

Native American Reading Unit

Teacher Guide: 16 days of read-alouds by Native authors, vocabulary, and activities

Grade levels	Grades 3–6
Time	16 reading-block lessons, one region at a time. Teach alongside the research project or on its own.
Each day	A map discussion, vocabulary words, a read-aloud, discussion questions, and an activity
Downloads	Vocabulary for the Native American Unit · Traditional Stories · Story Response sheet

About the Books

Every book in this unit was written by an author from the nation in the story, or from a closely related nation. Older books about Native peoples were often written by outsiders and can contain mistakes or stories that were not meant to be shared. Before adding a book, check it at *American Indians in Children's Literature* (americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com).



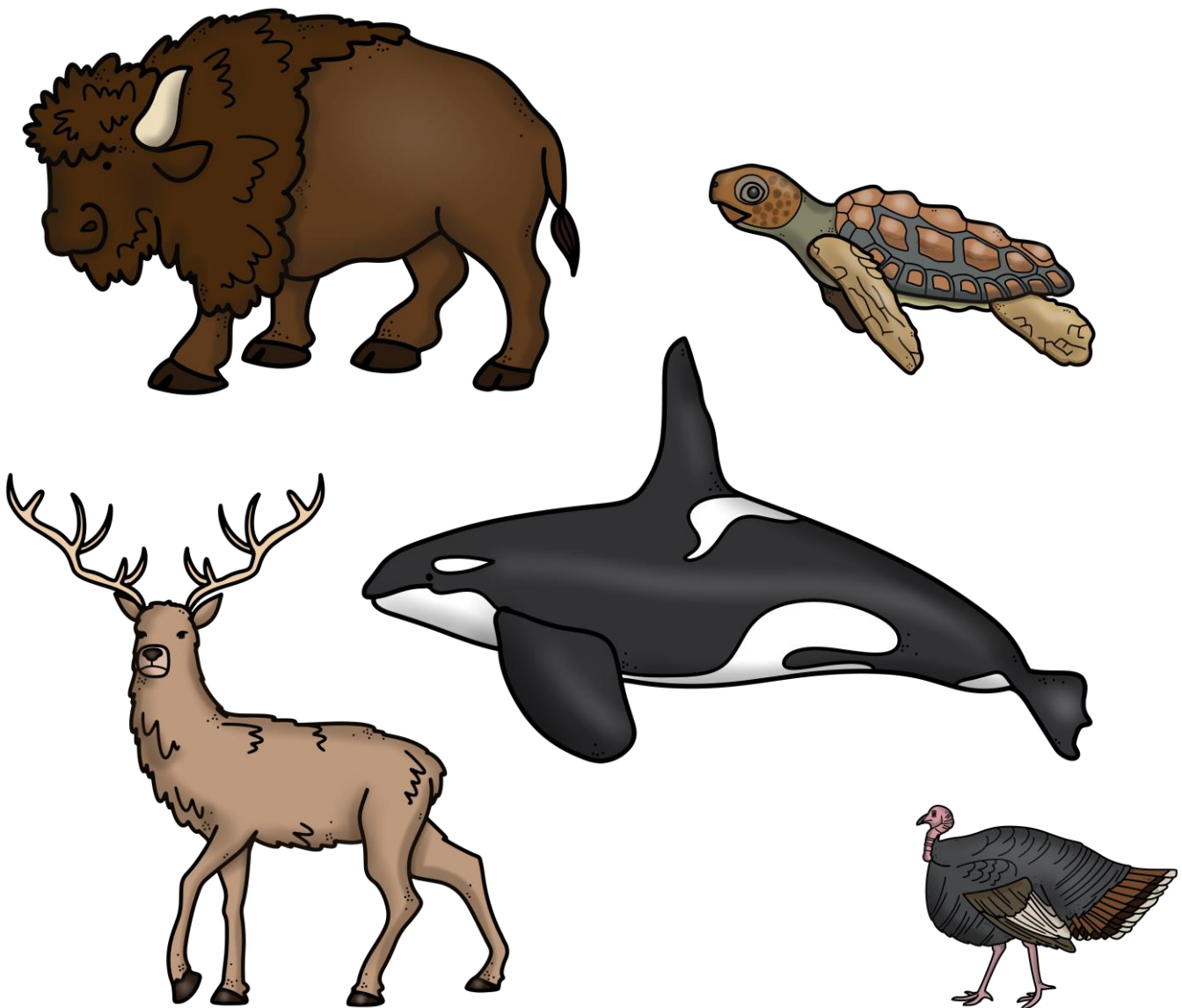
All of these are picture books, and most can be read aloud in 10 to 15 minutes. Check your school or public library first; most are also easy to order from booksellers.

