

NO: R054

COUNCIL DATE: April 1, 2019

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **March 25, 2019**

FROM: **Chief Librarian
General Manager, Parks, Recreation & Culture
General Manager, Finance**

FILE: **7960-01**

SUBJECT: **City of Surrey – Poet Laureate**

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Chief Librarian and the Parks, Recreation & Culture Department that Council:

1. Receive this report for information; and
2. Approve funding in the amount of \$10,000 from the Council Initiatives Fund, for each of the years 2019, 2020 and 2021, to support Surrey Poet Laureate Program as generally described in this report.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to continue the Poet Laureate Program for an additional three years, to champion the literary areas and to raise the profile and image of Surrey as a creative and cultural centre that values literacy.

BACKGROUND

In March 2012, the City of Surrey proclaimed March 21 as World Poetry Day and April as National Poetry Month. Subsequently, on January 23, 2015, Council approved the recommendation to support a three-year sponsorship contribution in the amount of \$30,000 to establish the Poet Laureate Program commencing September 2015 (Corporate Report F005; 2015 – attached as Appendix “I”).

DISCUSSION

Since the establishment of the Poet Laureate Program in September 2015, Council received an update on the program in 2017 at its regular meeting through Corporate Report, R217; 2017 (report attached as Appendix “II”). This mid-term update highlighted the various program initiatives established through the Poet Laureate Program led by Surrey’s Poet Laureate, Renée Sarojini Saklikar.

Surrey's Poet Laureate

Renée Sarojini Saklikar was selected as Surrey's inaugural Poet Laureate amongst many talented applicants. As a literary ambassador for the City, Renée engaged with residents through participation in civic events, festivals, programs, and other initiatives. Passionate about connecting people through poetry, Renée worked hard to create a legacy program of poetry outreach that is multi-lingual and inter-cultural, partnering with many local organizations, including Arts Council of Surrey, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Semiahmoo Arts Council, Simon Fraser University, Surrey Arts Centre Surrey International Writers Conference, Surrey Arts Centre and Surrey Muse.

The inaugural three-year Surrey Poet Laureate Program was a great success, with the Poet Laureate mentoring 110 people in 29 writing consults, helping over 400 youth and adult writers in 34 writing workshops, and contributing to an additional 160 events, programs and meetings with community partners including high profile events such as the Surrey International Writers Conference and the Surrey Children's Festival. During her three year term, Saklikar completed two legacy projects with additional support from the City of Surrey Cultural Grants program including the publication of the anthology 'Surrey Stories Connect: teens and seniors write Surrey' and a series of teen chapbook making workshops.

FUNDING

On February 2, 2015, Council approved Corporate Report No. Foo5; 2015 City of Surrey – Poet Laureate, authorizing a three-year sponsorship contribution from Council Initiatives Fund for Surrey Poet Laureate Program at \$10,000 per year for a total of \$30,000.

It is recommended that Council support the Poet Laureate Program for an additional three-year term, commencing September, 2019 through September, 2022, by approving a funding allocation of \$10,000 per year for a total of \$30,000 from Council Initiatives Fund.

Year	Recommended Funding
2019	\$10,000
2020	\$10,000
2021	\$10,000
Total	\$30,000

Appendix "III" attached to this report documents the balance of the Council Initiatives Fund based on an assumption that Council will approve the recommendations of this report.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

This event supports the objectives of the City's Sustainability Charter 2.0. In particular, this event relates to Sustainability Charter 2.0 themes of Inclusion and Education & Culture. Specifically, the event supports the following Strategic Directions ("SD") and Desired Outcomes ("DO"):

- Diversity & Accessibility - DO1: Surrey welcomes, includes and embraces and values the diversity of people who live here.

