

Jennifer Finley

Jennifer is an award-winning poet and journalist who has also become a playwright. She has authored two books of poetry and one children's book. Her first collection of poems won the North American Native Author's First Book award for poetry. She is Salish and Chippewa-Cree and is an enrolled member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

In Jennifer's Own Words

I was born and raised on the Flathead Reservation, and from the time I was a child, I wanted to be a writer. I had a deep desire to tell stories that would make the world a better place because we need more stories that reflect our deep beauty, goodness, and worth.

When I wrote my first poem, a whole universe opened up to me, and things have never been the same. I felt like a mute person who heard my own voice for the first time. Writing poems and stories is how I try to make sense of life and understand the world and understand myself. I now know the world is more mysterious than I ever could have imagined, and so am I which is why I will keep writing.

Bitterroot Woman from Heart of the Bitterroot

Heart of the Bitterroot is a CD of spoken word and music. Produced by Julie Cajune in 2006, *Heart of the Bitterroot* portrays both personal and general stories about Salish and Pend d'Oreille women. Julie believed that if the stories were formatted for a CD they would reach a wider audience than a book. The audio format also provided an opportunity to include women's voices in song.

Julie asked Jennifer if she could write the narratives about Salish women in a style that would be interesting and engaging for an audio format. Julie provided Jennifer a variety of historic research, including oral history, about Salish and Pend d'Oreille women. Jennifer made the inspired decision to write the pieces in the first-person voice of each woman. The result is a powerful testimony to the resilience, beauty, strength, and compassion of Salish and Pend d'Oreille women.

Bitterroot Woman is written in a first person narrative that is an elaboration of the Salish oral story of the origin of the bitterroot plant.