

Muskoka Novel Marathon 2025



Writer's Handbook

A Message from the Convenors

WELCOME to our second Muskoka Novel Marathon in our new space at the Port Sydney Community Hall. After the success of last year, we are thrilled to be able to return here, hopefully without the heating/cooling issues and random alarms of last year! The space will look a bit different this time round, but we hope it will be more functional for all. Welcome also to our online participants from all over the globe. While you won't be able to join us in some events, we hope being online with us in the writing room will inspire your creativity, and you are more than welcome to take part in the **midnight reading** (which will most likely happen at 10 p.m. as per last year) and share your words with us all.

This year, along with **KM Wehrstein** reprising her role as Convenor for the umpteenth time as well as acting as Food Sponsor Co-ordinator, we have **Emeleigh Stroud** joining as Co-Convenor. Emeleigh began her work with MNM in 2021 as T-Shirt Coordinator and has slowly been adding new titles to her resume, including Writer Liaison, Social Media Coordinator, Media Liaison, and Kitchen Staff. An event like this takes an awful lot of work, and this year it has been wonderful to share the load!

We would like to say **THANK YOU** to our awesome Committee: **Jennifer Britton**, Zoom Coordinator; and **Catherine Neal**, Website and Registrar. Thanks also to additional volunteers **Melissa Gold**, website; **Lois Ward**, Prize Sponsor Co-ordinator, **Jodie Auckland**, Co-Judge Liaison (Judges); **Cheryl Stamper**, Co- Judge Liaison (Manuscripts); **Pilar Miralles**, Publisher Liaison, **Christine Blenkhorn**, Trophy Co-ordinator, **Marlene Vettorel**, Treasurer; **Pilar Miralles**, **Joanne Lea** and **Cathie Raynor**, kitchen crew. Our **team of judges** will remain nameless for arms-length reasons, but we thank them!

Muchas gracias to **Pilar Miralles**, who also organized the infrastructure and the people for our new Spanish-language competition category, finding a publisher, three judges, six writers (as of this writing) and sponsorship funding. MNM is now a bilingual event!

We'd also like to thank our YMCA Simcoe-Muskoka Philanthropy contact **Danielle Nielson** and Y Huntsville Literacy contact **Ashley McGee** for their always-cheery help; **Judy Hall**, RMT for returning to do her lovely massages again this year, **Jen Starratt** for leading our yoga session, **Sue Kenney** for returning to lead the Creativity Walk and **Jennifer Britton** for her inspirational workshop.

As usual, **the fantastic local business/organizational community** has opened its wallets, kitchens and hearts to us, providing food and fundraising prizes. See the sponsor list below, and please visit them, support them and make them feel that being generous to us was a great idea!

And last but *definitely* not least, a big huge thank-you and congratulations to: **YOU**. Because you're a writer, because you've raised money for literacy, and because you are brave enough to participate in the Muskoka Novel Marathon.

In literacy and creativity,

KM (Karen) Wehrstein, Co-Convenor, MNM 2025 & Emeleigh Stroud, Co-Convenor, MNM 2025

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Things to Bring to an In-Person Novel Marathon

(adapted from Lori Twining's Ultimate Awesome Novel Marathoner's Packing List)

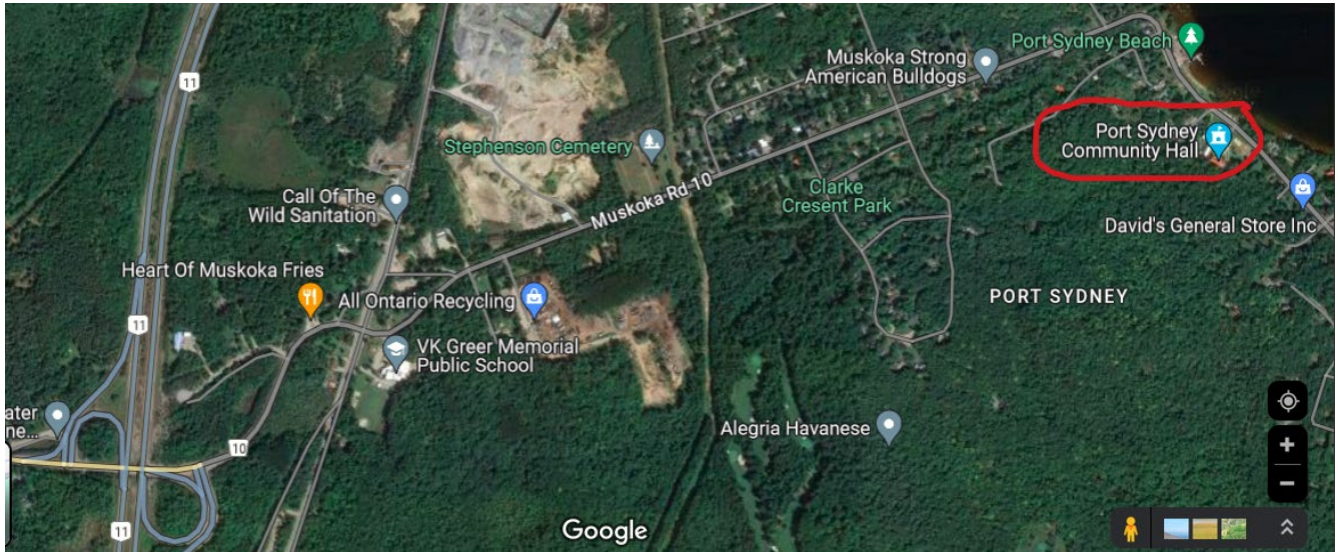
- A creative brain
- Laptop with power source
- Flash drive/Thumb drive *(for manuscript back-up – or save to cloud every few hours)*
- Cell phone & charger
- MNM Pledge Sponsor Sheet & money collected *(to hand in at the registration table)*
- Any COOL writing clothes *(your MNM t-shirt will be waiting for you if you ordered one)*
- Previous MNM Awards that you have to give back *(unfortunately, you can't keep them)*
- Research material *(including photos)*
- Sticky notes
- Paper or notebook for writing down character names, sudden ideas or just drawing pretty pictures until an idea smacks you in the head
- Mask, air filter for your spot, hand sanitizer, if needed
- Portable musical instruments, e.g. guitar, drum, harmonica, for beach singalongs
- Highlighters and coloured pens *(you never know what colour your brain wants to doodle/write in)*
- Sleeping bag, pillow, blanket, cot, inflatable mattress *(you're allowed a few minutes of sleep every now and then if you need it)*
- Reclining lawn chair/hammock
- Comfy chair for writing
- Bug repellent for deck sunning and beach parties
- Comfy lounging/relaxation clothes to write in
- Deodorant/Antiperspirant *(ward off the stink bugs)*
- Lucky charm/writing friend/inspirational talisman(s)
- A costume of any kind *(superhero costumes most welcome... there is a tradition.)*
- ADVIL/TYLENOL or pain reliever of any kind *(sustained writing can hurt the brain and other muscles)*
- Energy drinks like Monster, Red Bull or Rockstar to keep the brain waves in full shock for 72 hours

