



NATIVE VOICES

PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

THESE ARE PROGRAMS OF NATIVE STORIES FOR ALL AGES—KINDERGARTEN THROUGH UNIVERSITY—WHICH ENTERTAIN AS THEY EDUCATE. THROUGH ANIMALS AND HERO/TRICKSTER/CLOWNS, THE STORIES GIVE LISTENERS EXPOSURE TO THE VALUES AND BELIEFS OF NATIVE PEOPLE, DEMONSTRATING HOW CULTURE HAS BEEN MAINTAINED AND PASSED TO THESE CONTEMPORARY TIMES. THE CHARACTERS, WHETHER A TALKATIVE TURTLE, OR A PAIR OF KIND-HEARTED CHIPMUNKS, FACE CHOICES WHICH SHOW LISTENERS THE CHOICES FACED BY ADULTS AND CHILDREN IN OUR OWN TIME, AS IN THE PAST. THESE STORIES HOLD CHILDREN SPELLBOUND, MAKE THEM LAUGH, HELP THEM TO IMAGINE AND REMEMBER, AS THEY LEARN THE IMPORTANCE OF RESPECT AND SELF-CONTROL IN TRADITIONAL NATIVE CULTURES.

SPECIFIC PROGRAMS CAN BE REQUESTED, OR DESIGNED, IF DESIRED.

STORIES OF THE FOUR DIRECTIONS: This program offers a sampling of stories from the diverse Native cultures from different regions of the continent:

Northeastern Woodlands
Southeastern Woodlands

Plains
Southwestern Plains

(These regions are also available as single, regional programs of stories.)

THE TRICKSTER, HE WAS GOING ALONG: This program offers an intertribal sampling of the trickster stories, which are a part of all Native cultures. The stories of Iktomi, Turtle, Raccoon, Coyote, and others show the similarities and differences among diverse Native peoples and their stories.

LESSONS FROM THE ANIMAL PEOPLE: This program offers an intertribal sampling of the animal stories which often explain the *what?* and *why?* questions about the Earth and her animal children—why bear hibernates, why rabbit has no tail, etc. They are also used, as all stories are, to teach proper behavior and cultural values.

MONSTERS AND COURAGE: This program offers an intertribal sampling of the monsters and brave women, men and children who overcome them. Although they can be scary, they are always life-affirming and teach how to overcome fear, deal with evil and look at the —monstrous|| mistakes we are all capable of making.

THE CIRCLE OF THE FAMILY: This program takes a more serious look at problems which can affect a family, a community or a culture—anger, prejudice, violence—and how these social problems were faced and dealt with in traditional stories. It is suitable for older students (mature middle school and older) and should include time for discussion.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

- To introduce students to the rich oral tradition of “Native America” as a profound oral literature, not “primitive”, “preliterate”, or “inarticulate”.
- To give students experience at becoming active and involved listeners, with an appreciation of the power and art of spoken word communication.
- To encourage students to explore their own cultures and stories and their abilities to express those stories and themselves.
- To introduce students to the rich diversity of cultures covered under the broad category of “Native American”.
- To gain experience determining cause and effect and predicting outcomes in oral stories.
- To provide a view into Native cultures, while building awareness of similarities between cultures.
- To encourage further research, reading and retelling on the part of students
- To experience the enjoyment of a good story, well told, with the imaginative ability of the listeners being stimulated and respected.
- To develop critical skills observing storytelling techniques: gestures, facial expressions, voice\pitch/tone/volume, pacing, characterization, word choice, description, non-verbal “language”, etc.

ABOUT THE ARTIST:

DOVIE THOMASON is an award-winning storyteller and recording artist, recognized internationally for her ability to share a glimpse into Native cultures through the traditional stories she first heard as a child. The product of a “mixed” background that is Lakota *and* Kiowa Apache, urban Chicago *and* rural Texas, Internet *and* ancient teachings, Dovie has shared stories with NASA and the National Storytelling Festival, Shakespeare’s *Globe Theatre* in London and rural libraries, conflict resolution projects in Northern Ireland and Headstart programs on Indian reservations. Her stories are windows into her Native culture and mirrors for her listeners to see themselves, while she gently dispels stereotypes and false media images of the First Nations People of North America. Calling upon her years in classrooms as a teacher and professor, and nearly two decades of sharing stories professionally, Dovie establishes a rapport and bond with audiences of all ages, creating a climate where laughter, learning and respect come together. Her commitment to cultural arts and education has been recognized by the National Endowment for the Arts and many state arts organizations across the United States. Winner of the *Parents’ Choice Gold Award* and the *ALA/Booklist Editors’ Choice Award*, She’s recently turned her energy towards writing books for children and adults on stories, storytelling and cultural values.

