



NEWS RELEASE

Parliament of Canada

Appointment of the ninth Parliamentary Poet Laureate



February 3, 2021 – Ottawa – The Speaker of the Senate, the Honourable George J. Furey, and the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Honourable Anthony Rota, announced today the appointment of Louise Bernice Halfe – Sky Dancer as Canada’s next [Parliamentary Poet Laureate](#), effective January 1, 2021. Ms. Halfe is the ninth poet to hold this office, succeeding Georgette LeBlanc.

Louise Bernice Halfe – Sky Dancer was selected by the Speakers from a short list of candidates submitted by the Selection Committee, chaired by Dr. Heather Lank, Parliamentary Librarian and composed of Raymond Théberge, Commissioner of Official Languages; Leslie Weir, Librarian and Archivist of Canada; and Jesse Went, Chair, Canada Council for the Arts (represented by Joanne Larocque-Poirier, Chief of Staff and Corporate Secretary).

Louise Bernice Halfe – Sky Dancer was raised on Saddle Lake Reserve and attended Blue Quills Residential School.

She previously served as Saskatchewan’s second Poet Laureate. She is widely recognized for weaving Cree language and teachings into her works. Her books, *Bear Bones and Feathers* (1994), *Blue Marrow* (2004), *The Crooked Good* (2007) and *Burning In This Midnight Dream* (2016), have all received numerous accolades and awards. *Sôhkêyihta* features selected poems and was published in 2018. Her latest work, *awâsis – kinky and disheveled*, will be released in the spring of 2021.

Quotes

“Louise Bernice Halfe – Sky Dancer is an accomplished writer who has contributed significantly to Canada’s poetry community through reflections on her Indigenous experience. As the ninth Parliamentary Poet Laureate, Ms. Halfe will continue to promote the diversity of voices heard across our country.”

- Hon. George J. Furey, Speaker of the Senate of Canada

“Louise Bernice Halfe – Sky Dancer is a gifted poet and storyteller who brings a wealth of experience, some of it painful, to the role of Parliamentary Poet Laureate. Her work includes the use of code-switching between Cree and English to help her reconnect to her Indigenous culture and language.”

- Hon. Anthony Rota, Speaker of the House of Commons

“kinanâskomitinâwâw kahkiyaw, âsay mîna kiyânaw ê-nîkânôhtêyahk ôta kîkinaw askiy. I am deeply honoured and humbled to serve the people from coast to coast to coast. My dream is that poetry will be given the same stature as that of the novel. It is a privilege to bring the First Peoples’ voices and stories, poetry and whatever genre they are bringing to life to the forefront. Thank you for this gift.”

- Louise Bernice Halfe – Sky Dancer, Parliamentary Poet Laureate

The Parliamentary Poet Laureate Program

Federal legislators created the position of Parliamentary Poet Laureate in 2001 to build awareness of the reading and writing of poetry. Pursuant to the [Parliament of Canada Act](#), the Parliamentary Poet Laureate performs a range of duties, including: composing poetry, particularly for use in Parliament on important occasions; sponsoring poetry readings; advising the Parliamentary Librarian on the Library’s collection; and performing related duties at the request of the Speaker of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Commons or the Parliamentary Librarian.

Biographical notes and a photo of Louise Bernice Halfe – Sky Dancer are available [online](#).

Media relations

Tanya Sirois

Senior Communications Advisor

Library of Parliament

Tanya.Sirois@parl.gc.ca | 613-608-3956