



Readers And Writers Akaroa

2024 FINAL REPORT

What our audience said...

“It was a marvellous event. One of the best book festivals I have attended.”

“The programme had a great mix of leading writers and scholars together with relevant workshops for budding writers.”

“Inspiring speakers with heart and unique perspectives”

“Akaroa provided a relaxing venue, while the programme enabled the intimate mixing of readers and writers.”

“Great festival - looking forward to the next RAWA experience”



Thanks to our spectacular speakers and our wonderful audience, the RAWA Festival was a great success in 2024. Feedback from participants indicates that the programme was thought-provoking with engaging panels and generous speakers who shared their skills and experiences in sessions (and often during coffee conversations). The result was an incredible opportunity for people to come together as a community of readers and writers who share a passion of books, and book-making, in the beautiful setting of Akaroa.

Major accolades have included a review by Steve Braunias in the NewsRoom who wrote that the RAWA had set a new festival standard: <https://newsroom.co.nz/2024/11/05/paul-goldsmith-buys-a-book-in-queenstown/>

Immediately following the festival, articles appeared in the Akaroa Mail, first by reporter Brigid Rennell:

“[the RAWA team] created an event that was welcoming, inspiring and highly professional...Speakers came from all aspects of the literary world and from all corners of New Zealand...[providing] the opportunity to learn from, and be entertained by, the best in the business.”

And from Laura Jones:

“Stirring weekend - readers and writers mix well... Even the weather came out in force. The weekend was book-ended by sunshine with a furious southerly in between. Writers thrive on drama, so this was a welcome excitement, adding to a happily memorable festival.”

As in 2023, the RAWA festival was a major success, further reinforcing its potential as an important addition to New Zealand’s literary festival calendar. The community is supportive, as are the speakers, the volunteers and the festival participants.

This final report provides a summary of the festival, showcasing our terrific speakers and sharing the results of our post-RAWA survey that captured so significantly the success of the festival.



Our Highlights

There were so many highlights during the RAWA festival it is difficult to single out any one experience. But here are some...

The festival was opened by Kenny Brown who gave a moving mihi whakataua, supported by Ariana Tikao and Ross Calman. It perfectly reinforced the spirit of RAWA as an inclusive festival that is warm and welcoming.

Michael Bennett gave a spectacular keynote speech which also set the tone for the rest of the festival. His sharing of personal and professional insights enthralled the audience and his generosity of spirit made him a favourite with the audience. We couldn't have wished for a better start.

Steve Braunias and Jane Stafford delighted the audience with a funny and insightful conversation about whether journalism and literature can stand the sight of each other.

Award-winning author Catherine Chidgey gave an incredible plenary about the genesis of her ideas.

In one of many fun moments, the audience found themselves in the middle of RAWA's action when Dame Gaylene Preston stepped down from the stage with her Osmo camera and proceeded to film the audience waving enthusiastically: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1V79WPHLoFdfsJwseZ4BaJxLCqAbJJtgX/view?usp=drive_link

Finally, Ariana Tikao, musician, composer and writer, closed our festival with an inspirational exploration of poetry of the peninsula.

It was also an absolute privilege to hear Fiona Farrell's moving tribute to Owen Marshall when she launched his book, *New Stories*: <https://newsroom.co.nz/2024/11/06/a-tribute-in-akaroa-to-owen-marshall-of-timaru/>. It was a truly memorable launch and such an honour to have two of New Zealand's most revered authors with us on the RAWA stage.



Our survey results

Thirty people responded to the survey, 12 identified themselves as writers, 10 identified as readers and writers, and 8 identified as readers. Feedback from all groups was overwhelmingly positive.

- 24 told us they 'loved' their experience of RAWA (six thought it was 'pretty good'!)
- 29 told us that there was a good range of genres;
- 28 told us that the programme was good for both readers and writers;
- Our venues scored highly (5 out of 5): the Gaiety 60% scored 5; the Matariki Centre 79%; and the Coronation Library 77% (which is good because they are the only venues we have that can take a festival like RAWA!)
- A third of our respondents told us to do more of the same next time.

We also got some positive suggestions for future festivals...

- Participants appreciated the focus on non-fiction
- Potential additions: more screen-writing; more poetry, dark academia; fantasy; science fiction; romantic fiction; works that 'lift the spirits'
- Longer workshops - maybe another masterclass?
- Heat up the Gaiety Hall on cold days!



