



Recommendation of
Mandy Smoker
Broaddus for
Honorary Doctorate

December 1, 2022

Dear President Bodnar,

Please accept this letter as my nomination for awarding Mandy Smoker Broaddus an Honorary Doctorate Degree from the University of Montana at the Spring 2023 Commencement Ceremony.

I met Mandy Smoker Broaddus in the fall of 2001. We were office mates in the English Department at the University of Montana. We were both students in the Masters of Fine Arts program in Poetry. Mandy was there as the Richard Hugo Scholar, a prestigious honor given that the scholarship was set up in the memory of the founder of the program, the revered poet Richard Hugo. She was offered the scholarship because of her unique talent as a poet--and her drive as a scholar and thinker--as I would soon find out. It took some time, but Mandy and I bonded over teaching, modern art, and of course, poetry. Mandy has been a sister to me ever since.

Since those early days in graduate school, I have been awed to witness Mandy Smoker Broaddus publish a seminal book of poetry, *Another Attempt at Rescue*, under the name ML Smoker, through Hanging Loose Press. The poems are devastating, funny and necessary. As an Assiniboine/Sioux writer, she uses her gifts to open the world of Ft. Peck, the reservation she hails from, to the world, in all of its beauty and pain, in a voice that is as at home as it is alienated from home. The book is admired not just by me, but by greats like novelist and poet Jim Harrison, author of *Legends of the Fall*, her good friend, and it sent a ripple through the American Indian arts community that can still be felt. It will always be.

Fast-forward to the spring of 2022: our co-written graphic novel *Thunderous* for kids ages 8-12 was published. After spending COVID lockdown together with our children, Mandy asked me to write the book with her. We wrote the majority of the book at our kitchen tables. Our kids chimed in. We laughed and cried. The book was an opportunity for Mandy put a resource out there for children where the central characters are American Indian, specifically Lakota, and where Lakota values and traditions are represented authentically. I was happy to support that mission.

Since the book was published, we have been to events all over Montana, including at independent bookstores, the Montana Book Festival, the Montana State University Honors College and the Montana Historical Society. We were awarded a grant by the Montana Arts Council to go to several events and visit schools in Indian Country, taking books for each student with us. We were able to attend the National Indian Education

Association's annual conference in Oklahoma City and pass out books to educators at the First Americans Museum. At each of these events, it was amazing to watch Mandy interact with audiences—welcoming them and pushing them to think about children's literature and indigenous education. Our book was also chosen by Humanities Montana as a Great Read and was presented at the National Book Festival at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Pieces about our book have been featured in Montana Free Press, The Missoulian, Montana Quarterly, The Helena Independent Record and on MTPR's The Write Question.

The list of Mandy's awards and honors in the arts and humanities is long, to include a regional Emmy for her work on the PBS documentary *Indian Relay*, a Battrick Fellowship at the University of Colorado and the Arianna & Hannah Yellow Thunder Scholarship at UCLA. Mandy was on the Board of Directors of Humanities Montana, she was on the Helena Book Festival Committee for several years, she has been a judge for the Idaho Prize in Poetry, a Poet in the Schools on the Tahono O'Odham Nation, a Writer in Residence at Western Illinois University and at the American Indian Arts Institute, and most recently and Indigenous Writer award recipient at The UCross Foundation in Wyoming--the list goes on and on. But all that list does is speak to her drive and determination to advocate for the arts, her willingness to look hard to find people whose voices matter and her willingness to help cultivate those voices. She will amplify those voices ahead of her own.

You will read much more about her accomplishments from her esteemed friends—her sisters. But what I can say is that she is not only brilliant and accomplished, but loyal, serious and committed.

An Honorary Doctorate at the University of Montana is an honor, and it is one Mandy will accept with grace and humility. But the honor is really that one could call such a brave, innovative and unique talent "Dr. Mandy Louise Smoker Broaddus of the University of Montana".

Sincerely,

Natalie Peeterse
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December 4, 2022

Seth Bodnar, President
University of Montana
University Hall 109
32 Campus Drive
Missoula, MT 59812

Dear President Bodnar:

It is my privilege to submit this letter of recommendation on behalf of Mandy Smoker Broaddus for an Honorary Doctorate Degree from The University of Montana. Her professional experience that transpired from being a UM student and her personal love of the Grizzlies make her an excellent representative of The University of Montana.

