

2020 Indigenous Peoples' Heritage Month Reading List



Dear Readers,

November 1st begins the month-long celebration and recognition of Indigenous Peoples' Heritage. Stories of and by the Native community have long been ignored in American society. However, as the first people to inhabit this land, Indigenous peoples should exist at the forefront of our minds, especially this month.

As we attempt to eradicate our contribution to these oppressive systems in our professional world, it is important to also increase our awareness and support for the Indigenous community through resources, such as books. In lieu of our usual monthly book displays in the Writers' Room, we've selected several readings to celebrate writers of Indigenous descent and their work. We hope you're staying well, and that these readings will increase your knowledge and encourage your own decolonization work.

Warmly,

The OBWR Team

Heather (Coordinator), Marcus, Charlene, and Heather (CFSI)

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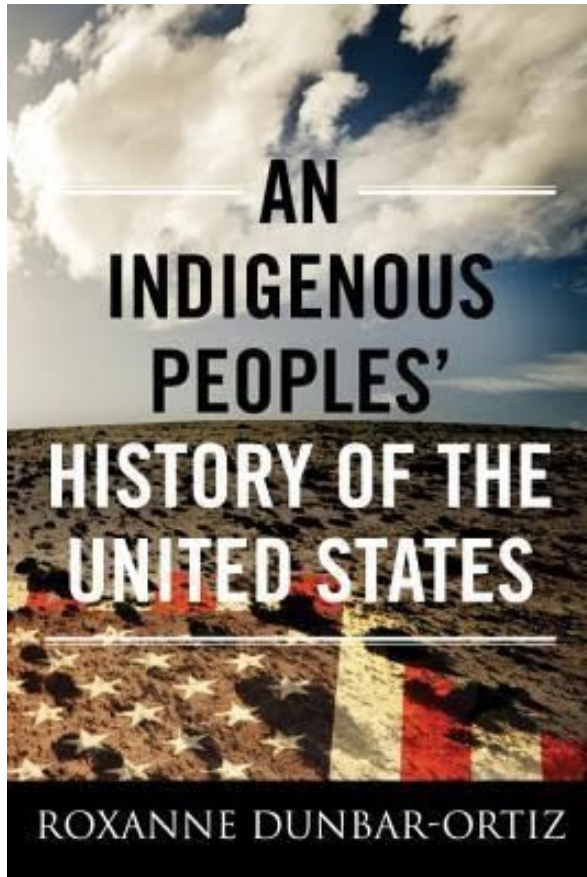
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An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States by **Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz**

(also check out *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States for Young People* by Debbie Reese and Jean Mendoza)

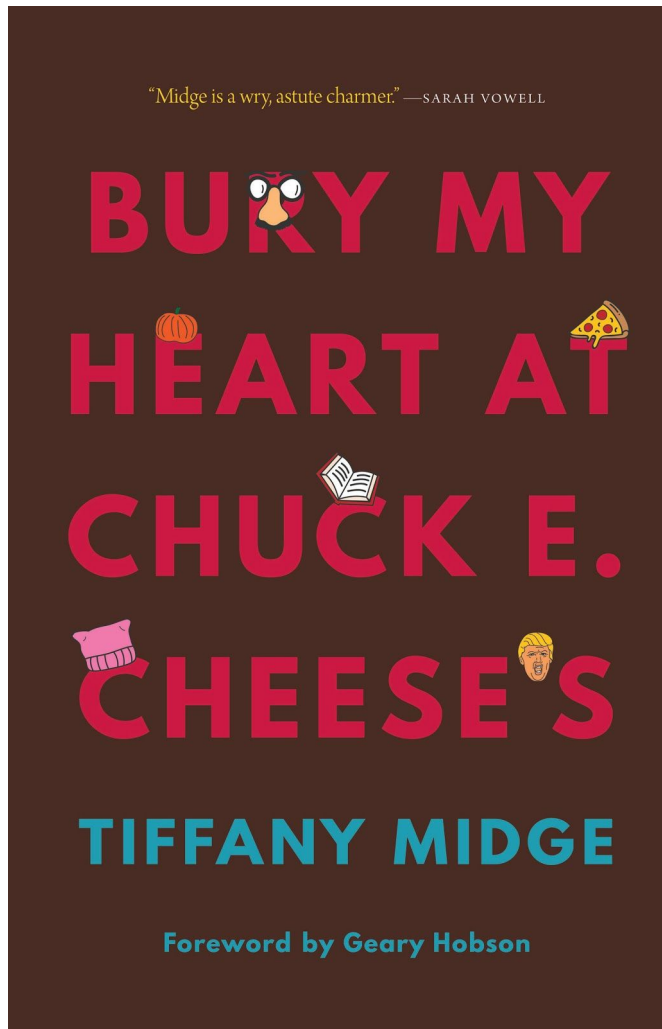


The first history of the United States told from the perspective of indigenous peoples.

