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Native Americans in Literature

Tracey Bos

"When questioned by an anthropologist on what the Indians called America before the White man came, an Indian said simply, 'Ours.' "

~Deloria quoted in Garret and Pichette

Would an American Indian parent want her child in my classroom? I had never before questioned whether I was portraying American Indians appropriately in my teachings. I taught within a mandated set of curricular guidelines imposed by my school district and blindly followed its lead.

I began to question my portrayal of American Indians in my classroom during a search for the logistics of building a longhouse. My belief was this would be an appropriate enrichment activity to supplement my fourth grade study of Michigan's early American Indian dwellers. Rather than fashioning a design of my own, I decided to research websites in order to locate information that would guide me through an accurate engineering of longhouses, thinking that such an activity would produce a factual representation of American Indian culture. What I received instead was a reprimand from an author of one website who openly expressed his dissatisfaction with the way American Indians were so casually represented as tokens from the past. He was aggravated by the incompetency of classroom teachers who chose to focus on such matters we truly did not understand, showing a lack of respect for tribal customs. This prompted me to reflect on my own knowledge of American Indian culture and how I've represented it in my classroom. Furthermore, I was disturbed that my lack of knowledge of this culture led me to

be disrespectful to a group of people. I found I was unaware of the depth of my ignorance and have decided to challenge myself to search for answers to questions I have regarding American Indians if I want to accurately and authentically portray them in my classroom.

**There is no single "Indian reality."
(Sparks 2000)**

My search began with the question, "Who is an American Indian?" "The United State's Bureau of Indian Affairs (1988) legally defines Native American as a person who is an enrolled or registered member of a tribe or whose blood quantum is one fourth or more genealogically derived from Native American ancestry. The U.S. Bureau of the Census (1991), meanwhile, relies on self-identification to determine who is a Native person. If a person is considered an Indian by other individuals in the community, he or she is legally an Indian. In other words, if an individual is on the roll of a federally recognized Indian group, then he or she is an Indian; the degree of Indian blood is of no real consequence, although usually he or she has at least some Indian blood" (Garrett and Pichette 2000).

Native Americans are casually grouped together as one culture or people while tremendous diversity exists between and among Native American tribes. Each tribe celebrates its own culture based on tribal beliefs. American Indian people prefer to be identified by their nation name

(Haukoos 1997). Yet, it has been my experience as both a student and an educator that the differences existing among the various tribal nations are not recognized.

Stereotypes and Overgeneralizations

As I continued my search, I found more than I could imagine of the inaccuracies of teaching about American Indians. Along the way I learned about common stereotypes prevalent throughout our educational system, perpetuated by leaders in the classroom like me. Stunned by this information, I knew this was my chance to right a wrong in my own teaching practice.

The practice of teaching about American Indians parallel with Thanksgiving, a holiday Native people seemingly are not so thankful for, perpetuates the stereotype that our country's history began with the landing of Christopher Columbus in 1492 when Europeans supposedly saved the Indians from their savage ways. Michael A. Dorris had this to say about Thanksgiving as a Native American celebration. "Native Americans have more than one thing not to be thankful about on Thanksgiving. Pilgrim Day, and its antecedent feast Halloween, represent the annual twin peaks of Indian stereotyping . . . smeared with lipstick and rouge, decked out in an assortment of 'Indian suits' composed of everything from old clothes to fringed paper bags, little trick-or-treaters and school pageant extras mindlessly sport and cavort." He continues ". . . that virtually none of the standard fare surrounding either Halloween or Thanksgiving contains an ounce of authenticity, historical accuracy, or cross-cultural perception" (19).

Further Stereotypes Through Misguided Education.

In the article "Authentic Voices," Rains and Swisher attempt to alert educators to general stereotypes taught in the classroom. The purpose of their article is to raise questions about the teachings of American Indians and Alaska Natives in our nation's schools. It is their hope that "Well-informed, thoughtful teachers will teach children to be well-informed and thoughtful."

