

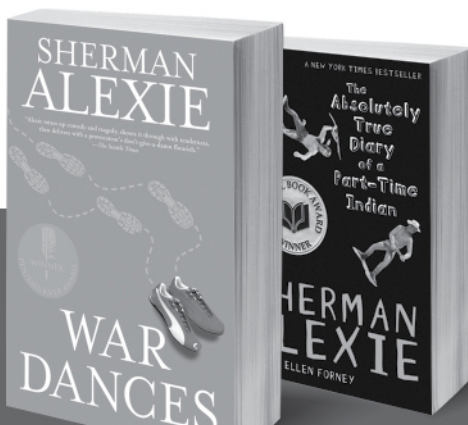
Lesson Plans and Resources for *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*

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 - *Review of the book by Bruce Barcott for the New York Times*
 - *"Sorry for Not Being a Stereotype" by Rita Pyrellis*

These resources are all available, both separately and together, at www.freelibrary.org/onebook

Please send any comments or feedback about these resources to Larissa.Pahomov@gmail.com.



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ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

The materials in this unit plan are meant to be flexible and easy to adapt to your own classroom. Through reading the book and completing any of the suggested activities, students can achieve any number of the following understandings:

- Being a minority has both its advantages and disadvantages.
- Schools are often miniature versions of the real world, with all the same problems and inequities.
- Humans are resilient and figure out ways to cope with difficulty or trauma -- humor, sarcasm, compassion, etc.

Students should be introduced to the following key questions as they begin reading, and keep them in mind as they work through the book:

What happens when a person leaves their home environment in pursuit of success? Do they give up or betray their identity? Is it really true that “you can never go home again”?

What makes for a good high school experience? Do you have to be happy for your education to have been a good one?

How do we, as humans, overcome adversity? What tactics do we use to get through hard times, difficult situations, and general injustice?

Many of the reader response questions and suggested projects relate to these essential questions. Students are encouraged to ask these questions not only of the characters of the book, but of themselves.

LINKS TO DAY-BY-DAY LESSON PLANS

These lesson plans, discussion questions, and assessments are geared more towards a high-school audience. If you are interested in plans that are designed more for middle school, or you would like to see some more specific day-by-day style plans, there are several excellent resources available online:

One is a 4-week unit posted via the University of New Mexico, and especially brings in outside resources looking at Native Americans today:

<http://www.d.umn.edu/~lmillerc/TeachingEnglishHomePage/TeachingUnits/AbsolutelyTrueDiaryofaPart-TimeIndian.htm>

The other is a 5-week unit posted via Columbia University, where the essential questions revolve around identity and environment:

<http://pocketknowledge.tc.columbia.edu/home.php/viewfile/download/74000>

Both of these units include daily instructions and reading schedules.

IN-CLASS INTRODUCTION

IN-CLASS INTRODUCTION

This lesson is designed to provide students with a one-class introduction to the book. The lesson can be used to start off a class reading of the text, or to encourage them to read it independently.

As a recipient of One Book resources, the Free Library requires that you devote one class period to introducing *War Dances* to students, either using this lesson or your own plan.

1. Hand out books. Have students look at the picture of the author and examine the back cover while you read the excerpt of the authors' biography:

Sherman J. Alexie, Jr., was born in October 1966. A Spokane/Coeur d'Alene Indian, he grew up on the [Spokane Indian Reservation](#) in Wellpinit, WA, about 50 miles northwest of Spokane, WA.

*Born hydrocephalic, which means with water on the brain, Alexie underwent a brain operation at the age of 6 months and was not expected to survive. When he did beat the odds, doctors predicted he would live with severe mental retardation. Though he showed no signs of this, he suffered severe side effects, such as seizures, throughout his childhood. In spite of all he had to overcome, Alexie learned to read by age three, and devoured novels, such as John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, by age five. All these things ostracized him from his peers, though, and he was often the brunt of other kids' jokes on the reservation.*

As a teenager, after finding his mother's name written in a textbook assigned to him at the Wellpinit school, Alexie made a conscious decision to attend high school off the reservation in Reardan, WA, about 20 miles south of Wellpinit, where he knew he would get a better education. At [Reardan High](#) he was the only Indian, except for the school mascot. There he excelled academically and became a star player on the basketball team. This experience inspired his first young adult novel, [The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian](#).

In 1985 Alexie graduated Reardan High and went on to attend Gonzaga University in Spokane, WA, on scholarship. After two years at Gonzaga, he transferred to Washington State University (WSU) in Pullman, WA.

Alexie planned to be a doctor and enrolled in pre-med courses at WSU, but after fainting numerous times in human anatomy class realized he needed to change his career path. That change was fueled when he stumbled into a poetry workshop at WSU.

Encouraged by poetry teacher [Alex Kuo](#), Alexie excelled at writing and realized he'd found his new path. Since starting out as a writer, Alexie has published over a dozen books of both poetry and prose, and has received several national awards and honors, including the National Book Award and the Pen/Faulkner Award.

2.. Hand out or project the **Map of Early Indian Tribes, West**. Have students identify "Spokane" and "Coeur D'Alenne" on the map.

3. Next, Hand out or project the **Census Map of Indian Reservations, 2000**. Have students use the key to find

the Spokane and Coeur D'Alenne reservations.

4. Jump into reading the first chapter of the book, pages 1-6.

5. Discuss: What are the ways that Alexie's personal history is influencing this book? Since there are some obvious connections between his life and the narrator's, why do you think he chose to write this book as a work of fiction, and not an autobiography?