Today in the United States, there are more than five hundred federally recognized Indigenous nations comprising nearly three million people, descendants of the fifteen million Native people who once inhabited this land. The centuries-long genocidal program of the US settler-colonial regimen has largely been omitted from history. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz offers a history of the United States told from the perspective of Indigenous peoples and reveals how Native Americans, for centuries, actively resisted expansion of the US empire.

Spanning more than four hundred years, this classic bottom-up peoples' history radically reframes US history and explodes the silences that have haunted our national narrative.

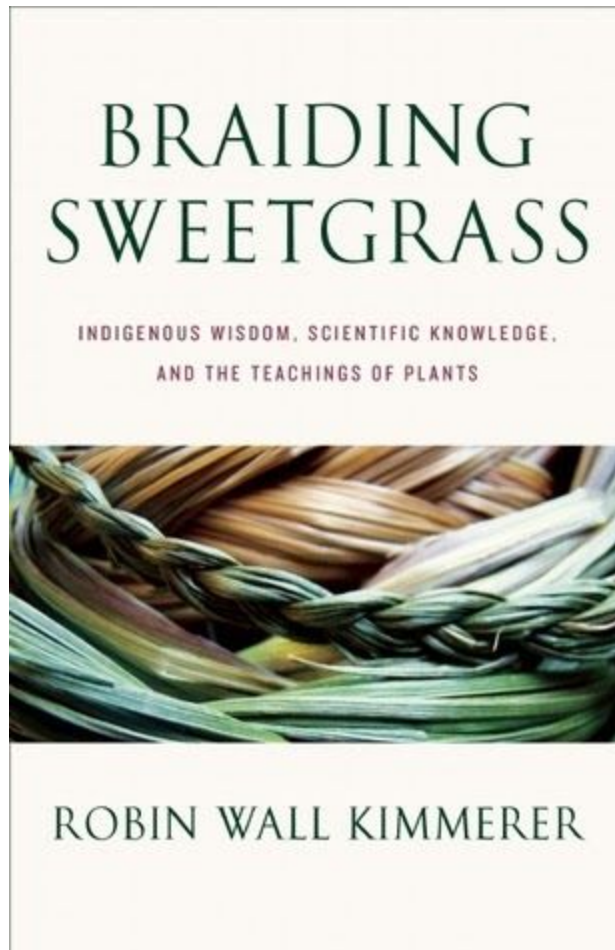
Bury My Heart at Chuck E. Cheese's by Tiffany Midge



Bury My Heart at Chuck E. Cheese's is a powerful and compelling collection of Tiffany Midge's musings on life, politics, and identity as a Native woman in America. Artfully blending sly humor, social commentary, and meditations on love and loss, Midge weaves short, stand-alone musings into a memoir that stares down colonialism while chastising hipsters for abusing pumpkin spice. She explains why she doesn't like pussy hats, mercilessly dismantles pretendians, and confesses her own struggles with white-bread privilege.

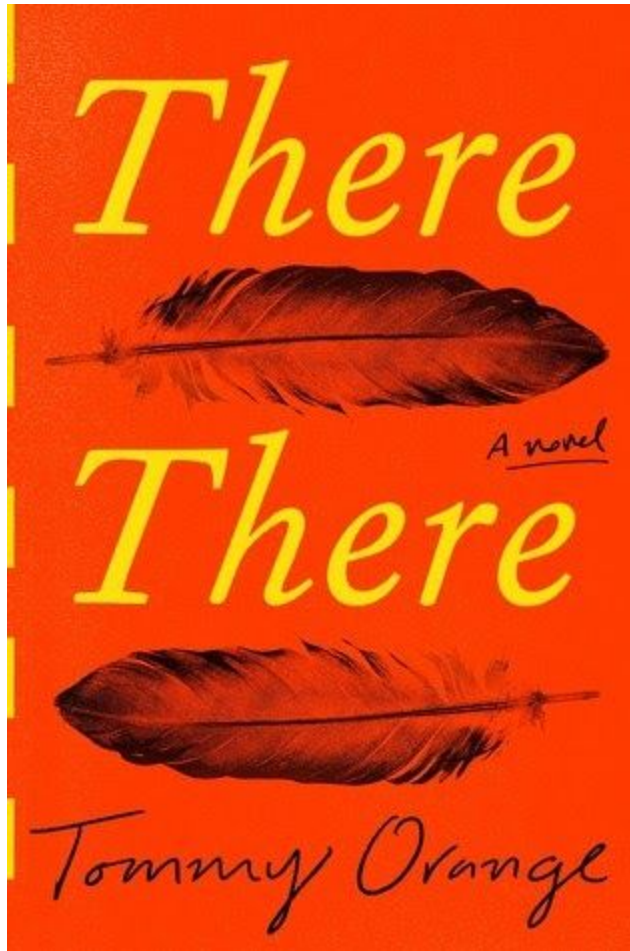
Midge goes on to ponder Standing Rock, feminism, and a tweeting president, all while exploring her own complex identity and the loss of her mother. Employing humor as an act of resistance, these slices of life and matchless takes on urban-Indigenous identity disrupt the colonial narrative and provide commentary on popular culture, media, feminism, and the complications of identity, race, and politics.

Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants by Robin Wall Kimmerer



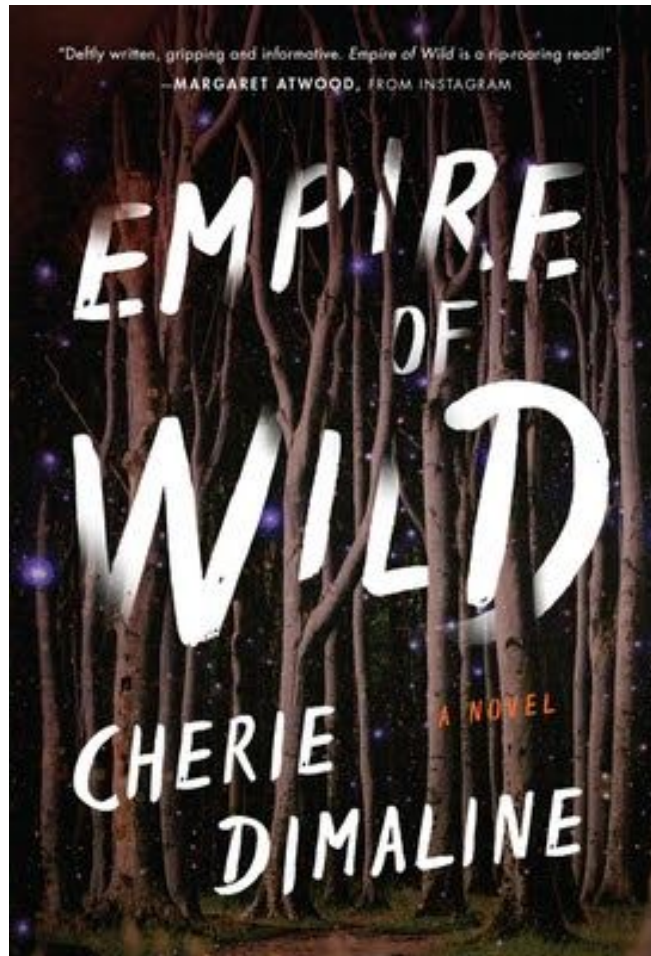
As a botanist, Robin Wall Kimmerer has been trained to ask questions of nature with the tools of science. As a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, she embraces the notion that plants and animals are our oldest teachers. In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Kimmerer brings these lenses of knowledge together to show that the awakening of a wider ecological consciousness requires the acknowledgment and celebration of our reciprocal relationship with the rest of the living world. For only when we can hear the languages of other beings are we capable of understanding the generosity of the earth, and learning to give our own gifts in return.

There There by Tommy Orange



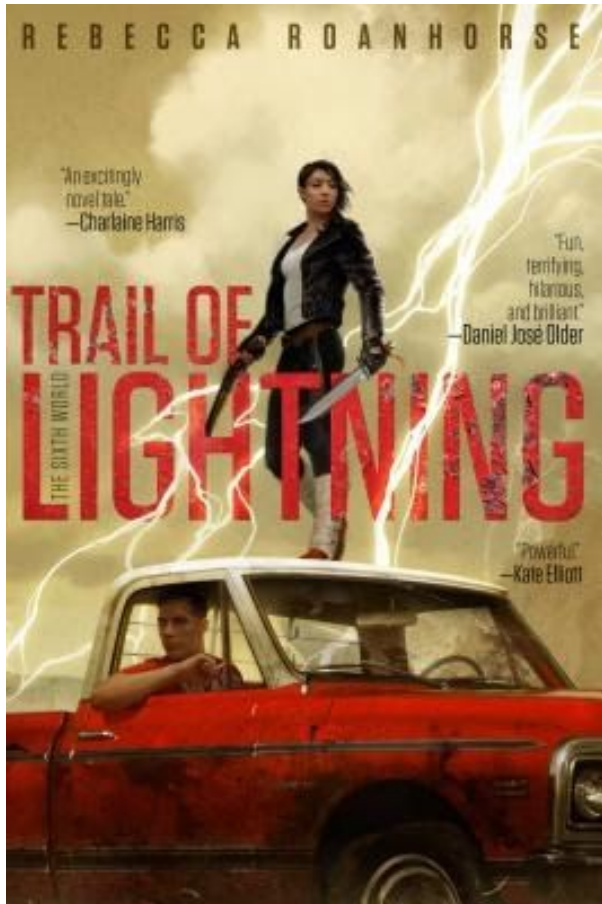
Tommy Orange's wondrous and shattering novel follows twelve characters from Native communities: all traveling to the Big Oakland Powwow, all connected to one another in ways they may not yet realize. Among them is Jacquie Red Feather, newly sober and trying to make it back to the family she left behind. Dene Oxendene, pulling his life together after his uncle's death and working at the powwow to honor his memory. Fourteen-year-old Orvil, coming to perform traditional dance for the very first time. Together, this chorus of voices tells of the plight of the urban Native American--grappling with a complex and painful history, with an inheritance of beauty and spirituality, with communion and sacrifice and heroism. Hailed as an instant classic, *There There* is at once poignant and unflinching, utterly contemporary and truly unforgettable.

