

## **Learning More about Native Nations Resource for Teachers, Students, and Families**

This resource was created by [Dr. Mandy Suhr-Sytsma](#), a settler scholar who serves as an Associate Teaching Professor in the [English Department](#) and the [Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative](#) at Emory University. The resource is tailored for Atlanta area K-12 students, educators, and families but is also relevant beyond this context.

### **Contents:**

**Learn about Native American Nations:** Information and websites where students, families, and educators can learn more about Native nations.

**Book List:** A list of books students and families can check out from the library (school or public library) or purchase from a local bookstore.

**Videos of Native American Authors Reading and Discussing Their Books:** Students can watch the videos linked to in this section on their own or with their families.

**Additional Information & Resources for Teachers, Librarians, Parents, & Caregivers:** Students, share this section with your grown-ups!

### **Learn about Native American Nations**

- There are currently 574 federally recognized Native American tribal nations in the United States. These Native nations are sovereign entities who operate governments, schools, and programs, just as other nations (such as the United States, France, or Ghana) do.
- In Atlanta, GA, we are on the homeland of the Muscogee people. The Muscogee (Creek) Nation in Oklahoma is the fourth largest tribe in the US, with more than 86,000 citizens. Around 3,000 additional Creek individuals belong to the federally recognized Poarch Creek Indians band located in Alabama. Muscogee citizens live on the reservations in Oklahoma and Alabama. They also live in Atlanta and other cities and towns across the United States and the world. Did you know that the former poet laureate of the United States, Joy Harjo, is Muscogee?
- Most Native Americans participate in their Native nations while living away in other cities and towns. Even though there are no federally recognized tribes in Georgia, many Indigenous people live here. Meet two of the many local Native leaders who work at the CDC in this short video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YiY9cpQj9zI>.
- Official websites of tribal governments are great places to learn more about the history, culture, government, and activities of specific Native nations. Visit the Muscogee (Creek) Nation website at: <https://www.mcn-nsn.gov/>. Visit the Poarch Creek Indians website at: <http://pci-nsn.gov/wordpress/>.
- The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian website at <https://americanindian.si.edu/> is another great source for information.

## **Book List**

These are *some* of my favorite books by Indigenous writers. There are many, many more. Your teacher or librarian can help you find them! I especially encourage you to read books by Muscogee and Cherokee writers since we are on Muscogee homelands in Atlanta, and Cherokee homelands are just a little bit North of here.

### ***Some great Indigenous books for elementary and middle school readers...***

\* *Jingle Dancer* (picture book) as well as *Rain is Not My Indian Name & Sisters of the Neversea* (middle grades novels), by Muscogee Creek writer Cynthia Leitich Smith. Also check out the lovely collection of intersecting Indigenous-authored short stories Smith edited, *Ancestor Approved: Intertribal Stories for Kids*. And find many more great titles in the Heartdrum series, an Indigenous-focused imprint of HarperCollins, Smith edits.

\* *For a Girl Becoming* (picture book) by Muscogee writer Joy Harjo. Many of Harjo's poems are also accessible for younger audiences, including poems addressing removal from her 2019 volume, *An American Sunrise*.

\* *We Are Grateful: Ostaliheliga, We Are Still Here! Native American Truths Everyone Should Know, At the Mountain's Base, and Classified: The Secret Career of Mary Golda Ross, Cherokee Aerospace Engineer* (picture books) by Cherokee writer Traci Sorell.

\* *The Birchbark House* and other books in that series (historical fiction chapter books/favorites of my own children) by Ojibwe writer Louise Erdrich.

\* *In the Footsteps of Crazy Horse* (chapter book) by Lakota writer Joseph Marshall III.

\* *Crossing Bok Chitto* (picture book) and the *How I Became a Ghost* (middle grades historical fiction) series by Choctaw writer Tim Tingle.

\* *JoJo Makoons* (early readers chapter book series) by Ojibwe writer Dawn Quigley.

\* *We Are Water Protectors* (picture book) written by Carole Lindstrom (Anishinaabe/Métis) & illustrated by Michaela Goade (Tlingit).

\* *Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story* (picture book) written by Kevin Noble Maillard (Seminole) & illustrated by Juana Martinez-Neal.

\* *Bowwow Powwow* (picture book) by Ojibwe writer Brenda Child and Ojibwe illustrator Jonathan Thunder.

\* *Notable Native People: 50 Indigenous Leaders, Dreamers, and Changemakers from Past and Present* (non-fiction picture book) written by Adrienne Keene (Cherokee) & illustrated by Ciara Sana.

\* *Healer of the Water Monster* (middle grades novel) by Navajo writer Brian Young.

\* *I Can Make This Promise & The Sea in Winter* (middle grades novels), & *She Persisted: Maria Tallchief* (early readers biography) by Christina Day (Upper Skagit)

**Some great Indigenous books for junior high and high school readers...**

\**An Indigenous People's History of the United States for Young People* by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, adapted by Jean Mendoza and Debbie Reese (Nambe Pueblo).

