

**Introduction to Children's Books: A Pathfinder
for Native American Families**

**Jennifer M. Kern
October 17, 2001**

**LIS 382L.2
Information Resources in the Humanities
Dr. Loriene Roy**

Introduction to Children's Books: A Pathfinder for Native American Families

http://www.gslis.utexas.edu/~ifican/resources/resources_index.html

"Let us put our minds together, and see what life we will make for our children"
-Tatanka Iotanka (Sitting Bull)*

Introduction

Historically, images and stories found in children's books about Native Americans were written, illustrated and published by non- Native people. Most of these books inaccurately and inappropriately represented Native American cultures. More recently with the growing awareness of the necessity for accurate, truthful representation of world cultures in children's publishing, there has been an increase in the number of children's books dedicated to Native American cultures. The goal of this pathfinder is to provide sources to Native American families that will enable them to evaluate, select and acquire excellent children's books, both those that focus on Native cultures and general children's literature as well.

This pathfinder is intended to be incorporated on the website of the "If I Can Read, I Can Do Anything" project, a national reading promotion program, which strives to encourage literacy within Native communities. Detailed information about the project can be found at the following address: <http://www.gslis.utexas.edu/~ifican>. Although this pathfinder will be accessible to anyone on the World Wide Web, I have selected most of the sites with the Native community as an intended audience, particularly adults and children who would like to learn more about children's books. With the aid of this pathfinder, patrons will be able to find answers to questions such as: Where can I find a brief introduction to evaluating children's books that portray Native Americans? Where

can I learn about selecting quality children's books for my family? Where can I locate electronic sources about Children's Literature? Where can I search for award-winning children's books? Are there any sites on the web that could help my child become a better reader? Can I purchase children's books online?

All the sources included in this pathfinder are available free through the Internet. The most important evaluation criteria I used in selecting sources was whether the sites were written by a Native American, endorsed by a Native American, and/or inclusive of a Native American perspective. I also selected sources that would be useful to adults and children. I began my search by visiting the search engine, *Google* and entering the search terms <"native american sites">. My first result was "*Native American Sites*", (<http://www.nativeculture.com/lisamitten/indians.html>) and from this site I was able to subsequently locate many sites found in this pathfinder.

* Oyate. Oyate.org. <<http://www.oyate.org/>> (16 October 2001).

Introduction to Children's Books: A Pathfinder for Native American Families

Annotated Bibliography

Style Manual Cited:

Harnack, Andrew, and Eugene Kleppinger, "Chicago Manual of Style,"
Online! A Reference Guide for Using Internet Sources, 2000,
<<http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/online/cite7.html>> (13 October 2001).

1. Caldwell-Wood, Naomi and Lisa A. Mitten. "A Selected Bibliography and Guide for
"I" is not for Indian: The Portrayal of Native Americans in Books for Young
People" 29 June 1991, <<http://www.nativeculture.com/lisamitten/ailabib.htm>>
(1 October 2001).

Naomi Caldwell-Wood and Lisa A. Mitten compiled this selective bibliography for a program held by the American Indian Library Association at the American Library Association Annual conference in 1991. Summaries and criticisms are included for books that they recommend, as well as for books they suggest to avoid. Guides for selecting books, sources of current reviews, and places to find books on Indians are also provided. A list of "things to look for", written in question format, is very useful for evaluating children's books about American Indians. This bibliography is cited often on other Native-authored web pages.

2. Anthropology Outreach Office, Smithsonian Institution. "A Critical Bibliography on
North American Indians, For K-12", 20 August 2001,
<<http://nsmnhwww.si.edu/anthro/outreach/Indbibl/index.html#ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS>>
(1 October 2001).

