**Tonya Lailey Full Bio**   
  
Tonya Lailey (she/her) lives in Calgary, firsr known as Mok-kin-tsis, the traditional territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy. She spent her childhood on a farm in Niagara-on-the-Lake., first named Onguiaahra, an Iroquoian name meaning “the strait” or “thundering water”.

After completing a master’s degree in political theory at Queen’s University in Kingston, she returned to the farm to start a winery with her family and winemaker Derek Barnett. Certified as a sommelier, she worked in the wine trade for twenty years, first as a partner and employee of the winery operation (Lailey Vineyard), then running her own wine agency in Calgary, Alberta. Her two daughters were born in Calgary where she has since raised them in partnership with her former husband. In 2022, Lailey received an MFA in creative writing from the University of British Columbia.

Tonya writes poetry, essays, reviews and children’s fiction. Her principal genre is poetry. Her poems have appeared in Grain, Rattle, The Fiddlehead, Room, FreeFall, Arc Poetry and Mslexia Magazine among others. She has twice won ‘best poem’ in FreeFall’s Annual Prose and Poetry Competition (2022, 2024). Her poem, *The Bottle Depot* was shortlisted for Arc Poetry’s Poem of the Year in 2024. Her poem, *Also*, was a finalist in Mslexia Magazine’s Poetry Contest in 2024, judged by Jane Hirshfield.

“Farm : Lot 23”, her first full-length poetry collection was published by Gaspereau Press in 2024.

In the early 2000s, before dedicating time to writing poetry, Tonya wrote about food and wine. For two years, she generated a monthly educational wine column for the Southwestern Ontario periodical, Real Women London. She also wrote regularly for Slow Food Canada Magazine, Culinaire and Calgary’s City Palate.

Tonya was an active member of the Slow Food Movement for over a decade. She started and led a convivium in London Ontario with chef Bryan Lavery in 2001. When she moved to Calgary, she joined the Slow Food Calgary planning committee, working alongside chef/writer dee Hobsbawn-Smith and cookbook author and travel writer Karen Anderson.

A competitive swimmer at the national level as a teen, Tonya now loves to swim in the open water of mountain lakes. No longer a farmer either, she gardens, having turned her front lawn into a flower, herb, berry and garlic garden. She grows vegetables, flowers and more berries in her backyard. She loves to cook, especially from her garden.

Her most recent craft passion is rag rugs. She has a loom in her living room. Strand by strand, she’s making the odd rug.