

Reprinted from the 1977 Teaching Guide for:

Unlearning “Indian” Stereotypes

Original Filmstrip Script:

1. This is the stupidest book!
2. Look! This one’s even dumber!
3. They make me mad.
4. The people who make these books don’t know *anything* about Indian people!
5. THE COUNCIL ON INTERRACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN
6. WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS IN THE
NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION PROGRAM, TITLE IV, NEW YORK
CITY
7. AND THE DIVISION FOR LIFE AND MISSION OF THE AMERICAN
LUTHERAN CHURCH
8. PRESENTS: UNLEARNING “INDIAN” STEREOTYPES”
9. My name is Mona. My mother’s Pawnee and my father’s Osage.
10. The Osage and Pawnee are two of the Indian nations that were in this country way
before white people came.
11. And my name is Danny. I’m Shinnecock.
12. I first met Mona here, in New York City...
13. Where we both come to a special program for Indian kids.
14. The kids in this program are from *thirty* different Indian nations.
15. I live in an apartment house where no pets are allowed.
16. So every summer I visit my grandmother on the reservation in the Long Island.
17. Once, the Shinnecock people had a whole big part of Long Island for their
country. But white people took most of it.
18. Now we have only a little piece called the Shinnecock Indian re-ser-va-tion.
19. The red places on the map show all the reservations in the United States. They are
the *only* pieces of land left for Indian nations.
20. Danny and I come here to learn about Indian history and languages.
21. And to spend time with other Native American children and teachers.
22. This is Muriel. Her father’s family are Indians from Central America.
23. Muriel’s father teaches us about Native music, and how to make Indian style
clothes and things.

24. Stephanie and her brother Louis are Lenni Lenape.
25. And Josh, here, is Choctaw.
26. Long ago, the Choctaw people lived in the South, where Mississippi and Louisiana are today.
27. Then Andrew Jackson — he was President of the United States — sent soldiers to make the Choctaw people leave their homes and farms.
28. Because white people wanted all the land for themselves!
29. The Choctaw — and other Native people — had to leave their own lands and go all the way to Oklahoma. Lots *died* on the way.
30. The United States promised that Indian people could have the land in Oklahoma for ever and ever.
31. But when white people found valuable oil there, they broke their promise and took most of Oklahoma away, too.
32. Here's Josh showing the small part of Oklahoma that still belongs to the Choctaw people.
33. Lance is Mohawk. Last year he lived on the Mohawk reservation.
34. Part of their reservation is in Canada and part is in the United States.
35. When Lance showed us pictures of his reservations, we were sad.
36. Near the reservation is this big factory. The owners make lots of money, but they let the factory pollute the river and the earth.
37. Because there's so much pollution, trees are dying and cows' teeth are rotting out.
38. Most of the fish in the river died, and those still there are full of poison and no good to eat.
39. The Mohawk people think it's wrong to spoil land and water.
40. They want to get back more of their old land so they can live like their grandparents taught them.
41. That means respecting the earth, the waters and all living things, not killing them with poison.
42. And sharing all the work, the food and the land with each other.
43. Our teachers here, like Daphne, talk to us about these things.
44. We talk about history, school and things that are happening in the world.
45. Well, one day Danny brought in a dumb book someone gave his cousin.
46. It was an A B C book and it had "I is for Indian."
47. That made us all mad. Like books don't say "I is for Italian."
48. No! They say "I is for igloos, insects, inkwells and Indians."

49. Like Indians are *things*, instead of real people.
50. Then our teacher walked us over to a big children’s library.
51. Where we found lots more books with dopey pictures of Indians.
52. And with other kids — and even animals — playing like they was Indians.
53. And with pictures of people wearing feathers...
54. Whooping and jumping...
55. Or sneaking around.
56. No wonder other kids don’t believe we’re *really* Indians, when we tell them.
57. Yeah! They expect us to run around dressed like these crazy pictures.
58. And saying, “How!” and “Ugh!” But Indian people don’t do *that!*
59. Daphne says all that stuff was just *made up* by people who make silly cowboy and Indian movies.
60. And make untrue books, like these.
61. Right! Cause Indian people *never looked* like this!
62. And today, most of us *never* dress like this, or wear feathers...
63. Expect, some of us do — for special times like ceremonies.
64. But *kids never* used to wear headdresses, only grown ups.
65. And *they* had to do special good things for their people before they *earned* the right to wear them.
66. Each eagle feather and each decoration stood for some special thing they did.
67. So our teacher says it’s a “s-t-e-r-e-o-t-y-p-e” when TV and books show Indians *always* wearing feathers.
68. Or *always* wearing this *same kind* of headdress. Cause only *some* nations, like the Sioux, wore headdresses like that.
69. There were hundreds of Indian nations and many kinds of headdress. This one is Seneca.
70. This is Apache.
71. And this is Pawnee. There are lots more.
72. Muriel noticed that the books keep showing tipis, like that’s the *only* kind of house Indians ever lived in.
73. People who *did* live in tipis had special decorations on them — to tell about things that happened.
74. But tipis were only used by Indian people in the western prairies. Other Native nations had different houses.
75. Like Lance’s great grandparents, and all the Mohawk, used to live in longhouses.