What the audience said about our speakers

"Fabulous talks!"

"A great day, with an excellent range of speakers and a wonderful choice of workshops."

"I was satisfied and stimulated."

"So many great sessions."

What they said about RAWA...

"Great festival, small and easy and friendly and well run and welcoming and interesting and stimulating..."

"Very impressed. RAWA organisers put on a terrific event - look forward to the next one."

"I hope you are able to repeat this. Such a good event."

"Keep organising them and I'll attend."

And what they particularly liked...

"Everything!! I can't wait until the next time."

"The easy egalitarian camaraderie..."

"Meeting other writers..."

"Owen Marshall's book launch!"

Our presenters enjoyed coming to Akaroa too - a selection of unsolicited comments...

Fiona Farrell

RAWA - a delight from start to finish!



Michael Bennett

I loved RAWA - Steve and I were talking on the way to Christchurch, it really was one of the most special events either of us has been to, and that's from two quite prolific festival attendees - RAWA is so warm and welcoming, such great enthusiastic audiences, such a lovely mix of writers. And it also doesn't hurt that it takes place in Paradise!

Saige England

RAWA was so fabulous and I am so impressed by the magnificent organisation. What better place for a Readers and Writers Festival than in Akaroa - a village moored by kelp and buoyed by roses...

Tania Roxborough

It was amazing...What a boost it was for my weary writer's wairua to see writers, new and long in the tooth, enjoying themselves. So many stories. So much passion.

Melanie Dixon

It was an absolute pleasure to be part of RAWA 2024!! What a wonderful festival - so many great sessions and conversations. I was delighted to be part of it all!

Ross Calman

It was an absolute pleasure to be part of this year's RAWA. Peter Hempenstall on Derek Freeman was a highlight, but there were so many other fabulous sessions. The dinner was delicious and the company great fun. RAWA is a great addition to the Canterbury literary calendar.



Our Sponsors and partnerships

Our Funders and Sponsors

We received incredible support from sponsors who provided grants and resources that made the festival possible: <https://www.rawafestival.com/about/sponsors>. We are hugely grateful, appreciating that we could not have been successful without them.

Our Volunteers and Supporters

Our small committed army of volunteers made a wonderful effort to welcome and look after people over the three days, helping to set up the Gaiety for the Akaroa Museum curtain-raiser and keeping the wheels turning during the festival - managing registrations, recording sessions, filling water glasses and generally ensuring that things went smoothly. The Coronation Library supported us this year, both in terms of providing the venue for workshops and the volunteers to support the speakers presenting there.



This year we also built a website to manage the administration of RAWA. Previously, this had been done manually creating hundreds of hours of work that a website can manage effortlessly. The building of the website was nevertheless labour intensive and we are deeply grateful to Rebekah Proffit, from [Content Proof](https://ejcrew.myportfolio.com/about-us), who volunteered many hours of her expertise to the task that has resulted in a wonderful website. It has made a huge difference and we greatly appreciate her efforts and generosity. The photographs that appear on the RAWA website were taken by local photographers, Emma and Jason Crew (<https://ejcrew.myportfolio.com/about-us>). A big shout out to them for giving us permission to use them.

Collaborations have been strong and effective. Our working relationship with the Akaroa Area School that provided the Matariki Centre venue, is well established. The Principal Vicki McIntyre was extremely helpful in getting our respective systems operating and once again, the parents' committee provided morning teas for the festival as a fundraiser for the school. Our collaboration with the Akaroa Museum also supported the RAWA curtain raiser to a larger audience at the Gaiety Hall. We have worked closely with the New Zealand Society of Authors to establish the RAWA fellowships (sponsored by Copyright NZ), and also Write On who largely managed the young writer fellows (sponsored by the Ben Gough Family Foundation).

The Hagley Writers Institute played an important part in establishing the RAWA Flash Fiction Prize, sponsored by Bayleys Akaroa. The institute providing the judging and the publishing opportunities for the winning entries.

Leigh Hickey and The Good Story provided the festival bookshop in the Gaiety Supper Room, which proved a great success with people - and also speakers.



