



2024-25

ND Poets in the Classroom



North Dakota Poet Laureate 2023-2025

Dr. Denise Lajimodiere

Dr. Denise Lajimodiere is an enrolled Citizen of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, Belcourt, North Dakota. She has been involved in education for forty-four years as an elementary teacher, principal, and professor, earning her Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate degrees from University of North Dakota. Dr. Lajimodiere is a retired Associate Professor from the School of Education, Education Leadership program, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

Denise is one of the founders of the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (N-NABS-HC). She is a poet – *Dragonfly Dance; Thunderbird; Bitter Tears; His Feathers Were Chains*; children's book author, *Josie Dances*, and academic book author, *Stringing Rosaries: The History, The Unforgivable, The Healing of Northern Plains Boarding School Survivors*.

Dr. Lajimodiere is a traditional Jingle Dress dancer, Ojibwe Birch Bark Biting artist, and lives in a cozy cottage by a lake on the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation.

Booking Contact:

Matthew Anderson, Arts in Education Director at mabanderson@nd.gov

Poets in Schools: A Valuable Complement to Poetry Out Loud

We're excited to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of Poetry Out Loud®, and to continue our Poets in Schools program. This program brings poets directly into classrooms, giving students a chance to engage with poetry in a hands-on way and learn from poets themselves. It's a great way to deepen the Poetry Out Loud® experience.

As we head into the 2024-25 season, we know Poetry Out Loud® is more than just a competition. It's about the power of words and the important role the arts play in education. Our goal is to help students connect with poetry, with each other, and to develop a lasting appreciation for creative expression.

Thank you for being part of this journey. If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to reach out.

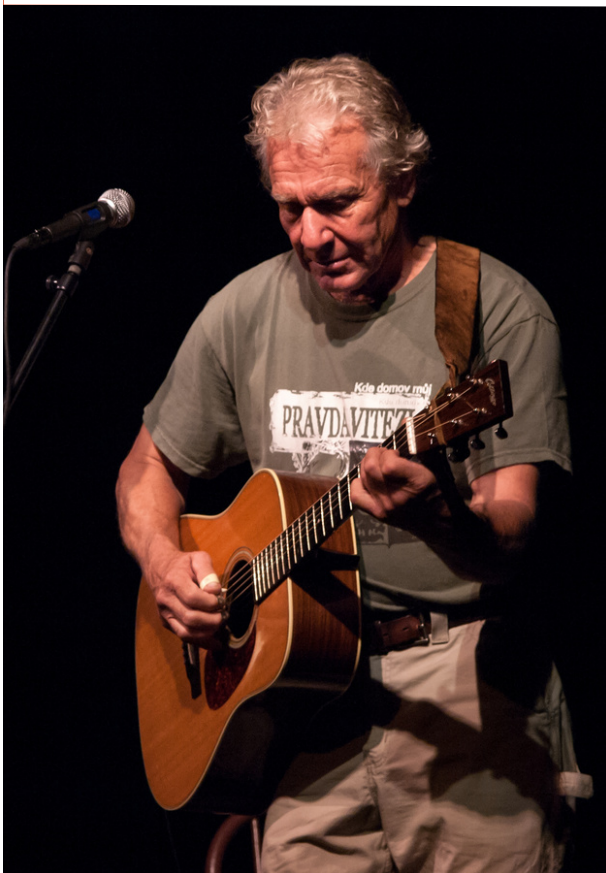
Warm regards,

Matthew Anderson Arts in Education Director North Dakota Council on the Arts

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Chuck Suchy (Mandan)

North Dakota Poet and Troubadour

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Chuck Suchy, North Dakota's Official State Troubadour, is a folk musician, songwriter, and working farmer from Mandan, North Dakota who writes, sings and records songs evoking and extolling the Great Plains region and lifestyle. His themes include songs about human relationships, spirituality, motorcycles, and even sailing. The Plains have seen a lot of change over this time, including farm crises, loss of population, oil boom, and a major restructuring of the agricultural economy. Chuck remains an astute observer of it all and his songs chronicle not only the events, but the emotions and feelings that accompany such upheaval and change.

See Chuck Suchy: [Sure Glad to be Around](#).



Joseph Davis (Minneapolis)

Poet, Performer, Teacher, Activist
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"I am a poet because I struggle desperately to express my soul's deepest longings each and everyday—yet I never shy away from the fight." - Joe Davis

Joe Davis is a nationally touring artist, educator, and speaker based in Minneapolis, MN. He employs poetry, music, theater, and dance to shape culture. His work has been featured on BET, CNN, and VH1. He is the Founder and Director of multimedia production company, The New Renaissance, the frontman of emerging soul funk band, The Poetic Diaspora, co-creator of JUSTmove, racial justice education through art, and the author of *We Rise Higher: Poems and Prayers for Graduates*.

