



***Many Eyes, Many Voices* American Indian Cultures in Picture Books**

In September 2005, the NAEYC published an article on their website entitled “Contemporary American Indian Cultures in Children’s Picture Books.” It offers a superb introduction to the challenges and rewards associated with sharing books about American Indian cultures with children. Here is a brief excerpt:

“Too many of the available children’s books on American Indians present inaccurate depictions. Many books published in the 1950s and 1960s are disturbing in their portrayals of American Indians, yet some of these books are still on the shelves and readily available to children today. More recently published books on American Indian life may also contain errors because some authors neglect the latest research and information. Thus myths and stereotypes persist. While there are many excellent books on Native myths and traditions, in children’s fiction there seems to be an overreliance on historical perspectives focusing on American Indian characters and cultures. It is less common to see contemporary stories.”

Born to Read highly recommends reading the rest of this article, which is available at { HYPERLINK "<http://www.journal.naeyc.org/btj/200511/Roberts1105BTJ.asp>" }. The following books and resources will also help you share American Indian culture—including the Wabanaki tribes of northern New England and the Canadian Maritime provinces, the Abenaki, Penobscots, Passamaquoddy, Maliseets, and Micmacs—with the children in your care.

Picture Books

Crazy Horse's Vision. Joseph Bruchac. Illus. by S.D. Nelson. Lee & Low Books, 2000.
A retelling of the vision quest undertaken by the famous Lakota warrior as a boy.

Jingle Dancer. Cynthia Leitich Smith. Illus. by Cornelius Van Wright and Ying Hwa Hu. HarperCollins, 2000.

Jenna is determined to dance at an upcoming powwow, but first she must gather enough jingles to wear on her dress.

Muskrat Will Be Swimming. Cheryl Savageau. Illus. by Robert Hynes. Northland, 1996.
A girl of Native American and French descent whose classmates call her a lake rat is comforted by a legend concerning Muskrat.

The Range Eternal. Louise Erdrich. Illus. by Steve Johnson and Lou Fancher. Hyperion, 2002.
A poetic reminiscence of the wood-burning stove that warmed and fed a girl’s family on the Turtle Mountain Reservation in North Dakota.

SkySisters. Jan Bourdeau Waboose. Illus. by Brian Deines. Kids Can Press, 2000.
Two sisters venture out to find the Northern Lights for a gentle treatment of both the relationship between two sisters and the relationship between humans and nature.

The Sugar Bush. Winona LaDuke and Waseyabin Kapashesit. Rigby, 1999.

Wasey and her mom show readers how sap comes from trees to feed people.

Thanks to the Animals. Allen Sockabasin. Illus. by Rebekah Raye. Tilbury House, 2005.

Forest animals rescue the baby Zoo Sap on a cold, snowy night in this story written by Maine Passamaquoddy tribal member Allen Sockabasin.

Two Pairs of Shoes. Esther Sanderson. Illus. by David Beyer. Pemmican Press, 1990.

Esther receives patent leather shoes *and* moccasins for her birthday, and learns “when and how to wear each pair.”

Where Did You Get Your Moccasins? Bernelda Wheeler. Illus. by Herman Bekkering. Peguis Publishers, 1995.

A boy brings his moccasins to school and tells the story of how they were made. Written in a question-and-answer format.

Books and Resources for Adults

A Broken Flute: The Native Experience in Books for Children. Beverly Slapin and Doris Seale, Eds. Oyate, 2005.

A Broken Flute deals with the issue of cultural appropriation in books for children, and evaluates hundreds of books for children published from the early 1900s through 2004.

”I’ Is Not For Indian: The Portrayal of Native Americans in Books for Young People.” Naomi Caldwell-Wood and Lisa A. Mitten. American Indian Library Association. (Available online at www.nativeculturelinks.com/ailabib.htm)

An article written for librarians in 1991, providing analysis of the portrayal of Native Americans in books for young children as well as a guide for selecting books.

Lessons From Turtle Island: Native Curriculum in Early Childhood Classrooms. Guy W. Jones and Sally Moomaw. Redleaf Press, 2002.

The first complete guide to exploring Native American issues with children, including five cross-cultural themes—Children, Home, Families, Community, and the Environment. Related activities based on recommended children's books develop skills in reading and writing, science, math, make-believe, art, and more.

The Wabanaki of Maine and the Maritimes. Maine Indian Program. Revised Edition. American Friends Service Committee, 2002.

This book was developed for educators, students, historians, and others interested in Native people, and includes historical overview, lesson plans, readings, fact sheets, a bibliography, and a list of resources.