

## Feminist Caucus in Conversation with Jónína Kirton and Joanne Arnott

### League of Canadian Poets, September 2020

**Jónína:** We're here today to talk about land, body, water, poetry. I like how land and body go together. They're kind-of firm, grounded. Water and poetry is much more fluid. The combination of the two is something that I look forward to exploring. My name is Jónína Kirton. I'm Icelandic/Métis from Treaty One and I'm currently in the land of the Qayqayt (Kee-Kite), Tseil-Waututh and Sto:lō nations. I'm very happy to be here with you and I would like to just tell you a little bit about myself before we start. I come from Treaty One as I said. I was born in Portage la Prairie and I am Métis on my father's side and Icelandic on my mother's side. We're probably going to discuss a little bit today about intersection, so where I locate myself in the world of intersections is I am Métis, which, of course, puts me in the person of color category be it that I'm a little fairer than many, I'm still in that category. And I am a late blooming writer, so here I am, a poet starting to write at 50, and now I'm 65 and I've been writing for 15 years and just starting to feel like I'm really getting my legs under me. I find it takes quite a while to really become a good writer and dedication to the craft is really important for me. And I enjoy it.

What else can I tell you about myself? I was a single mother for 14 years, so I got to experience the joys of going to the income assistance office, getting daycare subsidies and all the things that come with being a single parent on a low income. And then later in life, I've had health challenges. So, these things have really shaped my writing and shaped the things that I think about and talk about when I'm writing. And I'm going to get to talk to you today with one of my most beloved mentors, Joanne Arnott. Joanne and I come from a similar place. I'll let her talk more about that. We are close in age; I am older, and I have been a huge fan of hers from day one. When I first began writing, Joanne was there and I just kind-of glommed onto her -

**Joanne:** *[laughs]*

**Jónína:** - and she felt like home, let me just say that, which relates to land very much. So, Joanne?

**Joanne:** Thank you Jónína. Where I am, I'm in Richmond, so in terms of the colonial names, Jónína is in New Westminster; I'm just down the river, closer to the mouth of the river in Richmond. Richmond is a municipality composed of the islands in the mouth of the Fraser River. So, this is Musqueam territory. Musqueam people have named houses, you know, all over the place on most of these islands. And in terms of the water-based economy, these islands were a great gathering place for Indigenous people from all up and down the coast. Moving into colonial times, a lot of great gathering began around working in the fisheries and the canneries and so on.

So, like Jónína, I was born in Treaty One territory, although I didn't know that at the time. Not until I was in my 50's did I know that *[laughs]* or 40's maybe. I was born in Winnipeg which is, if I remember correctly, 52 miles from Portage la Prairie. My father was from Portage la Prairie and I ended up living in rural Portage between the ages of 11 and 15 with my dad and some of my siblings. I had an opportunity to get to know that side of the family more. My dad's parents both died when he was 20,21, and I came along much later. I'm the fifth of nine children that my dad had. So, one of our shared interests is finding out more about Treaty One territory and the history, geography and so on. I do identify as being of mixed blood. Most of my Manitoba relatives are Manitoba Métis Federation, what do you call it, signatories. *[laughs]*

**Jónína:** Métis status in Manitoba.

**Joanne:** Métis status, that's right.

**Jónína:** in Manitoba.

**Joanne:** That's right. Because of the finances involved, because I am a mother of 6, I don't have that whole genealogy legally clarified. I'm working on it. My uncle Don and his wife Helen both have recently passed and they were elders of the Friendship Society in Portage. I can't remember, Jónína, I got your address and I was going to send you a book. Did I send you the book or not yet?

**Jónína:** Not yet, no.

**Joanne:** Ok, so what the book is, is a beautiful oral history of Portage that I wanted to share with you. You know, I acquire things and then they get dispersed across my messy house. *[laughs]*

**Jónína:** *[laughs]* I can relate!

**Joanne:** It's something to look forward to. It's got a picture of my uncle and aunty and it's got stories from so many different people, representing many, many families of that Portage region so, that's something to look forward to.

