The Last Algonquin Short Guide

The Last Algonquin by Theodore L. Kazimiroff

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Overview

The Last Algonquin is an interesting book on many levels and for several reasons. First, it is a fascinating story in which a twelve-year-old boy is befriended by an elderly Indian living alone on an island, who teaches him Indian lore and skills, and tells him of the adventures he had when he was a young man. The Last Algonquin is also an interesting book because, without being preachy or overly didactic, it opens up to the reader a vision of history that is lively and relevant, not dry or boring. It shows the reader, not just tells the reader, how each of us is indeed an integral part of an continuing story called history. As such, it is a book that can spark in the reader the same deep and abiding interest in history that Two Trees inspired in the Kazimiroffs.

The term "Algonquin" may cause some confusion because of its several and overlapping meanings. In its narrowest sense, it is a variant of the Iroquois name —"Algonkin"—for a neighboring group of tribes in what is now Ontario, Canada, and it indicates the same group of tribes. In the largest sense, it means any of large group of tribes which speaks one of the many languages in the Algonquin group of languages. This meaning of the word would include tribes as far from the setting of this book as the Shawnee in Oklahoma and the Yurok in California.

In the middle of these two extremes is the meaning that the author of The Last Algonquin intends: a group of tribes, including the Ontario ones, which extends from the east coast of Canada, down through New England, and primarily along the shoreline from New York down to the Carolinas. This meaning of the word includes such tribes as the Algonkin, the Micmac, the Penobscot, the Narragansett, and the Delaware (who prefer to be called the Lenni Lenape).

Although, upon first reading of some secondary sources about Indian tribes in New York, it may appear that Kazimiroffs statement that Joe Two Trees's family is Wiechquaeskeck (which Kazimiroff spells as "Weckquaesgek") conflicts with some current estimates, such as Ives Goddard's (Trigger: Handbook of North American Indians), of early boundaries between the Rechgawawank Delaware and the Wiechquaeskeck Delaware, this is not necessarily the case. The admitted uncertainty of estimates such as Goddard's and the unusual depth of Kazimiroffs father's knowledge of the area and its people make it reasonable to accept Kazimiroffs statement that Two Trees's family is Wiechquaeskeck. And the distinction may not be important to most readers of The Last Algonquin in any case, because these two bands were both part of the Munsee-speaking subset of Delaware in the New York area and, as such, were similar Algonquin cultural groups.

About the Author

T heodore L. Kazimiroff, Jr. was born July 18, 1941 in New York City, son of Theodore Kazimiroff—a dentist and avid amateur archeologist and historian who was the official historian of Bronx County, New York when he died—and Emelia Kazimiroff, a lawyer and teacher. Kazimiroff served in the U.S. Army from 1959-1963; part of this time he served in Germany while the Berlin Wall was being built. He is a member of Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion. He attended Herbert Lehman College (now Hunter College) from 1963-1965, Columbia University in 1966, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York in 1980, and received a master's degree in teaching gifted and talented children from Long Island University in 1986.

At the time The Last Algonquin was published, Kazimiroff was a teacher in New York City and an author of local-interest articles for various local magazines and newspapers in New York. He also maintained and sometimes gave scholars and other interested people access to his late father's extensive collection of Bronx artifacts, all of which either he or his father excavated. Since then, he has donated the collection to Kingsborough Community College (CUNY, Brooklyn), which opened its display of the Dr. Theodore Kazimiroff Memorial Collection in a wing of the library building in the fall of 1994. He currently teaches gifted and talented children in New York.

During his youth, he went on many a local archeological dig with his father, and it was, in part, during his excursions that his father passed on to him his own passionate interest in the history and archeology of the Bronx.

Indeed, it was on one of these excursions in the summer of 1952 that the elder Kazimiroff began telling his son the story of how he met Joe Two Trees, "the last Algonquin." At that time, the younger Kazimiroff was within a year of the age his father was when he met Joe Two Trees, and the elder Kazimiroff began to relate the story near where he himself had met Two Trees.

