NEWS RELEASE

Distributed April 22, 2020

"Be Kind to All Kinds" poetry project launches on Instagram

Youth Poet Laureate inspires creativity and awareness of animal welfare

Youth Poet Laureate, Valina Zanetti is passionate about the welfare of animals. In partnership the BCSPCA and City staff in Culture & Events, Valina put out a call to youth poets, inviting young people to reflect on the BCSPCA's work and humans' relationship to animals and nature. "I have wanted to collaborate with the BCSPCA for a while and I am so glad that something has finally become of it," said Valina. Poems created for the project will be posted daily on the City of Nanaimo's Culture & Events Instagram feed @Culture_Nanaimo, starting Wednesday, April 22, through early May.

Because of measures in place to protect our community from COVID-19, the poetry project, which was originally framed as a competition and included a printed chapbook and April event, has been creatively adapted rather than postponed, so it can be delivered online during National Poetry Month.

"There were elements of the project that couldn't be delivered as planned, so we adapted," said Julie Bevan, Manager of Culture and Events, "Valina and I agree on the critical role that the arts play in how we understand and engage with the world, especially in the face of a crisis like the one we've been navigating. We talked about how creativity helps to connect us and heal—and how important it is to make space for and empower youth voices."

Encouraging and supporting youth poets is one of Valina's project goals. "Poetry is expressive, and can be emotional, and the youth poets who answered the call and created poems really brought those things to the table" she said. Rather than select competition winners, Valina was keen to recognize every person who submitted a poem and to honour each person's creative work. Prize money was divided equally and disbursed to each of the nine youth poets who submitted a poem by the March 31 deadline, the youngest of whom is 9 years old.

Sharing the 13 poems created as part of "Be Kind to All Kinds" on Instagram will make them accessible to a wider, more diverse audience. "I hope that after reading the poems… you have a better understanding about human's relationship to animals. I encourage you to give, volunteer, adopt, foster, or do anything you can to help these beautiful beings and the work of the BCSPCA. You could spread awareness by writing your own poetry and sharing it with us" says Valina.

Follow City of Nanaimo's Culture & Events Instagram feed (www.instagram.com/Culture_Nanaimo) to learn more!

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