**Jónína:** I do look forward to it.

[Update: the book, *New Buffalo Road*, sent & received]

**Joanne:** Ok. In terms of my writing, I started writing, and publishing I guess, relatively young. My family was very poor, you know, on a good day working class, but very arts positive. My dad was a guitar player and musician. He taught my mom to play guitar and all the kids. My mom was a painter. When I was very young, she had her oil paints, so that's kind of amazing to have 8 kids *[laughs]* and somehow find a little time to do a little oil painting. They were both my role models in terms of arts, as well as all my older siblings and younger as well. Not everyone has an art practice, but most do, whether it's music, painting, writing; that's our normal *[laughs]*, part of how you process the world. So, I've had 6 poetry books published, 3 chap books, a book

of essays, I'm working on a second book of essays, and I have a children's illustrated book, illustrated by Maryanne Barkhouse. It's about childbirth, called, "Ma MacDonald." I've had maybe two pieces of short fiction published, and I had a play that was brought to a staged reading, so that was as far as we went with that.

I wanted to position myself further. I identify as Métis/mixed blood. There are many, many people in my family who are LGBTQ2. I don't know what the statistical norm is, but we are way beyond that *[laughs]* and that includes lesbian women, gay men, and trans people. I just want to acknowledge all of the teaching and care that has been shared.

I spent a decade or more facilitating Unlearning Racism workshops and that has brought me into certain patterns of thinking that are very centered in our experiences rather than the more academic way of approaching things. That was actually one of our big conversations, Jónína and I, in terms of being invited to talk to the topic of decolonizing or decolonial feminism. It was like ok, what the hell is it? *[laughs]* So, at the time of asking, my only association with decolonial was Leanne Simpson's title, "Islands of Decolonial Love."

We did a little research; we checked out, ok, what's post-colonial, what's decolonial, how are they the same, what's different? At the end of the day, we decided that speaking as ourselves and for ourselves is the way to progress. Neither Jónína or I have a strong academic background, so you could say we're community-based poets, and we shall proceed from here. I guess one thing to note in terms of Indigenous writers across the board, neither Jónína nor I grew up on Reserve. We're both from mixed blood families of one sort or another and we're both long time west coast residents. So, those are some of the qualities, I guess, that will be reflected in how we talk and what position we're speaking from. I'm a cis woman, heterosexual, breeder *[laughs]* and I'm not a grandma yet. I'm grandma-age, but my children have not put me into the role of grandmother yet.

**Jónína:** Yes. Yeah, and I like that you bring up the community-based part of things. For me, I've just been more on the grass roots level. I worked with PeerNetBC for a while and we taught some stuff too, around anti-oppression... I taught peer support facilitators. I am a big fan of peer support and of the fact that the people who are living that experience, the lived experience, are often best equipped to work with those communities. But unfortunately, we're not supported enough... sometimes it comes down to money. I've been quite poor because I chose to do that kind of work. *[laughs]* But I wouldn't change it. *[laughs]*

**Joanne:** Now, one thing that we talked about quite a bit was that you also identify as a person with disabilities.

**Jónína:** Yeah.

**Joanne:** I don't remember you saying that so I just thought I would invite you, if you want to say anything about the physical side of things, go for it.

**Jónína:** Yeah, especially since we're talking about the body, this actually really fits. I just had a really fantastic discussion on Twitter... me and many other people with Amanda LeDuc... about, why do so many authors who have disabilities not put that in their bio? I am one of those people, other than on Twitter. I identify as a spoonie, which, not everybody understands what that is. A spoonie is every day, every person has, say, 12 spoons and that's their energy. So, most people, they start with their 12 spoons, maybe if they had a bad night, they start with 10. I start with 3, and so then, my days are short as to what I can physically manage. I have fibromyalgia; that's what they say. I'm not exactly convinced that's the diagnosis, but the doctors tend to ignore women, in particular, Indigenous women, when they go to see them about things that are going on for them. So yes, it's hard for me to claim that and there's a couple of reasons. One is because I feel that I don't want to claim space. I think of it as someone who has more disability than me and so this is a thing that happens often with intersections is the comparison; who has more trauma, who has more this, who has more that and I get uncomfortable when we get into those areas, so sometimes, I just remain quiet. So, thank you for inviting me to speak to that. I do believe our lands and bodies are very connected. I had a body that loved the land and still loves the land. It just can't feel the way it did when I was young.

