



Recommended Elementary Books by Indigenous Authors

[The Committee for Indigenous Peoples Day Wellesley](#) compiled this list to increase representation of diverse Indigenous perspectives in classrooms and homes. We were guided by resources from Indigenous educators--including Dr. Debbie Reese (Nambé Pueblo) and her website American Indians in Children's Literature ([AIICL](#)), Oyate Books (www.oyate.org), and Megan Tipler (Métis) ([Indigenous Texts \(Tipler\)](#)).

All of the books on this list were written by Indigenous authors and many were illustrated by Indigenous artists. We strove to choose books that

- Are engaging and educational for children across a range of ages
- Provide honest and factual historical accounts while being age-appropriate
- Include clear, informative context appended to the story
- Highlight the contemporary experiences of Indigenous Peoples in North America
- Are free from negative stereotypes about Indigenous Peoples or other races and cultures
- Represent diverse and authentic Indigenous voices from a variety of Indigenous Nations and locations.

We hope these books will be used in a variety of ways in schools, including interactive read alouds, independent reading, guided reading, and class discussions. To the extent possible, we have provided information on the reading level (Lexile and/or Guided Reading Level) and age-appropriateness of each book.

We plan to add to this list and create additional recommendations for middle and high school. We welcome feedback and collaboration!

We are Grateful: Otsaliheliga, by Traci Sorell (Cherokee), illustrated by Frané Lessac. Charlesbridge Publishing. 2018. ISBN 978-1-58089-772-3.

Estimated Reading level: grades K-2.

Lexile: 970

Guided Reading Level: M

Comments: We recommend getting the read-along version for pronunciation of Cherokee words. Wonderbooks edition. Findaway World, LLC. 2019. ISBN 978-1-09425-486-9.

Kunu's Basket: A Story from Indian Island, by Lee DeCora Francis (Penobscot), illustrated by Susan Drucker.

Tilbury House. 2012. ISBN 978-0-88448-330-4.

Estimated Reading level: grades K-2 (School Library Journal)

Lexile: 490

The Water Walker, written and illustrated by Joanne Robertson (Atikameksheng Anishnawbek).

Second Story Press. 2017. ISBN 978-1-77260-038-4.

Estimated Reading level: grades K-2 (School Library Journal)

Lexile: 730

Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story, by Kevin Noble Maillard (Seminole), illustrated by Juana Martinez-Neal.

Roaring Brook Press. 2019. ISBN 978-1-62672-746-5.

Estimated Reading level: grades K-3

Jingle Dancer, by Cynthia Leitich Smith (Muscogee Creek), illustrated by Cornelius Van Wright and Ying-Hwa Hu.

Morrow Junior Books. 2000. ISBN 068816241X.

Estimated Reading level: grades K-3

Lexile: 650

Guided Reading Level: L

What's the Most Beautiful Thing You Know About Horses?, by Richard Van Camp (Dogrib), illustrated by George Littlechild (Plains Cree).

Children's Book Press. 1998. ISBN 978-0-89239-154-7.

Estimated Reading level: grades K-3

When We Were Alone, by David Alexander Robertson (Norway House Cree Nation), illustrated by Julie Flett (Cree-Me'tis).

Highwater Press. 2016. ISBN 978-1-55379-673-2.

Estimated Reading level: grades K-3

Lexile: 600

Bowwow Powwow : Bagosenjige-niimi'idim, by Brenda J. Child (Red Lake Ojibwe), translated by Gordon Jourdain (Lac La Croix First Nation), illustrated by Jonathan Thunder (Red Lake Ojibwe).

Minnesota Historical Society Press. 2018. ISBN 978-1-68134-077-7.

Estimated Reading level: grades K-3

SkySisters, by Jan Bourdeau Waboose (Nishnawbe Ojibwe), Illustrated by Brian Dienes.

Kids Can Press. 2000. ISBN 1-55074-697-9.