6. Introduce students to any combination of secondary information designed to educate them about the history and current issues surrounding American Indian tribes, both in the Pacific Northwest and Nationally:

- Abbreviated Timeline of Indian history from 1789 to present (print)

- Spokane Tribe website (online)

<http://www.spokanetribe.com/index.php>

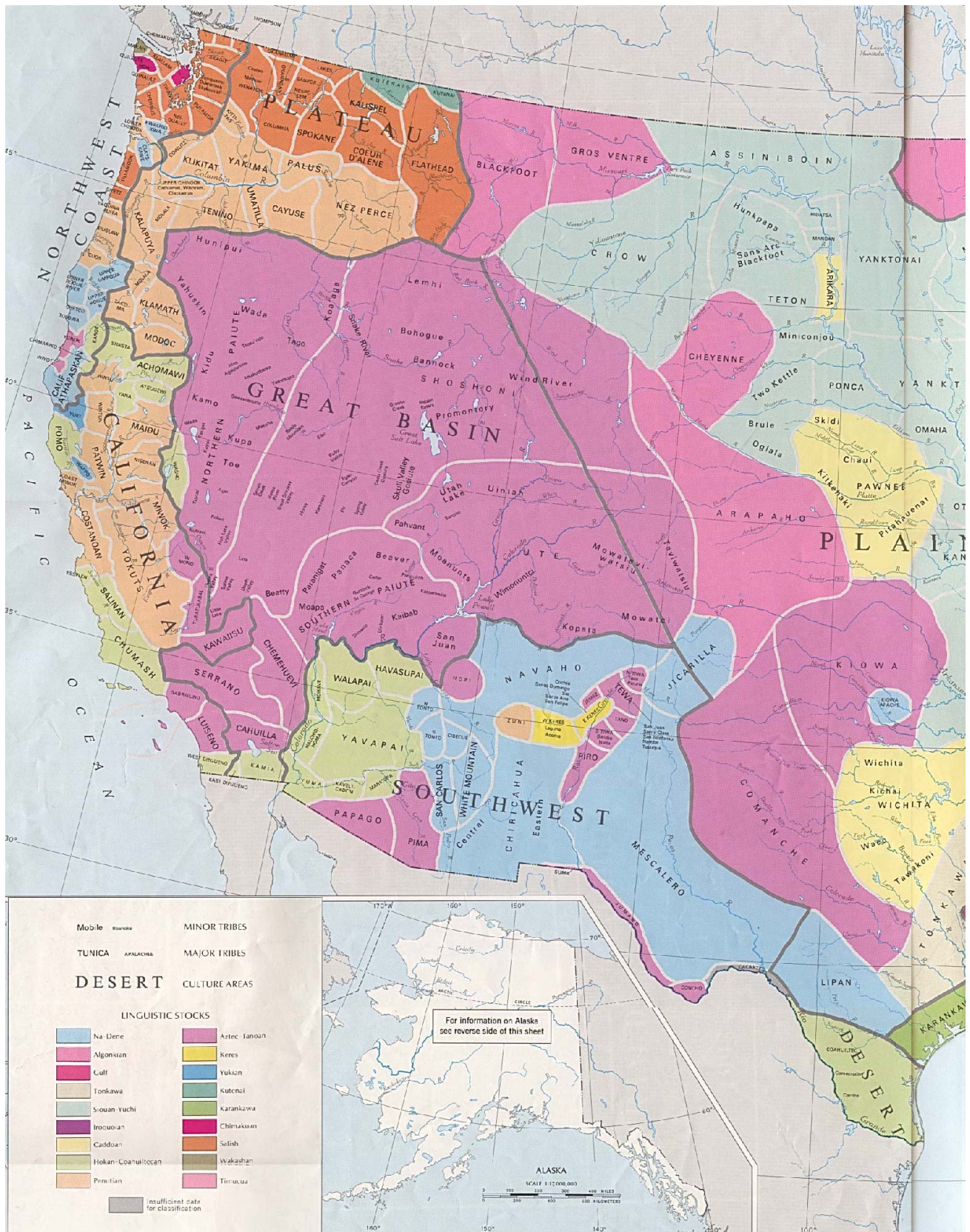
<http://www.spokanetribe.com/page.php?code=reservation>

- PBS website for the Ken Burns documentary "The West" (online)

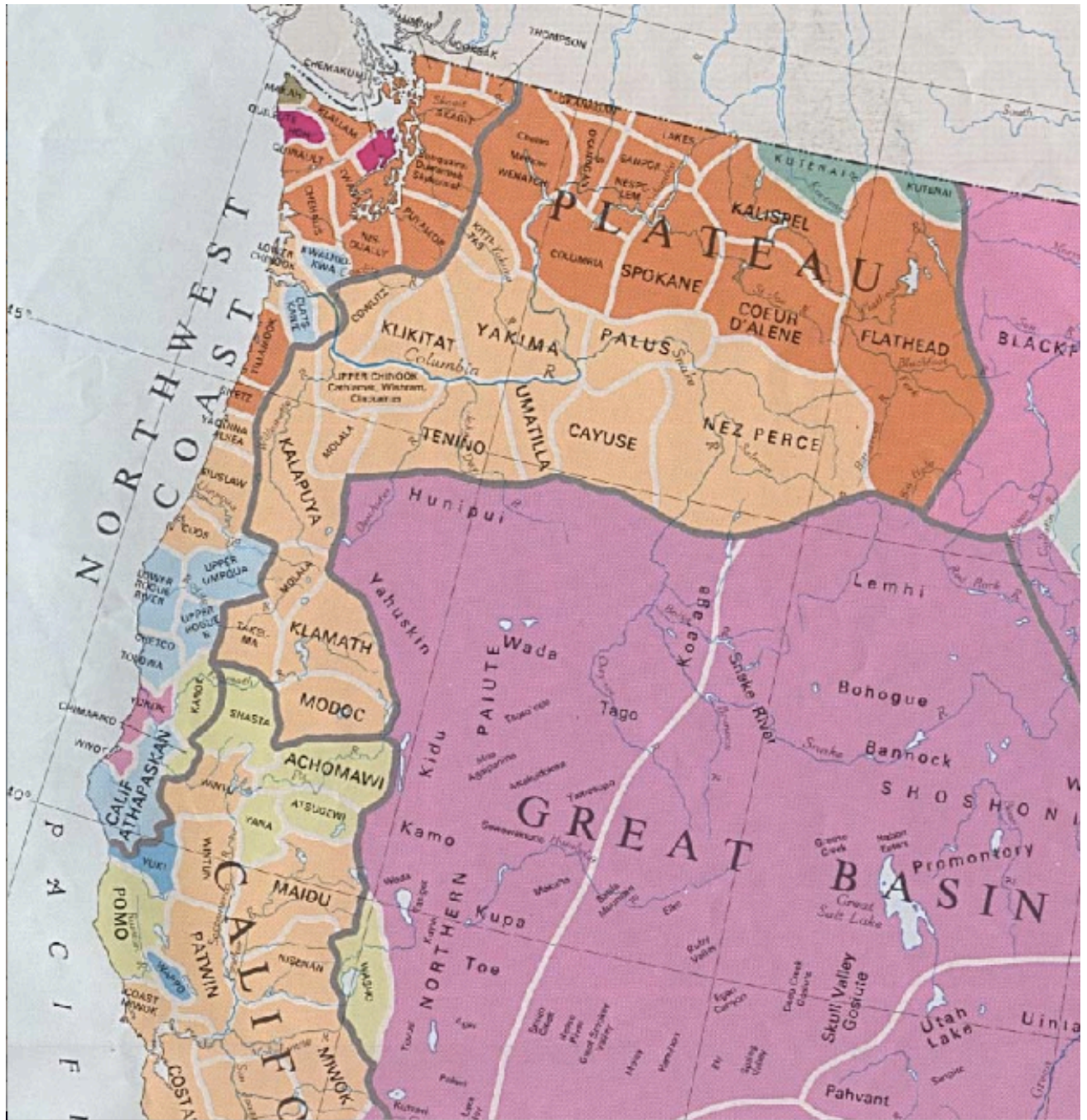
<http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/>