To date, The Last Algonquin is the only book-length work that Kazimiroff has published. It was one of forty-eight books included in the American Library Association's 1982 Best Books for Young Adults list. It was published in 1982, just two years after the death of his father, who was the actual young friend of Joe Two Trees. Its being published so soon after his father's death suggests that the book served, in part, to memorialize the author's father. Indeed, the foreword and introduction tell much about Kazimiroff senior's life and very little about the author's.

Setting

The body of this book has two main settings. One is the Bronx, especially Hunter Island, in 1924—the time and place in which Two Trees tells his story to the young Theodore Kazimiroff. This setting is indicated by the use of italics in most of the book, which also signals the passages in which Theodore, Jr. is speaking as himself.

The second main setting has two parts: Hunter Island in the Bronx, where Two Trees grew up and lived most of his life; and Manhattan Island, Staten Island, parts of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and southern New York state, where Joe Two Trees lived and traveled from approximately 1855 to late 1862. On another level, the setting of the book includes Bronx history well into the past, because Joe Two Trees's life is heavily influenced by the tales of long-dead, and even legendary, figures from the long and complex history of the Bronx.

In this novel, the setting and the theme of continuity are tightly intertwined. That these are closely related is pointed out quite directly early on, when Theodore, Sr. says, "I suppose I was, only then, beginning to comprehend that things had been going on here for a very long time. .. . I found pleasure in the idea that there was a continuity operating here, and that I was part of it." A more broad, historic continuity is explicitly pointed out later in the novel when the author discusses how many of the large rocks in the Bronx today are explained as the leavings of an ancient battle between Indian figures of Good and Evil.

Social Sensitivity

This book displays deep social sensitivity on the issue of what it means to be Indian. Joe and his beliefs are at no point looked down on; rather, in his dealings with non-Indians Joe is shown as having at least as much moral dignity as they do, often more. Also, he is shown as a hard-working and essentially reverent man, especially when he is living the closest to his native beliefs.

Being Indian, in this book, is portrayed as living in a way that would please the Maker, Tchi-Manitou. One way Two Trees does this is by recognizing and appreciating His hand in the world around him. For example, in Chapter 10, "The Hardest Winter", even though an early snow catches Two Trees unprepared for winter, he sees it as more than just a harbinger of the changing seasons: The snow, thought Two Trees, was a garment of great beauty sent to the Earth Mother by Tchi-Manitou.

It must have been a robe of light such as this that she had worn during her descent from the floating Island in the story of The Beginning.

Another way Two Trees lives as Tchi-Manitou would like is by praying over and sleeping on projects as seemingly secular at the making of a clay cooking pot. In Chapter 1, "A Strange Meeting," Two Trees explains to his young friend some of the spiritual aspects of making a pot: He told me that this making must begin first in the heart, or soul, for that was the place the Maker started all good ideas. Once the young thought had ripened, like a fruit on its branch, it would follow a natural course to the head. The brain, he said, was the second stopping place for any plan. It was in the brain that Tchi-Manitou would come during sleep time to help the plan become a workable project. In short, once the new idea had been prayed over, thought about, and then slept on, it was time to bring it into the world, as a reality. I was told to go home and pray that my pot would be made well, and that once made, it would be full whenever I, or my family, was hungry.

Being Indian is also portrayed as something that one must work at and can lose. In Chapter 13, "Indian Again", when Two Trees has just left the Pennsylvania coal mine at which he has been working, he decides that he will once again live in an Indian way.

Being Indian requires doing your work wholeheartedly with attention to detail and respect for tradition. For instance, in Chapter 16, "A Dugout Canoe", Two Trees wants to make his canoe in the Indian way, and he thinks a great deal about his ancestors, including his father, who showed him how to make a "mushoon," as he proceeds through the painstaking process.

