Exploring yesterday preparing for tomorrow: a personal perspective on Native American cultural studies in the elementary classroom as experienced in the multi-grade environment of a rural school

Donna Clair Peck

The University of Montana

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation
Exploring Yesterday
Preparing for Tomorrow

A Personal Perspective on
Native American Cultural Studies in the Elementary Classroom
As Experienced in the Multi-Grade Environment of a Rural, School

By

Donna Clair Peck
B.A.Ed, University of Great Falls, 1977
B.A.F.A. Pacific Union College 1977

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

In

Fine Arts and Integrated Arts and Education

2005

Approved by:

[Signature]
Chairperson

[Signature]
Dean, Graduate School

8-26-05
Date
Exploring Yesterday Preparing for Tomorrow

Chairperson: Dorothy Morrison,

Exploring Yesterday Preparing for Tomorrow, was this author’s study undertaken to investigate Native American culture as found on the Flathead Indian Reservation of Western Montana, among the Salish, Kootenai, and Kalispell (Pend d’Orielle) people, to discover some traditions and cultural values that could be included in the cross-curriculum activities of a rural multi-grade classroom, in order to highlight Native American heritage in the elementary school setting.

Camas Prairie School, which was established in the early 1900’s to meet the needs of a racially mixed population of settlers and indigenous people, has a long history of cultural and economic cooperation in this predominately ranching community. However County Highway 382 which runs through “The Prairie” is recognized by law enforcement agencies as a major conduit for illegal substance traffic from the Canadian border to the Western United States.

During the time of this study tragic events related to drug and alcohol abuse caused the deaths and injury of over a dozen children and young people from the reservation. These happenings changed the motivation of this investigation from one of a simple language arts exercise, namely the writing of a children’s story into a search for ways to use the Multiple Intelligences approach to classroom instruction along with native cultural values to ground the children in an understanding of their heritage. This project was intended to elevate the perception of American Indian Heritage among the children of Camas Prairie School both those of indigenous decent and any others who attend.

By the use of culturally sensitive instruction the children became aware and grew to appreciate the value of each person as an individual with unlimited and varying potential talents which are to be maximized.

Through the avenues of workshops focused on Indian Education, local Indian cultural events, personal interviews with tribal elders and storytellers, and directed readings, information was amassed that enhanced the repertoire of teaching techniques and experiences available for this author’s classroom enrichment.
Table of Contents

Proposal........................................................................................................................................1

Footprints: Discovering new techniques and practicing old skills..............................................2

Process: A Day at School..................................................................................................................8

Performances and Programs.........................................................................................................14

Interviews with Elders: Core Values.............................................................................................17

Storytellers......................................................................................................................................20

Professional growth workshops....................................................................................................23

Native Cultural Events: Bitterroot Festival..................................................................................28

River Honoring.............................................................................................................................29

Camas Prairie Powwow..................................................................................................................31

A Place for the word;.......................................................................................................................33

Donna’s Poems...............................................................................................................................35

My writing......................................................................................................................................36

Symbolism......................................................................................................................................39

Conclusion......................................................................................................................................40

Bibliography....................................................................................................................................44

Appendices: A Pair of Moccasins.................................................................................................48

VBS Color book.............................................................................................................................53

Time for Turtle Island.....................................................................................................................61

A Two-Taled Book..........................................................................................................................67

Final Presentation.............................................................................................................................76

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Proposal:

I proposed to study Native American Culture as found on the Flathead Indian Reservation, in Western Montana, from the viewpoint of the Multiple Intelligences Theory, presented by "The Creative Pulse" program at the University of Montana, school of Fine Arts, based on Howard Gardener's concept of the seven intelligences of human nature.

I investigated art, literature, music, drama, dance and tribal social structure, with the students of Camas Prairie Elementary, a remote, K-6 school on the Flathead Indian Reservation, where I am the sole teacher of a classroom that averages 11 children ages four to twelve. However I wished to focus specifically on writing stories and poems that would be culturally sensitive, and contain core values found in the literature specific to that local reservation.

To accomplish this, using folk tales of the Salish and Kootenai tribes available both in book form and on video tape, I planned to conduct reader-writer workshops and reader's theater activities with the children in the classroom. In addition to springtime Native cultural events the school regularly participates in, namely, the Bitterroot Festival, and the River Honoring, I hoped to have native elders from the community visit the classroom and spend time with the children throughout the year.

To enhance my awareness of significant current issues in Indian education, I planned to attend workshops that would focus on the unique learning styles of Indian children. It was my goal to become more familiar with the needs of the children I teach and try to find ways to help them discover answers to the questions facing all young people today, specifically the issue of self worth and its negative outgrowth substance abuses.
In doing this I hoped to help the children recognize and become proud of their heritage and its valued place in today’s society. While working with the children to help them develop their personal identities, I intended to spend time with my own artwork, writing and music.

Footprints:

Discovering new techniques and practicing old skills

Accomplishing the task I proposed seemed easy at the beginning. Because of a life long interest in American Indians, stemming from the fact that my paternal grandmother attended an Indian boarding school in the 1890’s, I have had years to collect books and artifacts, (see appendix 1, “A Pair of Moccasins”). I have taught Indian studies and camp skills at summer camps and Pathfinders, a church related youth organization similar to Scouting. Since 1977, I have presented units on North American Indians at the elementary level for social studies classes at various multi-grade schools where I have taught. And for six weeks one winter, I worked as a substitute cook at Holbrook Indian Mission School in Holbrook, Arizona.

All this has helped me. But I wondered how I could maintain enthusiasm week after week for the entire school year, keep ahead in my research, and be able to present new aspects of the theme to the children as the year progressed. As I considered what lay ahead, the astonishing idea came to me; that while studying the history and arts of the Indians would be easy, because of the many available resources; the real question was how to make the study relevant to a modern, perhaps more cynical generation, raised on videos and gameboys. Even far from town on the remote edges of the Flathead Indian
Reservation children are aware of the sophistication of modern techno culture. Substance abuse, crime and violence are frequently part of life in the extended Indian family, even among children who are mostly descendents and not registered tribal members (de la Garza, Workshop, 2005). The question occurred to me, "How can I make the study of Native American Culture relevant to the children at Camas Prairie School?"

Camas Prairie has enjoyed a long history as the heart of a community grown up since before the Reservation was opened for homesteading in 1912. Located in a wide, peaceful basin, surrounded by the Salish Mountains, just north of the Flathead River, in Sanders County, Camas Prairie prospered first as Pend d'Orielle tribal territory. Later with support from agriculture, ranching and the timber industry it flourished. "The Prairie" boasted K-12 educational facilities before adjoining districts could offer high schools to their residents. However since the end of World War II its population has declined, until now the only evidence of its once pulsing activity is the old school house and gymnasium, at the hub of a far flung conservative, ranching neighborhood. Over fifty percent of the student body is Native American. "The Prairie" located along a remote stretch of County Highway 382 has the reputation of being a conduit for illegal substances coming into the country from Canada.

So much has already been written about ways to solve the problems found among Indian youth, so many theories have been expounded, so much ink spilled expostulating ideas, I felt it was time to do something not just write about it.

A series of articles appeared in the Missoulian, the leading local news paper, entitled "Lost Boys of the Flathead"(www.Missoulian.com Special links, July, 2004). enumerating in great detail the death of several Indian boys ages 11-15, who had lost
their lives during the previous months due to alcohol and drug overdoses. These boys were related in some way to almost every child in our country school. The reporter kept asking “How did these children obtain illegal substances? Who was responsible for their access to lethal doses?” The articles were depressing and discouraging. They repeated the same old cliché, 'Indians get drunk and don’t care about their kids.' They offered no constructive suggestions, no ray of hope. This made the series seem unbalanced to me. Because I have found during the 16 years that I have worked on the Flathead Reservation, most parents are caring and are responsible for their children. Just as in communities outside the reservation, however, there are other influences that draw young people away from their homes and families.

A march was organized in Ronan, Montana, to support drug free living and also to bring attention to the problems facing Indian young people on the reservation. But I wondered whether this action by the community would really help solve the problem or just advertise it, glorifying suicide? What would work to reverse the appalling statistics that show Indian youth groping to find their way in a world that is so out of balance for them (de la Garza, 2005)?

I began to look for individuals and workshops that would address the issue: What is really missing from life today that causes children to try to alter their existence with substance abuse, and harmful behaviors that often lead to their violent deaths? I interviewed native people who were willing to share their experience with me and the young students.
During the past 12 months I have attended four workshops dealing with the challenges that face Native American children and offer ways to help them learn to cope with the world in which they live. These programs were geared for educators, and focused on awareness and action as the path out of the dismal cycle of poverty and abuses which generate low self esteem among Indian youngsters. It is a cycle perpetuated generation after generation in minority communities especially on reservations (Velma Wallis, 2003). These workshops will be addressed briefly later.

I believe education is a strong part of the answer to both phases of the issue. Through education a child can gain skills and set attainable goals that will lead to success. I can offer them the opportunity to gain skills, especially in reading and writing. Tribal leaders have noted that in recent decades young people who have left the reservation for professional training are returning to build up the standards and life style of their people ("The People" Salish and Kootenai Indians in Montana, SKC Press 2004).

I have determined to do something to curb the dismal progress of the downward spiral for the children in my classroom. Using core cultural concepts, I can help them see there is hope, give them tools to use, which facilitate the development of their identity and help them recognize their potential.

In August 2004 I was asked to take part in a Native American Vacation Bible School (VBS) in Ronan. I was given the simple task of teaching the daily scripture lesson to the little children. Remembering the multiple intelligences theory (Gardener 1993) I decided to use a multi-pronged approach to help them learn the short verses. First I developed a coloring booklet using American Indian symbols pertinent to the lesson (See Appendix 2). Each child, ages five to twelve, was given a little Gospel of John to keep
and read daily. Then, as small groups came to my tipi station, we drummed rhythms matched to each verse. The children responded with enthusiasm. By the end of the week they could repeat the six verses when the various rhythms were drummed.

While at the Vacation Bible School I was able to open communications with several tribal members: Steven Small Salmon, a Pend d’Orielle elder, initially discussed drumming, drum making, and the different tribal tipi constructions with me. Several times during the ensuing months I was able to continue the conversation.

David Gingras, Salish tribal member, discussed leather work, simple beading and told me about his experience in government boarding schools.

Del Des Jarlais, Métis musician, worked on making native style flutes from plumber’s pipe for the VBS. He shared with me the importance of the spiritual aspect of life found in his experience. The children at Camas Prairie School later benefited from the surplus flutes, eagerly learning several songs using these simple instruments.

Joyce Matt Wallen, Salish educator, shared with me her opinion of the value of Indian flute music for relaxation, and discussed a number of cultural values that were important to be taught to young children. She related that tribal values have been supplanted by those of the dominant culture over the last several generations.

From these interviews I learned that the Salish people have been fundamentally Catholic for almost 200 years. In 1841 Jesuit priests established missions in the Bitterroot and Mission Valleys along with the establishment of Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) trading posts. Christianity was originally brought to the Salish by an Iroquois fur trader, Shining Shirt, or Old Ignatius, decades before HBC arrival (Sr. Providencia Tolan S.P., 1980).
Each person I spoke with told that Indian children were often forced to attend boarding school where Indian ways were strictly banned. A boarding school on the Flathead Reservation continued teaching children into the 1980s. The HBC remained active in the Mission Valley until 1871 when its holdings were sold and the factor's family, the McDonalds, who lead out in the development of cattle ranching for Indian people on the site of Fort Connah, the former trading post (Jeanne O'Neill and Riga Winthrop, 2002).

The Reservation opened to settlement after land grants were allotted to individual Indians in 1912. White settlers established community schools and Indian children had a choice to attend public schools if they lived close enough. The allotment system and boarding schools effectively broke up the traditional tribal social structure and integrated family life supporting that culture. This continued the cycle of disintegration, abuse, neglect and widespread emotional depression that began in the early days and is still seen in native communities today.

