

Denise "Dee" Sweet
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Biographical Statement

Denise "Dee" Sweet is First Nations Organizer for Wisconsin Conservation Voices and for WI Native Vote. Dee initiates contact and builds working relationships with tribal communities— both urban and rural— fostering civic engagement through voter registration and voter participation. In a public information capacity, she also helps build awareness about the environmental issues that tribal citizens in the state and of the Great Lakes Region feel most profoundly about; those that not only effect their homelands and their economic livelihood, but their cultural lives and spiritual practices. Additionally, since tribal citizens are, historically, an undercounted and underrepresented segment of the population Dee also works within tribal communities to increase awareness of and participation in Census 2020.

Dee is also faculty emerita, having taught Humanistic Studies, Creative Writing, and First Nations Studies for the UW-System, 1991-2010. A publishing poet, her books of poetry include Know By Heart (Rhiannon Press), Songs For Discharming (Greenfield Press), Days Of Obsidian, Days Of Grace (Poetry Harbor), and Nitaawichige (Poetry Harbor; the latter a four-author collection).

In 1998, Songs For Discharging won both the WI Posner Award for Poetry, and the Diane Decorah Award, given by the North American Indigenous Writers Circle of the Americas. Her most recent book of new and selected poems, Palominos Near Tuba City (Holy Cow! Press) was released in April 2018. In 2018, it was awarded Honorable Mention by the Wisconsin Council of Writers.

Other distinctions: her poem, "Veteran's Dance: After Oklahoma City" took second place in Sante Fe Indian Market's 1st annual Poetry Competition. In 2006, the International Crane Foundation commissioned Sweet to author a poem for the organization, eventually titled, "All The Animals Came Singing." Additionally, her poem, "Constellations" is part of a permanent etched installation at the Midwest Express Center in Milwaukee, WI.

In 1998, Sweet was one of five North American tribal writers sponsored by the U.S. Embassy to attend the 1st Annual World Congress on Indigenous Literature of the Americas held in Guatemala City, GUATE. In 2004, Gov. James Doyle appointed Sweet as WI's Poet Laureate (4-year term); the 2nd laureate named for the state of Wisconsin.