

Check It Out! Podcast Transcript
Episode #26
“How poetry chose an immigrant, Claudia Castro Luna”
Sno-Isle Libraries, June 7, 2019



Cindy Tingley: 00:00 In today's episode, we're spending time with the remarkable poetisa Claudia Castro Luna, who's currently serving a two year term as the Washington State Poet Laureate. It's a conversation Ken and I really enjoyed and we expect you will too.

Ken Harvey: 00:14 Welcome to season two and episode 26 of Check It Out, the Sno-Isle Libraries podcast for lifelong learners with inquiring minds.

Cindy Tingley: 00:32 The views and opinions expressed on this podcast may not necessarily reflect the official position of Sno-Isle Libraries.

Ken Harvey: 00:39 Hey, I'm Ken Harvey.

Cindy Tingley: 00:41 And I'm Cindy Tingley.

Ken Harvey: 00:42 We are here with this episode of checking out podcast to spend some time with Washington state's newest Poet Laureate, Claudia Castro Luna. So Ms. Castro assumed that position in February of 2019, and she'll serve in the post for two years. As poet Laureate, she is sponsored by the Humanities Washington and Arts, Washington or Arts or WA, short for Washington State Arts Commission. We are delighted to have you with us Claudia, thank you for joining us by phone.

Claudia Castro Luna: 01:15 Yeah, it is my pleasure.

Ken Harvey: 01:17 Well, let me let the audience know just a little bit more about you before we get into asking you some questions. So Claudia recently served two years as the first Seattle Civic Poet. And that was a program administered by the Seattle's office of Arts and Culture. And she's the author of two books. It's just two books, right, Claudia?

Claudia Castro Luna: 01:37 Yes, that's correct. Yeah.

(Continued)

Ken Harvey: 01:38 And there's probably a lot more in you. So let me give the name, the titles of those books. So one is "Killing Marias" and that was published by Two Sylvias Press in 2017, and a book of poetry called, "This City" which is published by Floating Bridge Press in 2016. Did I get those right, Claudia?

Claudia Castro Luna: 01:59 Yes, that's correct. Yes.

Ken Harvey: 02:00 Okay, great. Well, congratulations on your recent appointment.

Claudia Castro Luna: 02:06 Yes.

Ken Harvey: 02:06 Why were you interested in this position that you've been appointed to?

Claudia Castro Luna: 02:12 Well, it's a huge honor to be granted the chance to serve in this capacity at a statewide level. That aside, that was perhaps the biggest thing, but I actually thought long and hard about applying because this position is one in which working for us across the state submit applications to the conviction that selects the poet laureate. And I thought a lot about, is this something I would like to do given that I had just finished serving two years, that specific code of Seattle. And in the end I decided that this particular juncture, this historical juncture that we're in perhaps made sense for me to apply because if elected, I would be the first immigrant to occupy the position and actually across the states, there are very few immigrants who've occupied [inaudible 00:03:16].

Claudia Castro Luna: 03:15 So I thought that this was an opportunity to lead by example in a way and to both inspire other immigrants especially young people and youth of the possibilities of juicing writing as something, if you're inclined or even if you're not inclined as something that you could do and they do with your life. So as a way of inspiring and also the way of dismantling stereo types of what immigrants do or can do in this case in Washington state. Because I think a lot of times we have a rigid notion or notions of what Latin immigrants, Latin American immigrants do. And I don't think that writers or poets often come to mind when one thinks of those two things together. So I thought that this was a chance to both inspire and dismantle.

Ken Harvey: 04:19 Well, when you said the first immigrant poet laureate in Washington state, then you also said and few across the states. And so you're talking about across the United States, right?

