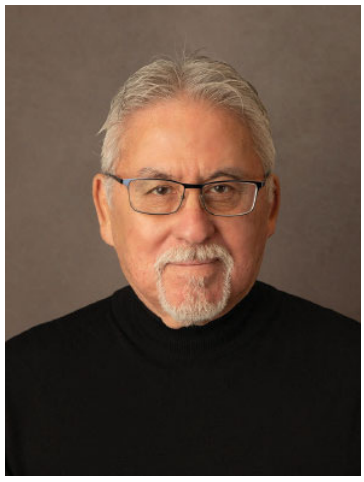


AUDREY MICHAUD/Photo

Nova Scotia author Amanda Peters sharies her latest novle, Waiting for the Long Night Moon, at STARFest on Oct. 17 at St. Albert Public Library.



SUPPLIED/Photo

Brian Thomas Isaac will share a conversation about his current novel, Bones of a Giant, at STARFest on Oct. 23 at St. Albert Public Library.



WOODGATE PHOTOGRAPHY/Photo

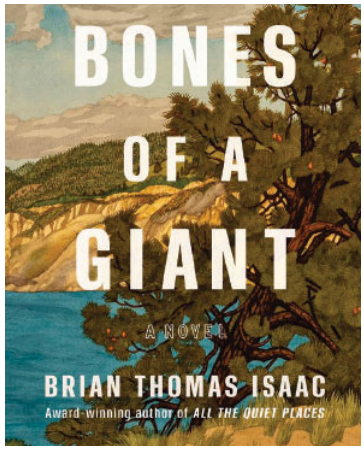
Author Emma Donoghue will discuss her gripping novel, The Paris Express, at STARFest on Oct. 15 at St. Albert Public Library.

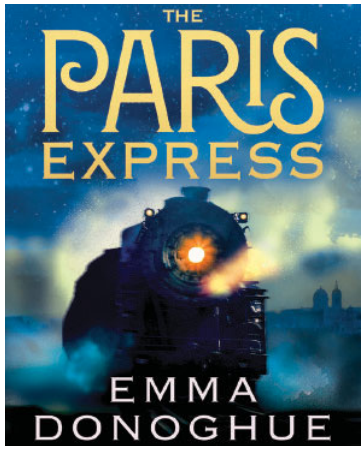


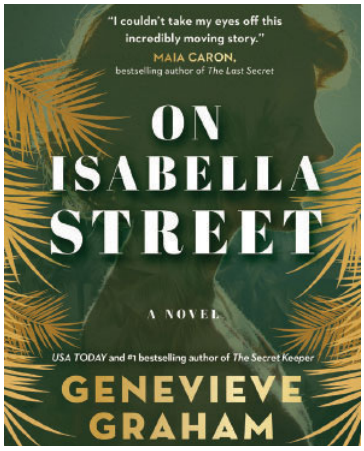
NICOLA DAVISON/Photo

Genevieve Graham returns to STARFest with a new novel on Oct. 26. On Isabella Street takes readers back to the 60s and 70s counterculture era.









Attention bookworms: STARFest annou

The readers' festival includes Emma Donoghue, Madeleine Thien, Amanda Peters, Brian Thomas Isaac, Jen Sookfong Lee and Genevieve Graham

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The written word has always held the power to propel its readers into an exciting adventure. Home to a vibrant culture, the 2025 St. Albert Readers' Festival (STARFest) has created spaces for Canadian writers to continue the adventure and foster new ideas.

Now celebrating its 15th annual landmark year from Oct. 15 to Oct. 26, the literary festival gives Canadian writers the opportunity to discuss assorted interests, philosophies, culture and how it shapes who we are.

"Here we celebrate the richness and diversity of Canadian voices. It's been a challenging year and people are feeling patriotic. And that is good for the festival. It's also been more challenging year for books due to the Alberta government's ban on some books," said Julie Ruel, festival director. "The festival is more important than ever. Now is not the time to retreat from new and exciting ideas. Now is the time to celebrate these ideas."

This year, six guest authors address diverse themes that fall under the umbrella of historical fiction. In order of appearance, the festival features Emma Donoghue, Madeleine Thien, Amanda Peters, Brian Thomas Isaac, Jen Sookfong Lee and Genevieve Graham.

"I tried to get a diverse set of authors, a mix of old favourites and new faces," Ruel said.

As the author of 16 novels, Emma Donoghue launches the festival Oct. 15 with her current epic, *The Paris Express*. This sweeping historical novel is based on the infamous 1895 train crash at the Paris Montparnasse train station.

As the train chugs across France, Donoghue describes fascinating passengers from across Europe, Asia and the United States. Members of parliament hurry back to Paris for an important vote; a medical student suspects a girl is dying; a secretary tries to convince her employer of the potential for moving pictures; a young anarchist makes a terrifying plan and more.

