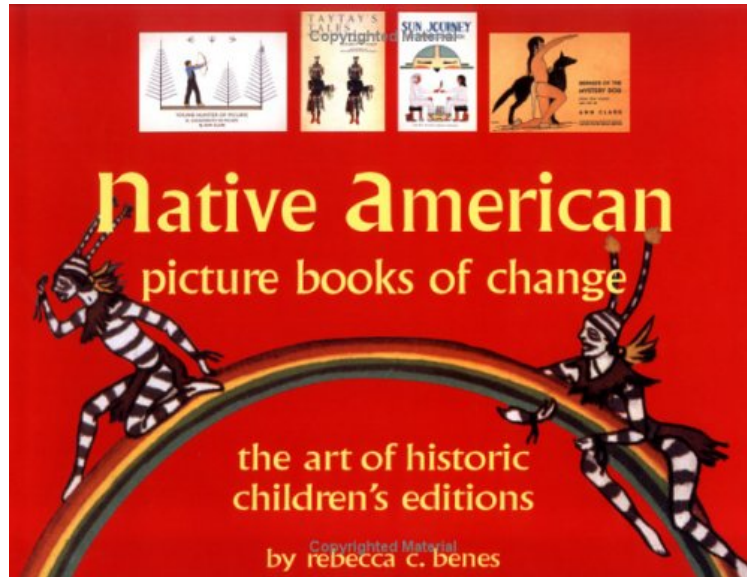


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Rebecca C. Benes

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[FREE] Native American Picture Books of Change: Historic Children's Books

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fond memoriesBy Gwynne C. SpencerA detailed overview of the golden days of government-produced children's books by notables such as Ann Nolan Clark, Pablita Velarde and Fred Kabotie with detailed notes about authors, artists, publishers, and the books themselves. About halfway through the book, you'll find yourself trolling on for copies of your very own of these long-out-of-print titles, so this is an extremely dangerous (and ultimately expensive) book! Forewarned.

In this book illustrated with 150 enchanting paintings and historical photographs, some from as early as 1922, the author describes the history and motivation behind some of the most exceptional children's books published in the United States. These picture book readers, originally developed for use in Indian schools during the New Deal, represent the first Native-centred texts used in Bureau of Indian Affairs curriculum. They were written by lauded writers, ethnologists, and linguists and illustrated with the stunning work of emerging and prominent Native American artists.

From Publishers WeeklyA children's literature professor who admits that she is "neither an art historian nor a linguist," Benes offers clear, accessible and author-focused descriptions of books produced by the federal government for use in Indian schools, following a sweeping indictment of the schools in the late 1920s. The 106 beautiful color plates and 44 bw illustrations drawn from the mostly hard-to-find books themselves all center on "change," or the enormous

upheavals and adaptations in Native communities following the devastating wars of the 18th and 19th centuries. One author, Elizabeth DeHuff, teacher and author of one of the earliest picture books, *Taytay's Tales* (1922), early on rejected the "archaic, nineteenth-century educational system that pursued a goal of forced assimilation"; instead, she transcribed her students' oral traditions. Velino Shije Herrera, the artist of the still-in-print *In My Mother's House* (1941), was a major progenitor of "the new pan-Indian tradition that was born at the Santa Fe Indian School." In order to teach literacy to the Navajo through bilingual readers, Willard Walcott Beatty, 1930s director of education at the Bureau of Indian Affairs, had to convert the oral Navajo to a written language, creating an alphabet and a definitive Navajo dictionary before the Bureau could publish the readers. The bilingual *Little Herder* series for the Navajo addressed the sensitive issue of overgrazing (in addition to the also sensitive issue of not having enough food to eat): "When I come here again/ then I will know/ if it is best/ to have many sheep/ or few sheep/ to use the land/ or let it sleep," says *Little Herder's* father. Such complex negotiations mark this poignant book as a whole. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

About the Author
Rebecca C. Benes has explored a lifetime interest in children's literature as a gallery owner, a librarian, and as an adjunct professor of children's literature. She lives in the Denver area.
Gloria Emerson is a writer and artist involved in Navajo education and linguistics. She founded and directed the Native American Materials Development Center in Albuquerque.