Compiled by the Anthropology Outreach Office of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, this bibliography is a guide to choosing "historically accurate and culturally sensitive" books about American Indians and Alaska Natives. Beyond merely describing the storyline and plots of children's books, this bibliography critically evaluates illustrations and descriptions of Native people, which is quite uncommon in mainstream reviews. Over eight hundred books are reviewed and categorized by geographic region, then by tribe, and further divided into fiction, non-fiction, biographies and traditional stories. This is a reliable source to aid in the selection of children's books that focus on Native Americans.

3. Leitich Smith, Cynthia, "Children's Books with Native American Indian History, Themes and Characters," *Home Page*, 5 October 2001, <<http://www.cynthialeitichsmith.com/NativeThemes.htm>> (1 October 2001).

A children's and young adult book author and enrolled member of the Muscogee-Creek Nation, Cynthia Leitich Smith hosts an extensive site dedicated to children's literature. This is a direct link to a section of her web page that specifically focuses on children's books with Native American Indian history, themes and characters. Following the link provided here, you can search through separate categories of books, such as picture books or short stories for critical reviews and commentary. Helpful related links are often included at the close of many annotations. Cynthia Leitich Smith Children's Literature Resources also publishes a free, quarterly online newsletter that features interviews with authors and illustrators as well as additional book reviews.

4. Whitewolf, George, "Home Page," 1998, <<http://216.156.75.23/articles/article1.htm>> (4 October 2001).

The Checklist for Evaluating Native American Children's Books was written by Dovie Thomason and is published on George Branham-Whitewolf's home page, a Monacan/Sioux Indian. Written entirely in question format, this is a clear and concise introduction to evaluating children's books that portray Native Americans. The checklist is divided into three sections; the first focuses on illustrations, another deals with vocabulary issues and the final section discusses other elements of a story, such as whether the author or reviewer of the book is Native or knowledgeable about Native peoples. This would be a great article to share with other families who may not have the time to read a lengthy book on children's literature. I suggest you print it out and keep it around for future reference.

5. Native American Authors, *The Internet Public Library*, 25 July 2001, <<http://www.ipl.org/ref/native/>> (5 October 2001).

The Internet Public Library is a modern, cyber version of the old-fashioned public library. Originally a student project for the School of Information and Library Studies at the University of Michigan, this website is an extensive and thorough resource for investigating Native American authors. You can search by author's name, title or tribe. Each author entry notes the culture of the author, suggests online resources available and provides brief bibliographic details about his/her work. If you choose to browse by title, you will be provided with basic bibliographic information, such as publisher name, genre, and intended audience. A search by tribe will lead you to links of authors of that particular culture and

online resources regarding that tribe. Over 480 authors and 1500 books are included on this regularly revised and updated site.

6. Giese, Paula, "Native American Books," *Native American Indian: Art, Culture, Education, History, Science*, 17 December 1996, <<http://www.kstrom.net/isk/books/bookmenu.html>> (7 October 2001).

The creator of this substantial site, Paula Giese, an Ojibwa, passed in 1997, but her work continues to live on the web thanks to her family, friends and colleagues who maintain her web page. This link directly escorts you to the "Native American Books" section where you can access in-depth, critical reviews of nearly three hundred children's books, organized by age group, subject, tribe, or title. The author suggests searching by subject. A thumbs-up symbol marks recommended titles, which are strongly suggested for purchase. A thumbs-down symbol denotes books that are poorly written, factually inaccurate, and biased; in general, they are not recommended and should be weeded from library collections. For direct, honest book reviews from Native people, visit this site.

7. Hurst, Carol, "Carol Hurst's Children's Literature Website," *Home Page*, September 2001, <<http://www.carolhurst.com/index.html>> (5 October 2001).

A well-designed web site, this source contains reviews of books recommended by Carol Hurst, a storyteller, lecturer, author, consultant, and former school librarian. Reviews are graded according to a three star method, one for recommended, two for a highly recommended book, and three for an outstanding book. An added bonus is a section that follows the review entitled, "Things to Notice and Talk About." You may search for reviews by author, title or by grade level (Pre-K through 9th). A free monthly newsletter offers news, a featured book review with suggested activities, related books and links to the Internet. An additional index groups books according to a particular theme; please follow this link to an article about Native Americans: <http://www.carolhurst.com/subjects/nativeamericans.html>

8. Brown, David K., "Children's Literature Web Guide," *Home Page*, 22 April 1998, <<http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/>> (5 October 2001).

