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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **BAY AREA BOOK FESTIVAL AND THE FEDERATED INDIANS OF GRATON RANCHERIA PARTNER FOR UNIQUE WRITING AND MENTORING PROGRAM**

### **YOUTH ESSAYS AND EXTENSIVE NATIVE-THEMED PROGRAMMING WILL BE FEATURED AT BAY AREA BOOK FESTIVAL IN BERKELEY APRIL 28 & 29**

Berkeley, CA, March 22, 2018 -- The **Bay Area Book Festival** and the **Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria** are pleased to announce the launch of the **2018 Graton Writing Project**, designed to inspire and develop young Native writers by presenting their work in a public forum. The program encourages middle and high school students in Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria's TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) of Sonoma and Marin program network to engage with the craft of writing. Participating students will write an essay, with guidance and support from writing mentors, based on a prompt. 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place

winners will be invited to read their work live at the Bay Area Book Festival on April 28; additionally, all essays will be published in the new *Graton Writing Project Anthology*. Writing Project participants will all have the opportunity to travel to the Bay Area Book Festival for the day on Saturday, April 28, when the program features a concentration of Native-themed panels and events including the youth readings. For information about the Graton Writing Project and the 2018 Bay Area Book Festival April 28 and 19 in Berkeley, visit [www.baybookfest.org](http://www.baybookfest.org) .

Youth writers have been working for several months in writing workshops creating their essays based on the following prompt by **Greg Sarris**, internationally acclaimed writer and Tribal Chairman of The Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria: Our communities face many challenges. Identify a problem that you see in your community and write an essay about how that problem could be addressed or solved. You could write about anything from the effects of climate change on your town to the lack of a sports team at your school — just make sure that the problem you choose, no matter how ‘big’ or ‘small,’ is a problem you’re passionate about finding an answer to.”

“The opportunity for young Native youth to participate in the Bay Area Book Festival affords them the opportunity to tell their stories, empowering their lives, and enhancing their ability to continue to see and articulate the greatness of their history and identities as American Indians, in a day when diversity and understanding diversity is so important,” says Greg Sarris, Tribal Chairman of The Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria. “Our young Native youth will be in a position with their stories to lead the challenge.”

Bay Area Book Festival founder and Director **Cherilyn Parsons** says, “From its inception in 2015, the Festival has included Native voices, and we are thrilled that under the leadership of Chairman Greg Sarris, an esteemed Native writer himself, the Graton Rancheria is partnering with us to showcase Native writers, nurture new talent, and explore Native issues and history. Our Native-themed programming and the involvement of young writers reflect the core mission of the Festival—using the power of books to create a better world. Native stories and traditions are vital in this mission. In particular, the contributions of the young writers in the Graton Writing Project will have a life beyond the April event as the youth discover the power of their own voices. We look forward to this program being an annual addition to the Festival.”

## **SPECIAL FESTIVAL PROGRAMMING APRIL 28 FOCUSES ON NATIVE VOICES**

Saturday, April 28

10:00 - 11:15

**Timeless Wisdom: Greg Sarris on Telling Tales and Native American Literary Tradition**

Greg Sarris wears many hats: award-winning author, screenwriter, scholar, professor, and tribal chief of the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria. His latest book, "How a Mountain Was Made," is a collection of stories inspired by traditional Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo creation tales; it celebrates the lore surrounding Sonoma Mountain. Timeless in wisdom and beauty, these fables are highly relevant to our times as they explore leadership, landscape, community, and responsibility to self and other. The Los Angeles Review of Books wrote, "Stunning.... Neither an arid anthropological text nor another pseudo-Indian as-told-to fabrication. Instead, Sarris has breathed new life into these ancient Northern California tales and legends."

11:45 - 1:00

**Native Voices Changing the Story**  
**Tommy Orange and Katherena Vermette**

These two powerful rising voices are breaking new ground in Native literature. Pam Houston wrote of Tommy Orange, "Remember his name. His book's going to blow the roof off." His novel "There There" is a remarkable look at urban Indian experience that Margaret Atwood described as "a gripping deep dive into urban indigenous community in California: an astonishing literary début!" Katherena Vermette is a writer from the Métis nation in Canada whose multifaceted novel "The Break" follows a Native woman and her neighbors after an assault. One of many rave reviews described "a stark portrayal of the adversity that plagues First Nations women in this country—and the strength that helps them survive." Bonus: The first 100 attendees to this session will receive an excerpt of Orange's book, set to hit shelves in June.

1:30 - 2:45

**Murder and Survival: The Remarkable Story of Indian Rebirth in the Wake of Genocide**  
**Benjamin Madley and Peter Cozzens, moderated by Greg Sarris**

The attempted extermination of the indigenous peoples of California is a history too little known in its bloody details. But the story today also is one of cultural survival and renewal. How was this genocide uniquely carried out in California, and how have California Indians and their indigenous brethren managed to survive? Two eminent historians discuss the trauma visited upon Native tribes, and Greg Sarris, a tribal chairman and writer, describes the challenges and opportunities of the current moment, including remarkable Native activism.

3:00 - 4:15

**The Graton Writing Project Essayists**

As part of a comprehensive program to celebrate Native heritage and writing, the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria and the Bay Area Book Festival launched the

Graton Writing Project, an essay contest open to middle- and high-school Native students from Sonoma. Students were invited to answer the following prompt: "Every community has a problem to solve. While one may struggle with a culture of domestic violence, another may not have access to healthy foods. Identify a problem that you see in your community, and write an essay about how that problem could be addressed or solved." Come hear this year's participants read excerpts from their pieces, and get a first look at the published anthology of their work!

4:15 - 5:30

### **Jabberwalking with Juan Felipe Herrera**

Can you walk and talk at the same time? How about Jabberwalk? Can you write and draw and walk and journal all at the same time? Festival favorite and marvelous speaker Juan Felipe Herrera, former Poet Laureate of the United States, will teach you everything he knows about being a real-life, bonafide, Jabberwalking poet! While his new book is technically for kids, anyone can learn to jabberwalk—parents, older siblings, and grandparents who have some pep in their step! Jabberwalkers write and speak for themselves and others no matter where their feet may take them—to Jabberwalk is to be a poet on the move. And there's no stopping once you're a Jabberwalker, writing fast, fast, fast, scribble-poem-burbles-on-the-run. It's all out there—vámonos!

### **About the 2018 Bay Area Book Festival**

Now in its fourth year, the Bay Area Book Festival is one of the world's premier celebrations of writers, readers and the written word. Nearly 500 authors and exhibitors—from the Bay Area, nation and world and from across the spectrum of genres, traditions and inspirations—will come together with tens of thousands of book enthusiasts for the fourth annual **Bay Area Book Festival April 28 and 29 in downtown Berkeley, CA**. The Festival celebrates two days of presentations, panels, keynotes, films, performances, participatory activities, exhibits and a lively outdoor fair.

The literary program will satisfy fans across many interests, from science fiction, history, mysteries, memoir, poetry, food writing, children's literature and more, with special tracks this year on women, Native storytelling and youth literature—all within the overall theme of the power of books to create a better world. Literary sessions take place in venues throughout the downtown area and on outdoor stages.

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