

# Honoring Alaska's Indigenous Literature



## 2005 Awards Celebration

February 8, 2005  
Anchorage, Alaska

Howard Rock Ballroom C  
Sheraton Hotel, 6–9 PM



# *Honoring Alaska's Indigenous Literature*

*Orators*

*Storytellers*

*Masters of Indigenous Knowledge*

*First to recognize those who have made  
an impact on our lives and indigenous peoples  
through their work in indigenous literature.*

## Opening Prayer

Elder

## Introduction of HAIL Working Committee:

Martha Stackhouse

Lenora “Lolly” Carpluk

## Co-Masters of Ceremony:

Martha Stackhouse

Lenora “Lolly” Carpluk

## Introduction and Presentations

Katherine Wickersham Wade, Athabaskan  
by Shirley Tuzroyluke

Katherine Peter, Gwich'in  
by Virginia Ned

Alisha Drabek, Alutiiq  
by Teri Schneider

Christopher Koonooka (Petuwaq),  
St. Lawrence Island Yup'ik  
by Bernadette Alvanna-Stimpfle

Kaayistaan Marie Olson, Wooshkeetaan clan,  
Eagle Moiety of Aak'w kwaan  
by Bernice Tetpon

Rita Pitka-Blumenstein, Yup'ik  
by Esther Ilutsik

# The 2005 Honoring Alaska's Indigenous Literature Awards

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Indigenous educators from across the state of Alaska have had numerous opportunities to meet cross-regionally and share issues and concerns of importance to them in their roles as educators. They first met as students of the Alaska Rural Teacher Training Corps (ARTTC) program and then as students of the Cross-Cultural Education Development (X-CED) program. With the formation of regional Native educator associations in the early 1990s to the present and the help of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative, they continue to meet within their regional associations and statewide Native educators conferences. As indigenous educators they have paved new trails in curriculum development, Academy of Elders camps and many other initiatives.

A concern in the area of literature in reference to indigenous peoples led to the formation of a working committee made up of representatives from each of the regional indigenous educator associations which led to the development of the *Guidelines for Respecting Cultural Knowledge*. These guidelines address issues of concern in the documentation, representation and utilization of traditional cultural knowledge as they relate to the role of various participants, including Elders, authors, curriculum developers, classroom teachers, publishers and researchers.

Along with the guidelines are a set of recommendations, one of which called for establishing a prestigious award to honor indigenous Elders, authors, illustrators and others who make significant contributions to the documentation and representation of Native cultural knowledge and traditions.

The 2001 Celebration of Alaska Native Literature was the first to recognize those who have made an impact in our lives as indigenous peoples through their work in indigenous literature. We hope this was the first of many celebrations of recognizing our people in the area of literature as we choose to define literature, with an indigenous perspective.

The 2001 awards program was organized by a group called the Alaska Indigenous Literary Review Board per the above-mentioned guidelines. In the spring of 2001, the group changed its name to Honoring Alaska's Indigenous Literature, or HAIL. Members of the HAIL working committee are listed on the back of this program.

# 2005 Award Winners

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## *Katherine Wickersham Wade*

*CIRI Region, Chickaloon Village*

Publication: *Chickaloon Spirit*

Published by the Athabascan Nation of  
Chickaloon  
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council  
2004

Katherine Wade's life intercepts a whole lot of lives and a whole lot of history in the Matanuska River Valley. Through this gift of her stories, her memories, her sense of humor despite tragedy, resilience despite setbacks, we learn some larger messages. We learn about mining history, railroad history, a bit of colony history and highway history.



We learn about the adventures and misadventures this remarkable woman had in Chickaloon, Sutton, Palmer, Wasilla and Anchorage. We learn what it was like to be a half-breed—not enough Indian to be fully accepted by some of her Interior Indian Ahtna relatives, and not quite white enough for some folks who came to the Valley. Through Katie's narrative we become more fully aware of the shock of racist encounters, combined with a sense of awe of her sense of humor and resilience in face of it all.

Katherine Wickersham Wade is 81 years old. She was born up the Chickaloon River. Katherine's aunts and grandmother delivered her. She has one older sister.

