

It is a huge honour to be invited to read a poem today at the Inaugural meeting of Victoria's new council. Thank you Mayor Lisa Helps for inviting me to write a poem for this occasion. Thank you all for the work you have been doing and are about to begin, it is no easy feat to write a poem for an occasion such as this, but even less so to enter into the work you have entered.

How to live in history

for City of Victoria Inaugural Council Meeting, November 1, 2018 by Yvonne Blomer

Language is the tree holding its last umber leaf,
swaying with meaning. You tread more lightly,
listen for the break that will end
a season. Music plays. Everyone in the middle
wavers: left a little, a little right. There is a feeling
in the forest that this leaf could fall,
and it is divided by such fragile veins. Has anyone eaten lunch?
Warm lentil soup and garden tomatoes are on offer and
soup is a kind of language in itself.

It is a refugee and an immigrant: language –
abandoned, lost, sunk into bone, burnt in fire, scraped
like residue, licked clean by wolves and used again. It is native
and it is mother. On wild nights it fills dark rooms like confetti,
like shadows – nothing is real, some days, nothing is false.

Language in a line of poetry wants to tell you the truth of the matter,
the way your mother may have told you – her forehead pressed to yours,
saying: *Listen, dear, listen*. And you do because
you feel like a child and language is also family.

The wind picks up and the leaf falls. Last whale, bird,
fresh water stream. Fear forms a language all its own. Power too.
They forget that part of language is listening. Listen to the raven
in the tree. It's throwing its voice: singing a frog's song
from high in the oak. Listen again.