

BOOKS

Russ López captures the Provincetown spirit in short story collection

By [Annie Sarlin](#) Globe Correspondent, Updated June 24, 2026, 12:22 p.m.



"Provincetown Stories" by Russ López. SHAWMUT PENINSULA PRESS/ROBIN SHERMAN

While working on his nonfiction book “The Hub of the Gay Universe: An LGBTQ History of Boston, Provincetown, and Beyond,” author Russ López loved researching P-town.

Known for its vibrant art scene and queer community, Provincetown has a longstanding reputation of embracing individuality.

“There’s something about the town and the natural environment there that encourages people to let go, to not be self-conscious, and to try to express themselves as truthfully as possible,” López said.

When writing, however, he felt he couldn’t fully convey the place’s unique character just with hard facts.

“I wanted people just to understand that wonderful feeling you get when you’re there,” he said. “To do that, I needed to go to fiction, so I could spend more time describing things. Everything is still true in the book, it’s still real in the book, but it’s also my interpretation of it.”

Over the course of two years, López wrote several short stories about P-town, which he published in various magazines before compiling them into the “Provincetown Stories” collection. He released the book via his publishing company, Shawmut Peninsula Press, on March 1.

This weekend, he heads to East End Books Ptown to celebrate the book’s release with the community it tells the story of.

The author has a longstanding connection with the seaside town. He first visited in 1981 while attending college in Boston, and has continued to come back ever since.

“I just fell in love with the place,” López said.

Now, over 40 years later, he and his husband lives part time in P-town, experiences that largely informed his writing.

Each story follows characters inspired by the town's real-life occupants, from tourists to longtime locals. Over the course of the collection, López aimed to reflect the town's diverse population.

"I really wanted the full range of stories," he said. "It isn't just gay people in the book; there's straight people and bi people, lesbians and gender queer people, everybody's in it, because everybody's in Provincetown."

The stories cover a variety of topics, from funny tales representing the local artist community like a recounting of "the Great Adverb War," where local writers start rioting in the streets in a heated battle between those for and against the use of modifiers, to more serious issues, including a story about a man whose lover died of AIDS.

Regardless of his writing subject, López's love for the town shines through. From the feeling of watching a sunset over the harbor to riding a bike over the dunes, the book is full of descriptions reflective of his own experiences in P-town.

"Fifty years from now, I want [people] to say, 'if you want to know what Provincetown was like 50 years ago, read this book, because this will tell you what it was like to walk down the street there,'" he said. "I want people to say 'Yes, he captured the spirit of that town.'"

Russ López at East End Books Ptown (389 Commercial St., Provincetown) June 27 at 6 p.m. eastendbookspatown.com

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