

**"I" IS FOR INCLUSION:  
THE PORTRAYAL OF NATIVE AMERICANS IN BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

Program of the

ALA/OLOS Subcommittee for Library Services to American Indian People  
American Indian Library Association

*American Indian Children's Literature: Identifying and Celebrating the Good*

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*“It is our view that, with the possible exception of classroom visits by American Indian people, excellent children’s literature is the most effective way to counter deeply held stereotypes and help children focus on similarities among peoples as well as cultural differences. The literature serves as a catalyst to extend related activities into other areas of the curriculum.”*

from *Lessons from Turtle Island: Native Curriculum in Early Childhood Classrooms* / Guy W. Jones and Sally Moomaw. Redleaf Press, 2002. p. xii

## **THE BACKGROUND**

Over the years, librarians with little knowledge about American Indian cultures and histories have asked "How can I tell good books about Indians from bad ones?" and "Where can I find reliable reviews?" Reviews on books about Indians abound in the usual book review sources, but most are written from a literary angle or from a children’s /YA literature perspective, and often skim over or even ignore evaluating the accuracy of the Native content. There are plenty of "good" books--well-written, exciting, from respected authors, much-loved by their readers, with well-developed characters--that are inaccurate, stereotypical, fanciful, or just plain dehumanizing in their depiction of the Native characters.

Sixteen years ago, at the American Library Association Annual Conference in Atlanta, the American Indian Library Association (AILA) presented a program entitled *“I” is NOT for Indians: The Portrayal of Native Americans in Books for Young People*. The program organizers figured they might attract a few children’s or school librarians, but were stunned to find a standing-room only audience. Clearly, the program had tapped into a real need. The handout, a sort of how-to guide to identifying good and bad books and directory of resources for finding books, quickly ran out. It subsequently took on a life of its own, cited repeatedly and reprinted over the years in various publications such as *Alternative Library Literature 1990-1991* (ed. by Sanford Berman and James Danky, McFarland, 1992) and *Multicultural Review* (April 1992, p. 26-35).

Lisa Mitten and Naomi Caldwell, AILA Secretary and President, respectively, at the time, and the original program chairs and compilers of the handout, have often been asked to do an update of the bibliography. Since that initial program, there has been an explosion of materials for children written by Native authors, something we did not find in 1991. In 2006, AILA initiated the first *“Native American Youth Services Literature Award”* (<http://aila.library.sd.gov/activities/youthlitaward.htm>), and current AILA president Carlene Engstrom decided to focus the 2007 AILA program on the complementary topic of excellence in children’s literature about Native Americans. The election of Anishinabe library school professor Loriene Roy as ALA President for 2007 clinched the idea.

Back in 1991, Lisa and Naomi both had young children in the public school system, and were encountering difficulties and confusion with teachers and children’s librarians about appropriate materials about Indians, so this was a personal issue for both of us. Our kids are grown up now (and although there are no grandkids yet, we are hoping we won’t be facing the same problems with children’s books for our grandchildren as we found with our own kids), and we have each moved on to different jobs. (Naomi, who was a school librarian at Nathan Bishop Middle School in Rhode Island at the time, is now a tenured associate professor at the University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Library and Information Studies, teaching MLS courses in collection development and multiculturalism for libraries. Lisa, who was a social sciences bibliographer at the University of Pittsburgh and reviewer of children’s

materials about Indians for *School Library Journal* and the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh's children's department, is now a social sciences book review editor at *Choice Magazine*.) Consequently, to include a "frontlines" perspective and to tap into extensive current practitioner expertise in this area, we decided to enlist the help of Gabriella Kaye, the reference/children's librarian at the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center in Connecticut, and Gaby graciously accepted. The three of us have revised and updated the "*I*" is *NOT* for Indian bibliography for this program, and retitled the handout to reflect the more visible presence of Native writers and literature today.

## **INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

To highlight the trends in books and increased presence of Native authors and illustrators since 1991, and to celebrate the new AILA *Native American Youth Services Literature Award*, which will be announced each year at ALA Midwinter with the other ALA book award announcements, we decided to focus this program and handout on the following topics:

- Works by Native authors for young people
- Works on contemporary Native Americans by Native as well as non-Native authors, such as photo essays of Native children and chapter books/novels that take place in contemporary Indian country
- Portrayals of Pocahontas/Jamestown, in conjunction with the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of that colony

Titles appearing in this handout are necessarily selective and reflect a random sample of titles, mostly published since 1991. They come from the Mashantucket Pequot Children's Library collection, the personal collections of the compilers of this handout, and local public libraries. They are a snapshot, therefore, of what is likely to be in your own school or public libraries. Most are recommended, some are not, all with an eye to the Indian component, irrespective of the author, publisher, popularity, etc., of the book. There are other review sources that do that.

Following these selected brief annotations, we've again included a few references to guidelines to assist librarians and teachers in evaluating portrayals of Indians in children's books, and a selected list of sources to obtain books about Indians. Although there is a much greater presence of Native authors and illustrators at mainstream publishers today, many tribal authors are still published by small and local presses, and identifying these sources is not always easy.

Finally, because libraries still retain on their shelves classics and award-winners that we feel should be recommended with caveats, we've included several titles that we find problematical in their portrayals of Native peoples and cultures. Our comments reflect this perspective, and hopefully will inspire librarians, teachers, and parents to look at these books, and others like them, with a critical and evaluative eye.

## SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

This brief selection of books is meant to give librarians an idea of the kinds of materials that are available. Many more can be found at the Web sites and distributors referenced in the section that follows. Books in this section include mostly children's books, with some YA titles. Books in series have been excluded, although references to a few series in general are included at the end of this section.

### Native Authors

These are books by Indian authors writing on a variety of topics. Works by Indian authors writing on contemporary Native America appear in that section below. They are referenced here by an author listing and a referral to the contemporary Indian section.

Bruchac, Joseph (Abenaki). *Navajo Long Walk: The Tragic Story of a Proud People's Forced March from their Homeland*. with illustrations and captions by Shonto Begay (Navajo). National Geographic Society, 2002. ISBN: 0792270584

The paintings by Shonto Begay (Navajo) bring strong feeling to this lengthy picture book about the Navajo Long Walk. His captions add meaning to his paintings--it is evident that Navajo people still experience the pain and suffering from the destruction of their homelands and disruption of their way of life. Joseph Bruchac includes a great deal of the history that led up to the forced march and internment at Bosque Redondo. Only after four years of brutal treatment did the end of the Civil War focus congressional and public attention on the "Navajo problem," and eventually the people were allowed to return home, although life was never the same for them and their descendents. Definitely a book that will raise awareness of a shameful episode in US history.

Carlson, Lori Marie, editor. *Moccasin Thunder: American Indian Stories for Today*. HarperCollins, 2005. ISBN: 0066239591

Ten short stories from some of the strongest contemporary American Indian writers, this collection is for young adults (and adults, too). The stories reach into the past, illuminate the present and show the dreams of Native young people. The authors write about teens who are as complex as their peers, but who are both burdened and strengthened by their histories and cultures. Susan Power, Joy Harjo, Richard Van Camp, Greg Sarris, Cynthia Leitich Smith, Linda Hogan, Louise Erdrich, Joseph Bruchac, Lee Francis, and Sherman Alexie have found their voices in this excellent collection.

