

Indigenous Strength, Joy, and Resistance

Jaye Harden & Zoe Reeves

Guiding questions:

- How do indigenous communities celebrate their cultures, histories, and achievements?
- How did and do indigenous people resist oppression?
- How can educators and students use texts to disrupt harmful stereotypes, representations, and narratives about indigenous people?

This text set was made in response to two patterns that we observed in representations of indigenous people in children's literature at our own school site, as well as across children's literature. Depictions of native people for elementary students often include folktales and stories that homogenize indigenous cultures, and relegate native people firmly to the past. Additionally, too many texts show stories of sadness, oppression, loss, and death, and depict native people as passive victims without agency.

This text set aims to heal some of the wounds inflicted by teachers and libraries that start with this deficit perspective.

Many indigenous nations are represented throughout our texts. We did this with intention, care, and caution. We present this text set with the acknowledgment that each native nation is unique, and every Indigenous person has their own story to tell. It is a common and dangerous mistake when teachers treat all native people and cultures as interchangeable.

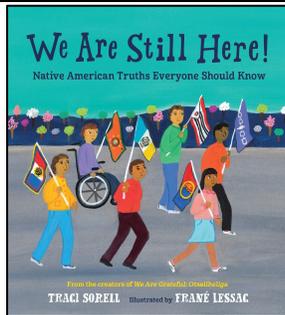
It is the duty of each and every educator to intentionally confront and prevent this practice.

These texts do not provide the full story, nor do they represent one perspective or culture. Rather, they are a point of entry for younger students in order to see positive representations of Indigenous peoples across the continent.

Indigenous Strength, Joy, and Resistance - Jaye Harden & Zoe Reeves

Summary: This text set provides positive representations of Indigenous people, with a particular focus on people native to the land now known as Tucson, Arizona. Themes of strength, joy, and resistance are present throughout the multimedia texts.

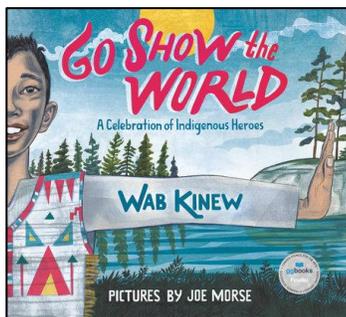
Picture Books



We Are Still Here!: Native American Truths Everyone Should Know

Traci Sorell (Cherokee), Illustrated by Frane Lessac

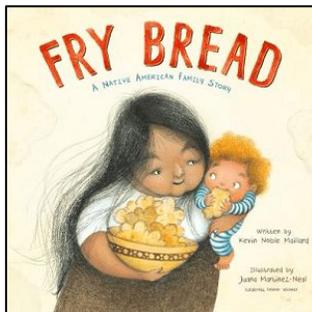
Twelve Native American kids present historical and contemporary laws, policies, struggles, and victories in Native life, each with a powerful refrain: We are still here!



Go Show The World: A Celebration of Indigenous Heroes

Wab Kinew (Midewin), Illustrated by Joe Morse

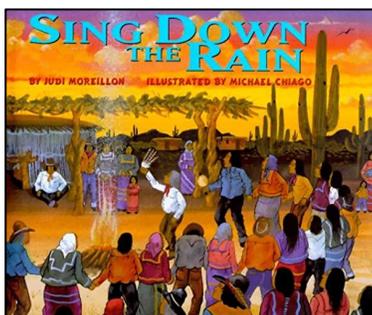
Celebrating the stories of Indigenous people throughout time. *Go Show the World* showcases a diverse group of Indigenous people in the US and Canada, both well known and not widely recognized. Individually, their stories are inspiring; collectively, they empower the reader with this message: "We are people who matter, yes, it's true; now let's show the world what people who matter can do."



Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story

Kevin Noble Maillard (Seminole), Illustrated by Juana Martinez-Neal

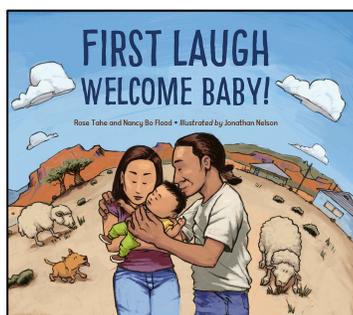
Told in verse, *Fry Bread* celebrates modern Native American families, connected by food and culture. Fry bread is food...time...nation...us.



