



the acorn

Newsletter for the North/Central California Region of the SCBWI

An Author Profile

Joseph Bruchac

By Patricia Newman

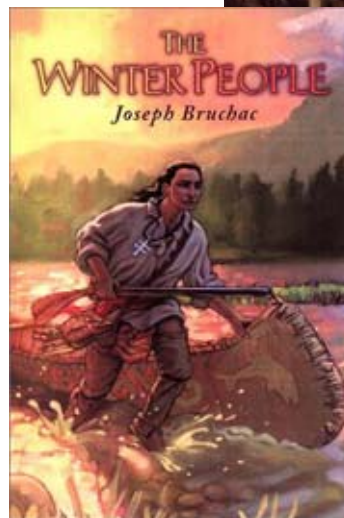
As a boy, Joseph Bruchac learned a great deal from his Abenaki grandfather, but they never openly discussed their shared Indian heritage. "I know now that my grandfather did this because of the prejudice against Indians that his family and many other Native families in the Northeast had experienced." But Bruchac could not deny his heritage.

While listening to his grandfather's stories, learning to love and respect nature, and imitating his grandfather's graceful, economical movements, Bruchac assimilated his culture. During his teen years he met other Native Americans and began to take a deeper interest in his own Abenaki roots. Bruchac first dabbled in poetry with Native American themes as a student at Cornell University, but it wasn't until he met Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian novelist, that Bruchac's Native American immersion began. "He is one of my greatest inspirations and dearest mentors. I taught his books when I was a volunteer teacher in Ghana [West Africa] and I have tried to follow his example—portraying my own Native people honestly, using stories as a source of inspiration, countering the bad images other writers have created in the past."

Bruchac has published numerous award-winning picture books, poems, plays, short



Photo courtesy Penguin Putnam



stories, and novels for children and young adults. Many of his stories come from the rich storytelling tradition of his Abenaki ancestors or their history. Bruchac's newest novel, *The Winter People* (Dial, 2002) is about an attack on the Abenaki village of Odanak in 1759 during the French and Indian War. "You'll find it and the Abenaki people described in a very biased—even racist—way in the 'classic' novel *Northwest Passage*

by Kenneth Roberts. . . I'm approaching the story from the point of view of an Abenaki boy whose mother and sisters are taken captive by the white soldiers." Bruchac says that other books, such as *Seasons of the Circle* (Troll, 2002), develop from a desire "to give a picture of the diversity and the tenacity of American Indian cultures around the continent." *Seasons of the Circle* focuses on the Native American year. "Each short poem, with its accompanying illustration, shows some particular event that

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Contributors:

Patricia Newman

Margaret Speaker Yuan

Regional Advisor's Corner



Greetings from North Central California,

Thank you, North Central volunteers, conference speakers (our local talent is fantastic), and all the SCBWI members who have participated in our mini-conferences this year. The gift of time you have given us is appreciated. Thank you all volunteers and members whose support keeps us writing and illustrating.

This year our critique group coordinators, **Alessia Cowee**, **Verla Kay**, and **Connie Goldsmith** have helped members connect with others to share words and ideas. Next year Connie Goldsmith will keep the critique openings and requests. Contact her if your group needs more members, or if you want to meet with other writers in your area.

Each of the coordinators organized conferences this year so members in all areas of our large region had the opportunity to attend an event. North Coast SCBWI members staged a conference, too. We had a total of six mini-conferences this year, thanks to our hard-working volunteers.

Nancy Barnet, our illustrator coordinator, presented at two workshops. She organized a listserv for illustrators and surveyed the illustrators to see what information and programs they needed. Nancy gave our newsletter, *The Acorn*, its style and good looks. She offers technical advice in each edition. Nancy Barnet is the North Central California, SCBWI volunteer of the year. She has been the graphics designer/editor of the new *Acorn*, written columns, surveyed the illustrators to see what kinds of programs would be the most useful, presented and led workshops at two conferences, and set up an illustrators listserv. She has helped and supported all our members. She is our region's illustrator coordinator and she's planning an illustrator program for our Davis conference on March 29th. Thank you, Nancy, for your help this year.

Julie Donahoo has been our new newsletter editor this year. Many thanks for her work. Now we can download all the news. Our next issue is in the spring. Sending materials in January and February isn't too early.

Verla Kay is our Northern California web genius. Her creative, well-organized site receives many compliments. It's the online place to visit. Many thanks to Verla who has shared so much with us.

Tricia Gardella keeps all of us in touch with the listserv. We couldn't manage without her connections. Many thanks to Tricia for the outstanding March in Modesto conference. This was her last conference, and we will miss her inspirational speakers and Saturday lunch.

