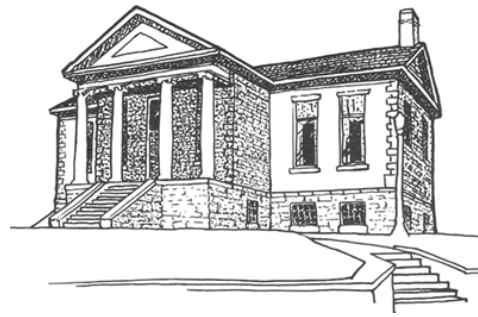


Bayfield Poet Laureate



"We don't read and write poetry because it's cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion. And medicine, law, business, engineering, these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for."

~ From **Dead Poet's Society**

History and Background

Following the dedication of Bayfield's first Heritage Tree on August 28, 2016, Howard Paap read a poem he wrote in tribute to the big old red oak. Noting how the poem added to this civic event, Don Albrecht subsequently proposed that Bayfield consider a Poet Laureate position. "In a city of 450 souls, we have two bookstores and have had a library since 1857. There is a side of the Bayfield community that has been bookish since our roots -- like the Heritage Oak Tree -- were planted in 1856."

This paper is another step in the process to organize such a position under the literary umbrella of the Bayfield Carnegie Library.

Why Name a Poet Laureate?

What practical purpose can a Poet Laureate serve? Just as a town has common property — the library, city hall, docks, and parks — there is a common human landscape inhabited by all whose lives are rooted in this place. It's a landscape of history, attitudes and common experiences. Without someone striving to weave the community into words, a town's identity remains the unexamined sum of fleeting moments.

Whether or not one agrees with the Poet Laureate's words, those words and images can help to crystallize Bayfield's view of itself. The Poet Laureate holds up a mirror so the community can see itself. And it is a reflection of the distinctive nature of Bayfield that we consider formally acknowledging and honoring the importance of poetry in everyday life.

Overview of Poet Laureate Positions

A Poet Laureate is commonly an honorary, unpaid, government appointment for a period of less than five years.

The title, Poet Laureate, dates back to the ancient Greeks, when poets and heroes were honored with crowns of laurel leaves. The word "laureate" survives in academia's baccalaureate degrees.

The U.S. Poet Laureate is entrusted with raising the status of poetry in the everyday conscience of the American public, but has few official duties. The laureate gives one annual lecture and a poetry reading. Each is free to pursue an individual agenda. Joseph

Brodsky introduced poetry into airports, supermarkets, and hotel rooms. Gwendolyn Brooks encouraged children in elementary schools to read and write poetry. Robert Haas organized a “Watershed” conference to unite writers and poets.

Both Madison (Oscar Mireles for 2016-18) and Milwaukee (Matt Cook for 2015-17) have Poets Laureate, as does the State of Wisconsin. The 2015-16 Poet Laureate for Wisconsin is Kimberly Blaeser of Lyons Township. She is the author of three acclaimed poetry collections — *Absentee Indians and Other Poems*, *Apprenticed to Justice*, and *Trailing You* — and works as Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. Previous Wisconsin Poets Laureates include: Max Garland (2012-2013); Bruce Dethlefsen (2011-2012); Marilyn L. Taylor (2008-2010); Denise Sweet (2004-2008); and, Ellen Kort (2000-2004).

Criteria and Selection Process

1) Residency

Preference is given to year-round Bayfield area residents, including Red Cliff and the Towns of Russell and Bayfield. Summer residents and poets residing within 10 miles of the City of Bayfield are eligible to apply.

2) Publication

Publication in a book or collection of poetry is preferred, but not required.

3) Poetry Samples

Supply no fewer than 6 and no more than 10 sample poems representative of your work.

4) Resume or curriculum vitae

The resume should not exceed 2 pages

5) Proposed activities

An explanation of what the applicant would hope to accomplish as Poet Laureate, including potential ideas for a special project (up to 2 pages).

6) Optional supplementary materials

The application may include up to 4 additional pages of supplementary supporting materials such as excerpts from published book reviews, judges’ comments, or other critical writings that help contextualize the poet’s work.

Note: recommendation letters are not appropriate and will not be considered.