Sing Down the Rain

Judi Moreillon, Illustrated by Michael Chiago (Tohono O'odham)

Through poetry, *Sing Down the Rain* depicts a Tohono O'odham community as they prepare for the rains necessary to provide fruit for the Saguaro Wine Ceremony, their most important harvest celebration.

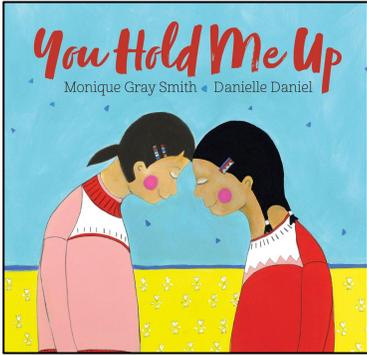


First Laugh - Welcome Baby!

Rose Ann Tahe (Diné) and Nancy Bo Flood, Illustrated by Jonathan Nelson (Navajo)

The First Laugh Ceremony is a celebration held to welcome a new member of the community. As everyone - from Baby's *nima* (mom) to *nadi* (big sister) to *cheii* (grandfather) - tries to elicit the joyous sound from Baby, the story celebrates Navajo life and culture.

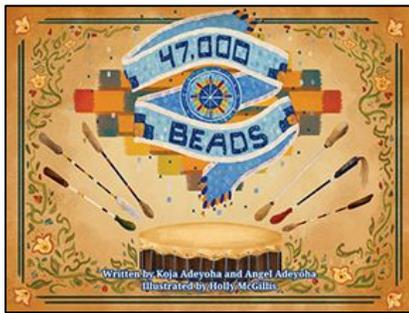
Picture Books cont.



You Hold Me Up

Monique Gray Smith (Cree & Lakota), Illustrated by Danielle Daniel (Métis)

An exploration of community interconnectedness. With native children intentionally featured throughout the pages, the story shows the many ways we can hold each other up in our homes and communities. Author's note explains how *You Hold Me Up* was written in part to heal generational trauma of indigenous people at the hands of the government and, specifically, boarding schools.



47,000 Beads

Koja (Oglala Lakota) and Angel Adeyoha, Illustrated by Holly McGillis

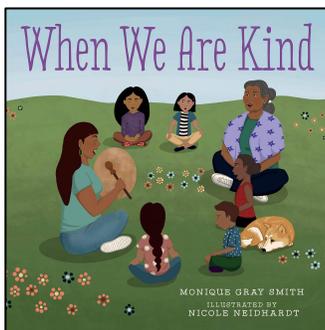
When Peyton tells her auntie that she wants to participate in the upcoming pow wow because she does not feel comfortable wearing dresses anymore, Auntie Eyota enlists the help of the community to help teach Peyton about traditional Two-Spirit identities and traditions.



Lessons from Hu'ul Ke:li

José "Husi" Cázares (Tohono O'odham)

A young Tohono O'odham boy's grandfather teaches him about their culture through daily activities they do on the Indian Reservation. A survey of life for many Tohono O'odham people that depicts how a young male member of the tribe learns the various responsibilities to benefit the family. The book includes O'odham language along with the definitions and pronunciations.

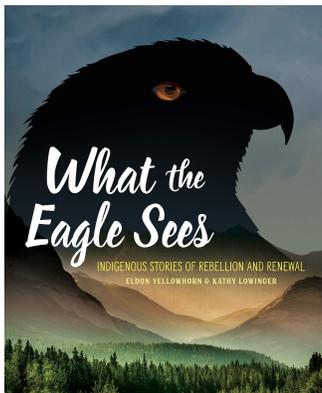


When We Are Kind / Nihá'ádaahwiinít'iigo

Monique Gray Smith (Cree & Lakota), Illustrated by Nicole Neidhardt (Diné)

A bilingual book in English and Diné that centers indigenous families and communities, *When We Are Kind* reminds children to be kind to themselves, to others, to their community, and to the Earth.

