STRATFORD'S FIRST-EVER POET LAUREATE AND YOUTH POET LAUREATE ANNOUNCED

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(STRATFORD, ON) In support of the City of Stratford's Municipal Cultural Plan, Destination Stratford and the Stratford Public Library have partnered to embark on a three-year Stratford Poet Laureate pilot program.

Over the last 3 months, a diverse selection committee – including representatives from the City, Council and the community – shortlisted and interviewed candidates from the 6 applicants for Poet Laureate and 3 applicants for Youth Poet Laureate.

The program partners are pleased to announce **David Stones** as Stratford's inaugural Poet Laureate (3-year post) and **Quinn Mayer** as Youth Poet Laureate (1-year post).

"*Stratford is famous for its arts and culture, and so we are thrilled to help launch the inaugural Stratford Poet Laureate program with David Stones and Quinn Mayer as the first Poets Laureate for our city*," said Zac Gribble, Executive Director, Destination Stratford. "*A big thank you to all of the incredible Stratford poets who applied, and to the selection committee for all of their wisdom, guidance and support.*"

Stratford's Poet Laureate Program will celebrate the contributions of literary and spoken word artists to Stratford's cultural life and will provide new opportunities for our diverse and evolving community to gather and share Stratford stories with unique perspectives that reflect our past, represent our present, and help shape our future.

"*David and Quinn will both be wonderful literary ambassadors for Stratford. Their ideas for connecting with our community are exactly what we were hoping for and the Library is looking forward to help bring them to life. I think our residents are in for something really special*," said Krista Robinson, Stratford Public Library CEO.

The Poet Laureate position will serve as an ambassador for our arts, culture and heritage sectors, and help to celebrate poetry and the arts – particularly the literary arts. As an ambassador for poetry and literature, the Poet Laureate will be invited to attend events to share works and raise the profile of the literary arts in Stratford and the area.

"*I'm deeply honoured to represent poetry and the literary arts in this first-time Poet Laureate role*," Stones said. "*Stratford represents a unique and knitted quilt of many voices and diverse stories. They need to be heard. Through my words and related initiatives, I look forward to working with Destination Stratford and Stratford Public Library in building out a poetry/literary program that excites, energizes and further unifies our*

wonderful community."

The Youth Poet Laureate will provide a strong youth voice and will reach out to other youth to inspire interest in poetry and the arts – particularly the literary arts. As an ambassador for youth, poetry, language and the arts, the Youth Poet Laureate will be invited to attend events to share works and increase engagement of youth with the arts.

"*I feel so honoured to have this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,"* said Quinn Mayer. *"I look forward to sharing my love of poetry and the literary arts with the Stratford community!*"

Details about upcoming Poet Laureate activities will be posted in the coming weeks at splibrary.ca/poetlaureate.

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