

**IN A GOOD WAY:
AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES IN THE
CLASSROOM**

By Gregory O. Gagnon, Ph.D

SUMMER 2006

**PREPARED FOR MINNESOTA HUMANITIES CENTER
TEACHER INSTITUTE**

JUNE 2006

Minnesota Humanities Center
987 Ivy Avenue East
Saint Paul, MN 55106
651-774-0105
www.mnhum.org

The opinions and conclusions in this paper are not endorsed by the Minnesota Humanities Center. They are entirely the opinions and conclusions of the author.

IN A GOOD WAY:

Many teachers would like to incorporate information about American Indians into their curriculum. A difficulty they face is that most teacher training programs simply do not provide enough, if any, Indian Studies subject matter. Another obstacle is that curriculum materials are not easily available despite several decades of state education department efforts—the material may be “out there” but this does little good for instructors who do not know about the material. For instance, in North Dakota the Department of Public Instruction worked for several years with reservation communities and some Indian educators. The results included brief histories of the reservations that were sent to school district administrators. Few teachers ever learned that the school had them.

Of course, many teachers develop units on Indian Studies at all levels. Often this is done in the face of increased demands on teacher workload commitments, the nonsense of No Child Left Behind, and the indifference of colleagues and administrators. Lamentations do no good, what is a teacher to do?

In Indian Country, traditional people try to do things “in a good way.” They know that human efforts should be evaluated within a realization that errors can be made for good reasons. They also know that if intentions are good, much can be forgiven. One thesis of this essay is that teachers need to approach the incorporation of Indian Studies in this spirit—IN A GOOD WAY.

Teachers do have a responsibility to minimize errors and to try to avoid egregious cultural mistakes. Perhaps the suggestions and admonitions in this essay might help. They come from the experience I have had in teaching Indian Studies and interacting with teachers. First, I provide generalizations about process and assumptions that all teachers, no matter what the grade level, should keep in mind as they prepare grade level specific lessons. Secondly, I will identify the continuing stereotypes and misconceptions about Indians that continue to blight American beliefs about Indians. Helping to eliminate these stereotypes is the most important contribution that any teacher at any grade level can make to greater multicultural learning. These categories of generalization are derived from personal experience and research augmented by numerous research studies and

hours of discussion with colleagues at all levels of the education community. Please note that the opinions expressed and the advice given is my responsibility and does not reflect the official position of any institution or organization.

PROCESS AND ASSUMPTIONS:

I would hope that teachers will consider the generalizations below and emphasize their content in classes. Again, the idea is to establish an approach for your students that emphasizes “In A Good Way.” Facts are good but they can be looked up. Process driven by valid assumptions creates a milieu for digesting and understanding the facts.

1. Terms: I use the terms Indian, American Indian, and Native American interchangeably. On the reservation, most of us use the term Indian although many of the younger people are using Native as a preferred term. Whatever you use, use it respectfully and few will object. In the current generation, I think that many non-Indians would feel most comfortable with Native American because many publishers and Indian advocates use it.
2. Culture is not singular. There are numerous Indian cultures in the United States alone. A Navajo is not a Chippewa and they are as dissimilar as German and French cultures. Too often teachers and students want a single answer but should stress the diversity of Indian cultures in the past and the present.
3. You cannot please everyone. Keep this in mind and do not worry about it too much. Once again, respect shown in a good way is the key to the choices you make in the classroom. Do not let a concern that you express the correct Indian approach paralyze your efforts to introduce Indian subjects into the classroom. Remember, there is no single Indian approach.
4. There is no single, monolithic Indian view about much of anything! I have been asked numerous times to identify the “Indian View” about things ranging from the War in Iraq, to “what Indians want,” to what is the Indian religion. There are 2.4 million or so Indians in the United States who are from one or more cultural groups. Indians vary in education, economic class, perspective, and even political ideology. Some Indians are Republicans, some are Democrats; some follow

traditional religions to the best of their knowledge and some adhere to Christian tenets and churches—there is no Indian View. Indian communities are diverse.