straight when you'd rather be sleeping (*coffee and tea are provided*)

- Sweater, sweatshirt, coat (*temp in the room can vary if it's a hot weekend, so layers are best*)
- Bathing suit/cap/goggles/watershoes to take a dip in the lake
- Business Cards (*for networking with other writers*)
- Your published books you'd like to sell to other writers
- Money to buy new author friends' novels
- Heating pad or Magic Beans (*sitting 72 hours tends to be hard on the back*)
- Camera & charger (*for documenting the fun time you are having, plus to update your blog, web site, Facebook, X, Bluesky and Instagram accounts*)
- Music/iPods/CDs (*creative words flow better with great music*)
- Earbuds/Noise cancelling headphones (*sometimes you want to block out the world*)
- Most recent family photo (*everyone wants to know what your family looks like & whether you're a pet lover or not*)
- MEDICATION (*important one: we don't want your mood swings getting in the way of the next great Canadian novel*)
- Kleenex/tissue or napkins of some kind (*to wipe off the emotional tears from your cheeks while you write a character's death scene, or to clean up sudden coffee spills*)
- Comb/brush/makeup/ponytails (**RED ALERT: WE TAKE PICTURES THROUGHOUT THE 72 HOURS OF NO-SLEEP**)
- Map, GPS or computer printouts showing how to get to the venue
- Favourite coffee mug, juice glass or water bottle
- Slippers, flip-flops or fancy-ass high heels (*whatever gets you in the mood to write like a tornado is coming your way and you only have to finish one paragraph before it reaches you*)
- Snacks to get you and your new author friends through 72 hours of non-stop writing (**HINT: the better the snack, the more they will like you!**)
- COOKIES ARE MANDATORY! They go great with morning coffee & inspirational chats with fellow early-risers! :D
- Yoga mat, if you're going to attend our morning session (see schedule on p. 7)

Arrival and Setup

HOW TO GET HERE



The Port Sydney Community Centre is at 607 Muskoka Road 10, Port Sydney, Ontario. ([Google Maps link](#)), right across the road from Mary Lake. From Hwy 11, take Exit 207 to Muskoka Rd 10/Muskoka District Road 10, and drive about 3 km. When you see the beach on your left, look on your right for:



...but with leaves on the trees and our blue and green banner on the deck railing, plus our black-on-white Muskoka Novel Marathon signs out front. There is free parking in front of the building and up the hill beside it. We have the whole building all to ourselves for the entire Marathon.

PLEASE DO NOT ARRIVE BEFORE 4 p.m.

...unless you want to be instantly and mercilessly press-ganged into helping with setup. (Willing volunteers, of course, are welcome!) Because another group has the hall booked until 4 p.m., we will be setting up in a *hurry*. Suggest grabbing an early dinner as registration will not open until 5:30 and we will only serve snacks this evening.

REGISTRATION

Registration begins at 5:30 p.m. and is open until **6:30 p.m.**, when Orientation starts. Please register at the registration table in the anteroom (it will have a sign). *Note regarding turning in cash and cheque donations:* make sure that all donations are credited to the correct writer when they are accepted and entered into the system by the onsite registrars. Amounts cannot be transferred subsequently. You will be handed your badge and t-shirt(s), if ordered, at the registration desk.

Seat allocation will be by order of previous-year fundraising **IF YOU ARE THERE AT 5:30**. If you arrive later, it's first-come-first-served. Once you're registered go on in and pick your seat, quickly please, as our late set-up start has tightened up the opening night schedule. We want to start as traditional at 8 p.m. sharp. (Note: if we are forced to start at, say, 8:10, we will end at 8:10 on Sunday. 72 hours is the rule!)

There is no official MNM recommended position for writing. It can be anything, and we mean anything.