- Diversity & Accessibility - DO2: Surrey is a caring and compassionate city that learns about and supports its residents of all backgrounds, demographics and life experiences.
- Diversity & Accessibility - DO3: Residents have opportunities to build social connections with people from different backgrounds.
- Community Pride & Engagement - DO20: Surrey residents are proud of their community.
- Community Pride & Engagement - DO21: All residents have opportunities to be meaningfully engaged in civic issues to and to contribute to community life.
- Learning - DO1: Surrey has a culture of learning, with a broad range of diverse learning opportunities available and accessible to meet the needs of all residents.
- Learning - DO2: Surrey children and youth have access to a high quality comprehensive and inclusive educational system, and opportunities that include experience in and out of school.
- Arts & Heritage - DO 7: An enviable and vibrant arts and heritage sector contributes to Surrey's citizen engagement, enrichment, economy, community livability and civic pride.
- Arts & Heritage - DO9: Surrey supports and celebrates its diverse artists, cultures and community heritage through inclusive festivals, programing and events.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, it is recommended by the Chief Librarian and Parks, Recreation & Culture Department that Council approve funding in the amount of \$30,000 to support the City's Poet Laureate Program from 2019-2022.

Surinder Bhogal
Chief Librarian
Surrey Libraries

Laurie Cavan
General Manager
Parks, Recreation & Culture

Kam Grewal
General Manager, Finance

Appendix "I" – Corporate Report F005; 2015

Appendix "II" – Corporate Report R217; 2017

Appendix "III" – Council Initiatives Fund – Allocations for 2019



CORPORATE REPORT

NO: **F005**COUNCIL DATE: **FEBRUARY 2, 2015****FINANCE COMMITTEE**TO: **Mayor & Council**DATE: **January 23, 2015**FROM: **Chief Librarian &
General Manager, Finance & Technology**FILE: **1850-20**SUBJECT: **City of Surrey – Poet Laureate****RECOMMENDATION**

The Chief Librarian and the Finance & Technology Department recommend that Council approve a 3 year sponsorship contribution from the Council Initiatives Fund for a Surrey Poet Laureate Program at \$10,000 per year for a total of \$30,000, as outlined in this report

INTENT

To create a Poet Laureate for the City of Surrey to champion the literary arts and to raise the profile and image of Surrey as a creative, cultural centre that values literacy.

BACKGROUND

In March 2012, the City of Surrey proclaimed March 21st as World Poetry Day and April as National Poetry Month. Following this proclamation, the Cultural Development Advisory Committee (CDAC) asked Surrey Libraries to investigate the concept of hosting a Poet Laureate Program in Surrey. In order to test local interest in the idea, the Library ran a poetry contest in honour of the opening of the New City Hall (NCH). The contest was run in April 2013 with over 30 entries received from across Surrey. The winning entry by Irene Plett was read at City Centre Library as part of the NCH Grand Opening in April 2014.

CDAC also asked Surrey Libraries to follow up by developing a Poet Laureate Program for Surrey. Many Canadian cities have a Poet Laureate, including Vancouver, New Westminster, Victoria, Toronto and Edmonton. Their main role is to serve as an ambassador for the City; advocating literacy and the literary arts and to raise the status of poetry, language & the arts in the City. Surrey Libraries reached out to the community and formed a planning committee comprised of members from:

- City of Surrey Cultural Development Advisory Committee
- Surrey Arts Centre
- Surrey International Writers Conference
- Arts Council of Surrey
- Simon Fraser University
- Surrey Muse
- Semiahmoo Arts

The planning committee will work closely with the Library to develop the nomination, selection and award process for the proposed Poet Laureate Program.

DISCUSSION

The Poet Laureate would create a unique artistic legacy. It is vital that the Poet engages with the people of Surrey. Duties range from city to city and will be determined by the planning committee. Duties can include, writing a poem for at least one formal civic occasion each year; attending civic functions such as Council inaugurations or grand openings; organizing public poetry events; working with at-risk youth; or developing city-wide outreach projects such as contests, readings and poetry clubs.

It is important that the selected Poet be affiliated with Surrey in some way, preferably through residence, but potentially through workplace or projects. Priority will be given to applicants who reside in Surrey but applicants who live elsewhere in the Lower Mainland are welcome to apply (taking into consideration applicants who may have grown up in, lived in, or worked in Surrey for a long period of time).