Dorris, Michael (Modoc). *Guest*. Hyperion Press, 1994. ISBN: 059006570X

Moss is a Wampanoag boy in the early 17th century who senses that things are changing with the arrival of the newcomers, and he has a feeling that perhaps the changes are not for the best. Moss has a lot of questions, but wants to honor and respect his father and not worry his mother. He simply wonders: "Why is my father inviting these people to our harvest gathering?" Children can easily relate to the uncertainty Moss feels. The book, with its multidimensional and realistic portrayals, captures the perspective of the Wampanoags. Dorris's writing style is a treat to experience, and he seamlessly describes the nuances of Native protocol without complicating the plot. This novel is a rare departure from the usual Thanksgiving tales, and is highly recommended.

Erdrich, Lise (Ojibway). ***Bears Make Rock Soup and Other Stories***. Paintings by Lisa Fifield (Oneida). Children's Book Press, 2002. ISBN: 9780892391721.

If you know anything about traditional storytelling among Natives, you realize that the stories are lengthy by contemporary standards. Don't be deceived by this collection of fifteen single-page tales. Erdrich, a seasoned storyteller and educator, has written stories that are infused with wisdom and humor. The stories are bite-sized healthy treats, each satisfying, rich, and flavorful. Fifield has garnished each story with a single watercolor painting. Working from a natural palate of earth tones, she has enhanced the text with subtle visual cues that provide additional information. This collection is perfect for high energy audiences who learn well in short sessions.

Erdrich, Louise (Ojibwe). ***The Game of Silence***. HarperCollins, 2005. ISBN: 9780060297893

This sequel to the award-winning *Birch Bark House* seamlessly picks up the story of Omakayas and her family through their day-to-day lives and the changes they encounter throughout the seasons. Erdrich subtly and gently explains traditional activities in a realistic manner, transporting readers back in time while easily relating the feelings shared by all human beings. Each character is multidimensional and genuine, subtly portrayed in rich detail. The story is filled with suspense and the whole range of human emotions in the face of growing uncertainty as a result of broken treaties. Although rich in cultural information, the book's focus is the lives of Omakayas and her family as they face the challenges of living during the 1860s. An excellent example of historical fiction about a Native community that is culturally accurate and accessible to children and adults alike.

Grace, Catherine O'Neill and Margaret M. Bruchac (Abenaki), with Plimoth Plantation. ***1621: A New Look at Thanksgiving***. National Geographic Society, 2001. ISBN: 0792270274

Perhaps the most notable thing about this book is that it reinterprets the "First Thanksgiving" from the traditional story created and embellished over the years and places it in a more accurate context; it looks critically at the complicated early interactions and relationships between Wampanoag and English peoples. The book is heavily illustrated with photographs taken at a reenactment of the fall harvest celebration of 1621 held at Plimoth Plantation, a living history museum in Plymouth, Massachusetts. For many years, the Wampanoag perspective was missing from American history books and Thanksgiving stories, and this work gives a more complete picture of the lives of both the colonists and the Native people who were already living there. Grace and Bruchac include recipes for "nasaump" and "stewed pompion," a chronology of the evolution of the Thanksgiving holiday, and a useful bibliography.

Kusugak, Michael Arvaarluk (Inuit). ***My Arctic 1, 2, 3***. Annick Press Ltd. 1996. ISBN: 1550375059

What a good book on many levels! It's an engaging counting book with a simple story that starts and ends with one polar bear. But along the way, different animals (and a few people) of the Arctic are encountered, including ringed seals, siksiks, Arctic foxes, and char. Descriptions of wildlife and more information about the author's life are in a section that follows the story, "The Arctic World of Michael Kusugak and His Family," along with a list of Inuktitut words in the book and how to pronounce them. Each animal's name is also written in the Inuktitut syllabary, which may inspire older readers to find out about other languages, while younger readers will enjoy counting and identifying the animals.

Manitonquat (Medicine Story; Wampanoag). ***The Children of the Morning Light: Wampanoag Tales***. Illustrated by Mary F. Arquette (Mohawk). Macmillan, 1994. ISBN: 0027659054 (Grades 3 and up)

A collection of traditional stories for the Pokonoket or mainland Wampanoag of southeastern

Massachusetts. Manitonquat is an elder and storyteller who learned these stories from his grandfather. Seven tales recount the Wampanoag creation, and another four tell of culture hero Maushop and his activities. A full-color painting highlights each tale.

Medicine Crow, Joseph (Crow). *Counting Coup: Becoming a Crow Chief on the Reservation and Beyond*. National Geographic, 2006. ISBN: 0792253914

It is amazing to read this memoir and realize that it was written by a man who spent his youth with men who scouted for General Custer before the Battle of Little Bighorn. Born in 1913, Crow tribal historian Joseph Medicine Crow recounts traditional stories from his grandfathers, childhood memories, including painful recollections of public schools and happier ones of Bacone and Linfield Colleges, and his experiences in Europe during World War II. It was there that the author counted coup four times and was recognized by the elders as a “full-fledged Crow war chief” at a traditional Crow honoring ceremony. Short chapters and Medicine Crow’s long and eventful life make this a good book to read aloud in a classroom or to use for a biography assignment. Rarely does history come alive as it does in this exceptional find.

Parsons-Yazzie, Evangeline (Navajo). *Dzání Yázhí Naazbaa’: Little Woman Warrior Who Came Home: A Story of the Navajo Long Walk*. Illustrated by Irving Toddy (Navajo). Salina Bookshelf, 2005. ISBN: 1893354555

Most children’s books about the Navajo Long Walk are not written by Navajos, so they lack the perspective of the people who were forced by the US Army to walk the 300 miles from their homelands. This is the story of Dzáníbaa’ who, along with other children, was kidnapped by soldiers to get their parents to surrender to the army. Just ten years old when her happy childhood ended, she endures the killings and hunger of the march and eventually returns to her home, although many people died during that time. Written in both English and Navajo and illustrated by Irving Toddy (Navajo), this book describes the Long Walk and the four years of exile that the Navajo endured without losing hope of returning to their homes and way of life. The author and illustrator have created a book that elementary age children can understand without dwelling on the horrible violence that happened, and a work that will serve as an introduction to this episode in US history for older students.

Shenandoah, Joanne (Oneida) and Douglas M. George (Mohawk). *Skywoman: Legends of the Iroquois*. Clear Light, 1998. ISBN: 0940666995 (Grades 6 and up)

Nine legends from the early days of the Iroquois people are retold by Confederacy members Shenandoah and George, and illustrated by Mohawk artists John and David Fadden. The Iroquois creation story is told over several chapters, and other well-known legends include “The Star Dancers” (explaining the origin of the Pleiades), “The Little People,” and “How the Bear Clan Became Healers.” The founding of the Iroquois Confederacy is retold in part in “Jikonsahseh, Mother of Nations.” Traditional stories at their best, retold and illustrated by the people to whom they belong.

Swamp, Chief Jake (Akwesasne Mohawk). *Giving Thanks: A Native American Good Morning Message*. Illustrations by Erwin Printup, Jr., (Cayuga/Tuscarora). Lee & Low, 1995. ISBN: 1880000156. (All ages)

Mohawk chief and elder Swamp tells a very brief version of the Iroquois Thanksgiving Address, used to open all gatherings of the Six Nations peoples. This picture book version, richly illustrated in bright primary colors by fellow Haudenosaunee member Printup, conveys the essence of this beautiful ritual. [Note: The Mohawk, Cayuga, and Tuscarora, along with the Seneca, Oneida, and Onondaga, are

the constituent members of the Haudenosaunee, more commonly known throughout American history as the Six Nations, or Iroquois Confederacy, and still located in their traditional homeland of upstate New York and southern Canada, as well as Wisconsin and Oklahoma.]