RAWA's New Initiatives

Our RAWA Fellowship Schemes

Two writing fellowships were introduced this year. Copyright NZ provided funding for 10 RAWA fellows from the membership of NZSA. The Ben Gough Family Foundation matched this funding to support 10 young writer fellowships from Write-On, the not for profit organisation that supports and mentors young writers (see: <https://www.rawafestival.com/about/rawa-fellowships>). The introduction of RAWA fellowships was incredibly important in enabling twenty writers to fully participate in the festival. This post-RAWA message was received from Nod Ghosh, one of our inaugural NZSA writing fellows:

I would like to show my gratitude to Copyright Licensing NZ for their generous funding of the RAWA fellowships. Having four places reserved to support diversity and inclusion, sends the message that these voices should be heard. This comes at a time when some would prefer certain minorities to remain silent.

In addition, I wish to acknowledge the Ben Gough family foundation for recognising the importance of encouraging young people in the field. Working alongside established writers enables our youth to see possibilities and know what they can aspire to. It also offers older participants the chance to learn from younger writers about their world and to share their energy and knowledge. (A shout out to older adult helpers who supported the youth contingent too).

And from Brianna, a young writing fellow from Write-On:

"The festival was a fantastic place to discover some cool New Zealand authors and New Zealand books. It's awesome to see some Kiwis out there doing it, especially since we young people often think of the literary world as dominated by the USA and the UK. Thanks, everyone for letting us be a part of it."

Outside the RAWA venue, here are RAWA's inaugural Young Writer Fellows and their minder for the weekend, Heather McQuillan. Heather is a tutor at Write-On. Heather is also an award winning writer of stories for young people and adults.



RAWA's New Initiatives

Our RAWA Flash Fiction Prize

In 2024, we were also delighted to establish the RAWA Flash Fiction Prize, generously supported by Bayleys Akaroa.

First prize of \$700 went to Christchurch writer Nod Ghosh for her story *A Week of Stones*. Nod was also one of our inaugural RAWA Fellows.

Melanie Dixon, Director of the Hagley Writers' Institute and judge of the RAWA prize said this about Nod's story:

"This piece is a feast for the senses with the smell of baking bread, the sound of logs crackling, and the image of the whare tipuna across the harbour. This piece stood out from the others with its poetic language and its form which leans towards haibun, all interwoven with a strong narrative story."



The second prize of \$300 went to local writer (and Director of the Akaroa Museum) Lynda Wallace for *Ping*, which also received accolades from the judge:



"There is so much that happens in this very short story - so much characterisation and so much backstory crammed into just a few words. In this piece we meet dodgy-dealing Chris who has 'borrowed from people he shouldn't know', and within five short paragraphs, his world comes tumbling down."

RAWA's Patron, Owen Marshall, awarded the RAWA prizes at the festival's closing session. In his congratulatory speech, he noted the strong field of stories submitted, and that the two winning entries will be published in *Quick Brown Dog*, the highly regarded journal of the Hagley Writers' Institute.

Our RAWA Programme

In 2024 we were more ambitious with our programme, bringing together award winning fiction and non-fiction writers, and adding an extra three skills-based workshops:

RAWA - Readers and Writers Akaroa festival PROGRAMME at a glance

Friday 1 November, 10am-4pm - Masterclass with Fiona Farrell (limited to 10 participants)

Friday 1 November 6-7.30pm RAWA CURTAIN RAISER - free event at the Gaiety Hall: *Love and Legacies* hosted by the Akaroa Museum

Saturday 2 November

9-9.30am	Registration - the Gaiety Hall				
9.30-10.30am	Mihi whakatau (Kenny Brown), welcome and Opening: Michael Bennett - <i>Why We Do the Stuff We Do</i> Chair: Marie Connolly				
10.30-11am	Morning Tea - provided				
11am-12pm	Plenary: Steve Braunias - <i>Journalism and Literature: Can they stand the sight of each other?</i> Chair: Jane Stafford.				
12-1pm	Lunch - own time (lunch not provided)				
Choices	Non-fiction	Fiction	Writing workshop	Writing workshops	Writing workshops
1-1.45pm	<i>Women in History</i> Katie Pickles Chair: Marie Connolly	Panel: <i>The Power of Words</i> Owen Marshall and Michael Bennett Chair: Stephanie Frewen	<i>Writing family histories: biography, memoir or something else?</i> Peter Hempenstall	<i>Edit write - Editing for writers</i> Ross Calman	<i>Small is Beautiful - Fiction in under 200 words</i> Melanie Dixon
2-2.45pm	Networking in the GAIETY SUPPER ROOM Optional session: <i>Grow your readership - Sell globally</i> with Stephanie Frewen				
3-3.45pm	<i>In conversation - Fiona Farrell and Steve Lowndes: The Adventures of Harry Head</i> Chair: Morrin Rout	Panel: <i>Writing about the Past</i> Katie Pickles, Ariana Tikao and Saige England Chair: Jane Stafford			
4-4.45pm	Plenary session Catherine Chidgey - <i>Where Do the Ideas Come From?</i> Chair: Melanie Dixon				
5-6pm	SPECIAL EVENT - In collaboration with Penguin/Random House and The Good Story, RAWA is proud to launch <i>New Stories</i> by Owen Marshall				

