

NEWS RELEASE

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The City of Nanaimo invites the community to explore the Poetry Trail

A new Poet Laureate project blends poetry, nature and public space

Summary

The City of Nanaimo, in collaboration with Poet Laureate Neil Surkan, is excited to launch the Poetry Trail this fall. Designed to spark reflection and creativity outdoors, the project places poetic prompts along city trails, inviting residents to engage with poetry in everyday life.

Each prompt is featured on a custom “viewfinder” that frames the surrounding landscape, encouraging visitors to pause, reflect and poetize their experience in relation to a specific place. A QR code on each installation links to an online form where participants can share their own poetic responses. Selected submissions will be curated and shared by the Poet Laureate on public platforms.

The Poetry Trail begins with three installations in South Nanaimo: Queen Elizabeth Promenade (Estuary), McGregor Park (Front Street) and Bing Kee Food Forest (Railway Crossing Garden). Poetic prompts include, for example, “Write a poem that plants a seed of gratitude, protest or grief. What will grow from it?”

Additional locations in North Nanaimo are planned for 2026. The project is a collaboration between the City’s Culture section and the Active Transportation team, aligning with Fall GoByBike Week and encouraging residents to discover Nanaimo’s active transportation routes in new ways.

As Poet Laureate, Neil Surkan aims to support opportunities for residents of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to engage with poetry and express themselves. An artist and passionate educator, Neil is the author of two full-length books of poetry and several chapbooks. His next book, a forthcoming collection called *Empties* (March 2026), explores themes of grief, bewilderment and hope in poems that consider, through a queer lens, the relationship between parenthood and climate change.

More information on Nanaimo’s Poet Laureate program can be found on the [City’s website](#)

Strategic Link: This initiative links to the City’s commitment to make arts and culture visible and accessible. It’s one of the ways the City is supporting arts, culture and recreation as an integral part of everyday life.

Key Points

- The City of Nanaimo, in collaboration with Poet Laureate Neil Surkan, is excited to launch the Poetry Trail this fall in three key South Nanaimo locations.
- Designed to spark reflection and creativity outdoors, the project places poetic prompts along city trails, inviting residents to engage with poetry in everyday life.
- The project is a collaboration between the City's Culture section and the Active Transportation team, aligning with Go By Bike Week and encouraging residents to discover Nanaimo's active transportation routes in new ways.

Quotes

"The Poetry Trail is about creating moments of pause and reflection in the everyday. It highlights how arts and culture can be woven into our public spaces, inviting residents to engage both with their environment and with their own creativity."

Adrienne Mercer Breen
Manager, Culture & Special Events
City of Nanaimo

"These prompt-focused installations stem from my belief that poetry exists for all there is to celebrate, for all there is to remember, and for all there is to change. When you happen upon one, I hope you feel invited to reflect on your singular life in this specific place, with its multitude of histories and contexts. Poetry makes space for all the resilience and surviving and persisting you see and do at any given moment: it includes you!"

Neil Surkan
Poet Laureate
City of Nanaimo

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<https://www.nanaimo.ca/NewsReleases/NR251003TheCityOfNanaimoInvitesTheCommunityToExploreThePoetryTrail.html>