

## Leacock Summer Festival - Bios of Presenters

**THU, July 19<sup>th</sup> 2:00 PM**

Mike's Choice



**JENNIFER ROBSON** is the USA Today and #1 Toronto Globe & Mail bestselling author of *SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE* and *AFTER THE WAR IS OVER*. She holds a doctorate in British economic and social history from Saint Antony's College, University of Oxford, where she was a Commonwealth Scholar and an SSHRC Doctoral Fellow. She lives in Toronto, Canada with her husband and young children.

**THU, July 19<sup>th</sup> 7:00 PM**

Fantasy & Sci-Fi



**J. M. FREY** (pronounced Fry) is a bisexual Canadian science fiction and fantasy author. While she is best known for her debut novel *Triptych*, Frey's work encompasses poetry, academic and magazine articles, screenplays, and short stories.



**LESLEY LIVINGSTON** is an award-winning author of teen and middle grade fiction, best known for *WONDROUS STRANGE*, recently named one of CBC's "100 YA Books That Make You Proud To Be Canadian". Lesley's current trilogy is a YA historical epic published by Penguin Razorbill (US) and HarperCollins (CAN) and tells the story of a 17-year-old girl's journey from fierce Celtic princess to female gladiator and darling of the Roman Empire. The first book, *THE VALIANT*, was released in 2017 and the sequel, *THE DEFIANT*, was released in February of this year. She is currently working on the third book, *THE TRIUMPHANT*, as well as a four-author/ four book series project (along with Ted Staunton, Kevin Sylvester, and Richard Scrimger) called *THE ALMOST EPIC SQUAD*, coming soon from Scholastic."

**FRI, July 20<sup>th</sup> 7:00 PM**  
**Humour Showcase**



**DAN NEEDLES** is best known as the playwright behind the popular Wingfield Series which has played across Canada for many years. It was performed at the Stratford Festival of Canada and was aired, in part, on the CBC and the Bravo Channel. His book *With Axe and Flask, The History of Persephone Township from Pre-Cambrian Times to the Present* was the winner of the 2003 Leacock Medal for Humour. On December 26, 2014, Dan Needles was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada.



**J.C. VILLAMERE**, who knew how to drive a Ski-Doo by age eight, reminds you that your country is wise and weird and you're in charge of keeping it that way.



**RANDAL GRAHAM** is a law professor at Western University. He lives in London, Ontario, with his wife and their Himalayan kitty. His book, *Beforelife*, was long listed for the 2018 Leacock Medal for Humour.

**SAT, July 21<sup>st</sup> 2:00 PM**  
**Tell Good Stories**



**BRAD WOODS** has told stories at festivals, theatres, conferences, prisons, churches and pubs all over North America and the UK. He tells traditional tales, literary classics and personal stories. Brad has told to all ages and in every type of venue imaginable. He is the recipient of the 2016 Alice Kane Award for Storytelling and used it to travel to Lesotho (Southern Africa) to tell, trade and collect stories on behalf of Bracelet of Hope.

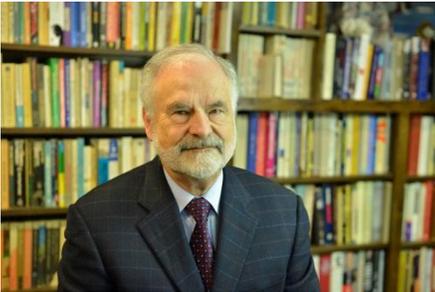
**SAT, Jul 21<sup>st</sup> 6:00 PM**

History



**TED BARRIS** is the author of 18 bestselling non-fiction books, including a series on wartime Canada. In June 2014, *The Great Escape: A Canadian Story* won the **2014 Libris Non-Fiction Book of the Year Award** (shared with astronaut Chris Hadfield).

This year, 2018, HarperCollins publishers will release Barris's 19<sup>th</sup> book – *Dam Busters: Canadian Airmen and the Secret Raid Against Nazi Germany* – about the famous 1943 attack on the Ruhr River dams that powered Nazi Germany's industrial war production.



**ALAN BOWKER** served for thirty-five years in Canada's foreign service, including as High Commissioner to Guyana. He has a PhD in Canadian history and has taught at Royal Military College. He lives in Ottawa. His latest book is *A Time Such as There Never Was Before: Canada After the Great War*. He has also edited two collections of essays by Stephen Leacock, whom he considers one of the most perceptive commentators on early twentieth-century Canada.

**SAT, Jul 21<sup>st</sup> 9:00 PM**

A Night Between the Covers



**MOLLY O'KEEFE** is the award-winning, USA Today Bestselling Author of over 30 romance novels. Her books have been included on many 'best of' lists including, Publisher's Weekly, Kirkus, Booklist and NPR. She lives in Toronto with her husband and two kids.



Multi-published author, **MARY SULLIVAN**, finds fulfillment in writing heart-warming, small town romance.

Her first book, *NO ORDINARY COWBOY*, was a finalist in Romance Writers of America's *GOLDEN HEART* contest. Her books have won awards—Romantic Times Reviewers' Choice, NJRW's Golden Leaf, The Reader's Crown and a Booksellers' Best Award—and glowing reviews.

For Mary, writing a book is very much like putting together a jigsaw puzzle without the final image. She indulges her passion for puzzles—particularly getting her daily cryptic crossword fix and putting together real jigsaw puzzles without the box—in her hometown of Toronto.

**SUN, July 22<sup>nd</sup> 7:00 PM**

A Night of Poetry



**SHANE NELSON** is a poet and physician who, in addition to several collections of poetry, has published in the genres of memoir, short fiction, biography and literary criticism. He is currently a fellow of the College of Family Physicians of Canada, a Vanier Scholar at McMaster University and editor for Victoria, B.C. publisher Frog Hollow Press. Though he lives in Oakville, Ontario, all of his work is rooted in rural New Brunswick.



**ANTONIO MICHAEL DOWNING** aka John Orpheus grew up in southern Trinidad, Northern Ontario, Brooklyn and Kitchener. He is now a musician, writer and activist based in Toronto. He has performed worldwide with artists such as Juno award nominees Alysha Brilla and Danny Michel as well as members of UK band Oasis. His 2010 debut novel, *Molasses*, was published to critical acclaim. His nonfiction manuscript, "Becoming John Orpheus", is a memoir of his obsession for radical identity transformations and how a tragic fire forced him to invent his "baddest, boldest self: John Orpheus" He leads the Pan-African, intersectional feminist art collective "Haus Orpheus" performing Afrobeats, dancehall, pop and hip-hop.