Ideally the Poet would have a working space, as this is a crucial component for enabling the Poet Laureate to write and to connect with Surrey community members in person. Possibilities include the City Centre Library or space provided by the Arts Council of Surrey at the Newton Cultural Centre.

Most cities offer a stipend of \$5000 per year (for a typical term of 3-4 years). The planning committee is recommending a 3-year term with a \$5,000 honorarium for the poet and \$5,000 for program expenditures, for a total of \$10,000 per year as shown below.

Proposed Budget:

Honorarium - \$5,000

Programming / outreach - \$3,000

Travel / administration fees - \$2,000

Total: \$10,000 / year

With regards to terms of Poet Laureates across Canada, there is a range of 2 – 5 years. The Planning Committee recommends that the successful candidate will have a better opportunity to create a legacy and to integrate sustainable programs during a 3-year term. Three years would also enable the organizing committee ample time to coordinate the subsequent term and plan for a successor. The successful candidate would be required to provide a final report to allow proper evaluation of the program.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

The implementation of the recommendations of this report will assist in achieving the objectives of the City's Sustainability Charter; more particularly the following action items:

- SC5: *Plan for the Social Well Being of Surrey Residents;*
- SC15: *Promote Literacy, Education and Training;*

CONCLUSION

Pending funding approval, the planning committee anticipates sending a call-out for applications in early March 2015 with a deadline of early April. The committee would evaluate the applications in April and announce the Poet Laureate during Poetry Month by the end of April.

Having a Poet Laureate would contribute to Surrey's image as a culturally diverse, growing city that values literacy and the literary arts. This invaluable program offers the opportunity to connect Surrey residents with poetry, language, and the arts in their daily lives.



Melanie Houlden
Chief Librarian
Surrey Libraries



Vivienne Wilke, CGA
General Manager
Finance and Technology

Attachment:
Appendix I: Status of the Council Initiatives Fund

NOTE: Appendices available upon request.



CORPORATE REPORT

NO: R217

COUNCIL DATE: October 23, 2017

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council** DATE: **October 23, 2017**
 FROM: **Chief Librarian** FILE: **8145-20**
 SUBJECT: **Surrey Poet Laureate – Program Highlights & the Legacy Project**

RECOMMENDATION

Surrey Libraries recommends that Council receive this report as information.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with highlights of the Surrey Poet Laureate program and provide information on the Legacy Project.

BACKGROUND

The Surrey Poet Laureate Program was created to champion literary arts, and raise the profile and image of Surrey. The idea was initiated by the City's Cultural Development Advisory Committee (CDAC) and the program is funded through a Council Initiative Grant for a 3-year term, starting in October 2015. Surrey Libraries formed a planning committee comprised of members from CDAC, Surrey Arts Centre, Surrey International Writers Conference, Arts Council of Surrey, Simon Fraser University, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Surrey Muse, and Semiahmoo Arts Council to develop the program and select the Poet Laureate.

Renée Sarojini Saklikar was selected as Surrey's inaugural Poet Laureate amongst many talented applicants. As a literary ambassador for the City of Surrey, Renée engages with residents through participation in civic events, festivals, programs, and other initiatives. Passionate about connecting people through poetry, Renée has been working to create a legacy program of poetry outreach that is multi-lingual and inter-cultural, in partnership with local organizations. This report highlights the past two years of the Surrey Poet Laureate program including Renée's legacy project.

DISCUSSION**Writing Consultations**

One of the most valued aspects of Renée's term has been her role as coach, mentor, and teacher. Renée has offered monthly writing consultations since November 2015, mentoring over 100 local writers on their poetry, prose, and non-fiction writing. Renée has met with aspiring writers throughout Surrey—from City Centre Library to Newton Library to the South Surrey Recreation

Centre. One local writer was homeless, living on the streets near City Centre Library. In May 2016, library staff helped him to type up his writing and he met with Renée for feedback.

Renée also offered blue pencil writing consultations at the Surrey International Writers' Conference in 2015 and 2016 and the Write Here, Read Now event at City Centre Library in 2016. She has met with the local writing group, the Cedar Bark Poets, to offer writing advice and she contributed a writing workshop during the creation of the 'We Are Newton' anthology to members of the Friends of the Grove, the Newton Seniors Centre Writers' Group and a local post-secondary student.