"Joe was inwardly proud of his efforts.

Indian he was, and Indian he would be again—that was his resolve. The spirits of his people were watching, and he had done well in their eyes." And he does not feel the eyes of his ancestors on him only when he is doing well.

When he realizes that he has forgotten the "one small detail" of making a paddle for the dugout, "He wondered bleakly whether the eyes of his ancestors had noticed this small oversight."

Although Two Trees is shown as using the word "Indian" to describe himself, the term "Indian" is disliked by some "Indians" today who prefer the term "Native American" because they feel that it accurately reflects who they are. Also, the term "Indian" is considered undesirable because it was given to them by Christopher Columbus, who claimed to "discover" the land in which they had lived for centuries, and whom they view as one of the harbingers of the virtual destruction of their cultures. He called them "Indians" because he mistakenly thought he was in India, which is what he had hoped to reach by sailing west across the Atlantic from Europe.

Literary Qualities

The Last Algonquin is a narrative which is interrupted at times by the author's italicized comments. But whether The Last Algonquin is a novel or a biography is a little blurred, as can be seen in Kazimiroff's explanation in the Introduction: I have tried to strike a good balance between the facts I know to be accurate, and the need to "flesh-out" the story with material from my own experience. . . .Does this mean the book can be read as a historical document, an accurate biography? Probably not. Is it a work of fiction born of my mind? Definitely not!

Probably the best category to put this book in was arrived at in a review of this book by Peter Ramsden, who calls it a biographical fiction.

One example of Kazimiroff's use of material from his own experience to flesh out the narrative comes in Chapter 10, "The Hardest Winter." Two Trees captures a rabbit so weak from lack of food after being snowed out of its burrow by a blizzard that he can simply pick it up and place it inside his jacket. But, because he thinks it is what Tchi-Manitou would want, he feeds the rabbit rather than eating it.

When the weather warms, the rabbit leaves but comes back to visit sometimes. This episode, while truthful in that it portrays a real part of Two Trees's character—his reverent desire to live according to the will of TchiManitou—is actually based on an episode in the author's own life. The author himself picked up and put into his jacket a storm-starved wild rabbit, brought it to his grandmother's, fed it until spring, and was later visited by the rabbit after it went back into the woods to live. This use of details from the author's life to illustrate a truth about Two Trees's character is one example of how biographical fiction sometimes uses stories not literally true about the subject to, nonetheless, reflect accurately on his personality.

The Last Algonquin is a good example of a book with a "ring" structure. A "ring" structure is one in which there is a story within a story. In The Last Algonquin, the innermost main story is Joe Two Trees's life story, which he tells to a twelve-year-old white boy named Theodore Kazimiroff (who is based on the real-life father of this book's author). This is presented in the third person singular—that is, Joe Two Trees is referred to as "he" rather than as "I"—to reflect the fact that Joe Two Trees's story is told to us by the boy to whom Joe Two Trees told his story.

The next ring out from Joe's story is the boy's story of how he meets and gets to know Two Trees. Almost all of this story is told in the first person singular—"I"—as if it were Joe Two Trees's young friend who were telling us this story.

In an interesting twist, the book itself is, in fact, written by the son of Joe Two Trees's young friend. This is explained in the foreword and in the introduction to the book. It is also reflected in just one sentence of the main body of the book itself, in the first sentence of Chapter 1: "When I was a boy in 1924, began myfather [italics mine], I used to walk from my house in Throggs Neck to the woody hills of Hunter and Twin Islands as

often as I could." After this sentence, the son essentially disappears from all but the italicized commentaries in the book, and the rest of the book is written from the point of view of his father, in the first person singular.

