

Criteria for Selecting Authentic American Indian Books and Materials

1. Written by an American Indian author

- a. Check the author biography in the book (example: “author Patty Loew, enrolled member of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe”
- b. Google the author or use one of the links below to look up the author or book title.

2. Book is reviewed positively by a First Nations person who is an oral traditional scholar or an academic scholar

- a. Examples: Debbie Reese (Nambe Pueblo), Doris Seale (Santee Dakota), Adrienne J. Keene (Cherokee), etc.
- b. Beverly Slapin, accredited, respected children’s author/editor, in First Nation’s studies

3. Books published by an American Indian owned/operated publishing company

Debbie Reese 10 Questions to Consider

Question	Why ask the Question
1. Is the book tribally specific?	Tribally specific books add information and push back on stereotypical “Indian images and ideas.
2. Is the author or illustrator Native?	Introducing books by Native writers and illustrators shows readers ‘what is possible’ and increases knowledge of other tribes.
3. What is the time period for the book?	A library should have a balance of historical and contemporary books.
4. Who are the main characters?	Characters should reflect our families, with babies, children, teens, parents, grandparents, and elders.
5. Where is the story set?	A library should have a range of settings, from reservation to urban to rural.
6. Does the story include an author background note?	Notes tell us a lot (good and bad) about the author’s research and permissions for telling the story.
7. What are the characters like? What are their personal names?	Characters should be realistic, not stereotypical.
8. Does the author use biased, incorrect, or stereotypical words and phrases?	Examples: massacre/battle; soldier/warrior; woman/squaw; baby/papoose
9. Is a character shown playing Indian?	Like mascots, this activity is generally stereotypical in nature.
10. Where are traditional stories shelved?	All peoples/cultures shorties should be treated respectfully, and shelved together, perhaps as World Religions

From Debbie Reese’s “The Role of Children’s Books in Native Nation Building” 2012

If a book does not meet one of the criteria, ask someone for help. Use collection development resources provided below or the MUSTY weeding criteria below to help inform your decision:

MUSTY

- **Misleading** – Does the material contain stereotypes or obsolete information?
- **Ugly** - Does the physical condition negatively affect its circulation with patrons?
 - If this is the case, do you replace or weed?
- **Superseded** - Are there newer, up-to-date copies available?
- **Trivial** - Does the material contain inaccurate information? Does the material fit your patrons interests'?
- **Your collection** - Is the item relevant to your collection? Do you have an historical or contemporary collection, or maybe both?

Resources for Collection Development about American Indians

***A Broken Flute* edited by Doris Seale and Beverly Slapin**

Contains reviews, evaluation tools, essays, and topic lists (2005)

Debbie Reese's blog American Indians in Children's Literature

<https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com>

Contains "Best Books" lists and reviews

Reading While White blog

<http://readingwhilewhite.blogspot.com/>

White librarians who are writing as allies to people of color and reviewing books

Oyate

<http://oyate.org/>

A publisher and reviewer of books (including *A Broken Flute*), with resources for selection

Birchbark Books

<http://birchbarkbooks.com/>

Minneapolis bookstore owned by Louise Erdrich with a focus on authentic Native materials

American Indian Youth Literature Award

<http://ailanet.org/activities/american-indian-youth-literature-award/>

An award presented by the American Indian Library Association every two years