

January 16, 2023

2023 Senate Education Committee

Chairman Elkin and members of the Senate Education Committee,

Boozhoo, Indinawemagonadoog. I greet you as my relatives.

Wabishka Binese Awanaakwat Ikwe dizinakaz.

Mikinak Wajiw nindoonjibaa,

Aajijak nindodem.

My name is Dr. Denise Lajimodiere. My Ojibwe name is White Thunder Cloud Woman. I am from the Crane clan. I am an enrolled member of the Turtle Mt. Band of Ojibwe, and I live in Belcourt.

I am a retired educator having spent forty-four years as a teacher, principal and professor.

My journey as a poet began when I was in Elementary school. I took Creative Writing classes in High School.

As a shy student with little self-confidence, I noticed there were no Native poets, or novelists. I figured that Natives just don't write, and so I stopped writing for over a decade. Then, in 1984 the book Love Medicine was published. Not only was the author a Native female but she was from my tribe! I began writing poems in earnest and that culminated in my first book, Dragonfly Dance, and had the honor of Louise writing the introduction.

As a young student I had no mentors. As Poet Laureate I hope to be a mentor and role model for students across North Dakota.

US Poet Laureate Joy Harjo says that Poetry is "singing on paper, it is soul talk, and we must be friends with silence in order to hear. We must learn how to listen. She also says every poem has ancestors behind it."

We are all story tellers and as North Dakota Poet Laureate I hope to encourage everyone to tell their stories.

Coming from a troubled childhood, poems were my healing, my therapy. My poems held what I could no longer carry, and I could rest. Not all my poems are autobiographical, but they do hold some personal truths.

While working on my Doctorate at UND I walked over to the English department and asked if I could register for poetry workshop classes. I took Larry Woiwode's classes for over a year. He became a mentor. He encouraged my writing, he line edited my poems. He invited me to read at some of his poetry readings. At one reading he announced that I would be an Associate Poet Laureate. He read and help edit my latest book of poems, *His Feathers Were Chains*. I owe much of my success as a poet to his mentorship.

Since the resolution was written I've gotten notice that I'm going to the moon! Well, one of my poems has been selected to go to the moon! *Gizhebaa* will be sent to the Moon when the NASA flight is launched, scheduled for 2024. It will be published this month in the Earthly edition of *The Polaris Trilogy*.

I hope to celebrate my moon landing as North Dakota's next Poet Laurate. Help me celebrate by supporting this resolution! I would also be the first Native American Poet Laureate in North Dakota.

I ask for a DO PASS recommendation on SCR4002.

Miigwech, thank you to Senators Tim Mathern, Estenson; Weston; Representatives Davis; Johnson and Vetter for sponsoring this Resolution.