**Joanne:** Uh huh. Alright, well, shall we read a poem?

**Jónína:** Yes.

**Joanne:** Do you want to start, or do you want me to start?

**Jónína:** I'd love it if you'd start. I know what you're going to share so I want to hear it. *[laughs]*

**Joanne:** *[laughs]* Ok. Let me get this. *[shows chapbook]* There we go. That is my chap book, it's called, "Pensive & Beyond", and it was published by Nomados Press at the end of last year, so it's still new. My focus in the writing or the compilation of it was friendship and death. It's a celebration of friendship and many of the poems are focused on people who have passed. More than half of the poems are focused on people who I consider friends or fellow travelers who are with us, so I don't want to bring this idea that if they're in the book, they're not still with us. The poem that I'm going to share is called, "Truth and Wreck", for Chief Robert Joseph. This was a commissioned poem. Chief Robert Joseph, a wonderful man. I won't go into more detail, but if you google Chief Robert Joseph and Joanne Arnott, you will find more discussion about the particular project. *[Reconciliation Through Poetry]* Anyway, I begin and end the poem with quotes from elders; Rita Joe: "I lost my talk"; Chief Robert Joseph: "Am I a human being?" Rita Joe had passed at the time of the writing of the poem, and Chief Robert Joseph is with us. Likewise, at the end. When I was commissioned for the poem, the main person I called and said, "What the hell do I say?", *[laughs]* was Jane Kwatleemat Marston. She's a writer and a carver on the island. And we had quite a long discussion but the thing that really stood out that she repeated a number of times was, "Listen to the trees talk." Then the

person who is more local to me but also has passed, Chief Dan George: “Like the thunderbird of old, I shall rise again out of the sea.” So, this is a poem of “Truth and Wreck”:

Rita Joe: I lost my talk.

Chief Robert Joseph: Am I a human being?

I have a multiplicity of stories  
within me  
some are the bones of me  
some are the blood  
some are the meat of me  
some are the stagnant pools of qi  
some are the resuscitation of being

rising up

I feel a cool wind blowing through  
when I hear the truth  
the truth about who is dying from neglect  
who is lied about, who is suppressed  
who is showcased and honoured and no, wait, listen—  
who is allowed a natural life  
who is interfered with, who is taken

rising up

a cool wave of truth flowing through  
aligning the bones and the meat of my stories  
cousins disappearing from the left hand  
new cousins arriving on the right hand  
who is interfered with  
who is paid to raise whose children, how  
indigenous families became outlawed  
how settler economies feed upon me

the cool truth has a hot heart  
the cool truth has a sober word for you  
the cool truth is a mind-blowing instrument  
blowing through the dead leaves of the fallen  
blowing away the grit of snow under which  
the stories were buried, frozen

taking up a shovel  
for redemption

our land is in a state of productive confusion  
the chaos  
the liberation of stories

shining the light of the unspoken to re-reflect  
all that was said to the children  
all that was said and the great unsaid

histories  
commingling

a mammoth nerve complex evolving  
new and old stories together  
your stories with my stories

no longer compelled to choose between or to  
go mad trying

the dams are weakening,  
let them fall

the wreck of the self-deceptive nation  
struggling toward transformation, we are  
coming into being

writing a new song of wholesome  
on the stinking bones of our  
undefended regret

heat of transformative anger shed  
the colonial project unmasked, interrupted

grace notes  
glimmering

with passion  
with innocence

Jane Kwatleemat Marston: Listen to the trees talk  
Chief Dan George: Like the thunderbird of old, I shall rise again  
out of the sea

**Jónína:** Powerful. Wow. Said, unsaid, new and old. The choosing of between and writing a new song. I was trying to write down some lines quickly as you were reading because so many I

wanted to hang onto. Beautiful. So, your poem goes more outward and mine is a little bit more inward and I think that it's kind-of nice to have the two juxtapositions of the broader political and more people, community, and then the more personal experience.