These resources could also be assigned as exploratory homework, with students recording and reporting back relevant information that they discover.

MAP OF EARLY INDIAN TRIBES, WEST

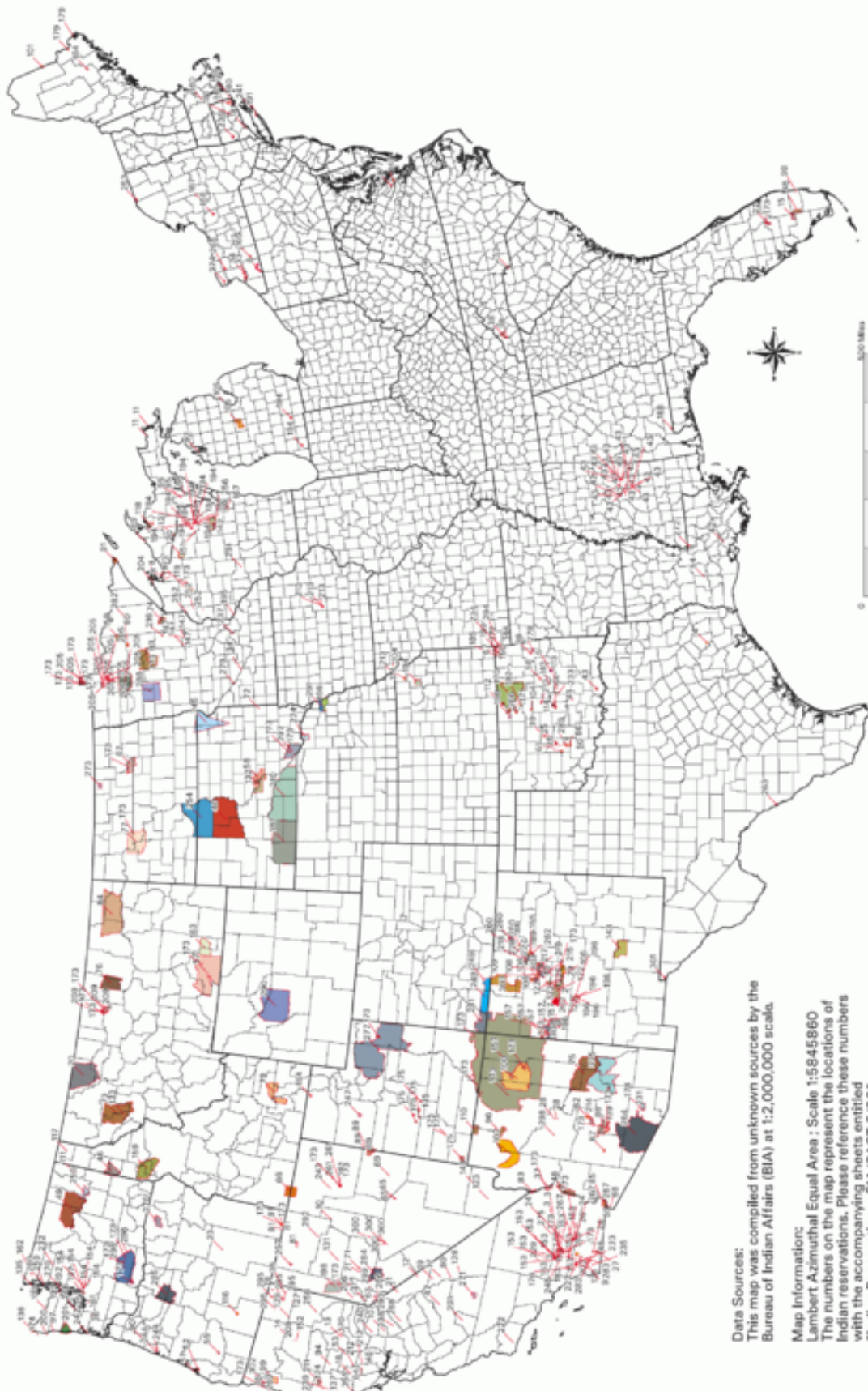


DETAIL OF MAP OF EARLY INDIAN TRIBES, WEST



CENSUS MAP OF INDIAN RESERVATIONS, 2000

Indian Reservations in the Continental United States



Data Sources:
This map was compiled from unknown sources by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) at 1:2,000,000 scale.

Map Information:
Lambert Azimuthal Equal Area ; Scale 1:5845860
The numbers on the map represent the locations of Indian reservations. Please reference these numbers with the accompanying sheets entitled "Indian Reservations- BIA/CAST 5/96".

