

Book Resources for Pre-school and Elementary Grades: themes of race and ethnicity, diversity and inclusion

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The ABCs of Black History

Rio Cortez - Workman Publishing, 2020

Ages 4 - 8

Be prepared to learn more than 26 nuggets of information from this rendition of the alphabet, which here provides the organizational framework for the creators pack vocabulary, concepts, events, names, and more pertaining to Black activism and accomplishments in the distant and recent past. Some letters introduce single concepts--"A is for anthem," "D is for diaspora"--while others involve paragraphs that highlight multiple terms--F is for food, farmed, fried fish, folklore, family, freedom. In this way, readers are provided descriptions and illustrations of traditions within context. Notable people mentioned include artists, scientists, politicians, activists, and others, ranging from Queen Nefertiti to DJ Kool Herc. The predictable format allows readers to linger and wonder as, with each page turn, emotional cues swing, hitting everything from grief to elation. The layers of history are plentiful and complex. Semmer's illustrations are bold, crisp, and contemporary. Extensive back matter supplements the main text, making this a useful mentor text for writing projects, a springboard for research, and an essential addition to classroom libraries.

-Booklist

Africville

Shauntay Grant - Groundwood Books, 2018

Ages 4 - 7

A young girl reminisces about a place of dreams and hope: Africville. She takes the reader home with her, where waves come to rest / and hug the harbor stones, where the scent of freshly baked fruit pies awaits, where children play in fields, go rafting on the pond, and later feast on freshly caught codfish. Through the poem, readers visit this sparkling seaside community that sustains itself through the bounty of nature and the legacy of history. This last element might be lost on younger readers, for whom a fuller context will need to be provided. Grant, Poet Laureate of Halifax, and acclaimed artist Campbell recreate the once-thriving black community of Africville, Nova Scotia. The poem itself will intrigue readers, and fortunately, there are resources provided for those who wish to learn more. Grant's evocative descriptions are perfectly matched in tone and timbre with Campbell's vibrant oil-and-pastel renderings of the town and its residents.

- American Library Association

All Are Welcome

Alexandra Penfold - Alfred A. Knopf Books for Young Reader, 2018

Ages 4 - 8

Meeting a challenging topic with buoyant enthusiasm, this colorful picture book celebrates a school where all the students from a diverse community feel welcome. The rhyming verses create a sense of unity, as if students and staff are speaking in a happy chorus: No matter how you start your day. / What you wear when you play. / Or if you come from far away. / All are welcome here. / In our classroom safe and sound, / Fears are lost and hope is found. / Raise your hand, we'll go around. / All are welcome here. While some verses are complete within one double-page spread and others extend over several, their upbeat tone and inclusive message remain consistent throughout the book. The illustrations are big, cheerful collages created with acrylic paint, ink, crayon, and digital elements. In many scenes, white backgrounds brighten the colors and make the individual figures of children stand out more distinctly. On the book jacket's reverse side, a poster vividly proclaims the book's theme: All are welcome. A lively, timely picture book.

- American Library Association

All My Stripes: A Story for Children with Autism

Shaina Rudolph - Magination Press, 2015

Ages 4 - 8

"Nobody gets me, Mama!" In *All My Stripes*, Zane the zebra feels different from the rest of his classmates. He worries that all they notice about him is his "autism stripe." With the help of his Mama, Zane comes to appreciate all his stripes - the unique strengths that make him who he is! Includes a Reading Guide with additional background information about autism spectrum disorders and a Note to Parents and Caregivers with tips for finding support. Foreword by Alison Singer, President, Autism Science Foundation.

