

# Jackie Kay, CBE, Poet Laureate of Scotland

## 175th Anniversary Honorees

### The Makar's Medal

The Chicago Scots have created a new award, the **Makar's Medal**, to commemorate their 175th anniversary as the oldest nonprofit in Illinois. The **Makar's Medal** will be awarded every five years to the seated Scots Makar – the poet laureate of Scotland.

The inaugural recipient of the **Makar's Medal** is **Jackie Kay**, a critically acclaimed poet, playwright and novelist. Jackie was appointed the third Scots Makar in March 2016. She is considered a poet of the people and the literary figure reframing Scottishness today.



Photo by Mary McCartney

Jackie was born in Edinburgh in 1961 to a Scottish mother and Nigerian father. She was adopted as a baby by a white Scottish couple, Helen and John Kay who also adopted her brother two years earlier and grew up in a suburb of Glasgow.

Her memoir, **Red Dust Road** published in 2010 was awarded the prestigious Scottish Book of the Year, the London Book Award, and was shortlisted for the Jr. Ackerley prize. It was also one of 20 books to be selected for World Book Night in 2013. Her first collection of poetry **The Adoption Papers** won the Forward prize, a Saltire prize and a Scottish Arts Council prize. Another early poetry collection **Fiere** was shortlisted for the Costa award and her novel **Trumpet** won the Guardian Fiction Award and was shortlisted for the Impac award.

Jackie was awarded a CBE in 2019, and made a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 2002. She is also an award-winning children's author and has written extensively for stage and television. Her most recent poetry collection, **Bantam**, was published in 2017 to critical acclaim. She is Chancellor of the University of Salford and Professor of Creative Writing at Newcastle University.

The **Makar's Medal** strengthens Chicago Scots commitment to its mission to nourish Scottish identity through service, fellowship, and celebration of Scottish culture – both traditional and contemporary.