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## **STARFest announces a star-studded 2023 festival lineup**

ST. ALBERT — STARFest (St. Albert Readers Festival) is thrilled to announce its festival line-up for 2023, featuring an exciting range of authors whose new books offer something for book lovers of all reading interests. Save these dates now, and watch for tickets to go on sale on August 14.

“We have another fantastic lineup for the festival – eleven incredible authors across twelve events September 24 and November 1,” says Festival Director Michelle Steinhusen. “STARFest audiences are made up of avid readers who will be delighted to see some of their festival favourites return with new books, and to discover some amazing new voices, too.”

### **Ann-Marie MacDonald | Sunday, Sept. 24 | 7 PM**

Bestselling and award-winning author Ann-Marie MacDonald is back with a new tale of science, magic, love and identity. *Fayne* traces the story of Charlotte Bell, who suffers from a mysterious condition and is being brought up in isolation on a vast and lonely estate straddling the border between England and Scotland. When she and her tutor discover something unexpected in the bog, her father announces he has arranged for a cure for her condition, and her world is upended. *Fayne* was a Globe and Mail Best Book of the Year, and was named one of CBC’s Best Canadian Fiction Books of 2022.

### **Michael Crummey | Tuesday, Oct. 10 | 7 PM**

From the award-winning, critically acclaimed author of *The Innocents* comes a dark, enthralling novel about love and its limitations, the corruption of power and the power of corruption. In *The Adversary*, Abe Strapp is about to marry the daughter of a rival merchant to cement his hold on the shore when the Widow Caines arrives to throw Abe’s plans into chaos – the opening salvo in a battle that spirals into violence and divides their isolated Newfoundland outpost, with devastating consequences.

### **Amy Jones | Thursday, Oct. 12 | 7 PM**

We are delighted to bring Amy Jones back to STARFest with her brand-new novel *Pebble and Dove*, a fast-paced, rollicking read with a cast of unforgettable characters. Lauren, anxious to escape a mountain of debt, runs with her teenage daughter, Dove, to her late mother’s rundown trailer in Florida. As she begins to untangle the truth about her estranged mother, a world-famous photographer, Dove is led by a mysterious photograph to an abandoned aquarium where she

meets Pebble, a former star attraction and the world's oldest manatee in captivity. In the tradition of Karen Russell's *Swamplandia!*, a once-famous but now-abandoned aquarium-in-a-ship in Florida is the captivating backdrop for a novel of family secrets and dysfunction, and the ways in which it can sometimes take an animal to remind us how to be human.

**Jessica Johns | Friday, Oct. 13 | 7 PM**

Jessica Johns' debut novel, *Bad Cree*, is a haunting and fierce horror-laced debut, an ode to female relations and the strength found in kinship, by an unforgettable voice. Mackenzie, a Cree millennial, has begun to bring back items from her dreams. As Mackenzie's life spirals into a living nightmare—crows are following her around and she's getting texts from her dead sister—she returns to her family and her small Alberta hometown to discover what is haunting her before something irrevocable happens. *Bad Cree* was shortlisted for the Amazon first novel award and won the MacEwan Book of the Year prize.

**Amanda Jetté Knox | Monday, Oct. 16 | 7 PM**

For award-winning journalist, writer and human rights advocate Amanda Jetté Knox, the publication of their bestselling memoir *Love Lives Here*, when both their child and partner came out as transgender, was the hopeful beginning to their new lives. Yet in the spring of 2020, Amanda began to experience targeted attacks on social media. The intensity of the backlash grew and drove Amanda to contemplate suicide. But instead of taking their life, one sunny afternoon they went to the hospital to seek help. *One Sunny Afternoon* is a profoundly moving and candid account of how trauma can shape us, but not define us.

*Presented in partnership with Outloud St. Albert.*

**Deanna Durbin, Judy Garland & The Golden Age of Hollywood featuring Melanie Gall | Tuesday, Oct. 17 | 7:30 PM | Arden Theatre**

Melanie Gall is an internationally acclaimed performer and music historian from St. Albert who has sung at Lincoln Center and Royal Albert Hall. In this one-woman show, Gall tells the true forgotten tale of a lifelong friendship—and rivalry—of two great stars of Old Hollywood: Deanna Durbin and Judy Garland. While Judy Garland is an icon, in the 1930s, “Winnipeg’s Sweetheart” Deanna Durbin was a far greater star, a favourite of Roosevelt, Churchill, Anne Frank and even Mussolini. The show includes 12 of Durbin's greatest hits, as well as songs made famous by Garland: “It’s Foolish But It’s Fun,” “Spring Will Be a Little Late This Year,” and “Somewhere Over the Rainbow.” This 5-Star hit has won hearts and awards around the world, and had an off-Broadway run at the SoHo Theatre in New York City in 2019.

