Inclusive Literature Lists

The Billings Public Library supports and values and celebrates diversity and inclusion. We strive to curate a collection of resources that represents all demographics in our community’s tapestry. We believe an inclusive and welcoming community is a stronger community.

This list of inclusive and diverse literature that the youth of our community can see themselves in as well as use as a conduit to build compassion for others is brought to you on behalf of collaboration between the Human Relations Commission of the City of Billings, the Billings Public Library, and a children’s literature assistant professor from Montana State University Billings.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive. We welcome your feedback, suggestions, and any recommendations for this list. We will take these into consideration as we continue to develop these lists.

November 2021: Indigenous Peoples

We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga
By Sorell, Traci
Illustrator Lessac, Frane
2021-09 - Charlesbridge Publishing
9781623542993 Check Our Catalog

The Cherokee community is grateful for blessings and challenges that each season brings. This is modern Native American life as told by an enrolled 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 ...More

Nibi Is Water
By Robertson, Joanne
2020-04 - Second Story Press
9781772601329 Check Our Catalog
A first conversation about the importance of Nibi, which means water in Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe), and our role to thank, respect, love, and protect it. Babies and toddlers can follow Nibi as it rains and snows, splashes or rows, drips and sips. Written from an Anishinaabe water protector's perspective, the book is in dual language: English and Anishinaabemowin. ...More

**What's My Superpower?**
By Johnston, Aviaq  
Illustrator Mack, Tim  
2021-07 - Inhabit Media  
9781772273250 [Check Our Catalog](#)

Nalvana feels like all of her friends have some type of superpower. She has friends with super speed (who always beat her in races), friends who can fly (or at least jump from a swing and seem to fly across the playground), and friends who are better than her at a million other things. But when her mom shows Nalvana that she is unique and special, she realizes that her superpower was right in ...More

**Loving Me**
By Slier, Debby  
2020-11 - Star Bright Books  
9781595728999 [Check Our Catalog](#)

Babies and toddlers will discover the importance of family through these charming photographs of Native American families. ...More

**Mi'kmaw Daily Drum: Mi'kmaw Culture for Every Day of the Week**
By Syliboy, Alan  
2020-11 - Nimbus Publishing Limited  
9781771088893 [Check Our Catalog](#)

A baby board book from the bestselling artist behind *Mi'kmaw Animals* that teaches young readers Mi'kmaw concepts and a Mi'kmaw word for each day of the week.

Mi'kmaw Animals baby board book, shortlisted for the Lillian Shepherd Memorial Award for Excellence in Illustration, comes *Mi'kmaw Daily Drum*. From celebrated artist Alan Syliboy, this vital book for the ...More

**Welcome Song for Baby: A Lullaby for Newborns**
By Van Camp, Richard  
2007-10 - Orca Book Publishers  
9781551436616 [Check Our Catalog](#)

Awards:  
NAPPA Gold Awards (2008)

A poem for newborns by well known First Nations writer Richard Van Camp accompanied by photographs. ...More
Maui Slows the Sun
By Ahulii, Gabrielle
Illustrator Tsong, Jing Jing
2018-09 - Beachhouse Pub.
9781933067988 Check Our Catalog

Part of a new series called Hawaiian Legends for Little Ones, Maui Slows the Sun introduces kids ages 2-5 to one of Hawaii’s best-known legends about Mui the demigod.

In simple, poetic language, this origin story gives small kids a taste of Hawaii’s rich history of storytelling.