Empire of Wild by Cherie Dimaline



One of *The New York Times* 10 Best Books of the Year and winner of the PEN/Hemingway Award, Tommy Orange's wondrous and shattering bestselling novel follows twelve characters from Native communities: all traveling to the Big Oakland Powwow, all connected to one another in ways they may not yet realize. Among them is Jacquie Red Feather, newly sober and trying to make it back to the family she left behind. Dene Oxendene, pulling his life together after his uncle's death and working at the powwow to honor his memory. Fourteen-year-old Orvil, coming to perform traditional dance for the very first time. Together, this chorus of voices tells of the plight of the urban Native American--grappling with a complex and painful history, with an inheritance of beauty and spirituality, with communion and sacrifice and heroism. Hailed as an instant classic, *There There* is at once poignant and unflinching, utterly contemporary and truly unforgettable.

Trail of Lightning by Rebecca Roanhorse



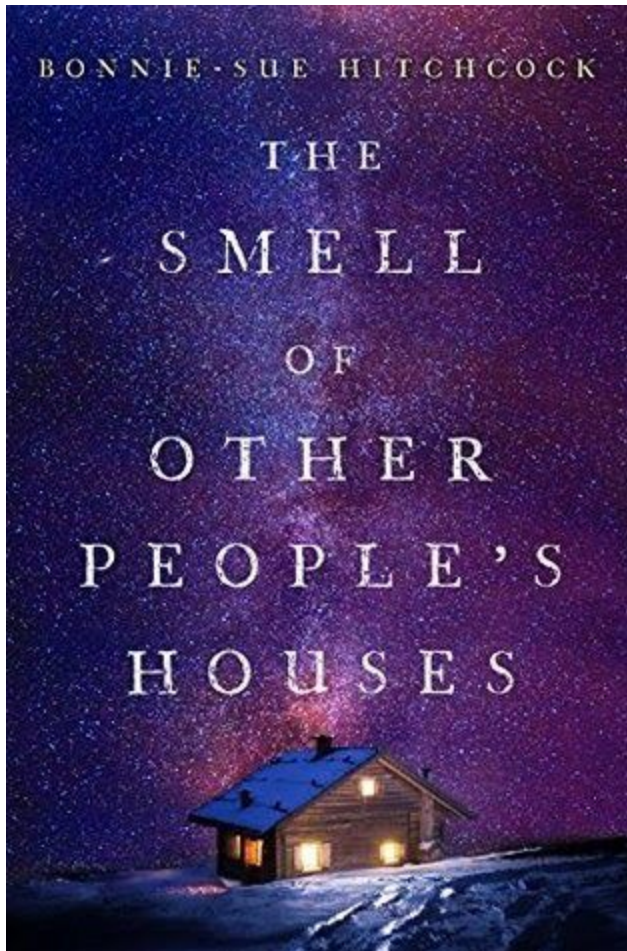
Maggie Hoskie is a Dinétah monster hunter, a supernaturally gifted killer. When a small town needs help finding a missing girl, Maggie is their last best hope. But what Maggie uncovers about the monster is much more terrifying than anything she could imagine. Maggie reluctantly enlists the aid of Kai Arviso, an unconventional medicine man, and together they travel the rez, unraveling clues from ancient legends, trading favors with tricksters, and battling dark witchcraft in a patchwork world of deteriorating technology. As Maggie discovers the truth behind the killings, she will have to confront her past if she wants to survive. Welcome to the Sixth World.

