



**2012 GOVERNOR'S AWARDS FOR THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES  
RECIPIENTS and STATE WRITER LAUREATE ANNOUNCED**

For immediate release:  
October 10, 2012

Contact: Shannon Daut, Executive Director,  
ASCA, 907.269.6607; or  
Nina Kempel, CEO, Alaska Humanities  
Forum, 907-272-5341

Once a year a select few citizens and organizations exemplifying great art and devotion to the humanities are chosen for recognition.

Join us to honor seven outstanding citizens and organizations from around the state who will be honored as the 2012 recipients of the Governor's Awards for the Arts and Humanities. In 2012, we will also recognize and celebrate a new Alaska Writer Laureate who will represent Alaska from 2012 to 2014.

2012 Recipients of the Governor's Awards for the Arts and Humanities are:

Arts Awards:

- Arts Education: John "Sinnaq" Sinnok, Shishmaref
- Arts Organization: Valley Performing Arts, Wasilla
- Individual Artist: Gail Niebrugge, Palmer
- Native Arts: Susie "Qimmiqsak" Bevins-Ericsen, Anchorage

Distinguished Service to the Humanities:

- Sven Haakanson, Jr., Executive Director Alutiiq Museum and Archaeological Repository, Kodiak
- Carol Swartz; Director Kenai Peninsula College – Kachemak Bay Campus; founding Director Kachemak Bay Writers' Conference, Homer
- Alaska Native Heritage Center, Anchorage

Alaska State Writer Laureate

- Nora Marks Dauenhauer, Juneau

The awards will be presented during a dinner at the Hotel Captain Cook on Thursday, October 18<sup>th</sup>. The awards are sponsored by the Alaska Humanities Forum, the Alaska State Council on the Arts, and the Office of the Governor with generous support from ConocoPhillips Alaska and BP. Please join us to in congratulating the awardees and celebrating this one-of-a-kind honor.

**Arts Organization**  
**Valley Performing Arts, Wasilla, Alaska**

Valley Performing Arts made its start in a small log church on the Alaska State Fair Grounds in 1976. For 37 consecutive years, the grassroots theatre has coupled their innovative ideas and a singular vision to provide their audiences with a diverse spectrum of family-friendly quality live theatre productions. Through offerings of quality entertainment to thousands of the borough's citizens, the organization has become an integral and deeply valued part of the Matanuska Susitna Valley's creative community.

A dedicated board and many talented volunteers nurture VPA's mission, "to promote community participation in live theatre and enhance the cultural and intellectual spirit of the community." In keeping with the organization's commitment to a community that so steadfastly supports them, VPA dedicates a percentage of their ticket proceeds from every performance to local non-profits. Patrons who may otherwise be unable to afford access to live theatre are invited free of charge as VPA guests.

Over its lifetime the organization has grown their audience and expanded their programs and creative services to include a highly celebrated and fully attended Summer Theatre Arts Program for young people.

**Distinguished Service to the Humanities**  
**Sven Haakanson, Jr., Ph.D., Kodiak, Alaska**

Dr. Haakanson, Jr. is a master of his scientific discipline and regarded professionally as the undisputed leader in advancing the understanding and preservation of Alutiiq language, culture, and customs. Dr. Haakanson's research career has spanned nearly two decades and has helped educate the public about the Alutiiq culture's contemporary relevance. He has helped build the Alutiiq Museum and Archaeological Repository into a world renowned collection of cultural artifacts of the Kodiak archipelago.

He received an Association of Tribal Archives Libraries and Museums 2012 Guardians of Culture & Lifeways Leadership Award for "his leadership in preserving and giving contemporary meaning to Native history and local legends, rituals, and customs." His work as an anthropologist has empowered community efforts to identify and amass an unparalleled collection of Alutiiq artifacts from as far away as Russia and France. As the Alutiiq Museum's Director, Dr. Haakanson has demonstrated his dedication to sharing Alutiiq cultural knowledge by building and organizing traveling exhibitions, teaching Kodiak village youth, and serving as a critical cultural advisor.

## **Alaska Native Artist**

**Susie “Qimmiqsak” Bevins-Ericsen**, Anchorage, Alaska

Susie “Qimmiqsak” Bevins-Ericsen grew up with her family at Beechy Point, a remote trading post east of the coastal community Point Barrow, Alaska. When she was eleven years old, she and her family moved to Anchorage where she was introduced to western culture and learned to speak English.

She studied fine art in Anchorage, Georgia, and Italy and became one of the first Alaska Native women artists to successfully execute large-scale outdoor sculpture. Her artwork embodies complex cultural elements and expresses the influences of her tribal traditions, her family and her cross-cultural experiences.