- Claudia Castro Luna: 04:32 Yes. Across the United States. Yeah. Many states in our union have poet laureate. I don't think many of them have been or are immigrants. That's what I was referring to.
- Ken Harvey: 04:47 Yeah. So congratulations again on being named. And it sounds like the work that you did and have been involved in proceeding this really helped us set the stage for your being a considered and selected for this.
- Claudia Castro Luna: 05:04 Yes, I do think so. I think that at least he helped me conceptualize what possibilities as working possibilities because in the state of Washington, and this is not the case across other states, but in our state, this position is a position of service. So in some places it's really a laureateship in the sense of you would be stowed laurels for what you have done, your career, you're writing in the state of Washington. That is true perhaps, but more true is the fact that the laureate is expected to travel the state to share with broad audiences, the power of poetry to be an ambassador for poetry. And I always say the literary arts in general, and so it is really a position of service. I think that is something I cherish in the way in which our laureateship has been established in the state of Washington. And so having served as civic poets, I knew more or less what the job entailed. And so I was, I had an idea and I was prepared to take on the responsibilities of it.
- Cindy Tingley: 06:16 Right. And one of the things I always find fascinating for anyone in any role that they do is how did they get there? What was the path? So in your case, what is your origin story? What is that path that led you to this current opportunity you are experiencing?
- Claudia Castro Luna: 06:33 Yeah. Well, I came into writing rather late, I, before being a full time writer, I was an urban planner. So I have a degree in planning. I was also a K-12 teacher. I've taught in kids in classrooms from kindergarten to high school. And I've worked in the arts as well as an art's administrator and all along. And if we think of a career path as a number line of some progressions all along in those stops. I was always doing some writing. So writing somehow got folded into what I was doing and not because somebody asked me to do it, but because I naturally was inclined to produce a newsletter to write a column, things like this.
- Claudia Castro Luna: 07:27 And it wasn't until my second child was born that I decided, this is something I really wanted to do. And I started then taking classes at a community college, poetry classes because for me it was always poetry. The writing disinclination to write often

would be butchery came into my being uninvited. I never, I always say it chose me. I didn't choose it, it would show up and so I went. So I knew that if I was going to go and study writing, it was always going to be poetry. And I took one class after the other in community colleges until I exhausted the possibilities there and knew then that I wanted to go do an MFA and gave up my job. I had a full time job at the time as a coach, as instructional coach for a school district and gave that up too, that I could go and work, devote myself to writing and entered a full time MFA program.

- Claudia Castro Luna: 08:36 I've been very lucky to have a partner in my life who supported that. So once I was in that writing program, I've never stopped. It is what I have been doing full time other teaching or in these positions that I'm occupying. I think of myself as a public poet and I think that's my original hesitancy was writing was that I couldn't see how I could help, contribute to social justice with my writing. Whereas I could clearly see it as a teacher working as a teacher or in my planning work. And eventually those two things have combined, they have found some unity within me. And then I've been able to write from that central core belief.
- Ken Harvey: 09:32 So Claudia, you used I think an acronym a little bit earlier. I wanted to make sure that I understood it correctly as an acronym and if it was, just have you define it. MSA, what does that stand for?
- Claudia Castro Luna: 09:47 Sorry, say that again.
- Ken Harvey: 09:49 I think that I heard you say something about use an acronym earlier, like you said, MSA and I was just wondering, well what does that stand for?
- Claudia Castro Luna: 10:00 Yeah, the MFA is a masters of fine arts.
- Ken Harvey: 10:07 Okay. MFA. Yeah So I just wanted to make sure.
- Claudia Castro Luna: 10:11 Yes. And they could be in the plastic arts of painters and sculptors and dancers also receive MFAs and also creative. There is an MFA trend, the fine arts trend that is in writing and the literary arts.
- Ken Harvey: 10:24 Yeah. So you also mentioned your teaching background. What school districts have you taught with or work with?
- Claudia Castro Luna: 10:34 Well, that was when I was doing that. That was another lifetime ago when I lived in California.

- Ken Harvey: 10:41 Well, some many of us have other lifetimes. Yeah. So I think we understand, we can understand that.
- Claudia Castro Luna: 10:48 Yes. Here in Seattle I've worked mostly with King County and King County schools, a lot with Seattle public schools and mostly doing residencies. So going into a school and working there for several weeks at a time with a set group of kids that I see over and over on a weekly basis and we read poetry together.
- Cindy Tingley: 11:12 Oh, nice. So when you completed your MFA, I'm guessing and correct me if I'm wrong, that when you were actually taking the courses, were you dabbling in some work in the field while you were taking the classes and also once you completed it, what was your first step toward this path?
- Claudia Castro Luna: 11:33 Yeah. No I didn't, I was fully engrossed in reading and working on this thesis that I had to complete. So writing a lot and experimenting a lot with my writing during your end that time and sending poems for publication. I think when left that there was a natural break there for me because I knew that I couldn't go back and work full time as what I was doing before. And I began working on the manuscript, under two manuscript that eventually became those books that you mentioned in the beginning as well as another manuscript that I'm still in the, it's still a working progress and it was a very, it could be thought of as a fallow time for me because I was continuing to write, although writing more for myself, I didn't have a job writing.
- Claudia Castro Luna: 12:38 I was focused on my family because my children were very small. So I was at home with my kids and writing and eventually started teaching in the school then as a teaching artist, teaching writing and I applied for the position of civic poet in Seattle because I had spent so much time thinking, I spent years thinking about how to articulate an urban spaces into poems and what would those poems feel and look like. And so by the time that position opened, I felt that I had not only an idea of where I was going with my work, but because of all the work I had done in planning and as I'm personally involved in community life, that I saw a way of articulating writing to that. And so I felt very secure in proposing, in advancing and application to occupy that position, in that I've felt that I knew what I would do if I were chosen. I don't know if that makes sense. But I had a relation of what the position could be like. And so this two worlds of my writing, which I had done very privately and like public work and schools and as a planner merged to that point. And that's the work that I have been doing that since.

