DISTINGUISHED ARTIST
A single $50,000 award honors an established artist of recognized stature who brings decades of creative excellence and accomplishment in the arts.

Anna Brown Ehlers is a culture bearer and Chilkat weaver born in Juneau into the Whale House, her ancestry deeply rooted in Klukwan, an ancient Tlingit village historically known for Chilkat weaving. For more than 30 years, Ehlers has been a recognized master and prolific producer of Chilkat weavings for ongoing ceremonial and cultural use. Her weavings — Chilkat robes, tunics, dancing aprons, dance leggings, bibs and vests — are featured in the most prestigious and prolific museums worldwide and coveted for private collections. They are danced, displayed, gifted and studied at memorial potlatches, totem pole raisings, traditional gatherings, canoe journeys and ceremonies. Even more important, Tlingit clans commission Ehlers for *at.óowu*, or communal sacred objects, fostering social and spiritual balance, or *wooch yáxh*.

She previously has been recognized with an array of prestigious awards, grants, fellowships and honors including the 2017 National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellow, 2006 United States Artists Fellow, 2006 Alaska Governor's Native Artist Award and 2001 First Peoples Fund Community Spirit Award. In 2023, the University of Alaska Southeast honored Ehlers with an Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts.

"I plan to do Chilkat blankets until the end of time," weaving in the home studio built by her husband, Willis, she says. She also credits her children, Marie, Billy and Alexis, with helping her reach her goals.

Learn more about Ehlers here.

FELLOWSHIPS
Ten $25,000 awards allow mid-career and established artists to focus energy and attention for a one-year period of creative development.

Shgendootan George of Angoon will create a series of robes including four dance robes in four distinct styles (Ravenstail, button blanket, cedar bark and Chilkat) to tell the history of the 1882 Navy bombing of Angoon. George sees her contribution to the education of the next generation by giving them an opportunity to learn from an Indigenous perspective not found in history books but in the wearing and dancing of these robes.

Tiumaluali'i Jody Marie Hassel of Fairbanks will write a book-length memoir, "To the Root: Recovery of a Samoan Princess in the Exile of Erasure," about her search for and reunion with her biological family. She will travel to research her ancestral Samoan, Scandinavian and French roots, weaving into her memoir her interests in trauma recovery and Polynesian dance.

Ossie Kairaiuak, from Chefornak and living in Anchorage, will create a performance titled "Ellanguarput: Our Pretend World" to celebrate Yup'ik ancestral traditions within modern times, using songs, masks and dances. He hopes to inspire healthy human conversations about humanity and art, using storytelling voices, drum beats and performers to create the story's atmosphere.

Katurte — which means "to come together" — is a collaboration between two Indigenous artists from Bethel and Nome. Nicolette Corbett, a Yup'ik artist, is the project director and Katie O'Connor, an Inupiaq artist, is the project lead. Corbett and O'Connor will create the first educational Yup'ik alphabet coloring book for children ages 5-12, which will feature animals and objects for each letter in the Yup'ik alphabet.

Darlene Lind, a sculptor from Wasilla, will create a maquette of an Alaska Native healer as part of her on-going artistic expression depicting her Alaska Native culture. Her finished bronze healer will help promote Alaska's Indigenous history, social life and customs.

M. C. MoHagani Magnetek, a cultural anthropologist living in Fairbanks, will write a stage play, "Just Add Water: Reparations for My Soul," an examination of the lives of the unacknowledged women who portrayed Aunt Jemima on pancake and syrup packaging and advertising from 1893 to 2020, when the products were rebranded.

Robert K. Mills of Kake will work with local residents, the Forest Service and mill owners to build a traditional Tlingit tribal house — Kake's first in more than 100 years — to improve his community's connection to heritage. This tribal house will function as a space for work, culture and community. Mills received a Project Award in 2018.

Kathryn Rousso of Ketchikan will explore her unique Sephardic Jewish heritage and cultural identity through intensive research, museum visits and travel. She plans to retrace her lineage through a pilgrimage eastward from Ketchikan to Seattle, New York, Greece and Spain, culminating with an artist-in-residence at Mudhouse Residency in Crete. Rousso received a Project Award in 2015.

