

Marina Sonkina, who also teaches at UBC, experienced the separation of being Jewish. However, her experience was vastly different. Growing up in Russia, her novella, *Expulsion and Other Stories* — which she will present at the festival — tells the tales of women coming of age in post-Stalinist Russia and explores how a totalitarian regime feels on a very mundane and personal level.

When discussing growing up in a totalitarian regime, her childhood experiences with the stigma associated with being Jewish in Russia and the repercussions of these experiences, Sonkina reiterated the message which is a central theme in her book.

“We do not choose where we’re born,” she said. “The place and the time, we do not choose, but we then accept that into ourselves and we either make the best or the worst of it. Some of the struggles are the struggles that would be typical to anybody born in any place — growing up, knowing who you are, blending or not blending with people. And some of the issues are quite different. So that is my message, just to show the fabric of life.”