

MASC Young Authors & Illustrators Festival

Nurturing creative talent for 29 years

Bios



KEVIN SANDS is the author of the bestselling *Blackthorn Key* adventure series: *The Blackthorn Key* (2015), *Mark of the Plague* (2016), *The Assassin's Curse* (2017), *Call of the Wraith* (2018), and *The Traitor's Blade* (2021). His books have won numerous awards including The Canadian Children's Book Centre (CCBC)'s John Spray Mystery, Red Cedar, IODE Violet Downey, and Geoffrey Bilson Historical Fiction. Kevin holds a pair of degrees in theoretical physics, which he mines to create the alchemic potions and ear-splitting explosions that rock his novels. He lives in London, Ontario. www.kevinsandsbooks.com



JESSICA SCOTT KERRIN has authored 16 works of fiction to date. Her most recent novel, which is titled *Clear Skies*, centers on a budding astronomer who suffers from claustrophobia. Book honours include: finalist, Book of the Year for Children Award (CLA); New York Public Library's Top 100; Best Books of Exceptional Caliber (CCBC); Best of Books (Horn Book); and Notable Books List (ALA). Jessica lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and is walking distance to the observatory at Saint Mary's University. www.jessicascottkerrin.com



MELANIE FLORENCE is an award-winning writer of Cree and Scottish heritage. Her close relationship with her grandfather sparked her interest in writing about Indigenous themes and characters. Her picture books have won several major awards including the TD Children's Literature, Golden Oak and First Nation Communities READ (for *Missing Nimama*) and the Ruth and Sylvia Schwartz Children's Book Award (for *Stolen Words*). Her teen novels include *Just Lucky, He Who Dreams, The Missing* and her recent release, *Dreaming in Colour* (2020). Melanie lives in Toronto, Ontario. www.melanieflorence.com/my-story



KATHERINE BATTERSBY is the critically-acclaimed author and illustrator of eleven picture books published around the world, including *Trouble, Perfect Pigeons* and the popular *Squish Rabbit* series. Her books have received glowing reviews in The New York Times, starred Kirkus reviews and been named CBC Children's Choice books. Her debut graphic novel series, *Cranky Chicken*, will be published in 2021. In another life, Katherine worked as a pediatric occupational therapist, specializing as a children's counsellor. She grew up in Australia but now calls Canada her home. www.katherinebattersby.com



MONIQUE POLAK is the author of 30 books for young people. Her most recent titles are the historical novels *The Taste of Rain* (2019) and *Room For One More* (2019) and *Princess Angelica, Junior Reporter* (2020). Monique is a two-time winner of the Quebec Writers' Federation Prize for Children's and YA Fiction. *Room for One More* was shortlisted for the Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People. Monique teaches at Marianopolis College and is an active freelance journalist. She lives in Montreal, Quebec. www.moniquepolak.com



KEAN SOO is the author and illustrator of the Shuster Award-winning graphic novel series *Jellaby* and *March Grand Prix*. He was an assistant editor and contributor to the Harvey Award-winning *FLIGHT* comic anthologies. His most recent book (as illustrator) is *The Fake-Chicken Kung Fu Fighting Blues*. Kean served as Writer-in Residence for the Toronto District School Board from 2014 to 2016. Born in the United Kingdom and raised in Hong Kong, he now lives in Toronto, Ontario. www.keaner.net/comics

Event Host



JUSTJAMAAL THEPOET is an award-winning poet, arts educator, songwriter and recording/performance artist. He has brought his work to audiences nationally and abroad and served as Ottawa's poet laureate from 2017-2019 as well as Carleton University's Music Program Artist in Residence for the 2019-2020 school year. He resides in Ottawa with his wife and six children, using the capital and his performance studio, The Origin Arts & Community Centre, as his launch pad to teach, mentor and advocate for the arts. www.justjamaalthe poet.com