David K. Brown, Director of the Doucette Library of Teaching Resources and experienced with children's materials, has compiled and organized an extensive directory of Internet sources dealing with books for children and young adults. A simple opening page initially breaks the resources into categories, such as discussion boards and quick reference. This site is very thorough in its inclusion of award-related sites, such as the Newberry award given annually to the best

American children's book author and the Caldecott award for the best American illustrated book of the year. The link to *Stories on the Web* under the *More Links* category will direct you to a variety of online, "picture books" and is well worth investigating. An annotated list of electronic journals and book reviews is a great link to bookmark for future reading on the subject of children's books. You may also directly search the entire site by following the "search this site" icon, located at the very bottom of the opening page.

9. Bartley, Lisa R., "Database of Award-Winning Literature," *Home Page*, 6 March 2001, <<http://www2.wcoil.com/~ellerbee/childlit.html>> (12 October 2001).

Sometimes we may wander the aisles of our local library and magically come upon exactly the type of quality book we were searching for. However, the best books are often not so easy to find and so using a database that compiles information on hundreds of award-winning books can make the hunt a lot simpler. Before searching the database, I recommend reading through some of the *Instructions* (the third link below *Search Database*) to better understand how to create a useful search. You will be able to limit your search query by age, historical period, language and ethnicity, to name a few options. You may also combine those limitations with keywords that you'd like to occur in the story, such as frog or elk. To read more about the different types of children's book awards, follow the link, *Awards*. Once you've organized a list of books, head down to your library and if they don't currently hold the title, ask your librarian about Inter-Library loans.

10. Ubbes, Valerie A. Ph.D, CHES, "Children's Picture Book Database at Miami University," 10 September 2001, <<http://www.lib.muohio.edu/pictbks/>> (12 October 2001).

The database, designed by Valerie A. Ubbes, PhD, CHES, (Certified Health Education Specialist) and an assistant professor of health education at Miami University, contains abstracts of over five thousand picture books for children. There are three different ways to search this database: you can search by keyword search, which is broken into categories such as Social Studies and Mathematics. You may alphabetically search through keyword categories and finally, you may search in additional fields, like author or publisher. This site is particularly useful when searching for books for children, preschool through grade three. Your child may be enthralled by snow and you would like to create an exhaustive list of picture books that concern this topic. Use the *keyword search by category*, follow the Nature History and Natural Science category, enter and then scroll down until you find *snow*. The abstracts are brief; however, remember this is **not** a source for reviews, but rather a source to use when you are looking for books that focus on a specific topic.

11. Kennedy, Elizabeth, "Children's Books," *About – The Human Internet*, 13 October 2001, <<http://childrensbooks.about.com/index.htm?terms=children%27s+books>> (13 October 2001).

Your guide to this categorized directory of web sources regarding children's books is Elizabeth Kennedy, a former elementary school teacher, museum educator and writer. With so much information available on the World Wide Web, I recommend searching for areas that interest you or your child via this "Human Internet." What makes the entire *About.com* site unique is that all the links are researched, evaluated, and compiled by actual humans, as opposed to a computer generated list of links produced by a common search engine. Use the side bar of topics to begin your search and then follow the annotated links to a site that appeals to you. Make note of the bulletin board feature (click on the **Forum** link in the top left-hand corner), where you can connect with other individuals who share an interest in children's books. Be sure to do a search for "Horn Book Magazine", an excellent source of book reviews.

