

# Garebian wins prestigious award

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As a literary reviewer for a national newspaper, Keith Garebian is used to handing out praise. Lately, however, the Lakeview resident has been on the receiving end; in May he was the winner of a 2013 Mississauga Arts



**Keith  
Garebian**

Award for his new book, *Moon on Wild Grasses*, and last week he was awarded the prestigious William Saroyan Medal, named in honour of the great Armenian American dramatist and author. The latter, created by the Ministry of Diaspora in Armenia, is granted for contributing to the dissemination of Armenian culture in the Diaspora, prominent achievements in the sphere, and contributions to the relations within Diaspora Armenian communities.

Garebian is one of a minority of diaspora writers who write only in English. He attributes the award chiefly to his two books, *Pain: Journeys Around My Parents* (a memoir published in 2000 and long out of print), and *Children of Ararat* (a collection of poetry about his Armenian father and the Armenian genocide of 1915).

Garebian was one of two writers to receive the Saroyan Medal, the other being Peter Surian of the U.S., who was honoured for his novels. Both men were invited delegates to the 5th Conference of Diaspora Writers Who Compose in Other Languages held in Yerevan, Armenia's capital, July 12-15.

The honour, which came on Garebian's 70th birthday, caught him completely by surprise. One moment he was sitting in a roomful of people, then someone was saying: "You'd better get up there ... they're giving you a medal."

In his impromptu acceptance speech, Garebian noted that he was visiting a country that his Armenian-born father could not and did not return to, and that he somehow felt was causing him to be re-born in a spiritual and cultural sense.

"It's such a thrill because the medal is given to so few people. I believe I'm only the second Canadian to receive one," he told *The News*.

Even though Garebian's life has been largely shaped by what his family went through during the Armenian genocide ("I have inherited the obsession of a survivor"), he himself was born in India and had never set foot in the country until this month.

Garebian says the Writers' Union of Armenia has expressed an interest in translating his two Armenian-themed books to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the genocide in 2015.