- Publisher Marketing

Antiracist Baby

Ibram X Kendi - Kokila, 2020

Ages 0 - 3

Kendi and Lukashevsky offer a beautifully designed set of guidelines for parents (and anyone, really) to practice anti-racism. This bright and welcoming board book speaks directly to new parents. The opening illustration, rendered in lush primary colors and bold lines, features a smiling baby riding in her father's baby sling as he participates in a peaceful protest. Other protestors of different ethnicities hold signs advocating for equity, climate change, and Black Lives Matter. Kendi is direct with his prose: "Babies are taught to be racist or antiracist--there's no neutrality." The text then offers nine steps to make "equity a reality." Each step is presented with a short explanation that rhymes, accompanied by more of Lukashevsky's inviting and cheerful illustrations. This excellent board book answers questions so many people are asking right now: What can I do? How can I help? Kendi's choice to speak directly to new parents in this format works quite well. His succinct, impactful prose makes for an accessible guide to anti-racism for everyone. Lukashevsky's artwork elevates the text even more with brilliant color and charming details that will inspire readers to linger on each page. The timely and relevant anti-racist message so excellently delivered in this book makes it worthy of a place on all library shelves.

- School Library Journal

Black Is a Rainbow Color

Angela Joy - Roaring Brook Press, 2020

Ages 4 - 8

A beautifully told and illustrated celebration of African American people and ethnology, *Black Is a Rainbow Color* thoughtfully explores what the Black experience means to a child. Starting with the young narrator's personal experience with the color black (Black is the braid in my best friend's hair / Black are the bottoms of summertime feet), then moving toward historical and cultural events (Black was the man / who gave the world his dream), each line emphasizes the positive connotations of the word. Accentuating these efforts are gorgeous illustrations, which are reminiscent of stained-glass church windows and manifest the many ways people of African descent can be beautiful. After the rhyming text, Joy supplies historical and cultural notes (including descriptions of how each page spread relates to a specific segment of Black history and a time line of the words used to describe Black people since the first enslaved people arrived in colonial America), a song list featuring deliberately chosen celebratory music from throughout the decades, and three poems.

-American Library Association

The Boy & the Bindi

Shraya, Vivek Shraya - Arsenal Pulp Press, 2016

Ages 4 - 8

An unnamed South Asian boy becomes fascinated with the decoration on his mother's brow, and when she explains what it means to her, he asks for one of his own. The bindi makes him feel safe, calm, sure. His white friends at the playground wonder what it is, and he has trouble explaining, but he decides he'll never be without it. He feels small and ugly sometimes, but the bindi brings beauty where there was none. At the end, her protagonist imagines readers asking, "Why is it so special anyway?" More sure of himself now, the boy explains that it's like a third eye watching over him, reminding him not to hide himself away and to embrace his potential self. The bright, beautiful illustrations by Perera do the heavy lifting, symbolically infusing the boy's cultural difference with the spiritual power it carries for the wearer. The book does not say that bindis are mainly worn by Hindu women in relation to their marital status, allowing readers familiar with the culture to imagine what it means for the boy's mother. Her decision to give one to her son opens up discussions of gender within cultural norms, including the fact that some Hindu men wear bindis for spiritual reasons unrelated to marital status. The mostly easy rhyming and vivid colors make this an unforgettable look into Hindu culture. - Kirkus Reviews

Counting in Mi'kmaw

Loretta Gould - Nimbus Publishing, 2019

One is Ne'wt, for one bear. Two is Ta'pu, for two women making offerings. Counting from one to ten in English and Mi'kmaw, baby is introduced to both the ancestral language of Mi'kmaki and to Mi'kmaw culture and legend, through beautifully rendered illustrations of important animals, like turtle, bear, and beaver, to concepts integral to the Mi'kmaw world view, like the Four (Ne'w) Directions, and the Seven (L'luiknek) Mi'kmaw teachings. Features bright and detailed illustrations from celebrated Waycobah-based Mi'kmaw illustrator, Loretta Gould.

- Publishers Marketing

The Day You Begin

Jacqueline Woodson - Paulsen Books, 2018

Ages 5 - 8

A beautiful and inclusive story that encourages children to find the beauty in their own lives and share it with the world. A young girl with brown skin and curly black hair stays home through the summer to watch over her younger sister while her classmates travel to distant lands. A young boy from Venezuela arrives in his new school and finds the children in his class do not speak his language. Another child brings a lunch that her classmates find too strange while another isn't physically able to keep up with the play of other children. Each child feels very alone until they begin to share their stories and discover that it is nearly always possible to find someone a little like you.

