

## Book Reviews

---

**Exemplar of Liberty: Native America and the Evolution of Democracy.** By Donald A. Grinde, Jr., and Bruce E. Johansen. Los Angeles: American Indian Studies Center, University of California, 1991.

Europeans have historically viewed Amerindian societies through either of two lenses: one that sees them in terms of their deficiencies in comparison with Western civilization, and the other that uses their "golden age of primordial innocence" to belabor the shortcomings of Old World nation-states. Only recently have there been serious attempts to evaluate Amerindian societies in their own terms and to incorporate them into the web of world civilizations. With the swing of the pendulum, scholars are now examining the influence of Amerindians on Europeans in such realms as agriculture, medicine, and political science, particularly in connection with the development of the Constitution of the United States.

David Grinde, Jr. and Bruce Johansen are well-known champions of what they see as the crucial influence of Amerindian liberty and equality on the fathers of American confederation. In *Exemplar of Liberty* they collaborate to further develop these ideas in what Vine Deloria, Jr. describes in his foreword as a "magnificent achievement," a "model for future historical writing on the role and influence of American Indians in American history." He was particularly impressed with their use of primary source documents, which he says has left critics "completely incapable of responding to them with anything approaching historical and documentary accuracy."

This enthusiasm mirrors that of the authors for their convictions. Although they exhibit impressive research and writing skills, they have used them for partisan purposes. *Exemplar of Liberty* is not a work to determine if there was Amerindian influence on the development of the American Constitution, and if so to evaluate it, but a tract that sets out to prove the extent of that influence, especially where the League of Six Nations is concerned. Complex issues become simplistic notions: monarchy is equated with despotism; the British are depicted as tyrants who, among other oppressions, sought to tax the colonies to pay for colonial defense. The authors seem to think that such expenses were England's sole responsibility: "Not surprisingly, the colonists thought that England ought to pay its own bills." The Iroquoian confederacy is described as an old idea in America, but "a novel concept to Europeans." In fact, it was old in Europe too: a similar idea had been proposed by such figures as Paulus Vladimiri (c.1370-c.1435), rector of the University of Cracow; developed further by Nikolaus von Kues (1401-1464), a canonist who later became a cardinal; and espoused by Calvinist Johannes Althusius (1557-1638), a law professor. Neither was the concept original with Vladimiri: the dream of a global society made up of interacting diverse elements, based on harmony rather than uniformity, is extremely old, predating Christianity.

In America too the authors allow their convictions to outpace the facts. Amerindian ideas are presented as freeing Euro-Americans from "the antiquated ideas of class and autocratic government that had so long existed in Europe." They do not mention that those same ideas were alive and well in pre-contact America, existing side by side with egalitarian societies. A Native autocrat well known to colonial Americans was Powhatan of Virginia who was building an empire until inter-

rupted by the arrival of the English; the Natchez of Louisiana had a more extreme form of hierarchy than any known in Europe. Just as Amerindian societies were diverse in their structures, so were their European counterparts.

Even more astonishing is the claim that the four Amerindian "kings" who visited Queen Anne in London in 1710 were the first Amerindians to come to Europe as "the feted guests of royalty." Not even for England is that the case: what about those who were guests of the court of Henry VII in 1502, and who stayed for at least two years? And the Inuit to whom Elizabeth I in 1577 gave the privilege of hunting the royal swans on the Thames, much to the amazement of the English public, who would have been severely punished for such an act? And the Iroquoian chief Donnacona whom Jacques Cartier brought to the French court in 1536, and who had such an influence on Francis I? What about the Aztec musicians, singers, dancers, and jugglers brought to Spain by Hernán Cortés in 1528 to be presented to Charles V, and who were later sent to Rome at the request of the Pope? By the mid-16th century it was fashionable in France, and indeed in all of Europe, for both royalty and wealthy nobles to have Amerindians in their entourages. In 1602 the young son of the Montagnais chief Begourat was installed as the companion of the Dauphin of France in the Château Saint-Germain. And what about the baptisms of Amerindians in Paris in which the French king and queen stood as godparents? On one such occasion in 1613, Parisians went so wild trying to catch a glimpse of the exotic visitors that the royal guards had to be called out. These examples barely touch a long list. The primary sources consulted by the authors did not go back far enough.

All that said, there is a case to be made for Amerindian influence on the making of the American Constitution. Grinde and Johansen do present some interesting insights even as they overstate their case. But if, as they say, it is absurd to think of America adopting a detested British government system after winning a war against it, is it not equally absurd for Americans to have consulted with the Iroquois Confederacy, and to have adopted some of its suggestions, after so many of its members (Mohawks in particular, but also Onondagas and Senecas) had fought on the side of the British? The American War of Independence uprooted the Iroquoian white tree of peace and dispersed the Confederacy, an event the Iroquois still dream of reversing 200 years later. They do not see themselves as part of that Constitution, even though they are acclaimed for having influenced its making.

I could go on, but the point has been made. Grinde and Johansen, for all their enthusiasm (or perhaps because of it), have not proven their case.

