

## The 'Underground' Poetry Network of Mississauga

By [Mileena Sobreira-Yousufy](#)

What do you plan on doing with that notebook you're hiding under your pillow, that's filled with flowering ideas, verses and lines of sweet poetry? Do you want to keep it there, or do you want it out for people to see? Usually one would easily get their work out by sharing online, but nowadays, with trolls and monsters armed with keyboard swords and computer screen shields, posting can feel more like a risk than an opportunity.

I've been writing poetry for just over three years now, and I've only thought to share my work until only recently. With that in mind, I began looking for reading opportunities in Mississauga where I could read, of course, but also learn to perfect my art.

Though at first there seems to be little opportunity here for poets in Mississauga, in contrast with the local artists hub we all know as Toronto, I guarantee you, masters and novices of the pen alike, Mississauga is a hub all on its own for writers and poets. Local anthologies are put out to print more often than not, and if it's what you desire, a poem of your very own could one day be published in one of them.

I didn't realize this until stumbling upon a Thera-Poetry Workshop hosted by The Ontario Poets Society and RISE Up! Rise ABOVE! that was held at Mississauga's very own non-profit Fair Trade Cafe, Studio 89. A local place holding a poetry meet? How could I possibly resist? This lovely afternoon meet is where I met a number of women, all poets, many published in local anthologies, all with their own tricks of the trade that a young poet like me was ecstatic to soak up in what felt like a short three hours.

Here I was able to meet Anna Yin, not only an amazing poet, but also Mississauga's first ever Poetry Laureate; Norma Nicholson, a local published author of *Young Lives on the Line*; Cheryl Antao-Xavier, publisher and Executive Director of RISE up! Rise ABOVE! a non-profit corporation whose mission is to bring about empowerment through creativity; as well as many other poets who all helped to create a safe environment for poetry reading and learning.

The meet up was nothing short of amazing, and opened my eyes to the opportunities available for poets in our growing city. Sometimes all you need to achieve greatness is step out of your comfort zone, which is all it took for me to earn the respect of all these established writers.

Given, not all of us want to stand up in front of a group and cry out our deepest thoughts – but for those who think their words deserve to be printed in ink on fine paper accompanied by other works, it's time you do your research. Check with local community centres, libraries or even clubs that host meet ups near you. I guarantee you, your persistence will pay off in the end.

The door to poetry is waiting for you to find it, and your pen is your key.