At "The Peoples Center", a tribal museum and cultural center, located in Pablo, Mt, I spoke with attendants about my project and was able to find several items that would be useful during the school year such as beads, books, documentary videos, and language and music tapes. "The Peoples Center" also conducts an annual cultural day for elementary schools in September. Tribal leaders demonstrated traditional ways of curing meat, tanning leather, beading, tipi construction, as well as games and crafts. Elders, both men and women, told stories of what it was like in the old days. The children of
Camas Prairie School look forward to attending this outing yearly, not only because gives them a chance to take a break from their daily routine but it gets them closer to roots. With these tools in hand, I began the school year 2004-2005.

**Process:**

**A day at School**

Every Monday throughout the year we held “Native American Cultural Day” (NCD), it started much like any other day. The Teacher’s Aid and I arrived about 8:00 a.m. and began preparing breakfast and setting up for classes. The little yellow bus arrived fifteen minutes later, children spilling out in a flurry, like hatching butterflies. After hanging their coats in the cloak room, two children raised the state and national flags on the flag pole outside, and then joined the rest of other eleven children at breakfast.

After role-call, we began nature study, a thoughtful expedition into the world of animals and what they could teach us about building strong characters (Character Sketches, 1983). Each week we concentrated on a different animal, learning its strengths and weaknesses, its life cycle and how it is beneficial to a balanced natural world. Every animal had something to teach regarding core cultural values, such as loyalty, generosity, hospitality, courage etc. This daily study focuses on the natural intelligence, as presented by Dr. Randy Bolton, in “The Creative Pulse”. Along with this study, the children were given a theme thought, wise words from ancient heroes, which they practiced writing daily. By the end of the week each child usually had the saying memorized. After a song
of thanksgiving which was a group writing/music project, classroom activities got underway.

The pledge of allegiance was recited verbally, and with sign language, thus incorporating kinesthetic learning into a routine function. The calendar was examined, especially by the four kindergartens. The older children practiced saying the name of the month, the names of the days of the week, and counting in Salish. Each month is named for a particular plant important to that time of year or to a cultural activity that takes place in that season, for example Huckleberry Moon, Chokecherry Moon, Hunting Moon, Story Telling Moon, etc.

Math, an example of logical intelligence, was the next class. After basic facts drills were practiced the children explored facets of Indian culture that demonstrate an understanding of mathematics. For example, the study of the geometry of tipi construction includes the circumference of a circle, bisecting a circle to make the tipi cover fit, the volume of a cone (tipi), the area of its surface, the number of animal hides needed to cover that area, etc. Here the importance of wind, solar energy, and air convection were discussed from the native perspective of physics and engineering principals. Some other math related activities took in, trading and economy in historical communities, beading and clothing construction, which is an exercises in pattern and design making, requiring the use of graphing skills. In these lessons children were making use of their spatial intelligence as well as logic.

Physical Education was a fun time on NCD. The children really enjoyed getting outside in good weather and playing historical games that helped them build trust and team work, tinged with the challenge of competition. The older boys especially liked to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
stretch their growing muscles during this period and exhibit their strength and physical prowess. The little girls did not hold back during the games but got involved in the rough action of shinny, double ball and lacrosse. They strengthened eye/ hand skills with hoop toss and target practice games as well as various foot races. These activities enhance awareness of their physical senses, movement, and coordination, again utilizing kinesthetic intelligence. The kindergarten and pre-school children usually took their recess at an earlier time, so these action games could be played safely.

Re-entering the classroom, the children were sometimes joined by Francis Stanger, a Pend D'Orielle/Salish tribal elder who came in the winter months to teach Salish language/ culture. He usually did not come to school until after the snow was on the ground. That is the traditional time for grandfathers to teach and tell stories. The old folks say that if Coyote stories are told when there is no snow on the ground snakes and spiders will get you. However there are many other stories that could be shared with the children while they learned traditional work skills, such as basket weaving, beading, arrow making, tanning hides or preserving food.

In preliterate societies, such as tribal cultures of the North American continent, stories were not only for entertainment but were devices used to pass along valuable traditions pertinent to personal or community survival. Comic figures, often in the form of animals, were used to characterize ideas, making learning fun. Stories were used to pass on culture, share a viewpoint, create a sense of tribal identity, and give meaning and make sense of a sometimes chaotic world. As much as 70% of all learning is done through narrative; folk tales warn, foretell and teach, in culturally sensitive ways.
For a spelling exercise we chose a few Salish words each week to learn to spell. Until recently Salish was not a written language; in it are some sounds that have no English equivalents so in this study the children also became familiar with other symbols used to express sounds; for example, the blend “Xw” in Salish, or the barred “L”. The children found it a lot easier to pronounce and retain Salish vocabulary words than I did, though I tried hard to remember. This was not surprising since language acquisition is most effective during early childhood. It is well documented that older people find it much harder to acquire skill in a language not introduced during their childhood (McWhorter, 2004). When elders are unable to pass along the spoken word to children in a vernacular form using good pronunciation, a language will die in the next generation. Lists of vocabulary words do not constitute a spoken language. Reconstructing conversation from word lists does not include the particulars of grammar and idioms of speech. This is one way language and cultures are lost.

Francis Stanger, along with other thoughtful elders on the Flathead Reservation fear that the local languages will perish in this generation, if swift measures are not introduced immediately to halt their demise. To this end, tribal leaders have initiated a language immersion pre-school named NKusna, in Arlee, Montana in hopes of halting the loss of such an important feature of their culture. We learned to sing “Silent Night” in Salish for our Christmas program I retained those words with the memory aid of familiar music. This multi-lingual activity demonstrates an exercise of linguistic intelligence (Gardener, 1993).

After the noon recess, the children returned to their desks with the assignment to choose a book from the Indian book shelf, read a story over several times, and then write
it onto a "story hide". They were to write not in letters on lines, but in symbols in a spiral, then be prepared, using only this device, to retell the story to the class at the council circle later in the afternoon. This activity usually took about an hour. The children were able to relate intricate details of the stories they read, even weeks later. Surprisingly, this exercise was most effective among the pre-reading children in kindergarten and first grade.

To initiate council meetings, the children gathered around the drum on the rug, and enjoyed drumming. We practiced various rhythms taking turns leading, changing the beat; this was an example of how the children experience musical intelligence. The drum is the symbol of "Mother Earth's" heart beat (F. Stanger and J. Arlee, individual interviews, 2005). It brings the people together in unity, to sing, dance, share thoughts, concerns, and stories. At council I introduced the science or social studies topic to be discussed that day. From what I have gleaned over the years of working with native children, they use consensus learning to a great degree. They share ideas and learn from each other. During this time we might discuss the value of the forest to the people, and how to make wise use of natural resources in our environment. In one lesson, we learned the names of different trees and the historical ways they were used by the people of the Western forests. The importance of each specie to forest management was stressed. As a guide in this study I employed "NASA Native Earth System Science Curriculum Project".

After recess and snack time, the children had the opportunity to work on an art project. I chose nine projects to use during the year, each one to take about a month to complete. The first one was a simple medicine pouch, made of deer hide, stitched with sinew and beaded. It was designed to be worn as a necklace. A story accompanied the
medicine pouch. It focused on the spiritual aspect of human nature and reminded the children to be thankful.

On September 1, 2004, the Sunday after the opening day of school a kindergarten girl from our community lost her life in the Flathead River in a boating accident. With this story I tried to help the children deal with the tragedy

I gave each child a smooth blue glass pellet, a smooth pebble, and a bead, then said;

"Hold the glass up and you will see sky color through it. This is like a day, like this day, the only day you have. Hold it in your hand, it is a treasure. What will you do with this day? It is yours to use. Use it wisely, or waste it. That is your choice. This day will never return to you, but you may remember it. In your heart say thanks for such a good day, a day you lived. We do not know how many days we will have.

Here is a little stone. It is shiny and smooth; it is like the earth we stand upon. The earth holds us up; our food comes from the earth. Our homes, families, and everything we hold dear is on the earth. We must remember to honor the earth, care for it, keep it clean, and be careful of its resources so it will be a good place to live for many generations to come, for our grandchildren.

Here is a small colored bead. Let it be the symbol of your friend. When you look at it let it remind you that you are not alone, that there are those who love and care for you, as you love and care for them. As long as you live there will be people around to love and care for. This gives you responsibility; you do not just have yourself to think about. Put these three things, the blue glass pellet, the stone and the bead into your medicine pouch, keep it safe, and remember who you are. Carry these in your medicine pouch."

These thoughts were intended to help give the children a sense of place, as Dr. Randy Bolton presented in “The Creative Pulse” and to help them see their way through a sad time. Thus the multi-leveled awareness budding in young minds was allowed to grow through the varying activities pursued during a Native Culture Day.
Programs and Performances

During my search for Native American Music, I discovered a collection of hymns and prayers in the Flathead, Kalispell, and Spokane Languages (Connolly 1958). It is the Christian music that has been sung by Flathead Reservation Indian people since before 1879 mostly in the Kalispell dialect. "Indians sing in a high and often shrill pitch ... in an eastern or oriental musical mode...therefore (it) sounds very peculiar to the western ear." It is seldom accompanied except by the drum. These hymns are a rich liturgy developed through the efforts of native prayer leaders with the Black Robes when they first came together in the mountain valleys of Montana. It is still used in religious services today, in gatherings whether secular such as the Bitterroot festival, Pow-wows, or sacred as in special church services such as wakes and funerals. Spirituality cannot be separated from native culture it is part of all their rituals and symbolisms (Shutiva, in ERIC Digest, Dec 2001).

As a public school teacher it is not my place to teach Native American religion, nor should the school be the primary source of cultural training of the native young people, but it is impossible to teach about the culture without coming in contact with its spiritual aspect. I respect the tradition and have found much basic good sense in it.

Parents in the Camas Prairie community have asked that the winter program include all the elements of a traditional Christmas program. This means Christian Carols and stories, as well as songs of Santa and his reindeer. I have interpreted this mandate to also mean some Native American traditions. Of all the elements of European society that the original North Americans picked up, they have made Christmas one of their most loved times of year. We learned to sing "Kam-Kemps Sku-sku-ets", last year. It is
“Silent Night in Salish”. We accompanied it with the big drum, which in Salish is called “pum-pumin”. When we visited the residents at Ever Green Manor, the local nursing home, we walked up and down the halls as the children sang Carols such as “Willy Take Your little Drum.” The children enjoyed playing the drum as they sang, more than any other part of that day. During music class each child also had a small hand drum to practice rhythms.

The last half of the school year we concentrated on adding Indian flute playing to our music practice. On the Prairie the wind blows most of the time. It whines and howls, and roars around the schoolhouse. Soft musical notes can often be heard as the wind plays the tetherball pole like a flute. Once we covered up various holes on the seven foot pipe and changed the tune the wind played. The children then tried to copy the sounds on their flutes. Stories of Indian flute players were popular items on the book shelf. One such tale is of “Kokopelli”, a legend that has come up from the South West. It tells of a humpbacked little man who brought seeds, blankets, songs and babies in his pack to share with the people of the desert. Some accounts say that he was an historical person; others say it is simply a fertility symbol. His distinctive image is carved onto cliffs, as petroglyphs, all across the southwestern and central United States, and his story is popular still (R. Carlos Nakai, 1996). He seems to take the place in Indian literature of the Pied Piper in European tales. The children spent time on the computer researching Kokopelli, and were eager to learn to play songs on their flutes, as well as stitching and decorating their fabric flute cases. I spent time designing, and weaving woolen flute cases to trade for a cedar flute for myself.
At the spring concert, the children were able to perform flute solos, duets and dance to flute music for their parents and friends. We enjoyed listening to audio tapes of the Native flute player, R.Carlos Nakai, a musician of some renown. In his book, The Art of the Native American Flute, he addresses the question “What is authentic native art?” Quoting from page 4:

“Music is a vital tradition in the sacred and social worlds of native North American peoples. In day to day life, music provides more than simple pleasure and entertainment; it also serves to preserve, especially through song, the integrity of experience based oral traditions. The individuals, often ceremonial singers, who personalize and interpret the spiritual and philosophic lifeways, use music as a foundation to reinforce cultural concepts. A study of indigenous native music requires adequate knowledge and understanding of tribal variations in language, oral histories, religious and healing practices and music traditions. The traditions are always changing as acculturation and adaptation brings new songs and stories to each generation.”