In December 2016, all of the participants in the Poet Laureate writing consults were invited to an Open Mic night. Over 35 people braved the snow and cold to attend, because they've made such strong connections with Renée. Participants shared their writing in short two minute timeslots, mingled, and ate. One attendee nicknamed Renée CEO, aka Chief Encourager of Others and wrote: "Inclusivity!! Support!! Community!! Just so happy with this program!"

Please see Appendix "I" for participant feedback on the Surrey Poet Laureate writing consults.

Youth Writing Workshops

Renée has led writing workshops for youth at schools and libraries throughout Surrey including Semiahmoo Secondary School, L.A. Matheson Secondary School, Elgin Park Secondary School, Earl Marriott Secondary School, IQRA School, and five Surrey Libraries locations. Renée ensures the needs and interests of the youth are met in her workshops, designing activities that help young writers hone their literary skills. Her focus as a poet is on making rather than on meaning, as indicated in a Cloverdale Reporter article from July 18, 2017: "Surrey poet laureate hosts teen workshops." Renée encourages young people to play with language as a material that they can shape and build into poems and stories. She creates activities that help welcome young people from diverse backgrounds: for example, opening workshops with "word portrait" writing prompts that help youth "tell the story of their name." This activity helps to build trust and interest in each writer: everyone has a story about how they got their name and what it means to them.

Springing from her workshops at L.A. Matheson High School and her experience working with Turning Point Ensemble to produce the November 2015 opera, *Air India Redacted*, Renée has been working with L.A. Matheson students and teachers on a poetry and arts collaboration that is set to debut in Surrey in October 2017. This event will feature L.A. Matheson high school students performing their own artistic works before an audience at City Centre Library.

In partnership with the youth services staff at Newton Library and teachers from the Surrey School District, Renée led a series of workshops for 10-year old kids in the PAWS (Promoting Achievement Within Schools) program in 2016 and teens in the TREES (Teen Recreation and Educational Enhancement Services) program in 2017, working through writing prompts and playing with words to help children and youth facing unique challenges engage with the written word in a fun, inspiring environment.

Renée has also helped to support the Young Adult Writing Contest through her participation in the Teen Writers' Camps at Surrey Libraries. Each year, winning entries for the contest are celebrated and shared at an Awards Gala held in the Council Chambers in October, which Renée attended as a guest speaker in 2016. She will be offering the closing remarks at the 2017 gala.

Please see Appendix "I" for comments from youth participants.

Legacy Project

From September 2016 through April 2017, Renée worked closely with Surrey Libraries staff and partners from Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS) Seniors' Centre and Historic Stewart Farm to complete her legacy project: *Surrey Stories Connect: Teens & Seniors Write Surrey*. This project aimed to capture the experiences of Surrey residents by creating opportunities to share inter-generational and multicultural stories. The book of stories was officially launched in May 2017 at a celebratory event attended by 80 people including local writers. Copies are available for free online and at local libraries. An audiobook version is being created by staff at UBC's Crane Library to be made available on National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS) for patrons with print disabilities.

This book is the culmination of months of work and celebrates the work of local authors in our community. On three separate afternoons in the fall of 2016, Renée worked with teens and seniors at Cloverdale Library, PICS Seniors' Centre, and Historic Stewart Farm on writing workshops that resulted in the beautiful anthology of Surrey stories. Surrey Libraries staff spent several hours translating Punjabi-language interviews and worked with Renée to edit multiple drafts of the anthology. Surrey Libraries Media Team created the beautiful layout and design. The City of Surrey Cultural Grant program provided funding for the writing workshops, the production and publication of the anthology, and the celebration in May. The anthology is the result of bringing people together to share experiences of living in Surrey. The stories serve as an example of Surrey's rich cultural diversity and unique heritage in Canada—celebrating our history, our future, and the brilliant storytellers in our midst. Over 40 local writers opened up their hearts, shared their stories, and responded to each other in these writing workshops—creating a snapshot of a moment in time in Surrey.