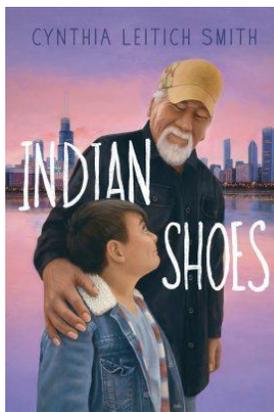
Chapter Books



What the Eagle Sees: Indigenous Stories of Rebellion and Renewal

Eldon Yellowhorn (Piikani) and Kathy Lowinger

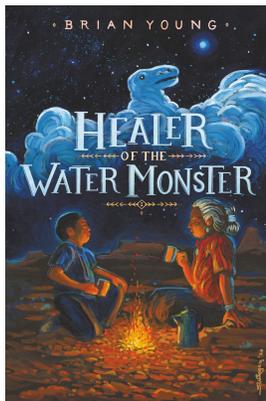
Detailing the stories of what Indigenous people did when invaders arrived on their homelands, *What the Eagle Sees* shares accounts of the people, places, and events that have mattered in Indigenous history from an Indigenous viewpoint. Each story and piece of history is centered on the strength, resistance, and agency of indigenous nations and their people.



Indian Shoes

Cynthia Leitich Smith (Muscogee)

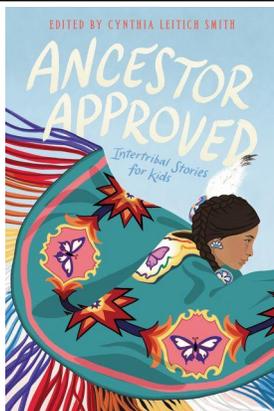
Ray Halfmoon prefers high tops, but he gladly trades them for a nice pair of moccasins for his grampa. After all, it's Grampa Halfmoon who's always there to help Ray get in and out of scrapes. *Indian Shoes* is about the love and adventures shared by a Cherokee-Seminole boy and his Grampa, told with love, joy, and humor throughout.



Healer of the Water Monster

Brian Young (Navajo)

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 time with Nali and with his uncle Jet, though it's clear when Jet arrives that he brings his problems with him. This novel tells the story 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.



Ancestor Approved: Intertribal Stories for Kids

Cynthia Leitich Smith (Muscogee)

An anthology that centers indigenous storytellers as they explore personal struggles, family joy, belief systems, cultures, and traditions, through the eyes of the young protagonists. Though themes may be serious, joy, community, resilience, and the importance of storytelling remain central to *Ancestor Approved*.

Painted Portraits



"In Coyotes Accordance" and "Lady Justice"

Dwayne Manuel (Akimel O'odham)

These paintings were created for the new Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community Justice Center. They combine traditional O'odham and western imagery around the themes of justice, law, and punishment.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/B3ZjkB5JabW/>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/B0BaY-Gp1f3/>

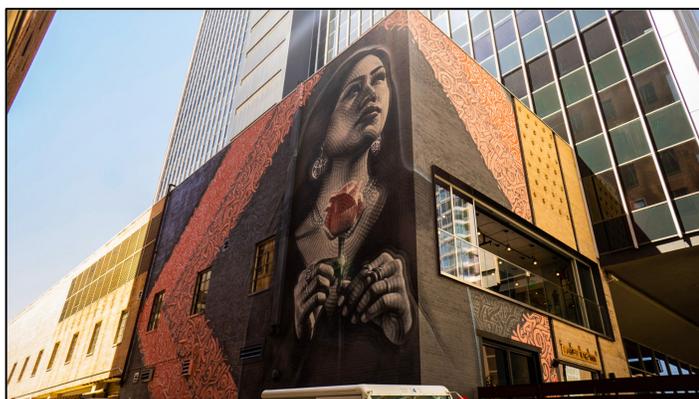


"Tasha", "Berdina", and "Dawn"

Dwayne Manuel (Akimel O'odham)

Manuel's paintings are "representations of the relationship between traditional Native American culture and modern American society/culture." These pieces are part of his woven praxis series "in which he immortalizes the weavers that are keeping O'odham basket-weaving traditions alive."

