

Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STARFest presents Mary Lawson

St. ALBERT—STARFest is thrilled to kick off our 2021 season on June 5 with an online afternoon event featuring critically acclaimed and bestselling author Mary Lawson in conversation with author Fran Kimmel about Lawson’s new novel, *A Town Called Solace*.

A Town Called Solace revolves around three people whose lives entangle in a Northern Ontario town in 1972. Seven-year-old Clara is grief-stricken and bewildered after her sixteen-year-old sister goes missing and her distraught parents try to protect her from the truth. Newly divorced newcomer Liam has just moved in next door, in a house left to him by an old woman he can barely remember, when a visit from the police implies he’s suspected of a crime. And the elderly Elizabeth is haunted by a thirty-year-old crime that had tragic consequences for two families, and desperately wants to make amends. *A Town Called Solace* traces the way these three people are brought together by tragedy, and how in the end they change each other’s lives.

Author, comedian and talk show host Graham Norton calls *A Town Called Solace* “poised, elegant prose, paired with quiet drama that will break your heart. The sort of book that seems as if it has always existed because of its timeless perfection.” Novelist Anne Tyler says, “I’ve been telling everyone I know about Mary Lawson... Each of her novels is just a marvel.”

Mary Lawson published her first novel, *Crow Lake*, when she was 55. It sold in 28 countries, spent 75 weeks on the bestseller list in Canada, won the Amazon First Novel Award, and was a *New York Times* bestseller. *The Other Side of the Bridge*, her second novel, was long-listed for the Man Booker Prize and was a Richard and Judy Summer Read in the UK. *Road Ends*, published to critical acclaim in 2014, was a top-ten bestseller, and *A Town Called Solace*, published in February of this year, is another top-ten bestseller, garnering rave reviews.

Lawson has lived in Kingston on Thames, England, for many years, but grew up in Ontario; the lakes, rocks and forests of the Canadian Shield remain her favourite landscape, and have played a major role in her writing.

“We’re thrilled to have an author of Mary Lawson’s stature at STARFest, and we know her conversation with audience favourite Fran Kimmel will be engaging and fascinating,” says Michelle Steinhusen, Interim STARFest director.

Fran Kimmel delighted STARFest audiences in 2019 with her second novel, *No Good Asking*, which was shortlisted for the 2019 ReLit Award the Georges Bugnet Novel Award. It has become a book club favourite and is published internationally. Her first novel, *The Shore Girl*, was named a CBC Top 40 Book and won the Alberta Readers’ Choice Award in 2013. Her short stories have appeared in literary journals across Canada and have twice been selected for *The Journey Prize Stories* anthology. Born and raised in Calgary, Fran now writes and teaches in Lacombe, Alberta.

This STARFest event will take place on Zoom at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, June 5. Admission is free and attendees will have the option to donate to STARFest online when they register; register in advance through the Programs & Events link at www.sapl.ca.

STARFest runs in October, 2021 – stay tuned for more information in the coming months. STARFest 2021 will 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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