

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 16, 2018

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## **ARIZONA HUMANITIES ANNOUNCES 2019 HUMANITIES AWARDS WINNERS**

*The Arizona Humanities Awards Will Be Celebrated on April 14, 2019*

**PHOENIX, AZ** – Arizona Humanities is pleased to announce the 2019 Arizona Humanities Awards winners.

- Natalie Diaz - Humanities Public Scholar
- Joan McGregor - Humanities Public Scholar
- Kevin Schindler – Friend of the Humanities
- Rachel Egboro – Humanities Rising Star
- Morning Star Leaders, Inc. – Founders Community Partnership Award
- Rodo Sofranac – Outstanding Supporter Award

Brenda Thomson, Arizona Humanities Executive Director shared, “Once again I am amazed by the talent and diversity of this year’s award winners...scholars, poets, storytellers, youth leaders and community builders. The one thing they all have in common is their outstanding contribution to public humanities across Arizona. For this we are most grateful.”

The 2019 Arizona Humanities Awards celebration will take place Sunday, April 14, 2019 at the Mesa Arts Center in Mesa, AZ. Tickets for the event will go on sale at [www.azhumanities.org](http://www.azhumanities.org) in early 2019.

Read more about each Arizona Humanities Awards winner below:

### **Humanities Public Scholar**

#### **Natalie Diaz**

*Maxine and Jonathan Marshall Chair  
in Modern and Contemporary Poetry,  
Associate Professor, Arizona State  
University*

Natalie Diaz was born and raised in the Fort Mojave Indian Village in Needles, California, on the banks of the Colorado River. She is Mojave and an enrolled member of the Gila River Indian Tribe. Her first poetry collection, *When My Brother Was an Aztec*, was published by Copper Canyon Press.



Diaz's second collection, *Postcolonial Love Poem* is forthcoming from Graywolf Press in 2020. She is a MacArthur Foundation Fellow, Lannan Literary Fellow and a Native Arts Council Foundation Artist Fellow. She was awarded a Bread Loaf Fellowship, the Holmes National Poetry Prize, a Hodder Fellowship, and a PEN/Civitella Ranieri Foundation Residency, as well as being awarded a U.S. Artists Ford Fellowship, and Princeton University's Hodder Fellowship. Diaz teaches in Arizona State University's creative writing MFA program, where she holds the Maxine and Jonathan Marshall Chair in Modern and Contemporary Poetry in the Department of English.

*Photo credit: Alonso Parra*

### **Humanities Public Scholar**

#### **Joan McGregor**

*Professor of Philosophy, Arizona State University  
School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies Senior  
Sustainability Scholar, Global Institute for Sustainability  
Honors Faculty, Barrett, the Honors College*

Professor Joan McGregor is a Professor of Philosophy at Arizona State University and President of the ASU Faculty Senate, Tempe Campus. She holds a PhD in Philosophy with a Minor in Law from the University of Arizona. She has a sustained and distinguished record of publications, grants (including a Mellon grant, "Humanities for the Anthropocene", 3 National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institutes, and an National Science Foundation grant for Ethics Education in Science and Engineering), administrative appointments, innovative teaching, and community engagement. Her record of scholarship spans 46 separate refereed articles, 11 book chapters, 39 other publications, and a monograph. Her research has broken new ground in applied ethics, in particular, trans-humanism, sustainability, food ethics, and sexual assault.



### **Friend of the Humanities**

#### **Kevin Schindler**

*Historian, Lowell Observatory*

Kevin Schindler has lived in Flagstaff for over twenty years, working for most of that time at Lowell Observatory. He's always been interested in history, from the very old of the cosmos, to the less ancient of fossils, to the comparatively modern of scientists and their research. He currently serves as Lowell Observatory's historian after two decades of leading the observatory's education and outreach efforts. Kevin is an active member of the Flagstaff history and science communities and served as sheriff of the Flagstaff Corral of Westerners International for thirteen years. He writes articles for a variety of



publications and contributes a biweekly column, "View from Mars Hill," for the Arizona Daily Sun newspaper and has written five books. In 2012, Kevin was awarded the Flagstaff Arts Council's Viola Award for Flagstaff Science Educator of the Year. Kevin spearheads the Flagstaff Lunar Legacy celebration recognizing northern Arizona's contributions to the 1960's-70's missions to the Moon. This event runs July 2018 to December 2019 and centers around the 50th anniversary of the first Moon landing. It teaches Flagstaff residents and visitors about the history of Arizona and helps them see connections to their modern lives. His other work as a Friend of the Humanities includes presentations in classrooms, libraries, restaurants, camp grounds, and even remote places such as the bottom of the Grand Canyon. He shares his knowledge and passion for history, science, baseball, and many other aspects of Arizona life with people of all ages. Fun fact: Schindler has a fossil crab and an asteroid named after him.

