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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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***The Beautiful Blackbird Children's Book Festival  
Returns for its Third Annual Year, September 17-18, 2022***

**PORTLAND/LEWISTON/ROCKLAND, ME** - From **September 17-18, 2022** Indigo Arts Alliance (IAA) will present the third annual ***Beautiful Blackbird Children's Book Festival***.

Joining **Indigo Arts Alliance** this year in its celebration of Black children's books and their creators from across the African Diaspora, are eight community partners holding events in three Maine cities over the weekend of September 17-18.

This year's festival, honoring the legacy of Black children's book creator and artist Ashley Bryan, will feature a 4,500 book giveaway, the production of acclaimed media, and live events in Portland, Lewiston, and Rockland. Each featured book and event will provide an opportunity for young readers of color to see themselves reflected in literature created with them in mind and to interact with the authors and illustrators as role models and storytellers.

The Beautiful Blackbird Children's Book Festival was founded in 2020 by Indigo Arts Alliance in partnership with I'm Your Neighbor Books and Diverse BookFinder and is produced with the 2022 partners: The Children's Museum & Theatre of Maine, Center for Maine Contemporary Art, Ridah Ridah, the Farnsworth Museum, LA Arts, and the Lewiston Public Library.

This year's festival holds special significance as Ashley Bryan, best known for his picture book *Beautiful Blackbird*, passed away in February of this year. Throughout his career, Bryan's passion for amplifying the legacy of African and African American knew no bounds. It was that same passion that inspired Indigo Arts Alliance to create the Beautiful Blackbird Children's Book Festival, honoring his legacy of uplifting Black roots, identity, and resiliency.

A goal of the festival is to build the home libraries of Black children, filling those homes with books that represent their lives and experiences. In the past two years, the festival distributed a total of over 4,000 books. However, this year's Beautiful Blackbird Children's Book Festival will provide and facilitate the distribution of over 4,500 books. This doubles our outreach to children in Maine of all backgrounds served by Portland Public Housing, Portland Parks and Recreation, Lewiston Public Schools, and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers CCLC program.

*“This year’s Beautiful Blackbird Children’s Book Festival is a demonstration of the deep love and respect the state of Maine has for our beloved Ashley Bryan. New this year, the festival returns to our original concept— more in person activities at partner institutions across the state! We are adding new content to our website for families and educators to enjoy at your convenience as well. Most importantly we are increasing our book give away to 4,500 ensuring children can OWN books with characters that represent the richness of the African diaspora created by Black writers and artists.” – Marcia Minter, Co-Founder, Executive Director, Indigo Arts Alliance*

## **2022 Festival Books include:**

1. *I Am Loved*, written by **Nikki Giovanni** & Illustrated by **Ashley Bryan**, is a gorgeous gathering of poems and illustrations that celebrates the fact that there is nothing more important to a child than to feel loved.
2. *Thank You, Omu!* **Oge Mora’s** award winning Nigerian American book, brings to life a heartwarming story of sharing and community in colorful cut-paper designs, honoring the resilience of immigrant matriarchs.
3. *Black Is a Rainbow Color*, written by **Angela Joy** & illustrated by **Ekua Holmes**, reflects on the meaning of being Black in this moving anthem about a people, a culture, a history, and a legacy that lives on.
4. *Blue: A History of the Color as Deep as the Sea and as Wide as the Sky*, written by **Nana Ekua Brew-Hammond** & illustrated by **Daniel Minter**, is a vibrant book following one color’s journey through time and across the world as it becomes the blue we know today.
5. *Nana Akua Goes to School*, written by **Tricia Elam Walker** & illustrated by **April Harrison**, is a moving Ghanaian American story that celebrates cultural diversity of our classrooms, explores a child’s fear of being different, and showcases the great love between a grandparent and grandchild.
6. *The 1619 Project: Born on the Water*, written by **Nikole Hannah-Jones** & **Renée Watson** & illustrated by **Nikkolas Smith**, thoughtfully chronicles the consequences of slavery and the history of Black resistance in the United States. With powerful verse and striking illustrations, this book provides a pathway for readers of all ages to reflect on the origins of American identity.
7. *New Kid* by **Jerry Craft** is a timely, honest graphic novel about starting over at a new school where diversity is low and the struggle to fit in is real, authentically capturing the struggles and tensions children of color face in traditionally White spaces.

This year's Beautiful Blackbird Children's Book Festival builds on the tremendous success of previous two festivals, which despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, successfully transitioned from a live festival to a virtual event throughout the summer of 2020 and a hybrid event in 2021. To this date, the festival has reached more than 200,000 audience members spanning over 44 countries. This year's festival will host several in person events with local partners. See list of events and partner profiles below.