*Olive Patricia Dickason  
University of Alberta*

**Blackfoot Grammar.** By Donald G. Frantz. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991 (hardcover, \$45).

This book is a concise pedagogical grammar that achieves some of the clearest expository prose ever dedicated to any Algonquian language, let alone one whose word structure is as complex as Blackfoot. Frantz has benefited from the collaboration of the colleagues and a number of university students who are native speakers of the language. Yet the book has a unity of purpose and shows no signs of having been "written by a committee."

A second use for the volume, in addition to use along with language learning materials, could be in conjunction with an introductory linguistics course. Technical linguistic concepts are introduced clearly and simply in the course of language description, and rules of grammar are typically arrived at inductively. Often there is contrastive analysis of the equivalent English structures. Thus, for example, one learns not only what the patterns of agreement, tenses, and aspects are in Blackfoot, but what agreement, tenses, and aspects are in general. Even without a teacher, parts of the book can no doubt be profitably read by the educated lay person.

The book is divided into 22 chapters, ordered by pedagogical priorities, and covering such topics as phonological rules, verbal and nominal inflection, derivation and nouns from verbs (and vice versa). Verb paradigms are given in Appendix A (pp. 145ff) and phonological rules in Appendix B (pp. 150ff). The index (pp. 159-159) is detailed and most helpful, though the author's idiosyncratic terminology sometimes makes it hard to find things. For example, pseudo-transitives have become "paratransitives"—though one will discover this if one follows his entry under "pseudo-intransitive verbs" to the supplemental material on page 40.

Those who are familiar with Frantz's more technical writing will find much of the same information here in a form much easier to assimilate. The references (pp. 143-144) provide a list for more advanced reading. What one misses most in this work is a sample text with interlinear translation, which has come to be something of a standard appendix in most recently published grammars, and any treatment of the discourse properties of the language. It is to be hoped that Frantz will soon remedy these lacks in a further publication.

This is a fine piece of work that will make the language more understandable to many. It belongs in every public library in the West, in university libraries, and on the bookshelf of everyone interested in the Blackfoot language.

*Paul Proulx  
Heatherton, Nova Scotia*

*The Circle Program (Fitzhenry & Whiteside)*

**All Kinds of Weather.** A pattern book (for kindergarten) by John McInnes with Janet Wilkinson, Mary Upper, Linda Guebert, and Barbara Burnaby. 15 pages.

**Who's at the Door?** A pattern book (for kindergarten) by John McInnes and Mary Upper with Barbara Burnaby and Linda Guebert. 32 pages.

**The Magic Chair.** A listen-and-read book (for kindergarten) by Mary Upper and John McInnes with Linda Guebert and Barbara Burnaby. 16 pages.

**Chakapesh and the Sun.** A listen-and-read book (for kindergarten) retold by Linda Guebert. 24 pages.

**The Boy and the Man of Snow.** A listen-and-read book (for grade 1) told by Annie Wiskeychan; adapted by Linda Guebert. 24 pages.

**Family Stories.** An I-can-read book (for grade 1) developed by John McInnes, Linda Guebert, Mary Upper, and Barbara Burnaby. 48 pages.

**Here Comes Winter.** An I-can-read book (for grade 1) developed by John McInnes, Linda Guebert, Mary Upper, and Barbara Burnaby. 48 pages.

**Rosie's Visit.** A listen-and-read book (for grade 1) by Mary Upper. 32 pages.

**Snow Moon.** A let's-read book (for grade 3) assembled by Elva Hook. 96 pages.

**Story Circle One: The Battle of Four Winds and Other Stories.** A

listen-and-read book (for grade 3) assembled by Charmaine Lurch. 72 pages.

In Native communities across Canada and particularly in the North, there has been a longstanding need for curriculum materials that can be used in the classroom for teaching English as a second language. By integrating contemporary and traditional Native content with a whole language approach to teaching and learning, The Circle Program contributes well to the resources available for teaching ESL to northern Native students. The program contains a variety of print and non-print materials, and it is the children's books that will be the focus of this review.

In many ways whole language philosophy as discussed by Froese (1990), Goodman, K. (1986), and Newman and Church (1990) is evident in the development of the Circle children's books. In this series wordless picture books provide a stimulus for young children's open-ended discussion about events at home and in the community, and when written words are introduced for young readers, the emphasis is on those which carry a great deal of meaning for the reader. In addition, repetitive patterns of language, such as rhyming, provide a strong structure for learning oral and written English, as well as providing a stimulus for play with its words. Like other contemporary language arts series that have been identified as whole language, the Circle Program is based on the principle that oral and written language are best learned when the children can actively use the language in constructing meaning of their lives.

The emphasis on northern Native content in this program is a natural extension of the whole language philosophy. With reference to content, students and teachers will be pleased to find northern lifestyles depicted in stories, informational reading, and illustrations. In a selection on transportation, for example, there are references to ATVs, ski-doo's, and float planes. As well, in a selection about trapping there are several children's accounts of nature observations and experiences in the bush. "The beaver held his head when my father hit him," is part of a straightforward account of trapping—a refreshing change from the sentimental and often sensationalist descriptions of nature found in southern-based texts.