<https://aztlancollective.com/dwayne-manuel/>



Thomas "Breeze" Marcus (Akimel O'Odham & Tohono O'Odham) and Miles "El Mac" MacGregor

This mural in downtown Phoenix, AZ features beautiful and joyful portrait of a real-life teenage girl from Phoenix's Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community. Students can analyze the symbolism and representations of O'odham culture in a mural set directly in Akimel O'odham land.

<https://dtpbx.org/2021/04/02/a-monumental-new-mural-by-el-mac-and-breeze-honors-native-youth-heritage/>

Painted Portraits cont.



From the Facebook page of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe Department Of Language & Culture

This contemporary portrait of a young Yaqui deer dancer is lush with symbolism. Students can consider the themes evident in this portrait, as well as the connection to traditional depictions of deer dancers.

<https://www.facebook.com/YaquiTribeofArizona/photos/a.1401758610041613/2486720021545461/>

Portraits



“Auto Immune Response No. 1”

Will Wilson (Navajo)

Wilson’s work explores the disconnect from the land that many indigenous people and nations have suffered after centuries of colonization, and looks to the ways that people may reunite with what they have lost. Wilson asks “How will [the subject] respond, survive, reconnect to the earth?”

<https://heard.org/physicaldigital/will-wilson-auto-immune-response-no-1/>



Traditional O’odham basket dancers.

Traditional O’odham basket dancers and the Akimel O’odham/Pee-Posh Youth Council joined Gov. Stephen Roe Lewis and Lt. Gov. Monica Antone in celebrating the Nation’s annual rodeo and fair. In a sharing of cultures and relations between the two O’odham sister tribes, representatives from the Gila River Indian Community came out for the 79th Annual Tohono O’odham Nation Fair & Rodeo Parade.

<http://www.gricnews.org/index.php/grin-articles/2017-articles/february-3-2017-articles/79th-annual-tohono-oodham-nation-rodeo-fair>



Tohono O’odham Nation activist Amy Juan watches the sunset over Kitt Peak in southern Arizona, a sacred mountain known to the O’odham as Ioligam Doag.

Photo by Raechel Running.

<https://inthesetimes.com/article/us-mexico-border-surveillance-tohono-oodham-nation-border-patrol>

Portraits cont.



Stella Tucker.

Photo by Steven Meckler

A Tohono O’odham elder and teacher, Tucker has been called “the public face of the annual saguaro fruit harvest in southern Arizona.” The saguaro harvest is a sacred, community or family-based activity for the Tohono O’odham. Here, Tucker holds a *kuipad* made of saguaro ribs, an important tool in harvesting saguaro fruit.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6lpOCjmJ4k&ab_channel=ArizonaPublicMedia



Modern day Yoeme (Yaqui) deer dancer David Hinojos.

The deer dance is sacred to the Yaqui, and embodies a connection to land and spirit. In Yaqui mythology, the deer represents good and the dancers tell the story of the deer, their little brother, and the flower world. In the flower world, all animals are our friends. It is believed that during a fiesta, the deer comes to the Yaqui people and they sacrifice him to the Gods, in return they perform a dance and a ritual in his honor and thank him for giving himself to their well being.

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/yoeme.htm>



Deborah Parker, vice chairwoman of the Tulalip Tribes gestures before President Barack Obama before he signed the Violence Against Women Act, Thursday, March 7, 2013.

Parker was there on behalf of 3 tribes, including the Pascua Yaqui, who have been given special prosecution authority under the Violence Against Women Act.

<https://www.knkn.org/post/pilot-program-give-tulali-p-tribes-legal-jurisdiction-over-non-indians>

Portraits cont.



Photo by Kitra Cahana/MAPS for The Intercept

Victor Garcia (Tohono O'odham) poses for a portrait at Quitobaquito Springs. The springs are a sacred site for the Hia C-ed O'odham, including as a vital water source and ancestral burial grounds. The U.S. government is currently pumping spring water to mix concrete for border wall construction, threatening the spring's continued existence.