Three other titles in the series are: Hina, Pele Finds a Home, Maui Hooks the Islands, Hiiaka Battles the Wind, ...More

Kiss by Kiss / Ocetowina: A Counting Book for Families
By Van Camp, Richard
Translator Collins, Mary Cardinal
2018-09 - Orca Book Publishers
9781459816213 Check Our Catalog CRE

One kiss, two kiss, three kiss, four So many kisses and so many more. From bestselling author Richard Van Camp comes a delightful counting book that honors families and can be used to praise your little ones as they learn to count. Ten kisses from your sweet baby might not be enough to get you through this adorable book, so you’ll just have to read it over and over

Orca Book ...More

My Heart Fills with Happiness
By Gray Smith, Monique
Illustrator Flett, Julie
2016-03 - Orca Book Publishers
9781459809574 Check Our Catalog

★ A quiet loveliness, sense of gratitude, and--yes--happiness emanate from this tender celebration of simple pleasures.--Publishers Weekly, starred review

The sun on your face. The smell of warm bannock baking in the oven. Holding the hand of someone you love. What fills your heart with happiness? This beautiful board book, with illustrations from ...More

Sweetest Kulu
By Kalluk, Celina
Illustrator Neonakis, Alexandria
2016-04 - Inhabit Media
9781772271119 Check Our Catalog

Dream a little, Kulu, this world now sings a most beautiful song of you.

This beautiful bedtime poem, written by acclaimed Inuit throat singer Celina Kalluk, describes the gifts given to a newborn baby by all the animals of the Arctic.
Lyrically and tenderly told by a mother speaking to her own little Kulu; an Inuktitut term of endearment often bestowed upon babies and young children, ...More

A is for Anemone: A First West Coast Alphabet
By Vickers, Roy Henry
Author Budd, Robert
Illustrator Vickers, Roy Henry
2021-09 - Harbour Publishing
9781550179477 Check Our Catalog


With crisp, luminous illustrations by celebrated Indigenous artist Roy Henry Vickers, and a simple rhythmic text, this sturdy board book introduces the alphabet using iconic imagery of the West Coast, creating a book ...More

We Are Still Here!: Native American Truths Everyone Should Know
By Sorell, Traci
Illustrator Lessac, Frane
2021-04 - Charlesbridge Publishing
9781623541927 Check Our Catalog

Twelve Native American kids present historical and contemporary laws, policies, struggles, and victories in Native life, each with a powerful refrain: We are still here

Too often, Native American history is treated as a finished chapter instead of relevant and ongoing. This companion book to the award-winning We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga offers readers everything they never ...More

I Sang You Down from the Stars
By Spillett-Sumner, Tasha
Illustrator Goade, Michaela
2021-04 - Little, Brown Books for Young Readers
9780316493161 Check Our Catalog

A New York Times bestseller!

This unique baby book sings with Native cultural detail, while striking a universal chord in its celebration of the blossoming of love that comes with expecting and welcoming a new baby--with art by New York Times bestselling illustrator and Caldecott Medalist Michaela Goade

As she waits for the arrival of her new baby, a ...More

Nimoshom and His Bus
By Thomas, Penny M.
Illustrator Hibbard, Karen
2018-03 - Highwater Press
9781553797081 Check Our Catalog
Nimoshom loved to drive the school bus. Every day, on the way to and from school, he had something to say. Sometimes, he told the kids silly stories. Sometimes, he taught the kids a new word in Cree.

*Nimoshom and His Bus* introduces basic Cree words. A glossary is included in the back of the book.

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**Go Show the World**

By *Kinew, Wab*

Illustrator *Morse, Joe*

2018-09 - Tundra Books (NY)

9780735262928 Check Our Catalog

We are a people who matter. Inspired by President Barack Obama’s *Of Thee I Sing*, *Go Show the World* is a tribute to historic and modern-day Indigenous heroes, featuring important figures such as Tecumseh, Sacagawea and former NASA astronaut John Herrington.

Celebrating the stories of Indigenous people throughout time, Wab Kinew has created a powerful rap song, the lyrics.

