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## Koffler Centre of the Arts launches expanded Books & Ideas series with exciting fall 2019 season line-up

**Jenny Heijun Wills, September 17**  
**Wayde Compton & April dela Noche Milne, October 6**  
**Francine Cunningham & Helen Knott, October 30**  
**Abby Stein, November 21**

**Toronto, ON, August 22, 2019** – The **Koffler Centre of the Arts** is thrilled to announce the year-round expansion of its **Books & Ideas** series, with the support of a generous bequest from the Joseph Koenig estate and the ongoing support of lead series donor Dorothy Shoichet & Family.

The fall 2019 Books & Ideas season will feature author **Jenny Heijun Wills** (*Older Sister. Not Necessarily Related: A Memoir*); poet and writer **Wayde Compton** and artist **April dela Noche Milne** (*The Blue Road: A Fable of Migration*); Indigenous writers **Francine Cunningham** (*On/Me*) and **Helen Knott** (*In My Moccasins: A Memoir of Resilience*); and trans-activist and author **Abby Stein** (*Becoming Eve: My Journey from Ultra-Orthodox Rabbi to Transgender Woman*). The authors will launch their new books in Toronto and appear in on-stage conversations.

Koffler Centre of the Arts' **Books & Ideas** series spotlights provocative writers, artists and thinkers, celebrating literary excellence and fostering critical dialogue through compelling book launches, author talks and on-stage interviews. With a thematic focus on counter-narratives, the fall 2019 series features books that employ **memoir**, **poetry**, and the **graphic novel** form as tools of resistance.

"The expansion of our Books & Ideas series to a year-round program continues the Koffler's longstanding interest in presenting cutting-edge writers and thinkers who are tackling some of the most urgent issues of our time," said Executive Director, Karen Tisch. "From migration to transnational adoption, Indigenous resilience and trans activism, our fall Books & Ideas line-up promises to challenge, provoke and entertain. We are deeply grateful to the Joseph Koenig estate and the Shoichet family for making the expansion of our literary series possible and are delighted to bring these talented writers to our stage."

Tickets for each event are \$20 for General Admission, and \$10 for Students/Underemployed. Series tickets are also available – \$60 for all 4 talks (General Admission), \$30 for Students/Underemployed. Tickets are available online at <http://kofflerarts.org/books&ideas>

Books & Ideas fall season is presented in partnership with **Diaspora Dialogues** and **Ben McNally Books**, with generous support from Dorothy Shoichet & Family, the Estate of Joseph Koenig, the Koffler Family Foundation, the Ontario Arts Council, and CIBC Wood Gundy. Thanks to our Books & Ideas Media Partner, the Toronto Star.

For more information and bios, and a full list of the Koffler's Fall 2019 programs, please visit [kofflerarts.org](http://kofflerarts.org)

## **Listing & Program Information:**

**Jenny Heijun Wills**

**Tuesday, September 17, 2019 | 7 PM**

**CSI Annex, 720 Bathurst St, Toronto | \$10–\$20**

**Co-presented by Diaspora Dialogues**

The Koffler's Books & Ideas Series presents the launch of Jenny Heijun Wills' memoir, *Older Sister. Not Necessarily Related*.

Jenny Heijun Wills was born in Korea and adopted as an infant into a white family in small-town Canada. In her late twenties, she reconnected with her first family and returned to Seoul. In her breathtaking new memoir, *Older Sister. Not Necessarily Related*, Wills traces her heartrending journey of reunion with her Korean mother, father, siblings, and extended family. Delving into gender, class, racial and ethnic complexities, the book describes in visceral lyrical prose the painful ripple effects that follow a child's removal from a family and the rewards that flow from both struggle and forgiveness. Wills will appear in conversation with Toronto novelist Carrienne Leung (*The Wondrous Woo* and *That Time I Loved You*.)

Presented with the support of Penguin Random House Canada.

**Wayde Compton & April dela Noche Milne**

**Sunday, October 6, 2019 | 3 PM**

**CSI Annex, 720 Bathurst St, Toronto | \$10–\$20**

The Koffler's Books & Ideas Series presents the launch of Wayde Compton and artist April dela Noche Milne's *The Blue Road: A Fable of Migration*.

With millions of people displaced each year by conflict, violence and persecution, migration is undoubtedly one of the critical issues of our times. In *The Blue Road: A Fable of Migration*, acclaimed poet and prose writer Wayde Compton and illustrator April dela Noche Milne's graphic novel debut, a young migrant girl embarks on a treacherous journey only to discover that leaving, arriving and returning are all just different words for the same thing: starting over. Lacuna is a girl without a family, a past, or a proper home. She lives alone in a swamp made of ink, but with the help of Polaris, a will-o'-the-wisp, she embarks for the fabled Northern Kingdom, where she might find people like her. A tender and timely graphic novel for readers of all ages, *The Blue Road* explores the world from a migrant's perspective with dreamlike wonder.

**Francine Cunningham & Helen Knott**

**Wednesday, October 30, 2019 | 7 PM**

**Native Canadian Centre of Toronto | 16 Spadina Rd, Toronto | \$10–\$20**

**Co-presented by Diaspora Dialogues**

The Koffler's Books & Ideas Series is proud to present the Toronto launch of two powerful debut books by Indigenous women authors.

Francine Cunningham is constantly reminded that she doesn't fit the desired expectations of the world as a white-passing, city-raised Indigenous woman with mental illness. In her debut poetry collection *On/Me*, Cunningham explores, with keen attention and poise, what it means to be forced to exist within the margins.

*In My Own Moccasins: A Memoir of Resilience* is Helen Knott's unflinching account of addiction, intergenerational trauma, and the wounds brought on by sexual violence. It is also the story of sisterhood, the power of ceremony, the love of family, and the possibility of redemption.

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Presented with the support of University of Regina Press, and Judith Moses & Peter Lyman.

**Abby Stein**

**Thursday, November 21, 2019 | 7 PM**

**CSI Annex, 720 Bathurst St, Toronto | \$10-\$20**

The Koffler's Books & Ideas Series is thrilled to present the Toronto launch of Abby Stein's *Becoming Eve: My Journey from Ultra-Orthodox Rabbi to Transgender Woman*.

Trans activist Abby Stein was raised in a Hasidic Jewish community in Brooklyn, isolated in a culture that lives according to the laws and practices of eighteenth-century Eastern Europe. As the first son in a dynastic rabbinical family, Abby was poised to become a leader of the next generation of Hasidic Jews. However, from a young age, Abby felt certain that she was a girl. In her ground-breaking memoir *Becoming Eve: My Journey From Ultra-Orthodox Rabbi To Transgender Woman*, Abby traces her extraordinary coming-out story, from suppressing her desire for a new body, to looking for answers in forbidden religious texts, to orchestrating her final exodus from ultra-Orthodox manhood to mainstream femininity – a radical choice that forced her to leave home, her family and way of life. Powerful in the truths it reveals about biology, culture, faith, and identity, *Becoming Eve* poses the enduring question: How far will you go to become the person you were meant to be?

## **ABOUT THE KOFFLER CENTRE OF THE ARTS**

The Koffler Centre of the Arts is a cultural platform that explores critical ideas and concerns of our time through exhibitions, publications, performances, literary events and digital initiatives. We examine complex issues through transformative art experiences that stimulate intercultural dialogue and position Jewish identity in conversation with diverse perspectives and global voices. The Koffler Gallery and its administrative offices are located at Artscape Youngplace, in Toronto's vibrant West Queen West art and design district.

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**For further information and high resolution images for media use, contact:**

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