Betty Provost compiles an individual email list so members can refer to the list and contact each other.

I've saved some of the loud applause and the marching band for **Connie Goldsmith**, our assistant regional advisor, who works behind the scenes to help North Central members.

All of you have enriched our lives and encouraged us when we needed a kind word. And, yes, we do squabble sometimes as well as lend a helping hug. That's because we're more than a writers and illustrators organization. We're a family.

By the way, we have two family reunions planned for 2003. Mark your calendar for these special events: March 29 in Davis and October 18 in Fresno.

My thanks to all our members!

Best wishes for a creative New Year,

Tekla White
SCBWI Regional Advisor
North Central California

Joseph Bruchac

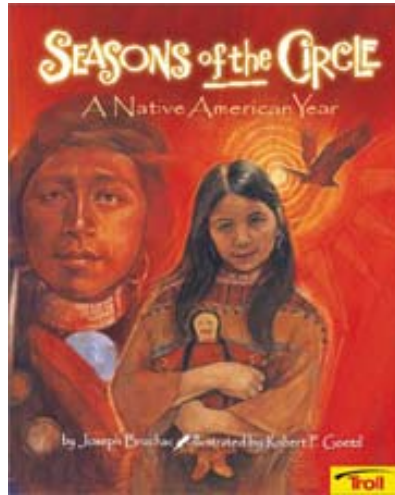
(Continued from page 1)

takes place at the same time every year in a specific American Indian tribal nation.”

Sometimes Bruchac’s ideas come to him in dreams, as with *Skeleton Man* (HarperCollins, 2001), based on an Abenaki monster story. *Eagle Song* (Dial, 1997) and *Heart of a Chief* (Dial, 1998) were written because children at various Native schools suggested he “write a book about us as we are now.” An editor suggested he write Sacajawea’s story. To prepare, Bruchac read all twelve volumes of Lewis and Clark’s journals and more than 100 related books. He traveled hundreds of miles of Lewis and Clark’s route, and corresponded with present-day relatives of Sacajawea and other Shoshones. *Sacajawea* (Harcourt, 2000) blends history with a personal look at the heroine herself.

As Bruchac begins to create a fictional character, he hears and sees that character. But his involvement goes beyond that. “I feel as if that person is making

their own decisions and I’m just taking notes! I often don’t know what my characters will do until they have done it.” Young Hunter and Rabbit Stick from *Dawn Land* (Fulcrum, 1993) are Bruchac’s favorite characters because they remind him of the close relationship he had with his own grandfather.



Bruchac considers himself “a writer whose work is sometimes (or often) written for younger readers.” He’s a disciplined worker, typically writing a few hours each morning. When writing a novel, he tries to create at least three to five new pages a day, plus edit previous pages. Bruchac has taught creative writing and African literature at Skidmore College, edited and published the *Greenfield Review*, taught creative writing to inmates of Comstock Prison, and coached wrestling. Currently, he makes time for oral storytelling, performing with The Dawnland Singers (a musical group featuring Bruchac, his sister, and his two sons), and preserving the Abenaki culture, language, skills, and crafts.

His home in the Adirondack foothills of Greenfield Center, New York is the very one in which he grew up. His roots are deep and he’s developed a strong sense of himself that pervades his work. “I truly love the life I’ve chosen, though in many ways it is a life that has chosen me.” ❖

How to Contact Joseph Bruchac

School Visits/Fan Mail: P.O. Box 308, Greenfield Center, NY 12833 518-584-1728 nudatlog@earthlink.com

Selections from Joseph Bruchac’s library

The Winter People, Dial, 2002. *Seasons of the Circle*, Troll, 2002. *The Long Walk*, National Geographic Society, 2002. *The Journal of Jesse Smoke, A Cherokee Boy on the Trail of Tears*, Scholastic, 2001. *Skeleton Man*, HarperCollins, 2001. *How Chipmunk Got His Stripes* (with James Bruchac), Dial, 2001. *Crazy Horse’s Vision*, Lee & Low, 2000. *Squanto’s Journey*, Harcourt, 2000. *Pushing Up the Sky: Seven Native-American Plays for Children*, Dial, 2000. *Arrow Over the Door*, Dial, 1998. *Bowman’s Store*, Dial, 1997.

Upcoming: *Pocahontas*, Silver Whistle, May 2003. *Our Stories Remember*, Fulcrum, Fall 2003. *Turtle’s Race with Beaver* (with James Bruchac), Dial, March 2004.

Conferences, workshops, networking

Conference Calendar

Find registration information for conferences at www.scbwinorca.org and www.scbwi.org.