## **2022 Upcoming Events include:**

**Saturday, September 17, 2022**

**Open 9 am - 4 pm EST | Event 9:30 am to 3 pm EST**

**The Children's Museum & Theatre of Maine**

**250 Thompson's Point Rd, Portland, ME, 04102**

### ***Beautiful Blackbird Children's Book Festival at the Children's Museum & Theatre of Maine -***

The Children's Museum & Theatre of Maine is proud to partner with the Beautiful Blackbird Children's Book Festival again this year! On September 17, the Museum & Theatre will present a robust in-person schedule of literary and art activities for the whole family, including Read Alouds featuring local community members and art-making workshops. In addition, the Museum & Theatre will offer a **Pay What You Can** ticketing option for all visitors to eliminate barriers families might face in taking full advantage of our new facility. Thank you to UNUM for their generous support and partnership.

**The Children's Museum & Theatre of Maine schedule of events begins at 9:30 am and takes place throughout the day.**

#### **Read Alouds**

Featured books and video schedule: 9:30 am Nana Akua, 10:30 am Thank You, Omu, 11:30 am I am Loved (Video), 12:30 pm Blue, 1:30 pm Black is a Rainbow Color, 2:30 Ashley Bryan Tribute (Video)

#### **Art Activities**

Art activity schedule: 10:30 am Adkinra art activity with Ebenezer Akakpo, 12:30 pm I am Loved art activity, 1:00 pm Blue art activity with Daniel Minter, 2:15 pm Black is a Rainbow Color art activity

**Saturday, September 17, 2022**

**12pm - 2pm EST**

**Indigo Arts Alliance**

**60 Cove St., Portland, Maine**

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***Our Wildest Dreams: A 1619 Project Discussion*** — Indigo Arts Alliance will host a discussion,

inspired by *The New York Times Magazine's* award-winning book *The 1619 Project: Born on the Water* by Nikole Hannah-Jones and Renee Watson, surrounding the past, present and future of the Black American Experience. Participants are invited to imagine a reframing of American History and explore ways in which audiences of *all* ages and backgrounds can engage in building a future of hope, celebration and freedom. Hosted at the Indigo Arts Alliance's 60 Cove Street studio, this conversation will ignite the sparks of creativity, questioning and pride in our complex identities through the lens of art, history, politics and academia. Educators, parents, and youth of all ages are encouraged to attend this free, in-person program.

**Saturday, September 17, 2022**

**1pm - 3pm EST**

**Center for Maine Contemporary Art & Farnsworth Art Museum  
21 Winter St., Rockland, ME & 16 Museum St., Rockland, ME**

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**2022 Beautiful Blackbird Children's Festival Midcoast** — Join the Center for Maine Contemporary Art and Farnsworth Art Museum for an afternoon read aloud and art activities! Artist Veronica Perez will join us at the CMCA courtyard to read a selection of books followed by art making workshops in the ArtLab and Gamble Education Center. Galleries will be open at the Farnsworth featuring solo exhibit *Ashley Bryan: Beauty in Return*. Artists of all ages are encouraged to attend this free event!

**Sunday, September 18, 2022**

**12pm - 3pm EST**

**LA Arts & Lewiston Public Library  
Kennedy Park, 120 Park St, Lewiston, ME**

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**2022 Beautiful Blackbird Children's Festival Lewiston**— Celebrate with us at Kennedy Park in Lewiston for a full afternoon of events including read alouds with Malik Hall, Mana Abdi, and more! Back to school giveaways, art making and cutup poetry by Art Van, a youth led interactive Community Mural inspired by Ashley Bryan, and free lunch provided by Mogadishu Store. Presented in collaboration with L/A Arts, Lewiston Public Library, Lewiston Auburn Youth Family Enrichment Services, Lewiston 21st Century, Maine Community Integration, ArtVan, Djibouti American Community Empowerment Project and Indigo Arts. Rain location Callahan Hall at Lewiston Public Library.

**THE CASE FOR A CHILDREN'S BOOK FESTIVAL:**

*"Research shows that children in communities where English is not the primary language are at risk of missing early literacy skills and entering school at a deficit. These early deficits can have psychological, social, and economic consequences. Additionally, Black and African American children are less likely to encounter books that depict their own life experiences. This is a critical gap*

since children are better able to retain and recall plot and character information after reading books featuring characters that mirror themselves. The Beautiful Blackbird Children's Book Festival addresses this gap." – Krista Aronson, Director and Founder, Diverse Book Finder

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## **ABOUT THE BEAUTIFUL BLACKBIRD CHILDREN'S BOOK FESTIVAL**

The Beautiful Blackbird Children's Book Festival was founded in 2020 by Indigo Arts Alliance in partnership with I'm Your Neighbor Books and Diverse BookFinder and is produced with the 2022 partners: The Children's Museum and Theater of Maine, Center for Maine Contemporary Art, Ridah Ridah, the Farnsworth Museum, LA Arts, and the Lewiston Public Library.