PRE-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES: *(just a few suggestions)*

- Talk with your students about what they know about Native people, both in the past and in contemporary times. You can brainstorm this as a list on the blackboard. Often, the list will be skewed towards the past and is often full of stereotypes. Discuss with your students where they learned the things they listed.
- Depending on the age/grade level of your students, introduce the idea of many different peoples, generally identified by geographic regions, language groups and cultural similarities—ALL of whom fall under the broad classification of —Native American.
- Read them stories from different Native tribes/nations, looking for stories from *specific* groups, ideally written by Native authors.

VOCABULARY:

Generally, Dovie explains words in Native language or words which might be unfamiliar to her listeners. Often, this is done with contextual clues, sometimes by using synonyms, and occasionally by explaining them directly. Students are always given the opportunity to pronounce and practice words from Native languages and attention is often drawn to “loanwords” in English, which are derived from Native languages.

Algonquian: (sometimes spelled Algonkian) A language group which is the group of many distinct Native cultures.

American Indian: (see **Indigenous**) **Culture:** customs, spiritual beliefs and ceremonies, history, stories, values which a people share in common and which makes up their group identity.

First Nations People: (see **Indigenous**)

Iktomi: (sometimes spelled Inktomi or Unktomi) He is the Spider Trickster of many Plains cultures, though he appears like a man. He is often called a hero/clown, as the tricks he plays on others backfire, entrapping him; yet he is still seen as sacred, with powers to teach and help humans.

Indian: (see **Indigenous**)

Indigenous: The original, or Native/natural, people of a continent or geographic area.

Iroquois: The name given by the French to the People of the Longhouse (or Haudenosaunee) of Canada and New York, of the Woodlands region. Called The Five Nations by the British.

Iya: (sometimes spelled Eya) The Swallower, or Camp Eater, who teaches important lessons about greed and imbalance in Lakota stories.

Kiowa Apache: (pronounced like Iowa) also called the **Plains Apache**, culturally more like Plains, rather than desert Apache culture.

Native American: More accurately, **Native North American**, as the Native cultures of Canada and Mexico predate the international boundaries and are related to cultures within the geographic boundaries of the United States.

Oral Tradition: Using the spoken word to pass on stories, values, correct behavior, customs, history, language and memory from generation to generation.

Storyteller: In our modern world, this usually describes someone who —performs|| publicly, using the —art|| of telling stories. For thousands of years, in many ancient cultures, including Native American, this was a respected person in the family or tribal community who could remember and share the knowledge, history and wisdom of past generations through retelling, passing the culture on to future generations.

POST-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES: *(just a few suggestions)*

- Have students draw storyboards to illustrate one of the stories they heard and to reinforce the sequence of events in the story.
- Have students share and retell a story they heard to another class that did not hear the story; have older students visit younger classes to share.
- Have students discuss *what* they liked about the stories—voices, colorful descriptions, movement, gestures? Practice for critical thinking skills.
- Read more stories to them; try to retell (teachers) familiar stories, rather than just reading. Add character voices, inflections and take risks to model fearlessness to your younger learners at any age.
- Find stories that teach values from Native cultures, or others, and have students retell them in small, then in larger groups.
- Discuss things they learned about Native people and/or history that changed a previous perception. Review the brainstorming list done as a pre-activity and revise it.
- Listen to recordings of some of the stories heard in performance and compare the telling for details, improvisations, sequence, development, etc.