CENSUS MAP KEY

1. ABSENTEE SHAWNEE *	73. FLATHEAD	151. MOLE LAKE	229. SAN MANUAL
2. ACOMA	74. FOND DU LAC	152. MONTGOMERY CREEK	230. SAN PASQUAL
3. AGUA CALIENTE	75. FORT APACHE	153. MORONGO	231. SAN XAVIER
4. ALABAMA-COUSHATTA	76. FORT BELKNAP	154. MUCKLESHOOT	232. SAUK SUJATTLE
5. ALABAMA-QUASSARTE CREEKS *	77. FORT BERTHOLD	155. NAMBE	233. SEMINOLE *
6. ALLEGANY	78. FORT BIDWELL	156. NARRAGANSETT	234. SENECA-CAYUGA *
7. APACHE *	79. FORT HALL	157. NAVAJO	235. SEQUAN
8. BAD RIVER	80. FORT INDEPENDENCE	158. NETT LAKE	236. SHAGTICOKE +
9. BARONA RANCH	81. FORT MCDERMITT	159. NEZ PERCE	237. SHAKOPEE
10. BATTLE MOUNTAIN	82. FORT MCDOWELL	160. NIPMOC-HASSANAMISCO +	238. SHEEP RANCH
11. BAY MILLS	83. FORT MOHAVE	161. NISQUALLY	239. SHERWOOD VALLEY
12. BENTON PAIUTE	84. FORT PECK	162. NOOKSACK	240. SHINGLE SPRING
13. BERRY CREEK	85. FORT YUMA	163. NORTHERN CHEYENNE	241. SHINNECOCK +
14. BIG BEND	86. FT. SILL APACHE *	164. NORTHWESTERN SHOSHONE	242. SHOALWATER
15. BIG CYPRESS	87. GILA BEND	165. OIL SPRINGS	243. SHOSHONE
16. BIG LAGOON	88. GILA RIVER	166. OMAHA	244. SILETZ
17. BIG PINE	89. GOSHUTE	167. ONEIDA #	245. SISSETON
18. BIG VALLEY	90. GRANDE RONDE	168. ONONDAGA	246. SKOKOMISH
19. BISHOP	91. GRAND PORTAGE	169. ONTONAGON	247. SKULL VALLEY
20. BLACKFEET	92. GRAND TRAVERSE	170. OSAGE	248. SOBOBA
21. BRIDGEPORT	93. GREATER LEECH LAKE	171. OTOE-MISSOURI *	249. SOUTHERN UTE
22. BRIGHTON	94. GRINDSTONE	172. OTTAWA *	250. SPOKANE
23. BURNS PAIUTE COLONY	95. HANNAHVILLE	173. OUT	251. SQUAXON ISLAND
24. CABEZON	96. HAVASUPAI	174. OZETTE	252. ST. CROIX
25. CADDO *	97. HOH	175. PAIUTE	253. ST. REGIS
26. CAHUILLA	98. HOLLYWOOD	176. PALA	254. STANDING ROCK
27. CAMPO	99. HOOPA VALLEY	177. PAMUNKEY +	255. STEWARTS POINT
28. CAMP VERDE	100. HOPI	178. PASCUA YAQUI	256. STOCKBRIDGE MUNSEE
29. CANONCITO	101. HOULTON MALISEETS102.	179. PASSAMAQUODDY	257. SUMMIT LAKE
30. CAPITAN GRANDE	HUALAPAI	180. PAUCATAUK PEQUOT +	258. SUSANVILLE
31. CARSON	103. INAJA	181. PAUGUSETT +	259. SWINOMISH
32. CATAWBA	104. IOWA *	182. PAWNEE *	260. TAOS
33. CATTARAUGUS	105. ISABELLA	183. PECHANGA	261. TE-MOAK
34. CAYUGA *	106. ISLETA	184. PENOBSCOT	262. TESUQUE
35. CEDARVILLE	107. JACKSON	185. PEORIA *	263. TEXAS KICKAPOO
36. CHEHALIS	108. JEMEZ	186. PICURIS	264. TOHONO O'ODHAM
37. CHEMEHUEVI	109. JICARILLA	187. PINE RIDGE	265. TONAWANDA
38. CHEROKEE * #	110. KAIBAB	188. POARCH CREEK	266. TONIKAWA *
39. CHEYENNE-ARAPAHOE*	111. KALISPEL	189. POJOAQUE	267. TORRES MARTINEZ
40. CHEYENNE RIVER	112. KAW *	190. PONCA *	268. TOULUMNE
41. CHICKASAW *	113. KIALEGEE CREEK *	191. POSEPATUCK +	269. TRINIDAD
42. CHITIMACHA	114. KICKAPOO *	192. PORT GAMBLE	270. TULALIP
43. CHOCTAW * #	115. KIOWA *	193. PORT MADISON	271. TULE RIVER
44. CITIZEN BAND OF POTAWATOMI *	116. KLAMATH *	194. POTAWATOMI #	272. TUNICA-BILOXI
45. COCHITI	117. KOOTENAI	195. PRAIRIE ISLE	273. TURTLE MOUNTAINS
46. COEUR D'ALENE	118. L'ANSE	196. PUERTOCITO	274. TUSCARORA
47. COLD SPRINGS	119. LAC COURTE OREILLES	197. PUYALLUP	275. TWENTYNINE PALMS
48. COLORADO RIVER	120. LAC DU FLAMBEAU	198. PYRAMID LAKE	276. UMATILLA
49. COLVILLE	121. LAC VIEUX DESERT	199. QUAPAW *	277. UINTAH AND OURAY
50. COMANCHE *	122. LAGUNA	200. QUILLAYUTE	278. UNITED KEETOOWAH BAND OF CHEROKEE *
51. COOS, LOWER UMPQUA & SIUSLAW	123. LAS VEGAS	201. QUINAULT	279. UPPER SIOUX
52. COQUILLE *	124. LAYTONVILLE	202. RAMAH	280. UPPER SKAGIT
53. CORTINA	125. LA JOLLA	203. RAMONA 204. RED CLIFF	281. UTE MOUNTAIN
54. COUSHATTA	126. LA POSTA	205. RED LAKE	282. VERMILION LAKE
55. COW CREEK	127. LIKELY	206. RENO-SPARKS	283. VIEJAS
56. CREEK *	128. LONE PINE	207. RINCON	284. WALKER RIVER
57. CROW	129. LOOKOUT	208. ROARING CREEK	285. WARM SPRINGS
58. CROW CREEK	130. LOS COYOTES	209. ROCKY BOYS	286. WASHOE
59. CUYAIPAPE	131. LOVELOCK COLONY	210. ROSEBUD	287. WEST COCOPAH
60. DEER CREEK	132. LOWER BRULE	211. ROUND VALLEY	288. WHITE EARTH
61. DELAWARE *	133. LOWER ELWAH	212. RUMSEY	289. WICHITA *
62. DEVILS LAKE	134. LOWER SIOUX	213. SAC AND FOX #	290. WIND RIVER
63. DRESSLERVILLE COLONY	135. LUMMI	214. SALT RIVER	291. WINNEBAGO #
64. DRY CREEK	136. MAKAH	215. SANDIA	292. WINNEMUCCA
65. DUCKWATER	137. MANCHESTER	216. SANDY LAKE	293. WOODFORD INDIAN COMMUNITY
66. DUCK VALLEY	138. MANZANITA	217. SANTA ANA	294. WYANDOTTE *
67. EASTERN SHAWNEE *	139. MARICOPA	218. SANTA CLARA	295. XL RANCH
68. EAST COCOPAH	140. MASHANTUCKET PEQUOT	219. SANTA DOMINGO	296. YAKAMA
69. ELY COLONY	141. MATTAPONI +	220. SANTA ROSA	297. YANKTON
70. ENTERPRISE	142. MENOMINEE	221. SANTA ROSA (NORTH)	298. YAVAPAI
71. FALLON	143. MESCALERO	222. SANTA YNEZ	299. YERINGTON
72. FLANDREAU INDIAN SCHOOL	144. MIAMI *	223. SANTA YSABEL	300. YOMBA
	145. MICCOSUKEE	224. SANTEE	301. YSLETA DEL SUR
	146. MIDDLETOWN	225. SAN CARLOS	302. YUROK
	147. MILLE LACS	226. SAN FELIPE	303. ZIA
	148. MISSION	227. SAN ILDEFONSO	304. ZUNI
	149. MOAPA	228. SAN JUAN	
	150. MODOC *		

