

RECLAIMING YOUTH AT RISK

Our Hope for the Future

By Larry K. Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg, & Steve VanBockern

Bloomington, Indiana:National Educational Service:1990/Revised 2002

[This book was provided for review by the Bookstore Circle of Courage, Lennox, South Dakota 605-647-2532]

Reviewed by [Lon Woodbury](#)

The purpose of this book is to apply Native American child-rearing philosophies and some child rearing principles based on Western psychology, to the modern problem of youth at risk.

The first part of the book examines young people's feelings of alienation from society in general, and from adult society, specifically. The material in this section will be quite familiar to professionals who work with children with problems.

The second section explores the unique Native American perspective of child-rearing. The authors assert that healthy self-worth is learned through four areas: children feel they are significant to others; they feel competent in mastering the environment; they have the power to control their behavior to gain the respect of others; and they have a sense of their own worthiness as measured by the "values of one's culture and of significant others." They further assert that Native American educational practices successfully address each of these four ideas through "celebrating the universal need for belonging"; "Guaranteed opportunities for mastery"; "encouraging the expression of independence"; and a "preeminent value of generosity."

The third section reviews current trends in educational practices that also build on these four areas such as focusing on relationship and attachment building, using positive peer culture, and brain friendly techniques. The authors show that the assumptions that are currently becoming widespread in education circles are also very consistent with Native American practices - they are based on the same basic premises about human nature and the needs of children. For example, discipline is used to develop responsibility, thus natural and logical consequences are favored instead of punishment, which can often be damaging. Also, the popular idea of community service helps build a generous spirit.

This book can be very helpful to programs that draw from Native traditions. It will also help professionals to understand that some of the new ideas becoming popular in education circles have been used for thousands of years in Native American cultures.