Native Americans have always been a source of inspiration to writers of children fiction. Yet, describing a traditional way of life while at the same time anchoring the story in a contemporary setting and avoiding spreading clichés about Native culture may have also proven difficult in some cases.

*Contes Navajo du grand-père Benally* follows two kids (who are aged between 10 and 12, thus enabling the targeted readers to identify with them) who visit their grandfather in rural Navajo land for Thanksgiving. Emma and Dan live in Phoenix and they are not very familiar with Navajo culture. For a week, they will share the daily life of their Navajo relatives, sleep in a Hogan, taste Navajo food, observe their grand pa sell jewelry at the local trading post, attend a demonstration against uranium mining and drive to famous landmarks and places (the capital Window Rock, Spider Rock in the Canyon de Chelly, Grants) in and around the Navajo reservation that play a prominent role in the organization of Navajo political and social life but also are deeply connected with Navajo religion and collective imaginary.

Two tales intertwine. Young readers are introduced to contemporary Navajo life through the description of Dan and Emma’s daily activities during their stay in the reservation. They also discover several important aspects of oral traditions with the telling of famous episodes such as the separation of women and men, the birth of Changing Woman, the quest of the Twins (who travel the world to meet their father, the Sun) and their fight against the monsters who decimated the ancestors of the Navajo… Each chapter ends with a documentary page which focuses on one famous Navajo person, place or word (Who are the *Yei*?) thus explaining one specific aspect of Navajo life (matrilineal organization, weaving etc.…)

The book is illustrated by Juliette Iturralde who paid a close look at Navajo children books published in the 1960’s by Rough Rock Demonstration School in order to avoid any discriminative representation of Navajo culture. The author of the book, Nausica Zaballos, defended a thesis on Navajo health system at La Sorbonne university in 2007. She is the author of many articles and books on the American southwest. She also teaches English to pupils and students in Paris.

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