

# ELL Library American Indian Reference/Resource “Must-Haves”

## Introduction and Teaching Rationale

A candid review of the record cannot deny that the institution of American education remains firmly entrenched within a 500-year-old ideology that has steadfastly excluded the American Indian voice. Nonetheless, our living presence is a bold and courageous antithesis to that ideology’s insistence that Indian people could not and would not survive Western expansion. In spite of military subjugation, forced removal, rhetorical bigotry, and political paternalism, the continuing survival of this country’s 500 Nations, with our ever-increasing strides toward self-determination, belies our predicted extinction. The majority of American society, however, still sees both historic and contemporary Native peoples through the lens of stereotype, an imagery created by the media and its cohort the entertainment field—an appropriation not unlike American claims on “surplus” Indian lands. Thus educators often fail to recognize the colonizer in their midst who continues to profit from American Indian dispossession, assuming privilege to speak for us and dictate how our stories are told, whether it be for self-gain or misplaced good intentions.

These stereotypes continue to be reproduced in present-day K-12 curriculum and teaching practices, emanating from teacher training programs that still do not question the ways in which literature and rhetoric marginalize Indigenous<sup>1</sup> peoples. More importantly, those inaccuracies may be further reinforced through efforts to incorporate Indigenous presence into the classroom—simply because teachers have not been given the cultural exposure or educational background necessary to facilitate the meaningful connections essential to student engagement. Given our country’s “melting pot” mentality, Indigenous America continues to be read and understood against a backdrop of “diversity” and “multiculturalism,” a tradition that is contrary to the Indigenous Americans’ view of our inherent rights to sovereignty and that relegates our occupancy to immigrant or squatter status. Until legislation and teacher training programs require an educational background in American Indian issues that is both rigorous and comprehensive, everyone has “homework.” This homework involves all of us as educators acknowledging the lack of information and curricular materials and surrendering to the spirit of inquiry, a surrender imperative to the development of a critical lens.

Framing the inquiry is the first step in this process. How do we develop the critical awareness necessary to recognize this lack of knowledge if our only frame of reference is one that is embedded in a fictitious portrayal? When we consider including American Indian-related resources in classroom curriculum, we might reflect on the following questions: Given my educational and cultural background along with that of my students, does the use of this resource strengthen or erode the more commonly known stereotype? Why? Why not? Based on what

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<sup>1</sup> In this work, “Indigenous” is capitalized when referring to aboriginal peoples in the Americas. Lower case is used when speaking in the general context of international indigenous people.

evidence? What is it that I know, need to know, or am curious to know about this resource? How does my inquiry conflict with or affirm my previous understandings and experiences?

Building a professional community in our own teaching locale that is dedicated to sustaining the inquiry is the second step. It is crucial that teachers, as well as the students they teach, be given ample opportunity to talk to each other as they question, converse, encounter new understandings, and engage in this mutual journey of inquiry. This bibliography is intended to provide a foundation of support to facilitate inquiry across a broad spectrum of concerns, which are vital in building a better working relationship with and appreciation for America's Indigenous peoples.

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### **Annotated Bibliography**

**Adams, David Wallace. 1996. *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1875–1928*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.**

This book is the result of one non-Native man’s undertaking to find answers to his own inquiry, which began in his childhood each time he passed the Sherman Institute, a residential Indian boarding school located in southern California. Adams chronicles the strenuous efforts of federal Indian policy to address the “Indian problem” by removing Native children far from their families, tribal homelands, traditions, and culture in order to rebuild their identity into the likeness and language of white Christian Americans. The book’s background of research draws from a broad spectrum of primary documentation by both Native and non-Native sources and should be regarded as a foundational reference from which to consider residential Indian schools that evolved after 1928 and into the present.

Related and recommended readings include *Boarding School Seasons*, by Brenda J. Child; *Residential Schools: The Stolen Years*, edited by Linda Jaine; *The Middle Five: Indian Schoolboys of the Omaha Tribe*, by Francis La Flesche; *The Surrounded*, by D’Arcy McNickle; and *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences*, edited by Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc.

