

Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

After Hours Conversations with Benjamin Hertwig and Jordan Abel: Two upcoming STARFest events

ST. ALBERT— St. Albert Readers Festival (STARFest) is thrilled to welcome patrons to two exciting upcoming author events, after hours at the Downtown St. Albert Public Library.

Local author and bookstore owner (Edmonton’s Paper Birch Books) Benjamin Hertwig joins the STARFest audience in conversation with CKUA’s Tony King Friday, January 31 at 7pm.

Hertwig’s powerful debut novel, *Juiceboxers*, is about four young soldiers serving in Afghanistan and the devastating aftermath of war.

Drawn from the author’s experiences as a soldier in Afghanistan, *Juiceboxers* tenderly traces the story of a young man’s journey from basic training, to the battlefields of Kandahar, to the inner city of Edmonton, braiding together questions of masculinity and militarism, friendship and white supremacy, loss and trauma and hard-won recovery.

Hertwig’s fiction, non-fiction, and poetry have appeared in places like the New York Times, the Globe & Mail, and the Walrus, among others. His debut poetry collection, *Slow War*, was a finalist for the Governor General’s Award, the Raymond Souster Award, and received the Poetry Prize at the Alberta Book Awards.

Winner of the 2024 Governor General’s Literary Award for Fiction, Jordan Abel joins the STARFest audience with his acclaimed novel *Empty Spaces*, Friday, February 28 at 7pm in conversation with Matthew Weigel.

Reimagining James Fenimore Cooper’s nineteenth-century text *The Last of the Mohicans* from the contemporary perspective of an urban Nisga’a person whose relationship to land and traditional knowledge was severed by colonial violence, Abel

explores what it means to be Indigenous without access to familial territory and complicates popular understandings about Indigenous storytelling. Engaging the land through fiction and metaphor, the successive chapters of *Empty Spaces* move toward an eerie, looping, and atmospheric rendering of place that evolves despite the violent and reckless histories of North America. The result is a bold and profound new vision of history that decenters human perception and forgoes Westernized ways of seeing.

Both author events happen after-hours at the Downtown Library (5 St. Anne Street) and are free but registration is required. Books will be available for purchase and signing.

Register here for Benjamin Hertwig with Tony King, Friday, January 31 at 7pm:

<https://sapl.libcal.com/event/3837805>

Register here for Jordan Abel with Matthew Weigel Friday, February 28 at 7pm:

<https://sapl.libcal.com/event/3859788>

Stay tuned for more information in the coming months regarding more STARFest events in 2025 as we continue the traditions of this award-winning festival, presenting numerous events featuring writers ranging from the new and noteworthy to long-time favourites from across Canada. For more information visit www.starfest.ca.

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