ABBREVIATED HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF INDIAN HISTORY

Adapted from: http://facstaff.uww.edu/guliga/uwec/american_indian_history_timeline.htm

1990 Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (Public Law 101-601), United States, requires museums and federal agencies to return human remains, funerary and sacred objects and objects of cultural patrimony to tribes that can show they had belonged to the tribe and had been removed without the tribe's consent. Trafficking in human remains is prohibited.

1987 Congress passes the Indian Gaming Act limiting tribes to gaming ventures allowed by states.

1978 Indian Child Welfare Act, United States, protecting Indian tribes' interest in retaining custody of their children.

1975 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, establishing policy to permit greater governmental and administrative powers to Indian tribes.

1968 American Indian Movement founded in Minneapolis

1960 Canada grants citizenship to Indians.

1949-1960 Relocation. The Bureau of Indian Affairs relocated some 35,000 Indians from reservations to cities.

1934 Wheeler-Howard (Indian Reorganization) Act, permitted tribes to organize and write constitutions for self-government, and directed the government to consolidate and conserve Indian lands, and encouraged education and economic plans for Indians; the Johnson-O'Malley Act authorized contracts with states to administer educational, medical, and welfare programs on Indian reservations. In 1974, the Johnson-O'Malley Act was amended to encourage Indian direction of such programs.

1924 United States Indians given citizenship, although right to vote denied by several states; Utah the last to enfranchise Indians, in 1960, in state elections.

1906 United States Antiquities Act establishes national jurisdiction over antiquities.

1903 Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock, the Supreme Court ruled that Lone Wolf, a Kiowa, could not obstruct the implementation of allotment on Kiowa land, regardless of Kiowa consent: the case established Congress' power to unilaterally break treaties. The Court declared the Indians to be "an ignorant and dependent race" that must be governed by the "Christian people" of the United States.

1902 Cherokee Nation v. Hitchcock, the Supreme Court held the United States has the power to overrule Cherokee laws.

1890 Ghost Dance Movement led by the Paiute prophet Wovoka gains influence among western Indians. At Wounded Knee, United States troops massacre 300+ Sioux Indians en route to a Ghost Dance celebration.

1887 Dawes Allotment Act, authorizes the break-up of Indian reservations into individual allotments usually of 160 acres, and the sale of "surplus" lands remaining after enrolled tribal members had received allotments (no provision for later generations)

1884 Congress acknowledges the rights of Eskimos to Alaskan territorial lands.

1881 Sitting Bull and his band of 187 surrender to officials at Fort Buford, North Dakota.

1879 Richard Pratt founds the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, with the philosophy of assimilating Indians into white culture.

1879-85 Many "Friends of the Indian" organizations are founded, including Indian Protection Committee, Indian Rights Association, Women's National Indian Association, and National Indian Defense Association.

1877 Flight of the Nez Perce under Chief Joseph in the Northwest.

1876-77 Sioux War for the Black Hills, involving the Sioux, Cheyennes, and Arapahos, under Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. In 1876, the Battle of Little Bighorn.

1871 Gold discovered in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Treaties protecting Indian lands ignored by miners.

1869-70 Smallpox epidemic among Canadian Plains Indian including Blackfeet, Piegans, and Bloods.

1868 Indians are denied the right to vote as a result of the 14th Amendment.

1867 "Peace Commission" makes a survey of Indian affairs and recommends that the current treaty process be abandoned. This commission and the Nez Perce Indians negotiate the last of 370 treaties between the federal government and tribes.

1862-63 Santee Sioux stage an uprising in Minnesota under Chief Little Crow. In 1863-64, it spreads to North Dakota and involves the Teton Sioux as well. Thirty-eight Indians are sentenced and hanged.

1853-56 United States acquires 174 million acres of Indian lands through 52 treaties, all of which are subsequently broken by whites.

1844 The first issues of the Cherokee Advocate are published in Oklahoma. Federal soldiers confiscate the press.

1835 Texas declares itself a republic independent from Mexico. The Texas Rangers are organized to campaign against the Comanches.

1834 Congress reorganizes the Indian offices, creating the U.S. Department of Indian Affairs (still within the War Department). The Trade and Intercourse Act redefines the Indian Territory and Permanent Indian Frontier, and gives the army the right to quarantine Indians.