I have known Mandy for close to 20 years when we worked together at the Office of Public Instruction in Native Education. Her education at The University of Montana has allowed her to follow her passion and make a career in both public education and poetry. When I was elected as Montana's state superintendent, Mandy served as the director of Indian Education. She traveled the state working with schools to increase Native student achievement, partnering with tribes to include their stories in classrooms, educating educators on curricular inclusion of Natives, and breaking down unfair systems so young people can better navigate their educational experience. She is a phenomenal role model who manages to be as comfortable as a data geek as she is a poet laureate. She is a teacher, mother, advocate, and a leader who has had significant influence in Montana and the nation.

Mandy continually works for justice and educational equity. She ensures that tribal voices are included at every table she sits at and brings forward a view of building inclusive systems. The University of Montana will be lucky to have Mandy among the distinguished recipients of this Honorary Doctorate.

All best,



Denise Juneau
Former Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction
Former Seattle Public School Superintendent
2014 Distinguished Alumni – The University of Montana
2019 Honorary Doctorate in Humane Letters – The University of Montana

November 30, 2022

Melissa Kwasny
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Basin, MT 59631
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Dear President Bodnar:

I am writing in enthusiastic support of the nomination of Mandy Smoker Broaddus for an Honorary Doctorate Degree from the University of Montana. I truly cannot think of anyone more deserving.

As a graduate, like Mandy, of the University of Montana's renowned M.F.A. in Creative Writing Program, and as an author of ten books of poetry and poetics, I want to attest first to the great meaning Mandy's writing has for me and for poets nationally. *Another Attempt at Rescue*, her first book of poetry, is a classic of Native American and Montanan literature. Mandy writes of personal loss and generational loss, illustrating how they are inextricably interwoven—loss of her indigenous language, land, people, and culture. She does this in unflinching poems that are always painfully beautiful, deeply felt, amazingly self-aware, and full of self-implication. In “Ghost Dance: The Poetics of Loss,” an essay published in *American Poetry Review*, I write, “In Smoker's *Another Attempt at Rescue*, what is being rescued from oblivion is a vision of the damage done to a people and the consequences played out over subsequent generations. It is, as well, a vision of spiritual and physical resilience, big enough to contain the complexities, the ambiguities, and the triumphs of survival.” I have taught her poems in my literature classes at Carroll College and in classrooms across Montana, where they are an inspiration to students who are eager to read work that leads them to an understanding of our shared lives.

In 2009, I was fortunate to work with Mandy as co-editor of an anthology of poetry in defense of global human rights. That book *I Go to the Ruined Place* (Lost Horse Press 2009), which includes well known poets, such as Carolyn Forché, Yusef Komunyakaa, and C.K. Williams, was

a response first to the revelations of U.S. sanctioned torture in places like Abu Ghraib. We found, however, as submissions started rolling in, that poems about sexual abuse, racism, immigration or refugee issues, and colonization also belonged in a book about human rights. We are especially proud that our anthology included such a large number of American Indian writers, not typical of anthologies at the time. Mandy's outreach and vision made this important project possible.

Mandy continues to be a force in the Montana and national literary scenes. Her poems appear in recent U.S. Poet Laureate Joy Harjo's anthologies *When the Light of the World Was Subdued Our Songs Came Through* and *Living Nations, Living Words*. She recently co-wrote *Thunderous*, a young adult graphic novel that teaches traditional Lakota values. From 2019 to 2021, I had the honor of serving as Montana Poet Laureate with Mandy. It was, given the pandemic, a challenging time to be charged with bringing poetry's role in our cultural and civic life to small and rural communities across the state. However, our collaboration was creative, wide ranging, and inspiring in its impact, from delivering the Montana Library Association's conference keynote (and countless Zoom presentations to libraries and schools) to working with the Big Sky Film Institute on a film and poem about Montana water resources. In 2021, we were awarded a fellowship from the Academy of American Poets to continue our work together. For our project, we traveled to Montana's art and historical museums, holding workshops for youth and writing ekphrastic poems in response to works in the museums' collections. The project culminated in an educational video made available to museums and to educators across Montana through Humanities Montana.

But beyond all this, Mandy is exceptional because of her commitment to improving the educational outcomes for American Indian children of Montana and our region. I first met Mandy twenty years ago. She was known already as a promising writer, having been named the recipient of the Richard Hugo Fellowship, the most prestigious award for graduate students. After graduation, Mandy had gone back to the Fort Peck reservation where she had grown up, in order to become dean of students and principal of Frazer Public Schools. It was a decision I had assumed was difficult because of her writing career. I saw it wrong. Mandy, then and now, has dedicated her life to making a difference in the lives of her people.