**Joanne:** Absolutely

**Jónína:** Yeah, so this one is more about being a mixed blood woman growing up. I grew up around the country. I was born in Portage, lived in Fort William, which is now called Thunder Bay and Goose Bay, and at 13, I moved to Winnipeg and I lived there until I was 30 before starting to move out west. So, while at the bank in Winnipeg, I could not help but notice the lack of visibility in jobs, visible jobs of Indigenous people. There was not many, and I was born in 1955. So, when I was working in the bank at Portage and Main, I was often asked what I was and I did feel that as a mixed blood women, a lot of liberties were taken with me and my body. I did question whether they were related to the fact that I was mixed blood and of course, I find out much later about the murdered and missing Indigenous women, girls and Two Spirit. That helped make sense of some of what had happened to me. This is called, "What Are You Anyway". It begins with a quote from Roxane Gay, "When we keep these men's secrets, we allow their predatory behavior to thrive." Secrets are something that is thrust upon us as women quite often, and certainly started in my childhood, being expected to keep the secrets of the men in my life.

***what are you anyway?***

his, *what are you anyway* fingers creep  
up my sheer blouse  
hands seeking flesh    loosen  
grip of camisole meant  
to screen out prying eyes and soon    his roughness  
a stain on my blouse  
his skin on my skin considered polite discourse  
a way to get to know one another  
while I cringe inside    smile outside  
  
no one told me to expect this  
yet they must have known  
his hungry eyes that wander

to girls in blouses

pencil skirts intended to make us professional

our appearance a balancing act of between

not too sexy

cautioned against the matronly look

of the midi and away from the mini

our availability measured in skirt lengths

monitored by fathers who may also be bank managers 'conversing'

with other young versions of his wife or seeking solace

in exotic Others as his *what are you anyway* fingers creep up her sheer blouse

how is it that the territory of our flesh remains his mountain to climb

and we, lost in the desert, are left to pick the bones of those who went before us

This is in the Indian Country Anthology that you were a part of?

**Joanne:** Yes.

**Jónína:** I treasure this book. It's filled with beautiful writing.

**Joanne:** Yeah, that was a co-publication between CV2 and Prairie Fire.

**Jónína:** Yes, and it's a beautiful publication. I love the cover, everything about it.

**Joanne:** ndn country\_\_\_\_\_

**Jónína:** Yeah, it was wonderful to be a part of it. I often think about... and this has been said a million times, but the relationship between the way we care for women and women's bodies and the way we care for land. I think there's a correlation between the two and I'm sure many people have said this before, but I think it needs to be said again and again. I wonder, if we don't care for our women, will we ever care for the land, and vice versa. I think the two are very connected. In the book, it's also about older women for me. Why did older women not warn me? Why was I not told that this was the world I was entering and why was it never acknowledged while I was in it? And in fact, I was blamed -

**Joanne:** Right. Absolutely



**Jónína:** - for anything that happened to me.

**Joanne:** Right. Well, I think about that and I know that on the one hand, you know, my auntie Shirley took me aside and talked to me about, you know, men interfering with me, but of course, I had no idea what she meant. *[laughs]* Her only practical advice was that I shouldn't smoke when I'm walking down the street. I should go into a café and buy a cup of tea and have my cigarette there. So, that is obviously very dated information –

**Jónína:** *[laughs]*

**Joanne:** but that was also impossible for me because, you know, she didn't take into account that I had no money. *[laughs]* So, where am I going to get money for a cup of tea? Anyway.

**Jónína:** Yes, absolutely. I received some interesting advice as well *[laughs]* –

**Joanne:** *[laughs]*

**Jónína:** - like not wearing too much blush. *[laughs]*

**Joanne:** *[laughs]* You don't want to appear overheated. *[laughs]*

**Jónína:** *[laughs]* My mom would say that you'll look like one of *those* kind of women. And I didn't know what that meant. *[laughs]*

**Joanne:** Right. I was going to launch off into stories about, you know, the oppression of women and my time in Manitoba, but I think that it would be cool just to carry on rather than go down a rabbit hole. I mean, on the one hand, it's worth acknowledging.