<https://theintercept.com/2019/11/24/arizona-border-wall-native-activists/>



Photo by Kitra Cahana/MAPS for The Intercept

Nellie Jo David, Victor Garcia, and Amber Ortega ride in the back of a pick-up truck to Quitobaquito Springs after a day of action at the U.S.-Mexico border wall. The springs are a sacred site for the Hia C-ed O'odham, including as a vital water source and ancestral burial grounds. The U.S. government is currently pumping spring water to mix concrete for border wall construction, threatening the spring's continued existence.

<https://theintercept.com/2019/11/24/arizona-border-wall-native-activists/>

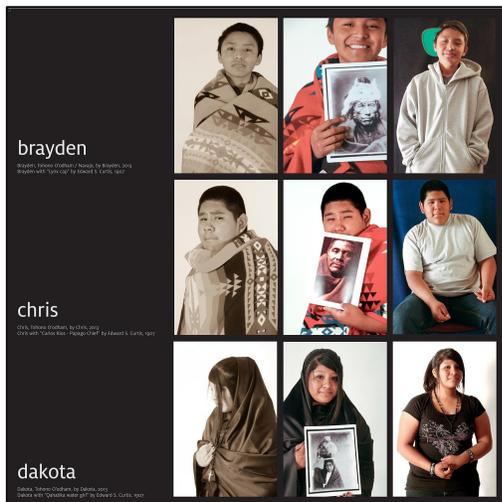
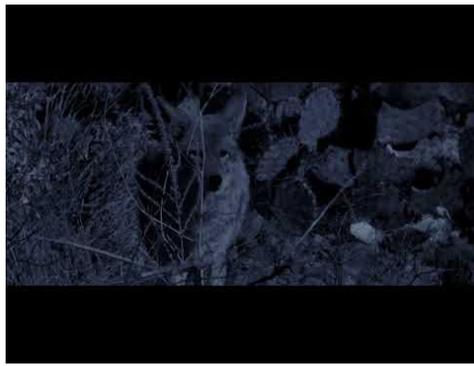


Photo ID: Portraits of Native Youth

In this portrait series, Native high school students created their own portraits in response to Edward Curtis' early 20th century photography of Native people. The series explores identity, agency, and photography as a communication tool. All artists and subjects are Native, including Tohono O'odham, Yaqui, Navajo, and Hopi youth.

<https://statemuseum.arizona.edu/online-exhibit/photo-id-portraits-native-youth>

Poetry



“O’odham Dance: Moving Rural Verse”

Poem by Ofelia Zepeda (Tohono O’odham), film by Jonathan VanBallenberghe

A lyrical film adaptation of Ofelia Zepeda’s poem portraying a Tohono O’odham ritual in which people join with not only the animals of the desert, but all the important elements necessary for rain, including winds, clouds, and the heat off the desert.

Carrying Our Words

Ofelia Zepeda

We travel carrying our words.
We arrive at the ocean.
With our words we are able to speak
of the sounds of thunderous waves.
We speak of how majestic it is,
of the ocean power that gifts us songs.
We sing of our respect
and call it our relative.

Translated into English from O’odham by the poet.

“Carrying Our Words”

Ofelia Zepeda (Tohono O’odham)

Translated into English from O’odham by the poet.

<https://poets.org/poem/carrying-our-words>



“Remember”

Joy Harjo (Muscogee)

United States Poet Laureate, Joy Harjo reads her poem for PBSkids. Throughout ‘Remember’, Harjo uses repetition of the word “remember” to remind the reader of their role on the earth. They are tied to all living things and are an integral part of the earth itself. The poem discusses how interconnected all people are to one another and the other lives around them. Animals and plants all have their families and histories. They should be respected and listened to.

Videos



“The Sorcerer Cricket (Narrated in Yaqui)”

Sesenta Y Ocho Voces.

A beautifully illustrated tale told in Yaqui with captions in Spanish and a written English translation. A Yaqui elder tells about two ancient prophecies of ferocious monsters from the North and how the Yaquis resisted monsters of all kinds.

<https://68voces.mx>



“The Origin of the Butterflies and Sequins (Narrated in O’odham)”

Sesenta Y Ocho Voces.

A beautifully illustrated tale told in O’odham by a Tohono O’odham elder, this video shows how the creator I’itoy created man, Earth, animals, and even the clothes we wear.

