

Mississauga's first poet laureate pens poems to city

Anna Yin fell in love with poetry while learning English as a new immigrant.



ELISSA RENWICK / TORONTO STAR

Anna Yin was recently appointed as Mississauga's first poet laureate by city council. Originally from China, Yin turned to poetry while learning English, in part to express her sadness and connect with the beauty in nature and daily life.

By: Tara Deschamps Staff Reporter, Published on Mon Aug 17 2015

When Anna Yin first moved to Canada from China in 1999, she thought she would improve her English by scrawling out daily diary entries.

But in little time, the monotony started getting to her, and she found herself dabbling with writing short verses filled with mentions of the Mississauga community unfolding around her.

Suddenly, the computer programmer was flourishing into a poet.

Earlier this year, when Mississauga was scouring for its first poet laureate, Yin seemed an obvious choice.

"I was very happy," she said, of being selected for the role after librarians and others in the community prodded her to apply. "It's a good thing that will challenge me to do more for the locals."

In her role, she joins at least 14 other poet laureates in cities across the province who were appointed as part of promoting local arts and culture.

During her two-year appointment, she is required to produce at least three original works for specific events determined by the city. So far this year she's written odes for Canada Day and the Parapan Am torch relay.

In the last year of her appointment, which nets her \$5,000 a year, she will take on a mentorship, coaching young people on the values of art in the community. Plus, she will embark on a project inspiring writers to craft haikus based on images on a postcard.

“Right now, people seldom mail letters or postcards due to all kinds of reasons,” she said. Yin hopes to change that by making a poetry map of the city, based on the works the project produces.

In between it all, she said, she will stroll the picturesque trails behind her home and make many jaunts to Port Credit’s lighthouse, looking to both to spark her imagination.

Some of her inspiration, she said, will come from her past.

“A lot of people in Mississauga are like me. We are newcomers,” she said, referring to one of her poems, “Root Carving,” which speaks of being transplanted to a city with a very different culture than the one where she grew up. “That is what Mississauga poetry is about.”