



St. Albert Mayor's Celebration of the Arts

March 18, 2026 • The Arden Theatre



MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



I feel fortunate to be joining the line of Mayors who have come before me in the tradition of recognizing and celebrating the arts in St. Albert. Becoming the torchbearer of this ceremony designed to honour the importance of artists and arts organizations in our community who exist to create, inspire and share the value of creativity is not a task I take lightly, but one I welcome wholeheartedly.

This year's group of extraordinary nominees exemplifies the diversity of artistic experiences that exist throughout our community; the nominees span nationalities, ages and practices, and yet find shared joy and meaning by using their talents to bring people together and provide our residents with a continued sense of belonging.

Art exists everywhere we look. Be it benches in parks, banners on street signs or sculptures lining our beautiful river trails, each installation has a story and a history within our city that connects generations, experiences and people. The nominees here this evening embody that spirit of connection and creation, and I am grateful to be here to join with them in recognizing themselves and their peers for their exemplary contributions to artforms that connect us with shared purpose because of our differences and make our world a brighter place.

On behalf of City Council, I welcome everyone to the 2026 St. Albert Mayor's Celebration of the Arts and invite you to continue supporting and cultivating the arts in our community.

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read "Scott Olivieri". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Scott Olivieri
Mayor, The Botanical Arts City



We respectfully acknowledge that we are on Treaty 6 territory, traditional lands of First Nations and Métis Peoples. As treaty People, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, we share the responsibility for stewardship of this beautiful land.

THIS EVENING'S PROGRAM

Reception and Performances	Neda Yamach
Greeting	Eve Gadoury-Wong
Welcome	Mayor Scott Olivieri
Host	Samantha Williams-Chapelsky
Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emerging Artist Award• Mid - Career Artist Award• Youth Artist Award• St. Albert Gazette Arts Champion Award• Lifetime Achievement in the Arts Award

AWARD DESIGN ARTIST



Donna Hillier

I am a self-taught stained-glass artist living in St. Albert, Alberta.

It started with seeing a stained-glass panel in a store window. It was my mission to make it. I may have been naive, but many years later I made that panel, and my journey began.

Working with cold glass, clay and nature I make an idea wander through frivolity and intuition until it becomes my finished vision.

My work has found its way across the country and for many years was the gift to the sponsors of The Northern Alberta International Children's Festival of the Arts.

HOST



Samantha Williams-Chapelsky

Samantha Williams-Chapelsky is an accomplished visual artist who earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Alberta. She is widely recognized for her abstracted landscape paintings that explore the interplay of textured acrylics and oils. Samantha's work is exhibited in both public and commercial galleries throughout Canada and the United States, earning acclaim for her unique artistic approach.

In addition to her studio practice, Samantha is a dedicated educator and mentor. She leads workshops in plein air painting, studio techniques, and business practices for artists, helping students hone their creative and professional skills. Samantha also hosts an annual European retreat focused on acrylic techniques and plein air painting, offering artists an immersive experience in the scenic outdoors. Through various studio workshops across Canada, she fosters a tactile, expressionistic approach to painting, while also providing valuable guidance on social media, crafting artist statements and navigating the modern art world for emerging and contemporary artists.

YOUTH GREETING

Eve Gadoury-Wong

I am proud of my mixed ancestry, and how I can weave it into my passion for art. My father is of Chinese descent, and I am learning more every day about my mother's French and Indigenous roots. My mother's grandparents were raised on the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation in Maniwaki, Quebec. Later, they moved to northern Ontario and shared only small parts of their culture to protect themselves from the hardships faced by First Nations people.

With my mother, I am learning to embrace our diverse heritage, which includes Nipissing, Algonquin, and Métis ancestry. Together, we honour our culture, reclaim our stories, and use our voices in ways that were not always possible for the generations before us; for me, that voice is expressed in my art.

PERFORMER



Neda Yamach

Neda Yamach is a sought-after chamber musician, soloist and teacher known for her captivating performances and innovative collaborations. With over a decade of experience as a member of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, she has established herself as a valued member of Edmonton's musical community.

Neda received a Bachelor of Music degree in Music Performance at McGill University and continued her studies at the Manhattan School of Music. Additional training and development was pursued at Meadowmount School of Music in New York, and the Banff Centre for the Arts, under the guidance of world-renowned instructors.

Although classically trained, her versatility spans across various genres, including pop, eastern, and jazz styles of music. This range has allowed her to collaborate with many Edmonton-based ensembles, including the Alberta Baroque Ensemble, Chamber Orchestra of Edmonton, New Music Edmonton, Obsessions Octet, and Candlelight Concerts.