López's vibrant illustrations bring the characters' hidden and unspoken thoughts to light with fantastic, swirling color. Shifting hues and textures across the page convey their deep loneliness and then slowly transition into bright hopeful possibilities. Full-bleed illustrations on every page are thick with collaged patterns and textures that pair perfectly with melodic prose that begs to be read aloud. Though the story focuses on four singular experiences, there's an essential acknowledgment that everyone will experience a time when no one is quite like them, when they can't find their voice, or when they feel very alone. Woodson's superlative text sees each character turn that moment of desolation into an opportunity to be brave and find hope in what they have in common.

- School Library Journal

Don't Touch My Hair!

Sharee Miller - Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2018

Ages 4 - 7

Smiling bright, brown-skinned Aria happily shares the things she loves about her bouncy, beautiful hair. She receives plenty of compliments from others, too, which she enjoys--but she resolutely does not enjoy when people try to touch her hair without asking. In a series of amusing and increasingly wacky situations, Aria tries to flee from overly curious hands, first situating herself behind a shrub, then diving underwater with a mermaid, and even leaving Earth for the safety of space (where she is approached by two meddlesome aliens) all to no avail; everyone still wants to touch her hair! When she finally escapes notice, Aria feels lonely. She returns home, but she has something to say: "This is MY hair...please, just look and don't touch without my permission." Miller has managed to put an upbeat, silly spin on a relatable problem for many children that can be awkward and upsetting. Aria has an adventure, but more importantly, she is able to state her boundaries with others when it comes to physical contact.

The book closes with examples of Aria saying both yes and no when asked about her hair, and those wishes being respected. Miller's bold mixed media art is a delight; each page brims with texture, from Aria's ebullient coils filling a spread to the zany houses of her bustling hometown. Young audiences will love pointing out each vibrant detail.

- School Library Journal

Eyes That Kiss in the Corners

Joanna Ho - HarperCollins, 2021

Ages 4 - 8

When she does not share physical traits with those around her, a young girl finds beauty in her uniqueness. One day at school, a young girl of Asian heritage remarks on the shape and color of the eyes of the light- and dark-skinned girls in her class. Instead of having big eyes with long lashes, hers "kiss in the corners and glow like warm tea." At home, the girl celebrates all she shares with her Mama, Amah, and little sister Mei-Mei. Together, these four women view the world through their matching, expressive eyes. Even when she feels apart from her peers at school, the young protagonist finds solace in the shared appearance of her family's eyes. Sweeping, expressive illustrations deeply connect readers to the many dimensions of this story. The featured characters comprise three generations of Asian women; the only male in the book is found in the background of a scene in the schoolyard.

Lyrical text propels the story; while relatively limited, each word is carefully chosen to beautifully enhance the message. - School Library Journal

The Girl Who Thought in Pictures: The Story of Dr. Temple Grandin

Julia Finley Mosca - Innovation Press, 2017

Ages 5 - 8

Diagnosed at an early age with autism, Temple Grandin (b. 1947) grew up at a time when there was generally little care or regard for those like her. However, Grandin's mother was able to secure the therapies and education her daughter needed to thrive. ("She was Different, Not less, ' they all finally agreed.") Grandin would eventually design animal husbandry techniques to more humanely treat livestock in the meat industry. Rhyming verse and appealing cartoon illustrations capture Grandin's spirit while providing an exciting, informative look at her remarkable life. Invaluable back matter contains a letter from Temple, fun facts, a time line accompanied by family photographs, and an insightful biography. Even the bookmaking pays tribute to its subject, with endpapers covered in adorable cartoon cattle. Reminiscent of Meghan McCarthy's quirky nonfiction, this is the first volume in a promising new series introducing readers to remarkable women in the sciences. VERDICT A fine addition to nonfiction biography collections.

- School Library Journal

Hair Love

Matthew Cherry - Kokila, 2019

Ages 4 - 8

In this endearing take on stories pertaining to promoting natural hairstyles for African American children, Cherry and Harrison create an unforgettable picture book about the bond between an African American father and his daughter. Readers will love the positive language used to describe kinks, coils, braids, twists, and Afro puffs as stylish and regal looks fit for royalty. The illustrations meld perfectly with the story as the illustrious depictions help explain the wonders of hair growth, shrinkage, moisturizing, and styling Black hair. It also features a young, hip dad with beautiful tattoos and his own hair styled in long dreads. The father and daughter's tender interactions are heartwarming to observe and will easily become a favorite among families. Written and illustrated in a style similar to Natasha Anastasia Tarpley's *I Love My Hair!* (1998), Cherry and Harrison's book provides an engaging and lovable story for younger audiences. Parents, children, caregivers, teachers, and librarians will find this story to be the right fit for their bookshelves.