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**We Are Water Protectors**

By *Lindstrom, Carole*

Illustrator *Goade, Michaela*

2020-03 - Roaring Brook Press

9781250203557 Check Our Catalog

Awards:

Caldecott Medal (2021)

Winner of the 2021 Caldecott Medal

#1 New York Times Bestseller

Inspired by the many Indigenous-led movements across North America, *We Are Water Protectors* issues an urgent rallying cry to safeguard the Earth’s water from harm and corruption—a bold and lyrical picture book written by Carole Lindstrom and vibrantly illustrated by Michaela Goade.

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**We All Play**

By *Flett, Julie*

Illustrator *Flett, Julie*

2021-05 - Greystone Kids

9781771646079 Check Our Catalog

**STARRED REVIEW**

*Kirkus Reviews, Publisher's Weekly*
From Julie Flett, the beloved author and illustrator of *Birdsong*, comes a joyous new book about playtime for babies, toddlers, and kids up to age 7, perfect for fans of *But First, We Nap.*  

**Where Wonder Grows**  
By González, Xelena  
Illustrator García, Adriana M.  
2022-01 - Cinco Puntos Press  
9781947627468 [Check Our Catalog](#)  

From the creators of the award-winning picture book *All Around Us* comes another lyrical intergenerational story exploring our connections to nature, family, and traditions.  

When Grandma walks to her special garden, her granddaughters know to follow her there. Grandma invites the girls to explore her collection of treasures—magical rocks, crystals, seashells, and ...More  

**The Water Lady: How Darlene Arviso Helps a Thirsty Navajo Nation**  
By McGinty, Alice B.  
Illustrator Begay, Shonto  
2021-03 - Schwartz & Wade Books  
9780525645009 [Check Our Catalog](#)  

This inspiring picture book tells the true story of a woman who brings desperately needed water to families on the Navajo reservation every day.  

Underneath the New Mexico sky, a Navajo boy named Cody finds that his family's barrels of water are empty. He checks the chicken coop—nothing. He walks down the road to the horses' watering hole. Dry. Meanwhile, a few miles away, ...More  

**Shaped by Her Hands: Potter Maria Martinez**  
By Freeman, Anna Harber  
Author Gonzales, Barbara  
Illustrator Aphelandra  
2021-04 - Albert Whitman & Company  
9780807575994 [Check Our Catalog](#)  

The most renowned Native American Indian potter of her time, Maria Povika Martinez learned pottery as a child under the guiding hands of her ko-ōo, her aunt. She grew up to discover a new firing technique that turned her pots black and shiny, and made them—and Maria—famous. This inspiring story of family and creativity illuminates how Maria's belief in sharing her love of clay brought ...More  

**The Bee**  
By Han, Becky  
Author Peturs, Tindur  
2021-10 - Inhabit Media  
9781772273007 [Check Our Catalog](#)  

When the narrator of this fun and silly book is startled by the buzzing of a bee, she sets off on an adventure that sees her running from community to community, trying to lose
her buzzing companion. When she has run clear across Nunavut, she finally realizes that perhaps this little bee isn't such a fearsome foe after all!

...More

**Stand Like a Cedar**
By *Campbell, Nicola I.*  
**Illustrator** *Victor, Carrielynn*  
2021-02 - Highwater Press  
9781553799214 Check Our Catalog

When you go for a walk in nature, who do you see? What do you hear?

Award-winning storyteller Nicola I. Campbell shows what it means to "stand like a cedar" on this beautiful journey of discovery through the wilderness. Learn the names of animals in the Nłeʔkepmxc̱n or Halq'emeylem languages as well as the teachings they have for us. Experience a celebration of sustainability and ...More

**On the Trapline**
By *Robertson, David A.*  
**Illustrator** *Flett, Julie*  
2021-05 - Tundra Books (NY)  
9780735266681 Check Our Catalog

A picture book celebrating Indigenous culture and traditions. The Governor General Award--winning team behind *When We Were Alone* shares a story that honors our connections to our past and our grandfathers and fathers.

