

Rita Joe, the “poet laureate” of the Mi’kmaq, began writing in her thirties to contest the conceptions and explain the actualities of Aboriginal people to her children.

Dr. Rita Joe, of Cape Breton, NS, views herself as a housewife who accepted a challenge to properly explain the history of the Mi’kmaq people. After submitting a manuscript and winning a Writers’ Federation contest in Halifax in 1974, Rita subsequently had her first work—suitably titled *Poems of Rita Joe*—published in 1978.

Her titles since: *Song of Eskasoni School, Lnu and Indians We’re Called, Kelusultiek (We Speak), Autobiography (song of Rita Joe), Mi’kmaq Anthology*, and *We Are the Dreamers* have earned acclaim across Canada while providing honest and positive definitions of Aboriginal people.

In 1990, Dr. Rita Joe received the Order of Canada. She possesses a Doctor of Laws from Dalhousie University, a Doctorate of Letters from the University College of Cape Breton, and a Doctor of Humane Letters from Mount Saint Vincent University.

The National Aboriginal Achievement Awards recognized her in 1997 in the Arts and Culture category.

Dr. Rita Joe has been the subject of television and radio documentaries, and she is a frequent contributor to many of Nova Scotia’s Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal newspapers.