12. Nativeculture. *Nativeculture.com*, 23 September 2001, <<http://www.NATIVECULTURE.COM/learn/>> (11 October 2001).

Nativeculture.com is a portal communication site, which offers its patrons an appealing and well-focused path to learn about the vast offerings on the Internet, with particular emphasis placed on sites that may be of interest to Native people. The *Update* category provides links to online Native American news services, as well as conventional news services. In the *Learn* section, you will find helpful links to "tribes and nations", "arts and expression" and "featured articles," to name just a few categories. You can relax and listen to music by connecting to AIROS – American Indian Radio on Satellite while reading summaries of recommended children's books. I have included this source in my pathfinder because it not only does serves as a searching tool, but it also helps you locate cultural events, like Pow Wows, and provides free e-mail and discussion services. If you would like to "meet" and discuss children's books with other Native families, this is an ideal place to get started.

13. Timmons, Mary P., "World of Reading," *Ann Arbor District Library*, <<http://www.worldreading.org/>> (13 October 2001).

Mary P. Timmons has created a web page that allows children an opportunity to write book reviews and share them online and/or read other kids' book reviews. There are numerous sites dedicated to adults and their opinions about children's books, which indeed serve a valuable purpose, but the majority of content on this site is by kids and for kids. Children can search for a book they're interested in reading by title or by browsing through categories, such as adventure, fantasy or

survival. The reviews are generally brief, but what's more important is the chance for kids to read what other kids are saying about books. To submit a review, a child may fill out the online form and ask permission from a parent, teacher or librarian. I think this site is a great way to expose children to reading and to encourage them to share their bright ideas with other kids..

14. Kidbibs. *Kidbibs International*, 13 October 2001, <<http://kidbibs.com/home.htm>> (13 October 2001).

Kidbibs is a dynamic and lively site dedicated to helping kids become better readers. Both children and the adults who care for them can make use of the varied resources accessible through this site. For example, the *Learning Tips* section (click on the pencil icon from the opening page) provides adults with specific, practical strategies to motivate their children to read, such as establishing a routine time to visit the library together or sharing with your child a book that you absolutely loved when you were a kid. The *Grow-A-Reader Booklist* category (click on the leaf icon from the opening page) breaks readers into age groups, provides an overview of language and literary development, highlights reading interests for each particular age group and suggests books that would likely appeal to children of that age group. You can use this site along with your child to investigate new and enthralling books before heading to the library. Kids will also find homework help and safe, cool sites to visit on the Internet.

15. Sylvan Book Adventure Foundation, *Book Adventure*, 2000, <<http://www.bookadventure.org/>> (12 October 2001).

A non-profit organization, The Book Adventure Foundation, offers this free resource with the goal of encouraging children to read independently and with great frequency. A child submits their age, reading level, a preference for fiction or non-fiction and then selects five types of books they like to read. A list of suggested books is created and the child can take this list to the library and look for titles which appeal to him/her. After the child has finished reading a book, he/she may take a multiple choice exam to test their comprehension. A point system is employed and once a child has earned enough points, they can visit the *Prize Library* where they can select items such as a free kid's cup from TCBY or temporary tattoos. There are also online games, awards, and a *Tools* section that is designed for kids by kids, which links to online dictionaries, encyclopedias, and news agencies. This site is a fine example of combining traditional learning (i.e. reading books) with modern technology. Furthermore, it is a fantastic companion for children while they read.

16. Oyate. Oyate.org. <<http://www.oyate.org/>> (1 October 2001).

Oyate, the Dakota word for people, is the name of a Native organization that is dedicated to promoting accurate, truthful portrayals of Native people in children's literature as well as in materials for teachers. Oyate's catalog contains reviews of books by and about Native people and directly allows you to support this non-profit Native organization by purchasing your children's books with their service. Teachers and other interested adults may also attend workshops where they can learn to critically examine books for an anti-Indian bias. If you are looking for a place to buy reliable books written by or about Native people, avoid chain stores and support this site that respects and honors cultural traditions.