Elatsoe by Darcie Little Badger (YA)



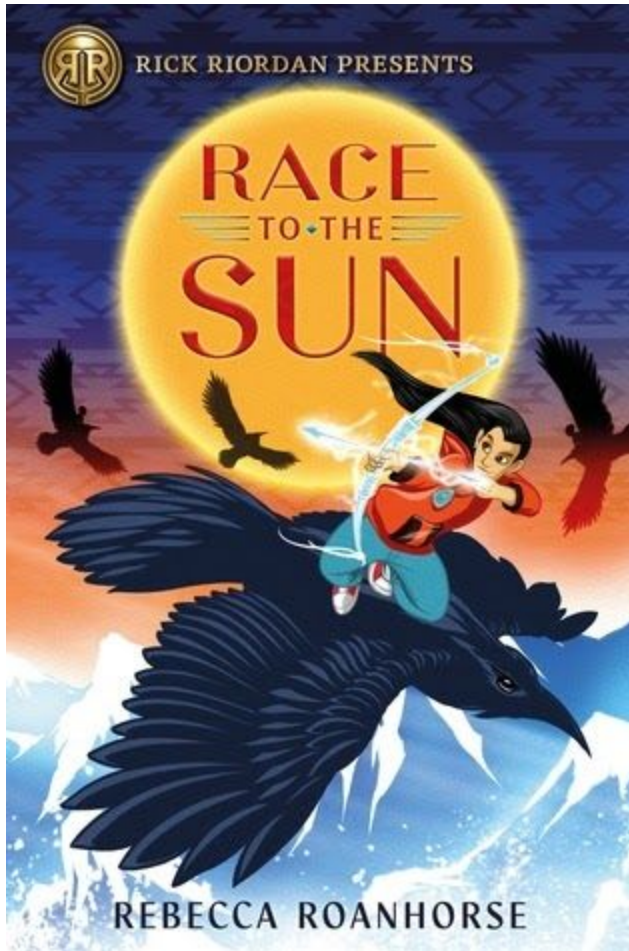
Elatsoe lives in this slightly stranger America. She can raise the ghosts of dead animals, a skill passed down through generations of her Lipan Apache family. Her beloved cousin has just been murdered, in a town that wants no prying eyes. But she is going to do more than pry. The picture-perfect facade of Willowbee masks gruesome secrets, and she will rely on her wits, skills, and friends to tear off the mask and protect her family. Darcie Little Badger is an extraordinary debut talent in the world of speculative fiction. We have paired her with her artistic match, illustrator Rovina Cai. This is a book singular in feeling and beauty.

The Smell of Other People's Houses by Bonnie-Sue Hitchcock (YA)



This deeply moving and authentic debut set in 1970s Alaska is for fans of Rainbow Rowell, Louise Erdrich, Sherman Alexie, and Benjamin Alire Saenz. Intertwining stories of love, tragedy, wild luck, and salvation on the edge of America's Last Frontier introduce a writer of rare talent. Ruth has a secret that she can't hide forever. Dora wonders if she can ever truly escape where she comes from, even when good luck strikes. Alyce is trying to reconcile her desire to dance, with the life she's always known on her family's fishing boat. Hank and his brothers decide it's safer to run away than to stay home--until one of them ends up in terrible danger. Four very different lives are about to become entangled. This unforgettable William C. Morris Award finalist is about people who try to save each other--and how sometimes, when they least expect it, they succeed.

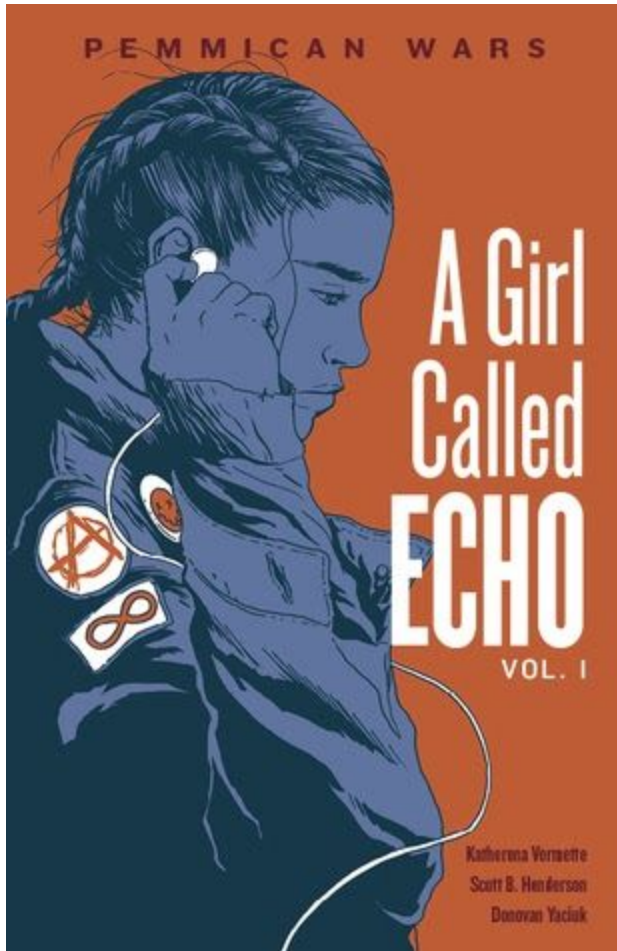
Race to the Sun by Rebecca Roanhorse (Middle Grade)



