



EMBARGOED UNTIL: April 12, 2023

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ARIANNE TRUE NAMED 2023-2025 WASHINGTON STATE POET LAUREATE

OLYMPIA – In conjunction with National Poetry Month, Governor Jay Inslee has appointed poet Arianne True as the next Washington State Poet Laureate.

A member of the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations, True has dedicated years to teaching and mentoring young poets around the Salish Sea. Arianne has received fellowships from Jack Straw Cultural Arts, Hugo House, and Artist Trust. She is an alum of Hedgebrook and the MFA program at the Institute of American Indian Arts and was recently the Seattle Repertory Theater's first Native Artist-in-Residence.

"I'm so excited to step into this role and get to meet folks all over our state for the next two years," says True. "I really believe poetry is for everyone, and I hope to help more folks see poetry as a resource that's always there for them, something that they know how to access and feel they have a right to."

Her two-year term officially begins May 1, 2023. She will succeed Rena Priest (2021-2023), the current poet laureate. Prior to Priest, the position was held by Claudia Castro Luna (2018-2021), Tod Marshall (2016-2018), Elizabeth Austen (2014-2016), Kathleen Flenniken (2012-2014), and Sam Green (2007-2009). During her tenure, she hopes to create an anthology of poetry from queer people in both urban and rural areas throughout the state.

"The Poet Laureate position is not just ceremonial," says Julie Ziegler, executive director of Humanities Washington. "It involves traveling throughout the state and meeting thousands of people each year, showing that poetry can bring real meaning to people's lives and communities. Arianne has already shown her dedication through her mentoring work, and we're very excited about her appointment."

The Washington State Poet Laureate program is jointly sponsored by Humanities Washington and the Washington State Arts Commission (ArtsWA). Poets laureate work to build awareness and appreciation of poetry—including the

state's legacy of poetry—through public readings, workshops, lectures, and presentations in communities throughout the state.

"Poetry is a living, dynamic art form that defies boundaries and categories," said Karen Hanan, executive director of ArtsWA. "Arianne does more than recognize poetry's potential—she embodies its welcoming spirit. Through her teaching, community engagement, and her own poetic practice, Arianne has shown an extraordinary ability to open the world of poetry up to all kinds of people."

Laureates are selected through a nomination and panel review process that evaluates candidates' poetry practice, commitment to reaching diverse communities, and experience promoting poetry.

THE PASSING OF THE LAUREL

Join Humanities Washington and ArtsWA for a celebration of Arianne's appointment, and a farewell to Rena Priest as laureate. Rena will "pass the laurel" to Arianne, and Washington poets—including former poets laureate—will read. The event will happen in-person and be also livestreamed.

When: Thursday, May 4, 2023, 7:00 p.m.

Where: Washington State History Museum, Mount Tahoma Auditorium

Cost: Free

[Register to attend here >](#)

OTHER POET LAUREATE EVENTS IN APRIL

Olympia

Breath of Our Words: Poetry and Activism

April 13, 2:00 p.m. at South Puget Sound Community College

[MORE >](#)

Vancouver

Ghost Town Poetry Open Mic

April 13, 7:00 p.m. at Art of the Cave

[MORE >](#)

Bellingham

Pacific Corner Poets Open Mic

April 20, 7:00 p.m. at Honey Moon Mead and Cider

[MORE >](#)

Eastsound

Earth Day Orcas 2023

April 22, 3:00 p.m. at Emmanuel Episcopal Church

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ABOUT THE WASHINGTON STATE POET LAUREATE

In April 2007, after Governor Christine Gregoire signed House Bill 1279 into law, Washington joined several other states in appointing an official state poet laureate position. The State Poet Laureate is appointed by the governor to serve a two-year term. The program is coordinated jointly by the Washington State Arts Commission (ArtsWA) and Humanities Washington, and is funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, ArtsWA, and Humanities Washington. More at wapoetlaureate.org.

ABOUT HUMANITIES WASHINGTON

Humanities Washington sparks conversation and critical thinking using story as a catalyst, nurturing thoughtful and engaged communities across our state. For more about Humanities Washington, visit humanities.org.

ABOUT ARTSWA

The Washington State Arts Commission (ArtsWA) advances and supports arts and culture in Washington State through leadership, funding, and resources that build participation and access to the arts. For more about ArtsWA visit arts.wa.gov.

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