

Beverly Matherne Selected As 2023-24 Poet Laureate Of The Upper Peninsula



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From a large pool of diverse applicants, the Selection Committee of the Poet Laureate Foundation in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan has chosen Grand Point native Beverly Matherne as the 2023-24 U.P. Poet Laureate.

The committee, consisting of poets, writers, professors, tribal members, and arts advocates from across Michigan's Upper Peninsula, underwent an in-depth process as they ranked applicants. So did contenders

for the position, who had to submit a demanding on-line application including hyperlinked audio and video material as well as a special Poet Laureate project to be carried out over a two-year tenure.

Professor Emerita of English at Northern Michigan University, Matherne served as director of the Master of Fine Arts program in creative writing and poetry editor of Passages North literary magazine. The author of seven books of poetry lives in Ishpeming, far

from her birthplace in St. James Parish, but she is still inspired by the boundless wealth of her Cajun and Creole heritage as well as the natural and cultural bounty of the Upper Peninsula.

The recipient of seven first-place prizes, including the Hackney Literary Award for Poetry, Matherne has done more than 350 readings across the United States, Canada, and France, and in Belgium, Germany, Spain, and Wales. Among notable venues that have welcomed Matherne are Shakespeare and Company in Paris and the Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium at the United Nations in New York.

The poet holds a Ph.D. in Drama from Saint Louis University and M.A. and B.A. degrees in English from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. After receiving her doctorate, she did extensive work in French at the University of California, at Berkeley.

In her role as U.P. Poet Laureate, Matherne will implement her U.P. Poet Laureate project, which will include visits to high school and middle school classrooms throughout the Upper Peninsula, promoting the art of poetry through interactive lessons and writing activities.

On April 26th, at the

Great Lakes Poetry Festival in Marquette, Michigan, Matherne will launch her new book, *Potions d'amour, thés, incantations / Love Potions, Teas, Incantations*, poems and stories set in and around New Orleans. Lush, semi-tropical settings surrounding her father's sugarcane and Perique tobacco farm and Cajun folkloric figures such as Madame Grands-Doigts and the Loup-Garou have found their way in Matherne's work. Acclaimed poet Cindy Hunter Morgan has this to say about the collection: "Matherne's explorations of myths and legends are darkly luminous. Read them. Step into the bayou, and stumble out shaken."

Matherne's inspiration stems from her parents, Lena DeBate Matherne, who penned verse herself, and Curtis Joseph Matherne, Sr., who sang in Cajun French and recited Shakespeare's soliloquies in English. Both could move an audience and Matherne said, when very young, "I want to do that," so she became a poet. Sample poems and more information are available at Matherne's Website at <https://beverlymatherne.com> and at the U.P. Poet Laureate Foundation at

<https://uppoetlaureate.org/>

