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2020 Literary Award to be presented to *Eastern Cherokee Stories* by Sandra Muse Isaacs on December 16 via Zoom

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (December 12, 2020) - The Western North Carolina Historical Association (WNCHA) is pleased to announce *Eastern Cherokee Stories: A Living Oral Tradition and Its Cultural Continuance* by Sandra Muse Isaacs as the 65th winner of the Thomas Wolfe Memorial Literary Award. Originated by the Louis Lipinsky family and now also supported by Michael Sartisky, PhD, and the Thomas Wolfe Memorial Advisory Committee, the Award has been presented annually by the Western North Carolina Historical Association since 1955 for printed works that focus special attention on Western North Carolina.

“Sandra Muse Isaacs in *Eastern Cherokee Stories* helps the reader see the oral tradition of the Eastern Cherokee as both an ancient and contemporary means of expressing culture and identity. She allows us to see the ways in which stories continue to have the power to educate and motivate a people rooted in a deep respect and understand of all living things. For her scholarship and for offering us a new lens on the original people of our region, Muse Isaacs was chosen as the winner of the Thomas Wolfe Memorial Literary Award for 2020,” said Catherine Frank, Chair of the selection committee.

A prize of \$2,500 accompanies the Thomas Wolfe Memorial Literary Award and will be presented to the author at the annual Award event. The Award event will be held this year via Zoom on Wednesday, December 16 at 6:00pm. Registration is available at www.wnchistory.org/events

The other finalists, who will read selections from their publications at the event, chosen from over 40 nominations, are:

- Leah Hampton, *F*ckface and Other Stories*
- Susan E. Keefe and the Junaluska Heritage Association, *Junaluska: Oral Histories of a Black Appalachian Community*
- Courtney Lewis, *Sovereign Entrepreneurs: Cherokee Small-Business Owners and the Making of Economic Sovereignty*
- Rose McLarney, Laura-Gray Street, and L.L. Gaddy, editors, *A Literary Field Guide to Southern Appalachia*
- Dale Neal, *Appalachian Book of the Dead*

The first award in 1955 was given to Wilma Dykeman for her landmark “The French Broad.” Last year’s winner was bestselling author Charles Frazier for his historical novel “Varina” about the Confederate first lady. Others who have received the award over the years include such notables as Robert Morgan, John Parris, Gail Godwin, John Ehle, Robert Brunk, Michael McFee, Lee Smith, Ron Rash, Wiley Cash, Wayne Caldwell, Fiona Ritchie and Doug Orr.

The 2020 Award Panel this year consisted of: Catherine Frank, Chair, Director, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UNC Asheville; Brandon J. Johnson, Blue Ridge National Heritage Area; Leslee Johnson, English Department, UNC-Asheville; Tom Muir, Historic Site Manager, Thomas Wolfe Memorial; Gordon McKinney, PhD, former president, Appalachian Studies Association; Terry Roberts, PhD, Director, National Paideia Center; Jim Stokely, President, Wilma Dykeman Legacy.

The WNC Historical Association is a nonprofit organization with a mission to preserve and promote the history and legacy of Western North Carolina through interpretation, education, collection, and collaboration. For more information, call WNCHA at 828-253-9231 or visit www.wnchistory.org.