Tapahonso, Luci (Diné (aka Navajo)) and Eleanor Schick. *Navajo ABC: A Diné Alphabet Book*. Illustrations by Eleanor Schick. Simon & Schuster, 1995. ISBN: 0689803168

It is particularly gratifying to see counting and alphabet books by Native authors, as these two genres are typically some of the earliest books children will see. Historically, they have been characterized by cartoonish, stereotypical, or otherwise dehumanizing images of Indians, setting the foundation for unquestioned acceptance of other such images, such as sports mascots. Alphabet books such as Tapahonso's take this format and make it their own as a vehicle for presenting, in this case, both Navajo and English words of common items found in the homes and environment of Navajoland. Full-color, soft pastel pencil drawings convey the desert homeland of the Diné people, with appropriate images for words such as G-Grandma, S-Sheep, A-Arroyo, and H-Hooghan. A lovely, warm book.

Tingle, Tim (Choctaw). *Crossing Bok Chitto*. Illustrated by Jeanne Rorex Bridges (Cherokee). Cinco Puntos Press, 2006. ISBN: 9780938317777

Bok Chitto is a river that separates the Choctaw community from a plantation. While berry picking, Martha Tom, a Choctaw girl, happens to cross the river; suddenly, she hears the voices of hundreds of slaves. They are whispering, "We are bound for the promised land." Through a series of events, Martha Tom befriends Little Mo, a slave boy. They become fast friends. In a story masterfully retold by Tingle, we learn of cooperation between the Choctaw and the slaves and how together they outwit the slaves' owners. This story is filled with suspense and the power of faith and friendship. It is made complete with excellent supplementary material by the author about the modern-day Choctaw.

Van Camp, Richard (Dogrib). *A Man Called Raven*. Pictures by George Littlechild (Plains Cree). Children's Press, 1997. ISBN: 9780892391448

Two boys are caught terrorizing a raven by a mysterious and stern man who smells of pine needles. The man scolds them and asks to meet their parents. The boys cannot resist him and quickly take him home, call for their mother, and dash to their bedrooms and pretend to be asleep. Immediately, they are called downstairs to face the music, but instead of being spanked, the mysterious man tells them a story about an old spiteful, angry, and wicked man. He was someone who also terrorized ravens. One day, he hurt a raven that then haunted him wherever he went. Seeking relief, the man began to act strange and climb trees. Once in the trees, he found peace. One day he fell from a tree and as he fell, he was transformed into a raven. His first experience as a raven brought him to his own funeral. He was surprised at the love and grief the people had for him. As a result, he felt bad and followed his people, warning them of danger and helping them to survive.

#### Native Authors included in "Contemporary Indians"

Alexie, Sherman (Spokane)

Dennis, Yvonne Wakim (Cherokee)

Highway, Tomson (Cree)

Lacapa, Kathleen (Mohawk/Irish/English)

Lacapa, Michael (Apache/Hopi/Tewa)

Orona-Ramirez, Kristy (Taos Pueblo/Tarahumara)

Slipperjack, Ruby (Ojibwa)  
Smelcer, John (Ahtna Athabaskan)  
Smith, Cynthia Leitich (Muscogee Creek)  
Watkins, Sherrin (Shawnee/Cherokee)

### Contemporary Indians

We feel very strongly that libraries should include books on contemporary Native Americans. The predominant ideas and images about Indians held by non-Indians are still very much rooted in the past, or poisoned by stereotypical images, such as sports team mascots. The many excellent photo essay books featuring contemporary Indian kids are invaluable for helping to counter these images. And although the focus of this program and handout is on Native American authors, writers, and illustrators, it should be pointed out that it is possible for non-Indians to write respectfully, knowledgably, and authentically about Native peoples. Several of the titles in this section are by non-Indian authors who have taken the time to “get it.”

Alexie, Sherman (Spokane/Coeur d'Alene) *Flight*. Black Cat, 2007. ISBN: 9780802170378

Meet Zits, a contemporary, streetwise, orphaned Indian kid who uses edgy dialog and bittersweet humor to get through foster homes and life on the streets. With a name like “Zits,” you can imagine what his face looks like. Readers--especially teen readers--will immediately sympathize with him and be drawn into the throes of his existence. He is ugly. He is lonely. He is an outsider. He is looking for love. After an encounter with another teen, Justice, who convinces Zits to use a gun to shoot customers in a bank, Zits himself is shot and begins the time travel through US history that makes up the bulk of the book. He finds himself inhabiting the bodies of various individuals until they are killed, and then is yanked into another body in another time. His wry comments on the situations he finds himself in are vintage Alexie, as he experiences life as a child at the Little Big Horn, as an FBI agent in the 1960s assassinating Indian activists, and as his own absent alcoholic father, among others, before finding himself once again in his own body in the bank, about to pull the trigger. Most teens will appreciate the straightforwardness of the language Alexie uses, while some adults might be taken aback. The beauty of this story is that in spite of its sometimes graphic portrayals of the human experience, it leaves a glimmer of hopefulness not often found in most young adult novels. This book has a lot of potential for use with teens, but is not recommended for middle school readers.

Cannon, A.E. *The Shadow Brothers*. Delacorte Press, 1990. (Grades 6-10) ISBN: 9780385299824

A well-done novel of a Navajo teen as told by his adoptive (non-Indian) brother. Henry Yazzie has been sent to live with his father's white friend's family so that he can attend good schools. The arrival of a second Native boy to the school has Henry, an excellent student and athlete, questioning his identity as a Navajo. Deals with issues many Indian kids face as the only Native student in school.

Dennis, Yvonne Wakim (Cherokee) and Arlene Hirschfelder. *Children of Native America Today*. Charlesbridge, 2002. ISBN: 1570914990

A kaleidoscopic, whirlwind journey through contemporary Indian Country visits children from 26 Nations, including Native Hawaiians and urban Indians. The tribes are grouped by region, beginning with the Northeast and traveling around the perimeter of the continent clockwise, ending up in Alaska, then jumping to Hawai'i and the cities. Each chatty two-page spread features stunning photos of kids from that tribe engaging in various activities, from making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and golfing

at the tribal golf course to getting dressed for a traditional dance and wrestling alligators in Florida. Each short visit concludes with a “more facts” table giving the reservations/communities names, population, three notable contemporary tribal members, and the names of neighboring tribes. Like just about every book on Native Americans that Hirschfelder has a hand with, this one is a winner!

Highway, Tomson (Cree). ***Fox on the Ice***. HarperCollins, 2003. ISBN: 0002255324

*Fox on the Ice*, *Caribou Song* (2001), and *Dragonfly Kites* (2002) form a trilogy of stories about Joe, Cody, their mama and papa, and Cody’s little black dog, Ootsie. The warmth and joy of their close family is evident in the glowing pictures and spare yet poetic text, which is in Cree and English. Their adventures take place near their home in northern Manitoba as they follow the caribou and go fishing; wherever they are, the two boys invent games and make up songs. There’s a moment of excitement in this story when Papa has to make a quick decision--should he stop the runaway sled with dozing Mama and Joe, or save his motorized ice-fishing jigger and net? It’s a pleasure to share this family’s life as they work, play, and laugh together in these stories.