76. This is a Wichita grass house. They were hard to make, but they kept out the wind and rain.
77. The Navajo people used to live in houses called hogans. Some still live in them today.
78. The Taos people lived in pueblos — the first apartment houses.
79. But today, most Native people live in houses like everyone else lives in.
80. Stephanie didn't like how the books called Indian babies, "Papoose."
81. Indian babies should just be called "babies."
82. Just like Native American women should be called "women" – not a nasty word like "*squaw*."
83. Josh says it's *crazy* for books to talk about "Indian princesses."
84. Because Native people didn't have kings, or princesses, like Europeans did.
85. No. Cause everyone decided *together* who the leaders would be. They had to be good hunters...
86. Or very brave — or very wise.
87. If they *stopped* being good leaders, we just picked different leaders.
88. Some were women leaders, just like some are today.
89. Look! This book says "Fierce Indians fought cowboys in great desert spaces."
90. Lots of movies and books say Indians were *mean* — always fighting and scalping.
91. They never tell how white men paid lots of money to other whites, if they murdered Indian people and brought in their scalps.
92. They wanted lots of Indian people killed so they could take away our land.
93. That's why we fought against the pioneers.
94. Yeah! *Anyone's* got a right to keep their country free from being stolen!
95. Some of these books make believe that all Indians look the same. And...
96. Who ever saw a real Indian person with *red* skin!
97. Lots of books show *animals* with feathers. And dopey names.
98. They're really making fun of us – *and that's not fair!*
99. No wonder some kids laugh, or say nasty things, when they find out we're Indians.

100. Our teacher says it's not their fault, though, cause books and movies tell lies about Native people.
101. Look! More mean looking animals supposed to be Indians.
102. And making fun of our pipes! Some pipes were just used for smoking, but...
103. Other pipes are sacred, and part of our religion. A sacred pipe...
104. Keeps our people together and strong. *We* don't poke fun at other people's religions!
105. This book makes fun of our dancing!
106. When we dance, we don't just jump around.
107. We learn special steps for special dances. And it's *hard* to learn them right.
108. Our dances have meanings, and some are part of our religion, too.
109. Louis is the best contest dancer, when we go to powwows.
110. Powwows are a time to meet and talk, dance and be together.
111. And to remember important things our grandparents taught us. That's called remembering our tra-di-tions.
112. Sometimes at powwows we talk about our treaties.
113. Treaties are promises between Native nations and the United States.
114. Like Indians gave the United States *some* land — and the United States *promised* not to take any more.
115. But the United States always broke its promises, and keeps taking more land.
116. Today, big coal companies are digging up and spoiling reservation land to make a lot of money selling the coal.
117. And some white people are trying to take away Indians' rights to fish, like the treaties promised we could.
118. Native people are working hard to get the United States to keep the treaty promises it made. That's what this sign means.
119. Sometimes I wonder how things would be if Indians had just *let* all those Pilgrims starve to death.
120. Instead, we taught them how to grow food and live here. Then they went and took our lands away!
121. That's why a lot of us *won't celebrate* on Thanksgiving Day.
122. Or on Columbus Day. Columbus made Indian people into slaves. And his men killed lots of our people.
123. Danny, do you remember when that Ojibway teacher flew to Italy — where Columbus came from?

124. Sure! He got off the plane and said, “I discover and claim this land I the name of American Indians!”
125. Yeah. He did that to show how crazy it is for books to say Columbus *discovered* America.
126. How can you discover a land where millions of people were already living?
127. Well, I hope other kids won’t believe what they read about us in these books.
128. I hope they learn about our real lives, our real history and our real beliefs.
129. And about what Native people are doing today to try to make a better life.