Sunday 3 November

9-10am	Gaylene Preston - <i>The Image and the Word: A Life in Film</i> Chair: Robyn Peers.				
10-10.30	Morning tea - provided				
Choices	Non-fiction	Fiction	Writing workshops	Writing workshops	Writing workshops
10.30-11.15am	<i>The Lives of Katherine Mansfield</i> Jane Stafford Chair: Katie Pickles	Panel: <i>Connecting with Young Hearts and Minds</i> Tania Roxborough, Melanie Dixon and Blair McMillan Chair: Morrin Rout	<i>Writing, Illustrating and Publishing your Book</i> Matt Kambic	<i>Creating Child Narrators</i> Catherine Chidgey	<i>Patter into Poetry: A Professional Eavesdropping Workshop</i> Claudia Jardine
11.30-12.15pm	<i>In conversation - Minefields for the biographer: Dealing with family, friends and enemies in writing a Life</i> Peter Hempenstall and chair, Marie Connolly	<i>AI vs the Creative: Who will win and why is it even a battle?</i> Ekant Veer Chair: Stephanie Frewen			
12.15-1.15pm	Lunch - own time (lunch not provided)				
1.15-2pm	<i>Writing about Art Crime</i> Penelope Jackson Chair: Steve Lowndes	Panel: <i>Climate Advocacy Fiction - Saving the Non-fictional World</i> Fiona Farrell, Melanie Dixon and Matt Kambic Chair: Marie Connolly	<i>A Passion For The Past: Writing Historical Fiction</i> Saige England	<i>Writing for the screen</i> Michael Bennett	<i>The kids are alright: writing for young people (not about them)</i> Tania Roxborough
2.15-3pm	Networking in the GAIETY SUPPER ROOM Optional session: <i>Dark Sky - From Idea to Book</i> - Marie Connolly				
3pm-3.45pm	Panel: <i>Killed by Review</i> Melanie Dixon, Steve Braunias and Jane Stafford (chair)	<i>The Best Thing an Artist Can Have...Perspective</i> Tayi Tibble and Claudia Jardine Chair: Morrin Rout			
4-5pm	Awards, Closing and Farewell Chair: Marie Connolly - Owen Marshall presents the inaugural RAWA flash Fiction Prize. Closing Session: Ariana Tikao - <i>Pepeha Portal: Poetry of the Peninsula</i>				

And finally, a tribute to our inspiring speakers...



Michael Bennett

Michael Bennett's (Ngāti Pikiao, Ngāti Whakaeu) debut novel *Better the Blood* was shortlisted for the Fiction Award at the Ockhams 2023, and won Best First Novel at the Ngaio Marsh Awards 2023. Michael won the Ngaio Marsh Non-Fiction award for *In Dark Places*, about Teina Pora's case, making him the first author to win a Ngaio for both fiction and non-fiction. Michael won Best Director and Best Film at the NZTV awards for his adaptation of *In Dark Places*. Michael wrote *The Gone*, a crime thriller series which won Best Drama at the 2023 NZTV Awards, and he is adapting *Better The Blood* as a 6-part TV series. Michael's second novel *Return To Blood* was published April 2024.

Catherine Chidgey

Catherine Chidgey is “one of New Zealand’s greatest living writers” (Radio NZ). Honours include Best First Book at the New Zealand Book Awards and the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize (South East Asia/South Pacific), the Betty Trask Award (UK), the Prize in Modern Letters, the Janet Frame Fiction Prize, and the Jann Medlicott Acorn Prize for Fiction (twice). Sarah Jessica Parker (*Sex and the City*) shared *Pet* with her 9.3 million Instagram followers, and CrimeReads said “I never thought I’d find a book to hold up to the contained brilliance of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, but *Pet* has done that and more.”



