

## **The 2018 recipient of the Storykeeper Award was Vancouver's Kira Van Deusen! Congratulations Kira!**

Kira Van Deusen has been on a magical storytelling journey...an adventurer willing to explore the world within and the world without, since 1992. That year she appeared at the Yukon International Storytelling Festival, both as a teller and as an interpreter for Russian – speaking Indigenous Siberian performers. Her meeting with these tellers led, at their invitation, to many trips to areas of the former Soviet Union over the next fifteen years.

These trips to the Russian far east helped Kira to establish relationships with Indigenous peoples, where she listened to their personal stories and the ancient tales still remembered by elders whose storytelling voices had been silenced during decades of Soviet power. Gifted with those stories, Kira also received permission from Nunavut elders to tell their Inuit story of Kiviuq. Kira's enthusiasm for these ancient tales has helped elders to renew their own commitment to remain vibrant keepers of their own stories.

In 2001, Kira's leadership was crucial to the creation and production of Vancouver's ongoing unique version of Epic Weekends which brings together a cultural mosaic of epic stories, tellers and listeners. The event recreates, as closely as possible, the experience of ancestors who gathered in the warmth of one another's company to share in the wisdom and mystery of a long story. These re-visited epic tales have assumed new power and relevance to both the tellers and listeners. Kira is a master of awakenings, generously sharing her considerable knowledge with beginning and established tellers.

As the author of eight books whose themes reveal a range of Indigenous cultures and concerns, Kira's MA in Folklore and Ethnology from Antioch University in 1995, has served her well. She has opened up a hidden world to her readers and listeners, and has honoured all those who have trusted her with their most precious possession – their stories.

Kira's contribution to our storytelling mosaic cannot be underestimated. She has been fearless in her pursuit of almost-forgotten tales and in her celebration of almost-lost voices. It is an honour to be able to present her with this year's Storykeeper Award.

Learn a bit more about Kira in [this interview](#) by SC-Radio-CC radio rover, Danica Lorier (interview begins at about 6 minutes and 30 seconds)