

Hosted by BFA Creative Writing Program and
Navajo Nation Poet Laureate Committee

Shił Nahólne':
Literary Arts & Oral
Stories Symposium

APRIL 8-9, 2024
Isleta Resort & Casino
Albuquerque, NM



Shił Nahólne': Literary Arts & Oral Stories Symposium



*Photo Credit: Laura Tohe, Ph.D.
Artist: Laura Florence

APRIL 8-9, 2024
Isleta Resort & Casino, Albuquerque, NM

Monday, April 8, 2024

7:30 AM Sign-In Registration

**Continental Breakfast provided*

8:30 AM **GENERAL SESSION**

Opening Prayer Sharon Nelson, *Diné Studies*
Yá'át'ééh Dr. Colleen W. Bowman, *Provost*
Introductions Dr. Jennifer Wheeler, *Associate Professor*
Anita Roastingear, *MFA, Associate Professor*
Gene Hult, *Assistant Professor*
Dr. Laura Tohe, *Navajo Nation Poet Laureate*

9:00 AM NTU BFA Creative Writing Program

9:30 AM Guest Speakers: Dr. Laura Tohe, *Navajo Nation Poet Laureate*
Sherwin Bitsui, *Diné Poet*

10:15 AM Break

10:30 - 11:45 AM **Session I: Nitsáhákeees**

- A. Lorinda Martinez, *Writing for Our Culture: Running With Changing Woman*
- B. Jake Skeets, *The Morning as a Metaphor: Before the Poem Is a Poem*
- C. Dr. Jennifer Denetdale, *What Do Archives Have to Do with Diné Storytelling? Colonial Archives and Diné History*

11:45 AM - 1:00 PM Lunch (on your own)
Solar Eclipse Presentation and Reverence: Lyle Harvey

1:00 - 2:15 PM **Session II: Nahat'á**

- A. Ramona Emerson, *Visual Storytelling: Fiction through the Lens of a Filmmaker*
- B. Dr. Tina Deschenie & Michael Thompson, *Alchemy: Our Lives and Writing*
- C. Byron Aspaas, *Memory Maps: A Map of Story through the Way of the Bilagáana*





2:15 - 2:30 PM Break

**Afternoon Snacks provided*

2:30 - 3:45 PM **Session III: liná**

- A. Lyle Harvey, *The Beauty of Our Language*
- B. Kinsale Drake, *Blankets of Love and Wisdom*
- C. Dr. Stacy Brooks, *Indigenous Science of Cherokee Mythology*

4:00 - 5:00 PM **GENERAL SESSION**

NTU Creative Writing Program

**Dinner on your own*

Tuesday, April 9, 2024

7:30 AM Sign-In Registration

8:30 AM **GENERAL SESSION**

Opening Prayer
Yá'át'ééh
Introductions

**Continental Breakfast provided*

9:00 - 10:15 AM **Session IV: Sih Hasin**

- A. Aanor Louis, *Storytelling with Media*
- B. Max Early, *Orality of Laguna Deer Hunting Poetics*
- C. Luci Tapahonso, *The Beauty of Our Language*

10:15 - 10:30 AM Break

10:30 - 11:45 AM **Session V: Hózhó**

- A. Dr. Tina Deschenie & Michael Thompson, *Terrain: Writing and Life Create Our Trails*
- B. Jake Skeets, *The Morning as a Metaphor: Before the Poem Is a Poem*
- C. Dr. Henry Fowler, *Díí Shaa Hane': This Is My Story Growing Up in the Navajo Western Agency*

12:00 - 1:30 PM Luncheon

**Lunch provided*

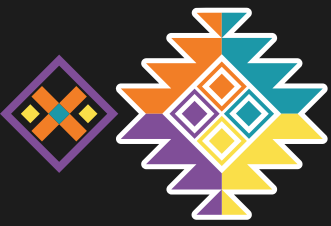
Guest Speaker: Sunny Dooley, *Story is Life. Life is Story*
Inaugural Navajo Nation Poet Laureate Address: Luci Tapahonso