Lacapa, Kathleen (Mohawk, Irish, English) and Michael Lacapa (Apache, Hopi Tewa). ***Less Than Half, More Than Whole***. Northland, 1994. ISBN: 9780873585927

Tony learns that he is a mixed-blood from his observant and innocent friends Will and Scott. They happen to notice that Tony is lighter than Will and darker than Scott when he is told he is "only half or less than." Tony catches up with his grandma and asks her what “less than half” means. She uses the illustration of a butterfly and tells Tony that being different is special. His brother tells him that they are part-Indian and part-Anglo. Finally, he talks with his grandpa, who points out the different colors of corn and that this is a gift from the Creator. Tony learns in a gentle way that he is also a special gift, and more than whole in his uniqueness. An excellent story that mixed-blood and interracial children of all ethnicities will relate to.

Maher, Ramona. ***Alice Yazzie’s Year***. Tricycle Press, 2003. ISBN: 1582460809

Originally published in 1973, this edition is illustrated by Shonto Begay (Navajo). It is the story of the year Alice was eleven. She’s a thoughtful and independent person and deeply attached to her grandfather and her Navajo culture. The lyrical prose for each month of Alice’s year brings the girl to life with her observations and activities, and the wonderful paintings capture the feel of the land, wind, sun, colors, and love in Alice Yazzie’s world. Carl N. Gorman, Director of Navajo Resources and Curriculum Development at Navajo Community College in Tsaile, AZ, provides explanatory notes and thoughts about the Navajo way of life and the things Alice experiences in the book. It is a beautiful introduction to Navajo contemporary culture, calendars, and families.

Mitchell, Barbara. ***Red Bird***. Illustrated by Todd L.W. Doney. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard. 1996. ISBN: 0688208601.

Katie lives in a large East Coast city with her parents. This weekend, they gather up their dance regalia and head down the highway to the Nanticoke powwow in Delaware. Like many, many Indian families across the US, Katie and her family head to their people’s tribal lands to visit aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, and other relatives when the tribe holds its annual summer or fall powwow. Bright, full-color, full-page illustrations uncannily capture the faces and sights of Native people and powwows of the mid-Atlantic states. Anyone who has visited a powwow in the eastern US will recognize the people in this wonderful book.

Orona-Ramirez, Kristy (Taos Pueblo/Tarahumara). *Kiki's Journey*. Illustrated by Jonathan Warm Day (Taos Pueblo). Children's Book Press, 2006. ISBN: 0892392142

Many American Indians live away from their reservation families and home and may rarely return there. This is the story of Kiki, who lives in southern California--far from Taos Pueblo where her parents grew up and her beloved grandma and uncle live. During a visit home, Kiki goes on a "tourist" tour of the pueblo and quietly realizes that as Tiwa, she is connected to the land and her family no matter where she lives and what she does with her life. This is definitely a story many children and adults can relate to, especially those who make long trips home. Illustrated in glowing colors by Jonathan Warm Day (Taos Pueblo).

Robinson, Margaret A. *A Woman of Her Tribe*. Scribner's, 1990. (Grades 5-8) ISBN: 9780684192239

Low-key story of Annette, whose white mother moves the two of them from Annette's deceased father's Nootka village to attend a private school in Vancouver where she's received a scholarship. Annette's transition to the city and the school is handled with sensitivity and understanding. The last third of the novel deals with Annette's return to her village over the Christmas break, where she realistically confronts her confusion over being both Nootka and white, and makes decisions about where she belongs.

Slipperjack, Ruby (Ojibwa). *Little Voice*. Couteau Books, 2001. ISBN: 1550501828

Ray grows up in this book; she starts her story when she is 10, living with her Ojibwa mother and siblings in poverty after her father dies in a logging accident and stops as she turns 14, well on her way to becoming a woman--a medicine woman who will work in two worlds. Along the way, Ray copes with being an outsider in school and getting a new family when her mother remarries with both silence and humor. She lives for the times she spends with her beloved grandmother near the remote village her mother grew up in. During those summers and one winter, her wise, strong, and loving grandmother gives Ray the strength and knowledge to grow in many ways. The story is filled with action and emotion and readers realize that while families may live differently, love, caring, and understanding are universally important.

Smelcer, John (Ahtna Athabaskan). *The Trap*. Henry Holt and Company, 2006. ISBN: 0805079394

*The Trap* is not an easy book to read but it's hard to put down; it is two intertwined stories for older readers about Johnny Least-Weasel and his grandfather, Albert Least-Weasel. In his eighties, Albert has been trapping for years, and on this cold and beautiful winter day in Alaska, he makes a mistake. Caught just steps from his snowmobile in one of his own steel traps, he settles in to survive and wait for someone to find him. Back in the village, Johnny gets more and more worried as the time passes, but since his grandfather is very independent, strong, and wise, he doesn't want to overreact. The chapters alternate between the two men, one old and one young, as they confront the challenges in their lives. There is a lot in this small book. The author has created a reality where readers hear family stories and memories, feel the extreme cold, see the land covered with snow, and begin to experience another world.

Smith, Cynthia Leitich (Muscogee Creek). *Jingle Dancer*. Morrow Junior Books, 2000. ISBN: 0688162428

In this engaging story, Jenna would like to jingle dance at the powwow, but there isn't enough time to get the jingles for her dress. So Jenna figures out a solution; she visits four busy, loving, and strong women who share their jingles with her, and she borrows just enough jingles to make her dress

sing. After practicing by watching her Grandma's video, Jenna dances at the powwow "...for Great-aunt Sis, whose legs ached, Mrs. Scott, who sold fry bread, for Elizabeth, who worked on her big case, and for Grandma Wolfe, who warmed like the Sun." Engaging colors and flowing words make this book a joy to read over and over.

Watkins, Sherrin (Shawnee/Cherokee). *Green Snake Ceremony: Mary Greyfeather Learns More about her Native American Heritage*. Illustrated by Kim Doner. Council Oak Publishing Com, 1995. ISBN: 9780933031890

In this second in book in a series, we learn more about Mary, her diva grandma Esther, Grandpa the great fisherman, Cousin Tony the teaser, and the "sophisticated" though frightened Herman Green Snake. The illustrations are brilliantly rendered watercolors that are vibrant and engaging. The alternating pages depict Mary and her family on one page and Herman Green Snake on the facing page. Mary is anxious about the Green Snake Ceremony, because Tony tells her she will have to take the snake into her mouth. Green Snake is anxious too, for obvious reasons. While Mary's Grandpa and Grandma explain why the ceremony is important for Mary's future good luck and good health, Herman Green Snake is comically trying to alter his appearance, plan a travel to a distant land, and sell his cool snake home. One cannot help but laugh out loud at Herman Green Snake's antics. Together, Mary and her grandparents hunt for a green snake. When they cannot find one, they find a reasonable substitute in a pet store that they are able to use. This book is a delightful look into how contemporary Shawnee continue to practice traditional ways of teaching the young to overcome their fears and respect all creation. This one is a great read-aloud.

