

Poetry Downtown 2025 Guide

Celebrating American Indian Poetry



**This year we
publish only the
5th anthology!**

**All events in Omaha, Denver,
San Francisco and the Poetry
Train are cancelled.**

Turtle Island

Turtle Island

celebrating

American Indian Poetry



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House Of Craziness

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Introduction

Dear Very Important Poets,

I'm thrilled to present the guide for the 5th Poetry Downtown Festival. This year, we celebrate American Indian Poetry with our theme, Turtle Island.

For those who may not be familiar with the festival, I'm a Dutch artist based in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Since my 50th birthday in 2021, I've dedicated each year to celebrating the work of an American poet. Past honorees include:

2021: Kenneth Patchen with Get Ready to Die

2022: Charles Bukowski with Some People Never Go Crazy

2023: Sylvia Plath with I Never Could Talk to You

2024: Edgar Allan Poe with The Raven

Each year, my literary pilgrimage begins in the poet's birthplace and concludes in the city of their death. This year's journey starts in Omaha ('Warrior Poet's' birthplace) and culminates in San Jose (his final resting place). As always, we connect these two cities with the Poetry Train—an Amtrak train which last car is reserved for poets.

The Poetry Train will travel through 40 urban cities and rural towns, offering readings and events along the way in Omaha, San Jose, the layover cities Denver and San Francisco, and, of course, onboard the Poetry Train itself.

Through this birthday tradition, I aim to promote literacy and unite amateur and professional poets with poetry lovers around the world. I chose poetry because even a simple haiku can have a profound impact on listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Beyond literacy, poetry has the power to improve people's health, well-being, and even financial success.

Turtle Island,

Erik van Loon

House of Craziness

September 23

Omaha



10.00 - 11.00 am Lecture
(..., Omaha)

American Indian Poetry

Dive into the ways American Indian poets infuse resilience, spirituality, and cultural heritage into their work.

1.00 - 2.00 pm Talk
(..., Omaha)

DNA

Three poets explore how ancestry and the four elements—earth, water, air, fire—shape their imagery and voice.

3.00 - 6.00 pm Poetry Walk (barefeet proof)
(Holland Center, 1200 Douglas St)

EARTH

Starting at the Lakeside Terrace, we'll stroll along the riverfront—reading poems at Farnam Pier, the Chief Big Elk statue, the Sioux Warrior sculpture, and the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge—then circle back with stops at Clark & Lewis Landing and Dream.

8.00 - 10.00 pm Readings
(..., Omaha)

Poetry Downtown Omaha

Max 13 selected poets read their work.

10.00 - 11.00 pm Patch
(..., Omaha)

Poetry And Tales Cocktail Hour

+ Ultimate Typewriter Showdown

(ONLY FOR POETS AND LOVERS)

Poetry And Tales Cocktail Hour

Everynight from 10 till 11 pm you can meet at PATCH your favorite poet in person and hear their poems and stories!

Poetry Train

Nebraska
11.25 pm Omaha



September 24

Denver



Poetry Train
NEBRASKA

12.46 am Lincoln
02.22 am Hastings
03.11 am Holdrege
04.22 am McCook
Colorado
05.46 am Fort Morgan
07.56 am Denver

10.00 - 11.00 am Lecture
(..., Denver)

Paha Sapa

In 1980, Indigenous leaders and allies gathered in the Black Hills—Paha Sapa, "Heart of Everything That Is"—to assert treaty rights and defend sacred land. This lecture examines that pivotal mobilization and its enduring influence on Native activism.

1.00 - 2.00 pm Talk
(..., Denver)

The Rise Continues

This talk will explore how Indigenous voices are reclaiming narratives, preserving traditions, and influencing contemporary art forms.

3.00 - 6.00 pm Museum
(Denver Art Museum, Denver)

Indigenous Arts of North America

Explore the museum's premier Indigenous Arts of North America collection, then dive into Kent Monkman's provocative exhibition "History Is Painted by the Victors"—a searing reimagining of colonial narratives through contemporary Indigenous eyes.

8.00 - 10.00 pm Readings
(..., Denver)

Poetry Downtown Denver

Max 13 selected poets read their work.

