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## **Heid E. Erdrich Selected as First-Ever Poet Laureate for the City of Minneapolis**

**The new arts ambassador will serve in the inaugural role for the duration of 2024, kicking off her tenure at the January 8 City Council Meeting**



The City of Minneapolis' Arts & Cultural Affairs Department and The Loft Literary Center are proud to announce the appointment of Heid E. Erdrich as the first-ever city Poet Laureate, marking a significant milestone in the city's cultural and literary landscape.

A widely esteemed poet, author, and advocate, Erdrich brings an illustrious and influential body of work and life experience to this role. Erdrich's career encompasses a

series of acclaimed poetry collections, including the National Poetry Series winner *Little Big Bully*. Erdrich is Ojibwe, enrolled at Turtle Mountain, and in addition to her own work has edited multiple collections amplifying the work of other Indigenous writers. Erdrich has received two Minnesota Book Awards, as well as fellowships and awards from the Library of Congress, National Poetry Series, Native Arts and Cultures Foundation, The Loft Literary Center, First People's Fund, and others.

Erdrich has taught and practiced multidisciplinary art for decades, both as a professor and in community. She has visited dozens of colleges and universities, libraries, and tribal and cultural institutions as a guest speaker and teacher. Her keen interest in visual poetics and ekphrasis has led to multiple collaborations, curations, and installations around Native American art.

"Minneapolis is a city of arts and creativity—and our new Poet Laureate will help inspire our community through the power of words," Mayor Frey said. "I look forward to welcoming Heid E. Erdrich to this role—and seeing her use language to inspire and unite our community. Thank you to Director Johnson, the entire Arts & Cultural Affairs Department, and The Loft Literary Center for collaborating on this first-ever program."

Heid E. Erdrich shared her gratitude and excitement at the new role, "Minneapolis is a city of poetry—the home of great poets and publishers of poetry—and it is a great honor to serve as the inaugural Poet Laureate. It is especially gratifying for me as an Anishinaabe woman to acknowledge that Indigenous people, particularly the Dakota, were the first poets of this place. In my role as Poet Laureate I will include Indigenous poets in all I do. I am grateful for the honor. Miigwech!"

Arleta Little, Executive and Artistic Director at the Loft Literary Center, added, "Heid E. Erdrich is a people's poet with an exquisite voice and deep, deep roots in community. We look forward to celebrating Heid and to collaborating with her in bringing her vision for poetry to the people of Minneapolis."

Minneapolis Council member Andrea Jenkins reflected on the exciting legacy of this position, stating, "I welcome Minneapolis' first Poet Laureate. This offering is long overdue for a city that boasts the Loft Literary Center, and so many amazing poets."

As the Poet Laureate, Erdrich will champion the power of words, engaging with diverse communities across Minneapolis through readings, workshops, and initiatives that celebrate the city's cultural tapestry.

Erdrich's appointment marks a pivotal moment in Minneapolis' cultural heritage, heralding a new era of literary engagement and artistic appreciation for generations to come.

## Upcoming Schedule

- January 8: Heid E. Erdrich will be honored at the first City Council meeting, where she will present a new poem written specially for the occasion.
- January 18: A public celebration at The Loft Literary Center, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

## Photos & Bio

**Heid E. Erdrich** has authored several poetry collections, including *Little Big Bully*, a National Poetry Series winner. Erdrich edited *New Poets of Native Nations* anthology from Graywolf Press and has received many honors, including the Rebekah Johnson Bobbitt National Prize for Poetry from the Library of Congress and a National Artists Fellowship from the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation. She regularly serves as a visiting writer and recently taught a term at Dartmouth College as a scholar of Native American Literature. Heid is Ojibwe, enrolled at Turtle Mountain.

A firm believer in service to the literary community, Heid regularly serves as a judge and panelist for awards and grants. She was the 2023 chairperson of the National Book Awards Poetry Panel. Heid reviews books and provides blurbs and encourages those she mentors to be good literary citizens.

Heid has a particular interest in the intersection of poetry, performance, and visual art. Her poems have been commissioned for the National Gallery of Art, Baltimore Museum of Art and elsewhere. She has collaborated on poem films, with choreographers and on public art projects. Since 2005, Heid has curated dozens of art exhibits focused on Native American artists. She currently serves as

the 2020-2024 guest curator for the Mead Art Museum of Amherst College. In 2023 her exhibition *Boundless*—a project combining texts and images from Amherst College’s collections of Native art and literature—will be on view at the Mead until July 2024. Heid’s next publication is a mixed genre chapbook to be published in 2024.

A press photo of Heid E. Erdrich is available [here](https://loft.org/media/1362). (<https://loft.org/media/1362>)

## Administration of the Award

The Loft received 24 nominations for the Poet Laureate position. A panel of 5 community members selected Erdrich and named four other finalists: Junauda Petrus, Miss Mari, Chavonn Williams Shen, and Raymond Luczak.

**The Minneapolis Arts Commission** advises the City Council and Mayor on arts-related issues and was chartered in 1974 with the mission to strengthen the arts and enrich cultural life in Minneapolis. The Commission works closely with the staff of the Department of Community Planning & Economic Development-Planning Division, and shares their goal of developing a strong and vital arts community throughout Minneapolis.

**The Loft Literary Center** advances the power of writers and readers to craft and share stories, to create and celebrate connections, and to build just, life-sustaining communities. We grow writers and build community by creating literary experiences that cultivate craft and connection.

The Loft envisions a world where the power of the word liberates minds, deepens relationships, and inspires movements for people and planet. As an antiracist organization, the Loft develops programs, services, and events for writers, readers, and storytellers because racism dehumanizes people, and stories reconnect us to our shared humanity. Recognizing the relationship between race, power, and resources, we prioritize the engagement of BIPOC and marginalized communities and work for the equitable distribution of our power and resources. Our core values are creativity, connection, justice, care, courage, and curiosity.

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