

Native American Reads

[*Braiding Sweetgrass*](#) by Robin Wall Kimmerer

As a botanist, the author is 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 this work of nonfiction, Kimmerer brings these two lenses of knowledge together in an amazing journey.

[*Ceremony*](#) by Leslie Marmon Silko

On a New Mexico reservation, one Navajo family—including Tayo, a World War II veteran deeply scarred by his experiences as a Japanese POW and by the rejection of his own people--struggles to survive in a world no longer theirs in the years just before and after World War II.

[*Cherokee America*](#) by Margaret Verble.

Check, in many ways the central character, has a fascinating personal history: her father is both a slave owner and a well-known soldier; her husband is an abolitionist. Check determines to solve, and avenge, a series of crimes all while history marches forward, threatening to tear her nation — and her family, apart. Refreshingly honest about slave ownership in Cherokee territory, this novel takes us through the Civil War and shows us the consequences that this part of American history has had on a people and their right to self-determination.

[*Crazy Brave: a memoir*](#) by Joy Harjo

A memoir from the Native American poet describes her youth with an abusive stepfather, becoming a single teen mom, and how she struggled to finally find inner peace and her creative voice.

[*Crooked Hallelujah*](#) by Kelli Jo Ford

Centering on teenage Justine, but covering three generations of Cherokee women, this novel-in-stories follows Justine's life in Oklahoma, as she deals with being abandoned by her father and the toughness, and tenderness, of her mother and grandmother. And finally, an act of violence that changes everything.

[*Heart Berries: a memoir*](#) by Terese Marie Mailhot

This is a powerful, poetic memoir of a woman's coming of age on the Seabird Island Indian Reservation in the Pacific Northwest. Having survived a profoundly dysfunctional upbringing only to find herself hospitalized and facing a dual diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder and bipolar II disorder; Terese Marie Mailhot is given a notebook and begins to write her way out of trauma. The triumphant result is *Heart Berries*, a memorial for Mailhot's mother, a social worker and activist who had a thing for prisoners; a story of reconciliation with her father—an abusive drunk and a brilliant artist—who was murdered under mysterious circumstances; and an elegy on how difficult it is to love someone while dragging the long shadows of shame.

[*House Made of Dawn*](#) by N. Scott Momaday

House Made of Dawn, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1969, tells the story of a young American Indian named Abel, home from a foreign war and caught between two worlds: one his father's, wedding him to the rhythm of the seasons and the harsh beauty of the land; the other of industrial America, a goading him into a compulsive cycle of dissipation and disgust.

[*The Road Back to Sweetgrass*](#) by Linda LeGarde Grover

Grover is a quietly revolutionary (and prolific) Anishinaabe writer. She beautifully and uncompromisingly weaves in Native language, and she also writes about darker aspects of Native history, such as the much-reviled boarding schools of the 19th and 20th century without cutting corners when it comes to story. This book takes us into the world of three different women, Dale Ann, Theresa, and Margie — all from the Mozhay Point Reservation, all of whom leave home for college or work, but are always drawn back.

[*The Round House*](#) by Louise Erdrich

When his mother, a tribal enrollment specialist living on a reservation in North Dakota, slips into an abyss of depression after being brutally attacked, fourteen-year-old Joe Coutz sets out with his three friends to find the person that destroyed his family.

[*There There*](#) by Orange, Tommy

With an introduction and interlude that speak to Native American history in this country in beautiful lyric essay form and a culminating shootout at a powwow in Oakland, it's clear why Orange's novel delivered such a punch in the literary landscape. The novel features twelve Native characters and narrative voices. Some of them have intertwined histories that meet in the past, with the Native American occupation of Alcatraz, and some of them only have Oakland, and a tragic outcome, in common.

[*Where the Dead Sit Talking*](#) by Brandon Hobson

Shortlisted for the 2018 National Book Awards, this searing novel about a Cherokee teenager caught in the social work system after his mother ends up in prison, will linger in your mind. Sequoyah is a troubled, quiet kid who ends up in the home of a well-meaning but largely naive white couple. When he meets Rosemary — also Native (Ponca), he can't figure out whether he loves her or wants to be her, culminating in the kind of climax that leaves you breathless.

Sources:

14 Contemporary Books by Native American Authors To Get Excited About

<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/erikawurth/native-american-novels-tommy-orange-there-there>

20 Native American Authors You Need To Read

<https://oedb.org/ilibrarian/20-native-american-authors-you-need-to-read/>

Novelist Plus

<https://www.scls.lib.wi.us/cgi-bin/libauth.cgi?connectto=NOVPLUS>