# 2005 Award Winners

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**Katherine Peter**

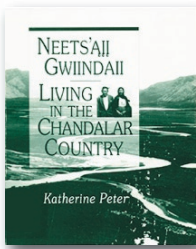
**Gwich'in Athabascan**

Publication: *Neets'arii Gwiindaii: Living in the Chandalar Country*

Published by the Alaska Native Language Center

University of Alaska Fairbanks

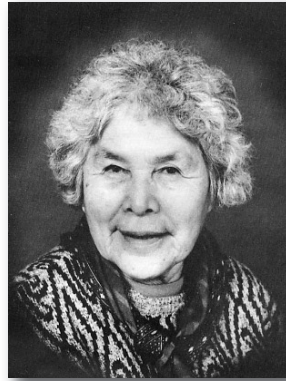
1<sup>st</sup> Edition 1992, 2<sup>nd</sup> 1993, 3<sup>rd</sup> 2001



Katherine Peter is a well-known Gwich'in linguist in Interior Alaska. She first worked as a school teacher in Arctic Village in the early 1940s. She continued her position as a schoolteacher in Fort Yukon in 1956 and 1957. She worked at the Alaska Native Language Center in Fairbanks from 1973–1980 teaching the Gwich'in language at the university level—the first time that Native language was ever taught at a university. She also transcribed and composed what is by far the largest and most important body of Gwich'in writing in this century. The more than one hundred works include many published schoolbooks; a school dictionary; volume of stories, narrative, and legends; editions of texts told to Edward Sapir in 1923 by John Fredson; *Dinjii Zhuu Gwandak, Khehkwaii Zheh Gwiich'i'i: Living in the Chief's House*; and many files of transcriptions from about twenty-eight Gwich'in storytellers.

Katherine was born in Stevens Village on the Yukon River in 1918. After her parents passed away at an early age she was adopted by a leading family in Fort Yukon, that of Chief Esias Loola. She spoke Koyukon Athabascan at the time and at Fort Yukon she quickly learned Gwich'in, which replaced Koyukon

as her first language. Katherine was raised and educated in a very strong and rich Gwich'in cultural life. She also periodically attended the one-room Bureau of Indian Affairs school at Fort Yukon where she learned English language and literacy. In 1936 Katherine married Steven Peter and moved to Arctic Village. She worked for a brief time in Arctic Village and Fort Yukon as a schoolteacher. In 1960 she



moved to Fort Yukon to raise and educate her children. In 1970 she moved to Fairbanks where she worked at the Alaska Native Language Programs from 1973–1980. She retired from the center in 1980, but continues her involvement with her language work, including transcription and translation of the memoirs of Belle Herbert (*Shandaa/In My Lifetime*, Alaska Native Language Center 1982); the texts of another dozen schoolbooks for the Yukon Flats School District in 1983; Chandalar area place-names survey with Rick Caulfield; and editorial, grammatical, and dictionary work for the Alaska Native Language Center.

# 2005 Award Winners

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## *Alisha Drabek*

*Alutiiq/Native Village of Afognak*

Publication: *The Red Cedar of Afognak: A Driftwind Journey*  
Published by the Native Village of Afognak  
2004



Alisha Drabek is a dedicated individual with a deep sense of connection to Kodiak and its surrounding islands and her people. Throughout her life she has utilized her talents of writing, communicating and facilitating to bring people together, share a wealth of learned knowledge and work towards what is good for all of Kodiak's people. Writing is her passion—she has authored many

grants that have brought hundreds of thousands of dollars to organizations and institutions throughout the region. Her real desire has been to write stories—*The Red Cedar of Afognak*, co-authored by Alisha and Dr. Karen Adams, and illustrated by Gloria Selby, is only the first story of what I am sure will be many! She is a talented writer, a dedicated educator, and a wonderful human who works endlessly to share what she has learned through personal experience and from her Elders in a way that brings respect and honor to the Alutiiq people.

Alisha Drabek is an associate professor of English at Kodiak College who was born and raised in Kodiak. She has an English and American Literature degree and a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing, both from the University of Arizona in Tucson.



A former tribal administrator for the Native Village of Afognak, who also is the founding coordinator of Kodiak’s “Esgahluku Taquka’aq”—“Awakening Bear”—a cultural celebration, she is proud to have returned to her home island to work with other Alutiiq people to preserve and honor the Alutiiq culture and heritage. Alisha is currently working as an apprentice with an Alutiiq speaking master teacher, and is a member of the Native Educators of the Alutiiq Region in Kodiak. She is married to Helm Johnson and has two sons.

