

## **MOLLY OF DENALI SCRIPTWRITING FELLOWSHIP BRINGS ALASKA NATIVE VOICES TO GROUNDBREAKING PBS KIDS SERIES**

### ***WGBH Boston Selects Recipients***

**BOSTON, MA (January 17, 2019)** – Six Alaska Native writers have been selected for the MOLLY OF DENALI Scriptwriting Fellowship. The Fellowship, funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and developed by WGBH Boston, is a part of the upcoming PBS KIDS series' ongoing commitment to creating opportunities for Alaska Native voices. The aim is to ensure that Indigenous people and communities are positively and authentically represented on-screen in MOLLY OF DENALI, by engaging and collaborating with Alaska Native writers throughout all aspects of production.

“The MOLLY OF DENALI scriptwriting fellowship is part of CPB’s overall commitment to diversity – including on screen and off,” said Deb Sanchez, CPB Senior Vice President for Education and Children’s Content. “CPB is supporting this goal through its investments in the MOLLY OF DENALI production, development workshops for Alaska Native voice talent, the creation of multi-station educational resources focused on rural children and the scriptwriter fellowships.”

Premiering in summer 2019 on PBS KIDS, MOLLY OF DENALI, a co-production of WGBH, Atomic Cartoons and CBC, is the first nationally distributed children’s series featuring an Alaska Native lead character. The animated action-adventure comedy aimed at children ages 4-to-8 features the adventures of Molly Mabray and her friends, who live in the fictional interior Alaska village of Qyah. This trailblazing series transforms the way Alaska Native, Native American and First Nations people are portrayed on screen by including these voices in all aspects of production. MOLLY OF DENALI production is informed by advisors, including: Alaska Native working group: Adeline Peter Raboff, Dewey Kk’oleyo Hoffman, Luke Titus and Rochelle Adams. Language Advisors: Adeline Peter Raboff, Lance X’unei Twitchell, Lorraine David and Marie Meade.

“When I was growing up, Indigenous people weren't reflected in television and film,” said Princess Daazhrai Johnson, creative producer for MOLLY OF DENALI. “When an Indigenous person was portrayed, it was usually a stereotype. What makes the MOLLY OF DENALI series so exciting is that Alaska Native voices were incorporated from the start of the show and WGBH and PBS KIDS continue to incorporate more Alaska Native voices at every level of production. We can't wait for Native youth to see themselves in Molly and her friends.”

The MOLLY OF DENALI Scriptwriting Fellowship kicked off with a week-long intensive workshop in November 2018. The Fellows received one-on-one support from guest writers and producers distinguished in children's programming as well as Alaska Native cultural advisors and their lead mentor, Raye Lankford, the Emmy-award winning former head writer of CURIOUS GEORGE. In addition to her script work on MOLLY OF DENALI, Lankford has also written for other PBS KIDS favorites such as ARTHUR, MARTHA SPEAKS and SUPER WHY! For the next three months, the fellows will continue to be mentored by Lankford to develop story ideas and an episode outline. Each fellow will complete an 11-minute script to be considered for inclusion in the first season of MOLLY OF DENALI.

MOLLY OF DENALI Scriptwriting Fellowship recipients:

- Aaluk Edwardson (Iñupiaq): an artist, playwright, educator, and actor from Utqiagvik who works at the University of Alaska Fairbanks Geophysical Institute.
- Anna Hoover (Unaangax): an award-winning filmmaker and project coordinator for the First Light Alaska project. She grew up in Egekik and now lives in Naknek.
- Frank Henry Kaash Katasse (Tlingit): an actor, playwright, and director living in Juneau.
- June Thiele (Athabascan and Yup'ik): an actor and playwright, who is originally from Alaska and now lives in Chicago.
- X'unei Lance Twitchell (Tlingit): a playwright, multimedia artist and associate professor of Indigenous studies at the University of Alaska Southeast.
- Joe 'Waats'asdiyei Apayuk Yates (Haida): an award-winning documentary filmmaker and University of Alaska Fairbanks student.

Each episode of MOLLY OF DENALI follows Molly, her friends, and family on their daily adventures in Alaska. The series is rooted in an informational text curriculum; in each episode, Molly's life and adventures are enhanced and broadened by informational texts (books, online resources, field guides, historical archives, indigenous knowledge from elders, maps, charts, posters, photos, and more) designed to convey information. MOLLY OF DENALI is a signature component of the CPB-PBS Ready To Learn Initiative, with a mission to advance children's early learning through innovative television and digital content. The series is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, as well as other funders including the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

For more information, visit MOLLY OF DENALI on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and [pbskids.org/molly](http://pbskids.org/molly).

### **About WGBH**

WGBH Boston is America's preeminent public broadcaster and the largest producer of PBS content for TV and the Web, including *Masterpiece*, *Antiques Roadshow*, *Frontline*, *Nova*, *American Experience*, *Arthur*, *Pinkalicious* & *Peterrific*, and more than a dozen other primetime, lifestyle and children's series. WGBH's television channels include WGBH 2, WGBX 44, and the digital channels World and Create. WGBH TV productions focusing on the region's diverse community include *Greater Boston*, *Basic Black* and *High School Quiz Show*. WGBH Radio serves listeners across New England with 89.7 WGBH, Boston's Local NPR®; 99.5 WCRB Classical Radio Boston; and WCAI, the Cape and Islands NPR® Station. WGBH also is a major source of programs for public radio (among them, *PRI's The World*®), a leader in educational multimedia (including PBS LearningMedia™, providing the nation's educators with free, curriculum-based digital content), and a pioneer in technologies and services that make media accessible to deaf, hard of hearing, blind and visually impaired audiences. WGBH has been recognized with hundreds of honors: Emmys, Peabodys, duPont-Columbia Awards and Oscars. Find more information at [wgbh.org](http://wgbh.org).

### **About PBS KIDS**

PBS KIDS, the number one educational media brand for kids, offers children ages 2-8 the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television, digital media and community-based programs. PBS KIDS and local stations across the country support the entire ecosystem in which children learn, including their teachers, parents and community. Provided by stations, the free PBS KIDS 24/7 channel and live stream is available to more than 95% of U.S. TV households. Kidscreen- and Webby Award-winning [pbskids.org](http://pbskids.org) provides engaging interactive content, including digital games and streaming video. PBS KIDS offers mobile apps to help support young children's learning, including the PBS KIDS Video app, which is available on a variety of mobile devices and on platforms such as Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV, Android TV and Chromecast. PBS KIDS also offers parent and teacher resources to support children's learning anytime and anywhere. For more information on PBS KIDS content and initiatives supporting school readiness and more, visit [pbs.org/pressroom](http://pbs.org/pressroom), or follow PBS KIDS on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and Instagram.

### **About CPB**

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private, nonprofit corporation created by Congress in 1967, is the steward of the federal government's investment in public

broadcasting. It helps support the operations of more than 1,500 locally owned and operated public television and radio stations nationwide. CPB is also the largest single source of funding for research, technology and program development for public radio, television and related online services. For more information, visit [cpb.org](http://cpb.org), follow us on Twitter [@CPBmedia](https://twitter.com/CPBmedia), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#) and [subscribe](#) for other updates.

### **About The Ready To Learn Initiative**

The Ready To Learn Initiative is a cooperative agreement funded and managed by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement. It supports the development of innovative educational television and digital media targeted at preschool and early elementary school children and their families. Its general goal is to promote early learning and school readiness, with a particular interest in reaching low-income children. In addition to creating television and other media products, the program supports activities intended to promote national distribution of the programming, effective educational uses of the programming, community-based outreach, and research on educational effectiveness.

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