

## Luci Tapahonso

### Biographical Information

**Luci Tapahonso** is Diné (Navajo) and a Professor of English and American Indian Studies at the University of Arizona in Tucson. She is author of six books of poetry; of which the most recent is *A Radiant Curve* (University of Arizona Press). She is a recipient of a number of awards, including the 2006 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Native Circle of Writers. She also delivered the 2007 Walter Capps Lecture at the National Federation of the State Humanities Councils.

### Campaign Statement

I would like to encourage AWP to become more visible in rural and urban American Indian communities and to work with children, as well as adults. Usually, creative writing courses are offered only in schools or in community colleges – which require enrollment and/or fees. I have led many community-based workshops and can attest to the need and the deep interest in creative writing in non-academic settings.

For example, a few years ago, I led one-week writing camps for high school students; the camps were funded by a local high school, thus classes, activities, lodging and food was provided. The camps were held on Navajo Nation, and many of the students were bi-lingual so the two languages served as the basis for a number of other culturally based activities such as horseback riding, storytelling with elders, rug weaving, herb gathering and painting. Though the funding was limited, we were able to bring in eight Navajo writers to meet with the students. Since it was a community-based event, the local media was heavily involved and at the end of camp, the students were invited to read their poetry on the Nation's radio station. The students wrote in a variety of forms (as well as songs) and in both Navajo and English. The outcome was very positive and a number of the students later majored in Creative Writing in college.

Also, in the 1990s, I taught poetry workshops for women in Lawrence, Kansas for a nominal fee (4 classes for \$100.) and the participants ranged from high school students to retirees. Generally, 15-17 women enrolled and the fees were donated to the Lawrence Indian Center, which provides social services for the community. Again, there existed a deep interest in writing poetry in a comfortable setting; it was also very valuable to receive critical, positive feedback on their writing.

The work and presence of AWP in academia, as well as the writing community is critical, but AWP can also encourage writing in our rural and urban communities. It is worthwhile to explore various avenues so that everyone who wants to share their stories and poems can do so.