1:30 - 1:45 PM Break

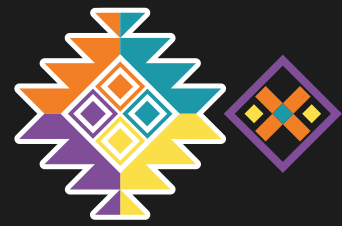
1:45 - 3:00 PM **GENERAL SESSION**

Guest Speaker Amber McCrary, *Poet and Publisher, Creating Zine*
Ahéhee' Dr. Casmir Agbaraji, *Dean of Undergraduate Studies*
Closing Prayer Dr. Jennifer Wheeler





Shił Nahólne': Literary Arts & Oral Stories Symposium Presenters



Jennifer Denetdale

Professor and Chair of American Studies at the University of New Mexico

What Do Archives Have to Do with Diné Storytelling? Colonial Archives and Diné History

Jennifer Denetdale is originally from Tohatchi, NM. She is a professor and chair of American Studies at the University of New Mexico. A historian at heart, Denetdale has written Diné histories with attention to the place of oral traditions and histories in how we talk about the past, present and future. She is the author of Diné histories, including two books for young adults. She is the chair of the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission. She has been awarded a Henry Luce Foundation grant to create a Milton Snow photograph exhibition collaboration with the Navajo Nation Museum. She is the co-curator for a Milton Snow photograph exhibition at the Maxwell Museum, UNM, opening on May 4th, 2024.



Max Early

Laguna Pueblo Writer

Orality of Laguna Deer Hunting Poetics

Max Early (Laguna Pueblo) is an Indigenous Nations Poet IN-NA-PO fellow and MFA graduate from the Institute of American Indian Arts. His poems are published in *Inkwell Journal*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Zócalo Public Square*, *Poetry Magazine*, *Poets.org Poem-a-Day Series*, and others. His first poetry collection is *Ears of Corn: Listen* (3: A Taos Press). He has received fellowships from Writing By Writers, Orion in the Wilderness, SAR's Indigenous Writer, and Taos Summer Writers' Conference. His clans are *Tsina Hanu* (Turkey People) and *Kwaya Waashch'ee* (child of the Bear). Early lives in the village of Pagate, NM.



Ramona Emerson

Diné Writer & Filmmaker

Visual Storytelling: Fiction Through the Lens of a Filmmaker

Ramona Emerson is a Diné writer and filmmaker originally from Tohatchi, New Mexico. Her debut novel, *Shutter*, was long-listed for the National Book Award and the Bram Stoker Award, nominated for the Edgar for Best First Novel, a finalist for the PEN America Open Book Award, the PEN/Hemingway Award, and the Macavity, Barry, and Anthony Awards for Best First Novel, and winner of the Lefty Award for Best First Novel. She has a BA in Media Arts from the University of New Mexico and an MFA in Creative Writing from the Institute of American Indian Arts. She resides in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where she and her husband, the producer Kelly Byars, run their production company Reel Indian Pictures.





Stacy Brooks
Mythologist

Indigenous Science of Cherokee Mythology

In order for the Cherokee to live well, observable scientific information had to be taught to younger generations, accomplished through the oral tradition of mythology. The paradigm of indigenous peoples takes an ecological, holistic stance where all areas of culture and represented through characters, symbols, plots and context in a system of mythology. Myths build meaning as similar aspects appear in multiple myths. This presentation will offer a small vision of this knowledge.

Stacy Brooks received her PhD and MA from Pacifica Graduate Institute in Mythology with an emphasis in Depth Psychology, BA in Elementary & Education at Northeastern State Univ. She is an independent academic, living in the Appalachian Mountains, in Boone, North Carolina, with her dog, Sophia and cat, Jasmine.



Tina Deschenie
Diné Writer

Alchemy: Our Lives and Writing

Tina Deschenie is Ta'neezahnii, born for Tó'aheedlíini. Her cheii are of the Tewa from First Mesa in AZ, and her náíí are Bit'ahnii. She grew up in Crystal, NM, her family home, and also in the Becenti community near Crownpoint, NM. Deschenie is married to Michael Thompson (Muscogee), both are retired educators. She holds a BA from Fort Lewis College, MA from UNM and an EdD from NMSU.