**Bigelow, Bill, and Bob Peterson, eds. 1998. *Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years*. Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools Ltd.**

This is an excellent resource for classroom use across the K–12 levels, as well as a launching pad for teacher inquiry and professional development initiatives to facilitate further exploration and discussion regarding alternative teaching curricula as opposed to the dominant narrative of “discovery.” From “Rethinking Thanksgiving” to “Contemporary Struggles,” this resource provides a comprehensive overview of Indigenous presence in the Americas, post-contact. Thought-provoking visuals and text, poetry, oral traditions, and recommendations for learning extensions and additional reading and resources make this teaching tool easily accessible and adaptable to any discourse setting.

**Champagne, Duane, ed. 2001. *The Native North American Almanac*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Detroit: Gale Research.**

This almanac is a highly useful day-to-day reference source for all kinds of questions related to Native American cultures. The 17 chapters cover a range of historical and contemporary topics including religion, arts, health, education, economy, languages, and legislation. The chronology of Native history begins around 11,000 BCE and continues through the 1990s. Each chapter also provides coverage of Canadian Indigenous peoples. In addition, the book provides condensed biographies of prominent Native North Americans.

Editor Duane Champagne, director of the American Indian Studies Center at UCLA, utilized the work of over 70 contributors in compiling this somewhat scholarly work, which is unusually broad in scope. It includes a great many photos of American Indian activities, as well

as charts, maps, and a number of useful bibliographies. Additional features include a very useful glossary, a bibliography, and an index. This work is recommended as a very good general reference and as a helpful overview on many topics.

**Cleary, Linda M., and Thomas D. Peacock, eds. 1998. *Collected Wisdom: American Indian Education*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.**

This book is unsurpassed in its insights specific to American Indian education, the “collected wisdom” of sixty Native and non-Native teachers of American Indian students, whose experiences speak from both on and off-reservation school systems. Linda Cleary, non-Native writer, and Thomas Peacock, Fond du Lac Ojibway writer, identify, define, and discuss the legacy of oppression that still impacts the lives and future of today’s Native students. Each chapter concludes with a case study and entry points for sustained inquiry. Every educator, Native and non-Native, should have a copy of this book.

**Deloria, Vine Jr. 2003. Foreword. In *Genocide of the Mind: New Native American Writing*, edited by MariJo Moore. New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press.**

As a result of the “praying towns” of early colonists and the relocation efforts of the Indian Reorganization Act, more and more American Indians are settling in urban environments in the pursuit of education and employment. This migration has given birth to a new kind of Native discourse that struggles to reconcile one’s Nativeness inside a landscape that can only name America’s Indigenous through the vernacular of stereotype. This anthology invites the reader to step inside the living reality of twenty-five writers whose individual stories shatter historic and existing attempts to generalize about Native peoples.

**Hirschfelder, Arlene B., and Martha Kreipe de Montano. 1998. *The Native American Almanac: A Portrait of Native America Today*. New York: Prentice Hall.**

The most striking aspect of this work, a well-written historical overview of past and present Native American life, is the way in which it combines comprehensiveness and brevity. It includes Native demographics, laws, treaties, federal relationships, tribal governments, languages, education, religion, sports, and media. Especially handy are the lists of tribes, reservations, and chronologies, with the aim to give readers “a Native American perception of Indian Country and the people who inhabit it today.” Recent reservation populations are listed, as well as land sizes and dates of establishment. Thematically arranged chapters explore social and cultural trends, beginning with chapter 1, “Historical Overview of Relations between Native Americans and Whites in the United States.” Sidebars in various chapters address additional related topics, such as historical novels by Native American authors and lists of actors, filmmakers, and athletes. Other resource lists include Native American artists and education organizations. Appendices of tribes by state, reservations, and historic Indian areas mirror the book’s organization.

**Josephy, Alvin M. 1994. *500 Nations: An Illustrated History of North American Indians*. New York: Gramercy Books.**

No school library should be without a copy of this authentic, illustrated history as told and witnessed by North American Indian voices. From Columbus to Wounded Knee, this resource provides easy reference for any classroom teacher wanting to compare the Indigenous reality against the dominant narrative. Filled with 485 visuals to support the text's context and timeline, the reader quickly acquires a comprehensive, albeit condensed, understanding of the unique cultural and traditional distinctions of each Nation represented, as their diverse voices speak out from the backdrop of American history.