February 7-9, Pacific Grove

Asilomar Conference and Retreat

February 8, 2003, New York

SCBWI Mid-Year Conference

March 29, 2003, Davis

Conference, details TBA

October 17-19, 2003, Fresno

North Central California SCBWI will hold a joint two-day conference with Fresno State University in October 2003. Details TBA.

Networking for Writers

If you’re interested in forming or joining a critique group, contact Connie Goldsmith, Goldwright@aol.com.

Networking for Illustrators

If you’re an illustrator in one of the three regions of Northern California, there’s a new email list just for you! Norca-illustrators is an exclusive list available to Norca members. If you haven’t joined yet, please contact Nancy Barnet (nancy@nancybarnet.com) for instructions. ❖

Announcements:

The listserv and adding your speaking information to the scbwinorca Web site will be free for SCBWI members next year. If you would like your name added to the listserv in January, contact Tricia Gardella after January 1, 2003 at trigar@mlode.com



The SCBWI has launched a remodeled and expanded website at www.scbwi.org

Check for news and information on all SCBWI conferences, workshops and events.



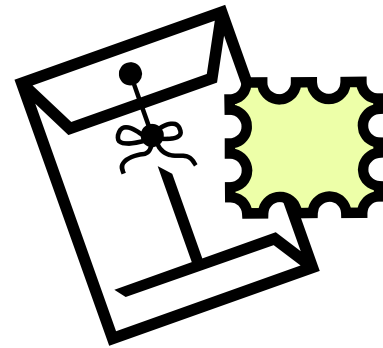
Want to receive email announcements of SCBWI events in Northern California? Please join the announcement list! Moderated by Jim Averbeck and Margaret Speaker Yuan, the announcement list will deliver periodic email information about events directly to you by email. The announcement list (this is NOT the listserv, please note!) is free.

To join to list, please send a note to Margaret Speaker Yuan at books4women@yahoo.com.

Publishing news

Michele Coppola has moved to Dutton from Clarion.

Phyllis Fogelman has resigned from Penguin Putnam, and Phyllis Fogelman Books will no longer be a separate imprint. The line will be absorbed by Dial. ❖



A year of SCBWI at Redwood High

By Margaret Speaker Yuan

For the last year, I've been running a tiny program for children's writers at a local high school. Titled SCBWI at Redwood High, it's been a free series of presentations, one per quarter, sponsored (read: funded) by SCBWI and offered through the high school's Adult Education district.

First, I want to extend a hearty thank-you to SCBWI for funding the program, and to our Regional Advisor, Susan Hart Lindquist, for her support of the program. Also, I'd like to offer a heart-felt thank-you to Kay Slagle, the Program Director at Redwood High, for providing us with the meeting space, and for running our announcement in the Community Education catalog every quarter.

Second, the speakers deserve a roll call of thanks. All of the speakers donated their time. Their only compensation came through book sales.

Our first presenter was Marsha Diane Arnold, who spoke last January. Her extremely inspirational program focused on her prescription for writing: playfulness, perseverance, patience, practice, plot, problems, personalities,

and promise. I promise I'll persevere, that I'll practice, and that I'm working on the patience, plot, problems, and personalities. Playfulness kinda comes natural to me.

Next, in April, we heard Yuyi Morales, an illustrator. She spoke about another P, namely, process. I treasure the inscription that she wrote in her book: "Live the magic of the hands." Every time I teach origami (my other passion, in addition to writing) in a special ed class, I think of her words.

In June, Gennifer Choldenko spoke. I lost track of her tips at around number twenty five, but I remember her energy, and her enthusiasm, and her humor. I especially enjoyed the tale of her title, having suffered through *Notes from the Underground* in college. *Notes from a Liar and Her Dog* spoke much more vividly to my experiences.

I was the last (and the least) of the speakers. About a week before the scheduled date of the presentation, a friend emailed a query letter to me, asking for help writing it. You guessed it: I did some research on the internet for sites that offered information about queries, dusted off some of my own queries, rewrote them, and designed a program for the SCBWI eve-

ning. Oh yes: I helped my friend with her letter. My topic wasn't an inspirational one, like Marsha's; nor a magical one, like Yuyi's; nor a funny one, like Gennifer's; but I'd like to think that I helped some writers on one tough writing assignment, namely, creating sales copy, AKA query letters.