Partnerships

Renée has made numerous connections throughout Surrey, collaborating with a wide range of people and organizations to raise the status of the literary arts in the community. Her work has connected her with KPU, the Surrey Art Gallery, Historic Stewart Farm, the Surrey International Children's Festival, the Surrey School District, and Surrey Pretrial Centre. Renée was the emcee of the 2017 Civic Treasures Awards at the annual Business and the Arts Reception and contributed to several events at the Creative City Summit in October 2016.

Since summer 2016, Renée has partnered with Surrey Libraries outreach staff and the Surrey School District at the Surrey Pretrial Centre to judge writing contests and provide feedback to the winning residents in a personal writing consultation. The monthly writing contests have inspired Pretrial inmates to express themselves through writing and the opportunity for professional feedback has been invaluable to them.

Touring

As Surrey Poet Laureate, Renée has taken the position on the road. She served a two-week stint as the Writer in Residence at UBC Okanagan in early 2017, traveled to Port Alberni to perform as Surrey Poet Laureate and lead a writing workshop, and toured Toronto and Hamilton, Ontario in September 2017 presenting on "Remembering Air India: the art of public mourning."

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

The Poet Laureate Program and Legacy projects support the City's Sustainability Charter under the following themes:

Inclusion:

- DO1: Surrey welcomes, includes and embraces and values the diversity of people who live here
- DO2: Surrey is a caring and compassionate city that learns about and supports its residents of all backgrounds, demographics and life experiences
- DO3: Residents have opportunities to build social connections with people from different backgrounds.
- DO20: Surrey residents are proud of their community; and
- DO21: All residents have the opportunities to be meaningfully engaged in civic issues to and to contribute to community life.

Education and Culture:

- DO1: Surrey has a culture of learning, with a broad range of diverse learning opportunities available and accessible to meet the needs of all residents.
- DO2: Surrey children and youth have access to a high quality comprehensive and inclusive educational system, and opportunities that include experience in and out of school.
- DO 7: An enviable and vibrant arts and heritage sector contributes to Surrey's citizen engagement, enrichment, economy, community livability and civic pride; and
- DO9: Surrey supports and celebrates its diverse artists, cultures and community heritage through inclusive festivals, programming and events.

CONCLUSION

As Surrey's inaugural Poet Laureate, Renée Sarojini Saklikar has excelled at the duties and responsibilities that were initially set out in the Call for Applications. She has been a vocal literary ambassador for Surrey, engaged with the people of Surrey through countless civic events, festivals, and programs, achieved a beautiful legacy project that brought members of the community together to celebrate Surrey stories, and continued to write poetry during her term.

Renée is "so grateful for this amazing opportunity" and she writes: "I realized that what inspires me the most as Surrey's first poet laureate [is] helping everyone who takes part in our activities, regardless of their background, [believe] that they can make poetry, and enjoy playing with words, and learn from language, too."

Thanks to the tremendous support of the partner organizations, community members, CDAC, and City of Surrey for championing the position. Renée looks forward to presenting before Mayor and Council during April 2018 for the Poetry Month Proclamation. Renée's official term will end in October 2018.



Surinder Bhogal
Chief Librarian



Meghan Savage
Acting Manager Guildford Library &
Surrey Poet Laureate Program Coordinator

Appendix "I"- Feedback on Surrey's Poet Laureate Writing Consults

Note: Appendices available upon request.

Appendix "III"



2019 FINANCIAL PLAN COUNCIL INITIATIVES

Description	Amount	Allocation to date	Remaining
Carried Forward from Prior Year adjusted for amounts not utilized	4,300		
2019 Adopted Budget	<u>260,000</u>		\$ 264,300
Olympic Qualifier Event		80,000	
SFU President's Surrey Gala		5,000	
Downtown Surrey Business Improvement Association		5,000	
102nd Anniversary Vimy Ridge Battle (Proposed)		2,900	
Surrey Poet Laureate - Year 1 of 3 (Proposed)		10,000	
Allocations for 2019		<u>\$ 102,900</u>	<u>\$ 161,400</u>