

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

American Indian Stereotypes in the World of Children: A Reader and Bibliography. Second Edition. By Arlene Hirschfelder, Paulette Fairbanks Molin, and Yvonne Wakim.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5xb334d0>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 25(1)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Darby, Jaye T.

Publication Date

2001

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

REVIEWS

American Indian Stereotypes in the World of Children: A Reader and Bibliography. Second Edition. By Arlene Hirschfelder, Paulette Fairbanks Molin, and Yvonne Wakim. Foreword by Michael A. Dorris. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1999. 384 pages. \$45.00 cloth; \$32.50 paper.

American Indian Stereotypes in the World of Children: A Reader and Bibliography, first published in 1982, is already a classic reference work on Native stereotypes in children's literature and media. Thus, the newly updated and expanded second edition is particularly welcome because it provides many additional guidelines and approaches "so teachers can do battle with the worn-out images that belittle Indian cultures, traditions, and histories and replace them with accurate and respectful depictions" (p. xi). As the authors point out in their introduction, the "first edition of this anthology was first compiled to 'shock adults into realizing that the world of contemporary American infants and young children is saturated with inappropriate images of Indians'" (p. xi). In the second edition this larger purpose is further strengthened by its attempt to "shock parents, educators, and other caregivers into positive action" (p. xi). What makes this new edition particularly valuable to educators is the balance between the earlier critiques of stereotypes and distortions found in the opening chapters and the new material in the later chapters, presented to help change the current educational landscape.

Part one is an in-depth collection of essays devoted to issues of representation and includes the seminal chapters from the first edition identifying research on children's distorted perceptions and the history and proliferation of common stereotypes, including "noble savages, warriors, braves and Indian princesses" (p. 248). The first two chapters examine representations of Native Americans in children's literature. In chapter one, data from an earlier League of Women Voters study of suburban kindergarten and fifth-grade students reached the following findings: "most children view Indian people as far removed by their own way of life" (p. 3); "many children hold an historic/traditional image of Indian people" (p. 4); "many children, particularly kindergartners, view Indian people as warlike and hostile" (p. 4); and "most of the children do not recognize the great diversity among Indian people which existed in the past and continues today" (p. 5). Chapter five,

entitled "What Your Teachers Never Told You (Maybe They Didn't Know)" includes a reprint of "Textbooks and Native Americans" from the Council on Interracial Books for Children, an essay that identifies common misperceptions about Native American history, offers Native perspectives, and provides selected references for further study of each issue.

The new material in this edition focuses on a range of issues particularly relevant to Native Americans today and offers a transformative approach to the Eurocentric curriculum that dominates most American schools. Chapter six, aptly entitled "Still Playing Cowboys and Indians after all These Years?" provides an insightful look at recent media stereotypes and mascot issues. Reviewing the recent Disney film *Pocahontas*, Cornel Pewewardy (Comanche-Kiowa) challenges the historically inaccurate portrayal of Pocahontas, the negative portrayal of American Indians as savages, and the sanitized depiction of European colonialism in the film. In contrast to these portrayals, Pewewardy argues for children's films and education programs to raise public consciousness and address issues important to American Indians living today, such as "the federal Indian budget, tribal sovereignty, loss of tribal languages, land claims, access to higher education, standardized tests, environmental exploitation and degradation of Indian lands, treaty rights, repatriation of artifacts, protection of burial sites, and return of Indian remains" (p. 173).

The three essays on mascots counter the mainstream argument that Native mascots honor Native peoples by exposing the inherent racism in the continued use of these mascots, thereby providing a well-argued rationale for their elimination. Paulette Fairbanks Molin's essay also offers a chronology of universities and other institutions that had the cultural sensitivity and courage to eliminate offensive mascots, including Dartmouth, Marquette, Stanford, University of Oklahoma, and Los Angeles Unified School District.

Chapter seven, "Holidays Are Not Always for Celebrating," probes Native perspectives on Columbus Day and Thanksgiving. Bill Bigelow's essay, "Columbus in the Classroom," offers critical pedagogical approaches to teaching about Christopher Columbus's devastating impact on Native peoples. Kathy Kerner's essay on "The Thanksgiving Epidemic" helps clarify the Eurocentric muddle in which well-meaning elementary teachers find themselves when preparing lessons on Thanksgiving. Both chapters provide educators with culturally responsive approaches to teaching about these two days. Chapter eight, "Art for Truth's Sake," provides helpful suggestions for incorporating Native arts and media into the classroom as a means of countering stereotypes and providing culturally sensitive images of different Native groups to children.

Of particular value to teachers who wish to provide more authentic portrayals of Native Americans in their classrooms is Yvonne Wakim's extensive annotated bibliography. Wakim (Cherokee/Arab) provides over fifty pages of extensive bibliographic data and resources, well organized for teachers, under following categories: "Stereotyping of Native Americans," "Corrective Materials," "Columbus Day and Thanksgiving," "Collections of Interviews and Personal Accounts by Contemporary Native Americans," "Catalogs and Curriculum," "Audiovisual Resources," "Newspapers and Magazines," and

“Web Sites about Native Americans” (pp. 257–321). This annotated bibliography alone is well worth the price of the book.

Although the focus of the second edition of *American Indian Stereotypes in the World of Children* is primarily on elementary school programs, this well-researched book belongs in the hands of all educators—elementary, secondary, and postsecondary—interested in teaching about American Indians. This book not only challenges stereotypes and misperceptions in the current mainstream curriculum, but also offers educators numerous suggestions and resources to present fair, accurate portrayals of the rich diversity of American Indians in their classrooms—a view of America that will serve all students well.

Jaye T. Darby

San Diego State University

The Changing Presentation of the American Indian: Museums and Native Cultures. Edited by W. Richard West. Seattle: University of Washington Press in association with the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 2000. 120 pages. \$25.00 cloth.

The Changing Presentation of the American Indian chronicles the thoughts of seven museum professionals as they negotiate what editor W. Richard West terms a “museological shift” to incorporate Native peoples’ voices in museum exhibitions. West, the founding director of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), a part of the Smithsonian Institution, asserts the volume’s preeminence as the first to “tackle seriously” this topic. The NMAI is positioned by West and several contributors as the forerunner in addressing Native concerns. This apparent self-aggrandizement negates the work of several contributors to the volume (two of them tribal museum directors) and overlooks decades of efforts by others dedicated to accomplishing the same goal of self-determination in cultural-resource management.

The result of a 1995 symposium of the same name, *The Changing Presentation of the American Indian* is presented as the first dialogue of its type, although collective organizing by Native museum professionals has been ongoing since the 1970s. Canada was on the forefront of these efforts with the Woodlands Cultural Centre of Brantford, Ontario, opening in 1972, followed by the Kwakiutl Museum of Cape Mudge in 1979, and the U’Mista Cultural Centre of Alert Bay British Columbia in 1980. The 1987 convocation, led by Alfred Youngman at the University of Lethbridge, hosted a similar panel to the Smithsonian’s 1995 “Changing Presentation” symposium titled “Canada’s Major Art Institutions and Artists of Native Ancestry—Policies and Responsibilities.”

Here in the United States, tribes actively established their own cultural centers some twenty years ago, with the Makah Cultural and Research Center of Neah Bay, Washington, opening in 1979. Early repatriation efforts included the Pueblo of Zuni’s reclamation of several Ahayu:da from the Denver Art Museum in 1980 following their 1978 tribal council resolution on sacred