

Bunny Swan Gease
Artworks Alaska
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Artist Statement

A professional artist since 1976, I strongly believe in the positive impact the arts bring to all our lives. Our cultures, our roots, give each of us essence and a foundation to grow and live amongst each other, with the important knowledge of our individuality. Our elders play an important role in our maturation. Who will nourish our identity and purpose? Given the proper guidance, the tools, and a good education, anything is possible. I work hard to bring families together through the arts. When participating in creating a song, a dance feather, a picture or a story, we are appreciating each other, learning and perpetuating our heritage.

Cultural Biography

An Alaskan born Dena'ina Athabaskan with strong roots to my cultural heritage, I am an active member of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe, I.R.A., on Alaska's Kenai Peninsula. Through participation in tribal events, ceremonies and regalia, I am a medium for the bearing of our spiritual, educational and cultural heritage through songwriting, singing, testimony reciting, craft creation, regalia making/wearing and original artwork. An active voice for retaining our ways of life, I combine ancient and modern rhythms to captivate the imagination and inspire the heart.

Business

Artworks Alaska is the name of my arts business. A self employed artist with over thirty years experience, I personally manage, promote and maintain a successful arts business. The four fields of my arts business are cultural performances through song and dance, arts education, graphic design and creation of original, contemporary artwork.

From 1998 through 2012 I was the primary caregiver for my great aunt Nancy Hufana, who lived onsite at our home property. I shared guardianship and conservator responsibilities with my husband. Care responsibility involved year-round, 24-hour, daily service for all aspects of her life. She passed away, at age 99 1/2, in September 2012.

My new art studio is named Auntie's Cantina in honor of Nancy. The Studio is open by appointment and showcases cultural arts of my heritage and our community.

Cultural performances include:

Compositions: "At All Times" single track for national organization CASA (Child Advocacy Special Assistant); "Make Love Last" - CD; "Ggugguyuni - Raven's Story" - CD; "What is Love" - CD/cassette; "Where Are The Drums" - soundtrack to Native Village of Tyonek video "Tubughna: The Beach People"; "Rivers" - soundtrack to "Footprints: A Documentary of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe, I.R.A."; "We Are One" - soundtrack to "Voices of the Raven's Children"; "Strangers" - ceremonial dance.

Headline appearances at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, (Washington D.C.), Alaska State Fair, the Washington State Fair, the Arctic Winter Games, Concert on the Lawn Festival (Homer, AK), Kenai River Festival (Kenai, AK), Kenai River Classic (Kenai, AK), Jazz Izz Festival (Kenai, AK), Native Village of Tyonek Traditional Potlatch Gatherings (Anchorage, AK) and Nambassa Music Festival (New Zealand).

Concerts with Jesse Colin Young, Jerry Jeff Walker, Stevie Ray Vaughn, Floyd Red Crow Westerman, John Trudell, and Glen Yarbrough.

Conference workshop presentations for Native, arts and women's organizations, including the Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education, the Alaska State Council on the Arts, the Alaska Congressional Delegation, the Alaska Federation of Natives, and the League of Women Voters.

Awards: NAMMY Native American Music Awards '2000 For "Strangers", Selection as the Alaska State Artist to perform in the State Days Concert Series at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. (1997); Distinguished Artist Award from the Alaska Art Education Association (1996).

Arts education projects/contracts include:

Arts in Education - resident artist program (1996 - 1999). One to two week school projects in the communities of Anchorage, Galena, Girdwood, Glenn Allen, Kenai, Nikiski, Northway, Sand Point and Soldotna. Curriculum theme is "teaching tribal arts is teaching tribal culture." Instruction culminates in an evening program with student participation via narration, acting, costumes and music.

ANSWER Camp - Cultural teacher at curriculum based summer school for Alaska Native youth with focus on science and math education within a Native cultural context of Traditional Ecological Knowledge.

De Sukdu (Our Story) Tours - Director of cultural tours involving the story of the Dena'ina village life in Old Town Kenai during the 1930's and 1940's (1995 - 1996).

"Footprints" Kenaitze Interpretive Site - interpreter of Dena'ina archaeology site and cultural heritage on the Kenai (1993 - 1994). Cultural factors discussed include environment, heritage, ancestors, social structures, architecture, customs, ceremonies, beliefs, cultural survival and the function of artwork in society.

Alaska Native cultural arts performances and workshops - presentations covering tribal arts such as scrimshaw, carving, beading, skin sewing, song and dance. Locations include: The Kennedy Center (Washington, D.C.), Alaska Native Heritage Center, The Dena'ina Center, Kenai Fine Arts Center, Kenai Visitors and Cultural Center, Alyeska Ski Resort, Alaska Sea Life Center, Kenai Fjords National Park, Portage Visitors Center and the Pratt Museum.

Alaska Native cultural trainings - outreach interpretive programs on Alaska Native culture to the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, Alaska State Parks, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District and many private interest groups.

Graphic Arts include:

Commercial businesses - many graphic designs for exteriors and interiors of buildings, canvasses, murals, signage, borders, business cards and brochures.

Residential properties - many graphic designs for home interiors, specializing in bedroom, recreation room, bath and kitchen areas.

Illustrations - specializing in graphic design of native flora and fauna of Alaska. Projects include designs for Kenaitze Indian Tribe, I.R.A., CIRI Cook Inlet Region Inc. the City of Kenai, the Kenai Watershed Forum, the Kenai Visitors and Convention Bureau, and the National Park Service. AIH Alaska Industrial Hardware, and a collaboration project with her mother, Clare Swan on a children's book, *Once Upon a Dena'ina Time*.

Original Artwork: Clients for commissioned pieces of original artwork and cultural regalia include Cook Inlet Region, Inc., Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Southcentral Foundation and Kenaitze Indian Tribe, IRA, as well as many private individuals.

Past Volunteer Service with Non-profit Organizations

Kenai Arts and Humanities Council - Council member representative of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe.

Kenai River Sportfishing Association - Music coordinator for annual Kenai River Classic.

Kenai Watershed Forum - Music coordinator for the annual Kenai River Festival.

Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network - Alaska State Alliance Board member.