



## Charting Alaska featuring Heather Johnston



Heather Johnston, an enrolled member of the Qagan Tayagungin Tribe of Sand Point, is an innovative artist who blends contemporary techniques with the traditional imagery of Alaska Native art to create unique illustrations on historic maps and sheet music. Born and raised in Alaska, Heather now resides in Oregon where she works as a professional artist.

As a self-taught artist, Heather experimented with many different mediums and techniques before finding her current style. Heather's father, Don Johnston, is a master artist who specialized in baleen baskets, a traditional artform of the Aleut people for thousands of years. This exposure to the arts at a young age inspired Heather to create her own work, and she has been drawing and painting since she was a child.

The unique style of Heather's illustrated maps was initially developed through a collaborative project with the Raven Makes Gallery in Sisters, Oregon. This project, *The Homelands Collection*, involved a diverse group of Native American and Alaska Native artists creating original work on antique maps. Through this project, Heather was introduced to a new style that she has quickly adapted to her own artistic vision. The antique maps that Heather uses as her canvases are sourced from a gallery in England. She illustrates the work with both colored pencils and watercolors. Animals such as whales, seals, wolves, and bears are featured prominently in Heather's art. These animals hold an important place in Aleut culture and art.

Parallels can be drawn between the illustrated maps that Heather creates and the Native American ledger art from the Great Plains. Both styles utilize antique paper that is reused to create a new art form that is uniquely Native American. This adaptability and resilience is a hallmark of Native American artists. The use of maps as a canvas for the illustrations is intended to address the concept of the unique relationship that Native Americans have to their homelands and the difference in world views and concepts of land ownership between Native American and Western societies.

Heather has earned multiple awards for her work including First Place in the 2-Dimensional Art category at the 2022 Heard Guild Indian Fair and Market, Phoenix, Arizona, and Second Place in the Paintings, Drawings, and Graphics category at the 2022 SWAI Santa Fe Indian Market, Santa Fe, New Mexico. Her work is included in the collection of the Alutiiq Museum in Kodiak, Alaska.

*The Sioux Indian Museum, managed by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Indian Arts and Crafts Board, is located in The Journey Museum, 222 New York Street, Rapid City, SD 57701. For admission fees and hours of operation please visit [www.doi.gov/iacb/our-museums/sioux](http://www.doi.gov/iacb/our-museums/sioux) or call (605) 394-6923.*

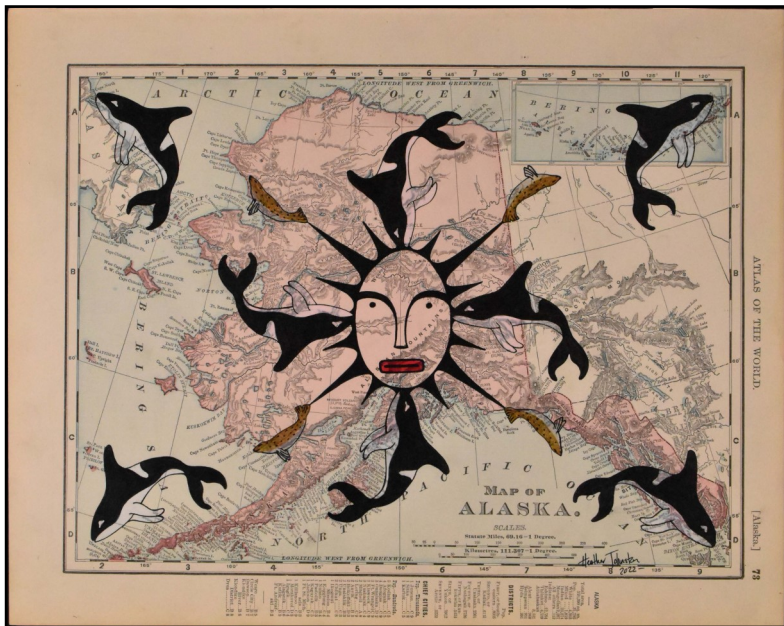
# Charting Alaska featuring Heather Johnston



