by Stephanie McLellan

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