



## Lake Simcoe — a poet's muse

*Desi Di Nardo began to craft her life's journey when she was 10 years old, sitting at the edge of the lake*

BY VALERIE PRING

When Desi Di Nardo was 10, she would sit on the rocks that edge Lake Simcoe and soak in the sun. With delicate hands, she would brush aside her dark blonde hair to watch the sparkling water. She felt at home on Lake Simcoe's shores.

Di Nardo's parents owned property at Duclos Point in Georgina, and the family would leave the confines of Toronto to spend summers by the lake. Sitting beside the lake with pen and paper in hand, Di Nardo would write down her thoughts and feelings, to create imagery through words. Desi Di Nardo was born to be poet.

Now, 25 years later, Di Nardo is well established in the literary world. Featured in many international journals and anthologies, her style is fresh and recognizable.

Di Nardo's major break came in 2001, when the *Literary Review of Canada* printed her poem *Canadian Moose*. Also that year, one of her poems was interpreted and performed as a dance at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa as part of an International Women's Day celebration. From there, her career blossomed. During the day, she was an English professor at George Brown College; by night, she wrote her poems.

In 2006, her poem *Rainbird in the Annex* appeared in buses and subways throughout Toronto. The following year, several of her poems were displayed in the Official Residence of Canada, and she met with Governor General Michaëlle Jean. Since then, Di Nardo's work has been printed on Starbucks cups, she has published a book of poetry (*The Plural of Some Things*, published by Guernica Editions) and she has been invited to be the writer-in-residence for Loretto College in Toronto.

This summer, Di Nardo will be circling Lake Simcoe to give readings from her collection and do workshops. The tour, entitled "The Journey of a Poet," will take place in

Beaverton, Sutton, Orillia, Bradford and Newmarket. (See list, opposite.)

People will be able to listen to Di Nardo read her poetry and can participate in a workshop.

In a small café in Toronto recently, Di Nardo talked about her connection to Lake Simcoe and how it has had a profound effect on her bonds with Nature: "Some of my earliest and fondest memories are of the time spent outdoors at the lake, and in nearby woodlands. Now, I spend most of my summer at the lake. The themes that are consistent in many of my poems are of nature and animals. Not only do they act as a source of inspiration but, also, I'm intrigued by the interrelatedness of all living things. Many poems in my book emerge from my respect, love and admiration for our striking Canadian wildlife. Lake Simcoe is one of my greatest muses."

Di Nardo finds it flattering to have her work recognized by so many people: "Sometime after one of my poems appeared as part of the Poetry on the Way series on buses and subways on Toronto's

transit system, I was surprised to meet several strangers who not only remembered reading the poem but could also recite lines from it!"

Di Nardo believes that you have to be born with the gift to write poetry. However, as with every art form, it needs nurturing to enhance the skill. For this reason, she is passionate about helping people hone their craft. She regularly hosts workshops and readings throughout Ontario. The first school to which Di Nardo was invited was Nantyr Shores Secondary School in the Simcoe County District School Board: "I remember reading *Poetry on Lake Simcoe* in class and, afterward, the teacher, who was deeply passionate about poetry, drove us both down to the lake, which I felt was really a thoughtful gesture."

Apart from being known for her poetry, Di Nardo also expresses herself on canvas. Her paintings can be viewed online at [www.desidinardo.com](http://www.desidinardo.com). When she is having difficulty expressing an idea or sentiment in the written form, she turns to this medium. Di Nardo believes that all art forms can influence and build from each other: "A painting may inspire a poem,

### Adrift on Duclos Point

By Desi Di Nardo

*I profess my love to you in a blue canoe  
where glistering minnows skitter out  
of weeds resembling inverted cedars  
where the growth below the lake  
is lush and plentiful  
and the crabs are merry kings  
on the lookout for shells of shelter  
here by the shoal and shallow water  
and the seagulls dotting the horizon  
is where I'll speak in poetry  
for solely us to hear  
and stay buoyant for an eternity  
appeased by the gulp of the paddles  
tailing the Osprey upstream and back  
and the sound of its pulse line over water*

story or ballet, which would, in turn, result in a new poem or story."

Di Nardo hopes to continue to write and paint, and to enjoy the Lake Simcoe property she now owns: "And I hope that I can inspire others to do the same — take up other art forms, engage in creative endeavours or simply derive pleasure from my work."

LSL

## JOURNEY OF A POET

This summer and fall, Desi Di Nardo is bringing her poems to these Lake Simcoe locations:

**Thurs., July 23** — Beaverton Public Library, 1 to 2 p.m., 401 Simcoe St., Beaverton. Phone: 705-426-9283

**Sunday, July 26** — Georgina Arts Centre and Gallery, 2 to 3 p.m., 149 High St., Sutton West. Phone: 905-722-9587

**Friday, Aug. 14** — Lake Country Literary Lapses, Leacock Museum. Register 8 to 9 a.m.; event starts 9 a.m. 50 Museum Dr., Orillia. Phone: Marilyn Rumball, 705-835-7061

**Tuesday, Sept. 15** — Bradford West Gwillimbury Public Library, 7 to 8 p.m. 100 Holland Court, Bradford. Phone: 905-775-3328

**Thursday, Oct. 22** — Newmarket Public Library, 1 to 2 p.m., 438 Park Ave., Newmarket. Phone: 905-953-5110

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