### **Books in series**

*My World: Young Native Americans Today*: A photo-essay series by the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. Currently there are three books in this series:

*Meet Naiche: A Native Boy from the Chesapeake Bay Area* by Gabrielle Tayac (Piscataway), 2002. ISBN: 1582700729

*Meet Mindy: A Native Girl from the Southwest* by Susan Secakuku (Hopi), 2003. ISBN: 1582700915

*Meet Lydia: A Native Girl from Southeast Alaska* by Miranda Belarde-Lewis (Tlingit/Zuni), 2004. ISBN: 151781471

Although written by different authors who have their own styles, the books are unified by their format--a combination of facts, stories, historical images and contemporary photographs taken by John Harrington (Siletz)--and by their focus on young people whose lives are rich with tradition. Each book contains cultural information in the lengthy picture captions and boxed texts, but the lives of the young people are interesting in how they are both similar and different from each other and non-Native kids. Their families, communities, and values center them in their worlds.

*North American Indians Today*. Mason Crest. There are fifteen books in this young adult series, published beginning in 2004. Series editor is Martha McCollough, an anthropologist at the University of Nebraska. Grades 6 and up.

*Apache* / Kenneth McIntosh. 2004. ISBN: 9781590846643

*Cherokee* / Philip Stewart. 2004. ISBN: 9781590846650

*Cheyenne* / Kenneth McIntosh. 2004. ISBN: 1590846664

*Comanche* / Joyce Libal. 2004. ISBN: 1590846672  
*Creek* / Autumn Libal. 2004. ISBN: 1590846680  
*Crow* / Kenneth McIntosh. 2004. ISBN: 1590846699  
*Huron* / Autumn Libal. 2004. ISBN: 1590846702  
*Iroquois* / Kenneth McIntosh. 2004. ISBN: 1590846710  
*Navajo* / Kenneth McIntosh. 2004. ISBN: 1590846729  
*Ojibwa* / George L. Cornell and Gordon Henry, Jr. 2004. ISBN: 9781590846735  
*Osage* / Philip Stewart. 2004. ISBN: 1590846745  
*Potawatomi* / Ellyn Sanna. 2004. 1590846753  
*Pueblo* / Kenneth McIntosh. 2004. ISBN: 1590846761  
*Seminole* / Joyce Libal. 2004. ISBN: 159084677X  
*Sioux* / Karen Lonehill. 2004. ISBN: 1590846788

Each title in the series profiles a different tribal nation to teach readers not only about these nations' histories, but about their present realities and hopes for the future. Native scholars and tribal leaders were consulted for each of the 15 titles, and authors are a mixture of Natives and non-Natives. The standard format features a traditional story, brief history, and contemporary activities, balancing history with contemporary applications. The illustrations are an appropriate mixture of color and black and white photographs, Native art, and maps. Short biographies of contemporary tribal members, index, glossary, and print and Web resources make each volume complete.

***We Are Still Here: Native Americans Today.*** Lerner Publications. There are twelve books in this photo essay series, published between 1992-1998. Grades 3-6

*Clambake: A Wampanoag Tradition* / Russell M. Peters (Wampanoag). 1992.  
 ISBN: 9780822596219  
*The Sacred Harvest: Ojibway Wild Rice Gathering* / Gordon Reggiunti (Ojibway). 1992.  
 ISBN: 9780822596202  
*Children of Clay: A Family of Pueblo Potters* / Rina Swentzell (Santa Clara Pueblo ) 1993.  
 ISBN: 9780822596271  
*Kinaalda: A Navajo Girl Grows Up* / Monty Roessel (Navajo). 1993. ISBN: 978-0-8225-9641-7  
*Ininatig's Gift of Sugar: Traditional Native Sugarmaking* / Laura Waterman Wittstock (Seneca).  
 1993. ISBN: 9780822596424  
*Shannon: An Ojibway Dancer* / Sandra King. 1993. ISBN: 9780822596431  
*Songs from the Loom: A Navajo Girl Learns to Weave* / Monty Roessel (Navajo). 1995.  
 ISBN: 9780822597124  
*Drumbeat ... Heartbeat: A Celebration of the Powwow* / Susan Braine (Assiniboine). 1995.  
 ISBN: 082259711x  
*Fort Chipewyan Homecoming: A Journey to Native Canada* / Morningstar Mercredi (Dene).  
 1997. ISBN: 9780822597315  
*Four Seasons of Corn: A Winnebago Tradition* / Sally Hunter (Ojibwe). 1997.  
 ISBN: 9780822597414  
*Weaving a California Tradition: A Native American Basketmaker* / Linda Yamane (Ohlone).  
 1997. ISBN: 97808225-26605  
*A Story to Tell: Traditions of a Tlingit Community* / Richard Nichols (Tewa Pueblo). 1998.  
 ISBN: 9780822598077

The “hook” in this series is having a child from the tribe learn about a tradition of his or her people from an elder, in a documentary style. Each book also has a word list and brief further reading list for more information. Photos are often, but not always, taken by Native photographers.

### **Pocahontas, Jamestown, and The Powhatan Indians**

This section provides a sampling of recent writing on historical topics as a balance to the rest of the handout’s focus on contemporary Indian people. We decided to focus on Jamestown and Pocahontas because of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the settling of that colony and the meeting between the Powhatan Confederacy and the colonists. Expect to see lots of books on this topic over the coming year or so.

Bial, Raymond. *The Powhatan*. Lifeways series. Benchmark Books, Marshall Cavendish, 2002. ISBN: 0761414093. (Grades 6-8)

College library director and photographer Bial consulted several Pamunkey and Mattaponi historians and elders as well as the Powhatan Village at Jamestown Settlement to produce this useful work. Focusing on Powhatan culture and social life, Bial takes pains to include a contemporary focus as well as presenting historical background. His excellent photographs are balanced with period illustrations and maps. Other useful features are a time line, notable persons (past and present), a glossary, and brief bibliographies of adult as well as children’s books on the Powhatan. A directory of organizations and relevant Web sites conclude this recommended work.

Krull, Kathleen. *Pocahontas: Princess of the New World*. Pictures by David Diaz. Walker, 2007. ISBN: 0802795544

The tropical colors and imaginative flowers, leaves, and designs in this book are very attractive, but puzzling to find in a non-fiction book set in Virginia. Perhaps it’s being aware that Pocahontas and her story have been told so many times before that this version strikes the reader as extremely fanciful and over the top with the flowery words and pictures. Unfortunately, the first sentence sets the tone: “Even at 11 years old, Pocahontas was quite the royal princess.” Despite a list of impressive sources, this book perpetuates the myth that Pocahontas was a princess, dancing her way through childhood until she falls in love with prisoner John Rolfe. One wishes for an excellent picture book about Pocahontas instead of the endless princess stories, but perhaps because there is so little information about her brief life and too much speculation, authors and illustrators resort to putting their own fanciful spins on her story.

Lange, Karen. *1607 : A New Look at Jamestown*. National Geographic, 2007. ISBN: 1426300123.

Similar in format and style to Catherine O’Neill Grace and Margaret Bruchac’s *1621*, the author uses primary source documents, scholarly research, and recent archaeological discoveries to retell the Jamestown story to coincide with its 400 year anniversary. This book is a useful introduction to American history because it simplifies the complicated political and often violent interactions between the English and the Powhatan from 1607 until the 1670s, when a treaty was signed. While the author makes it clear that there were two groups of people fighting for supremacy near Jamestown, the book lacks a Native perspective because of its focus on the colonists and their struggles to survive and gain financial success in the New World.

