

Highlander arts



Photo by Matthew Desrosiers

Ruth Walker just released her first novel, *Living Underground*, in September.

Author inspired by Highlands

By Matthew Desrosiers

What started as a fondness for Algonquin Park turned into a second home for author Ruth Walker.

In 2006, Walker and her husband began looking for a property in the Highlands to buy as a getaway.

"I was trying to see if we could find a little bit of property somewhere, and up came this little exclusive listing," she said. "The minute my feet stepped on the trail leading up to the cabin I felt home. I can't describe it in any other way. It was just home."

Nestled on a peninsula between two rivers, at the point where they come together, Walker's new cabin would become an escape from city life and provide a quiet place to write, think about her stories and work on her poetry.

Having just released her first novel, *Living Underground*, in September this year, Walker actually worked on her final edits and revisions in the Highlands. But she wasn't always a writer.

"Other than writing some very dreadful poetry at about 16 years of age, I didn't write at all because I thought that was a place [for] people with university degrees and writing pedigrees," she said. "You had to be something special to be a writer. It never occurred to me to be a writer."

Walker would later take a university course in writing, and there was a creative writing

element to it. It was a decision that changed everything.

"My professor said 'You have a very strong narrative voice. Do you write?' That's when I knew. I was almost 40."

The first thing she ever submitted for competition was a short story in 1996 that won the Canadian Living Short Story competition.

"I thought I had it made after that," she said.

However she struggled to break into the industry despite her success. Her poetry and short stories continued to win prizes at various competitions.

Now more established and with a novel under her belt, Walker looks forward to her time in Haliburton.

"It's a magical place," she said. "There's just this space in which to think, that in other places you don't have."

Her interests range from outdoors and nature, to women in history and historical figures.

Walker is looking to bring some of her writing workshops to the Highlands. She is looking to make this place more her community, however she knows she'll always be an outsider. But that's ok.

"It's better to be an outsider," she said. "As a creative artist, absolutely. I think that's why there are so many artists up here. We are always on the outside looking in."



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