**Melanie Gall | Thursday, Oct. 19 | 7 PM**

Building on her one-woman show featuring the story and songs of Deanna Durbin and Judy Garland, Melanie Gall's nonfiction book *Deanna Durbin, Judy Garland and the Golden Age of Hollywood* resurrects the largely forgotten story of how a 13 year old Canadian girl transformed moviemaking. From the start, Deanna's life was irrevocably connected with that of another young ingénue, Judy Garland. These wildly talented, ambitious, and strong-willed young women followed vastly different paths to stardom and their early friendship soon turned into a lifelong rivalry. Durbin quickly became the world's most celebrated star and the highest-paid woman in America before turning her back on Hollywood to pursue love.

**Michael Christie | Saturday, Oct. 21 | 7 PM**

Bestselling author Michael Christie joins STARFest with *Greenwood*, which was a 2023 CBC Canada Reads finalist, was longlisted for the Scotiabank Giller Prize, won the Arthur Ellis award, and has been translated into 10 languages. Beautifully written, and brilliantly structured like the nested growth rings of a tree, *Greenwood* threads the stories of generations of Greenwood family members to reveal the conflicted relationship with the source of its fortune—trees—and the knot of lies, omissions, and half-truths that exists at the root of every family's origin story.

**Sharon Butala | Monday, Oct. 23 | 7 PM**

We are thrilled to bring multi-award-winning author Sharon Butala to STARFest with her new novel, *Leaving Wisdom*. When Judith falls on the ice on the way to her retirement party, the debilitating concussion that follows seems to shake loose a confusing whirl of memories. When she moves back to a town near her family's Saskatchewan farm to pursue the answers to unsolved mysteries in her own life, small town bigotry and what looks like a serious crime unfolding in the house next door make her return even more difficult. Butala is the author of twenty-one books and an Officer of the Order of Canada.

**Emi Sasagawa | Friday, Oct. 27 | 7 PM**

Emi Sasagawa has created an unforgettable character in her debut novel, *Atomweight*, with good girl, good student, and good daughter, Aki, who has always done what her loving but demanding multiracial family expects. Everything changes when Aki moves from Vancouver to London for university: studies, friends and a relationship with a wealthy but closeted Asian woman. When Aki discovers that brutal bar-fighting relieves her stress, she begins a dangerous dual existence – obedient and accommodating by day and brawling by night. Emi Sasagawa is currently completing an MFA in Creative Writing at UBC.

**Bianca Marais | Sunday, Oct. 29 | 2 PM**

In Marais' bestselling new novel, *The Witches of Moonshyne Manor*, five octogenarian witches gather as an angry mob threatens to demolish Moonshyne Manor. The witches' aging powers are no match for increasingly malicious threats. Help arrives in the form of Persephone, a feisty TikTokker eager to smash the patriarchy. Funny, tender and uplifting, Marais' clever prose delves deeply into feminism, identity and power dynamics while stirring up drama through secrets, lies and sex. Bianca Marais is the author of the beloved *Hum If You Don't Know the Words* and *If You Want to Make God Laugh*, and the Audible Original, *The Prynne Viper*.

**Waubgeshig Rice | Wednesday, Nov. 1 | 7 PM**

What better way to end the festival than with fan favourite Waubgeshig Rice? Waub wowed our 2019 audience with his breakout bestseller *Moon of the Crusted Snow* – now he takes us back to that world in *Moon of the Turning Leaves*. It's been over a decade since a mysterious cataclysm thrust the world into anarchy and Evan Whitesky led his community in remote northern Ontario off the rez and into the bush. But resources are beginning to dry up, and Evan and his teenage daughter must lead a scouting party to discover what kind of life—and what dangers—still exist in the lands to the south.

“It’s an exciting festival lineup again this year, and we are looking forward to doing what libraries do best: bringing people together through engaging author events and a communal love of reading and the exploration of ideas,” says Peter Bailey, CEO of St. Albert Public Library.

STARFest staff are working on a fantastic lineup of STARFest hosts to keep the questions and the conversation flowing with the authors. Check STARFest.ca for all the details, save these important dates now, and watch for ticket sales to go live on August 14.

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