Lately, seventh grader Nizhoni Begay has been able to detect monsters, like that man in the fancy suit who was in the bleachers at her basketball game. Turns out he's Mr. Charles, her dad's new boss at the oil and gas company, and he's alarmingly interested in Nizhoni and her brother, Mac, their Navajo heritage, and the legend of the Hero Twins. Nizhoni knows he's a threat, but her father won't believe her.

When Dad disappears the next day, leaving behind a message that says "Run ", the siblings and Nizhoni's best friend, Davery, are thrust into a rescue mission that can only be accomplished with the help of Din Holy People, all disguised as quirky characters. Their aid will come at a price: the kids must pass a series of trials in which it seems like nature itself is out to kill them. If Nizhoni, Mac, and Davery can reach the House of the Sun, they will be outfitted with what they need to defeat the ancient monsters Mr. Charles has unleashed. But it will take more than weapons for Nizhoni to become the hero she was destined to be.

Pemmican Wars (The Girl Called Echo #1) by Katherena Vermette



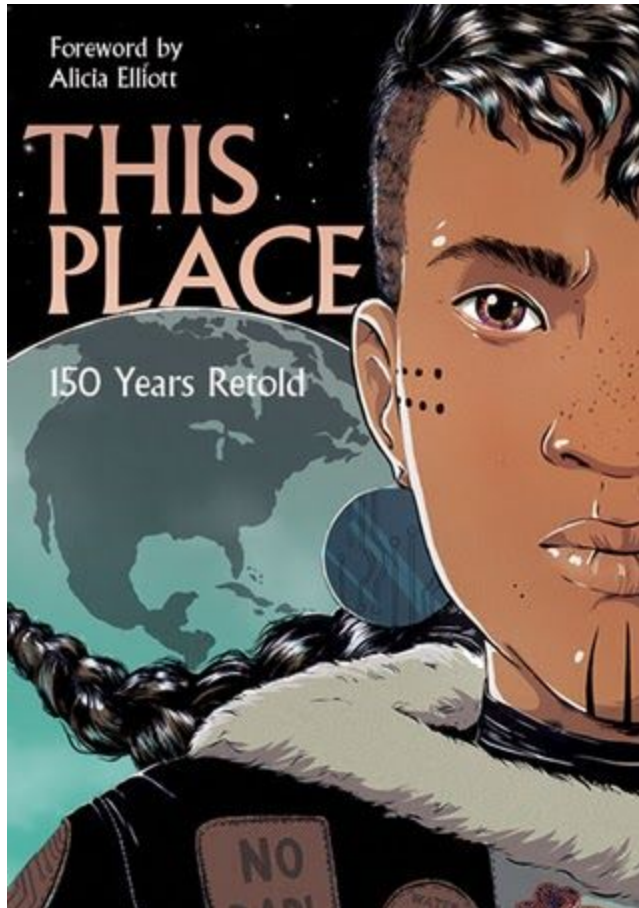
Echo Desjardins, a 13-year-old Métis girl adjusting to a new home and school, is struggling with loneliness while separated from her mother. Then an ordinary day in Mr. Bee's history class turns extraordinary, and Echo's life will never be the same. During Mr. Bee's lecture, Echo finds herself transported to another time and place—a bison hunt on the Saskatchewan prairie—and back again to the present. In the following weeks, Echo slips back and forth in time. She visits a Métis camp, travels the old fur-trade routes, and experiences the perilous and bygone era of the Pemmican Wars.

