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Leah Sanderson, seated in front of a stencilled poem in Discovery Park.

Photo submitted

Local writers do what they love

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Though it may not be well known, there is a thriving writing community in Drayton Valley.

While the exact number of writers isn't known, there have been several who have published books. Those published writers include Lillian Ross, Von Eric Tandoc, and Jeff Cartwright, among others.

In an effort to grow this community, Colleen Schoeninger created a writing group called The Write Stuff (TWS) in 2011 when she was working at the Municipal Library. Once Schoeninger had moved on the group was still running, so Leah Sanderson took over.

"When I first joined, I was joining as a participant. [Schoeninger] then left and I took it over," she says.

Throughout the years, many writers have been a part of the club. Sanderson says some have passed or moved out of the community, but there was still a core group of members. "Over the years the group membership fluctuated with the highest being 25 active members," says Sanderson.

While TWS was partially a social club, the group was mainly focused on getting their work published. One past member, Lillian Ross, had her own publishing company and often gave advice to members.

Sanderson says some writers have participated in anthologies such as the Christmas Anthology and a Summer Anthology.

When Sanderson left the library in December 2020, TWS was shut down. However, that core group wanted to continue meeting and sharing their work. So, Sanderson founded another private group called Let's Write.

During Covid, the group met every other Tuesday by Zoom to keep the club going. Sanderson says since they formed the group they have continued submitting their stories to *Our Canada*, *More of Our Canada*, genealogical magazines, church newsletters, and a Christmas and summer anthology.

"We're a small group, now, very close-knit," says Sanderson. "But if there's enough interest, I would be happy to start another public one."

In July 2021, the group decided they wanted to spend some time together. They went on an Authors' Walk and Tea. Together, they viewed the poems written by members of The Write Stuff, which have been memorialized by the Town. They can be found at the Eleanor Pickup Arts Centre and in Discovery Park.

"There were six authors and eight poems were chosen," she says. "It's a legacy."

They also spent some time remembering their Sisters of the Pen who had passed away: Lillian Ross, Evelyn Haight, and Bea Valin.

Sanderson says this walk will be an annual event so they can remember those writers who came before, and draw attention to their writing in the community.

Anyone who is interested in starting a community writing group can contact Sanderson at 780-898-5498.