He further says personal and interpersonal expressions easily demonstrate the adaptability of traditional culture to change and the need to adjust the varied demands of life in a multi-cultural society of other human beings. Addressing the question of authenticity in regards to Indian art, he expresses the idea that art forms and styles are fluid, and are constantly changing. Indian people are not confined to the old traditional styles or cryptic art, whether in music or the visual arts any more than are other artists. Authentic Indian art is art produced by Indians. Indian children are authentic artists in their own right, exploring, inventing, and making use of many artistic mediums.

After our final performance of the year, when I thought the children would just enjoy relaxing and listening to simple music for the fun of it, I introduced them to the Canadian Folk Song “Land of the Silver Birch”
The song was compelling sung and played with drum and flute, and seemed to hit a chord with each child.

“Land of the silver birch, home of the beaver
Where still the mighty moose wanders at will.
Blue lake and rocky shore, I will return once more
Boom-di-di-eye-di, boom-di-di-eye-di, boom-di- boom.”

It appealed not only to their sense of music but to their sense of place. One of the children spontaneously piped up, “Let’s learn this for a program next year”.

**Interviews with Elders:**

**Core Values**

In a discussion of traditional values, Joyce Matt Wallen, an administrator at Tribal Head Start, and long time educator, from Ronan, Montana, spoke with me in August 2004, about the importance of returning the teaching of cultural core values to the classroom. When I asked her what she included in her list of core values, she said, “They are the things that parents used to instill in their children when they were learning to walk and talk; the simple but important ideas that help shape a family, community and society.”. If the child receives tenderness and respect as an infant, it will learn to be tender and respectful. If the family supports the child, in all aspects of his development, strong family ties are established. These bonds need to be reconnected if they have been severed by negative behavior. Even if children do not like what the parent does, they must maintain a bond with their parents in order to have a sense of place. This point was strongly restated by Vincent de la Garza, in the workshop “Save the Child/ Save the Teenager” which I attended in April, 2005 in Calgary, Alberta Canada.
Joyce Wallen further brought up the need to teach truthfulness and commitment. Caring is attached to commitment, which is related to community. Cultural values are a network, like a safety net under girding the child; Children learn to feel responsible for themselves, care for their family and share with the greater community.

These ideas were reiterated in the publication ERIC, January 2002. In an article entitled “Social and Emotional Distress Among American Indian and Alaska Native Students: Research Findings” by Ardy Sixkiller Clark.

“Families with strong traditional values positively impact the academic success of AI/AN (American Indian/Alaska Native) students. However for many AI/AN families the interruption in the intergenerational transmission of traditional culture imposed by the Indian boarding school era which separated generations of American Indian children from their tribes and families, continues to have effects today. Many American Indian women missed out on role models for nurturing and child rearing... young, single moms with limited parenting skills made up 42% of native households in 1989”.

Steven A. Darnel, Navajo leader, from Flagstaff, Arizona, and keynote speaker at a Tribal Professional Development workshop, which I attended in Polson, Montana, in September 2004, re-emphasized the importance of maintaining traditional values, binding wellness and healing to the prevention of harmful influences and behaviors in both adults and children.

One important traditional value is group cohesiveness or glory to the group. Rather than praising individual attainment. This value is based on the core belief that wellness is harmony in spirit, mind and body. Thus when a student achieves academic success the family needs to be honored. Both Darnel and Garza agree with Joyce Wallen,
saying that students must be given time to observe and reflect prior to participation and communication, they must think before speaking “This value is based on the core belief that wellness is harmony in spirit, mind and body and is grounded in a world view that is circular rather than linear” ERIC Digest, Dec 2001. Further, stating the issue, ERIC Digest January 2002, continues:

“The key to producing successful American Indian students in our modern educational system...is to first ground these students in their American Indian belief and value systems...(giving) the whole person balance and harmony spiritually, physically, mentally and socially. Teachers need to bring the teaching of virtues such a courage and generosity back into the educational equation, not as behavioral tools but as a way to give meaning to academic mastery and enhance social responsibility.”

Many elders addressed the fact that spirituality and reciprocity (giving back to others) are vital to Indian learning and more and more educators believe that curriculum must include the wisdom embedded in Native American spirituality” In summary some of these values include the virtues of: courage, generosity, loyalty, hospitality, caring, sharing, commitment, tenderness, truthfulness, honesty, and family.

Similar discussions were conducted with other tribal members including David Gingras, Salish tribal member from Ronan, who told of his experience in the government boarding schools. He said he ran away so many times the officials finally took away his shoes. Del Des Jarlais, a Chippewa Cree tribal member now living in Ronan, did not attend boarding school. He instead lived at home with his parents on a farm on the Turtle Mountain Reservation in North Dakota. He shares many fond memories of growing up with his family in the Métis cultural setting.
Storytellers

I experienced native storytelling throughout the year both from live presentations and occasionally in the video format. Some of the storytellers were, Steven Small Salmon, Vernon Finley, Oshni Kenmille, and Johnny Arlee who are elders on the Flathead Reservation and have taught various cultural classes at the Salish Kootenai College, (SKC) in Pablo, Montana. Besides these live speakers, the SKC Library has video documentaries of story telling events featuring all of these and many other elders that we have accessed.

Their stories are traditional tales which we sometimes found in print at the “People’s Center” in such books as Ktunzxa Legends, and other compilations collected and published for modern readers by the Salish Kootenai College Press. There has been a concerted effort in recent decades to record the old tribal tales before they are lost in the passing of generations.

Traditional stories, often humorous, are told with much laughter and use dramatized characterizations of the anthropomorphic animals. Children easily remembered these caricatures, and their antics carried a serious message. The stories expressed cultural values without stating a motto. The children were left pondering the tale which could be applied to their own experience. I can imagine that there were often epiphanies, the “Ah Ha” moments when the meaning of a story suddenly became apparent to them. That is the Indian way, teaching in the oblique.

As I have mentioned previously, many Salish tale could only be told from the end of October to the beginning of April, or during the months of the year when snow was on the ground. The Coyote cycle is especially restricted to the winter months. He is a
character found in indigenous tales across the continent, and often plays the trickster. By his misfortune the children learn a better way of doing things. He is usually seen as greedy or selfish, however, at the same time, is considered a wise counselor. Other stories are not time sensitive, and might even be original tales written by modern authors in the traditional style and language.

Johnny Arlee is one such author. He was born in Arlee, Montana to a family of tribal leaders. His early years were spent with his great grandparents who taught him the Salish language and culture. He was educated at the Ursaline school in St. Ignatius, Montana, then later at a residential Indian school in Oregon. He always wanted to write, and while living in California, was an advisor and actor in the Robert Redford movie, "Jeremiah Johnson."

Mr. Arlee told us about the bias of Hollywood writers. They wanted to use stereotypes and down-play native culture even in a story that was supposed to show Indians in a good light. For example, in the "trapper's bride" sequence, of the movie "Jeremiah Johnson", the writers wanted the chief to show his daughter's teeth to demonstrate that she was healthy and sound. Johnny Arlee told the directors that this would never have happened in a Salish village; it would have been an insult to any woman, much more, a chief's daughter, to have her father treat her as a man might display a horse for sale. He went on to say that the writers adjusted the scene to have the chief ask his daughter to smile, thus bearing her teeth, but not invading her person.

Another scene Mr. Arlee spoke of in the same movie, showed chickens flying among the tipis. This would never have happened; the camp dogs would have made short work of any loose ground fowl in the camp. He also mentioned that the story was
set in a time before the Salish people were settled into permanent villages or had began farming. There would have been no chickens in the village at that period. But the writers thought it would be funny to show them. These are only a few among uncountable examples of bias towards American Indians, found in the modern literary world.

After spending time in the military working with communications, Johnny Arlee returned to the Flathead Reservation where he became active in retrieving vanishing native culture. He helped to compile much of the history and literature that is now in tribal archives, writing such books as Over a Hundred Years of Moving to the Drum, a tribal history with interviews of local elders.

I discovered his story book, Mary Bent Nose, a Mean Old Lady, which is a child’s story written both in Salish and English. When the children at Camas Prairie School heard the story, their immediate reaction was, “Can we act it out?”

It is an allegory easily adapted to the stage. We began working on it just for fun, then later seriously, as a play to perform for the parents. I was encouraged to contact the author and tell him how much the children loved his book. When he learned they were going perform it, he offered to send a script. The Children were delighted and proceeded to take charge of the casting.

Furthermore, Mr. Arlee accepted our invitation to spend the day with the class and discuss story telling and writing. It was a much anticipated event. We prepared a special meal and while he ate he told us his life story. He demonstrated how simple it is to tell a story in Indian sign language, teaching the children to retell a story to him in signs, then he sang a story using the hand drum as accompaniment. The children were inspired by his visit and afterward, wrote of the things they remembered from what he
said. One interesting side note is that I went home that evening and watched the video "Jeremiah Johnson" to see if I could find him in it. Not only was that easy, but the sign language he taught us he also used in the movie, and I could understand it.

Another tribal story teller who visited my classroom was Old Joe Phillips. He spent the day demonstrating how to build a fish weir from red-twig willow. As his hands worked he kept up a constant steam of stories, and wise sayings. The children were completely enthralled, listening and watching with wrapped attention the entire day. They were able to write down details and wise sayings that they remembered the next day. One first grade boy recalled him saying, "When the sun is in his house it will turn cold. Then he will call his dogs home."

Professional Growth Workshops

While researching this project, I have read many helpful books and been involved in several valuable conversations with people at the heart of the topic. During my quest to gain an understanding of the culture of the people from the Flathead Indian Reservation, in order to write a story that would address issues pertinent to children who live there, and else where, I have had the opportunity to attend educator's workshops both on and off the reservation and found in each, things that have given my understanding giant steps forward.

In September 2003 at Polson Montana, Velma Wallis addressed the teachers of the reservation schools at the annual Tribal Professional Development workshop. She is a native from Fort Yukon, Alaska, a small community located above the artic circle where she still lives with her young family. As an author and speaker, she is trying to help
bridge the gap for Native American people who are caught between the strong forces of two worlds, namely the modern world with all of its attractive benefits and addictions, and the world of her heritage, with its ancient traditions. She reiterated that the spiritual culture of a people is what holds them together, without that bond they are cut adrift to sink or swim in a stormy sea. She reminded us that where ever people are, there is racial tension, not just between red and white, but between Indians and Eskimos, between people of different colors, different economic levels, between people who live on different blocks in a city or go to different schools. This is often not just friendly rivalry but closed minded hatred and bullying. Prejudice has no limits and is unjustified. She traced a sequence of unhealed trauma that each older generation visited on the younger one. Passed down from generation to generation were a whole host of behaviors that come in the guise of tradition and culture but in truth are patterns of emotional detachment, abuse, and addiction. She said it is essential that these behaviors be recognized for what they are and be faced without excuses. “We must acknowledge the past honestly and educate our young ones. Abusive, addictive behavior must stop if Native people are to gain healing and survive into the future,” she stated.

I was challenged by this straightforward, painfully honest young mother, and successful author. Since then I have read all three of her books; Two Old Women, Bird Girl and the Man Who Followed the Sun, and her most compelling and latest book, Raising Our Selves. Her personal insights into the world of her people both historically and today ring with authenticity.
Another speaker who greatly impressed me was Steven A. Darnel, former judge and council man from Flagstaff, Arizona, who spoke to us about the importance of living a balanced life, at the Tribal PIR Day, in September, 2004.

He said that without acknowledging the multifaceted aspects of human nature, people grow distorted and cannot function or be healthy, mentally, physically, emotionally or spiritually. He said we need to teach the children who they are and how sacred each individual is. We need to show them through the world of nature how to live in a way respectful of themselves and others. He reminded us that Creator makes no mistakes and that each child is a treasure with gifts to be discovered and developed. He said educators need to make a paradigm shift because it is the leadership that directs change. Education should not simply be the accumulation of trivial facts, but the application of knowledge with wise guidance that leads to the child’s balanced growth and fulfillment.