Ken Harvey: 14:11 So I have to ask you, Claudia, if your thesis was all poetry, it was all input the poetry verse. That was a joke.

Cindy Tingley: 14:19 That would be a challenge with it.

Claudia Castro Luna: 14:21 Yeah. Well the, the thesis was a very long book, I think 80 or 90 pounds, something like that. And it was ...

Ken Harvey: 14:27 Oh, really?

Cindy Tingley: 14:28 Oh, so a compilation of your poetry.

Claudia Castro Luna: 14:31 Yeah, it was the poetry that I worked on during those two years. Very more experimental, some of it experimental, this idea of what is it to live in an urban space, what does it feel like, what does it look like and how can a poem inhabit that or how that be reflected in the poem and how can a reader experience that rapid pace of the city through the poems I was writing? That was an overarching concern for that thesis I wrote.

Ken Harvey: 15:08 So as I understand, Claudia, in your work as a Seattle Civic Pod, you invited residents to participate in a program that you had called the poet is in. So would you tell our audience a little bit about that program and what came out of it and what you saw happening with the participants?

Claudia Castro Luna: 15:25 Yeah. Well, that the way I put that together is I created residency's for public libraries and I spent, I designed for drop in poetry writing classes that were completely dropped in. Some people who had never written a poem could show up to one of those. Mostly, I did some in the Saturdays, I did some in the afternoon just to make myself available to different folks that use the library. Because I think of libraries as just wonderful civic spaces. To me, they are much more than the name indicates. I mean they were about books and we have a wealth of knowledge and information, but they're also building that house and allows for interactions between people and discoveries and conversations and meeting your neighbors and programming.

Claudia Castro Luna: 16:21 The libraries are hub of life to me and I thought that a way for me to make myself available to the citizens of Seattle was to do it through the public library and Seattle Public Library was a huge partner to me that it was, I think that successful program because the libraries were willing to have me and work with me and really each one of the libraries where I went with this program was can you cater differently to their local

neighborhoods? So we ended up doing slightly different things, but the main idea was to get people to come in and write about the place they live in, about their neighborhoods. To think about what is placed to you, what does it do to live in Ballard as opposed to Columbia city. What is it a built environment, how does that affect who we are? And also how do we affect the places in which we live.

- Claudia Castro Luna: 17:21 So I'm very interested in that and I want to do here to facilitate that thinking in people because a lot of times we don't think about the places we live in, not in that way. And that places could also be a muse of sorts. And ultimately I was working toward this goal of having this digital map. And I really wanted this map of poems about Seattle to be in the voices of regular residents. Want the to be towards establish poets with many accolades. I wanted to be the local voice of those who to live in the city, sharing with each other, what is it like to live in Seattle. So the library program [inaudible 00:18:16] was from the onset part of a larger scope of work that I wanted to do, which was to produce this digital map.
- Ken Harvey: 18:25 Wow. So it really sounds like you've been doing a lot of work to nurture the voice of the common person or the regular individual who's finds himself up a member of a community.
- Claudia Castro Luna: 18:39 Yeah.
- Ken Harvey: 18:41 And you're looking to harness those voices together. So in your mind you said something in an interview recently about the, I think it was the notion of arrival that I found that really intriguing and that we've all arrived from someplace and now we inhabit a space and a place. And it seems like there's something in this idea of having arrived from some place coming to a place build, making that place us potentially either a special place or trying to endure it as a place that is not so special. And I wonder if you've got some thoughts about how you're thinking that you'll be able to take the work that you're currently doing that you've just started doing as a poet laureate. And the work that you had done previously with the civic poet program. Where you see that all moving towards?
- Claudia Castro Luna: 19:56 Yeah. Well, I mean I have part of my one of my proposals to the committee who eventually selected me as the laureate was to do a similar map for the state of Washington where I would facilitate poetry writing and communities across the state that eventually would result in poems about the locations where those folks live. That then would be on a similar map because I think that's true, right? Writing and writing works, Huh? I think

