

28th Annual NOWW Writing Contest

2026 Categories

Poetry

- One entry consists of a minimum of 1 poem and a maximum of 5 poems.
- Poems may be in any style or theme.
- Combined line count of the total entry must not exceed 100 lines.
- Poem titles or spaces between poems do not count towards the total number of lines.
- All poems per entry must be submitted in one file.
- It is strongly recommended that you do not submit poems that require unusual formatting. If you choose to rely on a specific formatting, submit your entry as a PDF rather than a Word file. NOWW cannot guarantee formatting will remain the same and we cannot be held responsible for any adverse changes to your formatting at any point in the review/judging process, or if published.

Bill MacDonald Prize for Prose (Creative Nonfiction)

- This contest category recognizes author and teacher Bill MacDonald, who published 39 books, most of which were set in the Northwest, often Thunder Bay. The prize category was established in 2016, two years after his death. The category alternates yearly between fiction and non-fiction.
- This category consists of a complete piece of creative nonfiction.
- The work must be set in Northwestern Ontario. This includes settings of all kinds (not just nature) and includes the districts of Thunder Bay, Rainy River, and Kenora.
- Entry must be between 2,000-3,500 words.
- Title is not counted towards total word count.

Short Fiction

- This category consists of a complete piece of Short Fiction.
- An entry submitted to this category may not be submitted to any other category.
- Entry must be between 1,500-3,000 words.
- Title is not counted towards total word count.

Critical Review

- A concise critical review of any art form. This could include, but is not limited to, a review of a book, movie, television program, music release, concert, theatre performance, or the works of an individual artist.
- Your entry should aim to do two things: inform the reader about what you saw/read/listened to, and provide your evaluation, opinions and final judgment.
- If the entry has been previously published, it must have been within the last two years (Since January 1, 2024).
- Entry must be between 300-500 words.
- Title is not counted towards total word count.

2026 Rules

Eligible Writers

This contest is open to individuals (Canadian and international) age 16 and over.

Deadline

Entries must be submitted no later than **February 28, 2026, midnight Eastern Time.**

Rules

- Entries must be original and unpublished (with the exception of the Critical Review category).
- Two (2) entries may be made per category.
- Entries must be written in English.
- **Entries must not bear the author's name or any other information that would make the author's identity known to screeners or judges. Entries that do will be disqualified.**
- Edits and revisions are prohibited. Once submitted, your entries are final.
- Entrants are asked to be cognizant of cultural appropriation.
- Authors agree that winning entries may be read at NOWW's year-end celebration and published online on NOWW's website and in the NOWW magazine without compensation to the author beyond that of the awarded prize money. With these exceptions, the author retains copyright in all work submitted. Winning entries may be edited prior to publication.
- Winners must provide a photo and brief biography.
- Submissions that do not follow the "How to Submit" instructions are subject to disqualification.

Judging Process

- Judging is blind.
- Screeners will select six finalists per category to be sent to a final judge.
- Final judges reserve the right not to select winners if, in their opinion, none of the entries is of publishable quality.

Results

- Winners will be announced at NOWW's year-end celebration and on the NOWW website on or after May 30, 2026.
- The finalists for each category will be notified by email after June 1, 2026 that their entries were shortlisted.

Prizes

- Each category may be awarded a first, second, and third prize.
- First prize is awarded \$150.
- Second prize is awarded \$100.
- Third prize is awarded \$50.
- Prizes will be awarded in Canadian currency (or converted from Canadian) using e-transfer or a PayPal transfer. Please be prepared to provide email address or PayPal account information if you receive a prize.

Entry Fee

- Entry is free for NOWW members in good standing.
- Non-members must pay a fee of \$20 in Canadian funds per entry before the contest closing date (February 28, 2026, midnight Eastern Time).
- Payment may be made online through PayPal at the time of submission.
- Cheques must be payable to NOWW and must be received by regular mail or hand delivered no later than February 28, 2026, midnight Eastern Time.

How to Submit

- Only electronic submissions will be accepted.
- We prefer submissions in .doc or .docx. We will also accept PDF files. All other file types will be disqualified.
- All files are to be labelled with the category and the submission title of your entry.
 - Examples: "Short Fiction Dracula is Back.docx" or "Poetry Three Poems.docx"
- Prose manuscripts must be double-spaced in a Sans-Serif 12-point font with one-inch margins on all sides and the pages numbered.
- Poetry must be single-spaced in a Sans-Serif 12-point font with one-inch (or greater) margins on all sides and the pages numbered.
- All entries must be submitted by the closing date of the contest which is no later than midnight EST February 28, 2026, regardless of payment for entry. No refunds will be made should you not submit in time.
- The Google Form submission form must be completed for each individual entry. Files are to be uploaded into the submission form.
- Submit via the Google Form: [SUBMISSION FORM](#)
- If there are issues using the submission form (i.e./ you do not have a Google account), email nowwcontests@gmail.com
- All entrants are asked to be cognizant of cultural appropriation.
- **If your name or any information in the body of the text that identifies you to screeners or judges, the entry will be disqualified.**
- Counts must be exact, not estimates. Do not include the title in the word count.
- You should pay entry fees via PayPal on our website: <https://www.nowwwriters.ca/28th-annual-writing-contest.html>. **Include the name as it appears on your emailed entry in the comment section in PayPal to ensure it is matched with the correct entry.**
- If you cannot pay using PayPal, entry fees can be paid by cheque but must be received prior to the contest deadline. Cheques should be made out to NOWW and mailed to:
 - NOWW Writing Contest
 - Box 425
 - 1100 Memorial Avenue
 - Thunder Bay, ON
 - P7B 4A3
- Due to the volume of entries, we do not send personal confirmation of receipt of submission.
- For more information or additional questions, please contact nowwcontests@gmail.com

* This information is required for eligibility into the contest.