In the traditional Native American spirit quest, after much council from elders, a young person spent time alone in a remote setting seeking to focus upon the important life choices he or she must make. Education needs to embrace this aspect of learning; it needs to teach critical thinking so youngsters gain the skills needed to enable them to make good real life choices. Children need to become aware of how they feel so they can understand who they are. Education is not just teaching a child to parrot facts, but must teach them to think for themselves. The choice is not simply, “Do I take the traditional way or the modern way,” but “What decisions should I make so I can grow into a whole balanced person?”
Children must be taught values, guided to understand what influences are good and which ones are bad in their lives. This knowledge is not innate in a child, but must be given to them, by the wise council of their parents, elders and teachers.

He reviewed the important things we had learned: To guard the avenues into the mind, protect children from harmful influences, give them good self-esteem, and teach them to respect what Creator has given them, and to make good choices.

February brought “Red Letter Day” at the Montana Small School Alliance winter workshop (MSSA). There we received several issues of “ERIC Digest”; The Educational Resources Information Center, a clearing house on Rural Education and Small Schools including Alaska Natives and American Indian, Mexican Americans, Migrants and Outdoor Education. We also received other good reading material telling how to reach Indian children through using their learning strengths. Indian children are strong visual learners, with auditory and kinesthetic learning coming in as close seconds. Understanding this, a teacher can work with the multiple intelligences approach to learning to help her students have a more successful scholastic experience.

I was asked to make a presentation at the winter workshop for (MSSA), in Great Falls, and was given 2 hours to explain the way I included Native American Cultural Studies into the curriculum of my classroom. It was a pleasure to present material that I had been preparing and using from this study. There were approximately 50 teachers at the meeting. I shared with them a packet developed specifically for the workshop, entitled: “Time for Turtle Island”, which is included in the appendix 3.

In April, I attended the three day workshop, “Save the child/ Save the Teenager” in Calgary, Alberta Canada. It was directed by Dr. Vince de la Garza, an Apache Indian,
from Colorado. He showed us staggering statistics of at risk Indian children. According to his sources native children are often well on their way to becoming alcoholics by the time they are nine years old. He said the best prevention for drug and alcohol abuse, is for them to never start. Much time and money is spent by governments on rehabilitation, when early preventative measures would be more effective. Children learn best from children who are just older than themselves. If they can learn negative, disruptive behavior then they can be taught positive progressive behaviors by the young people they look up to. He gave training in ways to defuse abuse, and redirect hostility in school. Stating that teachers and school staff should not take negative behavior personally, he said if a child is having trouble at home he or she will most likely act it out at school. Abusive behavior should not be tolerated but dealt with in a positive way.

One of the major reasons for the 50% drop-out rate among Native American children is illiteracy. The best hope for Indian children to succeed in life, he said, is to teach them how to read well and early. To give the child the tools needed to understand the material taught in school, gives that child power over the poverty and the abusive environment often found on the reservation. “Use visuals to teach Indian children.” de la Garza reiterated many times. Included in the workshop was much good reading material.

Each of the workshop presenters used story telling with symbolism throughout their lectures, as a vehicle to illustrate the various points of their messages.
Native Cultural Events:

All year long the children looked forward to three main Native cultural events; The Peoples Center Educational Day, in September, then in April the Bitterroot Festival, and finally the River Honoring in May.

Bitterroot Festival

No one knows for sure when the Bitterroot gathering would happen. The elder determine when the plants are at the right stage of development. The roots are to be dug after the plant has sprouted but before the flowers appear, sometime in late April or early May. Of the wild edible plants, the Bitterroot is one of the first to immerge in the spring. It is heralded with thanksgiving as people converges from all over the Reservation at the traditional gathering sites usually on Camas Prairie. When the day arrived, the school children joined in eagerly.

This spring an elder called the people together, recounting the respectful way to dig the root. "Always go deep into the ground, carefully lift the plant out, then twist the top off and gently replant the heart. This will insure that another bitterroot will grow and the earth will replenish this food for another year." Then he offered prayers, giving thanks in the Salish language for the blessings of creation: for families, fresh air, clean water, the children and the old folks. The whole group joined in reciting the Lord’s Prayer in their language at the end of the ceremony. There was a sense of unity, anticipation and joy at the festival. People greeted each other and worked together, digging and cleaning the roots. Laughter and banter flew back and forth.
When enough roots had been dug to supply the feast, the people caravanned to the Cultural Center in St. Ignatius. The children of Camas Prairie went back to school. We took enough roots back with us to process for ourselves.

Bitterroot, when cleaned, dries quickly. Historically it was gathered to be used for the entire year. A fifty pound bag of the dry roots was worth the price of a good horse. "Bitterroot has a lot of power," Darrel Whitworth, local tribal member told us. "If you are traveling and are hungry, you can dig some bitterroot and keep it in your pocket to chew on. You don't have to stop to cook it. It has much strength, and will make you wise." Then he grinned.

One of the four flavors humans taste is bitter. In the United States this flavor is not as popular as say, salty, sweet, or sour. In earlier times the bitter flavor was more commonly appreciated. According to my late maternal grandfather Teddy, former professor of chemistry, University of Science and Technology, Ames, Iowa, and gourmet cook, it is a matter of balance again, a little bitter goes a long way. The root has sustaining power. In balance, it can become an acquired taste. Bitterroot can be boiled into a soup. Its fibers soften when cooked, and will thicken the sauce. Native people would add it to wild berries or cook it with wild onions, garlic or other herbs. It is known to have medicinal purposes as well. Now-a-days, one source told me, the old people will roll the roots in sugar for a treat.

**River Honoring**

River honoring is not an old festival. In a memo to teachers written by Lester Big Crane on the history of River Honoring, he says it originated in 1986 as awareness of the
need to care for the environment became an issue on the Reservation. This was especially true for the lower Flathead River Corridor, which was being threatened by industrial development. People remembered when they had been able to drink from any flowing stream. All the streams among the mountains of Western Montana were pure and pristine. After modern pollutants from residential and industrial sources began to take a toll on the land and water, newly empowered tribal leaders stepped forward to take an active role in educating the younger generation regarding their responsibility they had to help insure that the water of the Reservation would be good for generations to come. Each year the tribe invites local schools to attend day camps where children learn ways to care for natural resources, which include not only the river, but air quality, forests, fisheries, and animals that depend on clean water for a healthy life.

River camp was set up in the Moiese Valley at the old Woodcock campsite, remote from obvious settlement, but accessed by a gravel road. The camp was beautifully situated on a green meadow above the water; sixteen tipiis formed two half circles of gleaming white among Ponderosa pine and juniper trees. Groups of children moved from station to station learning how to respect the river ecosystem from tribal scientists, biologists, fire fighters. Students had the chance to talk with experts about careers in the fields of tribal land management and natural resources. Camas Prairie School, though small, is well known. It is not unusual for a weathered biologist or other professional to say, “Camas Prairie. I know where that is; I went to school there when I was a kid.”

Comments such as this build a sense of interpersonal relationships between the generations. It was demonstrated over and over to these children from a remote rural
locality that they really do have the opportunity to make something good of themselves; it was a goal setting time, a dream building day.

Again the ever present elders offered the children a chance to learn directly age old tribal values, building bridges between the old ways and the new, helping each other to find balance in life.

**Camas Prairie Pow-Wow**

As a culmination to the native cultural events our school participated in, I thought it would be fun to hold a pow-wow. I made some preliminary phone calls to the tribal cultural committee, to tribal Head Start, and to Pat Pierre, the leading Pend d'Orielle elder from "the prairie", who teaches at Nkusna, the immersion school, in Arlee, Montana. Our language teacher, Francis Stanger, proposed that we might have a pow-wow in March. That was a mere five weeks away. At first suggestion we were excited. Then I asked him how much money it would cost, and his answer of "Oh around $1500.00", threw cold water all over us. I knew that there would be no possibility for six families to raise that amount of money in such a short time, and besides that, I did not know yet if the parents would even want a pow-wow. A week later Mr. Stanger said he had been talking to people about a pow-wow at Camas Prairie, and found a lot of good feelings about the idea in the Indian community. He recommended I contact Ms Aggie Incashola at Two Eagles Rivers School in Pablo. Aggi and I had met in September at the Tribal Professional Development Day, and had talked about a cultural exchange with her eighth grade girl's Salish Language Club. I phoned Aggi and asked her about the idea of a Camas Prairie pow-wow. She said Francis had spoken with her already, and that we
could hold one for a lot less money than he had originally suggested. Instead of a
competition pow-wow, we could have a social celebration, a pot-luck lunch, and
everyone could just come to have fun. Aggi said it had been a hard winter for the kids at
her school because recent deaths in the community had been well known students in
Pablo, and the kids were feeling really “bummed.” They needed a lift, something fun to
think about. All we would need to do was provide the food and a place to dance. She
would round up a couple of drum groups.

That sounded a whole lot better to me. So we began to hope it could become a
reality. With a few minor changes in details such as the date, it was finally settled that
we should have a pow-wow on May 13, 2005, after the Bitterroot Festival, and the River
Honoring. The school board agreed it would pay $200.00 to help with expenses. That
would allow money for the drum groups and possibly some gas money to transport the
students from Two Eagles River School. Excitement mounted as the day drew near. The
children designed posters inviting neighboring communities to join us for the big day.
We decorated the gymnasium. Notes flew back and forth between homes and school as
we made the final arrangements.

The day dawned clear and breezy. As we put the finishing touches on the big
welcome sign and taped it to the fence, people began to arrive. The first one there was Pat
Pierre. Soon the whole place was abuzz. Young and old came in busses, cars, and vans.
Three drum groups, children from three other schools, people in fancy regalia, and people
in blue jeans, all anticipating a good time. The tables were sagging with food.

The celebration began with the presentation of the flags. Francis Stanger carried
the American Indian flag. Jim Malatare, from Arlee, carried the Confederated Salish
Kootenai Tribal flag, and Pat Pierre carried the Indian feathered staff. All three elders were dressed in splendid tribal regalia of beautifully beaded brain tanned buckskin, or plaid, with large feathered bustles and eagle-plume head dresses. What a sight they made solemnly parading across the gymnasium.

Steven Small Salmon called the people together for prayer and an honor song, and then the drums throbbed for the grand entry. Everyone lined up to dance the morning away. At noon, the food was served. They ate as much as they could hold and still the tables were full. There was more dancing after the meal, but soon it was time to go home. Steven Small Salmon asked what we should do with the food, save it or give it away. I waved, “give it away:” so the people lined up with plates and bowls and zip lock bags. When everyone had all they wanted there was still food left over. To me, it seemed a replay of the story of “the Loaves and Fish” from the Bible.

The last thing Mr. Small Salmon said, was,” This is the first time Camas Prairie has held a pow-wow in over eighty years. We will have to do this next year.”

News reporters were kind; there were pictures and stories in three local papers.

A Place for the Word

During the school year each day a time was set aside for the children to spend quietly writing in their journals. I encouraged them to explore different types of compositions, stories, poetry, research, humor. I did not correct or read any of the journals; however, I asked the children on Monday to be prepared to choose something they had written during the week to share with the class on Friday. This allowed them the privacy of their own thoughts, as well as a chance to plan for an audience. Some of the
children filled several notebooks during the course of the year. One second grader wrote exclusively about horses. No matter how I worded the assignment, she managed to figure out a way to work her favorite animal into her story. The students from the fourth grade especially enjoyed writing ‘chapter stories’. The topic of these lengthy narratives was almost exclusively of a “gothic” nature patterned after ghoulish books they have read. But it seemed difficult for them to write a serious story of any length about themselves. During the regular language arts classes though, we explored a more prescribed course. They really enjoyed the time we spent writing poetry. We delved into several different kinds of verses; Haiku, pattern poems, rhyming couplets, descriptive free verse, and fill-in-the-blank jingles. Here are some samples of the class poems that we wrote together:

Horses,
Graceful color
Galloping, loping, parading,
Joy-singer, hoof-dancer
Carrousel

January
light glows on grey rim
Swimming through clouds between us.
Winter Sun.