It is also interesting that, aside from the two main rings in this book—Joe Two Trees's story nested inside Theodore, Sr.'s narrative—there is a yet larger ring, present primarily in the forward and introduction, of Theodore, Jr.'s story of how his father told him Joe Two Trees's story. And, aside from the two main rings of Theodore, Sr.'s story and Joe Two Trees's story, there are some small pieces of rings embedded within Joe Two Trees's story and even more stories within those stories, as Joe tells some stories that were told to him and even tells stories that his parents told him were told to them.

Indeed, this very deeply nested ring structure reflects and reinforces the theme of continuity of human experience that this novel develops, even as it portrays the discontinuities between the white and Indian cultures.

Another interesting literary structure in this book is the circular structure, in which the main character ends up, after a period of wanderings, right back where he started. Joe Two Trees is born on Hunter Island in the Bronx, goes on a journey through Manhattan, Staten Island, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and upstate New York, only to return to his birthplace to live out his last decades.

This circular structure also works on a broader, clan level. As Two Trees—the last member of his part of the Turtle clan—is on the last leg of his journey back to his Bronx home, Kazimiroff writes, "He turned and saw the projecting land in the distance. Once, it had been Snak-a-pins, place of origin of the powerful Turtle clan. Now, it was a signpost, pointing the way home for the last member of that clan."

One somewhat strained literary device is the occasional use of the third person omniscient point of view—that is, a point of view of someone who knows everything. The omniscient point of view here makes the reader wonder, momentarily, if any of the story can be true if the author expects us to believe that he could actually know the actions and sensations of a particular animal inside a particular hidden home at a particular time. For example, in Chapter 10, "The Hardest Winter," while describing Joe Two Trees's preparations for an approaching blizzard, the author takes the liberty of suddenly switching to the third person omniscient point of view when he writes, Within one hundred feet of the young Indian, others were also dimly aware of the change. .. . A tiny kangaroo mouse, affected by the dropping air pressure deep in its subterranean nest, stretched his long hind legs in dreamless sleep.

The beaver, icebound within his wooden lodge, gnawed thoughtfully at a bark-covered twig. Rabbits huddled together, gathering warmth from the many bodies in their underground labyrinth.

This is not to say that this point of view is never good to use, but that the sudden switch to it does not work well.

The Last Algonquin contains many beautiful passages, including some descriptions that help to flesh out the narrative and make it come to life. For example, a passage in Chapter 14, "The Red-Haired Woman," describes autumn changes this way: As he walked, Joe took notice of the subtle changes in the trees.

Where only days earlier, green had cloaked them, now they had taken on a blend of red and yellow. The summer was ended.

Soon, he knew, he would wake one morning and find the first thin rind of ice on the lagoon.

Themes and Characters

The principal characters are Joe Two Trees, whose life story makes up most of this book, and the twelve-year-old senior Theodore Kazimiroff, the young white boy whom Two Trees befriends.

Joe Two Trees is the last remaining member of the Weckquaesgek band of the Algonquin people. He grows up in an ever-shrinking band made up of the surviving members of the small part of the Turtle clan that decided to stay in the Hunter Island area when the majority moved away to escape the increasing pressures of white settlement. He is a hard-working, reverent, elderly man who tries to live in "the Indian way" as he was taught to do by his parents.

Several years of trying to live in white society soon after his mother died—leaving him alone in the world—have convinced him that he is the last Indian on Earth and that the only way to keep the old ways going—for some short time longer—is to retreat to his boyhood home and live off the land in the way of his ancestors as best he can in a much changed and limited environment.

Theodore Kazimiroff, Sr.—the author's father—is the real-life basis of the twelve-year-old boy in the novel who becomes friends with Two Trees.

The young Theodore loves exploring the woods of Hunter and Twin Islands and spends many a day there exploring, gathering and eating berries, studying rocks, and tracking animals.

His continuing presence, probing curiosity, and respect for the land and its creatures move Two Trees to reveal himself to the boy.

