

POETCHRY

2025 Annual Report to Cobourg Town Council

It's been a year since POETCHRY embarked on the task of multiple World Firsts, 16 picnic tables. We have tables of women's poems, nature poems, peace poems, student poems, abled poems from disabled poets, Town Crier poems, Ontario Superior Court Judge poems, poems of Susanna Moodie, Archibald Lampman, and the Bard himself. 135 poems from 89 poets and eight short stories from writers across Canada, the USA and abroad, blended with the regional and very local.

It began October 2024 in the Cobourg Ecology Garden. 29 poems were submitted, and five poems were selected by the Cobourg Ecology Gardeners. I asked the Gardeners if they had ever dealt with poetry in any manner since leaving high school. None had. Community engagement. The Susanna Moodie table now graces grounds of the Cobourg Museum. Community engagement. POETCHRY will be outreaching to various community groups to engage their involvement in curating a table themed on their interests.



This year's Picnic On Poetry project ended like an exclamation point in David Pecaut Square, in the bull's eye Centre of the Unit Verse of Toronto for WORD ON THE STREET, Canada's largest literary festival. Going forward from here, Blue Denim Press, Cobourg's only independent book publisher has placed dibs on a published book about the entire project for next year. There is a future and POETCHRY and poetry will be part of it. Links are being made, the notion of picnic tables with poetry will catch on in other municipalities. (They will find this project technologically difficult to duplicate)



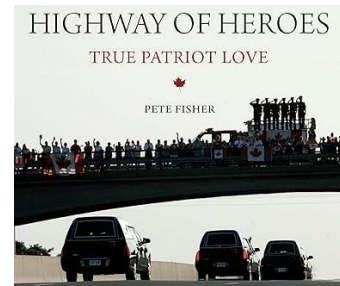
Word On the Street was thrilled by the notion of poetry on a picnic tabletop in their food court for maximum textposure of a multifunctional anthology of poetry. Imagine all those vacant picnic tables in parks across the nation that are now available as a venue for the poetic arts. Imagine Picnic Poetry Publishing Inc. Manulasing Canada's Poemtown, 1stanza@atime. Visit Cobourg, Read Our Tables.

So what does POETCHRY plan for 2026?

More of the same, only different, of course. Nature poems, peace poems, student poems, canon poems, and a bit of prose thrown in because it is a sibling of poetry. Diversity of voice. Diversity of genre. Diversity of imagination. Diversity without restriction or textclusion.

New for 2026

Pete Fisher will curate a '**HIGHWAY OF HEROES: True Patriot Love**' table. What will that entail? At this moment, only the notion exists to do such a table, soooo, stay tuned. It will be good and profound and something for which Cobourg can be proud. (In a future tranche there will be a table of poetry dedicated to First Responders)



A **WOW** table will be an anthology of poetry curated by Felicity Sidnell-Reid. **WOW (Words On a Wire)** is the premiere poetic event of the Northumberland Festival of the Arts, held every two years. Felicity has volunteered her skills in various levels of organization of the Northumberland Festival of the Arts and the Spirit of the Hills, Writer's Group, and nurtured young writers. This table will be unveiled at the WOW Textravastanza as part of the Northumberland Festival of the Arts in the fall of 2026.

Bānoo Zan has agreed to curate the world's first multilingual, multicultural picnic table of Persian poetry in English and Farsi. Bānoo Zan is a self-exiled poet, librettist, translator, teacher, editor and poetry curator, with numerous published pieces and three books. She is the founder of Shab-e She'r (Poetry Night), Toronto's most diverse poetry reading and open mic series (inception: 2012). She is the recipient of the 2025 Writers' Union of Canada Freedom to Read Award.



A **TED AMSDEN** table of course. He is a Cobourg Poet Laureate Emeritus (2011-2018). Ted engaged the community in many off-the-page poetry projects and events. (Cobourg News Blog of December 13, 2018 enumerates these) Bloated with wit, & nimble of mind, he was a very active hoodlum ornament for Poetry In Cob(our)g Spaces, while I was its Creative Director. I have every textpectation that he is going to have some very difficult, creative demands for his picnic table display. Challenge accepted with textreme tenacity; his work is worth it.



A **JESSICA OUTRAM** table also. She is another Cobourg Poet Laureate Emeritus (2019-2022). Jessica presented the community not only with the voices of her people, but the learnings of nature. Her poetry shone with intelligence and empathy, and a table dedicated to her poetry will glow in any park setting.

PINK PRIDE PICNIC POETRY, The Pink Café has offered to host a picnic table of Pride Poetry on its patio adjacent to Victoria Hall. The unveiling will be June 1, the beginning of Pride Month. The picnic table will be painted pink except for the tabletop which will remain raw.

THERE WILL BE A WALLY TABLE, JUST YOU WAIT FOR IT!

A last note concerning the Cobourg/Toronto table. It was with the invaluable assistance of Kate Rogers, that we solicited specific Cobourg & Toronto poets to grace the table. The design for the centre Title Board included the QR codes for the offices of the Mayors of Cobourg and Toronto.



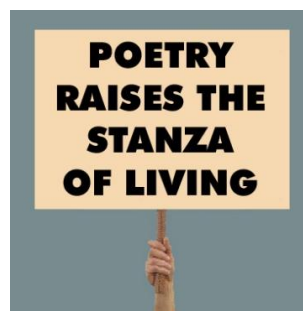
That picnic table now resides in Dufferin Grove Park, Toronto, near the Children’s Learning Centre. Skylar Hill-Jackson, who had been a reporter for the Cobourg Sentinel-Star in the late 60s, lives adjacent to the park and has volunteered to be its regular caregiver. There is a group assembled who are going to curate a table of poetry for Dufferin Grove Park for next April, 2026. They buy the boards, we etch them, ship them at their expense. Lasered in Cobourg, Canada’s Poemtown.



“Well, imagine that!”

That was my mother’s expression whenever a new gadget appeared in a tv commercial. So, I grew up amongst imaginary things. The Imagine Nation is tariff free, tax free. The Imagine Nation is larger than ten universes in a gnat’s eye. The Imagine Nation is textpansionary. The Imagine Nation is ungovernable. The Imagine Nation is the fury and fire I always wanted to play with.

Well, imagine this: a small town positioned on the stiff upper lip of a great lake becomes the locus of an organically original cultural manifestation; poetry on picnic tabletops. When I returned to Cobourg 15 years ago, I heard that Cobourg was a “Poetry Place”. That slogan has alliteration going for it, but it doesn’t rise above mediocrity. COBOURG: Canada’s **Poemtown**. That utilizes a homophone (hometown), but adds possessive ownership, whereas ‘place’ has all the warmth of a suburban strip mall. So . . .



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