Butterfly snowflakes
Flutter slowly to the ground,
Dancing on the wind.

Low shadows define snowdrifts
dim upon hill’s brow
Pale liquid sun backlights ridges.
Donna's Poems

I wrote, poems to model the lessons, but also for my own enjoyment:

I See the Blush upon the Stone
Where for ageless dawns the sun
Has shone upon the scriven face
Of mountains
Grown from ancient sea.

There flowing sands have spread,
In alluvial fans across the plains,
The grains of time,
As countless stars
Have tread the vast unpaved sky.

I see the morning light begin again
To haze the shadows from the plain
And silently reveal the trace
That man has scratched upon the place
Where shaggy bison still wandering
graze,

And although dusty trails spread
Through grass and gravel scree of eons
While mortals creep among the graven stones
And grieve for falling leaves,
Dreading the approach of night,
Dormant faith in patient, ancient bones
Inspires
Each dawn's new-born blossom,
As it grows, a living rose.

Thoughts on Seasons Vernal Equinox, 2005
Lost in the lavish luxury of late July is the exquisite
Fineness of close cropped fields
With tender clover leaves unfurling
And slim blades new sprung from moist moss
The first day of spring.
Swans mirrored, redwings flash,
Sapphire shards of sky dip and dive on birds wings,
Lambs bleat,
Cows stand patiently pondering
The advent of their young.
And on the whimsy of youth,
Who have not tasted yet the ecstasy of life,
Is spent the thousand day 'til High June.

I Shall Wear Green Someday
While through tender fields
Silken slippers dance.
And upon velvet shoulders
A golden shawl
Of tawny ripened wheat
Shall sway.
I shall wear green someday
Among the scarlet leaves
Butterflies shall rest
And crickets call,
Snow and ice shall sheath
The naked twig.
And brilliant, distant stars
Wheel slowly on, as darkness falls
I shall await the Sunrise
From my western nest.
My Writing

It is a logical prohibition to save storytelling for long winter nights, as can be seen in the story of the Ant and the Grasshopper from Aesop's Fables. If you play when you should be gathering food and preparing it for winter you will surely be sorry later when the weather gets cold. Native elders tell about learning folk tales from grandparents when they were young saying, "We were not allowed to make up our own stories. We could only repeat what we heard from the elders. Grandmother would say, 'Do not talk of the things you do not know, your mouth isn't big enough. Never change an old story, it must be told exactly as you heard it.' " This was taken from an interview with a tribal elder on a documentary film series "Make Prayers to The Raven" produced by KUAC-TV, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska, in program 102, "The Bible and The Distant Times."

Winter Stories" were told in the evenings around warm fires to help pass the time, as entertaining diversion for snow bound listeners and to pass along the wisdom of countless generations of accumulated knowledge. There were tales of heroes and exploits that taught survival skills. But modern native writers, such as Velma Wallis, Johnny Arlee, and many others, have added their own touches to their story telling.

My story, Mala and the Raven, was written for the little son of my friend Jessica. His father is a Pend d'Orielle, who wanted his son to remember his cultural heritage, so he gave the boy the name Mala at the name giving ceremony a few days after his birth. Mala is the Salish word for raven. I thought about the core values which are so important in native stories; kindness, generosity, humility, loyalty, and respect for elders and then I added that little touch of magic which lends the air of mystery to folk tales.
The story line includes the raven who displays behaviors that I have observed in the birds themselves. The raven is a common character in tribal literature, not only among the Indians across the Americans, but of tribal people throughout the world. With a few minor changes, "Mala and the Raven" could be adapted to Ireland, Scandinavia, Africa, or Asia.

I enjoy sculpting words to fit together like phrases in poetry, like modeling clay. I like to work to smooth out the lines until they flow with natural rhythm. Originally the story was intended to be illustrated by children but so far, that has not been accomplished.

I planned that the story would be a challenge to beginning readers, introducing them to new words, but using vocabulary they were also familiar with. One literary devise children love is repetition. Several phrases are repeated as snatches of a song. This chant is changed during the story to emphasize the point of conflict.

The end result of this story had a surprising twist. I made a copy of Mala and the Raven, bound and gave it to Raven Pierre. His mother, Jessica, told me that she put it away to save for him because she thought it would be valuable someday. She would not allow him to do the illustrations for it. However, later, at school, first grader Raven was hardly able to finish his work because he spent so much time writing, illustrating and binding books, then giving them away to his friends.

Story ideas come to me while I am doing mundane activities such as washing dishes or driving the car on the long road between home and school each day. In the story of Mala, the age of the raven gave me some concern. It seemed incredible that a bird could live so long. But upon researching ravens I found that they, as well as other bird species such as parrots, can actually live to be 60 years or older (Character Sketches, 1983).
In my story the raven talks. Animals characteristically talk in folk tales, which lends a point of mystery to the genre. Ravens belong to a family of birds including crows and magpies, which have the reputation of being able to pick up human speech. This ability is not always mindless parroting but to a limited extent they are able to choose their phrases to fit the occasion. Dr. John Whorter speaks of the ability of animals to communicate, in his lecture on “What is Language”. Because it is a folk tale the story does not require scientific accuracy, however, I felt compelled to keep the details close to nature.

My second story, “Grand Mother Spider the Dream Catcher”, uses another character common to native folk tales. The story resulted from an evening spent learning to make dream catchers and speculating about their origins. When I write a story, it sometimes rushes upon me, often all at once. Then it changes very little from the first idea to the final draft, except for polishing phrases. The idea of Grandmother Spider, a beneficent creature building dream catchers, stems from seeing the lovely orb spider’s webs in early mornings in my flower garden. Sometimes they are sparkling with dew. The beautifully designed button body of the spider in the center of its web reminded me of the large bead woven into the center of a dream catcher.

Spiders make their homes everywhere, from a king’s palace to the lowliest dwellings of nomadic people. Their main job in life is to eat mosquitoes and other flying insects which get caught in their webs. To my way of thinking, it is only a small leap to go from the spider’s web to the dream catcher. I also wrote this story to be illustrated by children, and gave a bound copy to a pre-first grade girl who wanted to learn to read. But she too has not been able to illustrate it for me yet. Perhaps, someday, I will do it myself. (See appendix 4 “A Two-Taled Book)
Symbolism

As a final project presentation for “The Creative Pulse” which I performed for the class of 2005, in July, at the Masquer Theater, I chose to focus my attention to a discussion of a few of the symbols that are common to American indigenous culture and can be found on the Flathead Indian Reservation. I set the stage to represent an Indian village. I used a miniature painted tipi which I have set up as a reading center in my classroom, the drum, “pum-pumin”, a story teller’s pipe mounted on a shield, and a hand drum decorated with a dream catcher. Quilted wall hangings made from modern textile Indian designs, resplendent with symbols, were hung from a wrack. A table displayed various items, including rock paintings, arrow points, weavings, a native style flute made of plumber’s pipe, and a picture of my father and his siblings taken in 1915. Easels displayed my paintings: “Indian Medicine Plants of the Northern Plains”, which was painted in acrylic on canvas, and a watercolor painting, “Secrets of Ashley Lake,” depicted mountain wild flowers that have symbolic meaning.

A poem and stories describing some American Indian symbols was introduced with only one candle lighting the darkened theater.

Following the presentation a feast of native foods was served in the foyer offering: venison, salmon, bannock, wild berries, corn and bitterroot. The poem, stories, a page of recipes used for the feast, and a list of symbolic items featured in the presentation are included in appendix 5.
Conclusion

In conclusion, I have spent a year collecting and presenting information on Native American Culture to the children of Camas Prairie School. It has been my hope that they will find value in their heritage, and begin to develop good self esteem. With a balanced concept of themselves, they will be empowered to go forward, set goals and achieve success in their lives. However, I have made this study also for my own growth with introspective investigation, in order to help me become better equipped to teach the children who pass through my classroom, focusing especially on the areas of reading and writing.

Throughout the year I have attended and participated in a number of workshops that have broadened my understanding of Native American Culture and the needs of children on the Flathead Indian Reservation, and across Montana. However, I have discovered that this year of study is only the beginning of understanding. The topic is multifaceted, and multi-departmental, rich in detail and depth of information to be improved only by further investigation.

Thinking to find a simple topic I chose a subject that had always been near and dear to my heart. However, the scope of the project grew from the speck of an idea, as small as a larkspur seed, to become an all consuming journey, mushrooming until it has nearly overwhelmed every waking moment of my life for the past twelve months. It has taken on even greater meaning and become more poignant to me since the death by violence of my friend Jessica, the mother of Little Raven, Mala.

I have begun to wonder if there will ever be time to develop my own art work and writing, which was one of my original goals. On the other hand while working through the native flute music/art project with the children I spent over 150 hours designing and weaving
five colorful woolen flute cases to exchange for a custom made native flute, carved by a Lakota musician. This cedar flute was created to play two tones at the same time. Both the weaving and learning to play a double flute are artistic expressions that I can look back to with a sense of accomplishment, and anticipate time for future development in both art forms of hand weaving and music.

In looking ahead as a new school year approaches I can see that the study I have made will not be ended when the final project is complete, for I can already see the shining smiles of children as they are packing their new backpacks with new tools to continue their learning process. As eager as ever to discover what new adventures will lay ahead, can I be any less enthusiastic? We will build on what we have gained in this study, and go on searching for more, ever hoping, ever reaching to find ways to gain the goal of turning information into understanding and wisdom.

I can look back to ancient insight that I have learned during the year from my readings, interviews with elders and the workshops I attended, and try to find ways to share it with the children. Elders have said that the spiritual aspect of human nature must not be ignored but be reintroduced into the educational equation in order for Indian children to gain balance in their learning. As a public school teacher trained to filter out any and all religious influences from the classroom this presents a dilemma. I must not infuse my own religious convictions upon the minds of the little ones in my care, nor can I belittle native spirituality by pretending to offer them sacred ceremonies of which I have no real understanding or authority to perform. In the words of Julie Cajune, a Salish tribal educator, such an act would be like baking and serving communion bread in the classroom. But in some way I must lead the children to understand that the unseen aspects of life are of vital importance to their
balanced growth and must not be ignored. They need to learn to make decisions based on critical thinking using skills gained in school and from life experiences in order to evaluate the choices they will be continually faced with as they grow.

Each school year brings a new crop of little ones that need to be nurtured and guided in their growth; not only in the one area of Native American Cultural studies but in a broader appreciation of themselves in the world in which they live; the family, community, state, nation and world.

As a result of my presentation to Montana Small School Alliance at its winter workshop at Great Falls in February, I was asked by the Office of Public Instruction, to join a state committee in Helena, Montana, during July 2005, to help work on creating a teacher's guide and resource materials to support the implementation of “Indian Education for All” a state constitutional amendment. Montana is the only state at this time that requires its public schools to teach Native American History and culture at all levels. This thirty year old mandate has received recent funding and is to be implemented in state public schools when classes begin in September. Although it will be a daunting assignment I am looking forward to the challenge of continuing to work with such an historic committee.

In the mean time I plan to continue including across the curriculum Native American Cultural studies in my regular classroom, with a strong emphasis on the development of reading and writing skills. Using the multiple intelligences approach to learning and teaching I plan to continue applying the use of the seven intelligences to curriculum development, teaching strategies, classroom management, assessment and special needs students in my classroom. I have found the books by Thomas Armstrong and Howard Gardener to be most helpful in understanding these principles. Their writings along with the activities presented
in “The Creative Pulse” at the University of Montana in Missoula, Montana, during the summers of 2003-. 2005, have been the foundation of my understanding and the basis of this study.

Two Paths

I find myself kneeling on a large flat rock in the sunshine,  
On the verge of a remote mountain lake.  
My hand trails in the cool water ruffling its surface.

I can see down through its liquid depths into the mysteries  
Of another world; shadows dart, muted light defuses,  
Playing vaguely on the forms below.

Reaching for a damsel fly I catch the mirrored glimpse  
Of chiseled granite crags above, new capped with too soon snow.