**Jónína:** Yes.

**Joanne:** Like you said, women and girls would be blamed for attacks upon you and if someone was assaulted, then often we would be told we're not allowed to hang out with that person anymore. You know what I mean?

**Jónína:** Yep.

**Joanne:** So, there's a really active oppression of women rather than encouraging the kind-of healthier solidarity that would help us all understand what the fuck is going on.

**Jónína:** Yeah, and we see that today that that's happening. That the women, younger women in particular, are really surrounding one another and supporting one another when they tell their stories. I'm so happy to see that.

**Joanne:** I have a question for you.

**Jónína:** Yeah?

**Joanne:** Topical, but when the whole, "Me Too", movement came along, did you post?

**Jónína:** I did post and actually, it's interesting that you ask that question because I was writing my book, "An Honest Woman", just before the "Me Too" movement came and it is actually a "Me Too" book. So, I had decided to tell more of my story and really, I've only told a smidgen. There's many things that happened to me that I will not write about –

**Joanne:** Right.

**Jónína:** - and probably not talk about publicly either, but the purpose of it was for my niece and other young women to understand that I see what's happening, I saw and experienced many of the things that they are seeing and experiencing, and that it's not okay. And so, I used some of my own stories. I had all this pressure to get it out there and it came out, I really feel, sort of half-baked. No offense to anyone, but I think the book probably needed another year, but I felt this pressure to get it out and surprise, surprise, "Me Too" is there. That made it harder, actually, to promote and publish the book. That made it harder for me for some reason. That unfolding of everybody's sharing. Somehow, that was very emotional.

**Joanne:** Oh, for sure. I didn't once share a "Me Too" story, so I just kind-of placed myself as, you know, a witness to the movement. So much of my writing, particularly my earlier writing, was very focused on assault upon myself and, you know, near-fatal moments. We've talked about trust quite a bit, right? I know that trust has interfered with my interpersonal relationships, particularly partners, and it has definitely interfered with my relationships with elders, particularly elders, because as a young person, yes, I had some abuse from siblings, but the terror was the adults, right? And so, very hard to suddenly shift gears and start accepting direction and comfort and wise advice from elders, because those are the people that most terrified me, right? Likewise, historically it was easier for me to trust men than women and I can go into all that but not today. So that was very interesting. So, after my parents split up, my mom, well, before they split up, she became feminist, a convert shall we say, so I am second generation feminist. I have a lot of knowledge and exposure to feminist evolutionary ideas of one type or another. I don't know where I want to end up with that, but only to acknowledge that by the time "Me Too" became a thing, I was not willing to share.

**Jónína:** Yeah.

**Joanne:** You know, it's like I've written about all this. If you want to know about it, go read my fucking books. *[laughs]*

**Jónína:** *[laughs]* That brings me to something that we did talk about a little bit earlier is as a writer, as we write, does what we want to focus on change? Because I know that for me, I started out thinking memoir, ended up writing poetry which was never my intention, but I fell in love with it, like a narrative poem and it was very useful for a poor memory that the trauma has left me with, so I felt I could use fragments of my story and then it also didn't even need to be 100% factual, that it was more pointing at the feeling -

**Joanne:** Right

**Jónína:** - you know, the details of what took place.

**Joanne:** Right

**Jónína:** So, that was very helpful. So, as a writer, for yourself, how do you feel you've evolved and changed as you've been writing?

