The Simon Ortiz and Labriola Center Lecture on Indigenous Land, Culture, and Community

DEBBIE REESE:

Some Truths, but Lots of Lies: Indigenous Peoples in Children’s Literature

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2016 | 7:00 p.m.
Heard Museum, Steele Auditorium, 2301 N Central Ave, Phoenix, Arizona

Debbie Reese (Nambé Pueblo), activist, scholar, and critic, publishes the critically acclaimed blog American Indians in Children's Literature (AICL). Reese started the AICL blog in 2006—with the teachings of her elders and Native scholars in mind—when she was a professor in the American Indian Studies program at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. "Those teachings," she explains, "are ones that tell us that the work we do is not for ourselves but for our communities and their well-being." For her, that meant making her research and writing easily and readily accessible to those who typically have the least access to the work of academics.

Reese was born at the Indian Hospital in Santa Fe and grew up on the Nambé Pueblo reservation, learning tribal dances and ceremonies from family members and elders. She earned a teaching degree from the University of New Mexico and taught elementary school in Albuquerque before moving to Oklahoma to work on a Master's degree in school administration. Later, while completing her doctorate in education at the University of Illinois in the early 1990s, Reese worked alongside Native students and allies to establish a Native American House at the university and soon after that, launched an American Indian Studies program there.

Reese has written for publications such as Horn Book Magazine, School Library Journal, and Language Arts. She is regularly invited to give lectures and workshops around the U.S. and has recently begun using technology to work with libraries and colleagues in Canada.

"Believe the books Native students read in school play a significant role in how Native students fare. Teachers and librarians have a role to play, too, in the success of Native students. For me—and I hope for you—that means selecting books that accurately portray Native people and our nations."

—DEBBIE REESE