

Books about Native Americans

As we talk to our kids about Native Americans, it is important to pick books that help kids to appreciate the differences in cultures, but also the many similarities we all share. In addition, these books lean away from the tendency to lump all Native Americans together or paint them only as people who lived long ago.

***The Goat in the Rug** by Charles L. Blood and Martin Link (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8n8KkeZjNFI>)

The story of how wool (or mohair) becomes a beautiful and prized Navajo rug, told from the point of view of the goat!

Stolen Words by Melanie Florence

A grandfather tells his granddaughter the story of his early life in a Canadian residential school and how his native language was stolen away. A difficult topic handled gently, it also shows a loving relationship between grandfather and granddaughter.

Thunder Boy Jr. by Sherman Alexie (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thL5wG1xo0k>)

Named after his father and nicknamed Little Thunder, the boy says his name makes him sound like a burp or a fart. He longs for a name of his own, and his father assists him in this quest.

Dragonfly Kites by Tomson Highway

A bilingual book in both English and Cree, this follows the adventures of two boys living in Manitoba with their parents and a multitude of “pets.”

A Day with Yahyah by Nicola Campbell

Two modern day girls are spending the day with their grandmother and have the chance to drive around in her mini-van and learn about edible plants. The names of the plants are in both English and Nlekepmxcín language, considered a critically endangered language.

Totem Tales: A Tall Story from Alaska by Deb Vanasse (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_jh08zY9vo0)

This book serves as a light-hearted explanation of what Totem Poles are and how the function as storytellers.

Jingle Dancer by Cynthia Leitich Smith (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4yhocDBQxA>)

Jenna, a contemporary Creek girl, must collect tin jingles from friends and family in order to dance in the pow-wow. A great book about problem solving that also presents Native American families as families like any others, this is a pleasing read.

The Water Walker by Joanne Robertson

The story of a group of Ojibwe women who are emphasizing the importance of fresh, clear water by walking around major bodies of water. It is set in the present and shows the women interacting with technology.

You Hold Me Up by Monique Gray Smith (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uiuev2fXvRU>)

A book by a native author, this book is dedicated to those who lived in the Indian Residential schools in Canada. Featuring children of color in all of the illustrations, this sweet and simple book is all about the ways that we can support or “Hold Up” our friends and loved ones.

* indicated books in our library

Hungry Johnny by Cheryl Minnema (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECnhK0LeoAQ>)
A young Ojibwe boy must wait patiently while the elders fill their plates at a feast. This contemporary book shares a humorous story about community and patience.

***Grandmother's Dreamcatcher** by Becky Ray McCain (drive.google.com/file/d/1JkuYjGbQrfwzSQGZAhr5mZwimg2hTKf1/view?usp=sharing)

The legend of the dreamcatcher is woven into the story of Kimmy, who must spend a week with her Chippewa grandmother while her parents are away. A week is a long time to be away, and Kimmy starts to have nightmares. Luckily, her grandmother knows what to do.

When the Shadbush Blooms by Carla Messinger (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wX3Ds4L_Rw)

The story of both a contemporary Lenape family and their grandparents' grandparents, the illustrations juxtapose how activities used to be done and how they are done now.

The Good Luck Cat by Joy Harjo

Woogie is a lovable but mischievous cat who is owned by a Native American family. He is constantly getting into tight scrapes and may use up all of his 9 lives!

We are Grateful: Otsaliheliga by Traci Sorell (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qHEZuCAJ74AaR4pvGj8Of43Cwg1EZjL1/view?usp=sharing>)

A book about the Cherokee people incorporating some of the Tsalagi language. The book features activities all children will recognize like spending time with family, gardening, making crafts, and playing outside.