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The Kids' Reading Room



The Kids' Reading page is part of the Reading by 9 literacy project.

Los Angeles Times

Native Stories Explore Horses, Hoop Dances and Buffalo

Kids' Books

By KEVIN BAXTER
TIMES STAFF WRITER

When GaWaNi Pony Boy, a mixed-blood Tsa-lag'i Indian, left college in Boston several years ago, his grandfather urged him to take one more class before he entered the workaday world. So GaWaNi joined a native drum group touring the U.S. performing traditional music and dance.

It was an experience that changed him forever.

"I lived with these men, many of whom were in their 70s, and I listened every day to their wonderful stories," he says. "It created within me a burning desire to learn more of the traditional ways. And I felt a responsibility to share that knowledge with others."

The most recent result of that calling is "Out of the Saddle: Native American Horsemanship" (BowTie Press; 96 pages; \$17.95), a fact-packed book for readers ages 8 to 11 that provides a rich mix of facts, folklore and Native American history, illustrated with 100 full-color photos.

Jacqueline Left Hand Bull provides a detailed look at one aspect of her people's culture in "Lakota Hoop Dancer" (Dutton Children's Books; 32 pages; \$15.99). A member of the Sicangu Lakota Nation, Bull was born on the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota. In her book, aimed at readers ages 8 to 11, she explains the history and importance of the hoop dance.

Like native peoples everywhere, the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico have also struggled to honor ancient customs while adjusting to modern life. That's among the

subjects Susan Hazen-Hammond explores in "Thunder Bear and Ko: The Buffalo Nation and Nambé Pueblo" (Dutton Children's Books; 32 pages; \$16.99).

The book, for middle-grade students, follows 8-year-old Thunder Bear Yates and his family as they care for a small herd of buffalo that the Pueblo Indians had saved by suing the state of New Mexico to prevent a proposed sport hunt. According to Pueblo beliefs, buffalo are sacred animals, and as Yates learns to care for them, he begins to learn more about his heritage.

In Brix McDonald's young adult

novels, "Riding on the Wind" (Avenue Publishing; 243 pages; \$5.95), 15-year-old Carrie Sutton yearns to become the first female rider in the Pony Express. But she must overcome the resistance of her fearful stepmother and the Pony Express supervisor. And before her adventure is over, she meets Wild Bill Cody and matures into a young woman.

In the sequel, "Outlaw" (Avenue Publishing; 237 pages; \$5.95), Carrie is separated from her beloved stallion. Her search for the missing horse leads her to California, where she encounters another

wild adventure.

Not all cowboys or cowgirls spoke English or Native American dialects. In fact, the first cowboys in the Southwest were *charros*, or horsemen, and spoke Spanish. *Charros* were more like modern rodeo stars than cowboys, since the best of them were also skilled in using lariat.

George Ancona's "Charro: The Mexican Cowboy" (Harcourt Brace; 48 pages; \$9 in paperback), is a lushly photographed book for middle-grade students that explains their history and tradition.



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New Young Adult Series ... *Widely reviewed and highly recommended!!!*

RIDING ON THE WIND by Brix McDonald

ISBN 0-9661306-0-X LCCN 97-077039 \$5.95 Paperback