

Autumn gives us so much to celebrate! It's a time to appreciate beautiful foliage, Halloween traditions, end-of-summer harvests and cozy sweater weather. And November brings another reason: Native American Heritage Month. Celebrate by letting Native Americans share their stories with your families. There are so many books by and about Indigenous people for all ages. Here are some wonderful titles written by Native authors that tell all kinds of stories, from traditional folktales to exciting adventures.

"Sweetest Kulu," by Celina Kalluk and Alexandria Neonakis, is a beautiful poem from an Inuit mother to her son that describes how the Arctic animals welcome and teach the new baby. The gorgeous illustrations show Kulu receiving gifts from the arctic fox and narwhal, and snuggling sweetly with a caribou and polar bear. This picture book is perfect for sharing at bedtime.

"The Legend of How the Bear Lost his Tail," by William Burns, and "The Robin Legend," by Chelsea Jocko. These two picture books are treasures in our library collection because they tell stories from the Oneida people, are written and illustrated by Oneida authors and illustrators, and have text in both English and Oneida languages. Each book teaches how to pronounce Oneida words throughout the story, so readers can learn to say "fox," "bear," and "robin."

"We Are Water Protectors," by Carole Lindstrom and Michaela Goade, won the Caldecott Medal in 2020 for its stunning illustrations that depict a black snake threatening to poison the Earth's water and the people who try to protect against it. This story can be a great conversation starter about humans' connections to our environment and how to protect our world.

"Fry Bread," by Kevin Noble Maillard and Juana Martinez-Neal, is a celebration of a food shared by families for generations. The words and pictures describe how fry bread looks, sounds, feels, and smells, and how it connects people to each other and their traditions. A diverse group of kids is shown making and sharing the bread.

"Jo Jo Makoons: The Used-To-Be Best Friend," by Dawn Quigley, is a chapter book about an Ojibwe girl and her life on the reservation where she lives. Jo Jo is a funny and charming 7-year-old who is trying to figure out how to be a good friend. The story is sprinkled with lots of Ojibwe words, and includes a glossary in the back.

"Fatty Legs: A True Story," by Margaret-Olemaun Pokiak-Fenton and Christy Jordan-Fenton, is the short biography of an Inuvialuit girl who attends a residential school for Native girls. Olemaun convinces her parents to allow her to go to school but soon learns that she'll be required to cut her hair, change her name, and endure abuse from the nuns who run the school. Olemaun is determined to learn to read and hold onto her family's beliefs despite the cruel realities of the school.

"Healer of the Water Monster" by Brian Young is a middle grade novel that weaves a Navajo creation story with a fast-paced adventure. A boy named Nathan discovers a Water Monster stealing the seeds he's trying to grow and finds himself on a mission to save the Water Monster and put an end to a drought. This novel is full of Navajo words and culture.

"Sisters of Neversea" by Cynthia Leitich Smith is another middle-grade novel which retells the story of Peter Pan from the perspectives of stepsisters Wendy and Lily. Lily is Muscogee Creek, and she and Wendy are taken away by Peter Pan to a land of adventure and magic.