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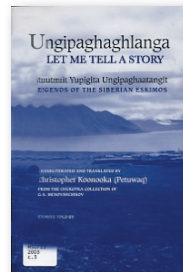
## *Christopher Koonooka (Petuwaq)*

### *St. Lawrence Island Yupik*

Publication: *Ungipaghaghlanga: Let me Tell A Story*  
*Qutmiit Yupigita Ungipaghaatangit*  
*Legends of the Siberian Eskimos*

Published by the Alaska Native Language  
Center  
University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska  
2003

This book is written in Siberian Yupik and English. Christopher Koonooka did a lot of work to transliterate the work of the late Georgiy A. Menovshchikov, a Russian educator and linguist. There are six storytellers from the Chukotkan side of the Bering Strait that are featured.



# 2005 Award Winners

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## *Kaayistaan Marie Olson*

*Wooshkeetaan clan, Eagle Moiety of Aak'w kwaan*

Publication: *Tlingit Coloring Book*



*Wild Edible & Medicinal Plants, Vol I and II:  
Alaska, Canada & Pacific Northwest Rainforest*

Author: Carol R. Biggs

Published by Carol Biggs Alaska Nature  
Connection

January 1999

Marie Olson of the Eagle Moiety Wooshkeetaan Clan of Auke Bay, Alaska, provided Tlingit names and usage for a number of plants in this booklet. With permission, the author included available Tlingit plant names in recognition and honor of indigenous cultures everywhere who have given the world valuable knowledge.



Marie has represented Southeast Alaska as an Elder, a member of the Southeast Tribal College Board of Trustees, and as UAF faculty. Not only does Marie work in the area of education, she is also president of Alaska Native Sisterhood Camp #2. Her previous work includes being an Elder in Resident for the Juneau School

District. She shares her love of art, writing and gardening in the book *Tlingit Coloring Book*. Marie is widely respected for her knowledge of the Tlingit language, culture and history.

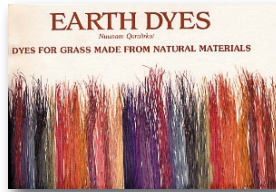
Marie Olson was born in Juneau and in her earlier years spoke only Tlingit. She is a member of the Wooshkeetaan Eagle clan of Aak'w kwaan and her Tlingit name is Kaayistaan which was the name of her maternal grandmother. Marie attended

school in Juneau, Seattle, and San Francisco. After raising a family and working in Native American projects in the San Francisco area, she returned to school and graduated from UAS.

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***Rita Pitka-Blumenstein***  
***Calista Region Yup'ik***

Publication: *Earth Dyes:  
Nuunam Qaralirkai*  
Published by the Institute of  
Alaska Native Arts  
1983



Rita has made an impact in the lives of many people whether indigenous or coming from different countries as well as around the State, especially in her wellness program. She is a traditional healer. Her book contributes seeing her cultural knowledge about her own experience growing up in the village not just through stories but also through her real life experience.



Rita was born on a fishing boat on the ocean near Tununak in Western Alaska. Her upbringing is in the village of Tununak, Alaska. Throughout her life she learned from her mother to subsist and gather food and learned to use resources from the environment for arts and crafts. The skill of learning to sew is an essential part of her culture in order to make a living or meet the needs of survival. She is an expert Yup'ik basketmaker. Rita is of Yup'ik, Athabascan, Aleut and Russian ancestry. Rita is also talented in other areas. Rita now resides in Anchorage working for Southcentral Foundation as a traditional healer, a tribal doctor. Rita has helped many people with their ailments.

# *HAIL Working Committee*

Linda Green, Chairperson

Lolly Carpluk

Virginia Ned

Bernice Tetpon

Esther Ilutsik

Cecilia Martz

Marie Olson-Elder

Bernadette Yaayuk Alvanna-Stimpfle

Yurliq Nita Rearden

Ray Barnhardt

Martha Stackhouse

Linda Green

Shirley Tuzroyluke

Teri Schneider

Moses Dirks

Andy Hope

## *List of Sponsors*

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Alaska Native Knowledge Network

Anchorage Sheraton Hotel

Program design by Paula Elmes, Alaska Native Knowledge Network

Award plaques created by Ben Snowball and Bovee Trophies

