

REPORT FROM SASKATCHEWAN

By Katherine Lawrence

New Reading Series

Thanks to poet Taylor Leedahl, Saskatchewan has a new reading series called Tonight It's Poetry (TIP).

TIP is held every Sunday night in a funky little bar in downtown Saskatoon called Flint. The space is long and narrow with high ceilings and low cocktail tables running down the north wall. Vintage and contemporary films are silently screened on the opposite wall to provide an intriguing counterpoint to the evening surround.

Taylor appears to be motivated by emerging writers and inspired by the established community of poets across Canada. Her format is to invite an established poet to read on a bill that also features four new writers. The mix feels honest, kind and inspiring.

The place also feels respectful. Poets are not expected to compete with the deafening assault of espresso machines and dishwashers. Flint staff double as both servers and listeners.

Taylor, whose first book, *No Apologies for the Weather*, was published last year by Thistledown Press, is paid a modest fee by Flint and, being a poet of conscience, cuts her featured reader a percentage. How many times have all of us read without compensation? The gesture is honourable.

TIP is a runaway success in this town and I suspect the marathon will continue. The Flint owners have recently installed a large garage-type door in the front wall so that the bar can blend with the sidewalk in gentler, warmer weather. They've even got speakers capable of blasting poetry out onto the street and into the ears of the masses. Bring it on.

Word is travelling about TIP. Taylor reports that she has begun to receive inquiries from poets who want to include the venue on their national or western tours. Maurice Mierau and Jan Horner of Winnipeg will be at TIP this year. Governor

General poetry winner Jacob Scheier will headline our annual (W)rites of Spring fundraiser on April 19th, along with poets Bruce Rice of Regina, and Lia Pas, Lynda Monahan and Jean Marie Demoissac of Saskatoon and area.

New Venue

Not far from Flint is a new(ish) gallery called Willow Studio, a space devoted to the fusion of Canadian art and environmentally sensitive home décor. I was impressed by the place when I stopped by for a visit over Christmas and so posed the question: How about poetry?

The response from manager Laura Erickson was an immediate 'yes.' We've now got five poets lined up to read with three artists from planet Calgary on Friday, April 19th as part of National Poetry Month. Poets reading are: Glen Sorestad, Wynne Nicholson, Kelly-Ann Riess, Louise Bernice Halfe (Skydancer), and Katherine Lawrence.

In other news

Gary Hyland of Moose Jaw was honoured in November during the Saskatchewan Book Awards with the Poetry and Book of the Year Awards for *Love of Mirrors: New and Selected*.

Summer in Saskatchewan

July 16-19, Festival of Words in Moose Jaw - www.festivalofwords.com

July 20 -31, The 20th anniversary of the Sage Hill Writing Experience - www.sagehillwriting.ca
Special guest author Richard Ford will attend the anniversary dinner on July 25th. Tickets now available.