5. Indians are! Too often books and lessons treat Indian topics as if Indians no longer exist. American Indians are part of the twenty-first century. Indian religions are as viable as any other religion. They did not “used to have” Sun Dances or sweat lodges or holy people. We still do. It is unfortunate if you leave your students thinking that Indians no longer exist. Do not say Indians used to live in Minnesota or North Dakota or America. We still do. Minnesota has an Indian population of over 40,000 for instance.
6. Indian students should not be expected to be all-knowing about all American Indian cultures or even their own. Would you ask your non-Indian students to summarize what all Americans think about God? About the environment? About anything? Indian students are not necessarily any more informed than non-Indians. I have had teachers tell me that they were appalled that Indian children “knew nothing about their culture.” Yet the same teachers would never expect white students to summarize American cultures. Parenthetically, it is rude to single students out.... Teachers should be aware of the difficulties this poses for any student but sometimes seem to forget this when they have Indian students.
7. Food is not culture! You cannot expect to satisfy the need for information about Indians, their histories, and cultures by just eating fry bread and corn soup. As a corollary, if you are having an Indian Week—maybe in November—do not just sponsor a pow wow and call it enough. Complexity and variations characterize Indians today just as has always been the case.
8. Remember not to be a racist. This sounds obvious but it is amazing how often people, and even teachers, will convey the impression that behavior is somehow “in the blood.” For instance, taciturnity is Norwegian blood coming out and volatility is an Italian genetic characteristic. American Indian culture is not conveyed from parents to children genetically. It is tragically amusing to have teachers want to know how much Indian someone is. You do not really expect students whose grandparents were Norwegian to behave as a Norwegian does

despite there being no cultural contact. We do not inherit wisdom, knowledge of the universe, or anything else through our genes. Of course no one does. This is important to convey to your students and might even result in a lessening of racism. By the way, one can be Indian and blond.

9. Incorporate all of your students into the activities that enable you to also communicate information about Indians. Why not talk about culture change within each community? Look how our ancestors dressed for instance; not look how Indians dressed. Look at how our ancestors changed the world through farming for instance; not look at how Indians farmed.
10. Describe Indian reservations as communities with governments and legal standing. Reservations are not just some sort of aberrant sub-division of states. They have a long history and today's tribal governments are the successors of governments that existed before there was a United States. In fact, tribal governments are the third form of government within the United States. The other two are federal and state.
11. Do not use Indians to illustrate some other point. For instance, Indians were not the "First Ecologists" living in harmony with the world around them and preserving the environment by never wasting. This is poppycock derived from the propaganda of the Ecology Movement. No more than Iron Eyes Cody was Indian is it true that Indians had no impact on their environments. (Iron Eyes Cody was featured in an ecology public service spot on television as the Plains Indian who rode his paint down to the polluted river and a tear trickled down his face when he saw how Mother Earth had been defiled.) Indians molded their environments through the use of selective burning, irrigation, plant breeding, fish harvesting, and other selective uses of resources. Indians in general learned to use the environment to make their lives better.
12. Change was always part of Indian history. Indians were not suspended in time living always as their ancestors had. Just as change was a feature of European, Chinese, African, and Malaysian civilizations and cultures so too did Indian societies change over time through the process of selection.

13. All analysis is not stereotyping. There are valid generalizations that one can make about any culture, just make sure you use the right ones. If you point out that the Chippewa trapped too many beaver in the late eighteenth century, you are not stereotyping. Just make sure that you avail yourself of scholarship. There are a great many silly books out there but there are many that are factual, acceptable interpretations of the facts. Always stress the scientific method and the use of evidence to your students. “We know this because . . .” is a good way to approach Indian or any other subjects.

This listing of guidelines could continue forever but these should suffice to remind good teachers of what they already know. To reiterate, the main point is that you approach injecting Indian subjects into the curriculum “In A Good Way” just as you approach introducing any other material in your teaching.

WE KNOW THESE TO BE TRUE! STEREOTYPES THAT ENDURE

Everyone knows that stereotypes are wrong but evidence indicates that humans love to cling to their stereotypes. Perhaps the only way to eliminate them is to erode them through consistent effort on the part of teachers, parents, and other moral leaders.

Since 1998 I have taught a course called Introduction to Indian Studies. It averages about 25 students per semester so I have taught about 400 students. One of the research projects each semester sends my students to inquire what other students and non-students know about American Indians. On average each of my student researchers interviews fifteen people. Over the years about 6,000 people have responded to my student researchers. This should be a roughly representative sample of what the population of Minnesota, North Dakota, and a few from various other states and countries “know” about American Indians. There are several stereotypes that emerge in survey after survey, year after year with dogged consistency.

The overwhelming number of stereotypes are negative. However, there are a few that can be construed as positive in the sense that the stereotypes picture Indian culture (respondents believe there is just one) as having value. If students in 2006 harbor stereotypes, where have we failed?