**Mihesuah, Devon A. 1996. *American Indians: Stereotypes & Realities*. Atlanta: Clarity Press.**

Mihesuah, a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, has compiled a rebuttal to twenty-four common myths and misperceptions that perpetuate stereotypes, such as, "Indians had no civilization until Europeans brought it to them," "Indians are all alike," "Indians get a free ride from the government," and "My grandmother was an Indian," to name a few. Each stereotype is accompanied by photographs, a 3–5 page discussion on the opposing reality as supported by documented evidence, and recommendations for additional reading lists. Mihesuah's book is specifically targeted at educators in the hopes that it will provide the impetus for professional inquiry and discourse that will in turn lead to the demand for textbooks committed to accuracy and truth.

**Oxendine, Joseph B. 1995. *American Indian Sports Heritage*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.**

Proponents of Western expansion frequently reported that members of aboriginal nations across America occupied a great deal of time playing games when not on the hunt or engaged in war, a misperception that gave credence to the stereotype of the "lazy" Indian. However, Western thought often failed to recognize the spiritual and ceremonial significance of traditional games, without which Indigenous culture could not survive. Ironically, many major sports teams have appropriated the Indian image as their team logo and used that image's popularity in their rise to national and global acclaim. At the same time, today's Indigenous youth must navigate social repercussions resulting from an oftentimes displaced cultural and spiritual center further complicated by the political backlash of federal Indian policy. Oxendine (Lumbee Nation) retraces American Indian sports back in time to their earliest roles and functions in aboriginal society in order to frame the growing significance of traditional games in contemporary Indigenous advances toward self-determination.

**Pritzker, Barry M. 2000. *A Native American Encyclopedia: History, Culture, and Peoples*. New York: Oxford University Press.**

Though vast in scope, Pritzker's book has been lauded for its readability and provides excellent specific information about the Indigenous customs, government, and religions of over 200 Native American groups in Canada and the United States, arranged across ten geographical regions beginning in the Southwest and ending with the Arctic. Each Native American group is listed alphabetically, and detailed information is provided on the tribal name, translation, origin, and definition, followed by facts about the group's location and population, history, and culture.

Entries also address each group's current government, economy, legal status, and reservations. Pritzker's prose has been called "engaging and precise," making this extensive work an enjoyable read. This generous reference work provides a great deal of information that is essential to a full appreciation of the history, culture, and current condition of North American Indians.

**Slapin, Beverly, and Doris Seale, eds. 2007. *A Broken Flute: The Native Experience in Books for Children*. Berkeley, CA: Alta Mira Press.**

Framed by stories, essays, and poems from the contributors, this unusual text critiques works written between the early 1900s and 2003 by more than 500 authors, including books used in preschool and K–12, along with evaluations of some teacher materials. Oyate, a community-based Native organization in Berkeley, California, produced this sequel to the ground-breaking 1998 book *Through Indian Eyes*. It offers often scathing critiques of the most objectionable work of non-Native writers and illustrators who have used—and often distorted—Native literatures, lives, and histories to create works for mainstream audiences. As the editors note, some of the harshest criticism "will not be comfortable reading," but concerned teachers of Native students will appreciate the Native reviewers' unflinching candor.

**Trout, Lawana, ed. 1999. *Native American Literature: An Anthology*. Lincolnwood, IL: NTC/Contemporary Publishing Group.**

This is, quite possibly, the best anthology of Native American literature in widespread classroom use today, containing more than 100 poems, short stories, pieces of oratory, essays, and memoirs spanning 200 years of Native writing and storytelling. Trout, a highly respected scholar of Native literature, provides a much-needed historical overview, ranging from the oral tradition to contemporary writing, which represents a useful diversity of North American tribes. Its sections, organized by theme, include "Images and Identities," "Growing Up," "All My Relations," and "Affairs of the Heart." The text also provides relevant historical material, biographical information on the authors, discussion questions, and writing topics.

## **Additional ELL Library American Indian References/Resources**

**Brown, Michael F. 2003. *Who Owns Native Culture?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.**

For centuries past and into the present, artists, photographers, film makers, collectors, New Agers, writers, archaeologists, anthropologists, and countless others have appropriated Native images, remains, artifacts, and culture for personal profit without fear of legal or social reprisal. Today, conversations regarding traditional property rights of Indigenous knowledge pervade circles of Native activism. Brown extends this conversation across a variety of issues critical to American Indians, including the controversy regarding recreational use of sacred sites, presenting and examining each issue through the lens of all stakeholders.

