



AfterWords Literary Festival
Where **readers and writers** meet

IMPACT REPORT 2025

Raymond Sewell at a'tukwewinu'k: a night of Mi'kmaw
stories, photo by Nancy Forde





OUR FESTIVAL PROGRAMMING

From Kids' Day/Journée jeunesse on Saturday, November 1 right through to co-executive director Stephanie Domet's closing night interview with Terry O'Reilly on Sunday, November 9, the seventh annual AfterWords Literary festival brought writers and readers together across **nine days, eight venues, twenty-seven events, fifty-seven authors and hosts, sixty volunteers, and more than 1,800 combined audience.**

Elamin Abdelmahmoud and Andre Alexis in conversation at The Carleton, @stoometzphoto

FOCUS ON...

YOUTH MENTORSHIP

Our second annual Youth Writing Mentorship paired two young Nova Scotians—Eris Davis and Grayer Parsons—with two professional writers—Rebecca Thomas and Chad Lucas. This year we extended our mentorship program to include the HRM Youth Poet Laureate, Asha Abdosh, who was mentored by Sue Goyette. After a six-week mentorship, all six presented work at our Spring ForeWord festival in April.

YEAR-ROUND PROGRAMMING

In addition to our second annual Spring ForeWord, which featured our youth mentorship participants, along with Vinh Nguyen, Melikah Abdelmoumen, Fazeela Jiwa, Christine Wu, Jessica Bebenek, Clare Goulet, Catherine Bush, Jaime Burnet, KR Byggdin, and Emma Donohue, we also produced a Heritage Day event celebrating the legacy of Nora Bernard, and a night of Mi'kmaw storytelling as part of Nocturne.

Shelagh Rogers, Ma'lglit Pelletier, Andrea Currie.
Rebecca Thomas. @stoometzphoto





IN OUR COMMUNITY

We're rooted in our community—as readers, and writers, and as neighbours looking out for each other and for the land. In 2023, we built and installed a Little Free Library alongside the Halifax Community Fridge, and we deliver contributions to both each month. In 2024 we contributed seven new native-species saplings to be planted in the Public Gardens. This year, we welcomed youth participants from the MacPhee Centre for Creative Learning, who joined us at four AfterWords events (including Tuesday Night in Cherry Brook, pictured above, where participants interviewed authors including Ryad Assani-Razaki). Almost a dozen young people trained for eight weeks to become members of our Social Media Street Team,, developing content creation skills, and they had the chance, at festival events, to interview authors and audience members and to create social media content we'll share with our audience all year round.



VOLUNTEER POWER

Our volunteers are organized, committed, hospitable, helpful, and creative. This year, we lost one of our first and steadiest volunteers, Cindy Littlefair. She died of cancer on April 15, 2025, and as her final gift to AfterWords, she encouraged family and friends to donate in her name to our festival, and many did. We are so grateful to Cindy for everything she did for AfterWords—she volunteered at our first festival in 2019 and when we returned to in-person programming in 2022 and 2023, she was right back at it with us. In 2024, we instituted the Cindy Littlefair Volunteer of the Year Award, sponsored by Bookmark, and awarded the inaugural one to Cindy herself. This year's recipient is Nyah Lupick, who has been with us as a volunteer for four years, and who says: "My favourite part about volunteering is getting to meet new people who love reading and writing as much as I do. I have met so many interesting people through AfterWords who I never would have met otherwise."

Some of our amazing volunteers at AfterWords. @stoometzphoto



OUR MISSION AND VISION

AfterWords Literary Festival envisions an equitable society where citizens are equipped with the tools and the passion to read, write, and tell stories, are empowered to consider other points of view, and where the work of artists is respected as a necessary pillar of democracy.

Our sustainable festival offers accessible year-round programming and opportunities in order to foster a love of words, books, and stories; to develop aspiring writers of all ages and communities, especially those historically underserved; and to inspire people of all communities to read, learn, and create.

Poet Eric Schmaltz with Sue Sirrs and Laurie Stephenson at Cafe Lara. @seymoursnap

THANK YOU

Everything we do, we do lifted by our community, and that's you. Our donors, sponsors, funders, supporters, fans, audiences, authors, hosts, volunteers, board of directors, venues, partners, and collaborators—you mean so much to us. We never take your support lightly. Thank you for being part of our story.

David A. Robertson and Jesse Wentz
@stoometzphoto

