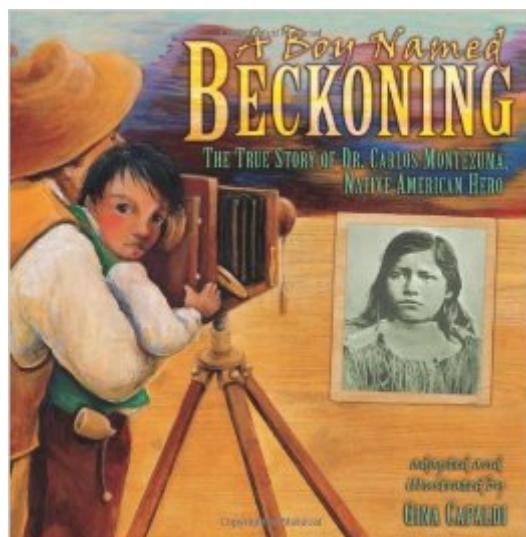


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# A Boy Named Beckoning: The True Story Of Dr. Carlos Montezuma, Native American Hero



## **Synopsis**

At the end of his career, Dr. Carlos Montezuma tells his life story in the form of a letter that the author has pieced together from his writings: As young Wassaja, he was kidnapped from his Yavapai tribe by the Pima, a long time enemy of his people. They sold him as a slave and in 1871 he was purchased by Mr. Gentile, an Italian who actually made his living with an early camera. Together they traveled the nation, taking pictures all the way. Wassaja, now renamed Carlos, eventually enrolled in school in Chicago where he thrived despite difficult circumstances, eventually graduating from the University of Illinois, and Chicago Medical School. He devoted his life to lobbying on behalf of his people. The illustrator is a multi-media artist, and she has skillfully integrated her own paintings with Mr. Gentile's photographs of Carlos to give us a fascinating view of another era.

## **Book Information**

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Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars See all reviews (6 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## **Customer Reviews**

Gina Capaldi makes a substantial contribution with this book by raising children's awareness of Dr. Carlos Montezuma's long-term advocacy work for the rights of Native Americans in the United States. Born in 1866 into a Yavapai family and tribe and named Wassaja, which means "beckoning," he was captured as a five-year old boy during a brutal attack. When Wassaja's captors tried to sell him as a slave, they came across Mr. Carlo Gentile, an Italian photographer who had immigrated to America in search of new work and adventure. Much of the book relates their

experiences traveling across America and their subsequent settling down in Chicago. Wassaja, by then renamed Carlos Montezuma, excelled in school and was accepted into the University of Illinois at the age of fourteen. Three years later this talented young man gained admission into the Chicago Medical College. After medical school, Dr. Montezuma undertook humanitarian work as an advocate for Native Americans in the United States. These inspiring and remarkable events in Dr.

Montezuma's life are told through the book's narrative (which is based largely on a five-page letter that Dr. Montezuma wrote), sidebar facts underneath original photographs taken by Mr. Carlo Gentile, and a detailed afterword about Dr. Montezuma's advocacy efforts. The book is also a treasure chest of economics lessons about investing in human resources, the economics of education, jobs, work, discrimination, and land rights. Children will walk away with important lessons about how a small Yavapai boy became a reservation doctor who courageously fought to strengthen the civil rights and improve the economic opportunities of Native Americans.

This book is great for read-alouds with younger children, and it is perfect for a grade school biography. The interest level is right in that 4th-5th-6th grade sweet spot. Dr. Carlos Montezuma had an incredibly interesting -- and sad -- and resilient childhood. We are an Arizona family, and it is so interesting to read about the 1870's in Arizona -- the Indian slave raids, the buying and selling of children, cultural contact between whites and Native Americans. Very interesting, indeed. The book has excellent illustrations, very large and using interesting perspectives. In addition, the book includes photographs taken by Wassaja's adoptive father, the photographer Carlo Gentile. Their sepia-tone and old-fashioned composition gives context and depth to the book. This happened a long time ago, but not SO long ago. Carlos Montezuma overcame the many, many obstacles in the path to his success and became an outstanding leader and spokesperson. I should hope my sons grow up to demonstrate some of his character. The book includes a good notes section and bibliography at the back. Here's an example of some of the vocabulary: befell, plateau, ancestral, revealed, captors, gaze, mimic, abolished, manual labor, vagabond, souvenir, dedicated.

Wassaja was a young Indian boy who lived "near Fish Canyon Creek in the Arizona Territory." He lived with his family in a small oo-wah (a small grass hut). The tribe he live with numbered around one hundred and fifty people. They often had to fear for their lives on the plateaus. One night in October 1871 he nestled with his mother and three siblings. The night soon turned into a nightmare when shots rang out and people began to scream. He ran for cover, but a strange Pima man "snatched [him] up by the arm and bound [him] with rope." Life for Wassaja, whose name meant

"beckoning," would change forever. He now had a new name, Hejelweiikam ("left alone") and he was going to be sold as a slave. Mr. Carlo Gentile, his new owner, tried to comfort him. He felt safe with his "new father" and was given yet another name. His new name was Carlos Montezuma, but his first name suited him better, least ways so he thought. Soon he was working in "Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show" playing the part of a young Apache captive and later he sold newspapers. Mr. Gentile met with misfortune when his "photo art studio burned to ashes and his finances were in ruin." Carlos was left with another family while his father tried to rebuild their lives. Carlos began to blossom. He was very intelligent and would be able to make a life for himself, but would he ever be able to find his biological family? This book is a phenomenal recreation of the life of Carlos "Beckoning" Montezuma. The author attempted to piece together this biography from a "five-page letter" written by Professor Holmes of the Smithsonian Institution while staying to the facts and catching the spirit of the boy and the man. The book is wonderfully illustrated and is peppered with photographs, including Carlos himself and one of his actual Pima captors. In the back of the book there is more biographical information, a bibliography and additional recommended websites. This is an excellent biography that will appeal to both young and old alike!

Not sure what to expect on such a big subject, in a book for Children, but this is a winner. For sure it's a high level view of "Beckoning"'s life, but just right for a book aimed at children. It is both a sad in inspirational look at the life of an amazing person. I liked all the little side bar details that were added also. Bought a copy for my daughter to read, and as a family were very impressed. So much so that we bought another copy to donate to the library at my daughter's school. No wonder it's won so many awards, it's a well done book!

Everyone should read stories like this and know about people like Dr. Montezuma. Dr. Mandela also has a legacy worth considering.

Little-known Native American who did much to help his people after being rescued from slavery.

Lovely illustrations.

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