



St. Michael's Episcopal School

## Books about Indigenous culture to read and discuss

Like any cultural day of recognition or remembrance, Indigenous Peoples' Day is an occasion to learn and share the stories of the cultures being celebrated. The list below includes works from a variety of voices and perspectives, native and non-native, about the history, realities, and importance of Indigenous culture in North America, past and present. Reading and discussing books like these with your children can help to open the door to a deeper understanding and appreciation of Indigenous heritage, while also offering an opportunity to navigate complex historical realities together in an age-appropriate way.

- **Rock your Mocs** by Laurel Goodluck

Author Goodluck (Mandan, Hidatsa, and Tsimshian) and artist Goodnight (Chickasaw) introduce young readers to Rock Your Mocs Day, celebrated yearly on November 15. Spotlighting individual children from specific tribes and locales, this vibrant picture book celebrates the joy and power of wearing moccasins, and the Native and First Nations cultural pride that comes with them.

- **What Your Ribbon Skirt Means To Me: Deb Haaland's Historic Inauguration** by Alexis C. Bunten

This beautiful, informative, Indigenous picture book offers both an homage to Secretary Deb Haaland's achievements and a celebration of urban Indigenous community through the eyes of a little girl.

- **A Land of Books: Dreams of Young Mexihcah Word Painters** by Duncan Tonatiuh

Inspired by the pre-Columbian codices, this story tells how the Aztec and their neighbors in the Valley of Mexico painted books and records long before Columbus arrived, and continued doing so among their Nahuatl-speaking descendants for generations after the Spanish Conquest.

- **Eagle Drum** by Nasugraq Rainey Hopson

This magical origin story of the Iq̃p̃iaq Messenger Feast, a Native Alaskan tradition, follows a young, skilled hunter who, confronted by a terrifying eagle god, is led on a harrowing journey during which he learns unexpected lessons about the natural world and his tribal ancestry.

- **Rez Dogs** by Joseph Bruchac

A young Wabanaki girl is quarantined with her grandparents on the reservation when the COVID-19 pandemic starts. There she befriends a local dog and learns about her ancestors and how they always survive together.

- **Indian No More** by Charlene Willing Mcmanis and Traci Sorell

When Regina's Umpqua tribe is legally terminated and her family must relocate from Oregon to Los Angeles, she goes on a quest to understand her identity as an Indian despite being so far from home.

- **We Still Belong** by Christine Day

American Indian Youth Literature Honor-winning author Christine Day (Upper Skagit), tells the story of a girl whose hopeful plans for Indigenous Peoples' Day go all wrong—until she finds herself surrounded by the love of her Indigenous family and community at an intertribal powwow.

- **Healer of the Water Monster** by Brian Young and Shonto Begay

A debut novel inspired by Native-American culture follows the experiences of a boy whose summer at his grandmother's reservation home is shaped by his uncle's addictions and an encounter with a sacred being from the Navajo Creation Story.

- **History Smashers: Christopher Columbus and the Taino People** by Kate Messner, Jose Barreiro, and Falynn Koch

Bestselling author Kate Messner and our country's premier Taino scholar uncover the hidden truth about Christopher Columbus and tell the stories of the Taino and other Indigenous North Americans, who had been living here for thousands of years, raising their families, running their societies, and trading with their neighbors.

- **Turtle Island: The Story of North America's First People** by Eldon Yellowhorn and Kathy Lowinger

This multifaceted history of the Indigenous peoples of North America before and after European contact tells the history of Turtle Island with a rich blend of archeology, oral tradition, prophecies, and more to discuss the evolution of the first peoples from Canada through Mexico.

- **Mascot** by Charles Waters and Traci Sorell

Told from several perspectives, this timely novel follows six middle-schoolers, all with different backgrounds and beliefs, as they learn about identity, tradition, and what it means to stand up for real change when their school's mascot is seen as racist.

- **Everything You Wanted to Know About Indians but Were Afraid to Ask: Young Readers Edition** by Anton Treuer

An Ojibwe scholar and cultural preservationist answers the most commonly asked questions about Native Americans, both historical and modern.