When asked for advice concerning the incorporation of American Indians and Alaska Natives in the elementary school curriculum, Rains and Swisher, indigenous educators who are former elementary teachers and current teacher educators, strongly believe that an "Indian Unit" or a "Native American Unit," usually taught in November, is not the best way for children to gain knowledge about and understanding of indigenous peoples. They ask teachers to think about this question: What other people are taught about as the subject of units? The authors suggest that teachers consider the following questions with regards to the appropriateness of Indian lessons. Their list was derived from "Beyond Ten Little Indians and Turkeys: Alternative Approaches to Thanksgiving," by Patricia G. Ramsey.

1. Do the proposed activities in any way support or reinforce negative and dehumanized images of Native Americans?
2. Do the activities imply or confirm historical misconceptions about the relationship between Europeans and Native Americans?
3. Are the experiences of all the people involved realistically represented?

Ramsey includes, in her book, several alternative approaches to the typical "Pilgrims and Indians Thanksgiving Feast" (Rains and Swisher).

Rains and Swisher suggest that teachers question what they really want children to learn from an activity. They pose this question: "Would teachers continue to encourage children to make and wear headbands encircled with feathers if it were known that:

- 1.) Indian children did not wear feathers until they earned them as young adults,
- 2.) there is variance in who can wear feathers,
- 3.) there is variance in the number and way in which feathers are worn, and
- 4.) all tribes did not wear feathers in their hair?"

All of the information discussed is important cultural information of which I was unaware. Another stereotype that I have carried into my adult life about American Indians was brought to my attention on a recent cruise to Alaska. A guest anthropologist discussed at length the indigenous people of the Northwest Coast. Through her discussions I learned that totem poles are native only to those tribes from the Northwest Coast. I did not know this. Many picture books I read about American Indians while growing up were not about a specific tribe. Instead they were a mix of information about different tribes, often including, for example, a tipi and a totem pole in the same scene. Throughout my search I am finding that many things I thought to be truths are in fact those very stereotypes Native people have been trying to overcome and banish from the public mind.

Children's Literature in the Classroom

As an educator of young children, I use children's literature throughout the content areas to enhance curriculum and for the pure enjoyment it provides. However, not all literature is quality literature; a careful selection process is required in order to weed through the abundance of choices. Robert B. Moore and Arlene B. Hirschfelder have this to say about literature: "Children's books are not merely frivolous 'entertainment.' They are part of a society's general culture. U.S. culture is white-dominated and racist. Children's books in the U.S. reflect our society, while at the same time reinforcing and perpetuating its racism" (Slapin and Seale). Consequently, if I am interested in teaching about indigenous people in an authentic manner, I must carefully choose literature which accurately portrays this culture. Otherwise, I run the risk of exposing my students to many of the same stereotypes I have discussed thus far in this paper.

What is American Indian Literature?

At a conference in Lansing at the Library of Michigan, I listened to three American Indian

authors and educators speak on the subject of American Indian Literature. Joseph Bruchac, a member of the Abenaki tribe, is a well-known storyteller and author of children's books, young adult novels, and co-author of adult resources aimed at helping teachers teach about Native Americans. Gordon Henry, professor of Native American literature at Michigan State University, was present, along with Diane Glancy, Cherokee, who teaches Native American literature and creative writing at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Although my attendance was spurred by the desire to learn more about literature for young people, the conference focused mainly on the interpretation of Native American writing for older audiences. The lecture was useful in that I walked away with a better understanding of how native authors approach writing. Each of the resources I consulted agreed that Native American writing begins with storytelling within each tribe. Native and non-native authors then attempt to place this oral tradition between the pages of a book. Fewer than 1% of native stories are written by Native American authors (Bruchac, Lansing, Michigan).

Mary Gloyne Byler emphasizes the impact that native writers have on literature portraying the native experience. She recognizes the quality of writing produced by non-native authors but contends that these pieces of writing are more accurately a representation of what non-Indians imagine an Indian to be. Byler says that only by living within the culture, not merely by brushing the fringe of American Indian living, can the author's story be a valid representation of the culture (289).

Native authors have a unique way of approaching writing that non-native authors would struggle to replicate:

1. Native people in general do not feel chronological imperatives. They do not acknowledge linear timelines, as public schools often teach, but rather view the passing of time in a cyclical manner.

2. Native stories and language serve as a connection between generations (Henry, Lansing, Michigan).

3. Native authors portray their people with qualities of strength and leadership rather than historical roles of victimization (Glancy, Lansing, Michigan).