Here is Marty Avery (not to be confused with Martin Avery) dancing while working at MNM 2010



Marathon Schedule

THURSDAY, JULY 10

- 5:30-6:30 p.m. **Registration & Writer Set-up.** Hand in any cash/cheque donations, choose your seat, set up your writing spot.
- 6:30 p.m. Orientation, snacks and last-minute socializing.
- 8 p.m. **Writing officially begins.**

FRIDAY, JULY 11

- 8 a.m. (Time very approximate – we’ll inform.) Yoga session with Jen Starratt in Huntsville. Greet the day relaxed and enlightened. Location: deck or, in case of rain, anteroom (where you registered).
- 9 a.m. Breakfast
- 11 a.m. Judy Hall, Registered Massage Therapist, begins massage appointments (ending with last booking at 4 p.m.). Book yours by signing up on the schedule at the admin table: \$50 for half hour, \$100 for full hour, pay by debit or cash, covered by most extended healthcare plans.
- 1 p.m. Lunch
- 1:30 p.m. Top fundraiser prize presentations and preliminary fundraising total announcement.
- 2:00 p.m. Official group photo. Gather on the deck, weather permitting.
- After photo: Top fundraisers choose their prizes and 2026 seats in order of amount raised until prizes run out and all who’ve raised \$1,000 or more have seats. We will come and get you (in person or via Zoom).
- 6 p.m. Dinner

SATURDAY, JULY 12

- 8:15 Creativity Walk led by our Creativity Walk leader and past Marathon participant Sue Kenney (approximately 30 minutes). Walking has been proven to inspire creativity!
- 9 a.m. Breakfast
- 11:00 a.m. Judy Hall begins massage appointments (ending at 4 p.m.).
- 1 p.m. Lunch
- 6 p.m. Dinner
- 10 p.m. Not quite midnight reading, led by... TBD. Location TBD (might be weather-dependent).

SUNDAY, JULY 13

- 8 a.m. (approx.) Workshop with Jennifer Britton, theme TBA. Guaranteed to be inspirational and stimulating to your creativity! Location: deck or, in case of rain, anteroom.
- 9 a.m. Breakfast
- 1 p.m. Lunch
- 6 p.m. Dinner
- 8 p.m. **Writing officially ends.** See “When You Finish” (p. 15).

What's on the Menu?

In the early days of the Muskoka Novel Marathon, writers fended for themselves nutritionally, either packing lunches or frequenting nearby eateries. However, we gradually increased the offerings provided by sponsors and now serve three meals a day plus some snacks with the help of a generous kitchen crew. This year's food will be pretty good as much of it will come from restaurants, and our Head Cook, despite his tender years, is an experienced pro.

Because we depend on donated foods and volunteer labour, **we cannot accommodate every special diet**. However, for every meal there is a vegetarian option, and we are trying for enough selection that, for instance, low-carb dieters will find enough low-carb foods. If you need a very specific diet we recommend bringing your own food to supplement what we provide; fridge space is available. If you have a severe allergy to a specific food such as peanuts, please advise us.



2018 kitchen crew members Heather Bacon (Sharon's daughter) and Mitch Cotic prepare generously-donated goodies for hungry writers. Good practice for when got married and became parents!

Writer Support

SELF CARE

We'll start out with a little supportive prose right here:

- Submitting your manuscript for “Best Novel” is *not* mandatory. Writers have also used the Marathon’s opportunity to start new projects with no intention of finishing them there, finish old ones that they haven’t otherwise allowed time for (and you will always get huge encouragement for this), work on writing already contracted for, etc. If competing isn’t your cup of tea, forget it and just do your own thing.
- However, submitting does add a level of ambition and thrill, and the possibility of winning is always there if you write well! If you’re undecided, we suggest going for it. The vast majority of our winners had absolutely no expectation of winning, as shown by the looks of total shock on their faces when their names were announced at the Wrap-Up.
- Since you’re sitting a lot, you’re going to want to make sure you get up and move! Stretch, wriggle, take a short walk, do a little yoga, go for a swim in the lake, put on a heavy metal track in your phones or buds and dance like a maniac for 30 seconds... whatever works. We have two shared movement opportunities: our traditional Creativity Walk on Saturday morning, and new last year, morning yoga on Friday.
- The Writer’s Room at an in-person MNM is notoriously quiet, save for the gently cacophonous din of keystrokes. All of us are around to support and motivate you, so reach out if you’re ever feeling lonely, but remember to *shhhhhhhhh*... quiet in the Writing Room. For online writers, we are going to keep the Zoom on 24/3 again this year, it’s going to be one big “Unsupervised Writing Room” except during the scheduled events, and some of the in-person people will be on the Zoom as well, to keep us all connected together. If you want to yack with someone during quiet times, please ask for a breakout room and failing that, use Whatsapp/Facebook/Google Meet-up/Discord/Teams/smoke signals/what-have-you.
- Taking time for yourself while writing is an important step in the process. Losing yourself in a manuscript is a great thing but shouldn’t be done at the expense of your own mental health. Make sure you take breaks when your body and mind tell you to, and recharge yourself after tough scenes or long-haul writing sprints. You’ll be glad you did. Drink lots of genuine Muskoka spring water from our dispenser to stay hydrated.

The most important thing you need to do in order to make this MNM yours is to believe in yourself and to allow your narrative to flow. If you need to reach out, reach out. If you need silence, focus and generate your art. The Muskoka Novel Marathon is about creating magic and creating a community. Through our dedication to the art of writing, we show the world how powerful literacy can be.