<https://68voces.mx>



“AL-03: TOHONO O’ODHAM NATION”

Aire Libre Running.

In July 2017, three Mexican runners joined the O’odham tribe for a run through the Arizona desert and along the border, as a symbol of unity and respect across the world.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rbmTM-d9kwA&ab_channel=AireLibreRunning



“Tohono O’odham Youth Artists - The Royalty of Tohono O’odham”

Amanda Tucker.

A young O’odham girl describes her experiences competing in the Miss Tohono O’odham Nation Royalty pageant. She includes memories and family photos of her journey as she encouraged other Tohono O’odham youth to participate.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ji-vOaY-Pwg&ab_channel=KristaNiles

Videos



“Tohono O’odham Food System”

Tohono O’odham Community Action (TOCA).

Shows the connection between the land and traditional O’odham foods in a clear and concise way that will be understandable to students of all ages. Teaches traditional foods and cooking.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLIXQHrFs&ab_channel=TOCAWebmaster



“Vantage Point - Mario Martinez, Yaqui Flashback II (1991) and Brooklyn (2004)”

National Museum of the American Indian.

Artist Mario Martinez (Pascua Yaqui) discusses his technique and process, as well as showcasing two of his pieces, Painting in an abstract style appeals to Martinez in part because it allows him to express Yaqui cultural traditions, knowledge, and spirituality without explicitly revealing them.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAMOISBgLVI&ab_channel=SmithsonianNMAI



“The Bahidaj Harvest”

Arizona Illustrated.

Shows the sacred ritual of the Tohono O’odham saguaro harvest. Includes the voices of many Tohono O’odham bahidaj harvesters and discusses the cultural significance of the harvest.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQzaryKxABA&ab_channel=ArizonaPublicMedia



“NMPBS ¡COLORES!: Navajo Photographer William Wilson”

PBS New Mexico.

Navajo photographer William Wilsons’ work focuses on the transformation of Indigenous art practice through the use of technology. His photographic images often intersect Indigenous knowledge systems and practices with advancing equipment that create wonder and intrigue. He uses the 19th century tintype process to add to our understanding of portraiture.

<https://www.nativeartsandcultures.org/will-wilson-2>

Articles

Skaters raise funds to build a skatepark on the Tohono O'odham Nation

By Austin Counts



A collective of young skaters from the Tohono O'odham Nation is one step closer to building a skatepark in their district to honor a fallen friend.



The Endure Skatepark Group has raised more than \$50,000 toward its \$66,500 goal to construct a concrete skatepark in the GuVo District with assistance from the Native American Advancement Foundation, Tucson Skatepark Alliance, Mortal Skate Shop, Tony Hawk's The Skatepark Project and rock band Portugal. the Man's PTM Foundation.

Over the past three years, the NAAF has secured upwards of \$30,000 for the group, while the latter two organizations donated \$20,000 toward the cause. The Tucson Skatepark Alliance is helping design the future park while Mortal Skate Shop has donated free gear to the group while teaching the community the fundamentals of properly setting up and maintaining a skateboard.

Jacob Charley, 17, a member of Endure, said the idea came from the group's founder and spokesperson, Eli "P.K." Lewis, while they were skateboarding on a concrete basketball court in the GuVo District back in 2016. Lewis, 28, passed away during a

Skaters raise funds to build a skatepark on the Tohono O'odham Nation.

KVOA4 News.

A collective of young Tohono O'odham skaters is working to raise money to build a skate park in their community on the Tohono O'odham Nation. They want to build the park as a safe place for youth to go, as well as to honor their friend who passed away in 2020.

<https://www.tucsonweekly.com/tucson/skaters-raise-funds-to-build-a-skatepark-on-the-tohono-oodham-nation/Content?oid=30253522>



MARIO MARTINEZ

Yaqui Mural

The mural project, created by Mario Martinez with the help of thousands of Yaquis and many of their friends, is a visual commemoration honoring the Yaqui's history in the City of Scottsdale. The main section of the mural is visually divided into three sections: on the left, three crosses are in front of a map showing where the Yaqui came from—the Rio Yaqui. Scores—to settle in Arizona at the turn of the century. The crosses honor and represent their ancestors who fought against the Mexicans to keep their original homelands, and all of their ancestors who lived in Arizona and kept their cultural traditions alive to pass down to their descendants. The middle section is devoted to the Yaqui workers in Arizona, who were an integral part of the Valley's economic, social, and cultural development in the 20th Century.

