

JOSEPH BRUCHAC

Poet Laureate of Saratoga Springs

BY TODD DEGARMO

Our heartfelt congratulations to storyteller, author, poet, Abenaki elder, and *Voices* columnist, Joseph Bruchac, for being appointed as the first Poet Laureate of Saratoga Springs.

The ceremony took place at City Hall on January 17, 2023. Bruchac was selected through a competitive nomination and interview process by members of the City's Poet Laureate Committee. His two-year appointment will run through December 2024.

Poet Laureate of Saratoga Springs is an honorary, civic position appointed by the Mayor of Saratoga Springs, recognizing an exceptional local poet who is committed to the power of poetry to engage and inspire. The Poet Laureate forges a meaningful connection between poetry and the community, undertaking projects that make poetry more available and more accessible to people in their everyday lives. The Poet Laureate will officiate at selected public gatherings, initiate a dialogue between poets and the community, inspire others in their writing and personal expression, and bring recognition to the history and tradition of poetry in Saratoga Springs.

Joseph Bruchac is a highly acclaimed, prolific writer and storyteller. In his work, Bruchac explores his Abenaki ancestry and Native American storytelling traditions.

He was born and raised in Saratoga Springs. He traces his maternal ancestry back to the Abenaki people and is a member of the Nulhegan Abenaki Nation, a state-recognized tribe in Vermont.

His poems, articles, and stories have appeared in more than 1,000 publications, from *American Poetry Review* to *National Geographic*, and he has authored more than 180 books for children and adults, including *Bowman's Store: A Journey to Myself*, *Thirteen Moons on Turtles's Back*, *Code Talker*, and *Rez Dogs*.

Bruchac earned his BA in English Literature from Cornell University, MA in Literature and Creative Writing from Syracuse, and PhD in Comparative Literature from



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the Union Institute of Ohio. His honors include a Rockefeller Humanities Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Arts Writing Fellowship for Poetry, and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Native Writers Circle of Americas.

His work as an educator includes four years of teaching in West Africa, and eight years of directing a college program for Skidmore College inside a maximum security prison.

With his late wife, Carol, he founded the Greenfield Review Literary Center and *The Greenfield Review Press*. He has edited a number of anthologies of contemporary poetry and fiction, including *Breaking Silence*, winner of an American Book Award. As one of the founders of the Woodcraft Circle of Native American Writers and Storytellers, he has helped numerous Native American authors get their work published. ▼