Related resources include *Traditional Knowledge and Intellectual Property: A Handbook on Issues and Options for Traditional Knowledge Holders in Protecting their Intellectual Property and Maintaining Biological Diversity* by Stephen A. Hansen and Justin W. VanFleet, and *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, by Linda Tuhiwai Smith.

**Deloria, Vine Jr., and Daniel R. Wildcat. 2001. *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing.**

An interviewer once asked the late Vine Deloria, American Indian author, academic, and literary critic, this question: “What was America called before the Europeans arrived?” to which he simply replied, “Ours.” In the ongoing pursuit of “American Indian intellectual sovereignty and self-determination,” Deloria and Wildcat discuss alternatives to an existing imbalance of power that still negates the worth of an ethics-bound framework necessary to indigenize Indian Education as authenticated by Native worldview and traditional knowledge. Pursuant to the authors’ message that what we don’t know might be critical to our survival, this book underscores the adage “Knowledge is power” and defines place as the tell-tale fingerprint of our interactions upon the American landscape—a landscape regarded by Native peoples as an intimate, socially reactive other, having a conscience and a soul.

**Hirschfielder, Arlene B., ed. 1995. *Native Heritage: Personal Accounts by American Indians 1790 to the Present*. New York: Macmillan.**

This anthology provides more than 120 personal accounts of men and women with varied tribal affiliations, chronicling a rich variety of traditions and perspectives within Native American families. Collected from very brief written and oral histories, autobiographies, newspapers, journals, and other sources of personal expression, the selections cover a variety of geographic regions and tribes and explore a large number of subjects, including potlatches, school experiences, child-rearing practices, governmental operations, language conflicts, and many other day-to-day activities of Indian people, both on and off the reservation. This book gives readers an informed perspective about the firsthand experiences of Native American life and, according to one reviewer, “demolishes the popular image of a monolithic Native American culture that was stoic, ecological and humorless.”

**Moore, MariJo, ed. 2006. *Eating Fire, Tasting Blood: An Anthology of the American Indian Holocaust*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press.**

“To eat the fire of truth is to taste the blood of our existence,” writes Moore in the introduction to this anthology, which comprises the writing of twenty tribally diverse Native authors. While curriculum and classroom conversations often confine prejudice and race relations to a time frame beginning with the Civil War and ending with the Civil Rights Movement, little to no time is dedicated to America’s lack of accountability for crimes committed against Native peoples in the momentum of western expansion. This book’s writers bear witness to a holocaust still raging in the twenty-first century, concealed from the public conscience in the parade of America’s shifting seats of power, and compacted from one generation to the next in the struggles of its oppressed. In this collection of resistance literature, each essay represents one more thread in the national tapestry of cause and effect: “What is done to one is done to all.” This is an excellent resource to use as a centerpiece from which to deepen and extend existing and ongoing professional inquiry.

**Nabokov, Peter. 2006. *Where the Lightning Strikes: The Lives of American Indian Sacred Places*. New York: Viking.**

This is exceptional scholarship on Native American sacred sites. Nabokov, professor of American Indian Studies at UCLA, attempts “to give readers a sense of the diversity of American Indian spiritual practices by focusing on beliefs related to different American environments . . . and to illustrate the persistence of those beliefs, practices, and feelings against great odds.” He examines sixteen “biographies of place” from the four directions, challenging stereotypes head-on: that Indian attitudes toward the environment are frozen in time, that they are simple and similar, and that they are always romantically picturesque. He also delves directly into recent failures of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act: Tellico Dam in Tennessee, the San Francisco Peaks in Arizona, Bear Butte in the Black Hills, and the U.S. Forest Service GO Road in California. Along the way, he honors the scholars, Indian and non-Indian alike, who have struggled to protect the essential heritage of place.

**Porter, Robert Odawi. 2005. *Sovereignty, Colonialism and Indigenous Nations: A Reader*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.**

This extensive reader is an incredible resource for anyone willing to explore the complex and often frustrating issues surrounding Native sovereignty. Porter, a former attorney general of the Seneca Nation, acknowledges that there exist many contradictory notions, even among Native people, about a simple definition of the word *sovereignty* itself. His intention is to “provide some clarification of what Indigenous nation ‘sovereignty’ really means, to explain how it has been and is undermined, and to serve as a springboard for further study of the Indigenous-Colonist relationship.” He provides an astonishing variety of texts to explore—from Indian manifestos to Supreme Court transcripts, along with more accessible book, magazine, and newspaper articles, as well as excerpts from important speeches. The Indian voice is well represented, and Porter’s attempt to point readers toward “decolonization” as a rational remedial strategy is commendable. Despite a caution that the book lacks full citations and, thus, materials



should not be cited for research purposes without locating the originals, this outstanding book is highly recommended.