I, of course, received no financial compensation whatsoever for my presentation, since my book is out-of-print and I don't have any copies left to sell. But the compensation I received was worth far more than mere money. It's the same compensation that I receive for the whole series of presentations at Redwood High. It wasn't the ego-satisfaction that I felt when people told me the program met their needs. It wasn't the feel-good idea for a future class on the subject, which I wrote up and faxed to Kay at Community Ed the very next day, and which she loved. It wasn't the altruism of the long-term volunteer donating her time. It was purely and simply, the feeling of heightened energy, awareness, and creativity that I find in working with other writers on writing. To my mind, that's what SCBWI is all about. So that's my last thank-you, to the organization for supporting writers and illustrators throughout the world. ❖

Conference snapshots

Sacramento in September, Chico in October



Sacramento speakers (l. to r.): Patti Newman (secrets for a perfect interview), Nancy Barnet (handout makeovers), Laura Torres (an editor's point-of-view) and Liz Koehler-Pentacoff (best tips from writers and illustrators).



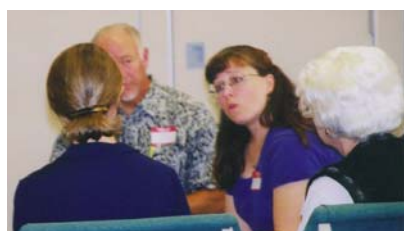
Illustrators and writers networking at the September Sacramento mini-conference. Nearly 50 people attended the event.



Chico conference speakers (l. to r.): Zilpha Keatley Snider (be a storyteller), Gennifer Choldenko (secrets of writing novels), Marsha Diane Arnold (paths to a published picture book).



Speakers and conference attendees engage in lunchtime critique sessions at Chico.



A writer's discussion group at Chico.



Illustrators discuss promotion and advertising strategies at the Chico conference.

Tech Talk

Fire up the digital press

By Nancy Barnet

If your word-processing software can't keep up with your creative ideas for those quick announcement postcards, promo sheets or brochures, you might want to make the move to a desktop publishing program.

In the home and small business category and \$30-\$150 price-range, you'll find options such as Broderbund's The Print Shop (Win/Mac) and Microsoft Publisher (Win). These products can handle almost any in-house task and some versions include a photo-editing component.

Page layout programs such as Adobe Page-Maker, InDesign and FrameMaker, QuarkX-

Press, and Corel Ventura will put a serious dent in your wallet (\$500-900) and may be overkill for creating a simple flyer or business cards. Most do offer cross-platform compatibility, are widely used in the industry and their files are likely to be accepted by print vendors.

To find out about features and availability of trial versions of various software visit:

www.adobe.com
www.broderbund.com
www.corel.com
www.microsoft.com
www.quarkxpress.com

Happy creating! ❖

Acorn submission guidelines

The *Acorn* would love submissions of articles of interest to children's book writers and illustrators, and photos of N. CA SCBWI events.

For articles, please query Tekla White at tnwrites@cal.net. Articles of 500 words or less are best, but longer pieces will be considered as space permits.

Send photos to Nancy Barnet at nancy@nancybarnet.com. Photos should be sent in JPG format as close to 150 dpi as possible (but if you have prints you can mail, that's okay too — enclose a SASE and they'll be returned to you). We'll need the usual who, what and where for the caption, and the photographer's name for the credit line. Contact Nancy if you have questions.

Payment for one-time rights (or reprint rights) is not extravagant. In addition to a byline or credit line and the heartfelt gratitude of your peers, the *Acorn* can offer you a gift from the SCBWI collection of logo items. ❖

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the SCBWI

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Good news!



Marisa Montes' book GATOS BLACK will be out in Fall 2005.

Deborah Underwood will be publishing four poems in Ladybug.

Carol Peterson signed her first book contract with Libraries Unlimited in July. The book, JUMP BACK IN TIME, will be filled with fun information, activities, legends, food and costume ideas for kids (9-12) to learn about specific periods in history - ancient cultures, Native America, Colonial America, and Pioneer America. The book, which she is also illustrating, is scheduled for publication in 2004.

Connie Goldsmith recently sold an article to Cricket Magazine titled "The Secrets of Dino Doo," for which she interviewed two scientists about what fossilized and mummified dung can reveal of the ancient animals that left it.

Last spring, Marisa Montes announced her contract with Scholastic for a groundbreaking 4-book series for third grade readers. Well, it's almost here. The series is called GET READY FOR GABI! She's just finished Book One: A CRAZY MIXED-UP SPANGLISH DAY! Book One will be in stores March 2003. The artist, Joe Cepeda did a fabulous job on the cover. The cover illustration is available on her web site (www.marisamontes.com). Her husband (and webmaster) did a super job on the book page, too! Please take a look. Just go to her web site and click on "My Books" (on the buttons on the left) then click on the spinning daisy. Now she's busy on Book 2.

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