A boy and Moshom, his grandpa, take a trip together to visit a place of great meaning to Moshom. A trapline is where people hunt and live off the land, and it was ...More

**The First Blade of Sweetgrass**
By *Greenlaw, Suzanne*  
**Author** *Frey, Gabriel*  
**Illustrator** *Baker, Nancy*  
2021-08 - Tilbury House Publishers  
9780884487609 Check Our Catalog

Musquon must overcome her impatience while learning to distinguish sweetgrass from other salt marsh grasses, but slowly the spirit and peace of her surroundings speak to her, and she gathers sweetgrass as her ancestors have done for centuries, leaving the first blade she sees to grow for future generations. This sweet, authentic story from a Maliseet mother and her Passamaquoddy husband includes ...More

**Josie Dances**
By *Lajimodiere, Denise*  
**Illustrator** *Erdrich, Angela*  
2021-05 - Minnesota Historical Society Press  
9781681342078 Check Our Catalog

Josie dreams of dancing at next summer's powwow. But first she needs many special things: a dress, a shawl, a cape, leggings, moccasins, and, perhaps most important of all, her spirit name. To gather all these essential pieces, she calls on her
mom, her aunty, her kookum, and Grandma Greatwalker. They have the skills to prepare Josie for her powwow debut.

As the months go by, Josie ...

**Nibi’s Water Song**
By *Tenasco, Sunshine*
*Illustrator Lady Bird, Chief*
2021-10 - Lee & Low Books
9781643794822 [Check Our Catalog]

This bright and vivacious book from two Native creators celebrates the energy, moxie, and determination of water activists of all ages.

When Nibi, an Indigenous girl, turns the tap in her house, only mucky brown water comes out. That starts her on a search for clean water to drink. Though she must face polluted rivers, unfriendly neighbors, and her own temporary discouragement, Nibi’s ...

**Kimitinâniwiw Itwêwina / Stolen Words**
By *Florence, Melanie*
*Illustrator Grimard, Gabrielle*
*Translator Sand, Dolores*
2019-09 - Second Story Press
9781772601015 [Check Our Catalog CRE]

The dual language edition, in Plains Cree and English, of Stolen Words, the award-winning story of the beautiful relationship between a little girl and her grandfather. When she asks her grandfather how to say something in Cree, he tells her that his language was stolen from him when he was a boy. The little girl then sets out to help her grandfather find his language again. This sensitive and ...

**When We Are Kind**
By *Gray Smith, Monique*
*Illustrator Neidhardt, Nicole*
2020-10 - Orca Book Publishers
9781459825222 [Check Our Catalog]

Notably centering Indigenous families and characters of color in personal and communal activities--and encouraging readers to evaluate their actions toward others."--*School Library Journal*

*When We Are Kind* celebrates simple acts of everyday kindness and encourages children to explore how they feel when they initiate and receive acts of kindness in their ...

**MiÎ Maanda Ezhi-Gkendmaanh / This Is How I Know: Maanda Mzinigan Dbaadjigaade Gikinoonowin / A Book about the Seasons**
By *Luby, Brittany*
*Illustrator Pawis-Steckley, Joshua Mangeshig*
2021-03 - Groundwood Books
9781773063263 [Check Our Catalog]
In this lyrical story-poem, written in Anishinaabemowin and English, a child and grandmother explore their surroundings, taking pleasure in the familiar sights that each new season brings.

We accompany them through warm summer days full of wildflowers, bees and blueberries, then fall, when bears feast before hibernation and forest mushrooms are ripe for harvest. Winter mornings begin in...

**Swift Fox All Along**

By *Thomas, Rebecca Lea*  
Illustrator *McKibbin, Maya*  
2020-09 - Annick Press  
9781773214481 Check Our Catalog

What does it mean to be Mi'kmaq? And if Swift Fox can't find the answer, will she ever feel like part of her family?

When Swift Fox's father picks her up to go visit her aunties, uncles, and cousins, her belly is already full of butterflies. And when he tells her that today is the day that she'll learn how to be Mi'kmaq, the butterflies grow even bigger. ...

