



Media Release

For Immediate Release:

Libraries welcome 2015 Writers in Residence Local writer, journalist Elizabeth Withey setting up shop at EPL

EDMONTON, AB, Dec. 11, 2014 – Readers and writers alike are in for a year-long treat, as Elizabeth Withey and Gail Sidonie Sobat have been named the 2015 Metro Federation Writers in Residence.

The Metro Federation is a consortium of four libraries: Edmonton Public Library, St. Albert Public Library, Strathcona County Library and Fort Saskatchewan Public Library. Each is a partner in this venture and will play host to a Writer in Residence over the coming year.

The Metro Federation Writer in Residence program is just wrapping up its second year, as 2014 authors Jason Lee Norman and Margaret Macpherson passed the torch at a celebration event on Thursday, December 11 at the Stanley A. Milner Library.

Elizabeth Withey will call the Edmonton Public Library home for the whole year. A staff writer for the *Edmonton Journal* for nearly 11 years, her work has also appeared in newspapers across Canada, well as in magazines and literary journals including *Alberta Views*, *Geist*, *Eighteen Bridges*, *Room* and *Avenue Magazine*. Withey grew up in Saskatchewan and has a master's degree from the University of Oxford. She studied writing at the University of Victoria before moving to Edmonton in 2004. Aside from being an award winning writer, Withey is an advanced yoga practitioner and certified ashtanga instructor, and is also fluent in German, French and Spanish.

She is looking forward to meeting with a wide variety of Edmonton writers to discuss their work, as well as working to create a Literary Walking Tour of Edmonton complete with digital and print maps, and perhaps even a smartphone app.

"I am thrilled and honoured to have been chosen as the 2015 Writer in Residence at the Edmonton Public Library. I'm also grateful to the Metro Edmonton Federation of Libraries for giving me this opportunity," said Withey. "As a Writer in Residence with a strong newspaper background, I'd like to help raise the profile of feature writing and long-form journalism as a legitimate form of creative writing. I feel this vein of non-fiction is an underrepresented form of writing, and I am eager to share my knowledge about the art

of writing a profile, conducting an interview, developing a voice in print and shaping a personal essay.”

As the regional Writer in Residence, Gail Sidonie Sobat will split her time between Strathcona County, Fort Saskatchewan and St. Albert, with multiple-month stints in each community. She is the founder and director of the Spoken Word Youth Choir and an instructor in the professional writing program at MacEwan University. Sobat has a master’s degree in English from the University of Alberta in children’s literature, specializing in fantasy. Her work has been published in academic and literary journals and anthologies, and has been broadcast on radio and performed on stage. She is also an award-winning teacher, and professional actor and singer. Sobat has been writer in residence in several Edmonton schools, at Queen’s University, in Doha, Qatar, at the University of Alberta through the Canadian Authors Association and recently at the UN International School of Hanoi.

She is looking forward to mentoring aspiring writers, and hosting readings and workshops.

“I am over-the-moon excited to be one of the new Writers in Residence for the Metro Edmonton Federation of Libraries, as I’ve lived, worked, taught or sung in all of the representative communities,” said Sobat. “The position is a dream come true – it’s wonderful to do this exciting work in my own city and province. Meeting people is one of my joys in life, and I look forward to connecting with writers and readers of all ages.”

While in residence, each writer will devote roughly half their time to mentoring other writers and the other half to working on personal writing projects. Local writers can take advantage of numerous programs and workshops, but also the unique opportunity to work one-on-one with the writers. Over her term, Withey plans to work on a book-length family memoir that centres on her father who died in a plane crash in northern Alberta when she was a teenager, while Sobat wants to pursue her adult novel-in-progress and a new collection of poetry.

“We are very excited to have Elizabeth Withey with us for the coming year,” said Linda Cook, CEO of the Edmonton Public Library. “Each Writer in Residence brings something different to the role, and it’s always fun to see the workshops and projects they work on – alone, in collaboration with one other, and with both the aspiring and established writers in our communities.”

For more information, visit metrowir.com.

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About the Metro Edmonton Federation of Libraries

The Metro Edmonton Federation of Libraries consists of: Edmonton Public Library, St. Albert Public Library, Fort Saskatchewan Public Library and Strathcona County Library. Libraries in the federation collaborate on programs, projects and events, share methods to help customers learn to use eReaders and download eBooks, and support the Edmonton International Literacy Festival (LitFest) by contributing ideas and hosting events at their venues.

About Edmonton Public Library

The Edmonton Public Library (EPL) is proud to be [2014 Library of the Year!](#) From March 2013 to March 2014, EPL celebrated 100 years of service to our great city. 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 we host over 14 million in-branch and online visits across our 17 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/donate.

About Fort Saskatchewan Public Library: Fort Saskatchewan Public Library serves the rapidly growing community of Fort Saskatchewan (pop. 21,795) through print and electronic collections and a wide range of programming. We welcome visitors to experience our recent transformation into a modern 17,000 square foot library with larger collections, more public access computers, larger study areas, and more comfortable reading and social areas for library users of all ages. Come for the modern “riverbank” theme, and stay for the free coffee and conversation. www.fspl.ca

About St. Albert Public Library: St. Albert Public Library is a vital part of the community, consistently rated as one of the key strengths of the city. It is a place where people learn, meet and share ideas, and enjoy leisure time. Community is at the core of St. Albert Public Library, working to improve citizens' lives through core services focused on learning, leisure and community life — the Library cultivates community, as important for what it *does*, as for what it *has*. About 330,000 people visit in-person each year and even more visit our website. It is one of the busiest mid-sized libraries in Canada, and the most visited place in downtown St. Albert. Patrons borrow over 946,000 items annually and attend over 1,000 programs. 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.ab.ca

For more information, contact:

Heather McIntyre
Marketing Communications Specialist, Edmonton Public Library
780-496-7055
hmcintyre@epl.ca

Stacey Wenger
Public Services Librarian, Fort Saskatchewan Public Library
780-998-4275
swenger@fspl.ca

Julie Collison

Communications and Fund Development Coordinator, St. Albert Public Library
780-459-1750
jcollison@sapl.ab.ca

Sally Neal
Communications Specialist, Strathcona County Library
780-410-8614
sneal@sclibrary.ab.ca