

Ahmed "Knowmadic" Ali

Edmonton's 7th Poet Laureate (2017–2019) · 2011 Canadian Festival of Spoken Word Champion

POET · SPOKEN WORD ARTIST · EDUCATOR · YOUTH ADVOCATE

7th

Edmonton Poet Laureate,
2017–2019 (City of
Edmonton)

2011

Canadian Festival of Spoken
Word Champion, Team
Edmonton

3,000+

students reached through
workshops and residencies
(career estimate)

4

countries performed in:
Canada, USA, UK, Sudan

Pronunciation & boilerplate

Knowmadic is pronounced like *nomadic* (noh-MAD-ik); the K is silent. The name blends *knowledge* and *nomadic*.

Boilerplate: Ahmed "Knowmadic" Ali is a Somali-Canadian poet, spoken word artist, and educator based in Edmonton, Alberta. Edmonton's 7th Poet Laureate and the 2011 Canadian Festival of Spoken Word Champion, he treats poetry as a tool for critical thinking, delivering curriculum-aligned school residencies, keynotes, and performances across Canada and internationally.

Short bio (50 words)

Edmonton's 7th Poet Laureate (2017–2019). Award-winning spoken word poet, educator, and youth advocate. Ahmed transforms classrooms through spoken word poetry, empowering students to find their voice, build confidence, and develop critical thinking. A Somali-Canadian teaching artist based in Edmonton, he creates inclusive learning experiences reaching thousands of students across Canada and internationally.

Medium bio (150 words)

Ahmed Knowmadic Ali is a Somali-Canadian artist based in Edmonton, Alberta who empowers students to transform ideas and emotions into art. He came to Edmonton in 1992 as a refugee from Somalia and went on to serve as the city's seventh Poet Laureate. Through spoken word poetry, he builds confidence, empathy, literacy, and critical thinking while creating inclusive, high-engagement classroom experiences.

Ahmed has conducted artist residencies at schools across Canada and internationally, including Belvedere Elementary and Aldergrove School (Edmonton), the Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center (Seattle, 2013), and programs in Sudan and the UK. His honours include the Human Rights Champion Award (2018) and Edmonton's Top 40 Under 40 (2017). As co-founder and artistic director of Breath In Poetry, he continues to champion equitable representation and arts accessibility. A long-form biography is available at knowmadic.ca.

Media & booking: ahmed@ahmedali.ca ·
knowmadic.ca

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Verified awards & honours

- **2023** — Outstanding Black Men in Canada, SHIFTER Magazine
- **2021** — Edmonton Artists' Trust Fund Award, Edmonton Arts Council / Edmonton Community Foundation
- **2018** — Human Rights Champion Award, John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights
- **2017** — Edmonton Top 40 Under 40, Avenue Magazine
- **2017–2019** — Edmonton Poet Laureate (7th), City of Edmonton
- **2015** — Northlands Emerging Artist Award
- **2014** — Alberta Top 30 Under 30, ACGC
- **2014** — Young Arts Entrepreneur Award, Michaëlle Jean Foundation / Futurpreneur Canada
- **2013** — Cultural Diversity in the Arts, Edmonton Arts Council
- **2011** — Canadian Spoken Word Champion, Canadian Festival of Spoken Word

Civic & institutional roles

- Board Member, Alberta Law Enforcement Review Board (provincial quasi-judicial tribunal)
- National Advisory Committee Member, National Council of Canadian Muslims
- Equity Committee Chair & Member at Large, Edmonton Arts Council (2014–2017)
- Co-Founder & Artistic Director, Breath In Poetry (est. 2009)
- 2013 Artist in Residence, Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center, Seattle

Publications & recordings

- *Black Abacus* — debut poetry collection (Write Bloody North Publishing)
- *The Great Black North: Contemporary African Canadian Poetry* (Frontenac House, 2012) — contributor
- *AfriCANthology: Perspectives of Black Canadian Poets* (Renaissance Press, 2022) — contributor
- Recordings as Knowmadic: *Throwback* (2019), *With Love* (2019), *Smoke Detector* (2014), *I Am Africa*, *Somali Flow* — on Spotify, Bandcamp, and YouTube

Selected press

CBC Edmonton · Edmonton Journal · Quill & Quire · Avenue / Edify Edmonton · Global News · SHIFTER Magazine

Photos



High-resolution versions at knowmadic.ca/press-kit. Portrait: Mat Simpson Photography; additional credits on file.

Every award and role on this sheet is externally verified; additional archive-only recognitions are omitted pending sources. Student-reach figures are self-reported career estimates. Prepared July 2026 · knowmadic.ca · ahmed@ahmedali.ca