



Indian No More Discussion Guide

Book Summary

Regina Petit's family has always been Umpqua, and living on the Grand Ronde Tribe's reservation is all ten-year-old Regina has ever known. Her biggest worry is that Sasquatch may actually exist out in the forest. But when the federal government enacts a law that says Regina's tribe no longer exists, Regina becomes "Indian no more" overnight—even though she lives with her tribe and practices tribal customs, and even though her ancestors were Indian for countless generations. In this moving middle-grade novel drawing upon Umpqua author Charlene Willing McManis's own tribal history, Regina must find out: Who is Regina Petit? Is she Indian, American, or both? And will she and her family ever be okay?

Background

It is well known that “Indians” is not the correct term to refer to Native Nations indigenous to the Western Hemisphere. Yet, since Columbus, the misnomer has persisted over centuries. This historical novel takes place in the 1950s when “Indian” was the prevailing English word to describe tribes and their citizens, languages, and cultures. That is why the word is used by both the Umpqua characters in the book as well as those who are not. The label is also reflected in the federal laws and policies of the era, e.g., the Indian Relocation Act, etc.

The inaccurate term persists even today because of that historic use and the continuing presence of the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Health Service in the lives of Native Nations and their citizens. Even in more recent times, some Native people, especially elders, use the word Indian to refer to themselves.

When students ask what to call Native Americans today, it is good to tell them to try to refer to each individual or group by using their specific tribal name. For example, you can say, “John Petit was Umpqua.” Some have begun using their tribal affiliation in front of the word American. For example, “Ashley is a Cherokee American.” Overall, the best thing any person can do is ask a Native person what term they prefer. This is the most respectful way. But if you cannot ask someone personally, try to use the unique tribal name.

Important Facts about Native People Today

- Native Americans do still exist! Over 70% of Native Americans live in urban areas. There are hundreds of Native Nations and many Native languages spoken within the contiguous United States.

- Not all Native Americans look the same, nor do they fit the stereotype that they have long black braids and dark brown skin.
- More Native Americans serve in the US Military, per capita, than any other demographic in the US.
- “Native peoples and governments have inherent rights and a political relationship with the US government that does not derive from race or ethnicity. Tribal members are citizens of three sovereigns: their tribe, the United States, and the state in which they reside.” (NCAI.org)

Reader Discussion Questions

1. What is “identity”? Who or what gives us our sense of identity? Do you think Regina and her family changed their identity when they left Grand Ronde and moved to Los Angeles?
2. What does it mean when someone talks about their own culture? What kinds of things make a culture? What gave Regina her sense of culture while living on the Indian reservation at Grand Ronde?
3. What does it mean to “belong”? What gives us our sense of belonging? How did “not belonging” affect Chich after the move?
4. What does it mean to be an American? What is American culture? Why did Regina’s father say that moving to Los Angeles made them Americans?
5. What is racism? In what 3 ways did Regina and her family experience racism in the story?
6. What is community? Does someone who is different from others need to give up their identity in order to be a part of a community? How did Regina and Peewee’s friendliness enable them to be part of the community?
7. What events or characters in this story made you think about your own family and the lives you have together? What do you and Regina have in common?
8. What are some events in the story that remind you of something happening in the world today? Things you see at school? Things you see in the news?
9. Think about the American holidays in the story and how Regina experienced them in LA for the first time? Did her experience change your understanding about any of our national holidays?
10. What is the most important thing you’ve learned reading *Indian No More*?

About Rogue Reads

Rogue Reads is a community reading program designed to promote literacy and intergenerational book-centered discussion and to foster a sense of community by bringing people together through literature. Rogue Reads aims to engage Jackson County residents in dialogue and bring the community together by promoting tolerance and understanding about differing points of view. Rogue Reads is made possible with the support of the Jackson County Library Foundation.

The book selections for 2021-22 include *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer for adults, *The Marrow Thieves* by Cherie Dimaline for teens, *Indian No More* by Charlene Willing McManis for tweens, and *We Are Water Protectors* by Carole Lindstrom, Illustrated by Michaela Goade for children.

Join JCLS for Rogue Reads programming, including a Virtual Author Talk with Robin Wall Kimmerer on Wednesday, February 23 at 5 PM. Learn more jcls.org/roguereads.