

NEWS RELEASE

Distributed November 12, 2024

Neil Surkan appointed as City of Nanaimo's newest poet laureate

The City's newest poet laureate is seeking to create community and connection

Summary

The City of Nanaimo is thrilled to announce Neil Surkan as its newest poet laureate. An accomplished poet and educator, Neil was appointed by City Council for a two-year term beginning December 1, 2024. In this role, he will serve as a literary ambassador for the city, raising awareness of the literary arts in our community by creating and presenting poetic works and activities.

Neil brings a wealth of experience and talent to the role of poet laureate. As a professor in the Department of English at Vancouver Island University (VIU) with two full-length poetry collections, three published chapbooks and additional publications in the works, Neil has turned his focus to creating connections with the broader Nanaimo community.

Since moving to Nanaimo in 2001, Neil has hosted poetry readings, workshops and retreats, edited an issue of Nanaimo's Counterflow Magazine, collaborated with the national Poetry in Voice Program and joined VIU's Gustafson Committee (in which a distinguished poet is welcomed to the university each year). His poetry explores the search for connection and community, queer parenthood and themes of isolation, anxiety and hope.

The City's poet laureate presents original work to City Council and the community at a variety of civic events, sharing poetry that is relevant to life in Nanaimo. The poet laureate is also responsible for serving as a mentor to the youth poet laureate, while collaborating with City staff and other partners to develop a diverse array of projects and programming. During his tenure, Neil plans to host regular literary events, create poems focusing on the impacts of writing from and about this place, and will offer engaging poetic activities within the community for passersby. Neil plans to work collaboratively with City staff and Nanaimo's youth poet laureate on projects that broaden public awareness and appreciation of poetry and the literary arts.

A free Holiday Poetry Showcase will be hosted by the Harbourfront Library on Thursday, December 5th beginning at 6pm. All are invited to join us for a cozy evening of poetry including readings by the City's poet laureate, youth poet laureate and more!

More on the City's Poet Laureate Program can be found on [the City's website](#).

Strategic Link: The Poet Laureate program aligns with the goals of the City of Nanaimo's City Plan by recognizing and promoting the role that culture and the creative sector play in the community with respect to community identity and quality of life, as well as fostering equitable opportunities for all community members of different ages, abilities, and backgrounds to create, engage, experience, and contribute to Nanaimo's arts and culture.

Continued... Neil Surkan appointed as City of Nanaimo's newest poet laureate

Key Points

- The City of Nanaimo is thrilled to announce Neil Surkan as the newest poet laureate.
- An accomplished poet and educator, Neil was appointed by City Council for a two-year term beginning December 1, 2024.
- In this role, Neil will serve as a literary ambassador for the city, raising the profile of the literary arts in our community by creating and presenting poetic works and activities that are relevant to our times and respond to our place.
- As an author and passionate educator, Neil's poetry has explored the search for connection and community, queer parenthood, themes of isolation, anxiety and hope.

Quotes

"I am delighted to welcome Neil Surkan to the position of Poet Laureate for our city. The extraordinary passion, talent and experience our newest poet laureate brings to this role is sure to inspire. We look forward to all the ways Mr. Surkan will engage the community, sharing the power of words through poetry and further enriching our thriving cultural lives!"

Leonard Krog
Mayor
City of Nanaimo

"I am so honoured to take up this role. My hope is that my time as laureate will offer spaces for creation and reflection to our community. Poetry, to me, is best reckoned with — and savoured! — together. It can be the language we share."

Neil Surkan
Poet Laureate
City of Nanaimo

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View the online edition for more information -

<https://www.nanaimo.ca/NewsReleases/NR241112NeilSurkanAppointedAsCityOfNanaimoSNewestPoetLaureate.html>