See more at JoeDavisPoetry.com



Christine Ellsworth (Wyndmere)

Poet, Author, Poetry Therapy Facilitator
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Christine Madline Ellsworth is a Minnesota native who currently resides in Wyndmere, North Dakota, with two cats and a Blue Heeler. She holds a BA in English literature from Minnesota State University Moorhead and an MA in English literature from Marquette University. As a member of the International Federation for Biblio-Poetry Therapy, she is in her fourth year working toward certification as a certified applied poetry therapy facilitator. Poetry therapy has been recognized as beneficial to people who seek healing and growth. Ellsworth has also published a book of poetry, titled *Girl Again* (Potter's Wheel Publishing House, 2021).



Jessie Veeder (Watford City)

Award Winning Musician, Author, Poet, Columnist

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Jessie Veeder has been a symbol of folk music in the badlands of Western North Dakota since she released her first original album, *This Road*, when she was sixteen years old. Her album recordings include: *A Place to Belong*, *Jessie Veeder Live*, and *Nothing's Forever*. Veeder's renowned single, *Boomtown*, the song that put her in the national spotlight, pays homage to the people working to make a living in North Dakota oil country. Jessie's poetic lyrics swell with references to her own life experiences growing up on a cattle ranch in the rugged land of Western North Dakota. She captivates audiences with stories of the changing landscape, the culture, and the people of small-town America. Jessie Veeder is an inspiration to aspiring artists and musicians throughout North Dakota and is the recipient of the prestigious 2019 North Dakota Governor's Award for the Arts in the category of Individual Achievement. Check out Jessie's blog [*Meanwhile, back at the ranch*](#) where she reflects on rural living, its characters, heartbreaks, triumphs, absurdity and what it means to live and love in the middle of nowhere.



Emily Vieweg (Fargo)

Poet, Playwright

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Emily Vieweg, MFA is a poet and writer originally from St. Louis, Missouri. Her work has been published in *Foliage Oak*, *The Voices Project*, *Red Weather Literary Magazine*, *Soundings Review*, *Art Young's Good Morning*, *The Basil O'Flaherty Feminist Voices* and more. Emily's full-length poetry collection *but the flames* is available through *Finishing Line Press* and *Amazon*. Click [HERE](#) to order. Emily's debut chapbook *Look Where She Points* is available from [Plan B Press](#) and her store. Emily's chapbook *Conversations with Beethoven and Bach* is available through her store and [Amazon.com](#). She lives in Fargo, North Dakota where she is a mother of two, cat wrangler and office assistant.



Kevin Zepper (Fargo)

Teacher, Poet, Author
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Kevin Zepper has taught English and Humanities at Minnesota State University Moorhead for over twenty years. His specialty is creative writing. To date, Zepper has been participating in the Poetry Out Loud initiative through the ND Council on the Arts for over five years, visiting several rural communities. Last year he became a part of the Minnesota Poetry Out Loud chapter serving as a judge. As a part of a new learning initiative, Eventide University, through the Eventide Retirement community in Moorhead, Minnesota, Zepper taught a three-session course on memoir writing. During his time as a professor, he has visited several schools as a part of the Northern Lights Library Network from 2012 to present.

In addition to teaching, Zepper is the author of six books of poetry: The Fifth Ramone, (Suffering from) An Apartment Complex, I Bring you Dead Things, Sugartown, Moonman, and The Shaman Said. He has collaborated with other poets and musicians in the region.

When he is not teaching or writing, Zepper is an active semi-professional photographer and film/TV actor represented by Natalie Sparrow Management, Fargo, North Dakota.



Carol Kapaun Ratchenski (Fargo)

Poet, Author, Licensed Professional Counselor
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Carol Kapaun Ratchenski is the author of two books of poetry, A Beautiful Hell, New Rivers Press, 2016, and A Certain Kind of Forgiveness, Meadowlark Press, 2019. Her work has won the Many Voices Project Award for poetry and the Birdy Poetry Prize. A Beautiful Hell has since been adapted to the stage by Laurie J Baker with the support of Theatre B and Humanities North Dakota. Ratchenski is a Licensed Professional Counselor and the owner/operator of The Center for Compassion and Creativity in Fargo, ND, where she also lives. She is at work on a second novel while she prepares to be honest, loving, disruptive and groovy at 60.