

## Selecting Children's and Young Adult Books about Native People

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When choosing children's and young adult books about Native people, look for these basic characteristics:

**Tribally specific** books specify a tribal nation and accurately depict the people and culture of that nation. Avoid "Native American" or "based on" because the content in books like that are too broad, often include stereotypical information, and don't help children understand that there are over 500 sovereign nations with a nation-to-nation relationship with the US government. (The exception is books written by Native people.)

Books written or illustrated by **Native People** help in three ways. First, you can use present-tense verbs to talk about the author or illustrator and you can talk about their nation (where it is today, how big it is, etc.). That helps non-Native children know we are part of contemporary society. Second, Native people create books they wish they had when they were children and teens—ones that show Native people as part of the present day, not the long-ago past. Third, Native people are more likely to be accurate in what they say—and sensitive to what they should not say, too, about ceremonies that their nation does not share with outsiders.

Books that include **sovereignty** or **nationhood** can help readers see Native people as citizens of nations that, in fact, were nations before the United States was a nation! Native peoples have distinct governments. Children should learn about local, state, federal, **and tribal governments**.

Below is a short list of recommended books. You'll find more at American Indians in Children's Literature, where you'll also find extensive reviews of books that misrepresent Native peoples, history, and culture. Go to <http://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.net>

*An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States for Young People* by Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, adapted by Mendoza and Reese (Nambé Pueblo), published in 2019. Nonfiction for teens.

*Fall In Line, Holden!* By Daniel Vandever (Diné), published in 2017. Picture book.

*Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story* by Kevin Maillard (Seminole), illustrated by Juana Martinez-Neal, published in 2019. Picture book.

*Give Me Some Truth* by Eric Gansworth (Onandaga), published in 2018. Middle Grade Novel.

*Hearts Unbroken* by Cynthia Leitich Smith (Muscogee), published in 2018. Young Adult Novel.

*I Can Make This Promise* by Christine Day (Upper Skagit), published in 2019. Middle Grade Novel.

*Indian No More* by Charlene Willing McManus (Umpqua), published in 2019. Middle Grade Novel.

*The People Shall Continue* by Simon Ortiz (Acoma), illustrated by Sharol Graves, published in 2017.

*This Place: 150 Years Retold* by Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm and 18 Native writers, 2017. Graphic novel.

*We Are Grateful* by Traci Sorell (Cherokee), illustrated by Frané Lessac, published in 2018. Picture book.

*We Are Water Protectors* by Carole Lindstrom (Turtle Mountain Band of Ojibwe), illustrated by Michaela Goade (Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska), published in 2020. Picture book.