**Joanne:** Well, I guess so, certainly, one thing that has been consistent is using writing to process my world, right? And primarily, that has been poetry and short non-fiction essays. How has it changed and evolved? Well, in the early days, I was writing a lot about abuse and I had an interesting conversation with Katerie Akiwenzie-Damm who was, at the time, looking for writing about sexuality. My response was, "Oh, I've got lots of sex poems", but they were all about abuse, right? She said well, that wasn't really what she was looking for. She wanted something happy, and I realized, yeah, I've been putting a lot more attention on my unhappy experiences rather than my happy experiences. Lee Maracle also writes about this; she talks about, you know, what does your writing point to? So, if I want to encourage people to celebrate our lives and settle into our bodies and enjoy our lives, then probably, writing all the time, hardcore, about abuse *[laughs]* is not the way to go. *[laughs]*

You know, one of the consequences is that I've written in the last, I don't know how many years, two books of love poetry, one for my late husband, Nick, and one for a boyfriend that I had for quite few years, and also, a book of mother poetry which was love poetry of another kind, tracing my experience from my first pregnancy to my last birth and with my eldest son becoming 18; that's "Mother Time." I wrote a lot about birth. I had all my kids with midwives at home, non-medical industrial complex shall we say. I avoided all that and I did write about that and I should probably write more about that.

In more recent years, I've been focusing on friendship and death. I think about Wanda John-Kehewin and her essay, "Indians Never Die Peacefully", right? So, in that essay, she shares this experience of the cascade of deaths that happened in her life when she was very young. I've thought about that a lot over the recent years because I, in my turn, have been experiencing a cascade of death of my friends and loved ones of various kinds. So, that's what I've been reaching to make peace with. Some were violent deaths; most I think were disease of one kind or another, but I just have felt confronted by them and tried to make peace with that.

**Jónína:** Death is a theme in my books as well because I had early indoctrination like Wanda. I had two brothers pass away in their teens and then my mother died when I was around 31, (I believe). I'm not good with dates and times, so don't quote me on that, but it was very formative years. Normally, you know, you're entering your twenties and you're looking at life and sort-of wondering what do you want to do and who do you want to be, and I was too broken to really think about those things. That's one reason I'm a late bloomer. I just feel, in some ways, grateful because those things sent me into the need for healing. So, at about 31, I got sober and I've been sober most of the time since that point. Not always, I had a relapse. But, I find too, that part of my reason for sharing my own story is that's what we learn in

recovery is that we learn to share our experience, strength, and hope with each other, and so that's what I'm hoping to do by sharing my own story. It's not that I want some attention on me and it's not even that I want people thinking and talking about some of those things; it gets quite uncomfortable sometimes, especially when you think about your brother coming to your reading *[laughs]* and things like that. So, I had to change what I was going to read when my brother was coming. I couldn't read it in front of him, let's just say that. So, you know, as a woman, I feel that it's important that we share our stories. I feel that they're needed, and I love doing it through poetry. I find poetry to be a great vehicle. I fell in love with it. To me, it's decolonized writing and I don't know if anyone else would agree with me. I just think of it that way because there's no rules and so, I can write poetry in any way I like. I can put the words on the page in any way I like. Of course, you want it to sound good and look good, but it's just this ultimate freedom. I find grammar constricting. I can speak in my own lingo *[laughs]* –

**Joanne:** Uh huh.

**Jónína:** - and have it be good, the Prairie Indigenous lingo. I love it and when I read it, I recognize it, right? It's freedom.

**Joanne:** Right. Well, I really love poetry. I kind-of think that people who practice other forms are also finding freedom in those forms, but definitely for you and for me, poetry is a vehicle that we can go quite a way with. *[laughs]*

**Jónína:** And there is, of course, very colonized poetry. *[laughs]*

**Joanne:** Absolutely. Duncan Campbell Scott, what an heirloom. *[laughs]*

**Jónína:** I actually don't read that kind-of poetry and never really have.

**Joanne:** You know, I love E. Pauline Johnson, right?

**Jónína:** Yes

**Joanne:** And I'm very, very reactive, I guess, to the ways that she has not been incorporated into the poetic memory. I mean, you read some of her poems like, "The Cattle Thief", and some of her love poems, and it's very contemporary. It's like, I'm sorry that the people back then could not appreciate it, but I am definitely with those who have been working to reintegrate her perspective which represents so many million of us. *[laughs]*

**Jónína:** You've been doing a lot of work to bring forth some of the writers that you knew and grew up with as a writer.