**Treuer, David. 2006. *Native American Fiction: A User's Manual*. St. Paul, MN: Graywolf Press.**

This is a must-read for every reader of Native American fiction. Treuer, Leech Lake Ojibway, tackles a conversation that has been largely unspoken regarding popular interpretations or how one “reads” Native-authored fiction. Treuer explores the work of a number of well-known Native authors including Sherman Alexie, Louise Erdrich, Leslie Marmon Silko, and James Welch to illustrate how reading these works through the familiar constructs of a novel may too often be influenced by stereotypical images embedded in the canon of American literature and further exploited by the media. The interpretive emphasis thus unconsciously fixates on the word “Native” rather than “fiction,” giving weight to an evolving standard against which “authentic” Native America is measured.

Related readings include *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, by Jace Weaver, Craig S. Womack, and Robert Warrior; *Mixedblood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place*, by Louis Owens; *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*, by Craig Womack; *Native American Perspectives on Literature and History*, edited by Alan R. Velie; *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians*, edited by Devon A. Mihesuah; *The People and the Word: Reading Native Nonfiction*, by Robert Warrior; and *Why I can't Read Wallace Stegner and other Essays: A Tribal Voice*, by Elizabeth Cook-Lynn.

**Utter, Jack. 2001. *American Indians: Answers to Today's Questions*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.**

“The issues and problems that confront Indian people on a day-to-day basis are extremely complex. It takes a life-time of education to even begin to understand them,” says Tim Giago, Oglala Lakota and founder of the news publication *Indian Country Today*. National ignorance, whether deliberate or unconscious, regarding America’s Indigenous peoples increases with each succeeding generation and is exacerbated by “myth, misinformation, and stereotype.” Indigenous America holds the title for being the most studied population in this country while remaining the least understood. This book provides the answers to more than a hundred questions pertinent to the American Indian past, present, and future.

**Warrior, Robert. 2005. *The People and the Word: Reading Native Nonfiction*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.**

Outstanding work by Osage writer Robert Warrior, *The People and the Word* is a potent contribution to Native scholarship, especially to criticism of Native nonfiction. Warrior applies a literary imagination and the notion of “synchronicity” to read anew four texts: the unconventional writings of Pequot William Apess from the early 1800s; the Osage Constitution of 1881; subversive boarding school narratives from the late 1880s; and N. Scott Momaday’s seminal essay “The Man Made of Words.”

Warrior considers how contemporary Native American realities, especially political and cultural interactions, have always shaped Native intellectualism, certainly more so than essentialist notions of supposed “Indianness.” He continues the path blazed by earlier Native intellectuals such as Vine Deloria, Jr., opposing assimilation and accommodation and laying groundwork for a richer American Indian studies. His is a Native critical consciousness that argues for common sense strategies rooted in the real lives of Indian communities.

**Womack, Craig, Daniel Heath Justice, and Christopher Teuton, eds. 2008. *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.**

This formidable collection of essays by Native American literary critics “performing community” represents a range of First Nations and includes sometimes contentious dialogue among writers Craig S. Womack, Sean Teuton, Phillip Carroll Morgan, Daniel Heath Justice, Cheryl Suzack, Christopher B. Teuton, Janice Acoose, Lisa Brooks, Tol Foster, Kimberly Roppolo, LeAnne Howe, and Robert Warrior. Thus *Reasoning Together* is in some ways an interactive work—with many essays commenting on the contributions of others—as well as being revolutionary in its aims, seeking to close the gaps between critical theory and tribal experience, between academic discourse and Native activism. Editor and critic Craig Womack begins by attempting to contextualize book-length Native criticism published between 1986 and 1997, and also authors a closing essay on theorizing Native experience. Each writer, in one way or another, speaks for a new school of Native criticism that promotes a collective cultural context rather than one derived from one’s individual critical sensibility. Topics include the celebrity of Will Rogers, a regional approach to Native studies, feminist theories within Native culture, the literary performance of Native inmates in prison, and an examination of eroticism in the work of Joy Harjo. This book provides a clear and compelling look at the cutting edge of Native-authored criticism.