10.00 - 11.00 pm Patch
(..., Denver)

Poetry And Tales Cocktail Hour

+ Ultimate Typewriter Showdown

September 25-26

Poetry Train



Poetry Train

September 25
Colorado

08.46 am Denver
10.53 am Fraser
Winter Park
11.22 am Granby
02.43 pm Glenwood
Springs
04.43 pm Grand
Junction

Utah

06.32 pm Green River
07.53 pm Helper
10.02 pm Provo
11.40 pm Salt Lake City

September 26

Nevada

03.25 am Elko
06.01 am Winnemucca
09.24 am Reno

California

10.33 am Truckee
12.50 pm Colfax
02.14 pm Roseville
03.05 pm Sacramento
03.31 pm Davis
04.13 pm Martinez
04.47 pm Richmond
04.57 pm Emeryville

barth

05.15 pm Emeryville
05.30 pm San Francisco

September 25

10.00 - 11.00 am Poetry and film

I am red

While traveling the length of the Colorado River, we will watch short poetry films like Pete McBride 'I Am Red' videopoem about the Colorado river.

1.00 - 3.00 pm Workshop

Earth, wind and fire

Learn to channel the power of the natural elements—earth, wind, and fire—into your poems, stories, or visual art, both literally and metaphorically.

8.00 - 10.00 pm Readings

Poetry Downtown Utah

13 selected poets from Utah and Nevada will read their selected work at the Poetry Train.

10.00 - 11.00 pm Patch

Poetry And Tales Cocktail Hour

+ Ultimate Typewriter Showdown

September 26

10.00 - 11.00 am Workshop

Zine Making

Under the guidance of artist Erik van Loon, poets create together the Poetry Train's very first zine.

1.00 - 4.00 pm

Poets meet publishers

Pitch your poems directly to American publishers and literary agents, and explore paths to publication and collaboration.

September 27

San Francisco



9.00 am - 12.00 pm Poetry Walk

(Gallery Area 405, 405 E. Oliver St.)

San Francisco Poetry Trail

Six San Francisco-based American Indian poets guide a walking tour from Pier 33, up Telegraph Hill, and into the American Indian Cultural District. Along the way, they'll share poems that celebrate land, memory, and resilience.

1.00 - 2.00 pm Lecture

(..., San Francisco)

Indian Land

Explore the pivotal moment on March 9, 1964, when five Sicangu Lakota activists declared Alcatraz "Indian Land," and learn how that declaration set the stage for the 1969–1971 occupation and reshaped Native rights movements.

3.00 - 5.00 pm Speech

(..., San Francisco)

State of the Land

On our final day, a featured poet delivers a "State of the Land" address—an evocative, lyrical report on the current health of tribal territories, economic trends, community achievements, and emerging priorities for American Indian nations.

8:00 - 10.00 pm Readings

(..., San Francisco)

Poetry Downtown San Francisco

13 selected poets read their work.

10.00 - 11.00 pm Patch

Poetry And Tales Cocktail Hour

+ Ultimate Typewriter Showdown

***We the poets foster
intelligence, literacy,
confidence and imagination.
With words we infuse our lives
with fun, energy and change.***

***Join your local poets or
writers club, and ensure
success, spread happiness
and - most of all - ignite
positive change!***

Erik van Loon
House Of Craziness

American Indian Poetry

American Indian poetry represents a rich tapestry of voices rooted in diverse tribal nations across North America. It weaves together centuries of oral traditions, historical upheavals, and modern innovations to explore identity, land, memory, and resilience.

Historical Foundations

Long before written records, poetry thrived in oral form—songs, chants, and spoken-word narratives carried forward ancestral knowledge. These early expressions honored creation stories, seasonal cycles, and community values, preserving cultural continuity through performance and ritual.

Evolving Forms and Themes

As written literature emerged, Native poets blended traditional rhythms with contemporary techniques. Key themes include:

- Relationship to land and nature
- Survival and resistance amid colonization
- Intergenerational trauma and healing
- Celebration of tribal language and culture
- Intersection of personal and collective identity

Contemporary Voices

Modern American Indian poets—such as Joy Harjo, Sherman Alexie, Layli Long Soldier, and Natalie Diaz—challenge stereotypes and reclaim narratives. Their work often experiments with form, incorporating bilingual lines, found text, and visual poetics to reflect the complexity of Native experiences today.

The Power of American Indian Poetry

This body of work not only offers artistic innovation but also serves as a vital medium for activism, education, and community healing. Through its intimate yet expansive lens, American Indian poetry invites readers to witness histories often marginalized and to acknowledge ongoing struggles for sovereignty and social justice.



Anthology and Zine

Every year, we release a Poetry Downtown anthology (see right), showcasing the finest selection of poems. This year we also creating a Zine at the Poetry Train. All poets, writers, designers, artists, and photographers aboard the Poetry Train are invited to contribute to the Poetry Train Zine 2024.

