

Preface

This collection of short stories is about the deep and intricate relationships between the ocean, people, and their sources of inspiration. Featuring emerging writers and spanning multiple short story genres, the collection explores what it means to be connected with the ocean and coasts. The collection reveals diverse experiences, interpretations, and perspectives about ocean and coastal inspirations, inviting readers to reflect on the stories they share with family, friends, and among themselves.

2024 is Newfoundland and Labrador's Year of the Arts, which aims at recognizing the province's culture and arts. To contribute to the year, this collection is set in Newfoundland and Labrador, exploring various and diverse relationships and visions that shape ocean and coastal futures in the province. Through the prism of the short story, and supplemented by hand-drawn art from youth across the province, the collection celebrates the writing community and the avenues they provide for thought, experience, and conversation about ocean and coastal life.

When I first arrived in 2017 as a doctoral student visiting the International Coastal Network Lab, led by Professor Ratana Chuenpagdee, she told me to *listen to the stories people are sharing, and focus on why they are telling them*. When I started to really listen, I gained deeper appreciation for stories. I learned they help shape meaning on coasts as well as in my own life. The power of the story inspired me to create spaces for stories to thrive even in unexpected places like research and policy. This collection was initiated by people who shared this vision.

In 2020, as a postdoctoral researcher, I joined the Ocean Frontier Institute Module I (OFI I), which is about informing governance responses in a changing ocean, and later began co-leading with Dr. Chuenpagdee the

Moving Together for Marine Conservation (MTC) project, which is a multi-year outreach and governance capacity building initiative for Canada's Marine Conservation Targets. These projects encourage researchers to use story-telling as a research method, and support sharing stories freely and openly. OFI I and MTC, along with Writers NL, came together to launch a new collaborative process, NL Writes, leading to the stories in this collection. As stories were being collected, MTC toured the province to learn from kids and young adults about their visions for the ocean and coasts. The kids told us about what matters to them about their surroundings through art-based activities, resulting in hand-drawn art incorporated into the e-book.

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NL Writes was a short story competition for emerging and amateur writers. It started with a fortunate meeting with Writers NL, a not-for-profit, member-based organization working to serve the needs of writers in the province. During outreach for MTC, I connected with Writers NL's Executive Director, Jen Winsor, to learn about the organization and discuss future collaboration with the writing community. The discussions led to the launch of the competition, inviting participants across the province, including youth, to write on the theme, "The Ocean is a Magnet." The competition provided mentorship from established writers such as Carmella Gray-Cosgrove, Santiago Guzmán, and Holly Hogan, as well as adjudication and feedback from a jury that led to three special mentions in the collection.

NL Writes longlisted sixteen submissions, written by authors aged 15 to 75 from across the province. The submissions were deeply personal. Authors told us that this was an opportunity to start or rekindle passion for writing, as well as experiment with new ideas and take creative risks, all of which paid off. Every final submission was a winner, selected to be published and shared broadly.

This collection values free expression, preserving the authors' voices and intentions with minimal editing. The style and substance remain true to the authors' choices. No one else but the authors can receive attribution

nor bear responsibility for what is featured in the stories. Now, the authors are free to do whatever they like with the stories, including sharing them elsewhere. This collection represents a moment in time and may serve as an initial glimpse into stories that could evolve with further reflection.

The creation of this e-book was a collaborative effort. It was published by the TBTI Global Book Series, with the support from its Editor-in-Chief Dr. Chuenpagdee and Managing Editor Vesna Kerezi. Daniela Bernot-Simon guided the authors through the NL Writes process, while Nova Almine administered funding for authors to participate in promotional activities. All came together to make choices along the way. NL Writes was a result of partnership among OFI I, MTC, and Writers NL. Melanie Downer created and implemented the youth outreach approach and activities that produced the artwork. The art was shared with permission by youth. I thank all involved.

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As the collection was taking shape, it became clear that it was not just about the magnetic forces of the ocean and coasts, but about their impact on us and what motivates experiences, thought, and action. The collection explores inspiration through twists and turns as well as ups and downs. It opens up to interpretation the beliefs and experiences about the ocean and coasts, sparking a range of emotion, curiosity and even adventure. Some stories look at new beginnings and unexpected ends including death and suicide, providing meaning and even some clarity to challenging times.

The collection shows the dynamic nature of ocean and coastal life—constantly evolving while anchored in memories and experiences that inspire. As life on the ocean and coasts changes for the characters in this collection, the inspirations are moorings that help retrieve them from difficult moments and situations, and in some stories, help return from being away. As a collection, the stories encourage the reader to *reimagine*, *reunite*, *rediscover*, and *rethink* their relationships with ocean and coastal life. These themes serve as a four-part structure for the collection.

Part 1, *Reimagining*, reconceives relationships, ideas, and bonds attachments that come and go. The stories—*The Unravelling* by Spoorthy Raman, *A Shifting Relationship* by Fiona Conway, *Ocean Funeral* by Rachel Barnes, and *Monster Trackers* by Kyle Penney— reconceive common narratives about life above and below the ocean. The stories help reimagine the past and future.

Part 2, *Reuniting*, reunifies people and places to give strength in the hard times. The stories—*Mi'kmaq Moons and Magnetically Attuned* by Erica (Samms) Hurley, *Pull Through* by Shawn Doyle, *The Wonders of the Waters* by Kelsie Keeping, and *She and her Sea* by Janice Young—reconnect people with the natural world, maybe even for the last time.

Part 3, *Rediscovering*, reawakens cherished memories, and finds new meanings in more difficult ones. The stories—*Sliver of Silver* by Sadie Butt, *Hide* by Meghan Donovan, *In Between Tides* by Krista Vokey, and *An Ocean of Memories* by Melissa Elizabeth Wong—retrieve the visions and images that provide comfort and even disturb. They provide clarity to life and memory on coasts.

Part 4, *Rethinking*, reconsiders beliefs and perceptions, challenging what is known and what appears to be self-evident. The stories—*Golden Bay* by Virginia Ryan, *A Marine Cook in Turbulent Waters* by Terry (T.C.) Bursey, *Riptide* by Stephanie Boone, and *Super Krill* by Robert Gross—re-evaluate choices and expectations. The stories rethink the narratives that are often told.

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Stories are sometimes dismissed as not relevant or useful. Yet, as this collection demonstrates, understanding how people connect with coastal life is crucial if the aim is to learn about their experiences and desires. Globally, researchers and policymakers are talking about how to advance the “Ocean we Want”, such as in the context of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. Stories like the ones in the collection, and I hope flow from it, are central to these conversations in the province and globally.

The collection is a kaleidoscope of inspirations intended to foster reflection and conversation about the past, present, and future of oceans and coasts. Enjoy the collection, as I have. Interpret the stories however you like. While the stories belong to the authors, your experiences with them are yours. Take them with you as you read, write, and talk about your own inspirations from the ocean and coasts. Stories are the medium of exchange in places like Newfoundland and Labrador. This collection invites you to reimagine, reunite, rediscover, and rethink your own. It invites you to share your inspirations.

Evan J. Andrews
Memorial University
St. John's, Canada
September 9, 2024