writing is magical and poetry is magical in that, in a very short, very condensed way a poem could really help you travel, travel across time, travel places, but also travel in your mind and in your heart. And so I'm always looking for those points of connection between people, between ourselves. And I'm hoping to do that through this geography of place and geography of heart in a way through this map that I'm, that I'm doing.

Claudia Castro Luna: 21:12 And this notion of a rival, what strikes me about Washington state is that Washington state, the statehood, this Washington state hood is a very recent event in historical terms. I think of trees that have been on in the territory that is the state of Washington. I think there's trees have been here longer than the states. The state has been a state and so I think that in our individual selves, I mean like myself, I came here from another country, but some of us might have been born here, but very soon in our, in our ancestry we might find the person who came to Washington state. So Washington is a very new place as of course there's folks who have been living here for thousands of years. So aside from native people in the state of Washington, I think a lot of us have arrived here.

Claudia Castro Luna: 22:16 I think species several arrived here, right? I mean we have invasive species, but we also have other species that were not here when you look at chronological time that also arrived in this place that looks like it does, but at one point [inaudible 00:22:31]. So I think what has been the common ground that we have around that word of arrivals, and it's an ongoing thing that I think about in an ongoing concept. And I find it a way of finding common ground. I think is something, a concept that could help us find common ground, especially in the state that is so diverse as ours is ecologically, geographically you were so different.

Claudia Castro Luna: 23:05 I mean, this idea, this map that I want to do in part is because I want us to know what does it feel like to live in Whidbey island. Or one of the San Juan islands versus living in Clarkson or Walla Walla, very different. I mean kids who go to school there, what is there, the noise are different because where they, the places they inhabit are different. But we have, we share a notion and then identity as Washingtonians. And so what is that? How can we come to a common agreement? That's, those are a bigger philosophical questions that I'm trying to get at through the building of this map and pursuing these ideas when I'm out deal doing workshops and things like this across the state.

Ken Harvey: 23:53 Well I want to be conscious of your time and just a really careful, because I know that you only have a limited amount of

time because you're actually traveling to another part of the state right now and you've taken just a few minutes moments at pull aside and off the road, because you are using a hand free device. Would you want to use it illegally? So we appreciate that. But let me just ask you, I'm just want us to have asked you this a few other questions. As you look back over your life and you're becoming a poetisa, what Were there two or three individuals who may have inspired you along the way to help shape your life and that maybe you're, what's happening now with you is really in some way linked back to something they said or did or displayed?

Claudia Castro Luna: 24:49 Well, I think, yes, the question to that is, I do have people that have inspired me. And actually, they're not all literary people because I think what I ended up doing with my life is really listening to something that was being asked of me to do, which was to turn in the direction of writing, which is an inward to follow that inward path to writing, which was very uncertain. And to give up something that the Worcester and for me, which was the job I really liked. And I felt that I was contributing to something larger than myself in the work that I was doing in the public schools, coaching teachers, teaching young people. And I was earning a salary, said I could stay in my family with that job. And I chose to move away from that to something completely uncertain in terms of economics, which to an extent continues to be true, but for myself, for who the person who I am, how to be true in a way to myself.

Claudia Castro Luna: 26:02 And so I always think back on two people whom I think really risked everything to do that. And one of them is the writer, Audre Lorde, who was an African American writer, she's now dead, but she was, to me she's a guiding light in the way in which she choose to put herself out there or her ideas and her writing at a time when it was very difficult to do that as an African American woman, as a gay woman, and to say, this is who I am and this is what I'm trying to do. She is trusting dental to me in that sense to watch her path. And then the other person is somebody from El Salvador who was a priest and that is our server, Bishop Romero, who was assassinated during the civil war in El Salvador, who was first I mean, he became [inaudible 00:27:05] but he was a priest who at one point thought of himself as a political being very grounded in the church.