1831 Cherokee Nation v. Georgia, Chief Justice John Marshall ruled that the Indians form "domestic dependent nations" over which the United States is guardian, as over wards.

1830 Indian Removal Act narrowly passes Congress, calling for relocation of eastern Indians to an Indian territory west of the Mississippi River. Cherokees contest it in court, and in 1832, the Supreme Court decides in their favor, but Andrew Jackson ignores the decision. From 1831-39, the Five Civilized tribes of the Southeast are relocated to the Indian Territory. The Cherokee "Trail of Tears" takes place in 1838-39.

1789 U.S. Constitution, several clauses relate the importance and place of American Indians in the new republic.

**ONE BOOK, ONE PHILADELPHIA
GRAPHIC ARTS CONTEST**

In this year's *One Book, One Philadelphia* selection, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, Sherman Alexie tells the story of how Junior's relationship with his coach helps him overcome some of the difficulties he faced in to school in an environment that was completely different from his home life. In this year's student contest, we invite students to submit a comic panel telling a story about a teacher who made a positive difference in their life.

Eligibility

- This contest is open to students in grades six through twelve who attend a Philadelphia public or charter school and who have read either of the *One Book, One Philadelphia* selections, *War Dances* or *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*.
- All entries should include the name of the student, their home address, telephone number, school name, and teacher name.

Deadline Date

- Submit your entry to Vera Da Vinci, Office of Secondary School Reform, Education Center – 2nd floor, 440 North Broad Street, 19130 by February 25, 2011. Winners will be announced by March 5, 2011.

Artwork

- Students may create their artwork utilizing a software program such as Comic Life, Illustrator, or In Design, or may create their panel without the use of a computerized program.
- For students using traditional art materials, any 2 dimensional medium may be employed; e.g. colored pencils, oil pastels, pen and ink, water color, tempera, mixed media
- Entries may not be larger than 22" x 28".
- Entries will be judged for originality and effective response to the prompt.

Awards for Participation

- All participants in the graphic arts contest will receive a copy of *Trickster: Native American Tales: A Graphic Collection*
- There will be four winners, each of whom will win a gift certificate. In addition, they will have their work displayed at the Free Library of Philadelphia on March 16, 2011.

Fourth Place Winner - \$25 gift certificate

Third Place Winner - \$50 gift certificate

Second Place Winner - \$75 gift certificate

First Place Winner - \$100 gift certificate

- The student who wins first prize will also be invited (along with their guardian and their teacher) to the *One Book, One Philadelphia* closing dinner with author Sherman Alexie on Wednesday, March 16, 2011.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Prepared by Beverly Slapin for Little, Brown and Company.

1. Consider the adjectives, "absolutely true" and "part-time." What concepts appear to be emphasized by the images and the title? Does the cover appear to reference Junior's internal struggle, or a struggle between Junior and the white power structure, or both, or neither?

2. By drawing cartoons, Junior feels safe. He draws "because I want to talk to the world. And I want the world to pay attention to me." How do Junior's cartoons (for example, "Who my parents would have been if somebody had paid attention to their dreams" and "white/Indian") show his understanding of ways the racism has deeply impacted his and his family's lives?

3. When Junior is in Rearden (the white town), he is "half Indian," and when he is in Wellpinit (his reservation), he is "half white." "It was like being Indian was my job," he says, "but it was only a part-time job. And it doesn't pay well at all." At Rearden High, why does Junior pretend he has more money than he does, even though he knows "lies have short shelf lives?"

4. Junior describes his reservation as "located approximately one million miles north of important and two billion miles west of Happy." Yet when he and Rowdy look down from almost the top of an immense pine, he says, "We could see our entire world. And our entire world, at that moment, was green and golden and perfect." What force drives the dichotomy of Junior's perceptions of his world and allow him to see the land in apparently disparate ways?

5. Cultural outsiders who write young adult fiction tend to romanticize the impoverishment of Indians. Junior is having none of this: "It sucks to be poor, and it sucks to feel that you somehow deserve to be poor. You start believing that you're poor because you're stupid and ugly. And then you start believing that you're stupid and ugly because you're Indian. And because you're Indian you start believing that you're destined to be poor. It's an ugly circle and there's nothing you can do about it. Poverty doesn't give you strength or teach you lessons about perseverance. No, poverty only teaches you how to be poor." How does Junior's direct language address this stereotypical portrayal of Indians? What about his language draws the teen reader into the realities of his life?

6. Junior's parents, Rowdy's father, and others in their community are addicted to alcohol, and Junior's white "friend with potential," Penelope, has bulimia. "There are all kinds of addicts, I guess" he says. "We all have pain. And we all look for ways to make the pain go away." Compared to the characters in Jon Hassler's young adult novel, *Jemmy* (Atheneum, 1980), how does Junior's understanding of addiction transcend ethnicity and class?

7. Junior refers to his home reservation as "the rez," a familiar name for the place he was born, the places his friends and relatives for many generations back were born and are buried, and the land to which he is tied that, no matter how bad things get, will now and forever be called "home." What would Junior think of a cultural outsider, such as Ian Frazier, who visits a reservation to gather material for a book and then calls his book "On the Rez"?

8. At Junior's grandmother's funeral, Junior's mother publicly gives a white billionaire his comeuppance to the delight of the whole community. "And then my mother started laughing," Junior says. "And that set us all off. It was the most glorious noise I've ever heard. And I realized that, sure, Indians were drunk and sad and displaced and crazy and mean but, dang, we knew how to laugh. When it comes to death, we know that laughter and tears are pretty much the same thing. And so, laughing and crying, we said goodbye to my grandmother. And when we said goodbye to one grandmother, we said goodbye to all of them. Each funeral was a funeral for all of us. We lived and died together." How does this reflect a cultural insider's perspective and how does it disrupt stereotypes about stoic Indians?

9. "I'm fourteen years old and I've been to forty-two funerals," Junior says, "That's really the biggest difference between Indians and white people." In the community of Wellpinit, everyone is related, everyone is valued, everyone is at risk for an early death, and the loss of one person is a loss to the community. Compare Wellpinit to Reardan, whose residents have greater access to social services, health care, and wealth, and people are socially distanced from each other. How does Junior use this blunt, matter-of-fact statement to describe this vast gulph between an impoverished Indian community and a middle-class white town just a few miles away?