On the right, three Scottsdale Yaqui villages are depicted. On the bottom, the Salt River Project Water Users provided housing for Yaquis who were a major part of their labor force during the 1940s and into the 1950s. The middle section shows old Panjano Village off McDowell Road, between Miller and Hayden Roads. Panjano was the Scottsdale Yaqui Village from the early 1950s until 1972. New Panjano, or Vista del Camino, is the present-day Yaqui village, located just south of the Vista del Camino Community Center.

Three side paintings complete the mural—the Yaqui Deer Dance, the Taking Tree, and the children's paintings. The Yaqui Deer Dance mural shows a Deer Dancer and a Yaqui Pasocito Dancer to his right, both figures that predate Christianity and represent their most ancient traditions and religion. The church represents the introduction of Catholicism by Jesuits in the early 1900s.

"Yaqui Mural"

Mario Martinez.

The main mural features three sections detailing the history of the Yaquis in the Phoenix area. Three additional "side murals" show the Yaqui creation story, children's paintings, and the Yaqui deer dance.

<https://scottsdalepublicart.org/work/yaqui-mural/>

These Pascua Yaqui girls are blasting off to space camp

Angela Pittenger | May 27, 2017 (Updated July 21, 2021)



This is the first group of Pasqui Yaqui girls who will go to space camp, thanks to the Taking Up Space Program. Czarina Salido, director of Taking Up Space, stands behind Serena Martinez, 11, left, Soledad Ramirez, 9, and Saydee Valenzuela, 10.



A group of girls sits around a table scattered with snacks, balloons and papers at the Pascua Yaqui Clubhouse, excitedly talking about the upcoming week. They're supposed to be inflating balloons for a science experiment as part of the mentoring program they're in. But they're too wound up. And a little nervous. Their first week of summer break isn't going to be filled



This is Tucson

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"These Pascua Yaqui girls are blasting off to space camp."

This is Tucson.

Showcases the first group of Pasqui Yaqui girls to attend space camp, thanks to the Taking Up Space Program. Czarina Salido, director of Taking Up Space, stands behind Serena Martinez, 11, left, Soledad Ramirez, 9, and Saydee Valenzuela, 10.

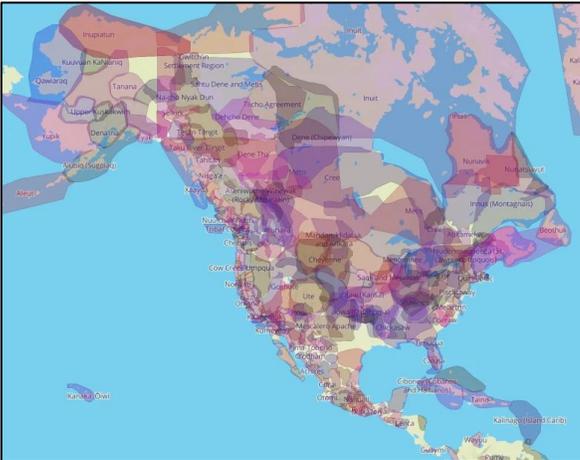
https://thisistucson.com/tucsonlife/these-pascua-yaqui-girls-are-blasting-off-to-space-camp/article_b32fd3c4-3cd7-11e7-b3f7-170221f09d76.html

Additional Resources



TikTok videos by Gabriella Cazares Kelly (Tohono O'odham).

The first video shown here depicts a positive representation of an O'odham woman in a statue at Tucson's Udall Center, while Cazares Kelly explains each symbol and object and the power accurate and respectful depictions of native people. The second teaches how to pronounce Tohono O'odham in the formal and informal way.



Native Land

Native-Land.ca is a resource to help people around the world learn more about their local history. It's designed to help you see what indigenous territories and languages have existed and still do exist in the world, overlaid on modern political boundaries. Treaties are also mapped.

This is an ongoing project and more territories are added regularly.

<https://native-land.ca/>