



PRESS RELEASE  
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For Immediate Release  
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Koahnic Broadcast Corporation  
Earthsongs

## Preserving Culture Through Radio

### *"Coming Home: the Return of the Alutiiq Masks"*

*Anchorage, AK*- History comes to life with Alutiiq/Sugpiaq drumming and storytelling in the special edition of Koahnic Broadcast Corporation's national program, Earthsongs. This one-hour radio documentary project, set to release in November 2008, stems from a partnership with United States Artists (USA) Rockefeller Fellow and George Peabody Award-Winning Artist, Dmae Roberts and Koahnic's Earthsongs Host and Producer, Shyanne Beatty.

The documentary details the long-awaited return of the Alutiiq Masks from France to Kodiak. In the winter of 1872, a young French anthropologist, Alphonse Pinart, traveled the Kodiak archipelago by kayaq, assembling one of the most extensive collections of Alutiiq ceremonial masks in the world, and brought them back to France. In May 2008, 34 of these Alutiiq ceremonial masks returned to their people and were exhibited at The Alutiiq Museum in Kodiak, Alaska. The documentary will feature the artists who helped make the return possible and interviews with community leaders on the significance of the masks.

This powerful story of reclamation will resonate with communities nationwide. The complex, sound-rich production features triptych storytelling, compelling interviews and music from Kodiak Island where Alutiiq/Sugpiaq peoples are undergoing a cultural renaissance.

In honor of Alaska Native/American Indian Heritage Month, the special edition of Earthsongs will be distributed by Native Voice One (NV1) in November 2008, and will be made available to stations for free. The program can be downloaded through ContentDepot and PRX. For more information on distribution, contact Burt Poley at 505.277.5354 or [bpoley@nv1.org](mailto:bpoley@nv1.org).

To learn more about the documentary and to watch the special flash movie produced by Clark Salisbury, log onto the Earthsongs website: [earthsongs.net](http://earthsongs.net).

#### **ABOUT KOAHNIC BROADCAST CORPORATION**

Koahnic Broadcast Corporation, the country's leading national Native media enterprises, operates four divisions: KNBA 90.3 FM, the country's only urban, Native public radio station; national radio programming including National Native News, Earthsongs and Native America Calling; and Native Voice One (NV1), the nation's national Native American radio service.

For further information on Koahnic Broadcast Corporation, please visit [www.knba.org](http://www.knba.org).

#### **ABOUT UNITED STATES ARTISTS**

The founding of USA was prompted by the Urban Institute's breakthrough 2003 study, Investing in Creativity: A Study of the Support Structures for U.S. Artists. This research found that while 96% of Americans appreciate the arts, only 27% believe that artists contribute to the good of society. In addition, the study found the median reported income for artists from their artistic work was only \$5,000 and that more than half of America's 2 million artists pay for their own health insurance. Despite these economic

challenges, artists contribute directly to advancements in the education of young people, the development of a competitive creative economy, and the revitalization of the nation's neighborhoods and urban centers.

In response to these findings, The Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Prudential Foundation, and the Rasmuson Foundation contributed a total of \$20 million to establish USA as a structure through which private philanthropists, corporate donors, and other foundations can support individual artists. Due to seed funding from its founders, 100% of current donor contributions directly support artists. The USA Fellowship program is envisioned to be funded in perpetuity through income generated by a permanent endowment USA will establish in the coming years. USA annually awards fifty \$50,000 fellowships to artists working in the US in virtually every artistic discipline. Through the generosity of the Rasmuson Foundation, USA Fellows are eligible for AK AIR, a residency program in Alaska. Dmae Roberts was in residence at Koahnic during 2007 and 2008.

For further information about USA, please visit [www.unitedstatesartists.org](http://www.unitedstatesartists.org).

### **ABOUT DMAE ROBERTS**

Dmae Roberts is a two-time Peabody award-winning writer and public radio producer living in Portland, OR. She won the USA fellowship in 2006 and the Asian American Journalists Association's award for civil rights and social justice. She has produced more than 400 documentaries and features for NPR and PRI, including her eight-hour Asian American history series, Crossing East, winner of the Peabody in 2007. She runs MediaRites, a non-profit dedicated to multicultural arts productions.

For further information about Dmae, please visit [www.dmaeroberts.com](http://www.dmaeroberts.com).

### **ABOUT SHYANNE BEATTY**

Shyanne Beatty is Hangwichin Athabascan and grew up in a subsistence lifestyle in Eagle, Alaska. Shyanne was awarded a prestigious fellowship at Koahnic Broadcast Corporation. Shortly afterwards, she headed to Seattle, Washington, to pursue an education in audio production and graduated from the Art Institute of Seattle with an Associate of Arts Degree.

She rejoined the Koahnic family as a media instructor and traveled to rural areas of Alaska with the goal to promote careers in radio broadcasting to Alaskan Natives and American Indians. Shyanne also blended a daily four hour music show on 90.3 KNBA when she wasn't traveling. She now focuses her time on the daily music show as well as hosting and producing Earthsongs. Shyanne is a singer and volunteers at community events throughout Alaska.

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### **DID YOU KNOW...**

#### **INSIGHTS TO ALASKA NATIVE/AMERICAN INDIAN HERITAGE MONTH**

Alaska Native/American Indian Heritage Month officially began in 1990 by a proclamation made by President George Bush. The proclamation is due to the hard work and dedication of many people - Native and non-Native - beginning as early as 1915. The purpose of Heritage Month is to celebrate and recognize the intertribal cultures and to educate the public about the heritage, history, art, and traditions of the original peoples of this land. For instance, some of the amazing American Indian discoveries included chewing gum, popcorn, prescriptions, chocolate and calendars.

For more information on Alaska Native/American Indian Heritage Month, check out the links below.

[IMDiversity](#)  
[Indian Health Services](#)  
[National Museum of the American Indian](#)  
[New York Times Archives](#)