Claudia Castro Luna: 27:15 But as the country, the violence in the country, the state violence against regular people in the state became so out of control. He began to step outside of his walls that he had created or this space and really take a lot of speaking for people

at the cost to himself. Cause he knew if he did that he might one day be killed. And indeed that's what happened. But he risked his life to do something because of this calling, because he knew that to be true to himself he needed to say something. And he is an amazing, he's always been this amazing figure for me. I mean there are two people who chose to do something at the beginning very in a reticence way, but who choose a path that was difficult for them and in the end could live with themselves. And I think I chose writing because I wanted to live with myself. And if I hadn't done that, I would have a hard time being myself. So don't know if that makes sense. But that is why I think of those two characters.

Cindy Tingley: 28:24 Right. And in terms of doing something, I mean, we've already mentioned your two books, but I am absolutely fascinated by your most recent book of poetry, which is Killing Marias a poem from multiple voices. And for those that aren't familiar with this, can you just go into the detail of what inspired you to write this? Because it's so such an incredible story behind this and I would love for everybody to hear it.

Claudia Castro Luna: 28:54 Yeah. That's a project that I started while I was a grad. I was studying poetry, and I started thinking about that in terms of how women are represented in literature, but also in just general culture and thinking how our bodies appear in magazines and in poems and then, but visually a lot of thinking taking cues from magazines and television and things like this. And in following that path of representation, I came across the list of hundreds of women who had been murdered in the town. What is Mexico for? Because they were women. This one murders against people because of the gender. These women did not commit any crime they were just female. And I was astounded that there were hundreds of them and that I did know this had happened or this was happening.

Claudia Castro Luna: 30:05 It's still happening. And not to the degree that it happened in the 90s, but this femicide continues to happen in Mexico and in our state, in Canada, a lot against native women. And so I was I really taken, I was shocked, that this had happened and that we will not hearing more about it through, that there was no more outraged about these murders.

Claudia Castro Luna: 30:33 So in looking at this list, I noticed that a lot of the women's name began with Maria. So I extracted all of the main, like define of these women whose names began with Maria and thought about writing a poem to each of them. That is essentially what the book is about is a book of 45 poems written. Each poem is written to a different woman whose

name was Maria and as an effort to give them agency to honor their lives because they were all, most of them very young. And in my research as I was conducting research as to how this woman died, many of them were part of this femicide wave of some side. Lot of them were very young, but many of them were victims of domestic violence that was never where the perpetrators were never brought to justice.

Claudia Castro Luna: 31:32 So it's a book about awareness around the issues of domestic violence. It's an honoring and a remembrance of these women. And it's a way of somehow providing some agency to the people, they were because there were so horrifically killed and whose bodies we were really abandoned and desecrated. So through the poetry, I'm hoping to blend flesh and spirit in a way to make them whole, if that is at all possible. That is of course only possible in a metaphorical sense because they are dead. And these are words, right? There's not even a similarity there that you could argue for some because they're no longer with us. But there's a network in that direction. And so I also think of it as a very spiritual texts in that I'm blending some of Christian iconography in their prayers to bring this woman back to life in a way that honors them.

Ken Harvey: 32:45 Well, I can tell you that I'm reading the book now and it is available. I want to say to our listeners, it is available through the Sno-Isle Libraries collection. And I want to thank you Claudia, for honoring the lives of these women. And by in some ways somehow breathing life back into their existences. Through your work and for those that members of the audience who are listening to this and you're horrified by the by this whole thought and by this whole discussion that, that these murders would have taken place in such way in some ways that's so systematically, right. I'm sure that this is something very real that as you said, it's still going on. And we want to not just feel bad about this, but we want to do in each of our ways, anything that we can do to stand against it and a stand against that systematic oppression and in violence, especially when it's happening within the family.

Ken Harvey: 33:59 So we really appreciate your drawing attention to that horrible thing that is happening. As you said, there is a spiritual aspect to your book that I think is really captured there and well worth reading. So for all, for everyone listening, remember Killing Marias by Claudia Castro Luna. So I'm again trying to be really respectful to your time. I just wanted to maybe and with this Claudia, do you have an early memory of a library?

Claudia Castro Luna: 34:43 Oh, yes, I do. Because I can tell you, want me to tell you?

