

# HONORARY DEGREE

A decorated and celebrated Métis novelist, poet, filmmaker and author, Katherena Vermette is one of the most important and recognized writers in Canada today.

Known for the generosity, care and engagement with which she approaches her work, Vermette is equally gifted at writing in several genres, including poetry, fiction, graphic novels, children's picture books and film.

Vermette grew up in Winnipeg's vibrant, multifaceted North End which continues to inspire her writing. The disappearance and death of her brother when she was 14 profoundly shaped her worldview and activated her sense of injustice at the discrimination of Indigenous peoples.

Her first published book of poems, *North End Love Songs*, is a beautifully polished and deeply thoughtful work exploring the contemporary resonances of place, family and Métis history. It was recognized with the prestigious Governor General's Award for Poetry.

Building on the themes of her previous work, her children's book series, *The Seven Teachings Stories*, explores the Anishinaabe Teachings of the Seven Grandfathers in a way that is easy for young people to absorb.

A former kindergarten teacher, Vermette's passion for empowering and educating Indigenous youth inspired her to write the *A Girl Called Echo* series of graphic novels that help bridge the gap between Métis history—especially that of Métis women—and the cultural and personal preoccupations of contemporary Indigenous youth. In *The Girl and the Wolf*, Vermette creates an empowering Indigenous twist on a classic children's wolf narrative which earned her top spots on Kirkus' Best Books and USBBY's Outstanding International Books lists.

In 2016, Vermette released her award-winning novel *The Break*. Winner of the Amazon.ca First Novel Award, Vermette's devastating examination of the mechanisms of colonial power and lateral violence that shape and destroy lives in Winnipeg's inner-city neighborhoods, and the familial love and profound connections that bind people together, became a Canadian bestseller. Widely taught in universities across the country and beyond, it has been the subject of numerous articles and dissertation chapters.

An ambitious and prolific talent, Vermette is also a filmmaker, and released her powerful, evocative prize-winning film *This River* in 2016. Her second novel, *The Strangers*, was released in 2021, and won the Atwood Gibson Writers' Trust Fiction Prize.

Beyond her literary triumphs, Vermette has been a generous community member who, through her writing workshops, has continually made space for other artists to share their voices with a wider audience.

The University of Manitoba is proud to award a Doctor of Letters, honoris causa, to Katherena Vermette for her prolific literary contributions which have brought the challenges of Indigenous peoples into the global consciousness.



## KATHERENA VERMETTE

BA(Winn.), MFA(Br.Col.)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 3 PM