McDaniel, Melissa. *The Powhatan Indians*. The Junior Library of American Indians series. Chelsea Junior, 1996. ISBN: 0791024946 (Grades 6-8)

This cultural and historical account provides great detail on the Powhatan people. Following two chapters on early Powhatan culture and society, four chapters recount Powhatan history from the first contact with the English through the Jamestown era and Pocahontas, the latter treated, appropriately, as only one episode in a centuries-long history. The story uniquely continues through subsequent centuries, following the struggles of Powhatan descendant tribes – Chickahominy, Pamunkey, Mattaponi, Rappahannock, and Nansemond – to retain and assert their Indian identity. A solid work with good references.

Nettleton, Pamela Hill. *Pocahontas: Peacemaker and Friend to the Colonists*. Picture Window Books, 2004. ISBN: 18778458392 (Picture Book)

Bright primary paintings unfortunately portray Pocahontas as looking older than her 12 years, her age when she met John Smith. Although over-simplifying her account to the point of skimming over some of the subtleties of the Pocahontas/Jamestown story, Nettleton, like most of her contemporaries writing on this subject, makes certain to cast doubt on Smith's account of Pocahontas saving his life. A one-page "To Learn More" section lists a few books and Web sites for readers wanting to delve deeper.

Zemlicka, Shannon. *Pocahontas*. Illustrations by Jeni Reeves. On My Own Biography series. Carolrhoda Books, 2002. ISBN: 08976145985 (Grades 3-5)

Overview of the life of Pocahontas. The Author's Note and Afterword stress that the little that is known about Pocahontas is filtered through the foreign eyes of the English. Illustrations (color drawings) are plain but generally accurate. Includes a brief chronology and select bibliography of adult books. Generally evenhanded and honest.

### **A Brief Word on the Problem with Stereotypes, with a Selection of Books We Love to Hate**

Stereotypes and misperceptions are commonly held by all Americans of all races, including, tragically, by Indian children themselves about their own people. Romantic, noble, demeaning, dehumanizing, and otherwise stereotypical ideas about Native Americans may be more pervasive and difficult to overcome than those about other peoples. There are certain kinds of deeply rooted images about Indians that do not have equivalents among other minority groups.

For example, there are derogatory terms for all ethnic and minority groups, but why are Indians the only ones with sports teams named after them, with accompanying mascots? Why do we have the Washington Redskins, but not the Pittsburgh Negroes or the Dallas Rednecks or the San Francisco Coolies? Why do these hypothetical team names sound so offensive and shocking, but the Atlanta Braves and Cleveland Indians, complete with Chiefs Nok-A-Homa and Wahoo, do not?

This kind of easy, and even defensive, acceptance of stereotypical images that we as Americans carry around makes it difficult for librarians to know where to start in identifying bias-free books for libraries.

Recognizing that these images are a problem is a big step in the right direction. But subconscious images of what Indians are comprise a very deep part of the American psyche, and you may be surprised at how uncomfortable you feel when asked to give up these images, no matter how you feel about them intellectually.

For example, *The Indian in the Cupboard* and its sequels are much-loved books by librarians and their patrons. But for Indian people, these are some of the worst perpetrators of the most base stereotypes. The miniature toy Indian in the series (Indians portrayed as objects or things) is described as an Iroquois warrior, but is dressed as a western movie version of a generic plains Indian "chief," complete with eagle feather headdress. The warrior is described in the most stereotypical terms and speaks in subhuman grunts and partial sentences. He is manipulated by a more powerful white child, fostering the image of the simple and naive Indian whose contact with the white man can only benefit him and his people.

Despite the fine writing and exciting plots, these books foster continuations of classic blatant stereotypes. Yet it has been our experience that a disturbing number of children's and school librarians greatly resist criticism of these titles.

Here are a few other popular titles that help to encourage the retention of stereotypes. When these types of books appear in library collections to the exclusion of more accurate or balanced titles, they become part of the problem. (For another list of titles not recommended, check out Oyate's "Books to Avoid" on their web page - <http://www.oyate.org/books-to-avoid/index.html> )

***Brother Eagle, Sister Sky*** / Susan Jeffers. Dial, 1991. ISBN: 0590466488.

This gorgeously illustrated, award-winning book with an unimpeachable message of environmental hope misses the boat when it comes to accuracy and images concerning the very Native people at its core. The book is based on a speech supposedly made by Duwamish Chief Seattle in 1856. In reality, it is the invention of an environmentalist in the 1970s. Even assuming that Seattle did indeed say these words, Jeffers' illustrations have nothing to do with him or his Northwest Coast people. The illustrations are firmly rooted in the horse cultures of the Plains, and convey nothing about the Duwamish people. But even that could be overlooked if it wasn't for the final page of the book. The illustration shows a ghostly Indian family from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century gazing benevolently down on a contemporary white father and children – environmentalists hiking in a newly-planted landscape. The clear impression is that now that the Indians are all gone, white Americans must carry on these vanished peoples' environmental stewardship. The clear message about Native people is that there are none left, about as harmful as it comes.

***Drift*** / William Mayne. Dell Yearling, 1985. (Grades 4-7) ISBN: 9780385294461

A stranded-in-the-wilderness tale about white teen Rafe and Indian teen Tawena. Indian characters are grunting savages, even though Mayne has attempted to present a "sympathetic" treatment of the Indians and their concept of nature. Time period, place, and Indians involved are unknown, and the storyline is rather murky. Mr. Mayne and the author of *Indian in the Cupboard* are from England. In general, books featuring Native peoples written by British authors tend to be full of quaint stereotypes and misperceptions.

***False Face*** / Welwyn Wilton Katz. M.K. McElderry Books, 1988. (Grades 6-9) ISBN: 9780689504563

An exciting and well-told story of a white female teen (Lonny) and a mixed-blood male teen (Tom) who accidentally unearth an old Iroquois false face mask. However, the portrayal of the Iroquois and the nonsense presented about the mask are way off base and very insulting. The author is obviously familiar with the locale of the story, and places on the Six Nations Reserve in Ontario are accurately described. However, this is a clear example of the phrase "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing". Katz conjures up a ridiculously evil power that is supposed to inhabit the false face mask and alter the

personalities of characters who attempt to possess the mask. This goes beyond the wild fantasies of a creative author. False face masks are an integral part of traditional Iroquois religion practiced today on the very reserve that Katz describes so well. Her description of the mask as an absolute evil amounts to religious intolerance and goes far in fostering the conception of Native, non-Christian religions as savage pagan rituals. A very harmful book.

***The Legend of Jimmy Spoon*** / Kristiana Gregory. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990. (Grades 4-8) ISBN: 9780152005061

Based on a true incident, this novel of a twelve-year-old Mormon boy taken to be the adopted brother of historical Chief Washakie is a mixture of historical accuracy and silly stereotype and ignorance. Use of the word "papoose" is constant (akin to using "pickaninny" to refer to African American children), and Jimmy is continually harassed by the Shoshone about being white, even after two years of living with these people. This flies in the face of accounts of actual treatment of white adoptees. Several incidents of violence towards women and children have no basis in tribal cultures, and ring very false, as does much of the dialogue, which careens between "noble savage" stereotypes and modern English. Guess who speaks which?

