

## Dr. Joseph Bruchac, Class of '64



Joseph Bruchac, a tribally enrolled member of the Nulhegan Abenaki nation, lives in the Adirondack foothills town of Greenfield Center in the same house where he was raised by his maternal grandparents.

While at Cornell he was both the varsity heavyweight wrestler for three years and the editor of *The Trojan Horse*. After graduating, he went to Syracuse University on a creative writing fellowship and received his M.A. in 1966.

During his college years at Cornell and Syracuse he was involved in the anti-Vietnam War Movement — reading his poems with Robert Bly at poets against the war events. He also was involved in the Civil Rights Movement, marching in Mississippi with James Meredith, Dick Gregory, and Dr. Martin Luther King.

He then spent three years in Ghana, West Africa with the Teachers for West Africa program from 1966-1969. Returning to America, from 1969 to 1973 he taught English at Skidmore College and from 1974 to 1981 directed a full-scale college program in a maximum-security prison for Skidmore. During those years, he also founded and began editing a literary magazine and multicultural press with the non-profit he still directs, the Greenfield Review Literary Center.

His groundbreaking work as a publisher of multi ethnic writing, earned numerous awards including the American Book Award for editing *Breaking Silence, an anthology of Asian American Poetry*.

He also earned his PhD from the Union Institute of Ohio in 1974 with the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe on his PHD committee and as a thesis advisor.

In 1981, he resigned from Skidmore College to become full-time writer and storyteller—the same year he received a Rockefeller Humanities fellowship. With the exception of occasional residencies at such institutions as Columbia University, Hamilton college, the State University of New York at Albany, and the Alaska Institute of Native Arts, he has been a full-time freelance scholar and writer since then. He has lectured and done author visits in schools, colleges, libraries, prisons, and reservations in every state.

He has been a featured Storyteller at numerous festivals, including the British storytelling festival and the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee and also performed as a musician, often with his two grown sons and his sister Margaret. Their group, The Dawnland Singers, has released several albums.

Author of over 170 books for various ages and in multiple genres, and winner of many awards, his books may be found in virtually every school library. His novel about Navajo marines in WW II, *Code Talker*, was listed by *Time* as one of the 100 best books of all time for young adult readers and his newest novel, *Rez Dogs* was listed as one of the best books of 2021 by NPR (National Public Radio).

With his two grown sons, James and Jesse, he runs the Ndakinna Education Center ([ndakinnacenter.org](http://ndakinnacenter.org)) where they teach wilderness survival skills, the Abenaki language, and offer outdoor programs for all ages on their 90 acre nature preserve.

He and his sons are also black belts in a number of different martial arts, including Brazilian jujitsu, Kyokushin karate, and Indonesian Pentjak-silat. They've competed nationally and internationally and train and teach at their family dojo, located at the Ndakinna Education Center— which received a facilities improvement grant in 2021 from the UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) organization.