SUPPORT FROM STAFF

Co-Convenor and Writer Liaison Emeleigh Stroud, Co-Convenor KM (Karen) Wehrstein and Zoom Co-ordinator Jennifer Britton are here to help you throughout the weekend. If there's anything you need while at the Port Sydney Community Centre or on our Zoom, please don't hesitate to bring it to us. Look for us online too.

Emeleigh is planning to be on site 24/3 – the whole time; the rest of us are around during the day. Our goal is to ensure that you have a fantastic experience. There are no dumb questions and no problems too big or small to share. Please be sure to ask for support if you need it.

SUPPORT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Our Facebook group "[Muskoka Novel Marathoners](#)" is a great spot to share photos, thoughts and questions. On X/Twitter, if you still use it, use the hashtag #MNM2025 and follow us: [@MuskokaNM](#). The website may also offer the answers you're looking for; check it out [here](#). Online writers, please make full use of Zoom and other e-methods for support. Ask for a breakout and Jenn will set it up.

SUPPORT BY OUR HEALERS

The wonderful Judy Hall, RMT has been using her expertise and caring to soothe the bodies and souls of stressed MNM writers for years. She is gentle and compassionate and knows exactly how to relax and strengthen you. Her prices are reasonable or zero if you have extended healthcare that covers massage therapy.

We also recommend participating in the morning yoga session on Friday and the Creativity Walk on Saturday morning—both are also good for the soul!



Please use this freely on social media!

Venue Information

Important: For our participants' security, the door to the Port Sydney Community Hall will be locked each night from about 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. If you want to enter during this time, call or text the number on the back of your badge (705-380-1627 – Emeleigh's number) and you'll be let in.

WRITING SPACE VERSUS SOCIAL SPACE

The main Hall space is one big room, so it will all be writing space except for one table set up for dining and very quiet socializing. For free socializing, please use the deck, weather permitting, or the anteroom. This year we will have a shady space on the deck, big enough to fit a few writers.

BATHROOMS

Look for the signs that show you where to go. Note this venue does *not* have showers available.

WIFI

Network: **PS-Community-Hall**

No Password needed.

REFRIGERATOR USE

The Hall has lots of fridge space. We will use some to store our donated/purchased food, to be accessed by *kitchen staff only*, and some will be available for the writers to put their snacks in. Look for the sign telling you which is for writers. Put your name on your items so that if anyone steals them, they'll know who they're stealing from and feel very guilty.

SLEEPING ON SITE

Please note: No cots, sleeping mats or bedding are provided. Please bring whatever you will need to be comfortable: sleeping bags, pillows, blankets, air mattresses, gravity lawn chairs, etc. You are free to sleep in or next to your chair in your writing space (it's your real estate for 72 hours).

The designated sleeping space is the curtained-off area right next to the writing room, normally used to store tables, but of course the tables will all be out in the room with writers' equipment, writers' snacks, sleeping writers, etc., on them. Please don't expect complete silence; bring earplugs if necessary.

SWIMMING

Beautiful Port Sydney Beach is a short walk away from our venue. Spontaneously-organized beach and/or swim parties are possible!

SMOKING AREA

The designated smoking area is just outside the main door on the upper level. Please do not smoke anywhere else and remember to place your butts in the receptacle provided.

A NOTE ABOUT ALCOHOL

Alcohol is forbidden without a license, and if we were to get a license it would cost a ridiculous amount and also raise our insurance costs. Any writers who feel the need for wine, beer or spirits can head over to 3 Pines Bar & Grill, the one bar in Port Sydney (see p. 25), or further afield to Huntsville or Bracebridge, though of course you'll need a designated driver. Thanks for following our rules instead of trying to smuggle it in and us having to escort or roll you out. "Pub Night" offsite on Saturday night, or perhaps Friday night this year, is something of a tradition and if it happens, all writers are welcome.

PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEOGRAPHY, AND SOCIAL MEDIA

It's a given that many photos, candid and posed, will be taken over the course of the Marathon. Some of these we all participate in, such as the traditional all-writers group photo. For such group photos, we will be asking each of you to sign release forms so that the YMCA of Simcoe County and the Muskoka Novel Marathon can use these group photos in our official press releases and websites promoting the event.

There will also be many writers and visitors who will be taking photos of the event for their own personal use, and posting these to their social media feeds. The Muskoka Novel Marathon encourages you to use social media to promote our event and bring awareness to our fundraising efforts for literacy.

If you want to post pictures online of your fellow writers doing their thing during the Marathon, we would strongly suggest asking if they are okay with you posting it and/or tagging them in the photo. This includes any other writer who happens to be in the background of a shot and/or who might be in your photo by accident.

If you are uncomfortable in **any way** about having your picture taken during the Marathon (other than for the obligatory YMCA and MNM group photos), please make your fellow writers aware of this. You can paste a sticky note to your computer, write it on a big sheet of paper that you leave on your desk, put it on a sheet around your screen, but please make sure you keep the notice out while you are in the writing room.

Please be aware that accidents do happen. If you find out about a photo of yours that is posted on another writer's social media feed that you were not aware of, please contact the writer directly, and kindly ask them to remove you from the image.