A resource for locating recognized and accepted Native American literature and authors is <<http://www.oyate.org>>. This web site identifies picture books and young adult novels written by Native American authors. This site also provides information on books about Native Americans that are not recommended because they perpetuate stereotypes. *Sign of the Beaver* and *Indian in the Cupboard*, both popular titles in the public school setting, are among the titles on this list.

Does The Dominant Culture Have A Positive View Of American Indians?

An apparent common misconception is that American Indians are relics of the past, not contributing members of the present and the future. In general, educators portray Native Americans in the past, dressed in deer skin, living in tipis, and carrying tomahawks. Is that the way American Indians should be presented to our children? In the past?

“I” Is Not for Indian (Michael A. Dorris)

How To Evaluate Native American Literature On Your Own

The following list was pulled directly from *Teaching Multicultural Literature in Grades K-8*. By using the following list as a guide, educators can evaluate books and detect stereotypes, so that informed choices can be made when selecting books for use in the classroom.

I was elated to find the list in my research. However, analyzing literature for this article using

these guidelines proved to be more difficult than I anticipated because I was often unable to recognize the offending element. For example, it was difficult to identify demeaning vocabulary (item #1). I am so accustomed to terms such as “squaw” and “warrior,” that it is impossible for me to feel the offensiveness of them. As for placing Native Americans in the past (item #4), every Native American book I have read until this year places them in the past. It wasn’t until recently that I read a novel in which Native American characters were placed in a current setting (*Eagle Song* by Joseph Bruchac). There are other challenges. It is very difficult for me to decide that an Indian name is “imitation” (item #7) unless it is outrageously inappropriate, and detecting generic “Indian” designs in artwork (item #8) is difficult, if not impossible, for my untrained eyes. With time and experience I hope to be able to use each of the 13 guidelines effectively when selecting Native American literature, but it will take much time, patience, and hard work to do so.

1. Is the vocabulary demeaning? (Are terms such as “squaw,” “warrior,” “savage” used?)

2. Do the Indians talk like Tonto or in the noble savage tradition? An example of this can be found in the young adult novel, *Indian in the Cupboard*, with the choppy, hesitant speech patterns of Little Bear. (“Me want food.” “Me want wife.”)

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

4. Are the Indians portrayed as an extinct species?

5. Is Indian humanness recognized? (Do animals “become” Indians or children “play” Indian?)

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

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 book?

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,” “civilization,” and “superstition” used in such a way as to demean Native cultures and indicate the superiority of European ways?

10. Are Indian characters successful only if they realize the futility of traditional ways and decide to “make it” in white society?

11. Are white authority figures (teacher, and so forth) able to solve the problems of Native children that Native authority figures have failed to solve? (Are there any Native authority figures?)

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

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

(Harris)

Book Reviews

I selected the following books from my public library. I asked for the area where I could find Native American books and pulled an armload from several shelves. I paid little attention to titles and authors having yet to formulate opinions. I was looking for what a local library in a mid-sized,

Midwestern city had to offer. I had two criteria: I wanted picture books with a Native American theme. After browsing through 30 books or so, I selected seven for review that stood out because the illustrations or content seemed to fit into the guidelines, for better or worse. *A Walk in the Woods* is an exception. It was not a part of the library sample, but was included because of its unique representation of Native Americans in a present setting. Each book review is based on information gleaned from a master’s level English class and independent research.

The Seminoles

by Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve

The Seminoles is a nonfiction book that tells the story of a tribe divided against its wishes. This historical picture book is about the removal of the Muskogee tribe by European explorers from the Georgia and Alabama areas that eventually divided its members into two groups: those who traveled to the reserved land area of Oklahoma and those who migrated to Florida against the will of the pursuant Europeans. The Florida inhabitants became known as the Seminoles. This selection seems to be tailored more for a dominant culture audience due to the presentation of its factual content in a timeline sequence presented chronologically from the First Seminole War to present-day Seminole life. The presentation of time in this manner is not a characteristic of native writing.

Included in this selection are brief descriptions about the adaptations of the Seminoles to their new environment in the Florida Everglades which they referred to as a “river of grass.” Seminole traditions were also addressed such as the Green Corn Dance, a sacred ceremony whereby the tribal members cleansed their bodies, homes, and spirit; and the Seminole Creation Story, in which they believe that the earth began on the back of a turtle.