- American Library Association

I Lost My Talk

Rita Joe - Nimbus Publishing, 2020

Ages 4 - 9

This picture book version of *I Lost My Talk* is best read with Rebecca Thomas's *I'm Finding My Talk*. These haunting, evocative books bring an original approach to the exploration of Canadian residential schools in picture books. For readers and teachers who appreciate fact-based information, there is also "A Short History of Residential Schools" at the end of *I Lost My Talk*. Educators, librarians, and families will find their classrooms and book collections invaluable enriched by these books. They are real tools of truth and reconciliation; as such, they belong on every bookshelf in Canada and beyond.

-Canadian Review of Materials

I'm Finding My Talk

Rebecca Thomas - Nimbus Publishing Limited, 2020

Ages 4 - 9

A response to Rita Joe's iconic poem *I Lost My Talk*, and published simultaneously with the new children's book edition illustrated by Pauline Young, comes a companion picture book by award-winning spoken-word artist and Mi'kmaw activist Rebecca Thomas. A second-generation residential school survivor, Thomas writes this response poem openly and honestly, reflecting on the process of working through the destructive effects of colonialism. From sewing regalia to dancing at powow to learning traditional language, *I'm Finding My Talk* is about rediscovering her community, and finding culture. Features stunning, vibrant illustrations by Mi'kmaw artist Pauline Young.

-Canadian Review of Materials

Intersectionalities: We Make Room for All

Chelsea Johnson - Dottir Press, 2019

Ages 6 - 12

A cheerful, diverse cast of friends describe living the ally life in this progressive picture book. Told in simple rhyming text, the book shares the stories of each child in the group. Though they're all the same age, the friends are otherwise very different. Allie uses a wheelchair; her friends make sure she is included in all their games. Kate identifies as nonbinary; her friends make sure she feels safe in all spaces, including school bathrooms. Adilah wears her hijab proudly; her friends love and support her religious expression. Nia's family marches in a Black Lives Matter protest; all her friends join in solidarity. The Dakota Access Pipeline protests are also highlighted by Dakota and her tribe. Immigrant stories are included as well, with Gloria, Heejung, and Yuri sharing their experiences and receiving loving encouragement from their friends. Their unwavering support for one another helps readers understand what intersectionality means and looks like. The bright, sweet illustrations have a charming silk-screen look that perfectly complements the heartfelt snapshots of the kids. A foreword, an afterword, book notes, discussion questions, and a letter to adults thoughtfully elevate this rhyming story of solidarity.

- School Library Journal

It's a Mitzvah!

Julie Merberg - Downtown Bookworks, 2019

Ages 0 - 3

This fun first taste of preschooler-friendly mitzvot is a very basic introduction to Jewish principles and to good behavior.

Clever, humorous illustrations accompany rhyming text about important Jewish do's and don'ts. From respecting parents and grandparents and feeding the hungry to telling the truth and repairing the world ("tikkun olam"), each page highlights a different mitzvah in a way that's engaging and totally relatable for kids two years of age and older. This adorable introduction to mitzvot doubles as an early guide socially conscious behavior.

- Publishers Marketing

It's OK to be Different: A Children's Picture Book About Diversity and Kindness

Sharon Purtill - Dunhill Clare Publishing, 2019

Ages 4 - 7

It's OK to be Different written by Sharon Purtill and illustrated by Sujata Saha presents individuality. Everything about it is inspiring. Children will enjoy the fun and clever rhymes, as they are drawn in by the bright and cheerful illustrations. It is one of those books that both children and adults can enjoy, as it delivers the perfect message to young readers.

This story has effectively imparted an ever important lesson that individuality should be celebrated and not shunned. It encourages kids to accept and befriend those who are different from themselves. Showing young children that they don't have to look alike or enjoy doing the same activities to be kind to one another.

