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A Native American Thought of It: Amazing Inventions and Innovations

David MacDonald
Rocky Landon
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A Native American Thought of It is an educational book written by Rocky Landon, an Ojibway band member and Native Studies consultant from Ontario, with children's book author David MacDonald, *A Native American Thought of It* chronicles inventions and accomplishments of Native Americans across the Americas. Many of the significant inventions and accomplishments covered are a part of our daily lives. Landon discusses everything from moccasins to syringes, diapers and even hacky sacks. Each of these items was being used by different Native cultures across the Ameri-cas before European colonization.

Landon is also careful to avoid broad generalizations about "Native America." In the beginning of the book there is a map that shows the diverse native cultures across the continent, from Algonquin to Zuni. As he traces Native American accomplish-ments throughout the book he is quick to cite the specific cultures that used the inventions, and why they were necessary for that cul-ture. What people used depended on what they were exposed to, and what natural resources existed in their environment. For exam-ple communities that lived in the Eastern Woodlands and around the Great Lakes were able to use birch bark as a scroll to write on, while other communities instead used rocks because they were more readily available. All of this history teaches the reader that Native America is not one homogenous culture, rather a plethora of cultures spread across an enormous continent.

At the end of the book, Landon includes a pivotal section titled "Native Americans Today" that bridges the gap between past and present. He highlights Native American astronauts, athletes, and politicians who are successful around the world today. Landon also brings to light how Native cultures are flourishing across the continent: Native languages are being taught in schools, and Native arts are thriving in galleries, museums, and people's homes. This section shows that Native cultures do not exist only in history books, but are an important part of our present.

The blurb on the front cover of another recent book, *The Drum Calls Softly*, asserts that this illustrated book is of equal importance to children and adults—a blurb has never been so right. From the beautifully painted illustrations to the world-class musicianship of Northern Cree on the accompanying audio CD, *The Drum* is a powerfully narrated tale of spiritual belonging that transcends cultural barriers, whether you page through the book listening to the narration in Cree, or you follow the story on its own.

Both of these books bring a diverse spectrum of Native American cultures to the forefront. *A Native American Thought of It* offers a broad overview of cultural, scientific, and artistic contributions in the past and present. *The Drum Calls Softly* showcases the artistic talents of contemporary Native American artists, while sharing the cultural practices of the Cree and their connection to the rest of the world. Each of these books shows us the importance of Native American cultures and histories in our lives, and both deserve a permanent spot on any reader's bookshelf; whether they are a child or an intellectually curious adult. (November/October)
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