Bevins-Ericsen is driven to improve the economic wellbeing of Alaska Native artists. True to her passion to raise awareness, educate, and create understanding of Alaska Native people, she became one of the founding members of the Alaska Native Arts Foundation. She has served on many boards and committees, representing the interests of Alaska Native artists and positively impacting the lives of countless young people through her teaching and mentorship. Bevins-Ericsen’s work is housed in the permanent collections of the esteemed British Royal Museum, the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, the Eiteljorg Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Native Arts (MoCNA), and the Heard Museum.

## **Distinguished Service to the Humanities**

**Alaska Native Heritage Center**, Anchorage, Alaska

A leader in Alaska Native cultural and arts education for more than a decade, the Alaska Native Heritage Center uses the arts and humanities to teach visitors the rich culture and heritage of Alaska’s indigenous peoples.

Since opening in 1999, the Center has welcomed tens of thousands of people to participate in a long list of educational programs, including an Artists in Residence program, the Alaska Native Playwrights project, the Language Project, the Understanding Culture workshop series and school visits. In fact, more than 200,000 students have visited the center since it opened.

The Center maintains a website to expand its reach to the public about Alaska’s First People and accomplish the mission of “sharing, perpetuating and preserving the unique Alaska Native cultures, languages, traditions and values through celebration and education.”

In nominating the Alaska Native Heritage Center, President and CEO of the CIRI Foundation Susan Anderson said: “There is compelling evidence to support the Alaska Native Heritage Center’s commitment to educating Alaska Natives *and* the public about Alaska’s diverse Native cultures, which is at the heart of the humanities and why ANHC is an organization worthy of the Governor’s Humanities Award. The humanities are alive and well through the work of the Alaska Native Heritage Center.”

## **Arts Education**

**John “Sinŋaq” Sinnok**, Shishmaref, Alaska

John Sinnok was born and raised on a northern Alaska island made more of water than solid land; a terrestrial whisper of an ancient Bering Land Bridge. Like the place itself, John is regarded by his students, professional peers, and elders as “nothing short of remarkable.” For more than 40 years—27 of which he has been declared legally blind—John has nourished Shishmaref students’ intellectual and creative pursuits. He has taught Inupiaq language and traditional carving, sewing skills and design to generations of students who have now received recognition and awards for their own art submissions to the Heard Museum All-Native Student Exhibitions.

John’s mastery and love of his Inupiaq language enabled him to both whimsically introduce Inupiaq Flat Stanley to his classroom students and be a force behind the written form of the Shishmaref Inupiaq dialect. John has deeply inspired his peers who shared that “working with John made me a better teacher, a better school administrator and a better district administrator.” Celebrated as “knowledgeable, skilled, courageous, and passionate,” John Sinnok has tirelessly shared the lessons we wish for all our students. He exemplifies the best in arts education.

## **Distinguished Service to the Humanities**

**Carol Swartz**, Homer, Alaska

Carol Swartz has directed the Kachemak Bay campus of Kenai Peninsula College (UAA) with distinction since 1986 and is known in literary circles across Alaska and the country as the founding director of the Kachemak Bay Writers’ Conference. Since 2002, the Writers’ Conference has hosted exemplary Alaskan and national writers in Homer, Alaska to provide writers with opportunities to improve their literary skills, explore their creative boundaries, share knowledge about their discipline, and build their community. On behalf of Alaska’s literary community, Ms. Swartz has brought nationally known writers such as Pulitzer Prize winning author of “The Hours,” Michael Cunningham, and Barry Lopez, National Book Award winning author of “Arctic Dreams”.

Her vision and dedication to the conference earned her a 2009 Alaska Center for the Book Contributions to Literacy in Alaska Award. She generously extends her time and energy to a long list of civic organizations in her community like Bunnell Street Arts Center, of which she is a founding member; the Homer Community Foundation, of which she is a founding trustee; and the Alaska Women’s Network.

## **Individual Artist**

**Gail Niebrugge**, Palmer, Alaska

An inveterate adventurer, Gail traveled from San Diego, California to Copper Center, Alaska in 1976. She brought her family and her artistic training with her to serve as the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park Artist-in-Residence for six years. She holds a Master of Fine Art Illustration with honors from Syracuse University, New York and over the course of her 40-year career has created more than 970 original drawings and paintings. Gail's unique labor-intensive painting style and subject material has received worldwide patronage.

Gail is a gifted teacher and lecturer on art and the business of art, and she has worked as adjunct faculty for University of Alaska Anchorage and Mat-Su Campuses, served on numerous arts, education, commerce and culture boards and committees. Gail was appointed by the Governor of Alaska to serve on the Alaska State Council on the Arts from 2007-2011 and as Vice Chair from 2008-2011.

Gail owns Niebrugge Studio, a family partnership established in 1982, and since 2006 she has maintained a daily art blog that documents her adventures, offers professional expertise, and highlights the accomplishments and work of fellow artists and arts organizations.