Sankofa Dance Theatre – Alaska is an African dance group based in Anchorage. Misha Baskerville is the project director and artistic director of the company, and Johnnie Wright is the project lead. The group will expand their knowledge of traditional African dance through workshops and conferences. They will rent dedicated workspace, purchase equipment and engage community through classes and performances.

Kunaq Marjorie Tahbone of Nome will learn from local hunters how to hunt seal, expanding her knowledge of preparing seal meat and oil for her people and processing seal hide to create maklaks and kamiks (boots). The Inupiaq artist will teach maklak classes in the Bering Straits region and host a culture camp about harvesting and preparing seal for food, clothing and art. Tahbone received a Project Award in 2019.

PROJECT AWARDS
Awards of $10,000 support emerging, mid-career and established artists in specific, short-term projects.

Brian Adams, a photographer from Anchorage, will publish a monograph of selected works to celebrate his 20 years of freelance work capturing the people who live in Alaska. He will purchase a high-quality film scanner to create works for this monograph which he hopes will lead to a better understanding of his Iñupiaq heritage. Adams received a Fellowship in 2018.

Mariza Ryce Aparicio-Tovar of Homer will create a multi-genre album of original music, “600 Years,” giving voice to her rage, grief and visceral responses to past and present-day colonization. As a first-generation immigrant of Indigenous Mexican origin, she will use drone, atmospheric, meditative and folk influences to recover her identity and inspire connections and hope.

JaVeon Brigham of Fairbanks will create a conceptual album drawn from the soundscapes of his adopted hometown to celebrate and honor the sanctity of family. He will purchase recording equipment, pay for tracks to be mixed and mastered, and create collaborative opportunities with musicians in his circle.

Lyndsey Brollini of Juneau will work with teachers and mentors to harvest and process cedar bark and learn specific Haida basketry techniques to create a large cedar bark basket. Brollini also will document her learning through high-quality photographs and video. She plans to create a website and online library of Haida weaving techniques to help others access this knowledge.

Myesha Callahan Freet of Chugiak will investigate the emotional and physical burden mothers carry by asking them to surrender several keepsakes. She will interview them about their memories of their children and create a documenting video. She will also scan the keepsakes to create large-scale photographs for scheduled exhibitions and return digital images to the mothers as mementos of their offering to her project.

Jiin F. Chang, a filmmaker living in Anchorage, will create a pitch deck to launch his first feature film, "Stranger," about outsiders, society's emphasis on individual strength, intelligence and self-reliance, and his empathy for people experiencing houselessness in the shadows of indifference and alienation, all of whom have stories to tell.

Rafael de la Uz of Homer will create and exhibit a series of black-and-white photographs scheduled for an exhibit in November to explore the foggy zone between individual growth and community identification. This visual narrative will tell the story of de la Uz's adolescent son as he integrates into a new community, moving from a large city to a small coastal town in Alaska.

Christiana Galea'i of Anchorage will produce an album of songs and music videos about her experiences as a Samoan American living in Alaska. Galea'i's voice will be featured and supported by members of a local Samoan church choir and the Polynesian rapper, Sefa M. These songs will highlight healthy love and cross-cultural communication.

Xochiyollotl Carrow Harbison will convert a shed in Homer into a ceramic studio to create more ambitious work and expand their art practice. They will purchase equipment and materials and update their website.

Wasabi/Sharla Hausmann, an Iñupiaq, Koyukon and Paiute musician from Point Lay, Kaltag and Anchorage, will create an album of new songs. She will work with Iñupiaq singers, drummers and language bearers who will help translate English lyrics into Iñupiatun. Her music acknowledges systemic violence, food insecurity and injustice, but she also loves to make music for her people to vibe to.

Young Kim of Anchorage has plans for a photography project in the spirit of a traditional American road trip to include traveling to South Korea with his mother, who has not returned to her homeland in more than two decades. This project will document his mother's encounters in a new world and explore themes of reverse diaspora, as South Korea is a dramatically different place now than when she moved to America.

William Kozloff, an Unangan and Athabaskan visual artist living in Palmer, will create a graphic novel to showcase the richness and complexity of Alaska Native identity, exploring themes of race, religion, colonization and conflict. By combining digital and traditional illustrations, he will create a rich visual narrative contributing to the emergent Native Futurism movement.