10. In many ways, Junior is engulfed by the emotional realities of his life and his community. Yet his spare, matter-of-fact language and his keen sense of irony help him to confront and negotiate the hurt, the rage, and the senselessness of Wellpinit's everyday realities. How does Junior use language to lead readers, whose lives may be very different from his own, to the kind of understanding that they will not get from young adult fiction whose writers do not have this kind of lived experience?

11. Cultural markers can be defined as the behaviors, speech patterns, ways of seeing the world, ethics, and principles that identify a person as belonging to a particular culture. When Rowdy and Junior play one-on-one at the end of the book--and they don't keep score--how is their friendship solidified by their deep knowing of who they are and what they come from?

Literary Log – Coping with Trauma

Name: _____

A lot of terrible things happen to Junior and his family in The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian. Arnold reacts to these events in a variety of ways. As you read, watch for some of these traumatic moments. As you find them, record three things in this journal:

1. A brief description of the traumatic event or situation
2. A specific quote from the book where Arnold reacts to this situation
3. Your analysis: what purpose does Arnold's reaction serve? Why react in that way?

Description of Trauma	Quote showing Junior's Reaction	Your analysis: why react like that?

Literary Log – White vs. Indian

Name: _____

Junior is constantly dealing with the differences between the existence of white people vs. the Indians on his reservation. These differences are mentioned both in the text and in the cartoons. As you read, watch for these moments of difference. As you find them, write a brief summary of the moment (quote or cartoon) and then analyze: how does this difference affect Junior?

Description of difference + page #	Effect on Junior's life

POSSIBLE ASSESSMENTS

Stereotypes

Read Rita Pyrellis' essay "Sorry for not being a stereotype" (see the PRINT RESOURCES section). Choose one of the following prompts to write about:

- Compare three points from her essay to three moments from Alexie's novel. What common issues do both authors bring up? What differences do they have?
- What does it mean to be an "invisible minority?" Use examples from both the essay and the novel to back up your argument.
- Write your own essay about a time you were stereotyped -- OR a time that you were using stereotypes yourself, only to realize or learn about it later.

Family Identity

In 2003, Sherman Alexie was asked to contribute to the "Finding Our Families, Finding Ourselves" exhibition, a project of [The Museum of Tolerance](#). The collection consists of recreations of parts of participants' childhood homes or other significant family locations and showcases the diversity of Americans' personal histories. The scenes explore the meaning and inspiration behind the places and objects where memories and family history were made.

- Ask your class to imagine that they have been asked to participate in such an exhibit. Have students draw or take photos/video of their home or another significant location and then write or record reflections that explain why this location is important to their family history and their personal identity.
- Alternately, have students create an exhibit for a character from a short story, book, or play the class has read. They can use information in the text (and their imaginations), to help them create a representation of the rooms of a character's family home and explain how these rooms reflect the personal history and identity of the character.

From the website Read Write Think: <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/calendar-activities/sherman-alexie-born-1966-20724.html>

Personal Identity

To stimulate ideas, examine one of Ellen Forney's illustrations from *Diary*, a picture of Arnold/Junior with a line drawn down the middle of his body (page 57). The left side is labeled "white" and drawn and labeled with "appropriate" characteristics. The right side is labeled "Indian." Ask students to respond by drawing their own versions, thinking about what areas of their life might feel split in similar ways. Their images might illustrate racial, cultural, geographic, or religious differences. or differences in personal characteristics such as that of "half obedient child" and "half rebellious teenager." They might split their drawings in more than two ways.

From this exercise, students can be prompted to free write about what it feels like to "walk in two or more worlds" at once: "How do these identities synchronize, clash, or something else? How do these differences impact decision making, such as deciding what is the right or wrong thing to do?" As a more formal project, students could compose a more formal essay to accompany their drawing.

From the NCTE Publication "Sherman Alexie in the Classroom."

ONLINE RESOURCES

Sherman Alexie's Official Website

www.fallsapart.org

Biography, links to interviews and excerpts, and other information about Alexie's work.

Web English Teacher: Sherman Alexie

<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/alexie.html>

A collection of online links and resources, including some lesson plans.

"Morning Edition" Interview:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/player/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=1397737&m=1399931>

Colbert Report Interview:

<http://www.colbertnation.com/the-colbert-report-videos/257719/december-01-2009/sherman-alexie>

Collection of Historical Maps: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/histus.html>

Native Tribes, East: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/united_states/early_indian_east.jpg

Native Tribes, West: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/united_states/early_indian_west.jpg

Digital Collections @ The University of Washington: American Indians of the Pacific Northwest

<http://content.lib.washington.edu/aipnw/index.html>

An enormous collection of primary source documents and photographs, including thousands relating directly to the Spokane tribe.

Spokane Tribe Website:

<http://www.spokanetribe.com/index.php>

<http://www.spokanetribe.com/page.php?code=reservation>

A small and informative website about the current location and situation of the Spokane.

Extended Timeline of American Indian History:

http://facstaff.uww.edu/guliga/uwec/american_indian_history_timeline.htm

A longer, more comprehensive version of the timeline provided with the introductory lesson.

PRINT RESOURCES

“Off the Rez”

Review for The New York Times Book Review by Bruce Barcott - Published November 11th, 2007

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/11/books/review/Barcott3-t.html>

Arnold Spirit Jr. is the geekiest Indian on the Spokane Reservation. He wears chunky, lopsided glasses. His head and body look like Sputnik on a toothpick. When he doesn't stutter, he lisps. Arnold is a 14-year-old high school freshman. When he goes outside he gets teased and beaten, so he spends a lot of time in his room drawing cartoons. "I think the world is a series of broken dams and floods," he says, "and my cartoons are tiny little lifeboats."

If that line has an unexpected poetry to it, that's because it was written by a poet. Arnold's creator, Sherman Alexie, grew up on the Spokane Reservation in tiny Wellpinit, Wash., and made his name as a poet before expanding into short stories, novels, screenplays, film directing and stand-up comedy.