Ronald Himler promotes the sensitive theme of the text with his visual presentation of the

Seminole and their interactions with Europeans. Native and non-native figures are placed at high and low positions in relation to each other when sharing a frame. Examples of this can be found in the battle scene where Seminole figures are standing proud against their enemies, and also in a frame representing trade between the two cultures. Members that represent both sides are found standing, kneeling, and sitting showing dominance from both points of view.

I have used and would use this selection again in a classroom setting. It portrays the Seminoles as a strong group of people who stood together in the face of opposition.

Between Earth & Sky: Legends of Native American Sacred Places

by Joseph Bruchac

illustrated by Thomas Locker

Between Earth & Sky is a collection of legends representing the spiritual connection Native Americans have to the earth. When speaking to the audience on the front cover of the book, Bruchac states that “. . . legends exist to help us understand our lives.”

This book shares the traditional relationship between a young boy, Little Turtle, and his uncle, Old Bear. The two are shown walking through the land where their ancestors had once lived, which remained a sacred place to them. The boy was full of questions for his uncle about the ways and beliefs within their tribe. He wanted to know if the Hudson River land, where they lived, was the only sacred place to his people. Old Bear answered by sharing that sacred places exist all around, and that they can be found in the seven directions: east, north, south, west, earth, sky, and within. He explained that these sacred places create balance.

Old Bear tells Little Turtle legends about sacred places from each of the seven directions. Each legend comes from a tribe living within that direction or sacred place. For example, Old Bear's

storytelling begins with a legend from the east since it is the direction where the sun first meets the sky, or sunrise. The legend comes from the Wampanoag tribe which lives in the east, as shown on the map at the end of the book.

The illustrations play an important role in walking the reader through the day with Little Turtle and Old Bear. As the two characters begin their day together, Locker blankets the forest with a morning glow causing the reader to look for dew on the foliage. His use of dark green tones around the perimeter of the wooded area and lighter saturation in the center gives the illusion of light reflecting off the birch trees. The figures cautiously cross a river on a stone pathway towards the opposite page, inviting the reader to join them on their voyage across the folds of the book through a complete day. As Old Bear shares the legends, we as readers pass westward through the day, visiting oil paintings of sacred places, with the final scenes of the Grand Canyon and Mesa Verde edging us towards dusk until we reach the final resting place at camp where the village fire welcomes us home.

This is a good book to use when discussing legends or storytelling within the American Indian culture. It is also a good resource to use when discussing the numerous tribes that exist across our country and how they retain individual beliefs while collectively agreeing on the idea of protecting and caring for the earth.

Many Nations: An Alphabet of Native America

by Joseph Bruchac

illustrated by Robert F. Goetzl

Many Nations is an alphabetized collection of illustrations depicting American Indians engaged in customs specific to their tribes. The list of guidelines cautions against using alphabet books that present Native Americans as objects (item #6). In my opinion, this picture book helps children recognize the diversity among American Indian tribes with its representation of a variety of homes, dress, craftsmanship, and recreation. Diversity

is achieved while retaining the common theme among these nations of their partnership with the earth by placing each native figure in an outdoor setting.

The combination of Bruchac's text and Goetzl's illustrations depicts each tribe as individual by placing native figures in their authentic environment while showing them engaged in a specific custom. The tribes are further depicted as unique because they are dressed in diverse clothing with unique hair fashions. Goetzl created these figures with variations in their appearance when forming cheekbones, chins, noses, and facial expressions. Examples of such diversity are evident when comparing two illustrations depicting female tribal members interacting with their native environment. Goetzl introduces us to an Anishinabe female who is making a birchbark bowl. She is shown wearing animal skin clothing with multiple necklaces draped around her neck. Her long hair rests in two braids, each fastened with a round decoration reminding me of a concha. She is shown engaged in her craft just outside the family's birchbark home located in a wooded area of the same trees. The illustrator achieves a diverse representation of females when comparing the Anishinabe female with two Lummi females. These women are wearing cotton clothing, and have shoulder-length hair, cut with bangs, restrained by cotton handkerchiefs. They are shown barefoot along the shore collecting clams at low tide. Not only are these females shown in their respective environments dressed in traditional clothing specific to their tribe, but they are also shown as contributing members of the tribe, which places them in a positive light for the reader to enjoy as well as expresses the important roles that females play within the native lifestyle.

