

LEANNE TOSHIKO SIMPSON

CREATIVE WRITER AND ARTS EDUCATOR

PROFILE

- SSHRC Doctoral Scholar at the University of Toronto, focusing on Asian Canadian Literature, Disability Studies & Creative Writing
- University lecturer with a strong commitment to anti-oppression frameworks; winner of U of T's 2023 Teaching Excellence Award
- Journey Prize nominee with a debut novel, *Never Been Better*, forthcoming in 2024 with HarperCollins Canada and Putnam Books

EDUCATION

Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Doctor of Education in Social Justice Education - in progress

- Winner of U of T's Student Engagement Award; research assistant for FLOURISH Arts-Wellness Collective at UTSC

University of Guelph

Master of Fine Arts, Creative Writing - Cumulative GPA: 4.00

- Winner of SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarship, Ontario Graduate Scholarship and COA Travel Grant
- Recipient of Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplement (in partnership with the University of London)

Ryerson University

Master of Professional Communication - Cumulative GPA: 4.00

- Winner of the Ontario Graduate Scholarship and Ryerson Student Union Mental Health Leadership Award
- Master's Research Paper: "Against Goffman's Asylums: Re-storying Mental Illness"

University of Toronto

Honours Bachelor of Arts, High Distinction - Cumulative GPA: 3.64

- University of Toronto Scholar, winner of the Mary Ellen Carty Scholarship and Branko Vojnovic Award

UNIVERSITY TEACHING EXPERIENCE

November 2017 -
Present

Trinity College at the University of Toronto

First Year Foundations Instructor and Writing Instructor

- Developed and taught Trinity's first BIPOC literature course after leading an innovative writing circle for diverse students; awarded Trinity's Chancellor Award and U of T's Urmila Sakar Service Award
- Created new literary disability studies course for first year students, focusing on fiction, poetry and memoir
- Organized "Writing as Community Building," a campus-wide conference for writing instructors that combined strategies from creative writing and community work with academic approaches to writing

January 2022-
September 2022

New College at the University of Toronto

Course Instructor, Disability Arts in Critical Equity and Solidarity Studies

- Built syllabus that showcased disability arts across a variety of mediums, bringing in community leaders and artist-activists to provide real-world case studies of the intersections between disability justice and artistic practice
- Provided detailed feedback on large-scale artistic projects and helped a group of undergraduate students prepare their final papers for submission to academic journals

January 2018 -
May 2020

Toronto Metropolitan University

Instructor in the Faculty of Communication and Design, The Chang School

- Developed new syllabus for CCMN 114 Short Management Reports and taught both classroom and online sessions for groups of 25 students, using interactive lectures, peer-to-peer workshops and oral presentations
- Completed Teaching Adult Learners Online certification and Resilience Training for Educators

September 2018 -
December 2018

University of Guelph Humber

Creative Writing Instructor, Faculty of Arts

- Designed and taught the school's inaugural creative writing class, covering fiction, poetry and nonfiction
- Led peer workshops on creative pieces and facilitated a class magazine and end-of-term reading

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COMMUNITY TEACHING EXPERIENCE

August 2020 – Present

Mata Ashita

Artistic Director

- Developed and launched a national writing for wellness program in the Japanese Canadian community, pairing author visits with guided workshops around trauma, identity and collective memory; mentored by Joy Kogawa
- Co-organized Return, a digital zine of participant work that was launched at the 2021 Powell Street Festival

September 2018 – April 2021

InkWell Workshops

Director of Partnerships

- Taught creative writing workshops for people with lived experience of mental illness and addiction, focusing on memoir and lyric essays as tools of personal empowerment and knowledge-seeking
- Launched a cross-cultural workshop program for CMHA clients with the Royal Ontario Museum in 2020; developed an online series to support the ROM community during COVID-19

April 2017 – Present

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)

Co-Founder, Resilience Writers

- Facilitated creative writing workshops in psychiatric wards; developed an 8-week rotational program in partnership with Gifts of Light and launched new programming for the Therapeutic Neighbourhood in 2021
- Served as Internal Communications Lead on the junior board of CAMH until April 2018; completed safeTALK training to better respond in crisis situations

COMMUNICATIONS EXPERIENCE

August 2016 – Present

Bell Canada

Senior Editor, Internal Communications

- Built slides and speaking notes for Bell's CEO and executive team, demonstrating the ability to transform complex strategic, financial and technical concepts into concise, powerful presentations
- Drafted and edited weekly internal communications for circulation to over 50,000 team members, specializing in mental health, diversity & inclusion and community investment releases
- Served as a Bell Let's Talk Diversity Fund Advisor and spokesperson, helping allocate funding to BIPOC-centered mental health initiatives; 2017 & 2019 Synergy Award winner

October 2015 – February 2017

SickNotWeak

Communications Manager

- Developed a national volunteer program, handled communications to 2000+ members and managed a team of 30 writers while coordinating a content calendar for all written and video-based contributions
- Produced a reoccurring web series directed by Michael Landsberg, and participated in speaking engagements across Canada; contributed to the development of an online peer support chatroom in 2016

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Publications

The Journey Prize Stories 31, PRISM International, Grain, The Puritan, Room Magazine, CV2, Unpublished City II, DisAppearing: Encounters in Disability Studies, Literary Review of Canada, Imaginary Safe House: Canadian Disability Poetics, FEEL WAYS, HELD, Matrix

Presentations

"Building Solidarities: Towards Trans-Pacific, Trans-Disciplinary Asian Diasporic Studies" - Canadian Association of Cultural Studies; "Mental Health & Intergenerational Trauma" - NAJC Human Rights Symposium; "Ain't No Pill Gonna Cure My Ill: Deconstructing the Medical Community" - Canadian Writers' Summit; "Community-Building Through Writing Groups" - Canadian Writing Centres Association; "Small Strategies for Supporting Mental Health in Your Classroom" - University of Toronto Scarborough Teaching Showcase; "Resilience Writers" - OISE Arts for Education Conference, Paueru Gai Dialogues: On Mental Health and Art