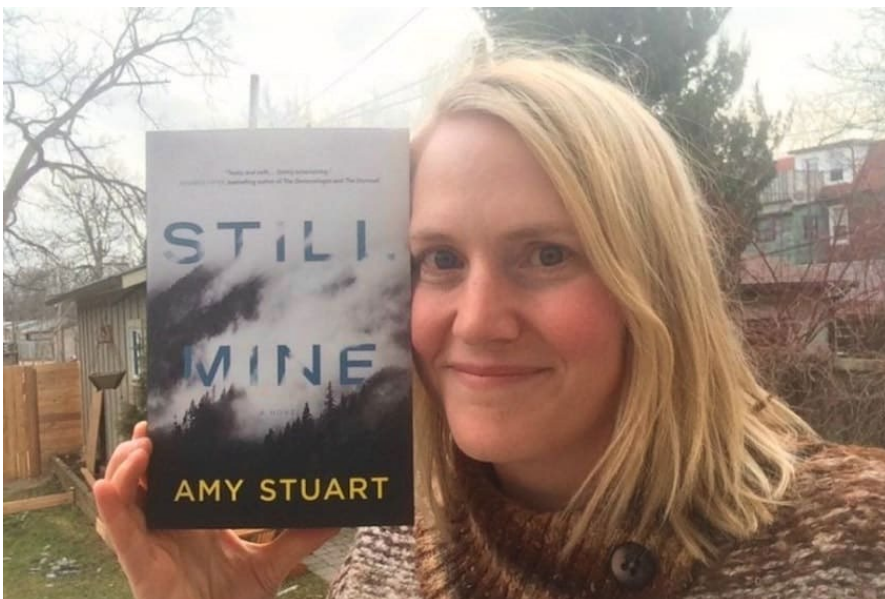
SECURITY & DISRUPTIONS

Last year we had an issue with several local youths disrupting our event. We have been reassured that the risk is less this year because the youngsters got themselves into more serious trouble and thus now face greater deterrents. Nonetheless we have taken some extra precautions, as has the town of Huntsville, so it's much less likely we'll be bothered in this way in 2025.

A second problem last year was that even a momentary power outage would trip the fire alarm which we could then not turn off. We spoke with our maintenance contact with the Town, Scott Doughty, and he told me the system has been replaced so that shouldn't happen again.

WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY

If it's a 911-type emergency, CALL 911. Specify whether you need police, fire department and/or ambulance, or just say what the emergency is. Location is the **Port Sydney Community Hall, 607 Muskoka Road 10, Port Sydney**. Should an evacuation be necessary, we'll meet on **the front lawn near the playground**. If there's a non-life-threatening issue, notify KM or Emeleigh or, if it's in the kitchen, Liam or Joanne. We recommend backing up your laptop 100% before arriving, just in case.



*This
internationally
bestselling
novel...*

*...had its
beginning
at the
2010
Muskoka
Novel
Marathon.*



Writing Rules and Judging Information

OUTLINE AND WRITING

Writers planning to submit their manuscripts for judging may bring an outline of up to one page. **Rule # 1: All writing to be entered must be done at the event location, within the allotted 72 hours.** An affidavit to this effect must be signed, witnessed and submitted by the end of the event. Note: despite the event name, non-fiction and short stories are also welcome.

Rule #2: The use of artificial intelligence of any sort to generate either concepts or text to be included in your manuscript is not allowed. If detected, it will result in disqualification, and we now have people on staff who are familiar with AI writing. You may use ChatGPT or another AI I to help you with research, but *not* with the *creative* process. The affidavit now includes language to this effect.

Rule #3: Writers may not submit a manuscript that is encumbered by any contractual obligation (e.g., a right-of-first-refusal clause in an existing publishing contract, a plot connection to another work that is under contract – if you are writing a sequel, say – or a tie to a series or setting that is under contract). These are just examples; there are other contractual obligations that could make it impossible or awkward for us to send your manuscript to our official publisher if you win Best Novel. Now when you sign the affidavit you are warranting that your manuscript is free and clear. Disqualification could result here, too.

FORMATTING YOUR MANUSCRIPT

Please use the [provided formatting template](#), as not only is it set to our standard double-spaced 14-point Times New Roman, but it has a standard title page and header template—you just start writing on the second page. If you're entering the contest, this will provide a more uniform look for the judges. And even if you're not, it will ensure that the pieces of paper or "votes" we post to celebrate every 10 pages represent roughly the same number of words from everyone. **Rule #4: Judging is anonymous.** If you are submitting, **do not include your name anywhere in the file.**

NOTE: we have promised our publishers that winning authors will send sample chapters and synopsis only, and not a complete manuscript, unless they ask for it. This makes a synopsis **mandatory**, even if you finish your novel. Manuscripts do not have to be complete to win; judges have made it clear repeatedly that **they are looking more for quality than quantity**. The full plot, especially how your tale ends, is of great importance to them, and that'll be covered by the synopsis. Never written a synopsis? It's a skill you need as a professional writer! Tips: A Short Guide to Synopsis Writing from the Porcupine's Quill: [\[online\]](#) [\[.doc file\]](#)

TRACKING PAGE COUNTS

In-person writers: every time you reach a 10-page milestone, please come to the designated area, choose a brightly coloured piece of paper, write your name and the total number of pages you have written, and hang it on the line alongside the others.

Online writers: Log in on the website and click on MNM:QE – DASHBOARD then [Page Count Log], or click [here](#) and follow the instructions. (Note: services such as the Page Count Log and Peer Award Voting won't open until the Marathon is underway.)



WHEN YOU FINISH

IF YOU ARE ENTERING THE CONTEST:

1. Double check that your name is nowhere in the file and you have filled out the cover page properly. Note: no cover letter to the judges is required, and in fact we recommend against.

