

CELEBRATE

Native American

HERITAGE MONTH

“For those new to the Native literary conversation, we give the same advice we offer to beginning writers. Read. Broadly. Extensively. Frequently. Read a wide array of Native voices.” -- Cynthia Leitich Smith (Muscogee Creek Nation) & Traci Sorell (Cherokee Nation)

Join the 86 FSS Libraries in celebrating Native American stories during Native American Heritage Month. This November commemorates the histories, cultures, heritage, and contributions of Indigenous communities including Native Americans, Alaska Native Peoples, and Native Hawaiians that inhabited the now United States prior to European colonization. Historically marginalized and their narratives oppressed or persecuted against, Native American Heritage Month is an opportunity to promote and provide a platform for the works of Indigenous authors, as well as for non-Native readers to increase their knowledge and experience of Native American history and culture.

“We are the first storytellers on this continent. But despite the increasing visibility of Native and First Nations today, many readers are still new to our ways of making sense of the world through literature...

The world is saturated with misconceptions about First/Native Nations and peoples, so any stories by Native creators about Native characters tend to offer positive educational benefit. Simply sending the message that we exist as human beings—not boogeymen on the prairie or supernatural creatures or feather-dripping Yodas—is an improvement. We come from hundreds of distinct tribal cultures and intersecting identities with our own storytelling traditions...” --

Cynthia Leitich Smith (Muscogee Creek Nation) & Traci Sorell (Cherokee Nation) in “How Native Writers Talk Story: Honoring Authentic Voices in Books for Young People” (School Library Journal).

Recognition of Native American Heritage Month Timeline

- ◆ The push for the commemoration was first started in 1915 by Dr. Arthur C. Parker of Seneca Nation as he worked with the Boy Scouts of America to celebrate a day for “First Americans”.
- ◆ Also in 1915, Red Foot James of Blackfoot Tribe of Montana rode 3-4,000 miles on horseback to gain approvals from 24 state governors to establish national recognition for Native Americans.



- ◆ In 1915 the annual Congress of the American Indian Association—then led by Arapahoe member Rev. Sherman Coolidge—officially recognized the day and called for national awareness. The September 28th proclamation also included the first formal statement to recognize Native Americans as citizens.
- ◆ The first “American Indian Day” was celebrated in New York during May 1916.
- ◆ In 1976, Jerry C. Elliott-High Eagle, a member of Cherokee and Osage Nations, pushed for Native American Awareness Week as a way to honor tribal communities and their contributions in the United States.
- ◆ Congress passed Public Law 99-471 in 1986, a joint resolution authorizing and requesting President Ronald Reagan to declare the week of November 23 - 30 as American Indian Week; he issued the first public proclamation in November. Four years later, President George H.W. Bush authorized the month of November as National Native American Heritage Month to be recognized by all levels of government and organizations. This proclamation has continued each year since 1994.



There are a number of ways to celebrate Native American Heritage Month both virtually and in-person. The National Museum of the American Indian hosts a Native Cinema Showcase, advocates for teaching and learning about Native Americans at home, and promotes a continued online exhibit on Native Americans in the Armed Forces. The American Indian Library Association, a membership action group of the American Library Association, includes a number of resources, reading challenges, and book lists for children and young adults.

Reading is one of the most impactful ways to celebrate Native American Heritage Month!

- ◆ Ramstein & Vogelweh Libraries will display works both authored by and about Indigenous history and culture during the month of November.
- ◆ Sign-Up for our Native American Heritage-themed Story Time for children.
- ◆ Check out our online curated reading list of available materials.
- ◆ Join our monthly book club on November 17th at 1730 at the Vogelweh Library. November’s choice is *Heart Berries*, a memoir written by First Nation Canadian author Terese Marie Milhot of her life on the Seabird Island Band Reservation in the Pacific Northwest.

A few of our favorite titles by Indigenous authors available for check-out:

- ◆ *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer (*member of Citizen Potawatomi Nation*): Adult Non- Fiction available at Vogelweh Library.
- ◆ *Hearts Unbroken* by Cynthia Leitich Smith (*member of the Muscogee Creek Nation*): Young Adult Fiction available at both libraries.
- ◆ *Postcolonial Love Poem* by Natalie Diaz (*Mojave American, member of the Gila River Indian Community, & identifies as Akimel O’odham*): Collection of poetry available online through Libby.
- ◆ *We Are Grateful: Ostaliheliga* by Traci Sorell (*citizen of Cherokee Nation*): Young Reader Non-Fiction available at both libraries.