Some of the minor characters include Tony, an Italian immigrant shopkeeper in Manhattan who befriends Two Trees; Cass, an escaped slave whom Joe becomes friends with when both are working in a Pennsylvania coal mine; Sheila, a manipulative red-haired farmer's wife with whom Joe falls in love while her husband is away during the Civil War; and Kane, a dog who is Two Trees's loyal companion for most of her life and who saves his life several times.

People who lived their lives and died long before the time Joe Two Trees's—such as his ancestors, Anne Hutchinson, and General William Howe—are also, in a sense, characters in this book. The theme of the continuity of human experience in a place—in this case, the Bronx—all but makes them seem as immediate a presence as Two Trees and the two Kazimiroffs.

The land is a character in this book, too. Indeed, Two Trees's own name was drawn from a small island—with two trees on it—which was close to the island on which he lived most of his life. Human characters and landmarks intertwine as virtual equals in the pattern of continuity woven by Kazimiroffs description of how white history and

ancient Indian stories come together at various natural stone "monuments" in the Bronx: Mute evidence of that titanic battle [between Tchi-Manitou and Manetto, Good and Evil] can be seen to this very day in many parts of the Bronx. . . . Another proof is Split Rock, where Anne Hutchinson, an early settler, hid during Indian raids on her farm. Then there is Glover's Rock, where a handful of Continental militiamen under Colonel John Glover's command held off the vastly superior forces of General William Howe's invasion long enough to allow George Washington to prevent the destruction of his army, and the loss of the Revolutionary War. . . . But they played a part in the older history of an earlier civilization, too.

The main theme of The Last Algonquin is continuity: how each of our lives is truly a part of the continuing history of a place and is connected to all that have come before. Kazimiroffs most explicit revelation about how there is a vibrant history in this place and that he, too, is a part of it comes in Chapter 4, "A Gift Is Passed Across the Ages."

As part of the preparation for helping his young friend make arrowheads, Two Trees shows him his family's deer antler tool which was used for making arrowheads.

I was amazed to think that the deer that had once worn the antler had walked the woods of this very island. I was even more engrossed by the evident fact that the deer had been killed by Two Trees's great-grandfather, probably with an arrow tip of his own making. I began to feel very new to this world around me. I suppose I was, only then, beginning to comprehend the fact that things had been going on here for a very long time.

Somehow, this thought was a reassuring one. I found pleasure in the idea that there was a continuity operating here, and I was part of it.

In a particularly touching scene near the end of the book, Kazimiroff describes how Two Trees, who is at death's door, adds one last chapter to the life story that he tells the boy: the part in which a young white boy (the elder Kazimiroff himself) enters his life and becomes his friend. Including Kazimiroff in the telling of Two Trees's own life story is the ultimate gesture of friendship and one last underscoring of the continuity and connectedness of the long line of lives and experiences that make up the history of the Bronx, or of any place.

Indeed, in the "Afterthoughts" section of this book, Kazimiroff, Jr. explicitly states the importance of understanding that we are part of the continuity of history when he writes: Don't lose him [Joe Two Trees].

When we allow the new to replace the old to such an extent, we will lose more than an ancient Indian story. Keep in mind that in our rush to meet the future, we must be sure to keep the past. Without its foundation, no structure stands for very long.

Another theme of the book is the similarities between different systems of religious beliefs. One of the earlier passages reflecting this theme occurs in Chapter 1—"A Strange Meeting." Two Trees has offered to help his young friend make an Indian pot sometime soon, and on his way home the boy contemplates what Two Trees has

explained to him about how praying to Maker, Tchi-Manitou, was an important part of the process. He notes that "Joe Two Trees wasn't very particular about who I prayed to, since he seemed quite certain that my prayers would find their way to the appropriate authority even if I called Him by some name he didn't know." This theme repeats itself, touchingly, near the end of the book, in Chapter 20, "To the Land of His Ancestors." The last evening that the boy and Two Trees spend together is Christmas Eve, December 24, 1924. Two Trees has just given his friend the gift of including the boy in Two Trees's own life story. Both know that Two Trees is close to death, and the boy has decided to ask his family to help.