The program contains a number of traditional stories as well, and it is in the use of these stories that problems can arise. While sensitivity to oral traditions has been demonstrated by the inclusion of tape-recordings by skilled storytellers, this does not completely ameliorate the potential for decontextualization and oversimplification through translation of the narratives into printed English. Of particular concern is the use of these stories in the hands of teachers who may be unaware of their complexities and traditions; here, it is particularly important for judicious decisions in close consultation with community members. While the Circle Program demonstrates some sensitivity to the issue, the juxtaposition of contemporary "entertainment" stories with deeper, more traditional narratives in a single book conveys to the children the tacit notions that the form and purposes of both are the same, and that the context is of relatively little importance.

Remaining criticisms have to do with the way these books were published. If all the passages had been published as individual works, this would have been more conducive to students' and teachers' exercising choice with respect to what will be read and what will be done with the reading. In the present format, the combina-

tion of passages into what appears to be predefined themes carries the unintended message that an authority from outside the classroom and community has decided what the children should learn. This message is furthered by the visible labeling of books by grade level; from the children's perspective the assignment of grade levels is consistent with a view of language arts as a kind of assembly line in which promotion depends on the number of stories read and activities completed. As well, if stories had not been combined by theme and grade level, older ESL students would be less likely to risk the embarrassment of using materials that are not age-appropriate. For example, "doing things together," in the grade 1 book *Family Stories* could be read by older beginning readers, but the passages that precede and follow it clearly designate the book as one for young children.

As with any other series, this one is uneven in the quality of writing and illustration. With respect to the writing, teachers and students should feel free to use their discretion in just skipping over the selections that are more poorly worded and/or lack the cohesive structure to enable the children to construe meaning. What is more problematic is the quality of some of the illustrations, because it is the pictures that often determine whether and how the children will become engaged in the text. If the quality of illustration was sacrificed as a cost-saving measure (which appears to be the case in a number of black-and-white and two-toned pictures), this was an unfortunate decision that does a disservice to the writers and the audience. Even very young children have a keen aesthetic sense, and this sense should be exploited more fully as a way of engaging them in reading.

There are many ways in which the Circle books can be used to spark meaningful language activities in the classroom, and it is hoped that Northern teachers recognize and follow up on all the ways the children's learning can be extended. For example, "The Box" depicts a mother and daughter unloading groceries they have just purchased, a topic that could lead well into a number of language activities in which studies of nutrition, mathematics, and social studies could be integrated as the students learn about traditional and store-bought foods. With respect to the latter, reading labels on the containers of familiar foods is an ideal way to support the budding literacy skills of young readers and writers, and research shows that this kind of environmental reading helps build a strong foundation for the subsequently more specific study of print (Goodman, Y.M., 1986; Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984). It is hoped that teachers make use of this idea by bringing signs and labels into the classroom—or better yet, taking the class on a walk through the community to read whatever they can find.

With respect to how teachers might use these books, it is important to note Durkin's (1984) finding that when using basal readers, teachers tended to disregard publisher's recommendations for the more meaning-based activities and failed to make use of a number of possibilities for connecting the text with what goes on in the children's lives. Instead, they tended to enforce the relatively meaningless skills activities in a highly sequential, lockstep fashion. The point here is that the nature of the language arts program ultimately depends on the philosophy and expertise of the teacher, and a whole language program in particular grows out of social, meaning-based interactions with a variety of print and human resources.

In other words, whole language is not a set of teaching methods, but a way of thinking about children's language learning. What makes a whole language philo-

sophy particularly congruent with traditional and contemporary aims for Native education is its respect for children (Goodman, K., 1986), its emphasis on student choice, negotiation, and collaboration (Harman & Edelsky, 1989), and its recognition that "people in the community are among the best language resources" (Froese, 1990). As such, it might be misleading to call the Circle resources a whole-language "program," but when used in conjunction with a variety of other resources, they could be a useful addition to one.

#### References

- Durkin, D. (1984). Is there a match between what elementary teachers do and what basal reader manuals recommend? *The Reading Teacher*, 37, 734-744.
- Froese, V. (1990). What is whole-language? In V. Froese (Ed.), *Whole-language: Practice and theory* (pp. 2-13). Scarborough, ON: Prentice-Hall.
- Goodman, K. (1986). *What's whole in whole language?* Richmond Hill, ON: Scholastic-Tab.
- Goodman, Y.M. (1986). Children coming to know literacy. In W.H. Teale & E. Sulzby (Eds.), *Emergent literacy: Writing and reading*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Harste, J.C., Woodward, V.A., & Burke, C.L. (1984). *Language stories and literacy lessons*. Portsmouth: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Harman, S, & Edelsky, C. (1989). The risks of whole-language literacy: Alienation and connection. *Language Arts*, 66, 392-407.
- Newman, J.M. & Church, S.M. (1990). Myths of whole-language. *The Reading Teacher*, 44, 20-26.

Carol Leroy  
University of Alberta