"Emma was last here in 2019 and she's a huge favourite. Her last book was hugely popular, and it continues circulating like mad. This newest work is taut and suspenseful," said Ruel.

Madeleine Thien, the Giller prize-winning author of *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*, returns with *The Book of Records* on Oct. 16. Lina and her father arrive at an enclave called The Sea, a shape-shifting place made of time where past, present and future collide.

Lina makes friends with Bento, a 17th-century Jewish scholar in Amsterdam; Blucher, a philosopher in 1930s Germany hiding from Nazi forces; and Jupiter, a poet living during China's Tang dynasty.

Thien tackles memory, political revolution, and generational change. Through the guidance of the great thinkers in history, Lina learns to wrestle with questions of guilt, responsibility and redemption when her sick father reveals his role in the family's tragic past.

"Madeleine is an amazing writer and a huge advocate for all writers in Canada. She has important things to say, and *The Book of Records* is expansive and thoughtful."

Nova Scotia writer Amanda Peters presents *Waiting for the Long Night Moon*, a short story collection with touching perspectives on Indigenous identity and resilience, on Oct. 17.

The experiences range from the first contact with European settlers to the removal of children from families to the present-day fight for clean water. In one story, a young man comes home from residential school and is unable to communicate with his parents. In another, a grieving mother finds purpose on the front lines as a water protector. And in yet a third, a nervous young girl dances in her first Mawi'omi.

"This book is still one of the top titles in Canada even though it came out last year. The reviews all use the same word - "stunning." Her turn of phrase is striking, and she does a beautiful job of balancing heavy and sad content with joy, relevance and redemption."

Brian Thomas Isaac, also an Indigenous author, writes about his heritage and culture in Bones of a Giant on Oct. 23. It's the summer of 1968, and 16-year-old Lewis Toma is left with his aunt and uncle while his mother goes south to the United States to pick fruit. She's trying to earn money to install a bathroom and running water in a three-room shack on the reserve.

He feels pressure to become a man in a place where most men have been broken by the residential school system, and women carry the family load, navigating between kindness and bitterness. A predatory woman, a thieving father and shocking family revelations make it difficult for Lewis to find a path leading to a bright future.



SUPPLIED/Photo

Through the haunting new novel, The Hunger We Pass Down, Jen Sookfong Lee, explores the intergenerational trauma of a Chinese family.



SUPPLIED/Photo

Author Madeleine Thien explores memory, migration and the stories that shape us in The Book of Records. She will be a special guest at STARFest on Oct. 16.





nces 2025 authors

"Brian Thomas Isaac has an interesting story. He dropped out of school in Grade 8. He worked in construction in Alberta's oil fields and retired as a bricklayer. He's won so many awards and his story itself is so interesting."

Jen Sookfong Lee's *The Hunger We Pass Down* on Oct. 25 is a haunting narrative that explores family, identity and the weight of history. Alice Chow is a single mother who juggles an online business while caring for a distant daughter and screen-obsessed son.

Life feels overwhelming until one day she wakes up and her chores are mysteriously completed. She didn't stay up late doing them, so perhaps a mysterious, supernatural element entered her life. Alice also struggles with family history, especially of her great-grandmother's imprisonment as a comfort woman during the Second World War.

"Her voice resonated with me. It has more Gothic and horror than other books and I like those elements."

Closing the series on Oct. 26 is Genevieve Graham with *On Isabella Street.* It's Toronto 1967 and two very different young women with nothing in common except living in an apartment on Isabella Street end up facing the issue of homelessness.

Marion Hart is a psychiatrist working in a Toronto mental institution. She is fighting deinstitutionalization because she believes it will cause major homelessness. Sassy Rankin is a folk singer and carefree hippy from a privileged family.

Sassy protests over the Vietnam War while her brother joins the Marines. Sassy also must deal with the fact her comfortable life is financed by her father, a real estate businessman gentrifying the city and making it unaffordable for her friends.

"Genevieve Graham has come to STARFest quite a few times. Our audience loves her work. This is a remarkable book about two young women trying to find their path during the counterculture movement of the sixties. She's passionate about bringing history to life, and she connects you to the past in ways you've never known before."

For Ruel, the literary festival is more than a mere presentation of books advertised by publishers.

"Over the past 15 years, STARFest has grown into a beautiful community. These stories cover our lives. Ideas are shared and it's an opportunity for readers to engage with writers in a way they don't always have when at home reading by themselves."

All events take place at St. Albert's downtown Public Library. STARFest tickets go on sale Thursday, July 31 and are available for $10 online at starfest.ca. For more information call 780-418-6623. ■

St. Albert Public Library presents:
STARFest
St. Albert Readers Festival
Oct. 15-26
2025
Six live author events over 12 days right here in St. Albert!
Emma Donoghue
Madeleine Thien
Amanda Peters
Brian Thomas Isaac
Jen Sookfong Lee
Genevieve Graham
Tickets on sale now at STARFest.ca
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