Meeting an author isn’t an opportunity that many students get. But I did.

I met Trace DeMeyer in the beginning stages of a project for the course American Indian Literature in the 21st Century.

The project involved the creation of an article about an unknown Native American author.

While DeMeyer was unknown to many, I was already familiar with her story and held a personal interest in it.

DeMeyer’s memoir had been given to me before the start of the project, and once I began reading it, I couldn’t put it down.

In the memoir, DeMeyer writes of her life as an adoptee and her life-long search to find her biological relatives.

She was able to connect with many family members and she discovered her Native background.

Prior to reading Trace’s memoir, I had begun my own search to find my Native background.

While I wasn’t adopted, my father was, and my ties to him were broken when I was very young.

I knew that he was Native, but had no way of finding out which tribe he was from.

In the weeks surrounding my work on the project, events lined up just so; something DeMeyer calls “synchronicity.”

I had the opportunity to discover things about my past and my Native background.

I tried contacting my half-sister for the first time in my life, and we now email on a regular basis.

We have begun getting to know each other, and from her I learned that I am Chippewa.

Parts of my own life seemed to parallel parts of DeMeyer’s story, and I felt a connection to her, someone I had never met.

Gratefully, it was arranged for DeMeyer to come and speak about her memoir and the important political issues surrounding it.

We were able to meet after having been in limited contact through email, and it couldn’t have been a better experience.

DeMeyer was receptive to my questions about her life, and to the things I divulged about mine.

She was more than willing to act as a resource in all facets, and urged me to keep in contact through emails and phone calls.
As the project came to an end, DeMeyer offered one last gift that was beyond incredible.

She had emailed a few times prior to my finishing the project to say that she was sending me a package.

She wanted me to have a copy of her latest book, as well as “a little surprise… Call this your graduation gift!” she said.

I received the package, and inside, I found a copy of her latest book, a small red box and an envelope with my name on it.

Dried sage fell out of the red box, which DeMeyer noted in the card “is good medicine.”

The box had inside of it a Native American ring, silver with turquoise and orange spiny oyster stone.

The card in the envelope said:
“Amanda Osiyo-Boozhoo-Aquay

Happy Graduation in May – so proud of You and this huge Achievement

The ring is “old pawn” Najavo- Wear it with my blessing “Walk in Beauty”

I’m here when you need me
Love, Trace”

As I surveyed the gift DeMeyer had given me, I was overcome with emotion.

I was amazed by the kindness she had shown me, in both her meaningful gift, and in the support she had shown me since we had first been in contact.

We are still in contact today, and I am confident that we will remain friends.

I was able to have this experience as a student enrolled in American Indian Literature in the 21st Century.

The project that I worked on with DeMeyer involved writing an article to contribute to Wikipedia.

The article was to be about a Native American author, with the goal being to bring them out into the public eye.

While taking this course, I learned that Native American literature isn’t being published often enough.

Some Native authors like Sherman Alexie and Louise Erdrich have found their place in publishing, but the niche is small.

I had the pleasure of being assigned Trace DeMeyer, an author who has found her own way of overcoming this obstacle and many others.

Trace DeMeyer is Shawnee-Cherokee, and a multi-genre author, poet, journalist and activist.

Her work focuses heavily on Native Americans and Native American adoption issues.
DeMeyer was born in 1956 and adopted by a non-Native family a year later.

At age 22, she was fortunate enough to open her sealed adoption records.

With the information that she found in those records, DeMeyer spent the next 27 years looking for and connecting with her biological relatives and her Native identity.

DeMeyer wrote about this experience in her self-published memoir titled “One Small Sacrifice: Lost Children of the Indian Adoption Projects.”

The book also comments on both the history of the adoption of Native American children and its substantial effects on adoptees.

The American Indian Adoption Projects were administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Child Welfare League of America from 1958 to 1967.

The program allowed for the removal of almost 400 Native American children from their families and tribes, who were then placed with non-Native families.

This resulted in the loss of the family, culture and identity of the children.

In 1978 the Indian Child Welfare Act set federal requirements for children that are members of federally recognized tribes.

Relatives, other tribe members, or a Native family of any other tribe, have priority over any non-Native family to adopt a Native American child.

Despite this law, the effects from the hundreds of adoptions that took place were lasting.

Native American adoptees find great difficulty in recovering their identities.

Most are legally unable to open their sealed adoption records.

The mystery that surrounds their identity is mirrored in the mystery of the entire ordeal.

Many people aren’t aware of what some call the “adoption era.”

Only recently have studies been done, conferences held, and research started on this issue.

DeMeyer has long been an advocate for Native American adoptees like herself.

Her advocacy has led to her collaboration with fellow adoptee Patricia Busbee. Together, they produced an anthology of Native American adoptee stories titled “Two Worlds: Lost Children of the Indian Adoption Projects.”

As an activist for these issues, DeMeyer has a number of blogs on multiple social media platforms, all dedicated to Native Americans and adoption-related concerns.

One of the social media outlets that DeMeyer takes full advantage of is Twitter.
She uses the site very frequently, and has even created a Twitter newspaper called Modern Ndn.

The immediacy of social media websites like Twitter works well for activists like DeMeyer.

This helps them call attention to the issues quickly in a wide-reaching public domain, something DeMeyer does on a daily basis.

She is an accomplished blogger, and has created an impressive online presence.

With the Wikipedia article that I was to produce, I aimed to compliment that presence.

As I began compiling research and sources, I discovered that the biggest hurdle lay in conjunction with Wikipedia’s strict source guidelines and the amount of third-party material that exists regarding authors like DeMeyer.

Wikipedia asks for multiple reputable independent sources about a subject. They discredit any primary sources that are produced by the subject.

The Wikipedia article that I produced was written in an attempt to provide more information about DeMeyer, as there isn’t much that currently exists.

However, it is for this reason that Wikipedia did not accept the article that I had written about her.

Despite Wikipedia’s rejection, I look at the article as a work in progress.

That is what Wikipedia is essentially- a constant work in progress.

The site’s articles are continually being edited and reviewed by people all over the world.

And so I will continue to edit the article about Trace DeMeyer, and continue to submit it for publication.

I strongly believe that DeMeyer, and other authors like her, deserve more exposure.

The struggles I faced in writing about DeMeyer don’t compare to the struggles that she and others like her face in trying to get their voices heard.

There aren’t enough outlets through which Native American authors have a voice.

This experience allowed me to see firsthand how true this is.