Book	Author (nation)	Region
We Are Still Here!	Traci Sorell (Cherokee Nation)	All regions, today
The Origin of Day and Night	Paula Ikuutaq Rumbolt (Inuit)	Arctic
The Littlest Sled Dog	Michael Kusugak (Inuk)	Arctic
Berry Song	Michaela Goade (Tlingit and Haida)	Northwest Coast
Dance Fast	AR Cribbins (Pomo)	California
Buffalo Bird Girl: A Hidatsa Story	S.D. Nelson (Standing Rock Lakota)	Plains
Grandma's Tipi	S.D. Nelson (Standing Rock Lakota)	Plains
Gift Horse: A Lakota Story	S.D. Nelson (Standing Rock Lakota)	Plains
Coyote and the Sky	Emmett "Shkeme" Garcia (Santa Ana and Jemez Pueblo)	Southwest
First Laugh: Welcome, Baby!	Rose Ann Tahe (Navajo) and Nancy Bo Flood	Southwest
We Weave	Daniel W. Vandever (Navajo)	Southwest
Fry Bread	Kevin Noble Maillard (Seminole Nation, Oklahoma)	Eastern Woodlands
Clack, Clack! Smack!	Traci Sorell (Cherokee Nation)	Eastern Woodlands
We Are Water Protectors	Carole Lindstrom (Turtle Mountain Ojibwe)	Eastern Woodlands
Giving Thanks	Chief Jake Swamp (Mohawk)	Eastern Woodlands
Keepunumuk	Danielle Greendeer (Mashpee Wampanoag) and others	Eastern Woodlands

Optional extras: *Finding My Dance* (Ria Thundercloud, Sandia Pueblo), *We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga* (Traci Sorell), *Bowwow Powwow* (Brenda J. Child, Red Lake Ojibwe), *Sitting Bull* (S.D. Nelson), and *Remember* (Joy Harjo, Muscogee).

Before You Begin

- **Teach the Traditional Stories handout on Day 2.** Native traditional stories are different from European fairy tales. Some are sacred, and some are told only in certain seasons. Call them “traditional stories” rather than “myths” or “legends.”
- **Use the Story Response sheet** with any book in the unit. It covers story elements, a then-and-now connection, and the author’s nation.
- **Add to the “Still Here” chart every day** so students see each nation as it is today, not only long ago.
- **Activities** come from the approved craft list in the Research Project Teacher Guide. Skip dreamcatchers, kachina dolls, masks, totem poles, drums, and headdresses.



Daily Plans

Day 1	Introduction: Native Nations Today
Read	<i>We Are Still Here! Native American Truths Everyone Should Know</i> by Traci Sorell (Cherokee Nation). Read two or three sections today and return to it during the unit.
Vocabulary	nation, sovereignty, reservation
Talk	• Show the region map. How many Native nations do you think there are in the United States today? (More than 570 are federally recognized.) • What did you think you knew about Native Americans before today? What surprised you?
Do	Start a class "Still Here" chart. Each day, add one fact about the nation you read about as it is today.

Day 2	Arctic: Inuit
Read	<i>The Origin of Day and Night</i> by Paula Ikuutaq Rumbolt (Inuit). A traditional Inuit story about a hare and a fox.
Vocabulary	Inuit, traditional story
Talk	• Find the Arctic on the map. What is the climate like? What animals live there? • Introduce the Traditional Stories handout. Which features does this story have?
Do	Complete the Story Response sheet for <i>The Origin of Day and Night</i> .

Day 3	Arctic: Inuit
Read	<i>The Littlest Sled Dog</i> by Michael Kusugak (Inuk)
Vocabulary	igloo, kayak, ulu
Talk	• How did Inuit families travel and hunt long ago? How do they travel today? • Why did some Inuit groups build igloos only in winter?
Do	Soap carving of an Arctic animal, or a sugar-cube igloo.

Day 4	Northwest Coast: Tlingit and Haida
Read	<i>Berry Song</i> by Michaela Goade (Tlingit and Haida)
Vocabulary	plank house, cedar, crest
Talk	- Find the Northwest Coast on the map. Why did nations here have plenty of food? - How does the girl in the story learn from her grandmother? What does she give back to the land?
Do	Design an original crest with Northwest Coast shapes (ovoids and U-shapes) that shows something about the student's own family. Explain that real crests belong to families and are not copied.

Day 5	California: Pomo
Read	<i>Dance Fast</i> by AR Cribbins (Pomo)
Vocabulary	regalia, basketry, acorn
Talk	- Find California on the map. What foods grew there? - Bizzy's grandmother says it is the Pomo way to leave one little flaw in everything you make. What do you think that teaches?
Do	Weave a paper basket or mat. Talk about Pomo basket weavers, then and now.

Day 6	Plains: Hidatsa
Read	<i>Buffalo Bird Girl: A Hidatsa Story</i> by S.D. Nelson (Standing Rock Lakota)
Vocabulary	earth lodge, bison
Talk	- Find the Plains on the map. Did all Plains nations live in tipis and hunt bison? (No. The Hidatsa were farmers who lived in earth lodges.) - What jobs did Buffalo Bird Girl do through the seasons?
Do	Make a seasons chart of Buffalo Bird Girl's year.