She has written poetry since her elementary school years and has read her work in the Four Corners area for years. Her writing is included in: *The Diné Reader* (2021), *Wet, An Anthology of Water Poems and Prose* (2021), *Satchel Story Objects* (2022), *Transforming Diné Education, Innovations in Pedagogy and Practice* (2022), *Poetry Magazine, July/August 2022*, and *Fertile, An Anthology of Earth Poems and Prose* (2023).



Michael Thompson
Mvskoke Creek Writer

Terrain: Writing and Life Create Our Trails

Michael Thompson (Mvskoke Creek) was born in Holdenville, OK, and raised on a south Georgia cattle ranch and row crop farm near the Flint River among pine trees, oaks, creeks, and swamp. He taught for 42 years in Georgia, Kansas, California, and New Mexico, primarily as a high school English teacher. Today, he and his wife Tina Deschenie (Diné) are restoring her family homesite and raising cattle on the Navajo Nation in Crystal, NM. They have four children and several grandchildren. Their family supports numerous Native American activities, traditions, and causes.





Byron F Aspaas MFA
Diné Writer

Memory Maps: A Map of Story through the Way of the Bilagáana

BYRON F. ASPAAS. Raised within the four sacred mountains of Dinétah. Aspaas's first published work was included in *Yellow Medicine Review* and since then his writing has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies. Aspaas's writing revisits the destruction of sacred land and engages his readers in a dialogue about preserving Diné culture and land. He uses imagery and persona to present explorations of language, landscape, and identity. Byron is faculty at San Juan College's English Department and Western Colorado University's Creative Writing Program.



Lyle J. Harvey
Diné Language &
Culture Consultant

The Beauty of our Language

Yá'át'éééh. Lyle J. Harvey yinishyé. I am from Rock Point, AZ and have worked with youth and educators for 22 years. I assist and service schools, universities, health organizations, youth programs, behavioral health programs, juvenile detention centers and urban development programs through my company Báhózhóní Consulting.

I provide services in cultural motivation and leadership, educational awareness, cultural sensitivity, staff training, professional development, curriculum building, horsemanship presentations, weaving symposiums correlating team building with parents and their children and character building with hard to reach teenagers. I also do cultural storytelling and presentations based on Diné language, culture, traditions, history and fundamental law. Ahxéhee.'



Lorinda Martinez
Diné Writer

Writing for Our Culture: Running With Changing Woman

My clans are Lók'aa' Dine'é (the Reed People) and I am born for Deeschii'nii (Red Streak People). The Tábaqáhí (Water's Edge people) are my cheii's and the Tódích'í'í'nii (Bitter Water people) are my nál'is. I was raised in Pueblo Pintado, New Mexico and Shonto, Arizona. I attended Highlands University in Las Vegas, New Mexico where I earned my Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Education. I currently live with my husband, son and dogs in the four corners area. I love my job as an educator, working with my people and many more. I feel blessed to be close to my family, working as a teacher, being a mother, wife and now, author. Thank you for being a part of my journey as a new author, I hope you enjoy my work of fiction!



Jake Skeets
Diné Writer

The Morning as a Metaphor: Before the Poem is a Poem

Jake Skeets is the author of *Eyes Bottle Dark with a Mouthful of Flowers*, winner of the National Poetry Series, Kate Tufts Discovery Award, American Book Award, and Whiting Award. He is from the Navajo Nation and teaches at the University of Oklahoma.



Kinsale Drake
Diné Writer

Blankets of Love and Wisdom

Kinsale Drake (Diné) is a winner of the 2023 National Poetry Series for her debut poetry collection *THE SKY WAS ONCE A DARK BLANKET* (University of Georgia Press, 2024). Her work has appeared in *Poetry Magazine*, *Poets.org*, *Best New Poets*, *Black Warrior Review*, *Nylon*, *Teen Vogue*, and elsewhere. She was named by *Time Magazine* as an artist representing her decade “changing how we see the world,” and is the founder of NDN Girls Book Club (www.ndngirlsbookclub.org).