## **Alaska State Writer Laureate**

The Juneau Poetry Society created the Poet Laureate Program in the early 1960s. In 1963, under House Resolution 25, the position of Poet Laureate was officially confirmed by the Legislature. In 1987 the Literary Advisory Committee began to oversee the selection process with the assistance of past poet laureates. In 1996, the Alaska State Council on the Arts broadened the position to that of State Writer Laureate, recognizing and honoring all genres of writing. The State Writer position is a two-year appointment with a mission to further the Literary Arts in Alaska.

## **Nora Marks Dauenhauer Alaska State Writer 2012-2014**

Nora Marks Dauenhauer was born (1927) in Juneau, Alaska, and was raised in Juneau and Hoonah, as well as on the family fishing boat and in seasonal hunting and fishing sites around Icy Straits, Glacier Bay, and Cape Spencer. Her first language is Tlingit; she began to learn English when entering school at the age of eight. She has a B.A. in Anthropology (Alaska Methodist University 1976) and is internationally recognized for her fieldwork, transcription, translation, and explication of Tlingit oral literature.

Her creative writing has been widely published and anthologized. Her Raven plays have been performed in several venues internationally, including the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. In 1980 she was named Humanist of the Year by the Alaska Humanities Forum. In 1989 she received an Alaska Governor's Award for the Arts, and in 1991 and 2008 she was a winner of the Before Columbus Foundation's American Book Award. From 1983 to 1997 she was Principal Researcher in Language and

Cultural Studies at Sealaska Heritage Foundation in Juneau. In May 2001 she received an Honorary Doctor of Humanities degree from the University of Alaska Southeast. In December 2004 she received the 2005 Community Spirit Award from First People's Fund of Rapid City, SD. In 2007 the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska recognized her with a lifetime achievement award. In March 2010 she was inducted into the Alaska Women's Hall of Fame. In November 2011 she was selected as an Indigenous Leadership Award Honoree by Ecotrust, Salmon Nation, Portland, Oregon.

She is married to Richard Dauenhauer, writer and former poet laureate of Alaska, with whom she has co-authored and co-edited several editions of Tlingit language and folklore material. She has 4 children, 13 grandchildren, and 15 great grandchildren. She lives in Juneau, where she is semi-retired but still continues with research, writing, consulting, and volunteer work with schools and community.

Her work has first appeared or has been anthologized or is forthcoming in editions by major publishers including: Alaska Northwest, Cambridge University Press, Carnegie Museum, De Gruyter, Graywolf Press, Greenfield Review Press, Harper and Row, Houghton Mifflin, Indiana University Press, Milkweed, Navajo Community College press, NTC, Random House, Rizzoli, Persea Books, Prentice Hall, Seattle Art Museum, University of Alaska—Anchorage, University of Arizona Press, University of Nebraska Press, University of Toronto Press, University of Washington Press, Utah State University Press, W. W. Norton, as well as by many small and regional presses.

#### Alaska State Writers

2012 Nora Marks Dauenhauer  
2010 Peggy Shumaker  
2008 Nancy Lord  
2006 John Straley  
2004 Jerah Chadwick  
2002 Anne Hanley  
2000 Richard Nelson  
1995 Tom Sexton  
1988 Joanne Townsend  
1981 Richard Dauenhauer  
1977 Sheila Nickerson  
1973 Ruben Gaines  
1965 Oliver Everette  
1969 John Haines  
1963 Margaret Mielke

For more information about the Governor's Awards for the Arts and Humanities, and the awardees, call the Alaska State Council on the Arts at 907.269.6610 or visit: <http://education.alaska.gov/aksca/>; or call the Alaska Humanities Forum at 907-272-5341 or visit: <http://akhf.org/governors-awards>.

---

*The Alaska State Council on the Arts (ASCA) is a division of the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, and is governed by eleven council members appointed by the Governor. ASCA is supported with general funds appropriated by the Alaska State Legislature and the National Endowment for the Arts, with additional support from Rasmuson Foundation. The mission of the Alaska State Council on the Arts is to foster the development of the arts for all Alaskans through education, partnerships, grants and services.*

Alaska State Council on the Arts, 161 Klewin Street, Suite 102, Anchorage, Alaska 99508-1506  
(907) 269-6610 or (888) 278-7424 \* Fax (907) 269-6601 <http://education.alaska.gov/aksca>

---

*The Alaska Humanities Forum engages Alaskans in humanities-based projects and innovative programs such as Take Wing Alaska, Sister School Exchange and Leadership Anchorage. The Forum was founded in 1972 by the National Endowment for the Humanities, and is one of 56 state and territorial groups supported by the NEH. The Forum is also a member of the Federation of State Humanities Councils. The mission of the Alaska Humanities Forum is to use the wisdom and methods of the humanities to enrich the civic, intellectual and cultural life of all Alaskans.*

The Alaska Humanities Forum, 161 E. 1st Avenue, Door 15, Anchorage, Alaska, 99501  
(907) 272-5341 \* Fax (907) 272-3979 <http://www.akhf.org/>

---