Behind me, rising stately, dark and cool, pine and fir trees stand shoulder to shoulder,  
fragrant in the sun,  
Creating shade where herbs and shrubs are nurtured in the duff of the forest floor.

Through this screen proceed two paths culminating at my feet  
In the dust of one appears the print of hard soled boots,  
While the other reveals moccasin impressions.

Those are not my tracks, though from the two my way is twined. And those are not my paths,  
I cannot go back and hope to find my way.

I must go on from here beyond, beneath, across or over.
Bibliography


ERIC Educational Resources Information Center Digest. Charleston, West Virginia: 


Kootenai Culture Committee Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. Ktunaza


Tolan, Sister Providencia, S.P. *A Shining From the Mountains.* Montreal, Quebec: Sisters of Providence, 1980.


Appendix 1

A Pair of Moccasins: Personal Reflection

The sea chest came home in the back of our 1941 Chevy Coupe. I remember it had straps, brass corners, and a flapping lock. The year was 1950. Mamito and Papito sent the trunk for one of us four kids to sleep on. They had not used it for a long time. Mamito and Papito were my great grand parents. They had been all around the world and back again. Sent by the American Bible Society, they went as ministers, in the late 1890’s, to China, at the beginning of the Boxer Rebellion, then to the Philippines, then on to Nome Alaska during the Yukon gold rush. I have seen an old Brownie Kodak snap shot of the young boy, Teddy, who would become my grandfather, sluicing for gold in rig he had built behind the house where he and his family lived. After Pastor Ralf Van Buren Dunlap completed construction of an orphanage in Nome, the Methodist church sent him to the state of Washington to work among the Indians along the Columbia River. While young Teddy attended the College of Puget Sound graduating in 1918. From there they worked as the circuit riding preacher with perishes in various places among the Indians, both east and west of the Cascade Mountains.

When I was three years old they were in their 80s and were working at a little church in a lodge pole pine forest near White Swan, Washington, on the Yakima Indian Reservation. I remember the long drive from Walla Walla, where we lived to their house. Early Sunday morning we walked with Papito to open the big front door of the church. The air was cool. He allowed us to pull the bell rope and swing as it rang out the call to worship.
I remember Papito, my mother’s white haired grandfather, standing tall behind the pulpit, sunlight streaming in from the open windows, and the scent of piney woods heating up outside. Mamito was playing the old pump organ while the congregation sang. That was the only time I heard Papito preach, I don’t remember a word he said, before he christened my baby sister. He was speaking Chinook Jargon. But the hymn was imprinted in my memory. To this day the words and music take me back to that sunny summer morning in the piney woods over 50 years ago:

“Come Thou Fount of Every blessing
Tune my heart to sing thy praise
Streams of mercy never ceasing
Call for songs of loudest praise
Teach me ever to adore thee,
May I still thy goodness prove...
Here’s my heart Oh take and seal it
Seal it for thy courts above.”

It must have been when they retired to accept a call to Long Beach, California, that they sent us the trunk. It was full of treasures from their life abroad. Mementos from China, beautiful curios, clothes from the 1890’s, embroidered white pineapple cloth, petticoats, shoe buttons, and a lovely white lace “Sunday-go-to-meetin’” dress with whale bone collar and a bustle.

Among the odds and ends was a pair of worn, beaded, buck skin moccasins. They were odd shaped not like the tipi creepers found in the shoe stores in the early 1950’s. So we four kids played with them until they disappeared in the rubble of our toy box. I remember what they looked like. They were side seamed with fringed cuffs and deer hide laces. The bead design was dark and light blue with a bit of red. I scorne
them. They were not store bought like grandma Dorothy always wore with her peddle pushers.

While surveying for the Army Corps of Engineers near Celilo Falls, along the Columbia River, near The Dalles, Oregon, my dad used to bring home small beads and worked shell he found in the sand. One day he asked the family to drive out and pick him up at the end of the week. It was a long drive. Hot. And we had a flat tire along the way. But when we got there he took us to meet a friend.

Her house, more like a shack, was perched on a cliff, above the falls. You could feel the ground shake from the thundering water as it rushed over the stone shelves on its way to the Pacific Ocean. The lady hugged each of us and said, “So these are your kids, Lewie.” She picked us up to show us the water fall saying, “Take a good look honey, because it won’t be here much longer. They’re building a dam that will cover it up soon.” I remember looking at that roaring, green water, churning into foam below us and clinging to my dad. As it turned out, this woman, dad’s friend, had long ago, been his mother’s midwife. She had wrapped him in a little blanket and said the words, now famous in the family,” Him no Injun, him white man.” She ought to know, she was Indian.

Some time later, before I started school, my teeth began to demonstrate their willfulness. Instead of melting away getting loose and falling out like every other child, mine did not. My secondary teeth began growing in behind the primaries. One after another I had to go to the dentist to have them extracted. Then for a long time, for ever, it seemed, I could sing that song,” All I want for Chrithmath ith my two front teeth,”
When they finally did begin to grow in, I was investigating the new oral furniture with my tongue one day. In dismay, I could feel another set of teeth growing in behind the new ones. In a panic I fled to mom. Sure enough back to the dentist we went. Upon checking Dr. Brown said, “No don’t, worry you are not getting another set of teeth. You’ll have to wait till you are old for that, these are good strong teeth and are not coming out soon.’

“Well, what do I feel behind my new teeth then?” I asked, still not convince. He simply said “you have shovel teeth.”

My brain just kind of tucks bits of information away like pieces of a puzzle. Much later, when I learned to read, *The National Geographic Magazine*, had an article that mentioned Indian children were often born with a blue birth mark on their back side, which faded soon after birth, and their incisors were shoveled. Since then I have always tried to be careful with my two front “Injun” teeth.

When I was in college, in the late 1960’s, Dad finally confirmed our suspicions, though he and his whole family had kept silent about it all his life. It was not popular in those days, and no one wanted to speak ill of the dead, but he finally told us. His mother, who had died during the influenza epidemic of 1918, when he was only five years old, Anna Mae Cobb Clair, was from the Osage Indian Reservation in Missouri. He was quick to add she was an educated woman, though. She had graduated from eighth grade in the 1890’s from Haskell Industrial Training Institute, an Indian boarding school, in Laurence, Kansas. So after all those years, the pieces finally fit together. There was a reason I have always been fascinated with all things Indian. When my chance came I jumped at it; to live and work on an Indian Reservation in Montana.
Appendix 2

Symbolism in the Vacation Bible School color book

Page 1. Center: great medicine wheel, with the four sacred colors, black, white, red, yellow. Pointing to the four directions, four seasons of the year, moons beginning each season. Border: Tipi, the houses in each direction of the earth, with reflections in the sky, Mountains with green trees (common symbols)

Page 2. Center: Water lily reflected in pond, human figure reflected, in the is a heart. The lily also makes the solar calendar symbol marking the eight major solar positions. Border: a moon in each corner, stars above, trees below, dragon flies carrying messages from earth to the skies (northern woodland symbols)

Page 3. Center: hand holding earth, water surrounding the circle Border: top corners solar and lunar symbol, bottom corners squash blossoms. Upper border; butterflies, renewing life, bottom; hills of sprouting plants Sides, vines connecting earth and sky (central plains)

Page 4. Center: animals leaping out of canoe after the great flood, birds flying away, canoe in the mountains, rainbow overhead Border: Upper corner lightning, rain clouds, bottom waves, sides; water recedes (South Western)

Page 5. Center; the avenger inside the arch of the earth, before a fire, with children Border; medicine flowers, corners; the garden (Great Lakes)

Page 6. Center: Great War Chief conquering, borders; bottom rain clouds, sides Rope tying earth to sky, Corners; the finished sign. (Great plains)

Page 7. Center; Open, space for hand print, signature symbol Borders; sides, sacred tree of life, top and bottom butterflies, life renewed Corners, the place

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Respecting Our Creator
In the beginning was the word...
And the word was God...
Through him all things were made...
John 1:1-3
Love one another as I have loved you.
John 15:12
In the beginning was the word...
And the word was God...
Through him all things were made...
John 1:1-3
The words I have spoken to you
Are spirit and they are life.
John 7:62
Greater love has no one than this,  
That he lay down his life for his friends.  
John 15:13
I am going to prepare a place for you
And if I go and prepare a place for you,
I will come back again to take you to be
with me, that you may also be where I am.
John 14:2
My peace I leave with you.  
Do not be afraid.  
John 14:27
Appendix 3

TIME FOR TURTLE ISLAND

Montana Small School Alliance
Winter Workshop Great Falls, Mt.
Feb 11, 2005

By
Donna Clair Peck
Camas Prairie School
District #11 Sanders County
BUTTERFLY (Grinding Corn)

Begin Slowly; Increase Speed by Stanzas Hopi Indian Song.

Girls: Grinding corn grinding corn!

[Musical notation]

Boys: Kiowa Choc-taw Onanda-gas Cheyenne

[Musical notation]

Indian maidens grinding corn.

[Musical notation]

Mohawk Chippewa Kootenai Cree

[Musical notation]

God of Rain and sun and sky

[Musical notation]

Seminole Paiute, Apache Quapaw

[Musical notation]

Send the gentle Butterfly.

[Musical notation]

Umatella Arapaho Ute Pawnee.
Math: was a part of native culture through time keeping, trade, and economics. Whether used in weaving or intricate bead designs, or keeping track of the seasons, mathematics, though perhaps not identified, was an integral part of native survival. Native peoples originally used a barter system of economics. They were sharp traders and could be trusted to strike a good deal. They used a lunar calendar of thirteen months, each with 28 days, following the moon's phases. They counted in units of ten. They could navigate across vast distances of wilderness using the stars as a sky map. An understanding of Geometry was demonstrated in the building of their various styles of homes. The Tipi is a perfect example of dynamic engineering, as is flute construction, Community drum playing is another example where math is used.

Science: Native Peoples held all Nature in profound respect; it was to them an honored mother. Nature still gives us all we need to survive. Therefore environmental studies, Man in balance with nature, weather, the web of life, plants and animals, fire safety, forestry, fisheries, hunting, air and water quality and conservation, astronomy, and related topics can all be found within the scope of Indian Culture studies.

Social Studies: The story the way native peoples adapted their life styles to the diverse habitats through which they traveled from the tundra to desert, mountain, and rainforest finding ways to not only survive but enjoy relationships within the tribe, clan and family is social studies in its most interesting form. It is a study of contrast and comparison. Maps and village dioramas depicting various occupations can become classroom or individual student projects

Reading / Literature: hundreds of good Native American story books, in many genres can be found in libraries or book stores or on line; folk lore, documentary, and life stories can be included on a classroom Indian Book Shelf. Children can read and share the book they have read in a council circle format, extending the oral tradition of fire side tales.

Language Arts/ Writing/Speaking: language arts can be extended through Readers- Writers Theater, writing in picture symbols, on story hides, and winter counts, presenting stories and songs that are traditional or child-created in performances, or as “Written and illustrated by’ books.

Art: Indian people were very adaptable. They accepted new technology as quickly as they were exposed to it. Trade cloth was exchanged for animal hides in clothing construction, metal kettles for cooking baskets, horses then automobiles for foot travel. Therefore, it can be considered alright to use non native materials to simulate Indian crafts. Some of these craft ideas are; weaving, beading, leatherwork, stitching, feather decorating, clothing design and construction, dolls, tipi mural painting, pattern designing on graph paper, making paint and dye from natural material, Domestic architecture , i.e. tipi, Hogan, long house, wikitup, wigwam, clapboard house, pueblo, igloo etc. Pictographs, masks of papier-mâché, god’s eyes, dream catcher, pottery, etc.
are other projects that work well. Crumpled brown paper is an acceptable alternative for leather in small crafts.

Music: audio and video drum and flute music, traditional and modern, rhythm band instruments made of wood especially.
Make instruments such as, rain stick, rasp, rattle, bell, flute, drum, whistle, bullroar, etc. Learn and perform songs and instrumentals.