***The Matchlock Gun*** / Walter D. Edmonds. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1989. ISBN: 0399219110.

In this 1942 ALA Newberry Award winner, Edmonds tells the story of a young family in Colonial New Amsterdam who defends their house by killing three "French Indians." The mother and two children are waiting on the farm for the father to return from fighting, when a group of Native Americans (in classic "savage" mode) circumvent the militia and attack the house. The mother is tomahawked but survives, and the boy lights the matchlock gun, shooting three attackers. The historical details are vague; these are generic Indians doing what generic Indians do--attacking settlers. There is no mention of how the attack is part of larger conflicts between the French and English, who were fighting over land, or between Native Americans and the Europeans who were invading their territories. One might reason that *The Matchlock Gun* depicts the attitude toward Native peoples held by European settlers in 1757, and therefore children are learning the perspective of the settlers. However, in this book the stereotypes are voiced, unchallenged, by the narrator. It is unreasonable to expect that children reading the overt racism in this book would not be influenced in their attitudes toward Native people.

***The Night the White Deer Died*** / Gary Paulsen. Delacorte Press, 1990. (Grades 6-10) ISBN: 9780440210924

A rather murky, New Age type of story about Janet, a loner who dreams of a highly romanticized encounter with a handsome young Indian hunter (the "Noble Savage" stereotype) shooting a white deer. She comes to realize that the old drunken Indian she has seen in the marketplace is the man in the dream. Although beautifully written, especially the imagery and descriptions of the town and the surrounding geography, the Indian man and a Chicano schoolmate are very shallowly drawn.

***Ten Little Rabbits*** / Virginia Grossman. Chronicle Books, 1991. (Picture book) ISBN: 9780877015529

A twist on the counting book theme featuring rabbits dressed as "Indians" and involved in "Indian" activities. Although the illustrations are beautiful, the messages conveyed are confusing. Each page shows the rabbits/Indians dressed in the manner of a different tribe, but this isn't explained until the end of the book, in an afterward. The impression given is one of generic "Indianness," and once again animals "become" Indians simply by putting on certain articles of clothing, relegating an entire race to the status of a role or profession.

## **RESOURCES FOR EVALUATING BOOKS AND IDENTIFYING STEREOTYPES**

The following list of titles contains excellent sources for understanding Indian stereotypes and the forms they take in children's literature as well as in American culture.

***American Indian Library Association*** – <http://www.ailanet.org>

The official Web site of the American Indian Library Association (AILA), with information about the association and its activities, membership information, occasional reviews, and many links to review and acquisition sources.

***American Indians in Children's Literature: Critical Discussion of American Indians in Children's Books, the School Curriculum, Popular Culture, and Society-At-Large***

<http://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/>

An excellent blog maintained by AILA member Debbie Reese, professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, Illinois. She is enrolled at Nambe Pueblo, a small Indian pueblo in northern New Mexico. All children's and school librarians should be reading this blog regularly.

***A Broken Flute: The Native Experience in Books for Children*** / edited by Beverly Slapin and Doris Seale (Santee Dakota/Cree). copublished by AltaMira Press and Oyate, 2005. ISBN: 0759107785 Available from the publisher or Oyate, 2702 Mathews Street, Berkeley, CA 94702. [www.oyate.org](http://www.oyate.org)

This hefty guide should be your bible; we cannot recommend it highly enough. The revised and updated edition of the seminal *Through Indian Eyes* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1992) contains articles by Indian authors and teachers, as well as an extensive book review section. Co-editor Seale explains that *A Broken Flute* is "... not meant to be an up-to-the-moment buying guide. It is intended to bring attention to some of the gifted writers and illustrators of the past ten years or so, frequently published by Native and small presses, and also to evaluate as much as possible of the most objectionable work of the non-Native writers." (p. 4) Numerous indexes by title, author/editor, illustrator/photographer/artist, poet, reviewer (and there are dozens of Native reviewers who have contributed to the reviews), storytellers/essayists, and subjects make locating reviews on a particular work a simple matter. All children's and school librarians should own this work.

***American Indian Stereotypes in the World of Children: A Reader and Bibliography*** / by Arlene B. Hirschfelder. Scarecrow Press, 1982.

Another good source for understanding what the problems are in portrayals of Indians directed at children. Goes beyond books, discussing such traditions as the YMCA/YWCA Indian Guides programs, toys with Indian imagery, and sports mascots.

***A Critical Bibliography on North American Indians, for K-12*** / Anthropology Outreach Office, Smithsonian Institution, 1996, updated 2001. <http://www.nmnh.si.edu/anthro/outreach/Indbibl/>

Includes brief annotations, some descriptive, some evaluative.

**Cynthia Leitich Smith**

Muscogee Creek children's author Smith maintains an excellent Web site with extensive information on Native children's authors and literature - <http://www.cynthialeitichsmith.com/> ; [http://www.cynthialeitichsmith.com/lit\\_resources/diversity/native\\_am/NativeThemes\\_intro.html](http://www.cynthialeitichsmith.com/lit_resources/diversity/native_am/NativeThemes_intro.html)

***Examining Multicultural Picture Books for the Early Childhood Classroom: Possibilities and Pitfalls /*** Jean Mendoza & Debbie Reese. ECRP: Early Childhood Research and Practice, Fall 2001 (vol. 3, no.2) - <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v3n2/mendoza.html>

“... discusses the possibilities and the pitfalls involved in the selection of multicultural literature for use with young children, examines two books featuring Mexican American protagonists to illuminate issues and problems in the images the books present of Mexican Americans, discusses some contemporary theories on race as ways of understanding such issues and problems, and considers possible actions for early childhood educators and teacher education programs to take.” Much of this can be applied to Native American children as well.

***How to Tell the Difference A Guide to Evaluating Children's Books for Anti-Indian Bias /*** by Beverly Slapin, Doris Seale, and Rosemary Gonzales. Oyate, 1996. Available from Oyate - <http://www.oyate.org/catalog/teaching.html>

***If I Can Read, I Can Do Anything: A National Reading Club for Native American Children -*** <http://www.gslis.utexas.edu/~ifican/>

Created by University of Texas library school professor and incoming ALA president Loriene Roy, about 1999.

***Lessons from Turtle Island: Native Curriculum in Early Childhood Classrooms /*** Guy W. Jones and Sally Moomaw. Red Leaf Press , 2002. ISBN: 1929610254 <http://www.redleafpress.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=169>

***Mashantucket Pequot Children's Library -*** <http://www.pequotmuseum.org/Home/LibrariesArchives/CHILDRENSLIBRARY/AboutTheChildrensLibrary.htm>

Housing a unique collection of materials for children by and about the Native peoples of North America. Many bibliographies of books for children are available on their Web site - <http://www.pequotmuseum.org/Home/LibrariesArchives/CHILDRENSLIBRARY/Bibliographies.htm>

***Native American Authors -*** <http://www.ipl.org/div/natam/>

A comprehensive listing of Native authors writing at all levels, from the Internet Public Library. Browsable by author, book title, or tribe.

***Native American Children's Literature in the Classroom: An Annotated Bibliography /*** Joan Berman, 1998; updated 2004 - <http://library.humboldt.edu/~berman/naclit.htm>

Another good resource, from AILA member Berman at Humboldt University

***Native American Sites: Tribal Colleges, Indian Studies Programs, and Indian Education – General Indian Education*** - <http://www.nativeculturelinks.com/education.html#general>

This section of the education page on *Native American Sites* contains links to a variety of resources dealing stereotypes, mascots, homework help, and resources pages for students.