17. The North American Native Authors Online Catalog. NativeAuthors.com <<http://www.nativeauthors.com/index.html>> (11 October 2001).

Here is another alternative to purchasing books from large, chain stores. The Native American Authors Online Catalog is an extension of the Native American Authors Distribution Project, which was founded in 1980 and sells books at Northeastern Pow Wows, book fairs and through direct mail. On the opening page you will find a search engine where you can enter the search terms, "children's books", which will lead you to a list of numerous titles. Just click on the highlighted link for a brief annotation of the book and an opportunity to add that title to your virtual "shopping cart." You may read about featured authors by following the links from the left sidebar. This site is **not** for kids literature exclusively, so you may want to spend some time browsing around and then pick up a book for yourself. If your child observes you reading, they will follow your lead.

18. Morgan, Robert, "Creative Ways to Encourage Reading," *Creative Teaching Home Page*, 22 January 2001, <<http://www.creativeteachingsite.com/read1.htm>> (11 October 2001).

You may have the most wonderful collection of books assembled for your child, but what do you do if he/she is not interested in reading them? Robert Morgan, a teacher with over thirty years experience, offers twenty-six insightful ideas to stimulate your children's interest in reading. One idea I particularly like is setting aside a time when the whole family reads together and of course, remember to establish a routine of visiting the library.

Introduction to Children's Books: A Pathfinder for Native American Families

http://www.gslis.utexas.edu/~ifican/resources/resources_index.html

Historically, images and stories found in children's books about Native Americans were written, illustrated and published by non- Native people. Most of these books inaccurately and inappropriately represented Native American cultures. More recently with the growing awareness of the necessity for accurate, truthful representation of world cultures in children's publishing, there has been an increase in the number of children's books dedicated to Native American cultures. The goal of this pathfinder is to provide sources to Native American families that will enable them to evaluate, select and acquire excellent children's books, both those that focus on Native cultures and general children's literature as well.

Where can I find a brief introduction to evaluating children's books that portray Native Americans?

- "The Checklist for Evaluating Native American Children's Books"
<http://216.156.75.23/articles/article1.htm>

Where can I learn about selecting quality children's books about Native Americans for my family?

- "A Selected Bibliography and Guide for "I" is not for Indian: The Portrayal of Native Americans in Books for Young People"
<http://www.nativeculture.com/lisamitten/ailabib.htm>
- "A Critical Bibliography on North American Indians, For K-12"
<http://nsmnhwww.si.edu/anthro/outreach/Indbibl/index.html#ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS>

Where can I search for extensive reviews of Native American children's books?

- "Native American Books"
<http://www.kstrom.net/isk/books/bookmenu.html>

Where can I easily locate electronic resources about Children's Literature?

- "Carol Hurst's Children's Literature Website"
<http://www.carolhurst.com/index.html>
- "Children's Literature Web Guide"
<http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/>

Where can I search for quality children's books?

- "Database of Award-Winning Literature"
<http://www2.wcoil.com/~ellerbee/childlit.html>
- "Children's Picture Book Database at Miami University"
<http://www.lib.muohio.edu/pictbks/>

Are there sites on the Web that could help my children become better readers?

- "World of Reading"
<http://www.worldreading.org/>
- "Kidbibs"
<http://kidbibs.com/home.htm>
- "Book Adventure"
<http://www.bookadventure.org/>

Can I buy children's books online?

- "Oyate"
<http://www.oyate.org/>
- "The North American Native Authors Online Catalog"
<http://www.nativeauthors.com/index.html>

How can I encourage my children to read and enjoy it?

- "Creative Ways to Encourage Reading"
<http://www.creativeteachingsite.com/read1.htm>

Best of luck!

If you need any help, don't hesitate to ask a Librarian!

Prepared by: Jennifer M. Kern, MLIS Candidate
The Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Texas at Austin
If you have any questions or comments about this pathfinder, please contact me at juanita13@hotmail.com.