My student researchers were asked to find out where their respondents had gained their “knowledge.” Parents, friends, and personal experiences are the sources most often noted. Respondents seldom indicated that they learned anything about Indians in school! Even those who said they had learned something in school indicated that it was about the way Indians were—in the distant past. They were left with the impression that there were no Indians today. “We ought to learn about Indians in school” is the solution that most student researchers advocate.

Another technique I use to elicit information about the state of college student knowledge is a pre-test. The first question is: “How many Indian tribes can you name?” Rarely do I have any students that can name more than five—unless the students are Indian (the class usually has about four Indian students of the 25 enrolled). Non-Indian students display the same absence of knowledge when asked, “How many reservations are there?”, “How many Indians are in the United States today?”, “name the reservations within the boundaries of North Dakota and Minnesota”. It is not unusual to have students fail to name a single reservation in Minnesota.

Most UND students are from either North Dakota or Minnesota. Ignorance can be fixed but someone is not trying hard enough at the pre-college level. My colleagues and I often discuss the absence of knowledge that our students display. We also assess student learning. By the way, UND has admissions standards so most of the students were average to above average high school students. We find that students do not know what culture is or how to study others. They are naïve and ignorant, not limited in intelligence.

It is an act of faith by most of us in the teaching business that education can help solve the problems of the world. We believe that knowledge can eliminate stereotypes, racism, and illogical processing of information. We believe that critical thinking is crucial to good citizenship. The challenge for teachers is to provide, directly and indirectly, the information for critical thinking leading to informed decision making. The information on stereotypes that our students believe is offered below for remedial action by teachers.

Ironically, the common stereotypes about American Indians probably say more about human nature than they do about Indians. A pervasive theme is that Indians are somehow cheating Americans and getting undeserved benefits that are denied other

Americans. A corollary theme, perhaps as a justification for picturing Indians as undeserving, is that Indians are violent, immoral, dirty, alcoholic, lazy, free-loaders, etc. Teachers familiar with studies of prejudice, racism, and chauvinism probably recognize a common theme here.

Another theme that has emerged consistently is that a large percentage of respondents think that Indians were cheated out of their land by the government. They also think that traditional Indian cultures were admirable. Of course, the cheating and culture happened in the past. There is no connection with the present. Most respondents also do not see any difficulty in asserting “our” right to tell “them” what to do and how to do it. This paternalistic attitude reverberates throughout minority-majority relationships historically.

The most common stereotypes gleaned from 400 student research papers reflecting the responses of 6000 are:

1. INDIANS GET A CHECK FROM THE GOVERNMENT JUST FOR BEING INDIAN.

This is far and away the most frequently voiced stereotype. Years ago I was asked by the National Park Service to write a tourist-friendly book about Pine Ridge Reservation. I asked the staff what question they were most often asked by tourists—it was, “Why do Indians get a check every month?”! This belief never goes away. Dealing with this stereotype is frustrating but it demonstrates the tenacity of ignorance and disregard of facts. Interestingly, one student researcher found that seven of the ten people he queried knew exactly how much Indians got in their non-existent checks, \$500 monthly. Another student found that 44% of her respondents knew that Indians received a monthly check “just for being Native American.” A third found that 58% of her sample knew Indians got a check for being Indian. It does little good to point out that I have never received a check just for being Indian. It does little good to explain that the stereotype probably stems from two sources, historical and contemporary. Payments were and sometimes still are made to members of specific tribes as settlements prescribed by federal courts or as payment for land. Many Indians work for the federal or tribal governments therefore, like public school teachers, their salary

checks are government checks. Unfortunately many Indians qualify for assistance programs because of their incomes but they have to meet the same guidelines for assistance as all Americans do. The check from the government stereotype leads to numerous corollaries. Indians get checks so they don't have to work. Indians live off our money. Indians have unfair advantages. Indians live for free. (Please note the mean spirited aspects of these extensions of the common stereotype.)