**We Dream Medicine Dreams**

By *Boivin, Lisa*  
2021-04 - Highwater Press  
9781553799870 Check Our Catalog

From Dene artist and bioethicist Lisa Boivin comes this healing story of hope, dreams, and the special bond between grandfather and granddaughter.

When a little girl dreams about a bear, her grandfather explains how we connect with the knowledge of our ancestors through dreams. Bear, Hawk, Caribou, and Wolf all have teachings to share to help us live a good life. But when Grampa ...

**Siha Tooskin Knows the Strength of His Hair**

By *Bearhead, Charlene*  
Author *Bearhead, Wilson*  
Illustrator *Mustooch, Chloe Bluebird*  
2020-05 - Highwater Press  
9781553798378 Check Our Catalog

Where can you find strength when someone disrespects you? And what does having strength really mean?

Paul Wahasaypa--Siha Tooskin--has learned from Ena (his mom) and Ade (his dad) to maintain a strong mind, heart, and spirit. Though starting at a new school can be hard, especially when the kids there have never experienced the values and culture of the Nakota people. Join Paul as Mitoshin ...
Borders
By King, Thomas
Illustrator Donovan, Natasha
2021-09 - Little, Brown Books for Young Readers
9780316593069 Check Our Catalog

A People Magazine Best Book Fall 2021

From celebrated Indigenous author Thomas King and award-winning Métis artist Natasha Donovan comes a powerful graphic novel about a family caught between nations.

_Borders_ is a masterfully told story of a boy and his mother whose road trip is thwarted at the border when they identify their citizenship as Blackfoot.  

The Great Bear: The Misewa Saga, Book Two
By Robertson, David A.
2021-09 - Puffin Books
9780735266131 Check Our Catalog

In this second book in the Narnia-inspired Indigenous middle-grade fantasy series, Eli and Morgan journey once more to Misewa, travelling back in time.

Back at home after their first adventure in the Barren Grounds, Eli and Morgan each struggle with personal issues: Eli is being bullied at school, and tries to hide it from Morgan, while Morgan has to make an important decision about

Ancestor Approved: Intertribal Stories for Kids
By Smith, Cynthia L.
2021-02 - Heartdrum
9780062869944 Check Our Catalog

Edited by award-winning and bestselling author Cynthia Leitich Smith, this collection of intersecting stories by both new and veteran Native writers bursts with hope, joy, resilience, the strength of community, and Native pride.

Native families from Nations across the continent gather at the Dance for Mother Earth Powwow in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

In a high school

Treaty Words: For as Long as the Rivers Flow
By Craft, Aimée
Illustrator Swinson, Luke
2021-03 - Annick Press
9781773214962 Check Our Catalog

The first treaty that was made was between the earth and the sky. It was an agreement to work together. We build all of our treaties on that original treaty.

On the banks of the river that have been Mishomis's home his whole life, he teaches his granddaughter to listen—to hear both the sounds and the silences, and so to learn her place in Creation. Most importantly, he
Healer of the Water Monster
By Young, Brian
2021-05 - Heartdrum
9780062990402 Check Our Catalog

Brian Young's powerful debut novel tells of a seemingly ordinary Navajo boy who must save the life of a Water Monster—and comes to realize he's a hero at heart.

When Nathan goes to visit his grandma, Nali, at her mobile summer home on the Navajo reservation, he knows he's in for a pretty uneventful summer, with no electricity or cell service. Still, he loves spending ...More

Sisters of the Neversea
By Smith, Cynthia L.
2021-06 - Heartdrum
9780062869975 Check Our Catalog

In this beautifully reimagined story by NSK Neustadt Laureate and New York Times bestselling author Cynthia Leitich Smith (Muscogee Creek), Native American Lily and English Wendy embark on a high-flying journey of magic, adventure, and courage to a fairy-tale island known as ...More

The Sea in Winter
By Day, Christine
2021-01 - Heartdrum
9780062872043 Check Our Catalog

In this evocative and heartwarming novel for readers who loved The Thing About Jellyfish, the author of I Can Make This Promise tells the story of a Native American girl struggling to find her joy again.