Aanor Louis
Assistant Professor of
New Media

Storytelling with Media

Aanor has worked at Navajo Technical University for 5 years. He graduated from Utah Valley University with a B.S. in Digital Media, emphasis in Audio, and from Gonzaga University, with an M.A. in Communication & Leadership. He has also been a working professional for Wayfinder Media & Communications for 15 years, creating media projects for many Native American companies and organizations. He has also worked as a Graphic Designer and Instructor for Diné College. And mostly recently has been coaching Women's basketball for NTU.



Dr. Henry Fowler
Professor of Math

Díí Shaa Hane': This Is My Story Growing Up in the Navajo Western Agency

Dr. Henry Fowler is the co-founder of the Navajo Math Circles. The Navajo Math Circles provides teacher workshops for grades K–12 and works with over 40 mathematicians to promote math education for students of the Navajo Nation. His research interests lie in Ethnomathematics and Navajo education. Mr. Fowler’s passion is promoting math literacy and advocating for social justice through mathematics. He strongly supports relevant cultural materials that guide instruction.



Sunny Dooley
Hózhqǫǫjí Halne'é

Story is Life. Life is Story

Sunny Dooley is a Nihokáá’ Diyin Diné/Earth Surface Divine person residing in Ní’dishchíí’bilyildiz Dédeez’á Bigháá’/Pondarosa Pine Glen on the High Ridge. She is a Diné Hózhqǫǫjí Hane’ teller, writer, poet, and creative organizer of positive possibilities to root for true change.



Luci Tapanonso
Inaugural Navajo Nation
Poet Laureate

The Beauty of Our Language

This session explores how Diné literary traditions, including stories, songs, prayers, conversations, and oratory, infuse daily life with a sense of Hózhó – the belief in maintaining well-being and balance. Hózhó, or the Beauty Way, has guided Navajo people since immemorial. The poems and stories shared will show how our language, philosophies, strong kinship ties, sense of humor, individual and collective memory, rituals, and connections to the land sustained them through military conflicts, relocation efforts, compulsory education, and various assimilation programs.

The Beauty Way continues to provide sustenance, strengthen our ties to place, sustain language, and help us comprehend our ancestors' influence on our lives today. Copies of the poems will be available.





Laura Tohe
Navajo Nation Poet
Laureate

With Thunder Words We Speak

As the Navajo Nation Poet Laureate, I represent our nation as a people who value our oral traditions and ancestral knowledge. We are bearing witness to the growth and development of our written traditions in many mediums: poetry, music, stories, operas, and novels while we hold to the foundation from which we came. We are dressed in these new creative mediums that have become part of the Navajo Nation's cultural wealth, as we take back our language, our stories, our lives. I will give a poetry reading that celebrates and honors these traditions.



Amber McCrary
Diné Poet & Publisher

Creating Zine

Amber McCrary is of the Kin Łichí'ńii clan, born for the Naakaii Dine'é clan. Her maternal grandfather is the Áshjǫ́hí clan and her paternal grandfather is the Ta'neezahnii clan. McCrary was born in Tuba City, Arizona and raised in Flagstaff, Arizona. She is a poet, zinester, dog mom and tea lover. She divides her time between Northern and Southern Arizona.



Sherwin Bitsui
Diné Poet

Honoring Diné Poetry

Sherwin Bitsui (Diné) is the author of *Dissolve and Flood Song* (Copper Canyon Press) and *Shapeshift* (University of Arizona Press). He is of the Bji'tóó'nii' Tódi'chii'nii clan and is born for the Tliziłani' clan. He is from White Cone, Arizona, on the Navajo Reservation. His honors include the 2011 Lannan Literary Fellowship, a Native Arts & Culture Foundation Fellowship for Literature, a PEN Open Book Award, an American Book Award, and a Whiting Writers Award. Bitsui teaches for the MFA in Creative Writing Program at Northern Arizona University.