I ran through the fields and shortcuts that would take me to my house. It was Christmas Eve, but I hadn't really thought about that all day. . . . The Prince of Peace was to be born! Surely that was a wonderful sign. I decided that He would certainly help Joe's Great Spirit. I remember thinking, as I rounded the corner toward my house on Stadium Avenue, that perhaps I had missed an idea here.

Maybe the two spirits were really one, in the last evaluation.

Topics for Discussion

1. In Chapter 2, "A Clay Pot," Joe Two Trees explains the Indian concept of "medicine," which is very different from his young friend's concept of the word. Compare and contrast these two concepts of the term "medicine."

2. In The Last Algonquin, what does it mean to be Indian? How is this similar to and different from other concepts of what it means to be Indian—such as your own before and after you read this book, ones portrayed in other books, and the various ones portrayed in movies?

3. The word "American" is used in more than one way in this book. Sometimes Joe is described as the only true American. Other times the term is used in the sense of Indians versus Americans. Find the various passages in which the term "American" is used and discuss how it is used in each case.

You may also want to broaden the discussion to the larger issue of what you or what society in general thinks it means to be an American. Be ready to consider a wide variety of ideas about this word, for it means many different things to different people. Dictionary definitions may be useful as one part of exploring the many meanings of this word.

Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Research the history and culture of Native Americans in your area, in Two Trees's area, or in some other area that interests you and present a report on them. You may want to do a general report that touches lightly on many aspects of their culture and history. Or you may want to focus on one or two main aspects of their history, such as 1) how their early and later contacts with white cultures affected them; 2) what myths they have that explain the origins of local landmarks in your area, or stories from their history about things that happened at local landmarks in your area, or both; 3) what kinds of cooking vessels they used (some used pottery, some used other vessels, such as baskets), and how they made them and used them; 4) their clothing; 5) their food; 6) their medicines; 7) their crafts and tools; or 8) their religious beliefs and practices.

2. Research the life of Anne Hutchinson, who is mentioned in a list of historic landmarks and their stories in Chapter 19, "Monatun." She is an important figure in colonial American history overall, as well as in New York City.

3. In Chapter 7, "Last of the Turtle Clan," Joe Two Trees tells of how his grandfather witnessed what Kazimiroff believes to have been British General Sir William Howe's New York landing of October 12, 1776. Research the part that General Howe played in United States history.

4. At various points in The Last Algonquin, Kazimiroff estimates the dates of events the lives of the members of Joe Two Trees's band. Pick one or more of these dates, and look up what was happening at that time in one or more of the following places: the Bronx, other parts of New York City or New York State, your area, the area where your family lived, or any part of the United States that interests you.

5. Richard Schneider's book Crafts of the North American Indians has detailed directions on how to do many Indian crafts as the Indians did them, including some that Joe Two Trees taught to his young friend. Schneider's directions sometimes resemble Two Trees's, down to such details as the use of antler prongs as tools for the pressure-flaking part of making arrowheads. Pick one of the crafts described in both books, such as pot making or making an arrowhead, and use both sources—and any others that you find—to help you write a report about how to perform the task. You may also wish to try making the item yourself and writing a report on how your efforts turn out.

For Further Reference

Erdoes, Richard and Alfonso Ortix, eds. American Indian Myths and Legends. New York: Pantheon, 1984. A collection of 166 Native American myths and legends from dozens of groups from across the United States, including several Algonquin stories. This wonderfully selected and presented collection is organized into sections by subjects, such as human creation stories, world creation stories, trickster tales, and spirit world stories. This is both an illuminating collection of Native American tales and just a plain good read.