2. **INDIANS DO NOT PAY TAXES!** The facts underlying this stereotype are too nuanced for public understanding, apparently. One student researcher, for example, found that 48% of her sample were sure that "Native Americans do not pay government taxes." Despite popular belief, individual Indians do pay federal income taxes and other federal taxes even if they live on reservations. Indians who do not live on Indian Trust land (reservation land) pay all state property and income taxes. The only untaxed individual Indian income is when the income is derived from treaty payments (rare but still applies in a few areas) or is generated from Trust land (leases and crops, for instance). An Indian who lives on Trust land and earns his income on Trust land is not subject to state taxes. Of course, off the reservations, Indians pay the same excise and special taxes that anyone else does. The pernicious influence of the global belief that Indians do not pay taxes is yet another illustration of some sort of envy or jealousy inherent in humans, I guess. Spin-off stereotypes include the idea that Indians live at "our" expense, have unfair privileges, and are welfare free-loaders.
3. **INDIANS GET FREE COLLEGE EDUCATIONS.** This is particularly prevalent among the college students sampled by my student researchers. The reality is quite different. A recent study indicated that most Indian students at UND leave college with as much debt from student loans as their non-Indian peers. UND does offer diversity waivers, about half of which go to American Indian students, but these are limited in number so that the majority of Indian students do not receive the waivers. Most tribal governments do award scholarships to some of their tribal members but they rarely, if ever, cover the cost of going to college. One program that UND has is called INMED (Indians into Medicine Program). It operates just like ROTC. An Indian student has tuition and living expenses covered while in college but must pay back by either

working in the Indian Health Service or by actually paying the money back, with interest. The free education stereotype is similar to many commonly voiced about minorities getting unfair benefits; it is based on a strange form of paranoia about “others” getting something “we” do not get.

4. **INDIANS WERE THE FIRST ECOLOGISTS!** Scholars trace this stereotype to the appropriation of American Indian culture by the contemporary ecological movement in America. Many a teacher has used the famous speeches of Seattle to illustrate Indian Green. Of course the Seattle speech was written by a non-Indian for an Earth Day celebration. The stereotype’s deeper roots come from the Romantic Noble Savage idea that was designed by European and American social critics like Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, Penn, Franklin, and even Jefferson. It has little or nothing to do with Indian realities. Indians were assumed to be part of the environment. Their intimacy with nature harmed nothing and left the wilderness in its natural state. This construction of Indian identity is pernicious because it denies the humanity of Indians. The reality is that Indians actively altered their environments—they did invent agriculture, irrigation, controlled burning to encourage growth of certain plants and of animal herds, after all—and they actively exploited their resources (including mining of copper and lead, hunting and trapping fur-bearing animals, etc.). However, these truths do not seem to matter. Interestingly, many respondents indicated that Indians USED to live in balance and harmony but today they make the reservations into garbage dumps; some even conclude that today’s Indians are not even really Indian because they do not live in harmony with the environment—they have lost their culture.
5. **RESERVATIONS WERE GIVEN TO INDIANS.** This is a variation on the idea that Indians get something for nothing. Many respondents offer a variety of reasons for why the United States “gave” reservations to Indians. Some see guilt as a motivation while others see the altruistic idea of giving Indians a place “to practice and preserve their culture.” Most Americans have trouble with the idea that reservations were administratively and congressionally created from Indian land. Today about 4% of America is Indian Trust land but once all of the land was Indian. Legally, Indians

reserved a miniscule portion of what they had originally owned and the federal government recognized that Indian land pre-dated the United States. Literally, Indians kept some of the land and this makes up the reservations of today. The land that is now owned by the United States (96% of the United States) was acquired from Indians through purchase, conquest, or simply by taking. As with other stereotypes, this one has permutations. “Reservations exist because Indians are too stupid and lazy to get jobs and buy their own land” is one of the most stereotypical-inclusive sentences I have gleaned from student commentaries. An ironic variation is, “Indians feel like this land is their land.” Most respondents conclude that reservations are vast areas of chaos where Indians destroy, fight, take drugs, avoid the law that ought to apply to everyone, and foolishly spend taxpayers money.

6. **INDIANS NEED TO GET OVER IT!** While not exactly a stereotype, this comment has appeared frequently in the quotations selected by student researchers. It implies an impatience and contempt for history, law, and justice by respondents. Many of the associated comments indicate that respondents conclude that contemporary Americans are not responsible for the past and that Indians have no justification in using the past to explain the present nor do they have any “rights” because of the past. Often respondents indicate “they were paid enough for what Europeans [emphasis mine] did.” This denial that the United States had anything to do with taking Indian lands appears frequently in commentaries. It was the Europeans, not us Americans, is an interesting piece of ahistorical sophistry.
7. **INDIANS ARE VERY SPIRITUAL.** While this belief is widespread, most respondents seem to equate spirituality with some sort of hocus-pocus that involves American Indian unity with the universe and with nature. Several scholars have commented on the pervasive quality of this belief and equated it with New Agers seeking communion with the forces of the world whether through Indian or Asian cultures as interpreted by the New Age gurus. It does not seem to matter that there is no single Indian culture and that there is diversity among Indians in their spiritual/religious beliefs. Aside from denying the humanity of Indians, this is not a particularly pernicious stereotype. In fact, many American Indians voice the same idea and find that it validates their sense of