Physical Education: Native American games were used not only for fun and entertainment but to develop life skills. They played rough, but learned to trust their team mates.
But these games can be adapted for modern children.
Shinny: much like field hockey but using a very soft ball, one that won't bounce. Indians used a deer skin ball stuffed with deer hair.
Double ball—much like field hockey but using two tennis balls tied into a sock and thrown across the playing field with the hockey sticks. These are both variations of Lacrosse, another Native American game.
A form of "jacks" was played using knuckle bones or pebbles.
Various hoop games included; throwing darts through a rolling or stationary hoop. Tossing a javelin though a hoop while running
Bean bag toss can be adapted for target practice. Girls as well as boys were expected to have good aim with rocks, arrows etc.
Foot races of various kinds were often played, one such is" Run and Scream". The children take a deep breath and run screaming in a straight line as far as they can, until they run out of air. They must stop where they have to take another breath. The one who runs the farthest on one breath is the winner. This game was fun self defense training.

Go to your library or used book store and browse a while. You will find much treasure out there to develop your imagination in things to do to include Indian studies in your classroom.
A Few Good Books

A brief bibliography of Native American resource books for the elementary teacher

MSSA Winter Workshop Great Falls Mt. Feb 2005

Much ink has flowed offering suggestions for integrating Native American Cultural studies into the elementary school classroom. Hundreds of books are available through your local library, favorite bookstore or online. Here is a list of some of those I have found particularly helpful because of their emphasis on general information which is common to peoples of a broad geographic area.

**Indians of North America**
*Maps National Geographic*
1989 National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C.

**Keepers of the Earth**
*NATIVE AMERICAN STORIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN*
Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac
Fulcrum Publishing, 1997
16100 Table Mountain Parkway, Suite 300
Golden, Colorado 80403-1672
ISBN 1-55591-385-7 (pbk)
(Also as books on Tape version)

**Thirteen Moons on Turtle’s Back**
*A NATIVE AMERICAN YEAR OF MoONS*
Joseph Bruchac and Jonathan London
Paperstar Books1997
Putnam & Grosset Group
348 Hudson Street,
New York, N.Y. 10014
ISBN 0-698-11584-8

**More than Moccasins**
*A KID’S ACTIVITY GUIDE TO TRADITIONAL NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN LIFE*
Laurie Carlson
Chicago Review Press, 1994
ISBN 1-55652-213-4 (pbk)
Chicago Review Press, Inc.
814 North Franklin Street
Chicago, Illinois 60610

**Montana Native Plants**
*AND EARLY PEOPLES*
Jeff Hart
Montana Historical Society Press,
1992, Helena Mt. 59620
ISBN 0-917298-29-2

**Scholastic Encyclopedia Of the American Indian**
James Ciment
With Ronald LaFrance, PhD
Scholastic Inc. 1996

**Encyclopedia of American Indian Contributions to the World 15,000 Years of Inventions And Innovations**

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Emory Dean Keoke and Kay Marie Porterfield
Facts on File, Inc.
132 West 31st Street
New York, New York 10001
2000.
ISBN 0-81690-4052-4

Storm Maker's Tipi
Paul Goble
A Richard Jackson Book
Athenem Books for Young Readers
Simon and Schuster Children's Publishing Division
1230 Avenue of the Americas
New York, New York 10020
2001
ISBN 0-689-84137-x

Paul Goble has many other titles of authentic Native American books for children which he has beautifully illustrated

The Native Americans
The Indigenous People of North America
Colin F. Taylor,
William C. Sturtevant
Smithsonian Institution
A Salamander Book
Smithmark Pub. Inc 1991
112 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10016
ISBN 0-8317-6393-0

North American Indian Stories
Earth Maker's Tales
Gretchen Will Mayo
Walker and Company Inc. 1990
ISBN 0-8027-7343-5(pbk)

Ktunaxa Legends
Compiled and translated by
Kootenai Culture Committee
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
Salish Kootenai College Press
Pablo, Montana 1997
ISBN 0-295-97660-8

Kokopelli's Gift
Kathleen Bryant
Kiva Publishing
Walnut, Ca
2002
ISBN 1-885772-29-7

Native American Flute website
www.nativeaccess.com/ancestral/flute-adv.html

Other topics can be found by searching the web for "how to make: Native American beading, leatherwork, tipi art, toys and games, Moccasin design, basket weaving, blanket and quilt designs etc."

R. Carlos Nakai, Native American Flute Player,
Native American Flute Music,
Canyon Records
3131 West Clarendon Ave, Phoenix Az. 85017
A Two-Tailed Book

Mala and the Raven

And

Grandmother Spider the Dream Catcher

By

Donna Clair Peck
Mala and the Raven

For Mala Raven Pierre

Charlo, Montana

Mala, a small boy, playing beside the doorway of his home, looked down the path that led through his village. Heat waves crinkled the air. Ripe grass heads swayed slightly and baked on their stems in the sun. The sky seemed to hum.

A small painted turtle, drawing a line of fine dots with its feet in the dry dust walked across the path in front of him.

Grinning to himself, he rolled it over with a twig and watched its legs kicking as it struggled to right itself.

Glancing up from his play, Mala saw something a long way off moving slowly towards him on the trail. He watched through the wrinkling heat waves as it drew nearer and nearer.

"Mother, what walks on three legs and flaps great ragged wings?"

From inside, his mother answered, "I do not know, dear son, is a strange riddle."

"Well, then, Mother, what walks on two legs, leans on a stick and has an old bird hopping on its shoulder?" the boy asked again.

"Let me see," she replied as she stepped into the sunlight and shaded her eyes.

There, passing by on the trail, was an old man, leaning heavily on his walking stick.

A blanket thrown across his back flapped...
like tattered wings with each step he took.
His silver hair hung in two braids over his shoulders.
And there, balancing on one foot perched an ancient raven.
It seemed to be muttering into the old man's ear.

"Ah, yes," said the mother,
"Come, son, we must give them something to eat."
So saying she hurried inside and began to gather
bannock, tried berries, and a chunk of tender, cooked meat.

Wrapping these in a piece of buckskin,
she handed it to her son.
"Now take this to the old man with my greetings."

"But Mother," Mala protested, "Mother that is my lunch.
You cannot give that ragged old beggar my food!"

"Go quickly, my son, before he gets too far ahead.
And speak kindly to him."
With that the woman returned to her work.

Mumbling, the child trotted along the trail,
and soon caught up with the old man and the bird.

"My mother sends you her greetings, and also this bundle of food."
Then remembering her final words, he added,
"May you enjoy it."

The Old man stopped and turned around.
It was now plain to see he was blind.

"Your mother is kind, little man.
A kindness always returns. Come closer to me."
The man reached out gently, found the boy's face,
touched the smooth brown cheek with his fingers

A smile creased his weathered face.
"What is you name, child?"

"I am called Mala, Little Raven, and I live with my family
in yonder village." Then after a pause, he added,
"How do you get that bird to stay on your shoulder?
I see nothing tying it down."

Still smiling the old man replied, "Oh, the bands that hold
this raven are stronger now than when we were first bound
together many winters ago.
The answer to your question is a long story.
Walk with me a while and you shall hear it.”

And so they turned again and started along the trail together.

“Long ago, when your great grandfather was about the same size
as you are, Mala, and his teeth were strong and white, he used to
smile a lot. And walk tall and run fast.
A boy lived in his village whose hair was black as a raven’s wing.
He could see things clearly far away and close by.
He was happy and often laughed right out loud as he ran
through the prairie grasses.
This was Little Raven.
He loved to leap over the brow of a hill,
flap his arms and pretend to fly.

‘I am Raven, see me fly.”
He sang just as ravens do.
His song sounded so much like the call of the ravens
with all their chuckles and chatter,
that those great black birds would often come close
to him as he played.

One day as he tumbled head over heels to the bottom of a hill,
a really large raven,
that was sitting on a buffalo berry bush,
called and laughed at him,
then began tossing its song.

“I am Raven, I can fly.
I am strong, the whole sky is mine.
I see beyond the hills.
I sit upon the highest mountain.
I ride the wind and laugh.
I laugh at the sun
As I chase it from the sky
I laugh over the river
It flows away from me.
I laugh at winter
And fly through it.
After all the birds have flown away,
I take whatever I like
I am Raven, I have great power.”

The bird stopped singing long enough to look at the boy

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
and jeer, "You, boy, may be called Little Raven, Mala, but you can never fly. You are tied to the ground just as surely as if a rope were wound around your ankle."

That day Little Raven went home to his family with his head hanging down. He did not feel like laughing for a while.

As days followed each other through the seasons, it seemed to the boy that the raven was right. For he saw it fly high above the river and over the distant hill. He saw the raven chase the sun into the West every evening. And after the cottonwood trees, beside the river, had put on their flame colors and danced their last dance of autumn,---after all the small birds had flown away before winter's blasts, there remained only Raven, flying high in the sky, seeing far beyond the horizon, still laughing and singing.

Little Raven heard it echoing in the cold winter air. "I am Raven. I can fly..."

Late one afternoon, as Little Raven was out hunting rabbits along the creek, he saw something black and ragged tangled in the bare branches of a plum thicket.

“What can be dangling in that tree?” he asked himself, as he crept closer, through the twilight shadows.

Then he saw it was Raven hanging there upside down. Its foot was pinned by a sharp thorn. The raven had struggled to free itself. It had twisted and turned and pulled and yanked, but could not get loose.

Now its wings were shredded and its leg was pulled crooked. Little Raven wondered if the creature was even alive for it hung there so limp.

He carefully reached up and worked the birds foot free. Yes, there was still some breath left in that tangle of feathers little Raven held it close under his robe, and carried it home.

On a soft bed near the fire he placed it gently... everyone came to see what Little Raven had brought home, then shaking their heads they looked away.
The boy sprinkled a few drops of water into the ravens gaping bill. Its black tongue moved slightly. A few more drops of water and the bird’s eyelids seemed to flutter. Then it sighed, and fell into a deep sleep.

Little Raven watched by the embers of the low burning fire far into the night, but there was no change in the bird. Morning came, he gave it more water. Patiently the boy watched and softly sang, “I am Raven, I can fly…”

Slowly spirit began to return to that limp little body, until it again took of the firmness of a living creature. Little Raven tended it faithfully day by day through the long, hungry winter, sharing with the bird bits of his own food.

As the sun grew stronger in the sky, so also did strength steadily return to the raven. At first it spread its wings gingerly later with more confidence. Then while out in the warm sun it flew a short distance.

But it could only hop on the ground or sit still for the leg that had been caught on the thorn was shriveled and useless.

From that day on Little Raven and the raven were always together. The bird would fly over head, see above the hills and over the river. It watched as the sun set. But it would never fly far from the one who had saved its life.

If there was danger Raven would call a warning. If strangers approached, Raven sent the message on ahead. If there was game to be hunted, Raven led the way. And on long journeys Raven helped the people find water.

When the bird was not in the sky, it rode on Little Raven’s shoulder. The boy grew to be a man and found many ways to be helpful to his village. And always the raven stayed with him.”

The old man paused in his tale, a-glow with the light of eighty remembered summers, then went on.

“Now I am Old Raven. My eyes have gone dark. But this raven still sits on my shoulder and helps me find my way. He sings to me.
This is what he sings:
'I am Raven I can fly.
Thanks to the sun that warms me,
Thanks to the wind that lifts me,
Thanks to the earth that feeds me,
Thanks to the river that washes me,
Thanks to the home that shelters me,
Thanks to the friend that loves me,
I am Raven I can fly.'

The man stopped his singing.
He faced the boy, "I am Old Raven, you are Little Raven, Mala. Remember the song. Sing it as you walk back to your village. And always remember, Kindness returns."

As Mala started home, the late afternoon sun swung low on the horizon. He sang, I am Raven, I can fly thanks to the wind that lifts me..."

As his song drifted off into the deep blue sky, a shiny black feather floated down out of the vastness overhead. It settled on the small boy's shoulder.

* * * * * * * *

Grandmother Spider the Dream Catcher

High above the ground where tall tipi poles lean together
Forming a cone,
Lacey against the stars on clear nights,
Lived Grandmother Spider.