I enjoyed this book for the many separations of tribes and their customs. Although this is an alphabet book, a writing presentation typically found in the primary grades, the information contained within *Many Nations'* pages is appropriate for an older audience such as an intermediate classroom.

The Boy Who Lived With the Bears

told by Joseph Bruchac

illustrated by Murv Jacob

The Boy Who Lived With the Bears is a collection of six Iroquois stories. These stories, along with countless others, have been passed on to new generations through storytellers. Joseph Bruchac, of Abenaki ancestry, is the messenger of this collection of stories for this book. He lived in the area where the People of the Longhouses cared for the land, and he listened to these stories for years. Because of his contact with this group, different from his own, he has received the blessing of member storytellers to share their tales. What does this tell the dominant culture about the personal way in which American Indians share their stories? I wanted to classify their stories as lessons from history, but I'm not sure that description fits. The dominant culture's history is defined by specific events occurring on a timeline, while American Indian stories seem to defy time.

Each of these stories centers around animal characters whose adventure teaches a lesson or provides an explanation for the animal's modern appearance and behavior. For example, "Rabbit and Fox" is the tale of a trickster rabbit who outwits a pursuant fox by disguising himself, hence the rabbit is now camouflaged. "The Boy Who Lived With the Bears" is the tale of an orphaned boy who was left in a cave by his ill-minded uncle and taken in by a bear family. The tale continues to be told as a reminder to parents to treat their children well.

Murv Jacob, Cherokee, created a brilliant scene for each of the six tales. He created strong images of animal characters in nature. His use of cool colors such as blue, green, and brown on a black or otherwise dark canvas, and pure white or tinted hues on top of the these cool colors creates a striking image, causing the reader's eye to dance across the page. Each illustration is framed in an equally dazzling square border ranging from flowery vines to carefully arranged line patterns. Each pattern winds around the border leading the reader's eye to the heart of the illustration.

I enjoyed the variety of tales this collection offered. An admirer of Bruchac as a storyteller and Jacob as an artist, I am impressed by what both of these gentlemen have contributed to American Indian storytelling. I believe in their delivery of native messages and would use this book along with others created by them in my classroom.

A Walk to the Great Mystery

by Virginia A. Stroud

A Walk to the Great Mystery is the story of a voyage a young boy and girl take to find their relationship with nature and themselves within. Grandma Ann, a medicine woman, is their mentor throughout this voyage.

Dustin and Rosie are led on a journey to search for the Great Mystery. The children begin their journey, full of curiosity about what they will find, by passing through a symbolic medicine hoop upon entering the woods behind Grandma Ann's house. The medicine hoop, shown in the illustration, signifies the beginning of a spiritual journey for the young children. Grandma Ann shares native beliefs about how nature will speak to them if they listen closely.

Both children embrace Grandma Ann's wisdom and learn to speak to nature as well as listen to what nature has to share. Dustin encounters a hummingbird that flutters past his ear. His first instinct is to swat at the bird until Grandma Ann stops his gesture. As the hummingbird gazes into his eyes, Dustin is told that the creature has found his inner light. Rosie hugs a tree and upon asking the tree for permission to smell its inner core finds the pleasant aroma of vanilla. Such events encourage the children to not only look and listen but smell the gifts nature provides. Stroud brings closure to Dustin and Rosie's search for the Great Mystery as they exit the woods, passing through the medicine hoop once more.

Stroud portrays Grandma Ann, Dustin, and Rosie as secondary figures by giving them a look of sameness. The children are presented with no distinguishable native attributes with the exception

of dark hair. They, along with Grandma Ann, are dressed in modern clothing and share a look with plain features. It is clear to me that Stroud's emphasis was on the beauty of nature by her use of color when creating the vibrant illustrations. The figures in nature appear to be layered, creating a 3-dimensional feel. The foliage of the trees and shrubs commands the reader's attention through Stroud's use of a variety of complementary shades of green mixed with varying amounts of black creating depth on the page. The bright colors used for flowers, streams, footpath, and sky further complement the foliage.