There's just one rule: all creations must be made aboard the Poetry Train itself. The Art Drawing Center will provide paper and pencils for your creative endeavors. Let's make this Zine a true reflection of the Poetry Train experience!



The Raven
Edgar Allan Poe
 Jan 18, 1809 – Oct 7, 1849

LA Poetry Downtown 2023

Poets from around the world joined our tribute to Edgar Allan Poe. From a pool of submissions, our jury selected the 25 finest poems inspired by The Raven to be featured in this anthology.

Sixteen poets were invited to share their work in person at Poetry Readings in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore during Poetry Downtown 2024.

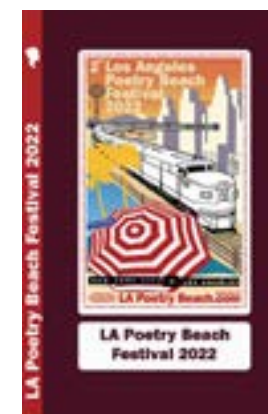
**Get Ready
 To Die**
 Kenneth Patchen



Poetry Downtown 2021

Purchase our inaugural anthology, carefully selected by our jury for the LA Poetry Downtown.

**Some People
 Never Go Crazy**
 Charles Bukowski



Poetry Downtown 2022

Poets from 17 states submitted, only the best were chosen. Many poets also joined our first LAPD readings.

**I Never Could
 Talk To You**
 Sylvia Plath



Poetry Downtown 2023

Poets from across America honored our first commemorated woman in history.



Poetry Train
Polaroid On The Tracks
Unlimited

Donate \$40 and get an
On The Tracks Polaroid photo
(3.5 x 4.2 inch) with American
Short poem in return!



Poetry Downtown Anthology
2025 Signed
100x

Donate \$50 and get a 'Turtle Is-
land' anthology signed by your
favorite Poetry Downtown 2025
poet in return!

Crowdfunding



Conductors Club
Septuagenarian Spew
Unlimited

Donate \$20 and give a
Septuagenarian Spew Cocktail
to one of the poets at PATCH
and we will toast on you!



Poetry Downtown
Tshirt 2024
100x

Donate \$50 and get a 3rd
Poetry **Downtown** shirt (sizes s,
m, l and xl) in return!



Poetry Train
Ticket 2024
50x

Donate \$300 and we give your
Poetry Train ticket Omaha to
San Francisco to a poet!



Poetry Cab
Art & Poetry Book
250x

Donate \$125 and get a by Erik
Van Loon signed Poetry Cab -
Art & Poetry book with unique
videos, poems and photos of
Poetry Cab 2026!

www.poetrydowntown.com/crowdfunding

Buy Art

Each year, I personally fund the Poetry Downtown Festival. Participating poets contribute only \$5 each, which is insufficient to cover all expenses, including Poetry Downtown, the Poetry Train, and the events in Boston, New York, and Baltimore.

To support the festival and poetry in general, I am selling my ten 33 x 20 ft "I Will Win" paintings from the NYC Marathon at www.erikvanloon.com

I Will Win
2005



The News
2006



The Statue
2007



The Runner
2008



The History
2009



The Creation
2010



The Crisis
2011



The Elections
2012



The War
2013



The End
2014



PoetryOnAir.com

Friday, September 27

10-11 am Lecture
Literacy Through Poetry

4-5 pm Radio Play
A Voyage To The Moon

8-11 pm Poetry Downtown
Boston

Saturday, September 28

10-11 am Lecture
Poe in Popular Culture

12-2 pm Poetry Downtown
New York

5.15-6.15 pm Talkshow
The Raven

8-11 pm Poetry Downtown
Philadelphia

Sunday, September 29

10-11 am Lecture
Are We All Insane?

2-3 pm Concert
The Raven Concert

8-11 pm Poetry Downtown
Baltimore

www.PoetryOnAir.com

Since 2024

The Statue
2007



The Runner
2008



The History
2009



The Creation
2010



The Crisis
2011



The Elections
2012



The War
2013



The End
2014



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150 USD

Poetry Film and Anthology

Every poem performed in our Hollywood-style backseat film studio will be filmed and published!



POETRY CAB

write a poem about your town or city and win a free ride during the National Poetry Month!

WWW.POETRYCAB.COM

Rules:

poetrycab.com/rules

- Age limit 21+
- Max 28 lines
- Entry fee \$ 10

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