

## **When old meets young**

*“The Unbreakable Code” by Sara Hoagland Hunter, illustrated by Julia Miner (Northland Publishing), ages 7 and up*

The Unbreakable Code,” a story within a story, blends Native American history and a modern youngster’s concerns about life outside his reservation into one very compelling whole.

John’s mother has married a man from Minnesota and the boy must soon leave the Navajo world where he grew up. His grandfather, a former U.S. Marine and veteran of the war in the Pacific, tells him a tale of how his own similar worries were once compounded (he was sent to an old-time Indian school where children were punished for speaking their parents’ tribal language) and then dispelled when he became a Navajo code-talker.

The Navajo language, we learn, was the basis for the American’s “unbreakable code,” used during wartime to elude the Japanese. Thousands of lives were saved by this once reviled oral language. John’s grandfather imparts both pride and a sense of safety to the next generation, for the Navajo code, once lodged in the child’s heart, would remain there forever.

Julia Miner’s illustrations bring life to the peaceful Southwestern settings and to scenes of loneliness and war. This is an excellent book.