In 20015, Mandy moved to Helena to work with OPI as the first Indian Education Achievement Specialist, working alongside then Indian Education Director Denise Juneau to implement the Indian Education for All Act and developing a statewide set of standards entitled Essential Understandings. The Act, “which requires Native American cultural literacy across the curriculum,” demanded programs that “integrate the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians into the curricula, with particular emphasis on Montana Indians.” When Juneau was elected State Superintendent of Schools, Mandy became director of Indian Education for All. She also spent seven years overseeing the work of the federal Schools of Promise initiative, which seeks to turn around the state’s lowest performing schools, most specifically those on reservations. Former Governor Schweitzer, speaking at the inauguration of the Indian Education for All Act, stated, “Ten years from now, students will have a more accurate understanding of their history, of tribal sovereignty, and of native contributions to society.” Today, not only is that true, but states across the nation are taking Montana’s program as a model. Mandy now works for a regional nonprofit that works with thousands of students, teachers, parents, and community members to improve equity and inclusion for Indian students. In 2015, she was named Educator of the year by the National Indian Education Association, and, in 2016, was appointed to President Obama’s National Advisory Council for Indian Education.

Mandy Smoker Broaddus’s integrity, selflessness, and vision is so deserving of this honor. I also couldn’t be prouder to call her my friend.

Sincerely,

Melissa Kwasny



Mandy Smoker Broaddus

A member of the Fort Peck Assiniboine and the Sioux tribes, Mandy Smoker Broaddus was born on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation.

She received a BA in Education/English from Pepperdine University, an MFA in Fine Arts/Creative Writing from UM and a master's degree in American Indian Studies from UCLA. She has also studied English at the University of Colorado, where she was named a Battrick Fellow. While a student at UM, she received the Richard Hugo Memorial Scholarship. She was also honored with the Arianna and Hannah Yellow Thunder Scholarship at UCLA.

Early in her career, Smoker Broaddus taught at Fort Peck Community College and was dean of students at Frazer Public Schools. In 2005 — when Montana began funding Indian Education for All — Smoker Broaddus started her service with Montana's Office of Public Instruction (OPI) as the first Indian student achievement specialist in the Indian Education program. Smoker Broaddus took over as the director of Indian Education when Denise Juneau was elected superintendent of public instruction; Smoker Broaddus served in this role for nearly ten years. At OPI, Smoker Broaddus played instrumental roles in the Indian Education for All program, as well as the Schools of Promise initiative, which worked to close achievement gaps for Montana's lowest performing schools. In 2015, she was named Educator of the Year by the National Indian Education Association.

In 2019, Governor Steve Bullock appointed Smoker Broaddus and Melissa Kwansy as co-poet Laureates. They served in this role until 2021.

Smoker Broaddus is the author of a poetry collection titled *Another Attempt at Rescue*. Along with Kwansy, she also co-edited *I Go to the Ruined Place: Contemporary Poems in Defense of Global Human Rights*. In 2022, co-authored *Thunderous* — a graphic novel about a teenage Lakota girl's struggles with fitting in and her identity — with poet Natalie Peeterse.

Smoker Broaddus currently serves as the Managing Consultant of Native and Culturally Responsive Education for Education Northwest. She is also a member of the National Advisory Council on Indian Education.

Mandy Smoker Broaddus

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Education

Masters in Fine Arts/Creative Writing, University of Montana 2002
Bachelors in Education/English, Pepperdine University 1997

Professional Experience

Education Northwest 2018-present

Practice Expert in Native Education

- Coordinate and provide direct services, including technical assistance, to personnel in state education agencies who are responsible for improving educational delivery and reporting systems. Also coordinates and leads technical assistance projects focused on capacity building, evidence-based inquiry, research/evaluation and practical application based on current issues, specifically in the areas of Indian Education, cultural responsiveness, strategic planning, equity and school improvement. in education. Also prepares and delivers presentations and workshops to district and SEA staff, stakeholders and other organizations both in the regional and nationally.

Montana Office of Public Instruction, Helena, MT

2005-2018

Director of Indian Education

- Division administrator, overseeing the work of the Indian education division staff (7-25 specialists, both in agency and working remotely) efforts related to implementation of Indian Education for All and Indian student achievement initiatives. Duties included budget oversight, staff supervision, agency wide collaboration, technical assistance/professional development and other services in school districts and other organizations across the state.

School Transformation Director

- Agency director overseeing federal School Improvement Grant initiative, targeting the lowest 5% performing schools across the state. Work included tribal, community and school consultation and engagement activities.

Indian Student Achievement Specialist

- Duties focusing on the area of Indian student achievement, including research, analysis and dissemination of relevant student data, communication and collaboration with school districts and other organizations, development of educational resources and professional development, presentation at various conferences and other venues, site visitations, research of best practices and educational research and theory, and technical assistance

Frazer Public Schools, Frazer, Montana

2002-2005

Dean of Students / Principal

- Duties included supervision of K-12 staff, monitoring student attendance, discipline and academic achievement, designing professional development opportunities for staff, creating school calendars and student/teacher schedules, applying for and maintaining various state and federal grants, school and community committee work and teacher contract negotiations.