It's been a hard year for Maisie Cannon, ever since she hurt her leg and could not keep up with her ballet training and auditions.

Her blended ...More

Powwow: A Celebration Through Song and Dance
By Pheasant-Neganigwane, Karen
2020-04 - Orca Book Publishers
9781459812345 Check Our Catalog

★ "Clearly organized and educational--an incredibly useful tool for both school and public libraries." --School Library Journal, starred review

Powwow is a celebration of Indigenous song and dance. Journey through the history of powwow culture in North America, from its origins to the thriving powwow culture of today. As a lifelong competitive ...More
Putuguq and Kublu are a sister and brother who cannot get along. They love to pull pranks and one-up each other every chance they get. When one of Putuguq's pranks does not go as planned, the feuding siblings find themselves on the land with their grandfather, learning a bit about Inuit history, between throwing snowballs, that is.

Whale Child
By Egawa, Keith
Author Egawa, Chenoa
Supplement by Hernandez, Jessica
2020-10 - North Atlantic Books
9781623174866 Check Our Catalog

An inspiring middle-grade chapter book that introduces young readers to the environmental challenges facing the planet through the eyes of Coast Salish characters and authors.

"We were wealthy from the water," Mitch Smallsalmon says, and like all the tribal elders, he speaks to our understanding of the natural world and the consequences of change. In this book the wisdom of the elders is passed on to the young as the story of the Jocko River, the home of the bull trout, unfolds for a group of schoolchildren on a field trip.

Rez Dog
By Bruchac, Joseph
2021-06 - Dial Books
9780593326213 Check Our Catalog

****Four starred reviews!****

From the U.S.'s foremost Indigenous children's author comes a middle grade verse novel set during the COVID-19 pandemic, about a Wabanaki girl's quarantine on her grandparents' reservation and the local dog that becomes her best friend.
Malian loves spending time with her grandparents at their home on a Wabanaki reservation. She's there for a visit when, ...More

**Jo Jo Makoons: The Used-To-Be Best Friend**
By *Quigley, Dawn*
Illustrator *Audibert, Tara*
2021-05 - Heartdrum
9780063015371 [Check Our Catalog](#)

Hello/Boozhoo--meet Jo Jo Makoons! Full of pride, joy, and plenty of humor, this first book in an all-new chapter book series by Dawn Quigley celebrates a spunky young Ojibwe girl who loves who she is.

Jo Jo Makoons Azure is a spirited seven-year-old who moves through the world a little differently than anyone else on her Ojibwe reservation. It always seems like her mom, ...More

**The Wolf Mother, Volume 5**
By *Huson, Brett D.*
Illustrator *Donovan, Natasha*
2021-09 - Highwater Press
9781553799788 [Check Our Catalog](#)

Follow along as award-winning author Hetxw’ms Gyetxw (Brett D. Huson) introduces young readers to a pack of grey wolves. New pups have just begun to open their eyes, one of which is a striking black female. Every day, her ears grow larger, her eyesight gets sharper, and her legs stretch farther. As she learns to hunt, play, and run with her pack, instinct pulls her to explore beyond her home ...More

**The Case of the Burgled Bundle**
By *Hutchinson, Michael*
2021-04 - Second Story Press
9781772601664 [Check Our Catalog](#)

The National Assembly of Cree Peoples has gathered together in the Windy Lake First Nation, home to the Mighty Muskrats--cousins Chickadee, Atim, Otter, and Sam. But when the treaty bundle, the center of a four-day-long ceremony, is taken, the four mystery-solving cousins set out to catch those responsible and help protect Windy Lake’s reputation!

What's worse, prime suspect Pearl takes ...More