In addition to performing across Canada, Neda has also traveled the world, sharing her music with audiences in Poland, Greece, Turkey and the Czech Republic. She has performed twice at Carnegie Hall, once with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra and once with Juno-nominated Obsessions Octet.

In 2013, Neda was honored with the City of Edmonton's Arts and Culture Performance Award, recognizing her exceptional contributions to the arts.

Neda is performing with her sister, Nava.

NOMINEES

EMERGING ARTIST AWARD

Credits an artist in the early stages of a career, generally in their first five years of practice, who is working towards becoming a recognized professional or established artist while engaging with the community.



Jenna Moan • Painting

Jenna became an artist at a young age after watching her older brother draw several characters from their favourite shows. Her recent foray back into creating art started with her Portraits of the Wild series in the summer of 2024. Jenna has always felt more comfortable in the presence of animals than with people and feels a real connection to these portraits while she paints them.



Dallas Loyd Stainthorp • Writer/Poet

Dallas is a poet who expresses through prose, narrative and explorative journaling as well as songwriting. Residing in St. Albert, Alberta, he has used his writing to contribute to organizational culture and mental health programs, local poetry club anthologies, local writing zines and literary accompaniment to art installations. He is passionate about community-building and championing other literary artists, especially youth artists. He is currently enamored by the expression of human experience and others' interpretation of the profound transformation experienced through creativity, healing and personal exploration.



Saraswoti Lamichhane • Writer/Poet

Saraswoti Lamichhane is a poet, translator and editor. Her work is lyrical, evocative and deeply rooted in both Nepali heritage and Canadian experience and has been published internationally. Her debut poetry collection is forthcoming with Mawenzi House Press in June 2026. She is also the co-author of Six Strings: A Joint Anthology of Poems (2011) and co-editor of Kavya: Representative Nepali Poetry in English (2023). An active literary voice, Saraswoti has been a featured reader at the Edmonton Poetry Festival, AWP Conference, World Poetry Cafe and other venues. She holds an MA in English (Pokhara University) and a Creative Writing Certificate (University of Toronto).

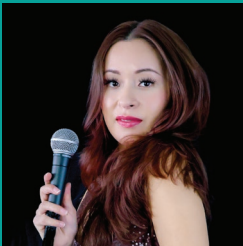
NOMINEES



Daphne Charrois • Actress/Dancer/Singer/Writer

Daphne Charrois is a professional actress, singer-songwriter, dancer and playwright. She is a proud Canadian, bilingual, queer artist, born and raised in the small town of Legal, Alberta.

A graduate of The American Musical and Dramatic Academy in New York City, she earned a certificate in The Musical Theatre Integrated Program. She is the playwright and lyricist of two original musicals, *The Spotlight's Shadow* and *Fool's Gold*. Her debut single "Don't Call Me Baby" is streaming worldwide, and both *Fool's Gold* and *The Spotlight's Shadow* are available as full cast albums. Daphne is also the Founder and Artistic Director of Light in the Attic Productions, a non-profit by actors, for actors, dedicated to helping performers find their light and tell original stories.



Alexa Leon • Singer/Writer

Alexa Leon is a 22-year-old Canadian Mexican singer and songwriter who has been performing since the age of nine. Her musical journey began at Giovanni's School of Music and continued at St. Albert's Visionary Centre for the Performing Arts. During her time at Paul Kane High School, she joined an all-female band, King Casserole, performing classics from the '70s.

Her first major stage experience for Amplify's Battle of the Bands marked a turning point and since then, Alexa has shared her passion through performances with the St. Albert Latin Cultural Association and memorable moments like singing "O Canada" in English and French in 2024.

NOMINEES

MID-CAREER ARTIST AWARD

Recognizes artists whose professional careers have passed the early stages, have produced a reasonable body of work, and have attained a fair degree of public exposure. Must have been practicing professionally for at least eight years to apply to this category and is a recognized amateur or professional in their field.



Cristian de la Luna • Musician

Cristian de la Luna's pop-Latin-folk music is both contagious and inviting. This versatile artist combines the simplicity of folk storytelling, Caribbean percussion and the jazzy warmth of brass instruments. Deeply rooted in his Colombian roots, Cristian has two albums to his credit, both in Spanish and French. His most recent record work *¿Qué Pasará?* won him the Edmonton Music Prize and the Envol Prize of the French Language Organization in Alberta (Le Rafa). He was also nominated for the WCMA's 2023 Awards in the global music category.



Phillip Gagnon • Painter

Phillip is inspired by creation, particularly the beauty in Western Canada and its wildlife as well as the views of his travels to various locations, especially Italy and Hawaii. He still loves to learn new things and try various media and methods to keep his creativity fresh and alive. His paintings have been described by others as infused with hope and he draws on the well of his relationships with people and deep faith to inspire his creativity.