BFA Creative Writing Student

Cheyenne Naomi Woodie is a student at Navajo Technical University, currently pursuing her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing and New Media. She is Navajo and of the Bitter Water clan (Todíh'í'nii), born for the Big Water clan (Totsohnii), her maternal grandfather is the Towering House clan (Kinyaa'áanii), and her paternal grandfather is the Water's Edge clan (Tábaqahá). She is from Steamboat, Arizona. Her interests include reading, traveling, journaling, music, and going to concerts. She hopes to be like the many Indigenous writers who have inspired her to write. Ms. Woodie credits her creative writing instructors at NTU, more specifically, Anita Roastingear, who has helped Ms. Woodie blossom in her life and her work. Ms. Woodie hopes to bring enlightenment with her little knowledge of the world through literature.

Cheyenne Naomi Woodie
Diné Writer



BFA Creative Writing Student

My Name is Marcel Francis. I am an enrolled member of the Navajo Tribe. My clans are Zuni Water Edge clan, born for the They Two Came to the Water People clan, my maternal grandfather's clan is the Bitter Water People, and my paternal grandfather's are the Blackfeet Tribe. I am from Gallup, New Mexico and am an enrolled student at Navajo Technical University. I am majoring in the Creative Writing in New Media program. I commute from Gallup to Crownpoint twice a week to attend classes. Throughout the past several years and courses I've taken in the program, I've come to enjoy the media classes and writing classes. My goal after graduating college is to gain experience working in the film industry.

Marcel Francis
Diné Writer



BFA Creative Writing Student

Celine Guerro is a student attending Navajo Technical University enrolled in the BFA program under creative writing and new media. Celine has been with the program for about five years. This will be her sixth year on campus. She is a somewhat creative student and is willing to help classmates should they ask. A few of her hobbies are drawing and story writing as well as immersive gameplay that she draws inspiration from for new challenging scenarios.

Celine Guerro
Diné Writer



Teaira Francis
Diné Writer

Early Childhood Multicultural Education Student

Teaira Francis is a fourth semester student at Navajo Technical University - Chinle Site, majoring in Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Multicultural Education.



Shyler Martin
Diné Writer

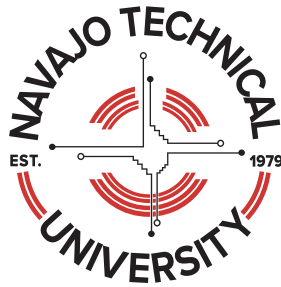
BFA Creative Writing Student

Shyler Martin is completing her program in BFA Creative Writing at Navajo Technical University.

Ahéhec' nihaa nooyá. Hahgo da shiji ahil ninaáadahwiilne' dooleet.

**THANK YOU FOR JOINING US.
WE LOOK FORWARD TO THE NEXT TIME WE CAN SHARE STORIES AGAIN.**





MISSION

Navajo Technical University honors Diné culture and language, while educating for the future.

VISION

Navajo Technical University provides an excellent educational experience in a supportive, culturally diverse environment, enabling all community members to grow intellectually, culturally and economically.

PHILOSOPHY

Through the teachings of Nitsáhákees (thinking), Nahátá (planning), Íína (implementing), and Siihasin (reflection), students acquire quality education in diverse fields, while preserving cultural values and gaining economic opportunities.

SYMPOSIUM COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Dr. Jennifer Wheeler, *Associate Professor, English*
Anita Roastingear, *Associate Professor, English*
Gene Hult, *Assistant Professor, English*
Sharon Nelson, *Lecturer, Diné Studies*
Dr. Laura Tohe – *Navajo Nation Poet Laureate*
Dr. Dianna Dekelaita-Mullet, *Chair, Arts & Humanities*

SPECIAL THANKS:

Dr. Casmir Agbaraji, *Dean of Undergraduate Studies*
Dr. Colleen W. Bowman, *Provost*
Dr. Elmer Guy, *President*
NTU Marketing & Communication Department
All presenters and attendees at this year's Symposium!



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