Estimated Reading level: grades K-3

Lexile: 560

Sharice's Big Voice: A Native Kid Becomes a Congresswoman, by Sharice Davids (Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin) with Nancy K. Mays, illustrated by Joshua Mangeshig Pawis-Steckley (Ojibwe, Wasauksing First Nation).

Harper, an imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers. 2021. ISBN 978-0-06297-966-7.

Estimated reading level: grades K-3 (School Library Journal)

We Are Water Protectors, by Carole Lindstrom (Anishinaabe/Métis, Turtle Mountain Ojibwe), illustrated by Michaela Goade (Tlingit and Haida).

Roaring Brook Press. 2020. ISBN 978-1-250-20355-7.

Estimated Reading level: grades K-3 (School Library Journal)

When the Shadbush Blooms, by Carla Messinger (Turtle Clan Lenape) with Susan Katz, illustrated by David Kanietakeron Fadden (Wolf Clan Mohawk).

Lee and Low Books, Inc. 2020. ISBN 978-1-64379-201-9.

Estimated Reading level: grades K-5 (School Library Journal)

Lexile: 660

Kamik: An Inuit Puppy Story, by Donald Uluadluak (Inuit), illustrated by Qin Leng. Inhabit Media. 2012. ISBN 978-1-92709-511-9.

Estimated Reading level: grades 1-4 (School Library Journal).

Lexile: 850

Comments: Font is a little tricky to read but we haven't found another version.

Part of a series.

Shi-shi-etko, by Nicola I. Campbell (Nlel7kepmx, Nsilx and Métis), illustrated by Kim LaFave.

Groundwood Books/House of Anansi Press: distributed in the US by Publishers Group West. 2005. ISBN 0-88899-659-4 (978-0-88899-659-6).

Estimated Reading level: grades 2-4 (Book List, School Library Journal)

Lexile: 860

Comments: Pair with *Shin-chi's Canoe*

Shin-chi's Canoe, by Nicola I. Campbell (Nlel7kepmx, Nsilx and Métis), illustrated by Kim LaFave.

Groundwood Books. 2008. ISBN 978-0-88899-857-6.

Estimated Reading level: grades 2-5 (School Library Journal)

Comments: Pair with *Shi-shi-etko*

Not My Girl, by Christy Jordan-Fenton & Margaret Pokiak-Fenton (Inuvialuit), illustrated by Gabrielle Grimard.

Annick Press. 2014. ISBN 978-1-55451-625-4.

Estimated Reading level: grades 2-5 (School Library Journal)

Lexile: 680

The Sockeye Mother, by Hetxw'ms Gyetxw (Brett D. Huson) (Gitxsan Nation), illustrated by Natasha Donovan (Métis Nation of British Columbia).

Highwater Press. 2017. ISBN 978-1-55379-5.

Estimated Reading level: grades 3-6 (School Library Journal)

Lexile: 1140

Comments: Part of a series (*The Eagle Mother, The Grizzly Mother, The Frog Mother*)

I Am Not a Number, by Jenny Kay Dupuis (Nipissing First Nation Ojibwe/Anishinaabe) and Kathy Kacer, illustrated by Gillian Newland.

Second Story Press. 2016. ISBN 978-1-927583-94-4.

Estimated Reading level: grades 4-6 (School Library Journal)

Lexile: 640

Comments: Content warning: descriptions of child abuse and abduction

The Reluctant Storyteller, by Art Coulson (Cherokee), illustrated by Carlin Bear Don't Walk (Crow and Northern Cheyenne); includes *The Energy of Thunder Beings*, by Art Coulson, illustrated by Roy Boney Jr. (Cherokee), and *Cherokee Life Today*, by Traci Sorell.

Reycraft Books. 2020. ISBN 978-1-4788-7025-8.

Estimated Reading level: grades 4-6

Lexile: 810

Comments: We recommend the title story

The Birchbark House, by Louise Erdrich (Turtle Mountain Chippewa).

Hyperion Books for Children. 1999. ISBN 978-1-43526-778-7.

Estimated Reading level: grades 4-8 (Book List, Minuteman Library Network)

Lexile: 970

Guided Reading Level: T