\**Hearts Unbroken* (YA novel) by Muscogee writer Cynthia Leitich Smith.

\**Crazy Brave* and *Poet Warrior* (memoirs with appeal for high school readers) and many volumes of poetry and music by Muscogee writer/musician Joy Harjo.

\**Mankiller: A Chief and Her People* (autobiography with appeal for youth and adult readers) by former principal chief of the Cherokee Nation, Wilma Mankiller.

\**The Marrow Theives* (YA novel) by Métis writer Cherie Dimaline.

\**The Night Wanderer* (YA novel) by Ojibwe writer Drew Hayden Taylor.

\**Firekeeper's Daughter* and *Warrior Girl Unearthed* (YA novels) by Ojibwe writer Angeline Boulley.

\**If I Ever Get Out of Here* and *Give Me Some Truth* (YA novels) by Onondaga writer Eric Gansworth.

\**Apple in the Middle* (younger YA novel) by Ojibwe writer Dawn Quigley.

\**Roofwalker* (short story collection for adults with appeal to younger readers) by Dakota writer Susan Power.

\**The Round House* (adult novel with appeal for high school readers) by Ojibwe writer Louise Erdrich.

\**#NotYourPrincess: Voices of Native American Women* and *Dreaming in Indian: Contemporary Native American Voices* (multimedia anthologies with youth readers), edited by Lisa Charleyboy (Tsilhqot'in) and Mary Beth Leatherdale.

**Videos of Native American Authors Reading and Discussing Their Books**

- *Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story* by Kevin Noble Maillard (Seminole) read by the author: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZGoPq2CeJdw>
- *We Are Water Protectors* by Carole Lindstrom (Ojibwe) read and discussed by the author: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2YHaRmj9wLU>
- *Bowwow Powwow* by Brenda Child (Ojibwe) introduced by the author and read by her daughter in English: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpBfWk46JA4>

- Read *Bowwow Powwow* again, in Ojibwe:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luXF84pESNE>
- “Remember” poem by Joy Harjo (Muscogee) read and discussed by the author:  
<https://www.joyharjo.com/videos/joy-harjo-reads-for-pbskids-and-little-free-library>
- Conversation with Cherokee author Traci Sorell about her book *We Are Grateful: Ostaliheliga*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qsIxsPDOVoA>

### **Additional Information & Resources for Teachers, Librarians, Parents, & Caregivers** **Finding and Evaluating Children’s Books**

While there are many excellent books for children by and about Native Americans (a small number of which I list above), there are also many popular children’s books that feature inaccurate and biased portrayals of Native people.

- The Nambé Pueblo scholar Dr. Debbie Reese’s website *American Indians in Children’s Literature* (<https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/>) is a fantastic resource, often used by teachers and librarians. Use Reese’s website to help you evaluate books you already have and to seek out new titles.
- The organization Oyate is another great resource. They promote children's literature and curricula that portrays American Indians with "historical accuracy, cultural appropriateness and without anti-Indian bias and stereotypes." Their website, <http://www.oyate.org/>, hosts reviews and resources, including resources on Thanksgiving and on “How to Tell the Difference” between appropriate and inappropriate representations of American Indians in children’s books.
- The American Indian Librarian Association’s Website (<https://ailanet.org/>) includes an extensive annotated list of resources along with book reviews, newsletters, and information about events. They also give biannual youth literature awards to children’s and YA books by Indigenous authors (great books to check out with your family!).

### **Learning More & Getting Involved**

- Follow Indigenous news media sources. Some of my favorites are Indian Country Today (online newspaper), Native Voice One (daily 5 minute headlines), Native America Calling (daily one hour radio program/podcast), & the Turtle Talk blog.
- Read about Native American history and contemporary issues. The books *An Indigenous People’s History of the United States for Young People* and *Everything you Wanted to Know about Indians but were Afraid to Ask* are a couple of good starting points. Also see the first section of this handout. Resources like the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian Website and official websites of tribal nations provide information for adults as well as young people. These books and resources can also help you as you develop curriculum and programs for the students you serve.

- Attend events. Events hosted by Emory University, CDC, and other local groups are usually free and open to the public. Many of these events are posted to the Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative at Emory's community calendar page: <https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/nae/category/events/>. You can also attend online events hosted by groups outside our region. During Native American Heritage Month and beyond, you could attend several events every day hosted by universities, museums, tribal governments, and other groups. Search around to find events that interest you.
- Non-Native parents, guardians, and teachers, remember to use the present tense when talking about Native Americans, and assume your classrooms, schools, and communities include Indigenous people. They do! So, avoid using "we" for non-Native people and "they" for Native Americans as if there are not any Indigenous people around you. Keep learning about and amplifying Native voices, not just in November but all year long.
- Indigenous parents, guardians, and teachers, remember, in addition to your personal families, communities, and nations, there are local Indigenous communities and allies here to support you, including: the Atlanta Indigenous Peoples Association; the American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Employee Caucus at CDC; the Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative at Emory; the Beacon Hill Black Alliance for Human Rights; and Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion crews at your local schools.

**Happy Learning!**