otherness. Quite often students indicate a certain envy of Indians for their spirituality because Americans have lost spirituality in the eyes of the respondents. Many recognize that American Indians have strong commitments to family and this, too, is seen as a positive characteristic.

8. **INDIANS ARE DRUNKS AND ALCOHOLICS.** There are many variations on this theme. Most respondents seem to perceive that Indians, particularly on reservations, live in a world of immoral anarchy that is violent, dirty, slothful, free loading, etc.
9. **INDIANS ARE LOSING THEIR CULTURE.** Numerous respondents have indicated this opinion over the years. It demonstrates the common belief that culture is dressing and acting the way people did in the past. Perhaps this is fueled by the numerous ethnic festivals that feature German descended American kids dressed in dirndls and lederhosen or Mexican-American kids dressed as nineteenth century peasants. Clearly if Indians wear suits and use computers they have “lost” their cultures.
10. **INDIANS UNFAIRLY MAKE A LOT OF MONEY FROM CASINOS.** Students and many other Americans have elevated this to the status of stand alone stereotype. The truth is that about 10% of the Indian casinos reap a disproportionate profit while most of the remaining casinos, as within North Dakota for instance, are mainly employment opportunities. Indian casinos generate only about 20% of the casino revenue in the United States. Many Indians have never received any dividends from their tribal casinos. Many reservations do not even have casinos. Despite these truths, students paint the picture of Indians with an unfair advantage over real businesses; many think that the states cannot have their own casinos so they ask questions like “Why do they get to have casinos and we don’t.” Others are indignant about Indians getting all that money and “we still have to support them!” Others believe that the states should get money from the casinos [many governors think the same thing but they want more money because they know states already get revenue from tribal casinos] because it isn’t fair that Indians don’t pay taxes.

These stereotypes and their abundant permutations leave those of us who are teachers with the apparently insurmountable task of trying to counter these tenaciously

held beliefs. What is the answer?

The easy answer is the one chosen by most of my students. Everyone should be required to take courses on Indian Studies. While I support this idea, the practicality is that such a good idea will not happen. Current patterns in curriculum are to restrict subject matter coursework in favor of reading and mathematics so No Child Left Behind will not punish schools. In this atmosphere civic education receives short shrift too often.

The hard answer is for teachers to make sure that they work with their students to nip the stereotypes in the bud. This can be done routinely within the context of any grade level. For instance, we all celebrate or note Thanksgiving. Here the important thing to emphasize is that all cultures have thanksgiving rituals and this one is for the United States. The opportunity here is multicultural learning and to emphasize that people all used to dress differently and to underscore the idea that intercultural contact was often harmonious. By the way, it would be nice to point out that the traditional Thanksgiving foods are Indian in origin (turkey, cranberries, potatoes, sweet potatoes, beans, etc.) This would allow students to realize that Indians were part of the agricultural developments of the whole world.

Perhaps the best approach for teachers is to check with their state education department. Over the past few decades many states have made a real effort to do curriculum development for several grade levels. It is a start. Beyond that one could go to any of the eleven reservations web sites for reservations within Minnesota. The Minnesota Indian Affairs Council has a web site with extensive links including connections to the eleven reservations within the state's boundaries. The Wisconsin Department of Instruction home page can be searched for Native American curriculum. The result will connect teachers to Indian curriculum by grade level. Remember that most of these have flaws because they were developed by committees with the idea of not offending anyone—too often this reduces Indian Studies to the way Indians used to live in a balanced way.

Try to emphasize that Indians were and are people. They interacted with other cultures. They fought wars for gain. They had sophisticated political systems. Their societies were not made up of just men hunting and women gathering. Men and women

had many functions in traditional society. Today Indian men and women still have many functions but they are different from those of their ancestors.