- Ken Harvey: 34:48 Yeah.
- Cindy Tingley: 34:48 Sure.
- Claudia Castro Luna: 34:50 So mine I did not have libraries growing up in the town where I grew up, libraries such as the ones that exist here are not very common in El Salvador. There's the national library and there may be no other smaller libraries and towns, but it's not this wonderful gift that we have here. But when I was in fourth grade, my parents moved cities and I went to a school that had a library and it was really the first public library. I mean, it was open to us kids in the school. And it was just the most amazing place because once a week we all, each grade, which happens here as a matter of fact in our public schools, but in private schools I guess.
- Claudia Castro Luna: 35:40 If we went to library and we got to pick a book, which we read you in the course of the week. And then, whenever it was again our turn, we would go back and select another book. And it was just such an amazing day when library they came because we were so anxious and antsy to go back and get to pick another book. I loved the whole experience. I love the fact that my school had a library and I read lots of books. Just and it was magical, you get to have this book for a whole week and get to read this book and next week you get another book and you get to pick from hundreds of books. And so, yeah, that's an indelible experience for me moving to that school and having access to a public library and I'm the daughter of two teachers, so it wasn't though I didn't have books at home because my parents were huge readers and I was surrounded by print and books. But it's not the same as to walk into a place that has hundreds of books for you. Are you on?
- Ken Harvey: 36:52 You are right.
- Claudia Castro Luna: 36:55 So that was my first fourth grade. So however kid I was 10 years old, maybe the first time I had access to a library.
- Ken Harvey: 37:06 Well, I was waiting to see if we're going to use the word magical. And you didn't disappointment me.
- Claudia Castro Luna: 37:14 They are magical. I love libraries are schools and libraries are magical institutions and we need to protect them and support them in any way we can. I think because they are more than just the books. As I said before, libraries are more than the books.

Cindy Tingley: 37:34 Well, I love what you said. Hubs of life that just sticks with me. It's great.

Claudia Castro Luna: 37:41 Yup.

Ken Harvey: 37:43 Well, we want to do a little shout out to the Humanities Washington and The Washington State Arts Commission who are really behind this whole program, this two year effort that you are part of. And we know that it's certainly sounds like you're not resting on any laurels that they've given you, that you're out there really spreading both the message and the opportunity to harness the power of poetry.

Claudia Castro Luna: 38:15 Yeah. I mean, beside those two institutions the program could not exist and it really is the two of them jointly providing support for the person in the positioning and for such I mean, it's a big state is a big territory and you do need support. You cannot do it alone. And they are amazing institutions. I mean they, they do programming. The poet laureate is one of the many programs which they have and they run in all corners of the state.

Ken Harvey: 38:53 Well, we are so thankful for them for making it possible for us to get to know you a little bit better. And I was just wondering Claudia, if people would like to get in contact with you, where would they do that?

Claudia Castro Luna: 39:08 Yeah, well one easy way to do it as to go to humanities.org, which is the Humanities Washington website. And there is a page that explains the program. There is a blog I keep there and I post about my travels throughout the state. There's an email also that people could write to me and there is, and also, I have my own website as well, which castroluna.com one word catroluna.com. And that also has a way of reaching me through email. So I would say those two websites that are probably that humanity's dot org and castroluna.com are the easiest ways to get ahold of me.

Ken Harvey: 40:01 Oh, fantastic. Well, we've been speaking with Senora Claudia Casto Luna. She is the poet laureate for the state of Washington. And we have really enjoyed her sharing with us the nobility of poetry.

Claudia Castro Luna: 40:17 Absolutely, Yes.

Ken Harvey: 40:17 And the opportunity to really help us all if we can find it within us to share the specialness of place and community and the fact

that the common ground after arrival. So, Hey Claudia, thank you so much for joining us this afternoon.

Claudia Castro Luna: 40:36 Thank you for the opportunity. Thank you so much. For all your work, for all of us as public in the public library. Thank you.

Ken Harvey: 40:46 Well, just want to remind our listeners that her two works Killing Maria and This City, This City are part of Sno-Isle Libraries collection and you can find out, find those works, here on our website and we invite you to check them out. Thanks Claudia.

Claudia Castro Luna: 41:05 Thank you so much.

Speaker 4: 41:08 When you give to the Sno-Isle Libraries Foundation, your gift touches generations. Your donation helps turn babies and young children into readers, turn students and first time entrepreneurs into successes and helps maintain the lifelong learning of adults, seniors and our homebound neighbors. You can be part of the change you're looking for. Your one time gift, monthly gift or memorial gift can make all the difference. Please consider investing in children, seniors, and others through the Sno-Isle Libraries Foundation today.