Fiona Farrell

Fiona Farrell lived for nearly 30 years at Otanerito on Banks Peninsula, where she wrote and published poetry, plays, short stories, non-fiction and eight novels. Her first novel won the New Zealand Book Award and several later titles were shortlisted for the award and also long listed for the International Dublin IMPAC Award. Fiona has appeared at festivals in Adelaide, Edinburgh, Salisbury and Vancouver, and is a frequent guest at festivals throughout New Zealand. She has received numerous awards, including the Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement in 2007 and in 2012 the ONZM for Services to Literature.

Steve Braunias

Steve Braunias is the author of 13 books, including *How To Watch A Bird*, *Civilisation*, and *Missing Persons*. His latest book *The Survivors*, a collection of true-crime stories, was published by HarperCollins in July 2024. He is a staff writer at the New Zealand Herald, and serves as literary editor at Newsroom. He lived in the South Island for a year and describes the experience as “disturbing”.



Morrin Rout

Morrin Rout has spent over 25 years organising literary events and festivals and producing and presenting book programmes on national and local radio. She is the former Director of the Hagley Writers Institute and member of the WORD festival trust board.



Jane Stafford

Jane Stafford is a Professor in English Literature. Her chief area of research is colonial literature, the networks, influences, and adjustments of the global literary world during the long nineteenth century, from the Romantics to the modernists. She has published widely on the early literature of New Zealand and contemporary poetry. She has recently completed a study of the ways in which Robinson Crusoe was read in colonial New Zealand. At present she is working on an aspect of Katherine Mansfield's 1907 Urewera Notebook as well as developing a project on a group of English women poets writing in and about India at the first decades of the nineteenth century

Ariana Tikao

Ariana Tikao is a musician, composer and writer whose work explores her Kāi Tahu identity, mana wahine, and ancestral kōrero. She was awarded as a 2020 Arts Laureate by the Arts Foundation of New Zealand. Her writing has appeared in Takahē, Turbine/Kapohau, Tupuranga, and Landfall. She has also contributed poems, chapters, and essays to several books, including the award-winning Bill Hammond: Across the Evening Sky. In 2022, Ariana published her book Mokorua: My Story of Moko Kauae (co-authored by Matt Calman) through Auckland University Press, and also completed her MA in Creative Writing through the International Institute of Modern Letters. In 2023 her book Te Rā: The Māori Sail (illustrated by Mat Tait) was published, and she was an Ursula Bethell writer in residence at the University of Canterbury, where she worked on a collection of poetry inspired by pūrākau attached to local Māori place names.



Owen Marshall ONZM, CNZM, Adjunct Professor The University of Canterbury

Admired by leading contemporary writers and described by Vincent O'Sullivan as New Zealand's best writer of prose, Owen Marshall has written or edited over 35 books, including his best-selling novel, *The Larnachs*. Multiple awards for his fiction include the NZ Literary Fund Scholarship in Letters, academic fellowships, and the Katherine Mansfield Memorial Fellowship (France). In 2000 he was awarded an ONZM for services to literature, in 2012 he was made a Companion of the NZ Order of Merit, and in 2013 he received the Prime Minister's Award for literary Achievement in fiction.

Melanie Dixon

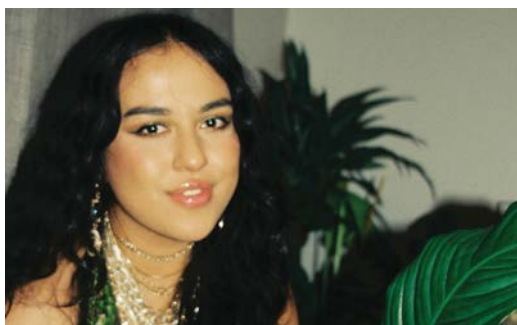
Melanie Dixon an award-winning writer based in Ōtautahi, Christchurch. She writes short-stories, flash fiction and novels for young adults, and has had work published and anthologised internationally including in Best Small Fictions and Best Microfiction, as well as in many literary journals. Her first novel for young adults, *A New Dawning*, was published by One Tree House in 2023, and was awarded a Storylines Notable Book Award.

Melanie holds a Masters in Creative Writing from the University of Auckland. She tutors at the University of Canterbury and is the current Director of Hagley Writers' Institute. When she's not writing or curled up with a book, you can find Melanie planning her next adventure.