2. E-mail your submission to judgeliaison@muskokanovelmarathon.com, including the **title of the manuscript and category (Adult or YA/Juv) in the subject line.**
3. Fill out, sign and have a witness sign our [affidavit](#), declaring that you wrote the entire manuscript during the marathon. In-person writers, hand the affidavit in at the admin desk; Online writers, email it to muskokanovelmarathon@gmail.com. Either use an electronic signature or print and scan it filled out and signed. Note: we use the affidavit not only to forestall cheating but also to track who wrote which manuscript and for which category, so be sure to fill one out. **Not sending in an affidavit will result in disqualification.**
4. Breathe a sigh of relief!

WHETHER OR NOT YOU ENTER THE CONTEST:

Please ensure that you vote for a writer for each of the Peer-Voted Awards (award descriptions below). To vote, log in on our website, click on MNM:QE DASHBOARD then [Peer Award Voting], or click [here](#). The names of our rookies are listed near the Rookie of the Year voting spot.

Part of Muskoka Novel Marathon’s success is that we make use of writer feedback, so please give us some! Praise encourages and inspires us, criticism lets us know what to fix (and if you have a suggestion for how, please include it; we’ve used them before). You will receive an email invitation to fill out an online survey soon after the marathon.

Awards



“Win me!” “Win me!” “Win me!”

BEST NOVEL

At the completion of the Muskoka Novel Marathon, manuscripts may be submitted to the judges, who will determine the winners in each of two categories: Young Adult/Juvenile and Adult.

This year's judges are all avid readers and over the years have included authors, editors, librarians, bookstore owners, and other literary types; we've even had one publisher.

Winners will be announced at the wrap-up party on **Sept. 21** (mark your calendar). Each winner receives a prize and the opportunity to have their manuscript reviewed by a publishing professional. Our Publisher Liaison **Pilar Miralles** will help you through the post-Marathon winners' process.

Winners will be given six weeks to refine their manuscripts before submitting them to the editor or agent. Once the manuscripts have been sent to, the discussion continues between the editor or agent and the author directly. The Muskoka Novel Marathon ceases to be involved from that point onwards (except that we wish you luck!)

In 2025, winning manuscripts will again be reviewed by [At Bay Press](#) of Winnipeg. For your interest, here are their [submission guidelines](#).

PRODUCTIVITY AWARDS

MOST PROLIFIC WRITER: Goes to the writer who produces the longest manuscript by word count during the marathon. There is no requirement for it to be coherent.

ROCK STAR: The runner-up to the most prolific writer. In the spirit of super-speedwriting veteran Pat Flewwelling, who created and donated this award, you have to write at least 250 pages to be eligible to win!

FUNDRAISING AWARDS

The deadline for fundraising for the purpose of the Remy and other prizes is **Saturday, July 12 at 10 a.m. EDT**.

REMINGTON AWARD: Awarded to the writer who has raised the largest amount of money for YMCA Muskoka Literacy Services.

RESERVED SPOTS: All writers who raise \$1,000 or more automatically receive a reserved spot at the next Muskoka Novel Marathon and get their pick of seats in order of amount raised.

DONATED PRIZES: All writers are eligible for fabulous prizes donated by generous local donors. They

will all be set out on a table, and also listed for online writers. They are awarded in descending order of amount raised until they run out (we'll visit your seat or find you on Zoom when it's your turn.)

PEER-VOTED AWARDS

In addition to the awards listed above, there are the much coveted peer-voted awards to be won. Please make sure you vote on all of them!

SPIRIT: Awarded to the author who best embodies the spirit of the Muskoka Novel Marathon.

B.I.C. (Bum in Chair): Is this not self-explanatory? If not: it is awarded to the writer who is observed to be most dedicated as measured by hours spent in their spot.

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR: For the first-time marathoner who best embraces the spirit of the Muskoka Novel Marathon. In-person rookies are denoted by a green dot on their badges, and their names will also be on the voting webpage.

TECHIE: For the writer who does the most to help fellow writers overcome technological issues.

VOLUNTEER AWARD

The Star Volunteer Award, given to MNM by the YMCA in 2021, acknowledges a leading volunteer helping run the Marathon. They may or may not be a writer as well. The winner is chosen generally by the MNM Committee, but if you have opinions, we don't mind hearing them! And if you'd like to be eligible for this trophy, [contact KM or Emeleigh](#). We are actually still short-staffed.

*2006 Rookie of the Year
Tracey Lapham
at the 2024 Marathon
with her son,
2024 Rookie of the Year
James Whitehill.*



The Programs We Support

For its first 10 years, the Muskoka Novel Marathon supported the Muskoka Literacy Council in its mission to provide free programs to local adults in need of upgrading their skills in reading, writing, spelling, math, computer skills and more.

These programs are now run by YMCA of Simcoe-Muskoka Literacy Services. As a result of Novel Marathon funding over the years, the Y has been able to enhance its capacity by upgrading computer equipment, increasing hours, offering computer courses for seniors, offering English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, and so forth. Most recently they have expanded outward in Muskoka, offering classes in Bracebridge, Gravenhurst and Parry Sound.

Our contributions have helped empower numerous people to acquire skills they've then used to gain new and better employment, start businesses, pursue their creativity in new ways, get out of isolation, gain confidence and generally transform their lives.

For more information, please visit ymcaofsimcoemuskoka.ca/literacy-services.



YMCA Literacy students, hard at work learning what will liberate them!

Our Sponsors

We wouldn't be able to put on such a great event without the support of our generous sponsors. Please let them know how much you appreciate their contributions. Note: this list covers our sponsors as of the distribution of this handbook. Others might jump on board at the last minute.