Hitakonanu'laxk (Tree Beard). The Grandfathers Speak: Native American Folk Tales of the Lenape People. New York: Interlink Books, 1994. This is a book of Lenape Indian (also known as Delaware) tales and legends, collected from written and oral sources by Hitakonanu'laxk (Tree Beard), a chief of the Lenape Nation, whose people consider themselves to be the grandfathers—or progenitors—of the Algonquin people. Roughly one third of this book is a very informative introduction which clearly and thoroughly describes the culture and history of the Lenape that is the context of these stories. The introduction alone makes this book a rich source of information for readers of The Last Algonquin, for Two Trees's people were Delaware Algonquin. It also contains twenty-five tales of the Lenape, a glossary, and a short, unannotated bibliography. However, a reader of The Last Algonquin should bear in mind that there will be differences in some of the Algonquin words and cultural practices presented in this book from those in The Last Algonquin in part because of the cultural differences between Two Trees's groups — which was probably Munsee speaking Delaware Algonquin—and the groups that The Grandfathers Speak covers in depth.

Also, the Lenape Algonquin words that Hitakonanu'laxk includes in his book are those from an Algonquin language spoken in Pennsylvania and Ohio in the eighteenth century, which differs somewhat from the Algonquin language spoken by Two Trees's group in New York.

Kuipers, Barbara J. American Indian Reference Books for Children and Young Adults. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1991. This is a particularly valuable reference for the young reader of The Last Algonquin because it is specifically designed for children and young adults. It is also an especially good reference because it makes a point of letting the reader know which references portray American Indians accurately and which ones are seriously limited by the biases of their creators. It starts with a long discussion of how one goes about selecting accurate and unbiased materials about American Indians. It then presents a selected and very well annotated bibliography of reference books useful to school-age readers. This bibliography is organized by such subject headings as "General Works," "Language," and "Arts and Recreation."

It is also supplemented by a most useful set of indexes which serve to make an already well-organized book even more readily-usable: an Author/Title Index and a Subject Index to Annotations.

Lehmann-Haupt, Christopher. "Books of the Times: The Last Algonquin."

New York Times 131 (July 30, 1982): C-23. (Book Review.) LehmannHaupt pronounces the "frame within the frame" structure of the book" to be "masterly," and then goes on to thrash out whether one can believe the story of Joe Two Trees. He ultimately decides that one might as well believe it, despite some obvious literary artifices used to flesh out the story, if only because "It makes one visualize a time before the city became all garbage and concrete, when bears roamed the Bronx and trout could be caught in the Bronx River."

May, Hal, ed. Contemporary Authors.

Vol. 109. Detroit: Gale Research, 1983: 244-245. Provides a short biography of Kazimiroff and a list of biographical/critical sources drawn mostly from newspapers of limited availability. Also, although this piece reports that The Last Algonquin was "named best book of 1982 by the American Library Association," it was, in fact, included in the American Library Association's list of "1982 Best Books for Young Adults," along with forty-seven other books.

Ramsden, Peter. "The Last Algonquin."

American Anthropologist, 85 (1983): 206. (Book Review.) While he has reservations about what he calls "some harmless ethnographic misconceptions," Ramsden pronounces The Last Algonquin "an enjoyable book." Also, like Lehmann-Haupt of the New York Times, after questioning the historical veracity of the story, he decides that it is enough that the author believes it to be true, and he calls the book "a readable piece of what might be called biographical fiction."

Schlessinger, June H. "Ishi: Last of His Tribe." In Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults. Edited by Kirk H. Beetz. Washington, DC: Beacham Publishing, 1990: 644-649. A critical introduction to a biographical novel that shares themes with The Last Algonquin.

Schneider, Richard C. Crafts of the North American Indians: A Craftsman's Manual. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1972. This book gives directions for making authentic recreations of Indian crafts of the Woodland Culture Area, which includes New York State. Although no specific mention is made of Two Trees's tribe, the methods described here for making coiled pottery and arrowheads closely resembles the description of Two Trees's methods Some chapters also include a list of written sources of information that Schneider used.

