Finding Children’s Books that Celebrate Indigenous People & Cultures

LOOK FOR BOOKS THAT:

- are written and illustrated by indigenous people,
- feature indigenous people in a positive light (rather than perpetuating stereotypes),
- feature an indigenous person as a main character (rather than a supporting character),
- feature indigenous people in a range of settings (as a hero, in everyday life, in the present day, in an historical setting, etc.), and
- include “indigenous characters who demonstrate the ability to achieve success on their own terms and in the context of their cultures or communities, as successful problem-solvers independent of non-Native teachers, social workers, and other authority figures.”

These suggestions are adapted from the American Indian Youth Literature Award Criteria, available here: https://ailanet.org/app/uploads/2019/03/AIYLA-Criteria-updated-March-2019.pdf

WHERE TO FIND CHILDREN’S BOOKS

DATABASES

Diverse Book Finder https://diversebookfinder.org/
- Database of picture books
- Search feature includes an option to filter by “Tribal Affiliation/Homelands” and “Race/Culture”
- Compiled by a research team at Bates College

Books with Characters of Color https://tinyurl.com/BooksPOC
- Database of children’s books that include characters of color (includes indigenous characters)
- Only searchable by child’s age (preschoolers to teens)
- Compiled by Common Sense Media

WEBSITES

Where to Find Diverse Books https://diversebooks.org/resources-old/where-to-find-diverse-books/
- List of websites that provide recommendations for books with diverse characters. Includes an American Indian section.
- Compiled by We Need Diverse Books, a non-profit “that advocates essential changes in the publishing industry to produce and promote literature that reflects and honors the lives of all young people.”

BOOK LISTS

- Annual list of books by or about indigenous people
- Compiled by Dr. Debbie Reese of Nambé Pueblo and other Native people

American Indian Youth Literature Award from the American Indian Library Association https://ailanet.org/activities/american-indian-youth-literature-award/
- List of award-winning books.
- Three award categories: Picture Book, Middle Grade Book, and Young Adult Book.
- Compiled by the American Indian Library Association

You can also contact local tribal museums, cultural centers, language preservation offices, and colleges.

- A list of tribal colleges in the US can be found here: https://sites.ed.gov/whiaiane/tribes-tcus/tribal-colleges-and-universities/