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Director



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OKLAHOMA CITY, OK – The Oklahoma Department of Libraries, in partnership with the Oklahoma Center for the Book, is pleased to announce the finalists for the prestigious Oklahoma Book Awards. Now in its 35th year, a ceremony honoring Oklahoma’s literary excellence will take place Saturday, May 11, at 6 p.m. at the Oklahoma History Center.

"We are thrilled to unveil this year's exceptional finalists for the Oklahoma Book Awards," said Natalie Currie, director, state librarian and archivist of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries. "Each of these works represents the vibrant tapestry of Oklahoma's literary talent and creativity. As we prepare for the ceremony, we invite everyone to join us in celebrating the power of storytelling and the richness of our state's literary heritage."

Books are recognized each year for outstanding work in fiction, non-fiction, children and young adult, poetry, and the design, illustration, and photography combined category. To be eligible for consideration, books must be written by an Oklahoman, about the state, or have an Oklahoma theme. This year, the Oklahoma Center for the Book received 179 entries with 28 chosen as finalists.

The awards is one of several programs facilitated within the Department of Libraries by the Oklahoma Center for the Book, which is a state affiliate of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. The Center champions the diverse works of Oklahoma authors, both past and present, while honoring the state's rich literary legacy. With a commitment to fostering a love for reading among Oklahomans of all ages, the Center encourages the exploration of literature for pure enjoyment.

"This year, the judges had the difficult task of selecting finalists from an impressive pool of 179 submissions from 2023," said Connie Armstrong, executive director of the Oklahoma Center for the Book. "After careful

deliberation, 28 extraordinary works across five categories have emerged as finalists.”

The finalists, representing a diverse range of genres and voices, are:

CHILDREN/YOUNG ADULT

This Indian Kid: A Native American Memoir by Eddie Chuculate, Scholastic Inc.

Benita and the Night Creatures by Mariana Llanos, Barefoot Books

Dr. Clara Sue Kidwell: Teacher and Mentor by Celia Stall-Meadows, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Gwen Didn't Care by Gwendolyn F. Mukes, WF Publications

All Kinds of Special by Tammi Sauer, Simon & Schuster

Mascot by Traci Sorell, Charlesbridge Publishing

DESIGN/ILLUSTRATION/PHOTOGRAPHY

The Florentine Poet cover and jacket design by Carl Brune; interior design by William Bernhardt; and illustrated by Brian Call, Babylon Books

Someday, Somewhere: Photographs & Poems photography by David Jennings, Wipf and Stock Publishers

Chikasha Chahta okla'at wihat tanówattook The Migration Story of the Chickasaw and Choctaw People designed by Jackson Davis and illustrated by Lauren John, White Dog Press

Otis W. Leader: The Ideal American Doughboy designed by Jackson Davis, Chickasaw Press

Gwen Didn't Care illustrated by Alex K. Wallace, WF Publications

Tulsa City-County Library: A Legacy of Innovation, Integration, Inspiration 1992-2021 designed by Carl Brune, Babylon Press

FICTION

Dark Ride by Lou Berney, HarperCollins

Listen by Sheldon Russell, Cynren Press

Stealing by Margaret Verble, HarperCollins

The Radcliffe Ladies' Reading Club by Julia Bryan Thomas, Sourcebooks

Heart of the Nile by Will Thomas, Macmillan Publishers

NON-FICTION

This Indian Kid: A Native American Memoir by Eddie Chuculate, Scholastic Inc.

Corn Dance: Inspired First American Cuisine by Lorretta Barrett Oden with Beth Dooley, University of Oklahoma Press

Leon Russell: The Master of Space and Time's Journey Through Rock & Roll History by Bill Janovitz, Hachette Book Group

A Promise Kept: The Muscogee (Creek) Nation and McGirt v. Oklahoma by Robert J. Miller and Robbie Ethridge, University of Oklahoma Press

Otis W. Leader: The Ideal American Doughboy by Sarah Elisabeth Sawyer, Chickasaw Press

Urban Homelands: Writing the Native City from Oklahoma by Lindsey Claire Smith, University of Nebraska Press

Oklahoma Freedmen of the Five Tribes by Angela Y. Walton-Raji, The History Press

POETRY

Come Before Winter by Ken Hada, Turning Plow Press

Sand: At the Mercy of Wind by Karen Kay Knauss, Peach Tree Press

Tallchief by Elise Paschen, Magic City Books Press

Vivia: The Legend of Vivia Thomas by Linda Neal Reising, Kelsay Books

In addition to the five categories, the Center will also present the Glenda Carlile Distinguished Service Award and the Arrell Gibson Lifetime Achievement Award upon Oklahomans who have made significant contributions to the state's literary legacy. Named in honor of Norman historian Arrell Gibson, the Center's inaugural president, this award recognizes individuals who have left an indelible mark on Oklahoma's literary landscape. Author, poet, filmmaker, and playwright LeAnne Howe will be presented with the Arrell Gibson Lifetime Achievement Award during the ceremony.

Join us in celebrating Oklahoma authors and books by attending the awards ceremony and banquet. The ceremony is a great opportunity to meet the authors, purchase their books, and have them signed while supporting Oklahoma's literary heritage. Tickets are \$75 to \$100 per person. A table for eight is available for purchase at a discounted rate of \$550. Dinner is provided with each ticket. To attend the event or for more information about the awards, email or call Connie Armstrong at connie.armstrong@libraries.ok.gov or 405-522-3383.

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The Oklahoma Department of Libraries is the official State Library of Oklahoma. It serves the information and records management needs of state government, assists with public library development, coordinates library and information technology projects for the state, and serves the general public through its specialized collections.

The [Oklahoma Center for the Book](#) (OCB) has partnered with the non-profit Friends of the Oklahoma Center for the Book for more than 30 years to co-

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sponsor the annual Oklahoma Book Awards. The OCB, located in the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, is affiliated with the [National Center for the Book](#) in the Library of Congress.

Born in Edmond, Oklahoma, Howe is a citizen of the Choctaw Nation. She attended Oklahoma State University where she earned a bachelor's degree in English, and she holds a Master of Fine Arts degree in creative writing from Vermont College of Norwich University. Howe is an author, playwright, scholar, and poet. She currently serves as Eidson Distinguished Professor at the University of Georgia, where she connects literature, Indigenous knowledge, Native histories, and expressive cultures in her work. Her scholarly writings include Native and Indigenous literatures, performance studies, film, and Indigeneity.