There are thousands of web sites. The ones I find most useful are:

1. www.census.gov/populations. Provides the all-important contemporary data describing the Indian population.
2. www.nativeculturelinks.com. Lisa Mitten maintains this American Indian Library Association website. Its strength is that it has myriad links to many academic and general public sites.
3. www.hanksville.org/Naresources. Focuses on organizations, tribes, tribal interest groups, and cultural associations. Includes scholarly sites.
4. www.si.edu. The Smithsonian Institute home page provides a link to its American History and Culture link. This is a rich site for continuing exhibits, information ranging from archaeology to art, and many other features.
5. www.Indians.com. Provides a daily summary of contemporary news items in Indian Country. It is where I start my day and it features links to present stories too. A very good contemporary site.

Naturally, web sites are only as good as the care taken for accuracy. There are many advocacy sites that are more than willing to distort the facts and to preach their own brand of Indian “reality” whether or not it bears any resemblance to reality. The reader must beware. Currently the Bureau of Indian Affairs web site is not in operation.

I would also suggest that teachers get a book or two that speaks to their own needs and provides general information too. An Indian Chapbook, 2nd ed., was written [by Greg Gagnon] to provide background. [This resource is available by contacting Barnes and Noble University Bookstore on the UND-Grand Forks campus at 701.777.2746.] If you are interested in law, my favorite reference is William C. Canby Jr.'s American Indian Law in a Nutshell, 4th edition. Unfortunately there is no single work that covers the whole of Indian cultures, history, and experiences. The same is true for good tribal histories. However, there are hundreds of good monographs for particular eras, tribal experiences, and even tribal pre-reservation cultures. The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism From

Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee by Jeffrey Ostler is an excellent example of this type of scholarship.

You might also want to call somebody. Most of us who teach Indian Studies are more than willing to answer questions for teachers who want to teach about Indians “In A Good Way.”

CONCLUSION

As teachers you must continue to fight the banality of ignorance. American Indians and their governments continue to be an important part of American society and history. Students of all ethnic backgrounds need to realize this if they are to grow toward being fully participating American citizens. Felix Cohen, the codifier of American Indian law, compared Indians in America to the miner’s canary. The way Indians are treated is an indicator of how America is doing in meeting its ideals.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gregory O. Gagnon is an associate professor in Indian Studies at the University of North Dakota. His specialty is contemporary tribal government and federal policy and he is a consultant on governance and faculty development for several tribal colleges. He teams with Ellen Gagnon to offer Indians in Children’s Literature as part of the Indian Studies program at UND. He was Vice President for Instructional Affairs at Oglala Lakota College for the better part of seventeen years before joining UND’s faculty. He has conducted professional development workshops on Indian Studies for elementary, secondary, and college level teachers on reservations and for school systems in several states. Dr. Gagnon is an enrolled citizen of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa.

APPENDIX: JUICY QUOTATIONS:

Unless one has read about 400 research papers that summarize the responses of 6,000 people, one does not realize the impact of accumulated stereotypes about American Indians. In order to provide the flavor of the mass of responses, you might want to read the selected quotations that I have saved over the past several years. They reinforce the somewhat drier treatment above and offer an opportunity to shudder along with me and my colleagues and to speculate on how much damage ignorance causes to American Indians.

1. "Gangs and drugs are what reservations are used for because Indians love chaos and practice these things."
2. "Indians drive nice cars paid for by the government."
3. "Reservations should be disbanded to get equality-they are not fair."
4. "Indians think they should have special rules that apply to them."
5. "They are allowed things we aren't. I think it is unfair to the rest of Americans."
6. "Indians are drunks and mostly alcoholics."
7. "tribal governments are Busch {sic} league."
8. "I didn't even know they had their own governments. I don't see how that can happen; don't they have to follow our laws?"
9. [Indians are] "dirty, fat, and violent."
10. "It's a new day and age and they need to get over it."
11. [Indians] "get a bunch of free stuff."
12. Indian culture is "desperate, lost, and it is quickly fading away."
13. Indians are exempt from punishment off the reservation.
14. The government "pays Indians to stay on the reservations so they are still there."
15. "I don't like that our government has to pay forever" [so] "stop the monthly checks."
16. Indians are "prejudiced against whites."
17. [We should] "take away their reservations if they are not living as their ancestors did."

18. "Indians no longer have a culture."
19. "Indian government is spoiled and corrupt."
20. "A lot of people tell me stories of how awful they are."

These are representative samples of the common themes of stereotyping revealed by student research papers. It is clear that teachers have their work cut out for them. It is important work because when stereotypes are allowed to go unchallenged, people make decisions based on misinformation.