Matt Kambic

Matt Kambic, originally from Pittsburgh, PA, currently resides in Raglan. Matt's creative work has been featured in magazines, on television, in Disney games, at universities, and in museums. He is a founding member of the Inkspillers Raglan Writers' Collective, and co-founder of the US non-profit National Scenic Visitors Center. Matt is the author of the award-winning science fiction thriller *Everest Rising*. He has also illustrated and/or co-written *Letter to a Weta*, *The Walking Stick's Story*, and *Last Voyage of the S.S. Panglossian*. Most recently, he wrote and directed the stage play *The Sherpa & the Beekeeper - Summit on Everest*.



Tayi Tibble

Tayi Tibble is a poet whose works reflect Māori culture and her own family history. Her first collection of poetry, *Pōukahangatus* (2018), received the Jessie Mackay Prize for Poetry at the 2019 Ockham New Zealand Book Awards, and was published in the United States and the United Kingdom in 2022. Her second collection, *Rangikura*, was published in 2021. In May 2022 Tayi headlined two events at the PEN World Voices festival on international and indigenous poetry. In July 2023 her poem 'Creation Story' was published in *The New Yorker*; she is the fifth New Zealander and first Māori writer to have work published in the magazine

Peter Hempenstall

Peter Hempenstall is an historian and biographer who has taught in universities in Australia and New Zealand. He was Professor of History at Canterbury University from 1998-2008. His three biographies – about an Australian bishop, A German statesman and a New Zealand anthropologist all have family history at their core and his latest book is about his grandfather, Edward Nugent Hempenstall, a hotel broker and auctioneer in Rockhampton, Queensland. Tying history, biography and family history together is the complicated task the 2024 RAWA workshop will consider.



Ross Calman

Ross Calman (Ngāti Toa, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāi Tahu) is a writer and editor based in Ōtautahi Christchurch. As well as being an author, researcher, translator and podcast host, he also has over 25 years' experience as a freelance editor. In 2023 Ross received a Doctor of Arts (honoris causa) from the University of Canterbury in recognition of his 'considerable contribution in the field of Māori history and as a preeminent researcher, editor, translator and publisher'.

Saige England

Based in Te Kōrero Karoro/New Brighton, Saige England is the author of the debut historical novel, *The Seasonwife*. She has an MA in Creative Writing from the International Institute of Modern Letters (IIML) at Te Herenga Waka/Victoria University of Wellington. As a journalist, Saige won a number of Qantas Media Awards, and the New Zealand Media Peace Award. Her articles have been published in the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Financial Times* and the *NZ Listener*. Her poetry has been published in international literary journals and anthologies. She was recently awarded a Copyright Licensing Authority-New Zealand Society of Authors grant to write more historical fiction.



Claudia Jardine

Claudia Jardine is a poet, editor and translator based in Ōtautahi, Aotearoa. She has published two best-selling collections of poetry: *The Temple of Your Girl* in *AUP New Poets 7* and *BITER* (long-listed for the Ockham New Zealand Book Awards). She has been performing as a poet and singer since 2011.

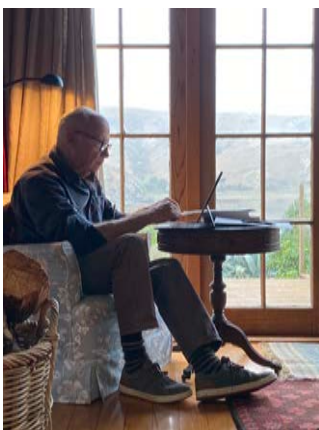


Dame Gaylene Preston

Dame Gaylene Preston is an award winning writer, producer and director. In 2001 she was the first filmmaker to receive an Arts Foundation Laureate Award. In 2016 she received the New Zealand Woman of Influence Award for Arts and Culture, and in 2017 she was given the Premium Mōa Award for services to cinema. In 2018 she was visiting scholar at the Intellectual Forum, Jesus College Cambridge. She has made several popular classics of New Zealand cinema and her recent memoir, *Gaylene's Take: Her life in New Zealand Film*, was long-listed for the General Nonfiction Book Award in the Ockham NZ Book Awards.