## *Wolf and Bear*

Colored pencils and ink on antique map  
© 2022 Heather Johnston

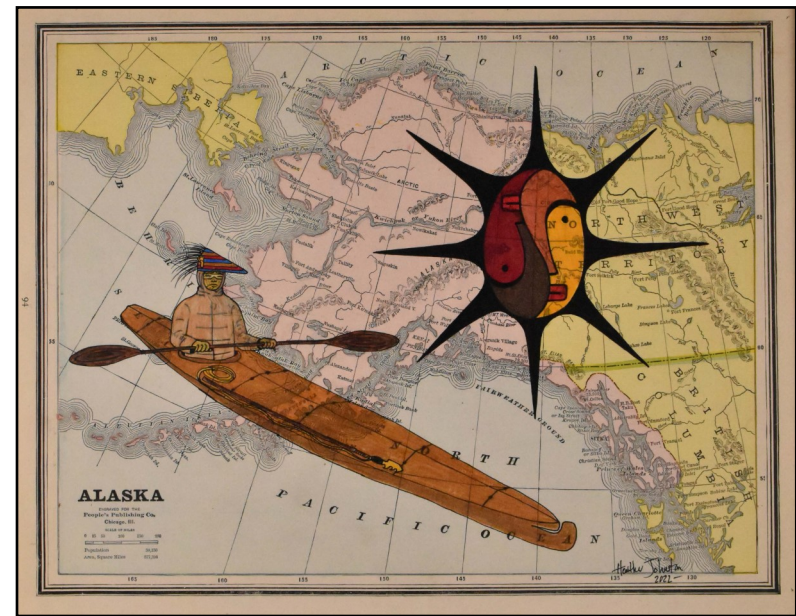
December 9, 2022 to February 28, 2023



**Mask of the Ocean**

Colored pencils and ink on antique map

© 2022 Heather Johnston



**Spirit of the Hunt**

Colored pencils and ink on antique map

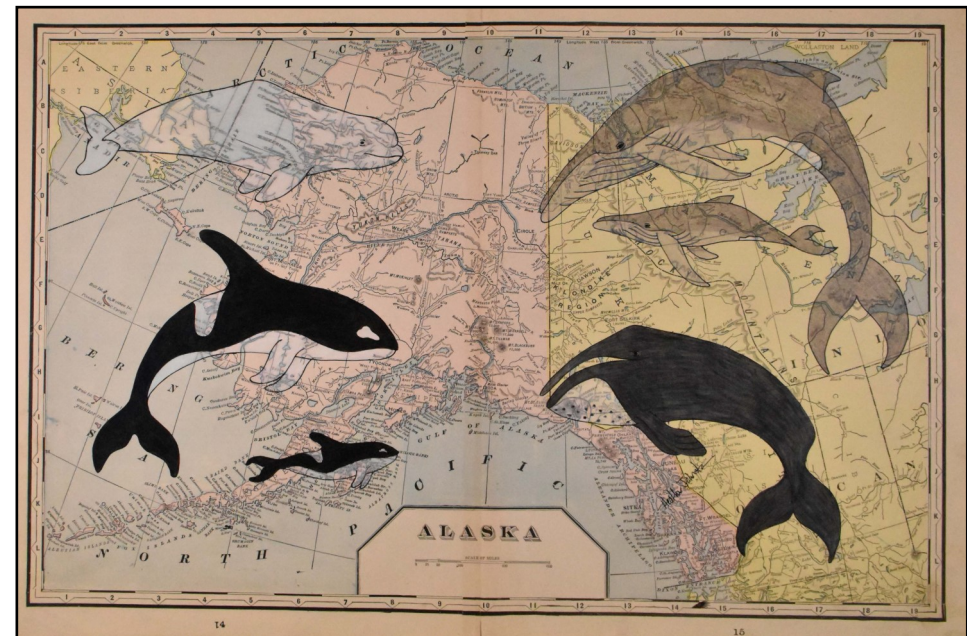
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**Heritage**

Colored pencils and ink on antique map

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**We Swim Together**

Colored pencils and ink on antique map

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