Will I See? by David A. Robertson



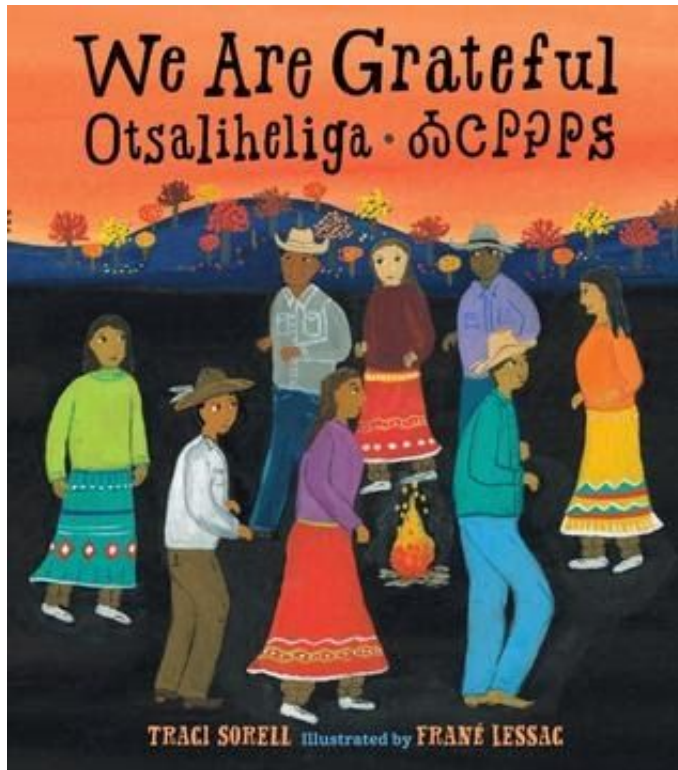
May, a young teenage girl, traverses the city streets, finding keepsakes in different places along her journey. When May and her kookum make these keepsakes into a necklace, it opens a world of danger and fantasy. While May fights against a terrible reality, she learns that there is strength in the spirit of those that have passed. But will that strength be able to save her? A story of tragedy and beauty, *Will I See* illuminates the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

This Land: 150 Years Retold by Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm, Chelsea Vowel and others



Explore the past 150 years through the eyes of Indigenous creators in this groundbreaking graphic novel anthology. Beautifully illustrated, these stories are an emotional and enlightening journey through Indigenous wonderworks, psychic battles, and time travel. See how Indigenous peoples have survived a post-apocalyptic world since Contact.

We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga by Traci Sorell, Frané Lessac (Illustrator)



A look at modern Native American life as told by a citizen of the Cherokee Nation

The word otsaliheliga (oh-jah-LEE-hay-lee-gah) is used by members of the Cherokee Nation to express gratitude. Beginning in the fall with the new year and ending in summer, follow a full Cherokee year of celebrations and experiences.

Whereas by Layli Long Soldier

WHEREAS



POEMS LAYLI LONG SOLDIER

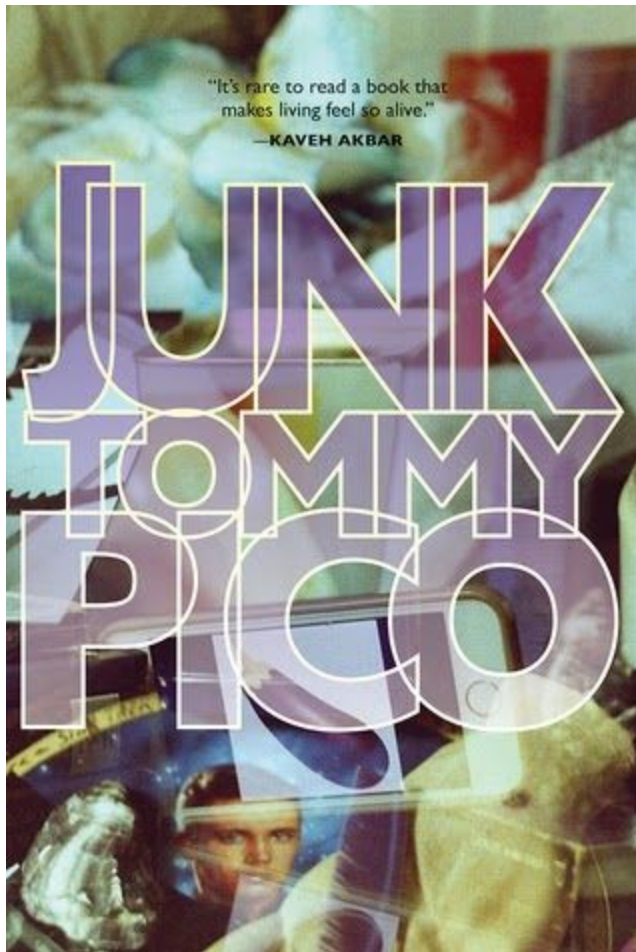
WHEREAS confronts the coercive language of the United States government in its responses, treaties, and apologies to Native American peoples and tribes, and reflects that language in its officiousness and duplicity back on its perpetrators. Through a virtuosic array of short lyrics, prose poems, longer narrative sequences, resolutions, and disclaimers, Layli Long Soldier has created a brilliantly innovative text to examine histories, landscapes, her own writing, and her predicament inside national affiliations. "I am," she writes, "a citizen of the United States and an enrolled member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, meaning I am a citizen of the Oglala Lakota Nation--and in this dual citizenship I must work, I must eat, I must art, I must mother, I must friend, I must listen, I must observe, constantly I must live." This strident, plaintive book introduces a major new voice in contemporary literature.