"The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian" is Alexie's first foray into the young adult genre, and it took him only one book to master the form. Recently nominated for a National Book Award, this is a gem of a book. I keep flipping back to re-read the best scenes and linger over Ellen Forney's cartoons.

To say that life is hard on the Spokane rez doesn't begin to touch it. "My parents came from poor people who came from poor people who came from poor people," Arnold explains, "all the way back to the very first poor people." The kid was born with 10 too many teeth, so he gets them pulled — all in a single day, because the Indian Health Service pays for major dental work only once a year. When Arnold cracks open his geometry textbook, he finds his mother's name written on the flyleaf. "My school and my tribe are so poor and sad that we have to study from the same dang books our parents studied from," Arnold says. "That is absolutely the saddest thing in the world."

Enraged, Arnold beans his geometry teacher with the book and gets suspended from school. The targeted teacher, Mr. P., visits Arnold at home and gives him a piece of advice: Get out. Mr. P. has seen too many promising students — like Arnold's sister, Mary Runs Away — fade year by year, beaten down by poverty and hopelessness. "The only thing you kids are being taught is how to give up," Mr. P. says.

"The Absolutely True Diary" tracks Arnold's year of getting out. He transfers to Reardan High, 22 miles away, a gleaming campus full of wealthy white kids, with a computer room and chemistry labs. He's the only Indian — if you don't count the school mascot. Early on, Arnold fears being beaten up by the jocks. "I was afraid those monsters were going to kill me," he says. "And I don't mean 'kill' as in 'metaphor.' I mean 'kill' as in 'beat me to death.'" (The comedian in Alexie pops up as often as the poet.) Arnold's toughness soon earns him their respect, though, as well as a spot on the varsity basketball team.

What he can't win back is the love of his neighbors at home. On the rez he's considered a traitor. His best friend punches him in the face. When Reardan plays Wellpinit High in basketball, the Indians rain so much abuse on Arnold that a race riot nearly breaks out. Triumph and grief come in equal measure. Arnold figures out that he's smarter than most of the white kids, and wins the heart of a white girl

named Penelope. ("What was my secret?" he says. "If you want to get all biological, then you'd have to say that I was an exciting addition to the Reardan gene pool.") Meanwhile, his father's best friend is shot and killed, and his sister dies in a trailer fire. "I'm 14 years old, and I've been to 42 funerals," Arnold says. "That's really the biggest difference between Indians and white people."

For 15 years now, Sherman Alexie has explored the struggle to survive between the grinding plates of the Indian and white worlds. He's done it through various characters and genres, but "The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian" may be his best work yet. Working in the voice of a 14-year-old forces Alexie to strip everything down to action and emotion, so that reading becomes more like listening to your smart, funny best friend recount his day while waiting after school for a ride home. Which, by the way, Arnold doesn't have. Unless his folks get lucky and come up with some gas money.

Bruce Barcott is a contributing editor at Outside magazine. His book "The Last Flight of the Scarlet Macaw" will be published next year.

“Sorry for not being a stereotype”

BY RITA PYRILLIS - Published in the Chicago Sun-Times, April 24, 2004

How many of you would know an American Indian if you saw one? My guess is not many. Certainly not the bank teller who called security when an Indian woman — a visiting scholar — tried to cash a check with a tribal identification card. When asked what the problem was, the teller replied: "It must be a scam. Everyone knows real Indians are extinct."

And not the woman who cut in front of me at the grocery checkout a few months ago. When I confronted her, she gave me the once over and said: "Why don't you people just go back to your own country."

OK, lady, after you, I said, when I thought of it the next morning.

Even though I was born and raised in Chicago, strangers sometimes assume I'm a foreigner. For the record, I'm Native American, or Indian — take your pick. I prefer Lakota.

Sometimes strangers think I'm from another time. They wonder if I live in a teepee or make my own buckskin clothes or have ever hunted buffalo. They are surprised when I tell them that most Indians live in cities, in houses, and some of us shop at the Gap. I've never hunted a buffalo, although I almost hit a cow once while driving through South Dakota.

Sometimes, people simply don't believe I'm Indian. "You don't look Indian," a woman told me once. She seemed disappointed. I asked her what an Indian is supposed to look like. "You know. Long black hair, braids, feathers, beads."

Apparently, as Indians go, I'm a flop, an embarrassment to my racial stereotype. My hair is shoulder-length, and I don't feather it, unless you count my unfortunate Farrah Fawcett period in junior high.

When you say you're Indian, you better look the part or be prepared to defend yourself. Those are fighting words. When my husband tells people he's German, do they expect him to wear lederhosen and a Tyrolean hat? Of course not. But such are the risks when you dare to be Indian. You don't tug on Superman's cape, and you don't mess around with a man's stereotype.

Native American scholar Vine Deloria wrote that of all the problems facing Indian people, the most pressing one is our transparency. Never mind the staggering [suicide rate](#) among Native youth, or the fact that Indians are the victims of violent crimes at more than twice the rate of all U.S. residents — our very existence seems to be in question.

"Because people can see right through us, it becomes impossible to tell truth from fiction or fact from mythology," he wrote. "The American public feels most comfortable with the mythical Indians of stereotype-land who were always THERE."

Sure. [Stereotypes](#) don't have feelings, or children who deserve to grow up with images that reflect who they are — not perfect images, but realistic ones. While Little Black Sambo and the Frito Bandito have gone the way of minstrel shows, Indians are still battling a red-faced, big-nosed [Chief Wahoo](#) and other stereotypes. No wonder people are confused about who Indians really are. When we're not hawking sticks of butter, or beer or chewing tobacco, we're scalping settlers. When we're not passed out [drunk](#), we're living large off [casinos](#). When we're not [gyrating](#) in Pocahoochie outfits at the Grammy Awards, we're [leaping](#) through the air at football games, represented by a white man in red face. One era's

minstrel show is another's halftime entertainment. It's enough to make [Tonto](#) speak in multiple syllables.

And it's enough to make hard-working, decent Indian folks faced with more urgent problems take to the streets in protest. Personally, I'd rather take in my son's Little League game, but as long as other people insist on telling me when to be honored or offended, or how I should look or talk or dance, I will keep telling them otherwise. To do nothing would be less than honorable.

Rita Pyrellis is a free-lance journalist and a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.