I enjoyed this depiction of native life in a present day setting. Dustin and Rosie seem to represent a population of American Indian children who want to connect with traditional ways of their tribe.

Raven: A Trickster Tale from the Pacific Northwest

by Gerald McDermott

The raven character is one of many animal characters found in tales among tribes in this coastal area. In traditional American Indian storytelling, tales are shared by village storytellers. The purpose of each tale is to warn children of certain behaviors, such as greed and vanity, and also to explain the existence of their surroundings, such as light, the oceans, or earthquakes. In these tales, a central animal character or characters may or may not interact with the native people. They possess skills in transformation and trickery. They are cunning and greedy, sometimes emerging as heroes.

Raven is a tale of how light came to the people of the Pacific Northwest. Raven felt empathy for the local people due to the blanket of darkness under which they lived, so he used his trickster abilities to unleash the sun from its keeper, Sky Chief.

At the beginning of the tale, McDermott develops a feeling of darkness in the outdoor setting by allowing the dark muted tones of the trees,

water, and sky to bleed into one another, much like the effects achieved when dyeing cloth in colored water. The use of color to evoke feelings emerges again at the end of the book once Raven has released the ball of light into the sky. For this concluding illustration, McDermott brightens the outdoor setting by using the same colors as tints rather than shades as in earlier illustrations. For the reader, this change in hue presentation develops a sense of freshness the local people must have felt with the onset of light.

Judging by what I have read and experienced, McDermott depicted the people of this area accurately in text and illustrations. Examples of this include the home, or lodge, in which Sky Chief and his daughter lived. The lodge was built with a smoke hole for smoke to exit the home. Smoke holes existed in all lodges in this area. Totem poles were shown outside the living quarters, identifying the family who lived in the lodge, marking their homes much like we now mark our homes with numbers and place names on mailboxes. The human figures have thin eye openings, a trait shared with their Asian ancestors. Patterns and colors used in character clothing look similar to what I witnessed during my visit to the area. Although I remain a novice of American Indian culture, this book appeared to remain loyal to the people of this area. I would use this selection in my classroom as well as recommend it to fellow teachers when sharing American Indian storytelling.

The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses

story and illustrations by Paul Goble

The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses is the tale of a young plains girl. The main character, referred to as "girl," belongs to a tribe that relies on horses for buffalo hunting and tribal migration. At the beginning of the story the spiritual relationship between the girl and the village horses is developed by her actions of loyalty to them. It is known throughout the village that she has a special knowledge of horse behaviors and needs.

One afternoon while the girl was visiting them, a tremendous storm caused the horses to run for safety far from the village. Startled awake from an afternoon slumber, the girl leapt on the back of one horse and was carried to a new, unfamiliar land. In this land she lived among the horses under the protection of a spotted stallion until the day she was discovered by hunters from her tribe and was taken home. The stallion's longing cries with each sunset and the girl's growing sadness encouraged her family to release her to the horses where she longed to be. She visited her family annually until one year she didn't return. That year hunters spotted the area where the wild horses lived and discovered a new horse among them. Riding alongside the grand stallion was believed by the tribe to be the girl who loved wild horses.

Goble won the Caldecott Medal for outstanding art in children's literature for the story *The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses*. Each illustration presents an intimate scene between the girl and the wild horses.

Goble creates tension for the reader through his illustrations at two significant turning points in the story. In the three page series depicting the thunderstorm, Goble seems to be marking a change in the relationship between the girl and the horses. In the story the relationship moves from the girl caring for the horses in the village to the horses now caring for the girl on the open plains. In this series, tension is created as the white background area becomes overtaken by the black clouds of the thunderstorm. The storm eventually subsides by day's end under the dark, peaceful sky of the plains, leading the reader to conclude that peace now rests with the girl and the horses in their new home.

Goble creates another tense moment in the illustration marking the stallion's cries for the girl's return. Against the stark whiteness of the backdrop, he used purple to color the plateau on which the stallion is standing. Once the girl's tribe has decided that she will return to live with the horses, this mood is softened by creating the same

scene using comfort colors such as browns and yellows.

