



Museum of the
Cherokee People

Reading List

Poetry & Essays

MANKILLER POEMS: THE LOST POETRY OF THE PRINCIPAL CHIEF OF THE CHEROKEE NATION

**By Wilma Mankiller (Cherokee
Nation)**

Wilma Mankiller was not known as a poet. After searching through her barn at Mankiller Flats in Adair County Oklahoma, Greg Shaw and Frances McCue located 19 of the 20 poems published here. The poems show Mankiller's engagement with her own artistry and reflection upon her life, particularly her Native heritage and the role of women in the world.

AN AMERICAN SUNRISE: POEMS

By Joy Harjo (Muscogee Nation)

In *An American Sunrise*, Harjo finds blessings in the abundance of her homeland and confronts the site where her people, and other indigenous families, essentially disappeared. From her memory of her mother's death, to her beginnings in the native rights movement, to the fresh road with her beloved, Harjo's personal life intertwines with tribal histories to create a space for renewed beginnings. Her poems sing of beauty and survival, illuminating a spirituality that connects her to her ancestors and thrums with the quiet anger of living in the ruins of injustice.

LITTLE BIG BULLY

**By Heid E. Erdrich (Turtle
Mountain Chippewa Indians)**

These poems are immediate, personal, political, cultural, even futuristic object lessons. The past for Indigenous people, ecosystem collapse from near-extinction of bison, and the present epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women underlie these poems. Here, survivors shout back at useless cautionary tales with their own courage and visions of future worlds made well.

POSTCOLONIAL LOVE POEM

**By Natalie Diaz (Mojave, Gila River
Indians)**

In this new lyrical landscape, the bodies of indigenous, Latinx, black, and brown women are simultaneously the body politic and the body ecstatic. In claiming this autonomy of desire, language is pushed to its dark edges, the astonishing dunefields and forests where pleasure and love are both grief and joy, violence and sensuality.

A HISTORY OF MY BRIEF BODY

**By Billy-Ray Belcourt (Driftpile
Cree Nation)**

With the lyricism and emotional power of his award-winning poetry, Belcourt cracks apart his history and shares it with us one fragment at a time. He shines a light on Canada's legacy of colonial violence and the joy that flourishes in spite of it. He revisits sexual encounters, ruminates on first loves and first loves lost, and navigates the racial politics of gay hookup apps. Among the hard truths he distills, the outline of a brighter future takes shape.

NDN COPING MECHANISMS: NOTES FROM THE FIELD

**By Billy-Ray Belcourt (Driftpile
Cree Nation)**

In a genre-bending constellation of poetry, photography, redaction, and poetics, Belcourt ultimately argues that if signifiers of Indigenous suffering are everywhere, so too is evidence of Indigenous peoples' rogue possibility, their utopian drive. In *NDN Coping Mechanisms: Notes from the Field*, the poet takes on the political demands of queerness, mainstream portrayals of Indigenous life, love and its discontents, and the limits and uses of poetry as a vehicle for Indigenous liberation.

