



Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

City of St. Albert and St. Albert Public Library announce new Poet Laureate

ST. ALBERT – The City of St. Albert and St. Albert Public Library are pleased to introduce Arienette Zak as the city’s new Poet Laureate. Mayor Cathy Heron announced Zak’s appointment at the City Council meeting on Tuesday, April 16.

Zak will serve for a two-year term as St. Albert’s fourth Poet Laureate, representing the City during readings at civic functions and public poetry events. Zak grew up in St. Albert and was active in high school poetry scenes before joining STARK Poets, where she mentors young poets. She has performed at and hosted many high-profile regional poetry and arts events, including Edmonton Poetry Festival, Edmonton Fringe, Amplify, Illuminate, Skirtsafire, and at the St. Albert Mayor’s Celebration of the Arts early in Mayor Heron’s first term. In 2020, Zak released a spoken word CD titled *To Love and to be Loved*, in collaboration with former Poet Laureate Julia Sorensen.

“On behalf of the City and Council, I am happy to congratulate St. Albert’s newest Poet Laureate, Arienette Zak, on this prestigious appointment,” says St. Albert Mayor, Cathy Heron. “It’s always inspiring to follow artists along their journey, so to know that Ari, a former member of the City’s own Amplify program, has been committed to her craft for so long and is now achieving a recognition like this, is truly remarkable.”

During her two-year term, Zak will act as a cultural and literary ambassador, and as a champion for poetry, language, and the arts. She will receive \$1,000 annually, thanks to a continuing partnership between St. Albert Public Library and the City of St. Albert.

"I am beyond excited to be St. Albert's fourth Poet Laureate. I believe that poetry has many purposes, from speaking truth to power to documenting and reflecting on the mundanities and miseries of everyday life," Zak says. "Poetry can be uplifting and cathartic, balancing the ways in which we reflect on the world, and I hope that my tenure as Poet Laureate can serve the community in reflection, helping to uplift new voices and respark existing ones."

Ariette Zak takes over from outgoing Poet Laureate Lauren Seal. The City and the Library wish to acknowledge the wonderful work Seal has done throughout her term, in particular her community poem project. In April of 2023, as part of National Poetry Month, Seal set out to create an original, community-led poem. She asked St. Albertans, "How do you create joy in your community?" then compiled and edited community responses into a piece in which St. Albertans could share authorship. "To Create Joy" was the moving result; it was first presented to the residents of St. Albert on Canada Day 2023. We thank her for her excellent service and wish her the very best.

For more information and to enjoy the community poem, "To Create Joy," visit the Poet Laureate page at www.sapl.ca/poetlaureate.

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