

Kung Hey Fat Choy!  
Happy Year of the Pig

Who needs chocolates  
for Valentine's Day?

Local writer shares her  
wisdom with students

## Writer shares wisdom

Lois Peterson Stacy PAVLOV  
NOW Contributor perches her reading glasses upon her head as she takes a seat in her office chair. She folds her hands, wrists jangling with bracelets, in her lap readying herself to talk about her favourite subjects: writing and reading.

For Peterson, a published author, teacher and speaker, words have always been a part of her life.

"My dad would walk around quoting poetry all the time," she says of her 81-year-old father, who taught all his life and still resides in her birthplace of England.

Peterson's mother was also a teacher, so books and language were aplenty in her household.

Her own passion for writing and reading flourished as a child and young woman. When she was a young single mother she would get up early before her daughter awoke to sit at her manual typewriter to write.

"It took me six months of getting up early and trying to write for me to realize I was not a morning writer," she

laughs. "I wasted six months doing that."

But wasted time it was not. Since then Peterson has written countless short stories, memoirs and her various articles have appeared online and in print in Canada, the U.S. and the U.K. Among other venues, her work has been published in the *Globe and Mail*, *Maclean's Magazine*, *The Writer*, *The Canadian Writer's Guide* and various literary journals. She is currently at work on her first novel.

"It's a little difficult going from writing short stories to a novel," she says. Yet at the same time she's excited to be able to expand on characters and ideas.

Ideas for Peterson's writing often come out of life itself. There will be times when she's in the middle of another story or some other activity and will have an idea or kernel of an idea come to mind. She will drop everything and go to her computer to expand on the thought.

Drawing from daily life experiences with children, work or school to get

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## Stories come from life

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ideas is something she stresses to burgeoning writers.

"Few of us pull fiction from thin air. Much of it is rooted in our own environment and experience," she says in her book, *101 and More Writing Exercises to Get You Started and Keep You Going*.

"Personal experience and memory offer a wealth of sensation, story and recollection which can be used as a base or impetus for many writing projects," she goes on to say in the book, which is packed with ideas to get writers motivated and keep them going.

For Peterson, words on a page are better than anything, even fine chocolate.

"Every word makes a difference. I love a nicely crafted sentence and a good opening paragraph. I like the sense of discovery words have and the power they have to change."

This love of prose has taken her down the path of not only writing and publishing her own work, but also teaching others how to do the same.

For the past 10 years, Peterson, along with her publisher and editor husband Douglas Brunt, has been teaching the Surrey Creative Writing Diploma Program.

Offered at Johnson Heights and Princess Margaret schools in Guildford and North Surrey, the program offers new and experienced writers the chance to work toward a creative writing diploma.

"Whether you're a weekend hobbyist or are hoping to pursue a lifelong career in writing, these courses give you skills for writing fiction, non-fiction and poetry and offer marketing information to help you find a good home for your work," she says.

But it's not just refining the skill and publishing that's important to Peterson; she enjoys giving people the desire and passion to write and read.

"It's nice that they want to learn a skill and get better."

Everyone writes for a different reason, but it's always exciting to see someone who wants to try and bridge the gap between quality and craft.