Trigger, Bruce E., ed. Handbook of North American Indians. Vol. 15. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1978. Although the reading level of this series may be somewhat difficult for some of the younger readers of The Last Algonquin, this series is an essential resource for anyone doing research on any aspect of the history or culture of North American Indians. It is, to date, a fifteen-volume set of books that cover in depth every aspect of American Indian life from thousands of years back to the present. Each volume is a collection of articles by different authors and contains a veritable gold

mine of a bibliography of the wide variety of works on which each of the essays draws. The first four volumes cover general topics about American Indian history. Each volume from Volume 5 and upward, covers in more depth a geographical area such as the Arctic (Volume 5) and the Northwest Coast (Volume 7). Volume 15 covers the Northeast area of the United States, including the area in and around New York City, which is the setting of The Last Algonquin. Of the essays in Volume 15, Ives Goddard's piece, "Delaware" (213-239), speaks the most directly to the geographic area and groups that include Joe Two Trees's people, the Wiechquaeskeck tribe (Kazimiroff spells this as "Weckquaesgek") of the Munsee-speaking Delaware. Also of interest to readers of The Last Algonquin are Dean R. Snow's "Late Prehistory of the East Coast" (58-69); Ives Goddard's "Eastern Algonquin Languages" (70-77); and the "Key to Tribal Territories" and its explanation (viii- ix).

Turner, Frederick, ed. The Portable North American Indian Reader. New York: Penguin, 1977. This superb collection is organized by a combination of subject matter and format.

The first section contains myths and tales from various Indian groups, organized by tribe. The second section contains poetry and oratory, organized by rhetorical mode. The third section, "Cultural Contact," contains two each of three types of writing about contacts between white and Indian culture: narratives written by white explorers, captivity narratives written by the white people who were captives of Indians, and two narratives describing the meeting of the white and Indian cultures from the Indian point of view.

The fourth section, "Image and AntiImage," includes a variety of writings describing Indians, from Freneau's ethnocentric poems to twentieth-century writings in which Native Americans describe their own lives.

Although this book contains no material directly from New York Algonquin tribes, it does contain material about other, similar northeastern Algonquin tribes. All in all, this is a solid collection with the depth and breadth to provide a good overview of writings about North American Indians from many points of view.

Waldman, Carl. Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes. New York: Facts On File, 1988. This is an exceptionally accessible text about Native American tribes. Contributing to its accessibility are the particularly clear and concise language used, its organization, and its pleasant and informative drawings. It is organized alphabetically, by tribe, and is generously cross-referenced to allow for easy access to both general and in-depth information about specific tribes and more general tribal groups. This book also includes a "For Further Reading" section that lists books about Native Americans by such general categories as "Some Reference Classics in Indian Studies" and "Indian Religion, Mythology, Music, Songs, and Dances." Of particular interest to readers of The Last Algonquin are the sections titled "Algonquin" because it gives a good overview of the various Algonquin tribal groups; "Delaware (Lenni Lenape)" because it gives good in-depth information about the Algonquin subgroup that Two Trees's tribe, the Wiechquaeskeck, was part of; "Northeast Indians" because it gives an even broader overview than "Algonquin"; and "Wappinger" because it explains the difficulties of

pinning down the dividing lines between the various tribal groups that lived in and around New York City.

Related Titles

Although the movie rights to The Last Algonquin have been sold, a movie based on the book has not yet been made.

Theodore Kroeber's Ishi: Last of His Tribe (1964) is the true story of Ishi, the last known member of the Yahi tribe of the Lassen area of northern California.

His story is similar to Two Trees's in that he was truly the last of his band.

His life also differs from Two Trees's in that while Two Trees stayed out on his own and had his last human contact on his own turf with a twelveyear-old white boy, Ishi ended up as a subject for study of anthropologists at the University of California, San Francisco. As a result, we have photographs of and other information about Ishi; there is no such independent corroboration of Two Trees's story.

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