Katie Pickles

Katie Pickles is Professor of History at the University of Canterbury. She writes on aspects of gender and empire, feminism, national identity, environment and decolonisation. She has published four books, six co-edited collections and has written over 150 journal articles, chapters in books, high impact popular press articles and book reviews. Her latest book is *Heroines in History: A Thousand Faces*, recently published by Routledge and as an audio book. Thanks to a Tessa Malcolm Bequest Katie is currently writing a new biography of Kate Sheppard.



Steve Lowndes

Steve Lowndes has had a checkered career since arriving in Aotearoa New Zealand in the winter of 1979. Making the transition from hippie traveller to being the father of two children was the the first challenge. Five years as a builder's labourer were followed by fourteen years as the director of Akaroa Museum and during that time he wrote three short histories of Akaroa, Banks Peninsula and the Hurunui. He then went into local government serving on various boards and councils. He retired in 2019 as the Chairman of Environment Canterbury. Writing and painting have been twin compunctions that have engaged him throughout his life when work hasn't got in the way. He now lives at Birdlings Flat in Canterbury with his partner Susan Morrow.

Marie Connolly

Throughout her academic career Marie Connolly has written many books relating to child protection systems and how they might better respond to vulnerable children. When she retired in 2019 and returned home to Aotearoa she saw it as a perfect opportunity to diversify her writing. She wrote and published, with illustrator Jenny Lee, six South Island travel books for children in the *Our Backyard* series. In 2023, she published *Friday Film Reviews*, a collection of blogs that help separate the film-streaming wheat from the chaff. And this year she published her first crime novel, *Dark Sky*, with Quentin Wilson Publishing. Now on to a sequel, she lives in Akaroa with her partner George.



Penelope Jackson

Dr Penelope Jackson MNZM has published several books and articles about art crime. She is the chair of The New Zealand Art Crime Research Trust and an Adjunct Research Associate of Charles Sturt University, NSW. Her book, *The Art of Copying Art* won the Best Book 2023 in the Art Writing & Publishing Awards.

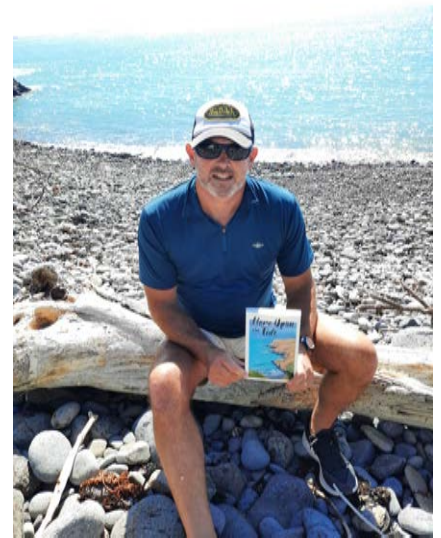


Tania Roxborough

Tania (TK) Roxborough, of Ngāti Porou, Scottish, German, and Irish descent, lives in Canterbury. Although she was born in Christchurch, she's traveled all over Aotearoa. She's been a high school teacher forever and a writer for even longer. After-work is spent with the most beautiful border collie in the country (Coach), reading, writing, listening to podcasts, watching tv because stories and people are fascinating. She wishes she had the bravery and memory skills of her character

Blair McMillan

Blair McMillan's debut YA novel, Here Upon the Tide, was released in July 2023 receiving widespread praise and positive reviews. It tells the story of two grieving teenagers from opposite sides of the globe, both of whom are both struggling to recover from trauma that has upended their lives. Blair lives in Christchurch with his wife and two teenage boys and has run a swim school with his wife for over twenty years.



Stephanie Frewen

Owner and Creative Director of Edition Audiobooks and Ebooks, Guerrilla Book Marketer, and Podcaster with The Author's Tale and My Tale to Tell. Coming from a background in theatre, film, publishing and scriptwriting, Stephanie loves chatting about all things to do with books and writing, especially with those who she calls Word Stars! Writing might be solo effort but like all writers she loves to have the chance to sit and talk about the story behind 'the story', gain useful hints and tips and to share all of this with other interested readers and writers

Ekant Veer

Ekant Veer is a Professor of Marketing at the University of Canterbury. He is a multi-award winning teacher and his research has been published in numerous international journals. Ekant is also the Associate Dean of Postgraduate Research. At RAWA he is speaking on the topic of Artificial Intelligence, exploring the role that AI plays in the creative process and some of the pitfalls and concerns that face the creative industry