[BASILICO](#)

Gourmet Italian restaurant at Bracebridge's Inn at the Falls. Not only are they sending us delicious fare, but their executive chef John Cooper begat our Head Cook, Liam Cooper.

[PAULA BOON](#)

Paula's many talents have not just helped MNM become what it is today, but have sent her to Japan to teach English, put her on stage, landed her works in many publications, won her many awards including MNM Best Novel, and started her creating word art.

[BLUE WILLOW TEA SHOP](#)

This British-to-the-bone establishment in Gravenhurst provides not only a full line of teas, china and other retail items imported from England, but serves up a classic high tea on a three-tiered tray.

[BOSTON PIZZA](#)

Pizza, pasta, sandwiches, burgers, salads, gluten-free and much more at BP's waterfront location in Huntsville.

[BULLOCK'S YOUR INDEPENDENT GROCER](#)

Great deli, great seafood counter, great bakery, all the President's Choice products and a whole lot of great everything else makes Bullock's YIG many people's fave supermarket in Huntsville.

[DEERHURST RESORT](#)

Arguably the most famous resort in Ontario, home of the 2010 G8 and an all-around amazing place with every amenity.

[DOT THE T PRODUCTIONS](#)

This unique company was formed by a husband-and-wife team of writers/show producers, and they create some of the best theatre in Muskoka.

[FARMER'S DAUGHTER](#)

The Farmer's Daughter (and yes, she really is one) has a passion for fresh food and ideas. Their products are handmade using only the best natural ingredients.

[FOUR SEASON GREENS](#)

Owned by our own Sharon Bacon and her husband Steve, FSG is a one-stop shop for everything to do with sprouts and microgreens, supplying most of the local restaurants, selling directly and helping you grow your own.

[FRESHCO](#)

If you wonder where Huntsville residents go for the most reasonable prices on groceries, this supermarket is it -- recently moved to a larger space and accordingly greater selection.

[THE GREAT VINE](#)

Dedicated to providing its customers with compassionate, professional customer service in the areas of complementary healthcare, health food and many other cool things.

[HENRIETTA'S PINE BAKERY](#)

Serving up delicious baked goods of every type, sweet and savoury—you name it, they make it—Henrietta's now has two locations, in Huntsville as well as Dwight.

[HUBBERT'S MAPLE](#)

This family business hasn't been around for all that long, only 163 years, as the current co-owner's great-great-grandfather started it, and produces the most Canadian of sweetly delicious treats.

[KAWARTHA DAIRY](#)

This establishment features products made with milk from Ontario farms, and they provide us with milk and cream for our coffee and tea, and butter for our toast. Oh, and yes, that other product, Salty Caramel Truffle ice cream.

[LITTLE CAESARS](#)

Yummy pizza with a wide variety of toppings (as you will find out) plus other Italian delights.

[MAIN STREET LOCAL KITCHEN](#)

Now a staple of Huntsville's culinary scene, this restaurant offers an intimate atmosphere, attentive service and gourmet foods, right across from the theatre. See if you can guess which of their servers played King Herod in Jesus Christ Superstar this spring.

[MBRP PERFORMANCE EXHAUST](#)

Performance means different things to different people. Whether it's being able to haul loads of people and equipment, minimize fuel consumption or deliver blast-off-the-mark power, MBRP has systems and components to make your definition of performance a reality.

[METRO](#)

Another long-time friend of the Marathon, the Huntsville Metro (in the Huntsville Place Mall) offers a full supermarket selection and is open every day of the marathon from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.

[MUSKOKA AUTHORS ASSOCIATION](#)

This association provides workshops to help writers develop their skills, meetings (the third Thursday of every month) to network with other writers and learn from published authors, as well as opportunities for public readings of their work.

[OLIVER'S COFFEE](#)

This Muskoka roastery has cafés throughout Muskoka including two in nearby Bracebridge and one in nearby Huntsville. Last year's coffee supplier, Diesel House, is a subsidiary of Oliver's, and thus you'll be able to enjoy the same quality and flavours as in 2024.

[SMOKIN' HOT BBQ](#)

If you haven't tried this rockin' eatery now at the old train station in Huntsville, you should get a taste of their lonnng-smoked brisket, pork, etc. or their authentic poutine (the owner is from Quebec).

[SPRINGHILL FRESH WATER COMPANY](#)

The only company that both sources and bottles its natural spring water here in Muskoka. When the G8 leaders needed a refreshing swig of water in 2010, this is what they drank.

[UP NORTH GAMES](#)

Huntsville purveyor of all games playable whether with boards and pieces or with controllers and pixels, conveniently located downtown on Main Street.

[WEST SIDE FISH AND CHIPS](#)

2018 MNM participant Debra Knobelsdorf's restaurant in Huntsville, famous for fish and chips but serving up lots more for breakfast, lunch and supper. Family-owned since 1979.

[WINDMILL BAKERY & BISTRO](#)

Inspired by European baking traditions, thriving here in Muskoka, Windmill offers a huge selection of sweet and savoury baked goods and has recently expanded its indoor seating area.

[WRITESCAPE](#)

This organization offers retreats, workshops and other escapes for writers, led by Muskoka Novel Marathon veteran and 2015 Best Novel winner Ruth Walker.