- Publisher Marketing

Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History

Vashti Harrison - Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2017

Ages 7 - 12

Harrison introduces 40 outstanding black women in one-page biographies. They range from the well-known (Ida B. Wells, Ella Fitzgerald, Shirley Chisholm) to women whose names are lesser known but just as important: Rebecca Lee Crumpler, a nineteenth-century physician; Marcelite Harris, an airline pilot; and Julie Dash, a filmmaker. But it's not the short bios that attract the most attention; it's the delightful full-page artwork that faces the text. Each subject is drawn identically, almost like a paper doll, but with her own hair, dress, and accouterments. Children will be inspired by these women, all of whom, in some way, had to overcome adversity or roadblocks to achieve their goals.

- American Library Association

Little Legends: Exceptional Men in Black History

Vashti Harrisin - Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2019

Ages 7 - 12

Inventors, authors, musicians, activists and others come to life in Little Legends: Exceptional Men in Black History by Vashti Harrison (Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History) with Kwesi Johnson. In 35 brief illustrated biographies, Harrison highlights the achievements of black men through centuries of world history.

- Shelf Awareness

M Is for Melanin: A Celebration of the Black Child

Tiffany Rose - Little Bee Books, 2019

Ages 3 - 6

This is a joyful tribute to, for, and of black children everywhere. It begins with "A is for Afro. Your hair makes a statement. Embrace the bigness of your hair. Pick it. Fluff it. Love it," and ends with "Z is for zillion. There will be a zillion people telling you to do something else or be someone else. Always be your free, talented, quirky, imaginative, melanated self. The world will adjust." The sentences are abundantly sprinkled with rich vocabulary (i.e., vibrant, unleash, remembrance, unapologetically). Each letter is large and filled with a bright, colorful design that mirrors the message. Many statements and individual words are in bold, upper-case letters to add emphasis, such as "NEVER DIMINISH YOUR SHINE" on the page for S. With this debut picture book, the author seeks to represent black children in ways she never experienced in the books she read as a child. The positive, upbeat vibe will no doubt appeal to most children but is especially aimed to inspire black children.

- School Library Journal

Mi'kmaw Animals

Alan Syliboy - Nimbus Publishing, 2018

Ages 0 - 3

Alan Syliboy, author of *The Thundermaker*, showcases his vibrant artwork in this new baby board book. Colourful images depicting Canadian animals like moose, whales, and caribou, and more makes this vibrant book a perfect introduction to the Mi'kmaw language. With English and Mi'kmaw translations for the animal names on every page, babies will enjoy the vivid paintings while they learn new words and discover a bit of Mi'kmaw culture in a fun way.

- Publishers Marketing

Mommy's Khimar

Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow - Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2018

Ages 4 - 8

In this ebullient picture book, readers come to share in the delight a little girl takes in wearing her mother's khimar, another term for hijab. For the girl, her mother's rainbow collection of beautiful khimars is a source of wonder, power, and intimacy, much like any mother's closet of pretty things might be for a young child. Her favorite one is yellow, and she wears it like a superhero wears her cape, imagining herself shining like the sun and shooting through the sky like a star. She recognizes her mother's fragrances, coconut oil and cocoa butter, which ensure the security of her mother's presence even in her absence. This affirming book will be a welcome mirror for Muslim and interfaith families, and a necessary counter to Islamophobic discourse. The illustrations are as lively and brightly colored as the khimars themselves, and smiling faces of friends and family members echo the warm message of the text.

- Booklist

Muslim Girls Rise: Inspirational Champions of Our Time

Saira Mir - Salaam Reads/Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2019

Ages 6 - 10

The lives of 19 champions for women's rights and equality are presented through short, inspirational bios in this bright and charming primer on contemporary Muslim women. Each vignette is accompanied by a quote along with a stunning portrait of the subject in her natural environment, be it a courtroom, movie set, or U.S. Congress. The variety of featured figures brings home the diversity of Muslim women; different nationalities, races, and ways of practicing faith are on display. Occupations range from author to activist to professional athlete and many others. Entries are arranged alphabetically by first name, and while some of the women, such as Malala Yousafzai and Ilhan Omar, may be familiar to many, the majority of them will be mostly unknown. This refreshing work concludes with a compelling exhortation to girls, encouraging them to rise up and be empowered. With jewel-tone illustrations that pop, this appealing collective biography will have children returning to its pages again and again.

