

PRESS RELEASE

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STRATFORD LAUNCHES INAUGURAL "EVERY VOICE" POETRY CONTEST TO CELEBRATE PERTH COUNTY'S LITERARY TALENT

STRATFORD, ON – Stratford's Poet Laureate, in partnership with Destination Stratford and Stratford Public Library, is proud to announce the launch of the Every Voice Poetry Contest – an project designed to amplify the diverse poetic voices throughout Perth County.

This inaugural contest represents more than just a literary competition; it's a celebration of self-expression and the powerful artform of poetry. The Every Voice contest recognizes that there is no voice more authentic than one's own, and poetry is an ideal platform for heartfelt thought and personal expression.

Contest Details:

- **Youth Category:** Ages 8-18 years
- **Adult Category:** Ages 19+
- **Open to:** All residents of Perth County
- **Oversight:** Editorial Panel comprising local multi-award-winning poetry leaders: David Stones, Quinn Mayer, Mark Hertzberger and Heidi Sander

The 2025 contest serves as a pilot project, with organizers envisioning Every Voice as an annual celebration of local literary talent. Each year will feature a different theme, with this year's theme being "resilience," building toward a published anthology and award ceremony scheduled for April to coincide with National Poetry Month.

"The Every Voice poetry contest is a mainstay of my Stratford Poet Laureate mandate," says David Stones. "The focus of my three-year term is to bring poetry to the people, and people to poetry. Every Voice has the power and capacity to unite and engage our community around universal, resonating themes, ensuring that the diversified voices of our poets and storytellers ring pure and true. The resulting anthology and awards event will be celebratory milestones in the cultural evolution of our wonderful community. It's all very exciting and I'm deeply appreciative of the involvement and support of Destination Stratford and Stratford Public Library in this rather historic undertaking."

The Editorial Panel is overseeing the contest structure, submission guidelines, and adjudication process, ensuring a rigorous and fair evaluation of all entries, including not knowing the writers' identities throughout the adjudication process.

"Part of our work at Destination Stratford is to share the authentic stories and experiences from our community with the rest of the World," says Zac Gribble, Executive Director, Destination Stratford. "I can't think of a better way to give voice to this region than through the Stratford Poet Laureate's Every Voice poetry contest and anthology."

About the Partnership: This collaborative effort between Stratford's Poet Laureate, Destination Stratford, and Stratford Public Library demonstrates a shared commitment to fostering arts, culture and stories throughout Perth County. The partnership ensures broad community support and accessibility for participants.

For contest guidelines, submission details, and deadlines, visit splibrary.ca/every-voice or contact David Stones, Stratford Poet Laureate poetlaureate@splibrary.ca

Read more about the Every Voice Poetry Contest 2025 at: splibrary.ca/every-voice

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If you would like more information about this topic, please contact David Stones, Stratford Poet Laureate 416-473-4855 or poetlaureate@splibrary.ca