The Festival was created to honor the legendary and highly acclaimed children's author and illustrator Ashley Bryan, whose award-winning picture book *Beautiful Blackbird* is a celebration of Blackness. Maine's own Ashley Bryan was one of the first Black writers and illustrators of children's books, opening the doors for Black book creators worldwide to add their contribution to children's literature and encourage the publication of other children's books for Black children. The Festival seeks to educate and entertain children, and brings attention to the critical need for more characters from the African diaspora in children's literature.

## **ABOUT THE 2022 BEAUTIFUL BLACKBIRD CHILDREN'S BOOK FESTIVAL PARTNERS**

**Indigo Arts Alliance (IAA)** is a Black-led organization dedicated to the professional development and amplification of Black and Brown artistic vision and practice. Founded in 2018 and formally launched in 2019, IAA is an incubator space with a mission to build global connections by bringing together Black and Brown artists from diverse backgrounds to engage in creative process through an Artists in Residency program. Visit [indigoartsalliance.me](https://indigoartsalliance.me) to learn more and support their work.

**I'm Your Neighbor Books** facilitates deep engagement with the children's books that represent our immigrant communities and their new generations. By curating, loaning, and gifting these diverse titles with educational materials, the nonprofit seeks to open conversations on modern immigration, replace false narratives about communities of color, create emotional connections to vast diversity of voices, build the cultural competency of all readers, lay the groundwork for cross-cultural communication, and create a culture of belonging in this diverse America. Visit <https://imyourneighborbooks.org> to learn more and support their work.

**Diverse Book Finder** is a comprehensive database of children's picture books featuring Black and Indigenous people and People of Color. This database is a go-to resource for librarians, educators, parents, book creators, and publishers who seek to create collections in which all children can see themselves – and each other – reflected in the picture books they read. Visit <https://diversebookfinder.org> to learn more and support their work.

**The Children's Museum & Theatre of Maine** inspires discovery and imagination through playful exploration, with a focus on science learning, community engagement, performing and visual arts, and early childhood education. The Museum & Theatre is an indispensable resource for families and educators, helping to create a broad community devoted to children's development and learning. The Museum & Theatre is committed to providing access for children of all economic means and all abilities through various access initiatives. With almost one hundred years of children's theatre history and nearly fifty years as a children's museum, the award-winning organization is considered one of the top children's museums in the country. Visit [kitetails.org](http://kitetails.org) to learn more and support their work.

**The Center for Maine Contemporary Art**, based in Rockland, is the state's only contemporary art museum. CMCA is dedicated to advancing contemporary art through direct engagement with artists and the public, creating exceptional exhibitions and education programs that communicate the transformative power of the art of our time. CMCA fulfills its mission by supporting and exhibiting the work of artists with ties to Maine; by providing engaging learning opportunities that open new possibilities for artists and visitors; and by serving as an essential platform for making art an accessible and vital part of our communities. More information about the museum may be found at <https://cmcanow.org>.

**The Farnsworth Museum of Art** offers a nationally recognized collection of works from many of America's greatest artists. It was named by the Boston Globe as one of the finest small museums in the country and is open year-round as the only museum dedicated solely to American and Maine-inspired art. Through its remarkable collection of over 15,000 works, inventive exhibitions, wide-ranging intellectual resources and energetic educational programming, visitors from around the world gain a deep appreciation of the ongoing story of Maine's role in American art. More information about the museum may be found at [www.farnsworthmuseum.org](http://www.farnsworthmuseum.org).

**The Lewiston Public Library's** mission is "Preserving our history, connecting our community, and enriching the life of the mind." At over a century old, the Lewiston Public Library is an invaluable community asset providing a wide range of needed information services to users of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. Visit <https://lplonline.org> to learn more and support their work.

**LA Arts**, the arts agency for the cities of Lewiston and Auburn Maine, has pursued a mission to engage and inspire a vibrant community through arts and culture since 1973. The agency works with governments, businesses, schools and local arts and cultural organizations to create opportunities for community members across the generations to experience, learn, and participate in the arts. LA Arts organizes arts programs and initiatives, supports the work of local artists and arts organizations, and highlights the essential role the arts play in shaping an economically vital, socially integrated, and

forward-looking future for its community. Learn more at [www.laarts.org](http://www.laarts.org).

**Ridah Ridah Entertainment (R2E)** is a sound design and music composition company created by Atiim Chenzira & Jason Williams (aka JasWho?). R2E has leveraged their legacy skill sets of indoor/outdoor sound design and music composition to create sound environments for films, built environments (art installations and more), video & music projects, as well as read aloud books. Visit <https://www.ridahridah.com> to learn more about their work.