- American Library Association

My Hair Is Beautiful

Shauntay Grant - Nimbus Publishing, 2019

Ages 1 - 3

A celebration of natural hair, from afros to cornrows and everything in between, *My Hair is Beautiful* is a joyful board book with a powerful message of self-love.

Governor General's Award-nominated author Shauntay Grant brings her unique spoken-word style to this fun read-aloud, featuring minimalist text and vibrant photos of toddlers sporting fresh dos, and a mirror to reflect your own baby's beauty.

- Publishers Marketing

Nibi's Water Song

Sunshine Tenasco - Scholastic, 2019

Ages 4 - 7

Nibi is the Anishinaabemowin word for water. In Nibi a soif, très soif, Nibi is an Indigenous girl on the search for clean water to drink. Though she is faced with repeated obstacles, Nibi's joyful and determined energy become a catalyst for change and action as her community and, in widening circles, the country and government, rally around her to make clean drinking water available for all. There is a strong underlying message that even when a problem seems too large to face, every bit that everyone does helps. And inaction is not an option.

Sunshine Tenasco, an Anishinabeg activist for clean water, has an amazing optimistic spirit that shines through her writing. The hopeful tone and lyrical read-aloud quality of this gentle allegorical tale open the door to conversations and action aimed at young children, whether they are on a reserve that does not have clean water or they are living with access to clean water.

- Publishers Marketing

Our Favorite Day of the Year

AE Ali - Salaam Reads / Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2020

Ages 4 - 8

On the first day of kindergarten, Musa is surprised to hear from his new teacher that he will become good friends with the children in his class. She knows what she's talking about, structuring her classroom to embrace the differences among all students. One way the children become closer is by sharing their favorite day of the year. Each child believes his or her favorite day is the most special, but everyone is willing to learn about another culture, the associated foods, and the special traditions--all while sharing in the joy their classmate feels for the day. Musa explains why his favorite day is the Muslim holiday of Eid Mubarak, while Mo shares why he loves Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. Moises celebrates the nine days of Las Posadas for his Christmas tradition, while Kevin talks about his family's love of science and their celebration of Pi Day, when his family learns about scientists and their discoveries. The celebrations profiled in the book are less about religion than family traditions and connections, and the year concludes with the teacher showcasing all these favorite days in calendars she passes out to the class. Colorful, charming illustrations show a diverse classroom where learning is thoughtful but also energetic and filled with music, dancing, and eating. VERDICT A comforting story that will help build bridges among children of different backgrounds and faiths.

- School Library Journal

The Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family

Ibtihaj Muhammad - Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2019

Ages 4 - 8

Faizah is excited for her first day of school but even more excited for her older sister, Asiya. Asiya is starting sixth grade with her brand-new blue hijab. As Faizah walks to the school in her new light-up shoes and backpack, she admires her sister who looks like a princess in her blue head scarf. At school, some students celebrate with her, some are ambivalent, and some faceless, nameless characters taunt her. Their mother has prepared the girls with wise words. When the kids in the school bully Asiya, she remembers her mother's advice to not carry hurtful words as "they are not yours to keep. They belong only to those who said them." The illustration and the colors are just as powerful as words conveying the passionate message of how to be proud of one's culture, individuality, and religion and how to stay strong and keep one's faith. This is an empowering book for young readers who can see themselves in Asiya or know someone like her. The touching and celebratory illustrations complement the quiet strength of Asiya as she steps into a beautiful and celebrated coming-of-age rite.

- School Library Journal

The Sharing Circle

Stories about First Nations Culture

Theresa Meuse - Nimbus Publishing, 2003

Ages 4 - 8

Matthew loves to share the special treasures that remind him of his First Nations culture. Perhaps his favourite treasure is the medicine pouch that his grandfather made especially for him. This is where he keeps many of his other treasures, including the sacred herbs his mother gave him. Matthew uses the herbs to remind him to be grateful for everything that nature gives us. Another special gift is the eagle feather from his father. Matthew knows that the eagle is a symbol of the spiritual strength of his culture. But there is one other gift that has a special place in Matthew's heart. It is the dream catcher that Matthew gave to his friend Dustin to help him not have bad dreams.