### **Humanities Rising Star**

#### **Rachel Egoro**

*Director, The Whole Story*

Rachel Egoro is a storyteller – which she says is strange for her to say, since everyone has a story. She just chooses to spend her free time writing, curating and coaching individuals and businesses on the art of storytelling. In January 2017, Egoro launched The Whole Story to expand Black narratives and challenge stereotypes through personal stories. In partnership with the Phoenix Art Museum, the show debuted to a sold out crowd and received the 2017 New Times Best of Phoenix award for "Best New Storytelling Event." Each quarter, five different people work with Egoro to develop their stories for a live, 300-person audience in the museum's Whiteman Hall. After seven sold out shows, over 2,000 people have heard 35 stories on love, life and a variety of universal themes told from the Black perspective. With each event, Egoro hopes to paint a clearer picture of the Black experience as a whole.



### **Founders Community Partner Award**

#### **Morning Star Leaders, Inc.**

**Megan LaRose, Debbie Nez-Manuel, Royce Manuel**

Founders Debbie Nez-Manuel (Diné), Royce Manuel (Akimel Aw-Thum and a member of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Communities), and Megan LaRose (Diné) formed Morning Star Leaders, Inc. (MSL) with a vision to serve Arizona tribal communities. MSL's mission is to preserve, strengthen, and renew cultural identity in indigenous youth through traditional indigenous leadership teachings. Through a range of student programming MSL has become a vital community resource



to support tribal youth who live off-reservation, and who may have experienced a disconnect with their home languages and cultural teachings. MSL works to ensure that native youth are college ready. “The morning star is our compass. We are reminded that the morning star is up early. At the end of ceremony we go out and we greet the morning and there is a star that’s there, it’s there every season, it doesn’t change. We give our offering and pray with intention, exactly what we want to do and accomplish, and that becomes our compass,” shared Nez-Manual. <https://morningstarleaders.org/>

*Photo: Debbie Nez-Manuel and Royce Manuel leading their AZ Speaks program “Protecting a Way of Life” Kinship Responsibilities.*

### **Outstanding Supporter Award**

#### **Rodo Sofranac**

*Children’s Book Author, Writer, and Leadership Development Coach*



Rodo Sofranac spent his first few years in a tiny village called Rijeka Crnojevića, Montenegro—former Yugoslavia. His family fled to Austria and later immigrated to the United States. The Montenegrin connection brought him to Arizona in 1974. He speaks, reads, and writes Serbo-Croatian and German. This diversity of cultures and languages inspires Rodo to read, write, and enjoy sharing stories. As a teacher, translator, mentor, and community organizer, he has worked with people of all ages—from birth to over 100—and in numerous settings, including over 25 years at the university level. Rodo’s award-winning work embraces varied storytelling, the latest being seven fun children’s books. Sofranac has connected Arizona Humanities to new friends and supporters through his readings, book donations, volunteerism, and advocacy to individuals and local businesses across Arizona.

### **2019 Humanities Awards Nominees**

#### **Humanities Public Scholar Nominees**

Owen Anderson, T.J. Davis, Betsy Fahlman, Ronald Geronimo, Björn Krondorfer, Tyler Meier, Paul Morris, Heidi Osselaer, Kirt Shineman, and Brooks Simpson

#### **Friend of the Humanities Nominees**

Stuart Graff, Randall Holdridge, Jean Reynolds, Helen Stephenson

#### **Rising Star Nominees**

Travis Franks, Jake Friedman and Kelsey Pinckney, Sean Avery Medlin, J. Seth Schermerhorn

*Any findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in these projects do not necessarily reflect those of Arizona Humanities or the National Endowment for the Humanities.*

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**Arizona Humanities**

<http://www.azhumanities.org>

*Mission: Arizona Humanities builds a just and civil society by creating opportunities to explore our shared human experiences through discussion, learning and reflection.*

Arizona Humanities is a statewide 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and the Arizona affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Since 1973, Arizona Humanities has supported public programs that promote understanding of the human experience with cultural, education, and nonprofit organizations across Arizona.