**Joanne:** Well, more my friends.

**Jónína:** Yeah

**Joanne:** You know, Vera Manual, she and I were working on her first book of poetry. She was better known for her playwriting. We were working on that book when she passed away, and it

took quite a while, but eventually, I hooked up with her sister, Emalene, and with Deanna Reder and with Michelle Coupall, and we collaboratively created a collection of Vera Manual's writings. It's not everything she wrote, but it's a very strong sample of her playwriting, poetry, short story, and one essay. So, that's the main thing. The other that I have kind-of been sitting with but still haven't progressed with, certainly nowhere near to publication, is the writings of Connie Fife. She had a vision for her final book and I agreed to bring it to completion. She is looking at me saying, "When are you going to get it done?!" *[laughs]*

**Jónína:** *[laughs]*

**Joanne:** Anyway.

**Jónína:** I've really enjoyed this conversation and I feel like it's, you know, just scratching the surface. I'd love to talk longer, but this is a short podcast. I'd like to talk more about land and body and how they relate, and water and poetry. I happen to have a Grand Trine in water, in astrology, so I'm a very watery person –

**Joanne:** *[laughs]*

**Jónína:** - which is great for poetry, hard to live with. My life challenge is learning to live with my own emotional nature, which is very emotional, very sensitive, very empathic. So, wonderful poetry, but really hard *[laughs]* in life –

**Joanne:** *[laughs]*

**Jónína:** - when life is as rough as it is. So, poetry and water and words, that's my area. I can float in that area. I can allow to come out of me what needs to come out of me, and it is related to land and body because for me, I come from people who were very body-oriented. My father was a hockey player. He could have played probably professional hockey with Montreal Canadians. He was asked to be on their farm team, he was offered a contract and then he was offered a tryout with the Montreal Canadians. He was a sports person, a dart champion, a bowling champion. My son works with wood and metal and my uncle was a horse whisperer; we are body people and that goes with the land, because we are out on the land a lot of times and engaging with the land. So, land for me is just incredibly important. When I'm in my homeland in Treaty One, I just feel my whole body relax. When I went to Iceland, I had this experience, I can't even begin to describe it. I'm still trying to work out a way to write about it. And the water in Iceland is like nothing I've ever seen in my life. I could weep thinking about the purity of that water and the purity of those lands and how wonderful that is. So, for me, I really found this topic: Land, body, water, poetry, I could go on for days –

**Joanne:** *[laughs]*

**Jónína:** - talking with you about it. And thank you, Joanne. I can hardly wait to hear your final thoughts on this. I know that you have lots to share with us.

**Joanne:** Where to conclude? Well, I've actually lived in the unceded Salish territories for more of my life than I lived in Manitoba in the Treaty One territory, and I feel much safer here. For most of my life, when I sat down to write, I would re-enter my body-memory of Manitoba and write from there, and at a certain point, I kind-of went, ok, so you've lived more than three times as long on the coast as you did on the prairie or you know, Ontario, so how about we let some of that current reality permeate? So, I'm just so grateful to Russell Wallace, to Lee Maracle, to Wil George and all of the other beautiful coast artists who have been friends, mentors, people who inspire me.

I did think that we should probably acknowledge some of our other commonalities that we didn't touch on early on. So, we're both members of the Aboriginal Writers Collective West Coast and we are both currently employed, contract workers, but employed none-the-less, -

**Jónína:** *[laughs]*

**Joanne:** - with The Writers Studio at Simon Fraser University, which I think is probably, for both us, our favorite job. *[laughs]*

**Jónína:** Most definitely. *[laughs]*

**Joanne:** Yes, a place of learning. I know that you've been connected with them for more than a decade in a various roles and for myself, I think this was my second year. I'm just beginning, but I love being a poetry mentor, and it's been quite a shock to shift in pandemic times from doing what you know how to do and what you love to do in person, to suddenly sharing that experience online. So, that was a growth spurt for all of us. *[laughs]*

**Jónína:** Yes, quite the learning curve and we're still all in it. *[laughs]*

**Joanne:** Right. Well, I really appreciate you and look forward to more conversations down the road.

**Jónína:** Yes, thank you and I hold my hands up to you, Joanne.

**Joanne:** Thank you, Jónína.