Fort Peck Community College, Poplar, MT

2001-2005

Instructor

- Taught courses in Composition, American Indian literature, American Literature

Publications

Smoker, M., Peeterse, N. (2022). *Thunderous*. Los Angeles, CA: Curiosity Ink.

Smoker Broaddus, M., Halliday, D. (2019). *Becoming visible: A landscape analysis of state efforts to provide Native American education for all*. National Congress of American Indians.

Juneau, D., Smoker Broaddus, M., Halliday, D. (2014). Big Sky Hope: How Montana's SEA Supports Turnaround in American Indian Schools. In L. Morando Rhim & S. Redding (Eds.) *The State Role in School Turnaround*. (pp 239-247) San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

Smoker Broaddus, M. (writer and cultural consultant). (2013). *Indian Relay*. Montana PBS.

Kwasny, M., & Smoker, M. (Eds.) (2009). *I go to the ruined place: poems in defense of global human rights*. Sand Point, ID: Lost Horse Press.

Smoker Broaddus, M. & Juneau, D. (Eds.) (2006). And still the waters flow: The legacy of Indian Education in Montana [Special Section] *Phi Delta Kappan* 88(3) 193-197.

Smoker, M. (2005). *Another attempt at rescue*. Brooklyn, NY: Hanging Loose Press

Selected Presentations

2018 South Dakota Indian Education Summit keynote - 'Montana's Indian Education for All' and other successful programs'

2018 Klamath County Public Schools Administrator's Training - 'Klamath County School District, Educational Equity: Understanding our Students and Families'

2018 Montana Pre-School Development Conference breakout presentation - 'Navigating & Supporting Cultural Landscapes for Equity in Education'

2018 Tribal Education Departments National Assembly breakout presentation - 'ESSA Consultation: Pre-Planning Template for Tribal Leaders'

2018 Flathead Reservation Area Schools, Title VI Parent Advisory Panels guest speaker - 'ESSA Consultation: Pre-Planning Template for Tribal Leaders'

- 2017 National Advisory Council on Indian Education Tribal webinar series – “Government to Government Relationships and Tribal Consultation in Montana”
- 2017 Montana State Tribal Relations Interim Legislative Committee presentation – “ESSA, Schools of Promise and Indian Student Achievement data”
- 2017 Innovations in Equity Conference, Wisconsin Department of Education keynote – ‘Navigating and Supporting Cultural Landscapes for Equity in Education’
- 2016 Montana Advisory Council on Indian Education Meeting / Tribal Consultation – ‘ESSA and Tribal Consultation’
- 2016 Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribal Education Department Conference keynote – ‘Indian Education – Where Do We Go From Here?’
- 2015 Northern Arizona American Indian Teacher Education Conference keynote – ‘Indian Education for All: The Montana Way’

Honors and Awards

- UCross Foundation Native American Fellow, 2022
- Academy of American Poets Fellowship, 2021-2022
- Montana Co-Poet Laureate, 2019-2021
- University of Montana Alumni of the Year award, 2019
- Montana Governor’s Award for Excellence in Performance, 2017
- National Advisory Council on Indian Education committee member, 2016
- National Indian Education Association Educator of the Year, 2015
- Regional Emmy Award, 2014 (writer/consultant on PBS documentary, *India Relay*)
- University of Montana, Phyllis J. Washington College of Education Excellence Award, 2012
- Montana Governor’s Award for Excellence in Performance, 2012
- Montana Indian Education Association Educator of the Year, 2010
- Richard Hugo Fellowship, University of Montana, 2001-2002.
- Battrick Fellowship, University of Colorado, 2000-2001.
- Arianna & Hannah Yellow Thunder Scholarship Recipient, UCLA, 1998-1999.

Other Professional Activities

- University of Montana Alumni Foundation Board Member, 2021-present
- Institute of Education Sciences/National Indian Education Study Technical Review Panel member, 2020-present
- Montana Budget and Policy Center Board Member, 2020-present

National Advisory Council on Indian Education, President Obama appointee, 2016 – present

Humanities Montana Board Member, 2014 - 2021

Montana State University Bozeman, ILEAD Educational Leadership Advisory Board
Member, 2012-18

Superintendent Appointed Member of the College Board, 2008-2011

Advisory Board Member, University of Montana Teacher Prep Program Project LETTERS,
2007- 2011.