The Sharing Circle is a collection of seven stories about First Nations culture and spiritual practices:

Researched and written by Mi'kmaw children's author Theresa Meuse-Dallien, and beautifully illustrated by Mi'kmaw illustrator Arthur Stevens, this book will engage and inform children of all ages.

Speak Up!

Miranda Paul - Clarion, 2020

Ages 4 - 7

A thoughtfully inclusive cast of children encounter various situations throughout their school day that present opportunities for them to help themselves and others. Highlighted examples of advocacy include familiar scenes like showing kindness in the lunchroom and expressing thanks to a teacher, while others address issues such as clarifying the correct pronunciation of your name and being mindful of the environment. The illustrations provide helpful context for younger children. A spread encouraging examination of outdated rules smartly ties in portraits of social justice icons who stood up against oppression, reinforcing how one voice can make a difference. The rhyming text and colorful, cartoon-like illustrations combine for a positive, uplifting message of empowerment. The children are represented in a spectrum of skin tones and an array of intentional choices: One character wears a hijab, while another is shown with hearing aids. Helpful back matter includes an author's note, brief biographies of real kids who spoke up, examples of when to speak up, and nonverbal ways to participate in change. A calm and creative look at everyday activism, recommended for all library collections.

- School Library Journal

Spork

Kyo Maclear - Kids Can Press, 2020

Ages 3- 7

His mum is a spoon. His dad is a fork. And he's a bit of both. He's Spork!

Spork sticks out in the regimented world of the cutlery drawer. The spoons think he's too pointy, while the forks find him too round. He never gets chosen to be at the table at mealtimes until one day a very messy ... thing arrives in the kitchen who has never heard of cutlery customs. Will Spork finally find his place at the table?

This "multi-cutlery" tale is a humorous and lively commentary on individuality and tolerance. Its high-spirited illustrations capture the experience and emotions of anyone who has ever wondered about their place in the world.

- Publishers Marketing

Stolen Words

Skipping and dancing home from school, a young girl carries in one hand a dream catcher she's made. "How do you say grandfather in Cree?" she asks. And suddenly their walk turns somber as Grandpa admits, "I don't remember... I lost my words a long time ago." Bewildered, the little girl presses, "How do you lose words, Grandpa?" He tenderly explains about the residential schools to which First Nations' children were forcibly sent: "They took our words and locked them away, punished us until we forgot them." By the next day, the little girl has a plan: she presents her grandfather with a dictionary in which he finds the soft, familiar words of his past.

Melanie Florence, of Cree/Scottish descent, offers *Stolen Words* as a sobering ode to her heritage, through eyes filled with love and hope. Artist Gabrielle Grimard is Florence's ideal creative partner, enhancing each page with depth and movement, capturing every touch, every gaze with enveloping empathy. Adding a grey overwash on Grandpa's memories proves especially effective in emphasizing the traumas he survived. Florence's narrative couldn't be more affecting. Word by word, her story--written in honor of her Cree grandfather--is a significant step toward forever healing.

- Shelf Awareness

Sulwe

Lupita Nyong'o - Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2019

Ages 4 - 8

A sweet story that discusses colorism and emphasizes self-love. In lyrical prose, actress-writer N'Yong'o tells the tale of young Sulwe, "born the color of midnight." Sulwe feels isolated from her lighter-skinned family, and from the children at school who call her racist names. She resorts to trying to lighten herself by wearing makeup, eating light foods, and even using an eraser to rub away her dark skin. Though her mother reassures Sulwe (whose name means 'star' in the Luo dialect) that she is beautiful and her brightness is internal, the young girl remains sad and skeptical. That night, she is taken on a journey by a shooting star and told the tale of Night and Day, two sisters who brought light and darkness to earth. Bullied for her darkness, Night disappears, leaving earth to suffer in perpetual sunlight. Eventually, Day brings her back, apologizing and assuring Night that she's exactly who she's meant to be. Sulwe wakes up from her nighttime adventure energized and confident, "dark and beautiful, bright and strong." Readers who are familiar with this experience will feel seen, while others will relate to feelings of being an outsider while learning about colorism. Harrison's art is captivating: warm golden tones blend flawlessly into rich, purple-hued night scenes, gorgeously accented with iridescent blues and galactic sprinkles of white. Youngsters who may miss parts of the lesson will remain enthralled with the artwork. VERDICT Though a bit uneven in its storytelling,

