THE INDIAN READING SERIES: Stories and Legends of the Northwest is a collection of authentic material cooperatively developed by Indian people from twelve reservations. Development activities are guided by a Policy Board which represents the Indian community of the Pacific Northwest. The Pacific Northwest Indian Reading and Language Development Program Policy Board members are:

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A Little Boy's Big Moment
Level I Book 18

Developed by the Blackfeet Indians
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A Little Boy's Big Moment is a story about a small Blackfeet Indian boy's first dance. It is traditional with our Blackfeet Indian people to have a giveaway ceremony to honor someone for something special. When a child or person makes their first public appearance as a dancer, this ceremony is done to honor the person. The person will then be recognized as a dancer in our Blackfeet Indian society. This ceremony is still carried out to a great degree among the traditional Blackfeet Indian people.
One cold, winter evening Young Rabbit's father was sitting by the wood stove. He was singing a fast, grass dance song. The little boy thought, "This song makes me want to dance."
Young Rabbit began slowly tapping his foot to the beat of the drum. He then got up and began to dance very fast. At the end of the song, the father said to his son, "Young Rabbit, do you like to dance?"

"Yes, Father, it makes me feel good," said Young Rabbit. "Teach me how to do fancy steps."
"Young Rabbit," said his father, "at the big dance this year we will have a giveaway in honor of the first time you dance at a celebration. We will give away many fine presents — some blankets, Indian crafts and some fine horses."
The son listened to his father and felt very proud of this honor.
How grown up he felt!
Young Rabbit's mother and father began making a good, fancy dance outfit. Just the right colored feathers were chosen. A fine porcupine headdress was made. Bells were strung on rawhide. After several months of work, Young Rabbit tried on his outfit. He felt great pride. "I feel like a great Blackfeet brave," he said.
Many evenings Young Rabbit danced his new steps.
His mother bought many blankets.
She made some star quilts and put them away
for the big dance.
His father broke many horses for the giveaway.
Young Rabbit became more excited as each day passed.
Finally the big day came!
Everyone was ready to move to the Indian Day campgrounds.
At the campgrounds, the tepee was pitched among the other tepees in a big circle. Everyone was happy to be together again after a long, cold winter.
After two days had passed,
it was time for Young Rabbit’s big moment.
Young Rabbit's mother and father brought all the blankets, moccasins and beadwork to the ring. Young Rabbit stood proudly beside them.
Each drum sounded loud and clear as the drummers sang the grass dance songs.
What nice Indian costumes the dancers had!
The bells tinkled happily and the feathers swayed as the dancers moved.
The people laughed and joked.
They were very happy.
Suddenly the announcer said,

"The family of Young Rabbit will now have an honor dance.
This will be the first time Young Rabbit will dance at a big celebration."

Young Rabbit’s heart pounded as his father and mother walked with him to the center of the ring.
Young Rabbit danced proudly as he led the line.
His mother and father followed behind him.
Many relatives and friends joined in the dance.
The drumbeat seemed to say to Young Rabbit,
"How proud we are of you!
You are a strong, wonderful Indian boy.
Someday you will lead our tribe to great honors."
Then the drums stopped.
Young Rabbit's father and mother began the giveaway.
He thought, "How very lucky I am to be a Blackfeet Indian!
I'm so very proud.
And to think my ancestors have roamed this very land!"
When the giveaway was over, the family left the center of the dance ring. They were overjoyed to think that the Great Spirit had helped them obtain enough to give to others in honor of their son. They felt great satisfaction to know this task had been achieved.
Young Rabbit was now recognized as one of the dancers. When the drums began to beat and the dancers started to dance, Young Rabbit joined in. The drums seemed to say, “Young Rabbit dances so proudly. Young Rabbit dances so lightly. Young Rabbit is truly a great Indian dancer.”
Young Rabbit danced for many hours.
He became, oh, so very tired.
His eyes wanted to close.
His legs would not move as fast as the drum beat.
Even his headdress seemed tired.
It hung slightly to one side.
Young Rabbit’s mother looked at the tired, little boy and smiled.
She took his hand in hers.
They walked slowly toward the tepee.
Although very tired, Young Rabbit had completed a great event.
Young Rabbit's mother cooked a meal of boiled meat, berry soup and fried bread.
After Young Rabbit had eaten, he fell into a deep, happy sleep inside the comfortable tepee.
The next morning a happy family left for home.
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Mrs. Kennerly is a member of the Blackfeet Tribe and has fifteen years of teaching experience in the Blackfeet and Northern Cheyenne public school systems. She was the first runner-up for the 1972 Montana Teacher of the Year. She received her B.A. in education at Northern Montana College and her M.A. in education at Arizona State University. She has served as an elementary school principal and is presently teaching.

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MELVIN TAILFEATHERS
Mr. Tailfeathers is a self-taught artist who has lived on the Blackfeet Reservation all his life. His grandmother was a Blackfeet medicine woman. Mr. Tailfeathers prefers to do pen and ink sketches of Blackfeet life although he sometimes works with ceramic figurines.
Booklets available in the Level I sequence are listed below. Numbers refer to the planned sequence of use as outlined in the Teacher's Manual. Materials developed by these tribes and others in the Northwest will appear in the Levels II and III sequence.

1 Coyote and the Stars  
The Confederated Tribes of the  
Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon

2 How Wild Horses Were Captured  
The Confederated Tribes of the  
Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon

3 School  
Blackfeet Tribe

4 Philene and Buttons  
Northern Cheyenne Tribe

5 Insects Off to War  
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6 Why Bluejay Hops  
Skokomish Tribe

7 Indian Festival  
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the  
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10 Tales of Coyote and Other Legends  
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15 How Cottontail Lost His Fingers  
The Confederated Tribes of the  
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16 Friends  
Blackfeet Tribe

17 How Daylight Came to Be  
Skokomish Tribe

18 A Little Boy's Big Moment  
Blackfeet Tribe

19 Skunk  
Muckleshoot Tribe

20 Raven Helps the Indians  
Skokomish Tribe

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