When My Brother Was an Aztec by Natalie Diaz



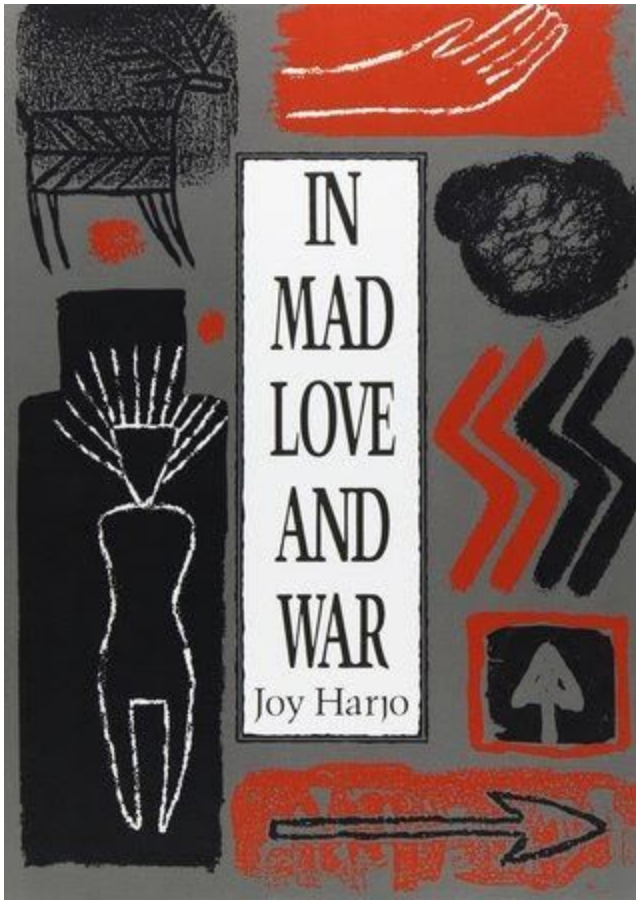
"I write *hungry* sentences," Natalie Diaz once explained in an interview, "because they want more and more lyricism and imagery to satisfy them." This debut collection is a fast-paced tour of Mojave life and family narrative: A sister fights for or against a brother on meth, and everyone from Antigone, Houdini, Huitzilopochtli, and Jesus is invoked and invited to hash it out. These darkly humorous poems illuminate far corners of the heart, revealing teeth, tails, and more than a few dreams.

Junk by Tommy Pico



Junk is a breakup poem in couplets: ice floe and hot lava, a tribute to Janet Jackson and nacho cheese. In the static that follows the loss of a job or an apartment or a boyfriend, what can you grab onto for orientation? The narrator wonders what happens to the sense of self when the illusion of security has been stripped away. And for an indigenous person, how do these lost markers of identity echo larger cultural losses and erasures in a changing political landscape? In part taking its cue from A.R. Ammons's *Garbage*, Teebbs names this liminal space "Junk," in the sense that a junk shop is full of old things waiting for their next use; different items that collectively become indistinct. But can there be a comfort outside the anxiety of utility? An appreciation of "being" for the sake of being? And will there be Chili Cheese Fritos?

In Mad Love & War by Joy Harjo



Joy Harjo is a powerful voice for her Creek (Muscogee) tribe (“a stolen people in a stolen land”), for other oppressed people, and for herself. Her poems, both sacred and secular, are written with the passions of anger, grief, and love, at once tender and furious. They are rooted in the land; they are one with the deer and the fox, the hawk and the eagle, the sun, moon, and wind, and the seasons – “spring/ was lean and hungry with the hope of children and corn.” There are enemies here, also lovers; there are ghost dancers, ancestors old and new, who rise again “to walk in shoes of fire.”

Joy Harjo is also the current Poet Laureate of the US.

Special Mentions

[*Indigenous Originated: Walking in Two Worlds*](#) by 826 Minneapolis - St. Paul

[*This Land*](#) (Podcast) hosted by Rebecca Nagle

["Grandpa's Drum"](#) from *Molly of Denali* (PBS Kids)

["This is my message to the western world--your civilisation is killing life on Earth"](#) by Nemonte Nenquimo