



Atsitty shares her journey to publication

Diné poet Tacey M. Atsitty, 35, from Cove, Ariz., has published her first book of poems, *Rain Scald*
, from the University of New Mexico Press in Albuquerque.

After six and a half years of constant revisions and organizing, Atsitty finally got her first published book in her hands this past month.

"It was a long journey, to be honest," Atsitty said. "It was 2011 and now I finally received my

book in my hands January 2018."

There's no doubt that the process was arduous, as the poet encountered some personal obstacles between the time of sending off her manuscript to UNM Press and her time at Cornell University, where she received her Master's of Fine Arts in creative writing.

"Having to go back and try and go back to that space emotionally was the hardest (sic) for me," she said. "Trying to be true and keep the work true to that time was the hardest thing I had to do in order for the book to get publish."

Sure enough, the poet planted her feet and joined the ranks of distinguished Diné poets.

"I was fortunate enough to have a circle of friends and writers who cared about my work," Atsitty said. "Laura Tohe [Diné poet] was a contributing editor at UNM Press."

Her book, *Rain Scald*, is expected to be released Feb. 15.

WRITING WAS NATURAL

Atsitty's parents, late Carmelita Atsitty of Toadlena, N.M., and George Atsitty of Cove, Ariz., and her grandmother, Linda Hatch, were the foundation of the poet's success.

"I always attribute the fact that my mother wrote in journals daily," Atsitty said. "She would sit down and write. I was 3, so I couldn't write, but I would draw as she was writing."

But the creative bonding was short lived. Her mother passed when she was just 3-years-old.

However, Atsitty was also encouraged by her grandmother to write stories.

"That always stuck all these years. I always enjoyed language and writing," she said. "I lean towards poetry. I had a great love and affinity for it."

EXPERIENCES INTO LANGUAGE

The Diné poet spoke on why she chose this genre.

"I believe this world was created with language," she said. "Everything that we see and that we are, was created with language. And the power that comes with language."

In her perspective and journey through writing poetry, she said. "I believe words and language have the ability to heal, that's what I use my poetry for. I use it to help me heal. I use poetry to help me understand and parse out the experiences I had."

It also helps the artist to understand the world, and to process life events and experiences into creative works.

"I use poetry to convey messages," she said. "I use poetry to emulate beauty. Translating experiences into language."

FOUR CORNERS TO ACROSS STATES

Atsitty grew up in Kirtland and is Tsénabahiłnii (Sleep Rock People) and born for Ta'neeszahnii (Tangle People).

She attended Navajo Preparatory High School in Farmington, where she was part of the Slam Poetry Team and competed across states such as: Connecticut, California, and New Mexico.

She holds two bachelor's degrees from Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, and from the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, N.M. In addition, she holds a master's in creative writing from Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.

She currently resides in Salt Lake City, and is the coordinator at Native American Village: This Is the Place Heritage Park. It's where she researches, sets curriculum development for the culture and history of the tribes in the state of Utah, and recruits and trains a team to share information with the public during fall and spring seasons.

INFLUENCING ACHIEVEMENT

Of course, the poet wouldn't be where she is today, and her book wouldn't have received any notice if it wasn't for those who believed in her, encouraged her, loved her and her work.

From high school teachers such as Scott Nicolay and Jim Barnes (Choctaw) to mentors and support system such as: Jon Davis, Luci Tapahonso (Diné), Laura Tohe (Diné), Arthur Sze (Chinese-American), Mark Turcotte and Evelina Lucero (Isleta/Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo) are whom she mentioned in part of her writing journey and encouraged her, in addition to numerous other people.

WORDS FOR ASPIRING WRITERS

"Keep writing," Atsitty said for those who would like to become a writer.

"Be open to revision," she said. "I think that's one of the hardest things for any of us [writers] to take is criticism. Take what you can and make it better. Always make it better."

She continues, "Find those people who are invested in your work and who know you, who love you and your work. And keep writing."

Atsitty's work has emerged or is forthcoming in POETRY Magazine, *Kenyon Review Online*, *Pr airie Schooner*

,
Crazyhorse

,
Literary Hub

,
New Poets of Native Nations

,
New Orleans Review, Crab Orchard Review,
and other publications.

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