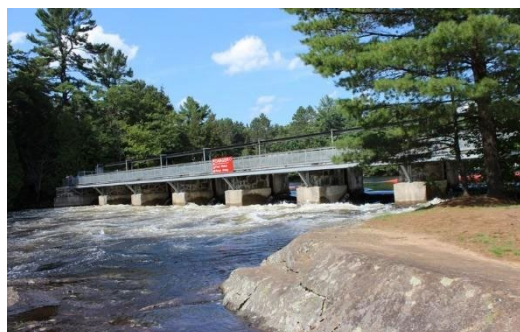
Things to Do in the Area

By Port Sydney resident Paula Boon, with files from KM Wehrstein

1. Cool off/soak up some sun/paddle at **Port Sydney Beach** (across the road, pictured on the front cover of this handbook, the registration package, your badge, etc. ...we haven't got tired of doing that yet). Has deep and shallow swimming areas, picnic tables and washroom. Expect it to be busy on Saturday and Sunday if the weather is good... but quiet early in the morning and at night. [Port Sydney Beach | Port Sydney, Muskoka](#).

2. Hang out at **Port Sydney Dam**. (If you take the semi-hidden path/shortcut, it's a 5-10-minute walk from the venue.) Natural stonescapes, rushing waterfalls, nice picnic area.

[Port Sydney Dam | Port Sydney, Muskoka](#)



3. Grab a coffee or other goodies from David's General Store. What has David got? What's mentioned in the picture and more.

[David's General Store Inc. - Discover Muskoka: Plan Your Trip](#)



4. Browse the one-of-a-kind gifts, home decor, pottery, candles, soaps, locally made items, books, etc. at The Wild Heart, a consignment and gift store in Port Sydney -- or just stop by the Little Free Library out front.

[The Wild Heart - Port Sydney, ON](#)



5. Visit Indian Landing. Iconic tree to photograph (in case you're wondering, it's a red maple), quieter spot to be by the water. About a 10-minute walk from the venue.

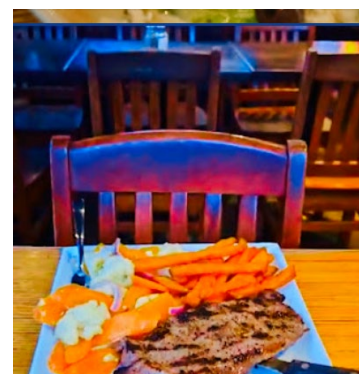
[Indian Landing | Port Sydney](#)



6. Check out the Cheese Dock - public dock down the small street almost directly across from David's General Store - quieter than public beach, at the mouth of the river, often shady. Not for swimming - boats come and go.

Still hungry?

1. 3 Pines Bar & Grill – just-renovated place at 3 Pines Inn, open for lunch and dinner, serving a wide variety of flavours of wings plus burgers, fish & chips, steak, wraps, etc. Also the only pub we can find in Port Sydney and certainly within walking (or staggering) distance of our venue, so if there's a pub night, it'll be here. 484 Muskoka Road 10. See 3pines.ca.



2. Heart of Muskoka Fries - out closer to the highway (92 Muskoka Road 10). Some people rave about their poutine, while some are less enthusiastic – see what you think! See them on [Tripadvisor](#).



Other things you might need:

Gas: Smith's Ultramar at 34 South Mary Lake Rd (close to Hwy 11)

Groceries: Freshmart at 29 South Mary Lake Rd (close to Hwy 11, same turn-off as Ultramar)

Miscellaneous (more like a general store): Dean's Home Hardware: (also at the same turn-off)

DOWNTOWN HUNTSVILLE

Downtown Huntsville is a 15-minute drive away, north on Highway 11. Many of its fine restaurants, interesting shops and other businesses and organizations have been generous supporters of the marathon for years.

DOWNTOWN BRACEBRIDGE

Bracebridge is south on Highway 11, a little further (20 minutes), but offers more and different stores and yummy restaurants (e.g., Basilico, where our Head Cook Liam Cooper's dad, John Cooper, is head chef, and Old Station, whose menu once featured a gnocchi by Liam). If you go there, you must visit the spectacular waterfall at Bracebridge Bay Park.

The 2025 Wrap-up Party

The novel marathon wrap-up party takes place in September every year. There, we announce the winners, give out trophies, distribute feedback from the judges, invite writers to do short readings, and socialize with each other and the judges who attend.

Mark your calendar: this year's wrap-up will be held on **Saturday, September 20** in the YMCA Simcoe-Muskoka Huntsville office (60 King William St. in Huntsville). The wrap-up itself will be from 2-4 pm, followed by two hours to relax and enjoy each other's company while nibbling *hors d'oeuvres*.



At the 2024 Wrap-Up Party. On Zoom, l to r, top to bottom: Atiya Hakeem, Ashley McGee from behind, Catherine Neal, Kathleen May. Rear row, l to r: Jennifer Britton, Paula Boon, Jennifer Turney, Jade Watson, Cindy Watson. Front row: KM Wehrstein, Janet Nichols, Emeleigh Stroud, Ashley McGee.

Muskoka Novel Marathon 2026

Whaaat, you want to come baaack?

You craaaazy person! We love you! Muskoka Novel Marathon 2026 will take place on **July 16-19, 2026**. (We changed to the third weekend for the sake of Muskoka Authors Association members.) We will be back at the Port Sydney Community Centre again (it's booked). Throughout the year, keep an eye out for our emails, check our website, muskokanovelmarchon.com, and stay tuned to our social media channels for information.



*It's important for writers to maintain equilibrium and flexibility.
Melissa Gold demonstrates during MNM 2024.*