Ken Harvey: 41:39 If you live in Snohomish or Island county, we'd like to invite you to stop by your closest library or visit the library online. You'll find thousands and thousands of titles of classic and popular books, music, movies, and surprising number of digital resources just waiting for you. Plus you'll have opportunity to enjoy our friendly, helpful librarians. Check us out today.

Cindy Tingley: 42:11 Okay. And that was an amazing conversation.

Ken Harvey: 42:13 Wasn't that fun?

Cindy Tingley: 42:14 I enjoyed that so much.

Ken Harvey: 42:16 And you know, fun is probably the wrong word. It was both insightful and yet also sobering, whereas we were talking about with Killing Marias.

Cindy Tingley: 42:24 Yes, very true. Her work is so striking. And the interesting thing I didn't mention when we were talking to her, but there's actually a video online, I think it was done at the Rainier arts center or something like that where it's a Killing Maria is acted out and read by a variety of voices and she's there as well. So it's a really interesting piece. We'll find the link and we can include it.

Ken Harvey: 42:54 Definitely. Cause I don't think I've seen that and that would be, that had been even more, I don't know, I was pointing at the right word.

Cindy Tingley: 43:04 It's really, it's when you think about the subject matter, it really hits home about what's been going on. As in around other places as well, of course.

Ken Harvey: 43:14 That is a horrible, horrible thing that's happening and I'm really saddened for the families who have been suffered such tragic loss and that sense of maybe of injustice that they're feeling that the perpetrators have not been brought to justice. If there is even a sense of what justice would even be in terms of making it right. Because it's never going to be right.

Cindy Tingley: 43:46 Right. And the other thing I found incredibly striking is that she only looked up the stories of the women named Maria. And there's so many more.

Ken Harvey: 43:55 Yeah. You're right.

Cindy Tingley: 43:57 Just incredible.

Ken Harvey: 43:58 Well, there are other high points to our time with Claudia. What for you, that's really [inaudible 00:44:06].

Cindy Tingley: 44:06 I had mentioned it just a little bit before we stopped speaking with her, but I loved her description of libraries as hubs of life. I mean, that is something that wraps it up in the most beautiful, dare I say, poetic way. It is absolutely a great way to think of our libraries.

Ken Harvey: 44:28 Well, for me, I like that too, but I was really intrigued by this, this phrase that she used the notion of arrival. And I remember I was reading an interview that she had had. And she used that term in there and it just struck me that she's right. Everybody arrived here from someplace else. Even the folks who had lived here for thousands of years, they came from someplace else, or at least that's what we think. So in some ways we all share this commonality of, we're all immigrants. We are all potentially strangers who need to be introduced to one another. And none of us can lay ultimate claim to the place, to this place.

Cindy Tingley: 45:21 Exactly. But we can all love it. And treat it with respect and treat each other.

- Ken Harvey: 45:26 Yeah. With respect and love. So I was really struck by that. I also appreciated what she was saying in terms of how's she didn't start out as a poet or poetess or poetisa. I think if I'm saying it correctly in Spanish, she said, can't you came uninvited so that really will lodge in my head and that she was late. It was late to poetry in her life. So I can just really appreciate that. She must've had some individuals in her life who really objected to this whole notion that she would leave a paid position, paid career and pursue this thing. And so I just don't believe that was easy.
- Cindy Tingley: 46:22 Right. But she was so, you hear that calling and you cannot ignore it and how beautiful that she followed through with that.
- Ken Harvey: 46:32 I think the last thing I just mentioned is that I really appreciated her talking about that early memory of visiting a library. And I think that for me and hopefully for all of our listeners, if we can harken back to that first experience, there is something magical about going into this place and you can actually walk out with these books.
- Cindy Tingley: 47:02 Yeah. The most fascinating thing I found about was just the minute you asked her the question that joy came back. You could feel that moment that she first discovered a library. It's still there and I think it's there in all of us.
- Ken Harvey: 47:16 Well, certainly I'm like she said, we hardly agree that libraries are valuable places and then they are one of the key places that are to exist in each of our communities.
- Cindy Tingley: 47:29 Absolutely.
- Ken Harvey: 47:30 So hopefully you as members of our audience, I feel that way too. Thank you for listening to the Check It Out podcast. For free resources and materials connected to today's guest and topic, head over to the library's website and search for the word podcast. The library's website is sno-isle.org/podcast.