NOMINEES



Eunju Park • Collage Artist

Eunju is a self-taught Korean letter Hanji collage artist who fell in love with art later in life. What began as a way to heal and overcome depression from the suicide of her father has become a joyful journey of sharing Korean culture through Hanji traditional Korean paper and Hangul, the Korean alphabet. Her work blends affirmations like "you matter" and "love yourself" with the texture and spirit of Hanji to express hope and resilience.

One of Eunju's proudest moments was seeing her art displayed on streetlamps in downtown St. Albert. In 2026, she will be hosting workshops at the International Children's Festival of the Arts, an incredible opportunity to share positivity and creativity within this inclusive community.

YOUTH ARTIST AWARD

Celebrates individuals between the ages of 13 and 21.



Aveya • Singer/Songwriter

Aveya is a country singer and songwriter with a big voice and even bigger dreams. Music has always been her way of telling stories and finding her space, especially while making her way through the later stages of elementary school.

Some highlights of her journey so far include winning Global Country 2025, singing anthems for the Edmonton Riverhawks, the Rural Municipalities of Alberta and the Rainmaker Rodeo, and performing on the Rising Star Stage at Big Valley Jamboree.

NOMINEES



Oyemen Agbonison • Poet

Oyemen Agbonison has been captivating audiences with her heartfelt poetry that blends culture, identity and lived experiences. What began as a debut performance at Taste of Africa has blossomed into a journey of writing and presenting at community and cultural events across St. Albert and beyond.

Her poetry is sparked by everyday life-moments of joy, struggle, resilience and celebrations within her community. She writes to inspire, empower and connect.



Keira Myer • Singer/Songwriter

Based in St. Albert, Alberta, Keira is a rising youth talent in the country music scene. She has played in shows and events across Alberta, including the Horizon Stage at the Big Valley Jamboree for three consecutive years. She was recently nominated for the Country Music Alberta Youth Horizon Award and performed as part of the 14th Annual Awards Show.

Other recent performances include the Canadian Country Music Association Country Crawl, the Fall 2024 Country Music Alberta Songwriters Showcase, as well as the Blue Jays Sessions: Spring Addition. With two singles already released to streaming platforms, “Dance Around in Firelight” and “Soundtrack to Somebody’s Something” and 11,000 streams between them, she is excited to be working on some brand new music. Keira’s captivating storytelling and her innate ability to connect with audiences is what makes her shows memorable.

NOMINEES

ST. ALBERT GAZETTE ARTS CHAMPION AWARD



Recognizing an individual, organization or corporation who makes an exceptional contribution to the arts in St. Albert as a leader, volunteer, advocate, supporter, sponsor and/or philanthropist.



St. Albert Singers Guild • Choir

The St. Albert Singers began as a "little choir" in a church basement in 1968 under the direction of Dr. Lillian Upright. In 1985, Upright created the St. Albert Singers Guild. With direction from accomplished conductors like Tim Hankewich, Jan Dammann, Eric Mierau and Criselda Mierau, the choir has built a strong reputation in the St. Albert Community. In 2023, the current Artistic Director Caroline Crispin took the helm to keep the organization going strong, moving them into their fifth decade. What began as a mixed choir of 24 voices grew to almost 50 singers with many more on the waiting list. Eventually the Guild expanded its programming to include six choirs: The St. Albert Singers, The St. Albert Women's Vocal Ensemble and four children's choirs.



Groovy Gang Choir • Choir

All members of the St. Albert Seniors' Association are in the Groovy Gang and rehearse every Monday. They go into the community to present free of charge concerts in long term care centers and senior residences. In the last year, they have performed over 20 concerts and had 10 bookings in the fall to honour Remembrance Day and to celebrate Christmas.

The Groovy Gang are simply thrilled to sing with each other and to share their art with our St. Albert community. The immense appreciation they share with us is a joy to witness.

NOMINEES



Emily Baker • Curator

Emily is the curator of the Art Gallery of St. Albert and responsible for each of the Gallery's exhibitions, from research to installation and interpretation to celebration. Since taking on the role of Curator in January 2021, she has worked on 61 exhibitions, encompassing a dazzling range of art styles, media and stories.

Over her career, she has worked with over a thousand artists from across the province, the nation and a handful from around the world. She has hung tens of thousands of works of all shapes, sizes, materials and media.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN THE ARTS AWARD

The recipient will be this year's inductee into the Cultural Wall of Fame.



Ryan Arcand • Singer/Dancer/Educator

Ryan exemplifies staying true to his Indigenous culture, family and community. Ryan has contributed thousands of volunteer hours over the past seventeen years, sharing his gifts as a singer, dancer and knowledge keeper. Ryan has taught cultural classes, sung and drummed in local schools since 2016.