***Native Writers Circle of the Americas Book Awards*** - <http://www.hanksville.org/storytellers/awards/>

***Native Americans and Library Service: Bibliography #15***. Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship, Department of Library Science, Clarion University, updated October 2003 -

<http://eagle.clarion.edu/~grads/csrl/bib15.htm>

Not about children's literature per se, but a helpful list of resources on serving Indian populations.

***Oyate FAQ*** - <http://www.oyate.org/faqs.html>

Brief, to-the-point answers to common questions on topics such as "I am a third-grade teacher planning a unit on local Native Americans..." "My elementary school library has a number of older books on Native Americans." "Why isn't my favorite book on your web site?" An excellent starting point.

***Shadows of the Indian: Stereotypes in American Culture*** / by Raymond William Stedman. University of Oklahoma Press, 1982.

A somewhat more scholarly rather than how-to treatment of the image of Native Americans in American culture, focusing on the movie industry, pulp westerns, and television as well as literature. The author pulls no punches.

***Storytellers – Native American Authors Online*** - <http://www.hanksville.org/storytellers/awards/>

***Techniques for Evaluating American Indian Web Sites*** -

<http://www.u.arizona.edu/~ecubbins/webcrit.html>

From AILA member Elaine Cubbins at the University of Arizona

***Unlearning "Indian" Stereotypes A Teaching Unit for Elementary Teachers and Children's Librarians*** / Council on Interracial Books for Children. New York : The Council, 1977.

An excellent book of sample lesson plans and background materials developed specifically for teachers and librarians. The librarian described on p. 483 of the June 1991 "American Libraries" would have done well to read this first before leading her young patrons in holding their insulting "rain dance". An accompanying filmstrip featuring comments on books by Indian schoolchildren is also available.

## SOURCES TO PURCHASE BOOKS

When this section was first compiled back in 1991, the Internet was still just a gleam in Al Gore's eye. Today, with the availability of Internet superstores like *Amazon.com* and *ALIBRIS.com*, locating titles from obscure publishers and even out of print works is much easier than it used to be. Even small presses have their own Web pages.

Nevertheless, publishers or jobbers who specialize in Indian titles can make building a library collection even easier. Following is a sampling of publishers and distributors of both adult and children's books; many also carry music and DVDs.

**CHILDREN'S BOOK PRESS**, 965 Mission St., Ste. 425, San Francisco, CA 94103.

Harriet Rohmer publishes a book series called Fifth World Tales, featuring strikingly illustrated bilingual stories for children from the different ethnic groups in this country. Several Latin American Native peoples are also represented, such as the Miskito of Nicaragua.

<http://www.childrensbookpress.org/>

**GOODMINDS.COM**, Six Nations of the Grand River, 188 Mohawk Street, Brantford, Ontario, Canada, N3S 2X2

Educational resources for Native American Studies, First Nations Studies, Indigenous Studies, and Aboriginal Studies. Catalogue of Aboriginal and Native American educational resources for schools, libraries, and the general public, for grades K to post-secondary. Bias-free books, videos, audiocassettes, kits and CD-ROM's by and about First Nations / Native Americans. <http://www.goodminds.com/>

**IROQRAFTS**, Tuscarora Road, RR#2, Ohsweken, Ontario, Canada N0A 1M0.

This is an Iroquois-run craft mail order house that carries a very large inventory of titles on Native peoples, with an emphasis on the Iroquois and other eastern Canadian groups. They even do their own reprinting of important works. <http://www.iroqrafts.com/CatalogueR/Books1.html>

**THE NATIVE BOOK CENTRE**, 150 York Hill Blvd., Thornhill, Ontario L4J 2P6 Canada

Another excellent and well-established Canadian distributor of Indian titles (why aren't there any in the US?) - <http://www.nativebooks.com/>

**OYATE**, 2702 Mathews Street, Berkeley, CA 94702.

These folks are the compilers and publishers of *A Broken Flute*, and sell many of the books recommended in that bibliography. [www.oyate.org](http://www.oyate.org) ; <http://www.oyate.org/catalog/index.html>

**SALINA BOOKSHELF, INC.** A Navajo Language Publishing Company. 1254 W. University Ave. Suite 130 Flagstaff, Arizona 86001

An independent publisher of textbooks, children's picture books, reference books, and electronic media in Navajo and English. Many books include an audio CD narrated in Navajo and English for use in the home or classroom. Authentic depictions of Navajo life, both contemporary and traditional, are portrayed throughout the entire collection of materials offered. These resources have broad appeal in classrooms, adult centers, libraries, and homes to teach the Navajo language and culture. <http://www.salinabookshelf.com/>

**THEYTUS BOOKS, LTD.**, Green Mountain Rd., Lot 45, RR#2, Site 50 Comp. 8, Penticton, British Columbia V2A 6J7 Canada; US address: Theytus Books, P.O. Box 2890, Oroville, Washington 98844 -  
A Canadian Native-run publishing house, featuring children's and young adult novels.  
<http://www.theytusbooks.ca/>

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## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

**1. Is the vocabulary demeaning?**

Are terms like "squaw", "papoose", "chief", "redskin", "savage", "warrior" used?

**2. Do the Indians talk like Tonto or in the "noble savage" tradition?**

See *Indian in the Cupboard* and *The Legend of Jimmy Spoon* for examples.

**3. Are the Indians all dressed in the standard buckskin, beads, and feathers?**

Again, see *Indian in the Cupboard*, and any book in which any character "dresses like an Indian".

**4. Are Indians portrayed as an extinct species, with no existence as human beings in contemporary America?**

This is the whole "vanishing Indian" concept, as in *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky*.

**5. Is Indian humanness recognized?**

Do animals "become" Indians simply by putting on "Indian" clothes and carrying a bow and arrow? Do children "dress up like Indians" or "play Indian" as if "Indian" was a role that one could assume as one can dress up like doctors or cowboys or baseball players? For comparison, do animals or children also dress up as African Americans or play Italian?

**6. Do Native Americans appear in alphabet and counting books as objects that are counted as things?**

**7. Do Native American characters have ridiculous imitation "Indian" names, such as "Indian Two Feet" or "Little Chief"?**

**8. Is the artwork predominated by generic "Indian" designs? Or has the illustrator taken care to reflect the traditions and symbols of the particular people in the story?**

**9. Is the history distorted, giving the impression that the white settlers brought "civilization" to Native peoples and improved their way of life? Are terms like "massacre," "conquest," "civilization," "customs," "superstitions," "ignorant," "simple," "advanced," "dialects" (instead of "languages") used in such a way as to demean or belittle Native cultures and achievements to indicate the superiority of European or American ways and cultures?**

**10. Are Indian characters successful only if they realize the futility of traditional ways and decide to assimilate to mainstream American society?**

**11. Are white authority figures (teachers, social workers, etc.) able to solve the problems of Native children and/or adults that Native authority figures (parents, elders, tribal leaders) have failed to solve? Are there any Native authority figures in the book at all?**

**12. Are Native women portrayed as subservient drudges? Or are women shown to be the integral and powerful part of Native societies that they were and are?**

**13. Finally, and most importantly, is there anything in the book that would make a Native American child feel embarrassed or hurt about who he is? Can the child look at the book and recognize and feel good about what she sees?**

Adapted from Stedman, 1982 and Slapin, 1988.