



## Media Release

For immediate release:

### Libraries name 2021 Writers in Residence

**EDMONTON, AB, January 6, 2021** – St. Albert Public Library, Strathcona County Library and Edmonton Public Library (EPL) are delighted to announce that poet Nisha Patel and playwright Vern Thiessen have been selected to serve as the libraries' Writers in Residence for 2021. Patel and Thiessen will offer a wide range of free writing support and programs to writers of all ages and experience levels through their roles with the libraries.

"We're delighted to welcome Nisha Patel as the regional Writer in Residence. She brings tremendous talent, creativity and energy to the role and we know local writers will thrive and grow under her mentorship," says Peter Bailey, CEO of St. Albert Public Library. "We had great success moving the Writer in Residence programs online in 2020 and are excited to have Nisha continue that creative work reaching and supporting aspiring writers in 2021."

Patel is an award-winning queer poet and artist and the current City of Edmonton Poet Laureate. As the regional Writer in Residence, she will split her time between Strathcona County and St. Albert, with the first six months of 2021 at Strathcona County Library and the final six months at St. Albert Public Library.

"I can't wait to meet writers who are on their new and old journeys of creation," Patel says. "Our stories are the most important thing we have, and helping people give voice to theirs is what I am truly passionate about, and hope to foster in my time as a Writer in Residence."

Vern Thiessen, an established playwright whose award-winning work has been seen across Canada, the United States, Europe and Asia will serve as the EPL Writer in Residence for the year.

"Libraries are essential to the soul of a city. For thousands of Edmontonians, the EPL is not just a place to get books, it is a safe space to think, read, write, learn and gather with others," says Thiessen. "I am excited to meet Edmontonians from all walks of life with stories to tell."

While in residence, each writer will devote roughly half their time to mentoring other writers and the other half to working on personal projects.

Local writers can take advantage of workshops with both Writers in Residence, and will also have the opportunity to meet with them one-on-one through virtual meetings. Those who wish to book time with the regional Writer in Residence should email [regionalwir@gmail.com](mailto:regionalwir@gmail.com). Those who wish to book time with EPL's Writer in Residence can visit [epl.ca](http://epl.ca).

The Writer in Residence program just wrapped up a successful eighth year; 2020 writers Susie Moloney and Conni Massing have engaged with numerous aspiring and experienced writers in the metro Edmonton area through free one-on-one writing support, creative opportunities and dozens of writing programs. Moloney and Massing pass the torch to the 2021 writers this week.

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#### **About Nisha Patel:**

Nisha Patel is an award-winning queer poet and artist. Her first book, *COCONUT*, is out with NeWest Press in April. She is the City of Edmonton's Poet Laureate, and the 2019 Canadian Individual Slam Champion. She is the founder of Moon Jelly House, a publishing house centering the voices of marginalized poets by publishing chapbooks for emerging spoken word artists. She is two-time Canadian Festival of Spoken Word finalist. Nisha is a recipient of the Edmonton Artists' Trust Fund Award and is the current Executive Director of the Edmonton Poetry Festival. For more information visit [nishapatel.ca](http://nishapatel.ca).

#### **About Vern Thiessen**

Vern Thiessen is one of Canada's most produced playwrights. His work has been seen across Canada, the United States, Europe and Asia. His works include *Of Human Bondage*, *Vimy*, *Einstein's Gift* (GG winner), *Lenin's Embalmers* (GG finalist), *Apple*, and *Shakespeare's Will*. He has been produced off-Broadway five times. Vern is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Dora and Sterling awards for Outstanding New Play, The Carol Bolt Award, the Gwen Pharis Ringwood Award, the City of Edmonton Arts Achievement Award, the University of Alberta Alumni Award of Excellence, and the Governor General's Literary Award for Drama, Canada's highest honour for a playwright. Vern received his BA from the University of Winnipeg and an MFA from the University of Alberta.

#### **About St. Albert Public Library:**

St. Albert Public Library is your place to be, to meet, and to grow. This vital community hub is one of the busiest mid-sized libraries in Canada, the most visited place in downtown St. Albert, and is consistently rated as one of the key strengths of the city. SAPL is home to STARFest – St. Albert Readers Festival – a world-class annual literary festival that consistently showcases an exciting range of authors who are driving national conversations. In 2020, SAPL was a leader in the rapid pandemic pivot to online programming and creative outdoor programs and activities with our Outreach Literacy Van – we take pride in evolving alongside the community we serve. SAPL is committed to reducing barriers to access, and creating opportunities for citizens to engage with ideas, resources, and each other. With locations in downtown St. Albert and Jensen Lakes Crossing, we are here for you, and here for all. [www.sapl.ca](http://www.sapl.ca)

**About Strathcona County Library:**

Strathcona County Library is located in the heart of Sherwood Park but serves the entire Strathcona County, an area of 1,265 square kilometres, through the services of a Bookmobile and a partnership with Fort Saskatchewan Public Library. In November 2010, we opened the doors to our newest home in the Strathcona County Community Centre. Spread out over 64,000 square feet on two floors, our main branch houses a 200,000+ collection that includes books, eBooks, audiobooks, DVDs, CDs, newspapers, magazines and databases. We also host several hundred programs each year, ranging from early literacy development with infants to travel insurance for seniors. Strathcona County Library – your place for literacy, learning and leisure. [www.sclibrary.ca](http://www.sclibrary.ca)

**About Edmonton Public Library**

Edmonton Public Library (EPL) is proud to be 2014 Library of the Year! We've come a long way since 1913 when books were all you could find on our shelves ... and we're just getting started! Today, EPL carries everything you care about. We are Edmonton's largest lender of all manner of information and entertainment. Our professionally trained staff take you beyond Google with the knowledge, discernment and desire to help you navigate a universe of information. The second most visited place in Edmonton, every year EPL hosts over 15.4 million in-branch and online visits across our 21 branches and website. We deliver our incredible content to you everywhere – in the library, at home or on your handheld device. Unmatched access and unrivalled value – that is today's EPL. EPL is a registered charity and relies on donations to enhance services. Spread the words. [www.epl.ca/give](http://www.epl.ca/give)

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