



**TRACI SORELL** writes award-winning poems, fiction and nonfiction works for young people.

Her debut nonfiction picture book, *We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga* illustrated by Frané Lessac, won four national honor awards. Traci's middle grade historical fiction novel, *Indian No More*, co-authored with the late Charlene Willing McManis (Umpqua) received the 2020 American Indian Youth Literature Award (AIYLA) for Middle School Book. Her lyrical story in verse, *At the Mountain's Base*, illustrated by Weshoyot Alvitre (Tongva), received a 2020 AIYLA Picture Book Honor. Born and

raised in northeastern Oklahoma, Sorell is an enrolled Cherokee Nation citizen.

**Traci will be accepting applications for:** fiction or nonfiction picture book manuscripts that center stories reflecting children, other people and events that have been historically underrepresented in children's literature. She is looking to mentor a marginalized creator.

**1. If you could be in any movie or tv series, what would it be and what character would you play?**

Molly of Denali. I would love to play Molly or one of her friends. Her family life and the adventures she has with them and her friends are so enjoyable to watch.

**2. If you could have any supernatural power, what would it be and why?**

Easy one! Teleportation. I love to travel, see new places, and meet readers all over the world, but the actual getting to and from is tiring and keeps me away from home a lot. Teleportation would allow me to travel, but still sleep in my own bed each night.

**3. What are your five favorite picture books not written, illustrated, and/or edited by you?**

So difficult! I love so many.

*Beautiful Moon* by Tonya Bolden and Eric Velasquez

*Drum Dream Girl* by Margarita Engle and Rafael López

*Freedom Soup* by Tami Charles and Jacqueline Alcántara

*Greet the Dawn: The Lakota Way* by S.D. Nelson

*You Hold Me Up* by Monique Gray Smith and Danielle Daniel

**4. What writing and/or publishing-related accomplishment are you most proud of?**

I sold my first book unagented through the slush pile. So many wonderful things have come from that, including signing with an agent and selling many more books.

**5. What about mentoring excites you most?**

I look forward to helping someone work on strengthening their craft and providing insights into publishing as a newer author in children's literature.

**6. What are your strengths as a mentor?**

Helping a mentee focus on crafting precise, lyrical language that invites the reader into the story; freely sharing the knowledge I've gained thus far in this industry

**7. What is your feedback/critique style like?**

I'm flexible. I can note areas of strength in the manuscript and ask questions on parts that may be unclear or I can be more detailed and provide line edits. I'll rely on my mentee to tell me what they need.

**8. What are the most important things you're seeking in a mentee?**

Someone who is serious about working on their craft, uses honest, direct communication and understands that this is a business as well as a creative endeavor.

**9. Who are you not the best mentor for?**

Someone who writes punny or picture books focused on humor. There are other authors who write those all the time and would be stronger mentors on sculpting those manuscripts. Also, I know how difficult it is to get rhyme correct (which is why I haven't yet attempted it), so I wouldn't be the best fit for someone writing those stories either.

**10. How will you help your mentee and their stories develop?**

I will share my knowledge of craft techniques, mentor texts, and the industry (the market, agents and publishers, etc.). I'm happy to advise on cover letter drafting, critique manuscripts, and answer craft as well as business related questions.

**11. What is your style of communication like?**

I tend to use email, but I'm happy to jump on the phone or Skype/FB Msgr/Zoom, etc. too

**12. What are you looking for in the applications you receive?**

Someone who knows why they are writing for children and wants to share stories that are not white-centered or white-coded (i.e. animals, shapes, inanimate objects that read as white) which has long been the norm in the industry.

**13. Any tips/advice for applicants to make their applications and/or manuscripts shine?**

Proofread and submit the strongest manuscript you have written to date. Take time to think about why you are seeking this mentorship, what you want to know, learn and take away from this short-term experience. Knowing that will allow you and your mentor to make the mentorship more meaningful for you and your work going forward.

**14. What advice or inspiring and/or motivational words would you like to offer up to anyone applying to be your mentee or simply reading this questionnaire?**

The time you spend working on your craft (including reading hundreds and hundreds of picture books as well as typing them up and studying them) is critical if you seek publication. There are no shortcuts to spending time reading, writing and revising. But it is time well spent.