Day 7	Plains: Lakota
Read	<i>Grandma's Tipi: A Present-Day Lakota Story</i> by S.D. Nelson (Standing Rock Lakota)
Vocabulary	tipi, parfleche, travois
Talk	• How does the family in this story keep Lakota traditions today? • Why was a tipi a good home for nations that moved with the bison?
Do	Make a parfleche from a paper bag. Glue colored toothpicks on the flap to look like a quill pattern.

Day 8	Plains: Lakota
Read	<i>Gift Horse: A Lakota Story</i> by S.D. Nelson (Standing Rock Lakota)
Vocabulary	buckskin, quillwork
Talk	• How did horses change life on the Plains? • Compare and contrast <i>Gift Horse</i> with <i>Buffalo Bird Girl</i>.
Do	Finish the parfleche. Compare-and-contrast chart for the two books.

Day 9	Southwest: Pueblo
Read	<i>Coyote and the Sky: How the Sun, Moon, and Stars Began</i> by Emmett "Shkeme" Garcia (Santa Ana and Jemez Pueblo). Optional: <i>Finding My Dance</i> by Ria Thundercloud (Sandia Pueblo).
Vocabulary	pueblo, adobe, mesa
Talk	• Find the Southwest on the map. How do adobe homes fit a desert climate? • Which features of a traditional story are in <i>Coyote and the Sky</i>?
Do	Make a coil pot from clay or play dough. Story Response sheet.

Day 10	Southwest: Navajo (Diné)
Read	<i>First Laugh: Welcome, Baby!</i> by Rose Ann Tahe (Navajo) and Nancy Bo Flood
Vocabulary	Diné, hogan
Talk	• Why do you think the whole family celebrates a baby's first laugh? • What clues in the words and pictures show that this is a Navajo family today?
Do	Write about a tradition or celebration in your own family.

Day 11	Southwest: Navajo (Diné)
Read	<i>We Weave</i> by Daniel W. Vandever (Navajo)
Vocabulary	loom
Talk	• How do the boy and his grandmother use both old and new skills? • Why is weaving important to Navajo families?
Do	Weave on a cardboard loom.

Day 12	Eastern Woodlands: Seminole
Read	<i>Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story</i> by Kevin Noble Maillard (Seminole Nation, Oklahoma)
Vocabulary	chickee, patchwork
Talk	• Find Florida and Oklahoma on the map. Why do Seminole people live in both places today? (Many were forced west to Oklahoma in the 1830s and 1840s; others stayed in Florida.) • Share the history of frybread from the author's note.
Do	Design a Seminole-style patchwork strip with colored paper.

Day 13	Eastern Woodlands: Cherokee
Read	<i>Clack, Clack! Smack!: A Cherokee Stickball Story</i> by Traci Sorell (Cherokee Nation). Optional: <i>We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga</i> .
Vocabulary	stickball, syllabary
Talk	• How is stickball like games you play? How is it different? • Sequoyah created the Cherokee syllabary. Why does it matter that the Cherokee language can be written?
Do	Learn a playground game, or make a Cherokee seasons chart from <i>We Are Grateful</i> .

Day 14	Eastern Woodlands: Ojibwe (Great Lakes)
Read	<i>We Are Water Protectors</i> by Carole Lindstrom (Turtle Mountain Ojibwe). Optional: <i>Bowwow Powwow</i> by Brenda J. Child (Red Lake Ojibwe).
Vocabulary	wigwam, birchbark, wild rice
Talk	• Find the Great Lakes on the map. Why is water so important to the Ojibwe? • What is the author's message? What can you do to protect water?
Do	Make a birchbark-style container from brown paper, or a "protect our water" poster.

Day 15	Eastern Woodlands: Haudenosaunee
Read	<i>Giving Thanks: A Native American Good Morning Message</i> by Chief Jake Swamp (Mohawk)
Vocabulary	Haudenosaunee, longhouse, Three Sisters
Talk	• The Thanksgiving Address is spoken at the start of gatherings. What does it give thanks for? • How do the Three Sisters help each other grow?
Do	Write a class "good morning message" thanking parts of the natural world.

Day 16	Eastern Woodlands: Wampanoag
Read	<i>Keepunumuk: Weeâchumun's Thanksgiving Story</i> by Danielle Greendeer (Mashpee Wampanoag), Anthony Perry (Chickasaw), and Alexis Buntin (Yup'ik and Unangan)
Vocabulary	wetu, sachem, wampum
Talk	• Who were the Wampanoag, and who are they today? • How is this telling of the Thanksgiving story different from others you have heard?
Do	Read the <i>Story of Thanksgiving</i> flip book and compare it with <i>Keepunumuk</i> .

Standards

Sample alignment with the Common Core State Standards (grade 4 shown). Adjust for your grade level.

- **RL.4.2** Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.
- **RL.4.3** Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story, drawing on specific details.
- **RL.4.9** Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics in stories from different cultures.
- **L.4.4** Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown words.
- **SL.4.1** Engage effectively in collaborative discussions.