His career has taken him around the world four times with the White Braid Society and White Buffalo Society, performing for dignitaries including the Queen of England and several former Canadian prime ministers. A three-time dance champion and two-time singing champion, he continues to pass on the teachings shared with him by many respected Elders.

NOMINEES



Gracie Jane Genereux • Gallery Owner

Gracie's love for art started as a child and continued in adulthood when in the early 90's she opened a wearable art store in Edmonton, where she sold clothes adorned with her unique designs. Each piece was a wearable canvas.

At the age of 64, inspired by her lifelong love of art and her experience in the bar business, she brought her dream to life: a Boutique Gallery Bar by Gracie Jane. Gracie Jane's walls are alive with colour, laughter and stories, each piece telling its own tale. The best part? Everything is for sale, including chairs, tables and even ceiling tiles, inviting visitors to take home a piece of art.

Her lifelong commitment to the arts was celebrated in a heartfelt documentary called "Love Gracie," which showcased her remarkable journey and inspiring outlook on life.



Bruce Allen • Painter

Bruce has been passionate about art since junior high school where he completed a concrete and wire mesh sculpture for the Bramalea Secondary School courtyard. In high school, he created an ice sculpture for a competition and began painting at that time. After coming to St. Albert in 1988, Bruce once again immersed himself in painting, completing many commissions and taking part in several exhibitions. His best-known work is at The Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute where six large paintings hang.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN THE ARTS AWARD RECIPIENT



RYAN ARCAND

Ryan Arcand has lived in St. Albert for 17 years and raised his family in this beautiful city. His grandparents were born just outside of St. Albert, and he visited them often throughout his life. He carries many memories of watching St. Albert grow from a small town into a vibrant city. These memories, and the time he spent with family who lived here, give his connection to this place deep meaning.

Ryan began singing and dancing in 1978. Over the years, he's been blessed with guidance and teachings from many elders and mentors who shaped his path. Some of the highlights of his career include singing for the Queen of England twice and performing for four former Canadian Prime Ministers and dignitaries from around the world.

Ryan has also had the honour of traveling the globe four times with two incredible performing groups, the White Braid Society and the White Buffalo Society. He is a former three-time dance champion and a two-time singing champion!

He worked for the City of St. Albert from 2010 to 2011 and has performed at the International Children's Festival of the Arts. Since 2016, he has been teaching cultural classes in local schools and singing and drumming with students across St. Albert. Sharing what he has learned and passing wisdom to the people of St. Albert brings him tremendous joy.

Over the years, Ryan has had the privilege of meeting and working with many wonderful Mayors and City Councillors. When he first started singing in 1978, he could never have imagined the places it would take him or the life it would build. He is deeply grateful to his loving wife, children and family, and thanks God and Mother Earth every day for the life he's been given.

Ryan is filled with gratitude for those memories and for the small-town heart that still lives within this amazing city. He is proud to call St. Albert his home for many years to come. Kinaskumtanawow.

Tapwe Na Na Skamun (Thank You).

Ryan is a Cree-speaking man.

CULTURAL WALL OF FAME

The Lifetime Achievement in the Arts Award recipient will be inducted into the Cultural Wall of Fame.

The Cultural Wall of Fame recognizes individuals and groups who have not only made outstanding contributions to arts and culture, but also demonstrated a mastery of their craft which has brought recognition to St. Albert.

The Gathering, which is on permanent display in St. Albert Place, is a large-scale artwork created by Kyle Walton. Each year, the recipient's name is added to this piece.



THE GATHERING - ARTIST BIO



In 2007, St. Albert native and Paul Kane High School graduate Kyle Walton opened Hammer & Forge with his wife Susanne. Creating one-of-a-kind, hand-crafted artistic architectural ironwork, Kyle uses traditional techniques to design elegant custom products such as gates, railings, light fixtures, furniture, sculpture and decorative items. A full-scale and comprehensive studio, Hammer & Forge also installs all the products they build to ensure quality is maintained from design to completion.

PREVIOUS INDUCTEES

2024	Diane Gwilliam • Potter/Arts Facilitator
2020	Carol Watamaniuk • Arts Champion
2019	Lewis Lavoie • Visual Artist
2018	Dr. Lillian Upright • Choralist/Educator/Pianist
2017	Michael Massey • Conductor/Pianist
2016	Alan Nutall • Visual Artist
2016	Elke Blodgett • Visual Artist
2015	Frances Schuchard • Musician/Educator
2014	Mick Lazar • Luthier
2013	Maureen Rooney and Paul Punyi • Educational Theatre Artists
2011	Pat Wagensveld • Visual Artist
2010	Joanne Drummond • Visual Artist
2009	Nell Sadee • Potter



THANK YOU

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