

For Immediate Release
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Library of Congress Honors Award-Winning Oklahoma Poet with State Reading

The nation's library will honor poet Allison Hedge Coke at a special Oklahoma City reading in the 46th Star Auditorium at the Ronald J. Norick Downtown Library on April 28 at 6:30 p.m. A reception and book signing will follow in the Friends meeting room. Hedge Coke is the 2016 Witter Bynner Fellowship winner.

The U.S. Poet Laureate, in conjunction with the Library of Congress, selects Witter Bynner Fellows each year. Selections are made to call attention to outstanding poets whose works demand more attention.

In his selection of Hedge Coke, Poet Laureate Juan Felipe Herrera said at a March 9 reading in Washington, D.C., that he sought to honor her "for her precision of Earth, of suffering in and out of the Rez, of the workers unnamed, open roads knitted with tin shacks, Case'45 tractors, ancestor dust and the spirit tuned to caribou, America and song. For her translation projects of First Peoples across the entire hemisphere. For her unceasing teaching, humility, courage, and pioneering—for these offerings to the small miracles of all our voices and the galaxies they aim to call out and admire."

"To be selected by Juan Felipe Herrera for this honor is utterly humbling and almost terrifying," Hedge Coke said. "I feel a condor flew low over and brushed my shoulder with a certain grace. Something I am not accustomed to experiencing. It's brilliant."

Hedge Coke's honors include an American Book Award, an Independent Publisher Book Award, King-Chavez-Parks Award, Pen Southwest Award, Wordcrafter of the Year Award, and a Lifetime Achievement Award from Native Writers' Circle of the Americas. Her books include *Streaming* (2015), *Blood Run* (2007), *Off-Season City Pipe* (2005), *Dog Road Woman* (1997), and *Year of the Rat* (1996). Her 2014 memoir, *Rock, Ghost, Willow, Deer* (2014) is a searching account of her coming of age, as the daughter of a mother suffering schizophrenia, yet storied and deeply immersed in her mixed heritage, including Metis, Huron, Cherokee, Luso, French-Canadian, Irish, Lorraine, Scot, and English.

Hedge Coke is also the editor of nine anthologies, including *Sing: Poetry From the Indigenous Americas*, named a Best Book of 2011 by the National Books Critics Circle's Critical Mass.

People in a number of states claim Hedge Coke as their own. Born in Texas, she came of age working fields, factories and waters, and was primarily raised in North Carolina, with some time in Canada and on the Great Plains. She has organized and taught in California, New York, Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina, Nebraska, and Hawaii, as well as in Oklahoma, where she currently serves on the faculty of Red Earth MFA @ Oklahoma City University. She is a founding faculty member of the Vermont College of Fine Arts' full-residency MFA in Writing and Publishing Program, where she also teaches poetry, creative nonfiction and publishing.

The Witter Bynner Foundation for Poetry was incorporated in 1972 in New Mexico to provide grant support for programs through non-profit organizations. Witter Bynner was an influential early-20th century poet and translator of the Chinese Classic "Tao Te Ching," which he named "The Way of Life According to Laotzu." He travelled with D.H. Lawrence and Frieda Lawrence and proposed to Edna St. Vincent Millay (she accepted, but then they changed their minds). He worked at McClure's Magazine, where he published A.E. Housman for the first time in the United States, and was one of O. Henry's early fans.

Prior to the evening's event at the downtown library, Hedge Coke will present a 9:30 a.m. reading for students from Monroney Jr. High School at the Midwest City Public Library.

Sponsors of the Oklahoma City readings include Red Earth MFA @ Oklahoma City University, Friends of the Oklahoma Center for the Book, the Oklahoma Center for the Book in the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, the Metropolitan Library System, and Best of Books. The Ronald J Norick Downtown Library is located at 300 Park Ave in Oklahoma City.

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