STUDENT AND TEACHER RESOURCES:

YELLOW MOON PRESS (for Dovie's tapes and others)

www.yellowmoon.com 800.497.4385

NATIONAL STORYTELLING NETWORK/NATIONAL STORYTELLER DIRECTORY

www.storynet.org 800.525.4514

OYATE (Exceptional educational and teachers' materials, plus reading/listening resources by Native people for all ages/grades)

www.oyate.org 510.848.6700

STORYARTS, INC. (Extraordinary website designed by storyteller Heather Forest, with lesson plans, curriculum idea exchange, story library and much more!)

www.storyarts.org

NORTH AMERICAN NATIVE AUTHORS CATALOG (Comprehensive listing of Native resources)

www.nativeauthors.com

CRADLEBOARD TEACHING PROJECT (Founded by singer-activist Buffy Saint-Marie, they provide curriculum for all grades K-12 from Native perspective and have created the Interactive CD-ROM, "Science Through Native American Eyes", gr. 5-adult)

www.cradleboard.org

When we first thought about making our poster, “Teaching Respect for Native Peoples,” we had no idea that it would grow into what it has become. We know, because we have been told, that the information it contains has been widely used in classrooms and teacher-trainings. We are happy to give permission for classroom reproduction and use of this material.
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- **Do** present Native peoples as appropriate role models with whom a Native child can identify. • **Don’t** single out Native children, ask them to describe their families’ traditions, or their people’s cultures. • **Don’t** assume that you have no Native children in your class. • **Don’t** do or say anything that would embarrass a Native child.
- **Do** look for books and materials written and illustrated by Native people. • **Don’t** use ABC books that have “I is for Indian” or “E is for Eskimo.” • **Don’t** use counting books that count “Indians.” • **Don’t** use story books that show non-Native children “playing Indian.” • **Don’t** use picture books by non-Native authors that show animals dressed as “Indians.” • **Don’t** use story books with characters like “Indian Two Feet” or “Little Chief.”
- **Do** avoid arts and crafts and activities that trivialize Native dress, dance, or ceremony. • **Don’t** use books that show Native people as savages, primitive craftspeople, or simple tribal people, now extinct.
- **Don’t** have children dress up as “Indians,” with paper-bag “costumes” or paper-feather “headdresses.” • **Don’t** sing “Ten Little Indians.” • **Don’t** let children do “war whoops.” • **Don’t** let children play with artifacts borrowed from a library or museum. • **Don’t** have them make “Indian crafts” unless you know authentic methods and have authentic materials.
- **Do** make sure you know the history of Native peoples, past and present, before you attempt to teach it. • **Do** present Native peoples as separate from each other, with unique cultures, languages, spiritual beliefs, and dress. • **Don’t** teach “Indians” only at Thanksgiving. • **Do** teach Native history as a regular part of American history.
- **Do** use materials which put history in perspective. • **Don’t** use materials which manipulate words like “victory,” “conquest,” or “massacre” to distort history. • **Don’t** use materials which present as heroes only those Native people who aided Europeans.
- **Do** use materials which present Native heroes who fought to defend their own people.
- **Do** discuss the relationship between Native peoples and the colonists and what went wrong with it. • **Don’t** speak as though “the Indians” were here only for the benefit of the colonists. • **Don’t** make charts about “gifts the Indians gave us.”
- **Don’t** use materials that stress the superiority of European ways, and the inevitability of European conquest. • **Do** use materials which show respect for, and understanding of, the sophistication and complexities of Native societies.
- **Do** use materials which show the continuity of Native societies, with traditional values and spiritual beliefs connected to the present. • **Don’t** refer to Native spirituality as “superstition.” • **Don’t** make up Indian “legends” or “ceremonies.” • **Don’t** encourage children to do “Indian” dances.
- **Do** use respectful language in teaching about Native peoples. • **Don’t** use insulting terms such as “brave,” “squaw,” “papoose,” “Indian givers,” “wild Indians,” “blanket Indians,” or “wagon burners.”
- **Do** portray Native societies as coexisting with nature in a delicate balance. • **Don’t** portray Native peoples as “the first ecologists.”
- **Do** use primary source material—speeches, songs, poems, writings—that show the linguistic skill of peoples who come from an oral tradition. • **Don’t** use books in which “Indian” characters speak in either “early jawbreaker” or in the oratorical style of the “noble savage.”
- **Do** use materials which show Native women, elders, and children as integral and important to Native societies. • **Don’t** use books which portray Native women and Elders as subservient to warriors.
- **Do** talk about the lives of Native peoples in the present. • **Do** read and discuss good poetry, suitable for young people, by contemporary Native writers. • **Do** invite Native community members to the classroom. • **Do** offer them an honorarium. Treat them as teachers, not as entertainers. • **Don’t** assume that every Native person knows everything there is to know about every Native nation.