She spent her days wandering in and out
Between the tamarack poles
With their dry tassel tops,
This was her world, high above the ground.

She smelled the smells of the grass lands
Dewy at dawn, and dusty ad sundown.

Whether Sun hammered in the heat of day,
Or wind's arrows pierced chill,
She paid them little thought.  
She busied herself searching  
For food in the lights and shadows of her home.

Seventeen poles tied together;  
Fifteen poles shaped into the ribs of the tipi  
Two to hold up its sharp ears;  
Straight lodge poles held together with twisted cord,  
Spun from plant fiber.  
This was her world.

She spun her thread too.  
Though not of dog bane, or sweet clover,  
But of silk,  
Softer than thistle down, and strong.  
She spun her silk on her spinneret  
With one back foot.

Grandmother Spider wove her web,  
Round and delicate,  
Like a little fish net among the poles  
In the night, stars glittered through it  
Like gleaming beads.

Smoke rising from the hearth below,  
Smelling of sage or sweet grass or cedar,  
Filtered passed her,  
Fragrant and tangy.

Sparks snapped in the darkness sometimes  
Like little winged things  
Flying out of the embers.

Other winged things that hum in the day light  
And whine in the night,  
Fly, hunting through the tipi poles,  
Seeking warmth and food,  
Down in the darkness,  
Among the sleepers.

There, brown eyes, bright as beads  
Gaze drowsily at the embers, waiting and listening.

"Oh but close those big brown eyes, little Peeper.  
Slip away to sleep.  
High above you Grandmother Spider
Has hung her web, her dream catcher.
No biter can steal passed her
To rob you in your slumber.
No whiner will come to nip you with bad dreams.

They will be caught in her net.
Only happy dreams come through to you.

So go to sleep, Little Peeper,
Grandmother Spider has done her work well.
Appendix 5

**Final Presentation**

We travel in a great circle:

The Sun rises in the morning.

Its heat grows stronger as it crosses the sky

Then diminishes at sun set

And dissipates as night comes on.

So it is with life,

We are born into the red sunrise of childhood,

Our strength increases throughout youth,

We reach our golden maturity and find our task,

Then pass into our rest as night falls.

We live within a sacred circle,

We all are part of the same family;

Brothers and sisters living upon the earth,

Black, Red, White, and Yellow the sacred colors,

Human kind.

The Sacred circle is empowered by four basic elements

Fire, water, air, and earth.

These forces activate our lives and are gifts for our use

We respect them.
There are four aspects to our nature

Physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual

Each of these aspects must be equally developed

In order to achieve balance

and maintain equilibrium in life.

With in each of us is a seed

That has the potential of becoming a great forest

We must look for gifts that will aid in our growth

In the east we will find joy and renewal

In the south we will find strength and love

In the west we will find perseverance and spiritual understanding

In the north, as in our elders, we will find wisdom.

But our home is the center of the great circle,

As in a medicine wheel,

There our journey should always return

Morning and evening we must remember

To give thanks for the life within us.

All around us are things that can help us learn, if we only look.

Look at your hand let the thumb be “ME”. If you look at the side view

All you see is the thumb. “Me” becomes the central focus.

But if you look at your hand, palm side open, the other aspects of your
nature become visible;
The Thumb is me
The first finger is for the physical aspect, what I can do
The second finger is for the emotional aspect. How I feel
The third finger is for mental aspect ...what I think, my choices and commitments
The pinky, the smallest, needs help so it looks up
Recognizing its need it stands for the spiritual aspect of human nature.

When you go out of doors, look up. What do you see? What do you hear?
What do you feel? What do you smell? What can you taste? The five sense
are the doors to your mind. Guard the doors. Do not let the enemy get in
with pollution. Be careful of what you look at, what you listen to, what you
say, and what you smell and taste. You must learn to make wise choices.

Look up. Look to the mountains with their snow covered tops. It is like the
white hair on the head of the elders. The snow like wisdom flows
down from the heights to bring cooling water to the thirsty forest.
The wisdom of the snow nourishes its children. The trees are symbols or
our children. We must care for them. We must guard them from things in
our world that would harm them: Substances and influences.

Steven Darnel, of Flagstaff Arizona, a spiritual leader of the Navajo nation
Told me these things...He said all creation has symbols that can teach us
What we need to learn if we open up to them. Listening not just with our
ears, but also with our minds, and Hearts, and spirits.

Take a little thing, -- a kernel of corn. You can eat the kernel or
plant it. You will have food or a harvest. The corn has become a
symbol ripe with much meaning. Corn is one of the gifts Indian people have given to the world. It has become one of the main agricultural crops in a global economy providing food and employment everywhere.

Symbols are like that, little buttons. Simple things that can carry many layers of meaning. Tipi, turtle, pipe, drum. These are some of the symbols that you can see today.

Here is my lodge, my tipi. It is round like a nest, a place for young children to be nurtured. It is a place to find food, shelter and safety within the family circle. The village is a circle of nests.

The tipi is feminine, wherein babies are born. The hearth fire is tended by the woman. She is the keeper of sacred fire. She carries embers from the hearth fire in a turtle shell when the village moves, so that there will always be fire to make food and to warm her family when they are cold and tired.

When the husband comes home from hunting, whether or not he has been successful, the fire will be at the center of his lodge to welcome him home.

The turtle is a symbol of home and family too, of shelter, food and preparedness. Old Joe Phillips told me this. And he is gone now.

Francis Stanger, Pend d’Orielle elder, from Lone Pine said, “When Creator had finished making all the animals, He took the left-overs and made Turtle. In it you will find some of every kind of meat; Dark and light chicken, fish, buffalo. Maybe that is why the turtles had to go to war with men one time.

People had to learn not to be greedy, not to eat every turtle they saw.

Turtles are very wise. They keep a calendar on their back.
The days of the month are around the edge of the shell, and the 13 moons of the year are shields on the shell.

A story is told about turtle...

Long, long ago before the earth was, there was only water, all the birds and animals were swimming around in it. Far above in Sky land, near the Sacred Tree, lived the Great Sky Chief and his wife who was expecting a child.

One night she dreamed that the Sacred tree was uprooted. She told her husband of the dream and he became very sad.

"Why are you so sad husband?" the woman asked.

"Dreams of this kind are very powerful." he replied. "We must do all we can to make it come true."

So he called all his helpers to pull the great tree over.

As hard as they pulled, it would not move. Finally the Great Sky Chief himself started pulling on it. At last with a shudder the tree fell over, its massive roots in the air.

There was a deep hole in the ground of Sky land made when the tree uprooted. The great Sky Chief and his wife went to look down into the whole. Way, way down, they could see the water and the animals swimming around in it.

The woman, holding onto a branch, leaned over to get a better look, and slipped. She lost her grasp, slid down the branch and she fell through the whole in the ground of Sky Land. But still clutched in her hand were some seeds from the Great Tree. Down, down she fell.
Looking up the animals in the water saw her falling.

"Someone is falling From the sky," they cried.

Two swans flew up to catch her in their wings and brought her down slowly.

"Look they said, "she is not like us, she does not have webbed feet, she is not made to live in water. What shall we do?"

"I have heard" said one of the birds, "that far below sea is earth, if we can swim down and get some, then she will have a place to stand."

One by one the birds and animals tried to swim to the bottom to find earth and bring it up, but each one failed, it was too far and too deep.

Finally the little muskrat said she would swim down in search of earth.

Neither strong nor swift as some of the other animals were, had they doubted that she could make it. She swam till she thought her lungs would burst.

Just before she went unconscious she reached out her tiny paw grabbed and a bit of earth then floated up.

The other animals saw her break the surface and thought she was dead.

But tight in her paw was a little bit of earth.

"She has earth," they said. "Now where can we put it?"

"Here, put it on my back," said the Great turtle. They placed her paw with the bit of earth on Turtle’s back. Almost immediately it began to grow and grow until it became the whole world.

When the two swans set Sky Woman on Turtle’s back, she opened her hand letting seeds from the great tree fall onto the bare soil. From those
seeds sprang up all the trees and plants. Life on earth had begun. To this day some still call the world “Turtle Island.”

Many variations of this tale have been told by the people, but this one came from the Onondagas in the Eastern Woodlands and was found in *Keepers of the Earth* by Michael J. Caduto, and Joseph Bruchac.
Some Symbolism of the Tipi
1. The Tipi is a circle built on mother earth. It is female, the place of mother, keeper of the fire
2. It is a nest nurturing the young
3. a village is a circle of nests
4. The door faces east to allow the sunrise to shine in to joyfully awaken the sleepers
5. the sun shining in through the smoke hole keeps track of the solar year; the light on the wall marks the month
6. my tipi is a storytelling lodge
7. starting at the bottom is a black stripe symbolizing the earth
8. the blue symbolizes water and all the life within it
9. the green strip represents the dry land with plants upon it
10. the mountains and valleys rise purple
11. the footprints of many animals have made trails down to the water
12. red suns rise above the mountain tops, yellow suns set in the valleys
13. red and yellow bands encircle the top of the lodge counting days
14. on the ears of the tipi are the solar disk, the lunar orb, and the north star in its constellation
15. between the earth and the heavens creatures fly
16. the humming bird is a for bravery
17. the dragonfly is a messenger between earth and sky
18. the butterfly reminds us that life changes and goes on
19. the turtle above the door represents Turtle Island, the place we live

Symbolism of the Drum
1. the drum is the heartbeat of mother earth
2. it brings people together in unity

Symbolism of the Pipe
1. the pipe is the vessel through which smoke ascends to heaven,
2. Smoke is the visible form of prayers
3. there is much deeper significance to the pipe
4. this pipe is a storyteller, a woman's pipe
5. It tells of the great red hawk that carried the seed from the tree of life out onto the prairie.
6. It grew into the tree of life which sustains all creatures
7. Feathers also remind us that birds can ascend into the heavens to carry messages
**Native American Feast**

**Bannock**
Bannock originally came to North America with the Hudson’s Bay Company fur trappers in the late 1700’s. It was an immediate success with the native people who adopted it to available ingredients of the north wilderness:

- 4 cups coarse multi-grain meal (wheat, oats, barley, corn, other)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon soda
- 2 eggs
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- 1 cup raisins, currents or other berries (elderberries etc.)
- 1 15 oz. can applesauce

Heat griddle in oven at 350°F
Mix dry ingredients in a bowl
Mix all wet ingredients together.
And add to dry, Add Raisins. Stir until all the flour is moist. Let the dough sit while you lightly grease hot griddle
Put dough onto griddle and bake for about 30 minutes. Serve with jam or butter. Early people used to bake bannock in a skillet on the campfire using a reflector oven.

**Salmon Dip**
Canned Salmon mashed
Salad Dressing of choice
Mix chopped pimento, chives, mustard
Serve with corn chips

**Minced venison**
Cook minced venison slowly overnight in tomato sauce with herbs, garlic, and salt. Serve hot

**Bitter Root Sauce**
The Bitterroot was one of the first plant foods ready to eat in the early spring. Native people enjoyed going to the digging grounds to gather it as a community. With prayers of thanksgiving they celebrated the coming on another spring. It could be eaten raw, cooked or dried for later use. A hungry traveler could eat it while on the move.

Dig the bitterroot plant before the flower emerges. Discard the top but replant the flower’s heart so it can grow a new plant.
Clean and peel the roots. Immerse in water, And boil until tender.
Season to taste with your choice of herbs
The sauce is quite bitter, I added:
- chopped garlic blossoms
- wild onions or chives, dill weed, basil, sage to taste. And 2 table spoons of lemon juice (lemon Juice helps to balance the bitter flavor)

Or add to berries with sugar

**Huckleberry Cream Cheese Spread**

Boil huckleberries in a pan, cool
Blend cream cheese and powdered sugar.
Stir into berries. Too much powdered sugar makes the berries syrupy. Serve with bannock

**Wild Berry Punch**
1 Quart wild berries boiled and blended (strained if desired)
1 cup honey, blend thoroughly
Add 3 quarts lemon soda or ginger ale
Chill and serve

---

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.