Goble developed a symbolic relationship between a native girl and the tribe's horses, emphasizing the strong connection American Indians have with the animals who live among them. This selection seemed to vary from the other books I reviewed, with the exception of *A Walk to the Great Mystery*, by focusing on a central female character who possessed strong spiritual power and was revered by her people because of this unique attribute. Even though I believe the girl was a strong female character, I can't dismiss the dominant male character, the stallion, who remained central throughout the girl's journey. This noted, I cannot decide who the hero is in this story.

Squanto's Journey: The Story of the First Thanksgiving

by Joseph Bruchac

illustrated by Greg Shed

Squanto's Journey is a story of the famous Native American, Tisquantum or Squanto, and the first Thanksgiving. Many versions of the first Thanksgiving can be found on the shelves of public and school libraries. In his author's note, Bruchac reiterates what Native Americans have been saying for years—that the native voice cannot be heard through the pages of non-native retellings. Historical inaccuracies are perpetuated through these tales, from the clothing worn to the food prepared. Joseph Bruchac delivers his version of this tale based on careful research and consultation with Native historical human resources.

Squanto's Journey is delivered from the native point of view. The reader is with Squanto through his travels with and travesties caused by Europeans. The story begins with Squanto's capture on a European ship with several other native males later to be sold as slaves in Spain. Squanto's intelligence and bravery enable him years later to serve on another ship as guide across the ocean back to his homeland. He reaches his native shores only to find that devastation brought on by

the white man—massacres, disease, and starvation—have brought his tribe to its knees leaving him with no family and very few surviving tribal members.

Squanto befriends white settlers by teaching them to hunt and farm the land as he remembers the women of his village doing years before. He also persuades other native leaders to join in this union so the fighting and killing of native peoples would hopefully cease. By learning how to live as neighbors with the white settlers, he regains his dignity and helps to save the lives of natives and white settlers alike.

Through the illustrations Squanto is further presented as a powerful leader of native people as he stands with pride among other characters in the book. He expresses emotions through posture and facial expressions. This is possibly the first book in which I personally have seen a native male shown smiling and laughing.

I enjoyed this retelling of Squanto's story. The illustrations showed Squanto as "human" or "real" through his expression of both negative and positive emotions. He was presented as a brave, noble, and wise character in the face of abundant adversity whose choices were independent of the white man's coercion. He overcame personal losses and emerged as the hero of an angry, mistreated group of people by securing their future.

Author's note

Each book review was written based on my interpretations of and opinions formulated by personal research. I have tried to retain facts and knowledge when presented in professional forums. I openly expressed my admiration for Murv Jacob's artwork. Even though his artwork suits my taste, I cannot vouch for its artistic accuracy and authenticity of the tribe it is intended to represent. To further clarify, it has been my observation that Murv Jacob uses a unique style. I have no account of whether his artwork is a product of Cherokee upbringing or a personal preference of his. His artwork is the same whether he is depicting tales from the Iroquois, Cherokee, or tales from a mix of

tribes. When considering the notion of keeping native work authentic, I question how strictly these rules need to be followed before crossing over the line of stereotyping American Indian artwork. When choosing a book written by a native author and illustrator, I am trusting that the work is produced with integrity based on the opinions and wishes of the collective native nation.

Throughout this article, I have referred to people in the native culture using two labels: American Indian and Native American. Through my research, authors have referred to this "group" of people in both ways. In his article, Haukoos declares that "most American Indian and Alaska Native groups have moved away from calling themselves Native Americans, and instead use the names of their original nations . . . Native scholars now use the term American Indian." I chose to honor the American Indian name in my personal writing; however, the Native American label was used when it was necessary to cite quotes accurately.

Throughout my research, I was amazed to find so much new information, for myself, with such little effort. What does that say about my initial knowledge base of American Indians? Why was it so deficient?

When teaching students and guiding my own children, my goal is to provide a balance of literature based on what I *now* know. I am *now* wary of presenting a pile of books focusing exclusively on one group of people. I *now* see how this approach can be a dangerous way to create division among cultures. I *now* see the sense of incorporating American Indian themed literature as a natural way of sharing history rather than sectioning the culture off as a unit.

When choosing literature with an American Indian theme, I have a new perspective with which to look and new guidelines to follow. Because of this new perspective, I now look at every book with sensitivity to all cultural representations. I can only imagine that this learning process will continue to expand and my opinions and expectations will continue to evolve.

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