

A Year of Women

Lost in history:

Women in Arts & Entertainment

Fact #8

Esther Deer, also called “Princess White Deer,” was a noted stage actress and dancer from the Mohawk Community of Akwesasne (New York). Princess White Deer traveled around the world in Texas Jack’s Wild West Show. Deer became a solo act and in time gained most of her fame from the Florenz Ziefeld shows.

Teaching Points

1. The Ziefeld Follies.
2. The roles for minority women in vaudeville and Wild West Shows.
3. The impact Princess White Deer’s success had on the public’s attitude toward the Native American Community.

NY Learning Standard(s)

ELA 1, 2, 3, 4; SS 1

Discussion Questions

- 1a. How did Princess White Deer go from the Akwesane Reservation to the bright lights of Broadway?
- 1b. Did her work in theatre make it easier for other minority women to achieve fame?
- 2a. How did Princess White Deer’s work in the Follies and Wild West Shows promote the betterment of minority women in America?
- 2b. Is Princess White Deer the Native American Annie Oakley?
- 3a. Was Princess White Deer seen as an ambassador of Native American Culture worldwide when she traveled with Texas Jack’s Wild West Show?
- 3b. Was Princess White Deer seen as an ambassador of the Mohawk culture to mainstream America in the early 1900 hundreds?

Activity Extensions

1. **Research.** There is a community in New Jersey named after Princess White Deer. Prepare a letter stating why the community decided to name their community after Esther Deer.
2. **Dialogue.** Prepare a dialogue between Princess White Deer and a present day young lady from the Awkwesasne Community. What words of wisdom could Princess White Deer share with young Native American girls?
3. **Field Trip.** Visit the Akwesasne Museum and Cultural Center in Hogansburg, New York in person or online (<http://www.nc3r.org/akwlibr/>) and record your discoveries.