

MURDER, MEMOIR, AND MOTHERS - QUEENSTOWN WRITERS FESTIVAL 2023

Expect the mysterious, the morbid, and insights into the deeply personal act of memoir writing at the 2023 Queenstown Writers Festival.

The team behind the festival have brought together a small group of acclaimed writers from across Aotearoa New Zealand to discuss bold ideas and their latest literary works, on the weekend of November 11-12 at Te Atamira.

And in a new segment, we have invited six talented Queenstown writers to share work in a sampler session built around a theme of arrival - physical arrivals and those that happen inwardly.

Headlining the festival is writer, producer and director Dame Gaylene Preston who shared her story as a trail-blazing pioneer of New Zealand's film industry in her recent memoir *Gaylene's Take*. Dame Gaylene will discuss her life and works with local filmmaker Holly Wallace and hold a screenwriting workshop with a small number of participants helping take stories from their imagination to the screen.

We welcome award-winning filmmaker Michael Bennett (Ngāti Pūkiao, Ngāti Whakāue) who took the publishing world by storm with his debut novel, the crime thriller, *Better the Blood*. A writer of wide-reaching ability and a fighter against institutionalised racism and injustice, he played a key role in having Teina Pora's wrongful conviction for the 1992 rape and murder of Susan Burdett overturned.

Megan Nicol Reed is a former journalist and columnist. She has channelled her delight in sending up the middle classes, and writing about the absurdity and mundanity of modern parental concerns, into her debut novel *One of Those Mothers*. We expect her conversation with Queenstown author Jane Bloomfield to be funny, insightful and irreverent.

Barbara Else is one of Aotearoa's literary greats whose beautifully published memoir *Laughing at the Dark*, tells her tale of finding the courage to break free of societal constraints. She will speak on writing memoirs, at Arrowtown Lifestyle Village, ahead of an on-stage conversation with Megan Nicol Reed.

Finally we welcome Cristina Sanders who reimagined the sinking of one of New Zealand's most famous shipwrecks - the General Grant - and the lives of 15 survivors on the sub-Antarctic Auckland Islands, in *Mrs Jewell and the Wreck of the General Grant*. She shares the stage with Wānaka businessman Bill Day, who spent 35 years and millions of dollars on five unsuccessful attempts to recover the General Grant and its golden treasure.

Festival chair Tanya Surrey said the trust aimed to provide an eclectic mix in the programme and hoped to see many local readers and writers at events.

Dame Gaylene Preston's screenwriting workshop offered an opportunity to learn from a legend of New Zealand filmmaking, she said.

"We are also pleased to be providing an opportunity for some of our up and coming local writers to take the stage."

Tickets for the 2023 Queenstown Writers Festival will go live on Eventfinda on Thursday, September 14. Earlybird prices apply until October 14.

More information is available on our website at qtwritersfestival.nz (from September 14) or on our Facebook page.