Danielle D. Larsen, a visual artist with roots in King Cove and Beaver living in Anchorage, will explore her Unangan-Aleut, Koyukon-Athabascan, Inupiaq and European roots to create new work for an exhibit at the Bunnell Street Arts Center in Homer. Larsen plans to create work inspired by the beauty of simple things, places and memories that connect her to family and the Southcentral lands where she was raised.

Kristin Link of McCarthy will create a book about the art of field sketching to be published by Timber Press. She will also co-curate and contribute to a nine-month exhibit about sketchbooks at the Museum of the North in Fairbanks. She will spend time working in the field and her studio, complete an artist residency at Toolik Field Station and hire a photographer and a studio assistant. Link received a Project Award in 2012.

Alma Manabat Parker of Ketchikan will deepen her understanding of the five major Filipino folk dance forms by training with Kayamanan ng Lahi, a folk dance and arts organization based in Los Angeles. She will study the appropriate musical instruments, movements, costumes, props and performance staging for each style and bring back this knowledge to share with Ketchikan's Filipino dance group.

Betany Porter of Anchorage will create a new series of sculptural paintings that can be folded, stacked and rearranged in large-scale installations to examine how Alaska is portrayed in popular culture. She will upgrade her studio so she can work and host visits year-round, refresh her website, and connect with curators, museums and galleries.

Ashley R. Powe, an author with roots in King Cove living in North Pole, will write and publish a novel of Indigenous-themed stories about traditional herbalism, survival, food preservation, spirituality and well-being, accompanied with illustrations and photographs of Alaska plants. The main character in her novel journeys through four seasons with the help of animals, ancestors and spiritual gifts.

Mistee St. Clair of Juneau will finish her first full-length collection of poetry and send it out for publication. She will attend poet-led workshops, residencies and retreats hosted by teachers and poets who will push her to untangle the dark and light, to write across time and space, through grief, loss and absence, and to find the small pleasures and beauty in this complicated world.

Shoko Takahashi of Anchorage will create a new body of silkscreened accordion-style books for an exhibit at Bunnell Street Art Center in Homer. She will also travel to Japan to forge new gallery connections in her home region of Kansai, which includes the cities of Osaka and Kyoto, and attend a printmaking artist residency in California.

MK Thekkumkattil of Anchorage will complete a creative nonfiction essay collection, "The Sexuality of Care," weaving their experiences as a trans, nonbinary South Asian critical care nurse with queer theory, disability justice and Malayali homeland wisdom. They will enroll in the Unicorn Authors Club, an online community for people of color to help complete their books.

Emily Wall of Douglas will complete a book of poems, written as a conversation between a woman raising teenage daughters in a world that is not safe for women, and a blue-haired, sneaker-wearing, gender-queer angel who writes back. These poems will ask questions about power, belief and safety for women in today's #metoo society. Wall received a Project Award in 2018.

Annie Wenstrup of Fairbanks will revise and publish a collection of poems, "The Museum of Unnatural Histories," about the experiences of a mixed-race Dena'ina woman, offering a unique perspective of urban Indigeneity filtered through the constructs of race, gender and class. Wenstrup will attend residencies and travel to learn about the artwork included in her poems.

'Wáats'asdiyei Joe Yates, a media artist from Craig living in Anchorage, will create a short narrative film, "My Message to You," from a child's point of view about the difficulties that parents experience in passing on their culture to their children. 'Wáats'asdiyei will show this film at film festivals, libraries and schools to create connections with those who are doing this work.

Kinsie Young, from Hydaburg living in Anchorage, will weave a traditional Ravenstail robe for her younger sister to be worn and displayed at the 2024 Sealaska Heritage Celebration's toddler regalia review. She will purchase a loom to weave the child's robe, her largest and most complex weaving project to date, making it possible for her to weave larger adult robes.

Itzel Zagal of Anchorage will write a collection of bilingual poems, "Cooking Poetry" about Latinx immigrants who reconnect the work associated with growing and making Indigenous food for healing and nourishment in Alaska, presented both as a printed book to be distributed in Latinx and public spaces and as the first Spanish podcast in Alaska, named "Sembranza." Zagal also received a Project Award in 2017.