this beautiful book covers an important topic rarely addressed for young audiences, with tenderness and joy. Sure to gain attention in picture book collections.
- School Library Journal

Tracy Newman's Jewish holiday series: ***Hanukkah Is Coming! Rosh Hashanah Is Coming! Shabbat Is Coming! Passover Is Coming! Purim is Coming!***

Tracy Newman - Kar-Ben Publishing, 2015 - 2017

Ages 1 - 4

This series of board books celebrate Jewish holidays and sabbath with cheerful rhymes and colourful illustrations.

Under My Hijab

Hena Khan - Lee & Low Books, 2019

Ages 4 - 7

A young girl watches the women in her life, paying close attention to how they wear their hijabs. Grandma carefully tucks in the ends of hers, like the pastry on the pies she bakes. Auntie, who is an artist, winds her silky hijab high on her head and pins it with a jewel. Iman's more sporty covering stays put while she competes for her martial-arts black belt. This book is a generous invitation by both author and illustrator to young Muslim girls to witness the variety of ways and reasons women wear hijabs. It is necessarily unsubtle, for it also considers the gaze of the outsider who may wonder and have questions. The women and girls the protagonist admires vary in profession, age, and race. They go about their lives with confidence and pride, choosing to style their hijabs according to circumstance or whimsy. An author's note explains when and why some Muslim women choose to cover, or not. Cheerful, colorful images complement the affirming tone and message of this timely book.

- American Library Association.

Viola Desmond Won't Be Budged!

Jody Nyasha Warner - Groundwood Books, 2010

Ages 5 - 9

In 1946 Nova Scotia, Viola Desmond thought to pass an afternoon at the movies while waiting for her car to be repaired. Desmond was the owner of her own beauty salon and founder of the Desmond School of Beauty Culture to train black students. She sat downstairs at the Roseland Theatre, although black people were supposed to sit in the balcony. She refused to move, was arrested and held in jail overnight. Throughout her trial and subsequent appeal, no one would admit that this was a racial issue. Instead the judge focused on the tiny differential in ticket price and fined her \$20, then worth ten times what it is today. Using a cadenced style that echoes the oral tradition of African-Canadians, Warner recounts the story simply, allowing children to see raw discrimination for what it was. Rudnicki uses bold acrylics in vivid colors to tell the story. He captures the style, dress and look of the period, and the flap copy notes his images were based on archival photographs. An historical note with a couple of bibliographic citations offers more background.

- Kirkus Reviews

Your Name Is a Song

Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow - Innovation Press, 2020

Ages 5 - 10

This story simultaneously imparts a strong spark of sensibility and envelops readers in a warm embrace through an overdue, crucial lesson about the significance of honoring every individual's cultural identity, including the respectful care to correctly learn another's name. At the end of the first day of school, Kora-Jalimuso, the story's young Black Muslim protagonist, shares her sorrow with her mother over her teacher and classmates' inability to pronounce her name. Her mother's response lifts the girl's--and readers'--spirits by illuminating the resonating meaning and power of diverse names through song. As the gently rendered scenes of this heartfelt talk unfold, Uribe's expressive details capture the musicality of different names. Fine, swooping lines and blooming silhouettes of pastel color flow through each page, matching the mother's musical notes and Kora-Jalimuso's growing sense of understanding and confidence in her ability to pass this lesson on to others. The book concludes with a glossary and a pronunciation guide, emphasizing the beauty and significance of all the names featured. For all collections, this is a heartwarming tale with a simple yet critical message of respecting the pronunciation of an individual's name and honoring the importance of identity and cultural heritage.

- School Library Journal