

Traci Sorell Author Guide

By Drew Wilke and CJ Armitage

About the Author

Traci Sorell was raised in the Cherokee Nation (in a rural area) where she currently resides

Traci grew up hearing stories about her ancestors and looking through their photos with her grandmother

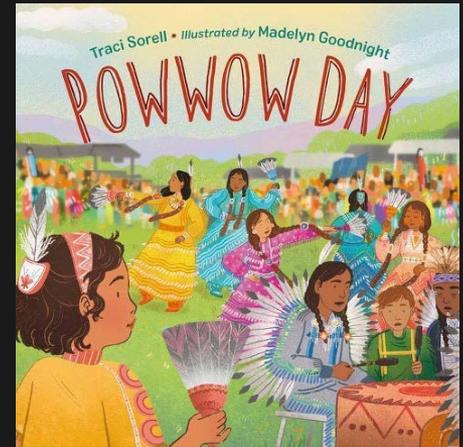
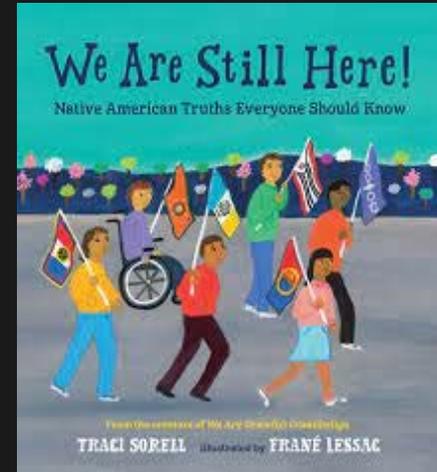
As a child, Traci loved to explore the outdoors and her environment with her younger brother and sister. They often created games with the supplies that were available to them



Fun Facts

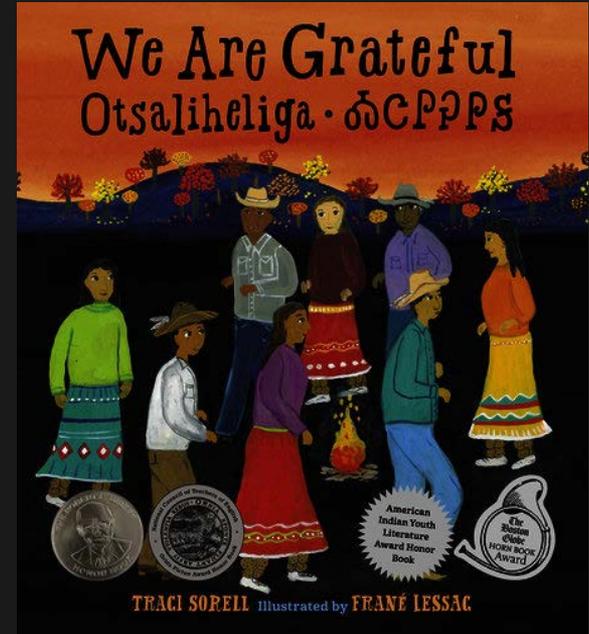
- Traci is learning Cherokee
- Her second language is Spanish
- Traci lived in Madrid, Spain for a year in college
- She has kept all of her favorite childhood books
- She tried out for the movie “Annie” in 1982
- Traci cannot whistle

For more information visit: <https://www.tracisorell.com/about>



We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga

This book is about a family of Cherokee people and their rituals as the seasons pass. This book also teaches about important words in the Cherokee language, such as “elisi”, which means grandmother, and “gola” which means winter. In the fall the Cherokee people celebrate the Great New Moon Ceremony and the Cherokee New Year. During the winter families come together to eat food and teach children how to make traditional toys and instruments. During the spring Cherokee families harvest and plant crops. During summer they celebrate the Green Corn Ceremony, the Cherokee National Holiday, and also play stickball.



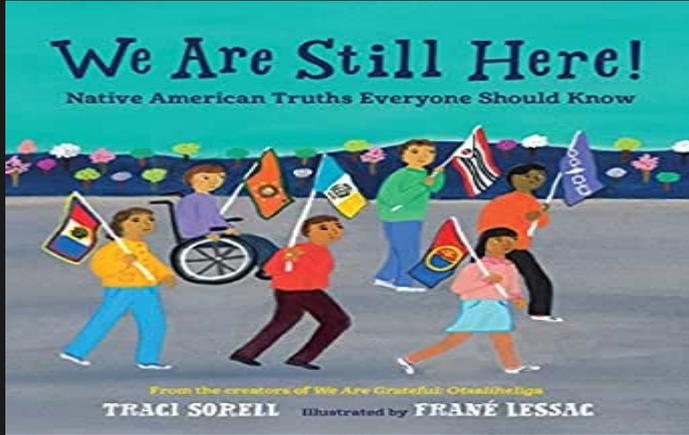
Cherokee Holidays

The Great New Moon Festival happens in October and actually marks the beginning of the Cherokee New Year. During these ceremonies gifts are exchanged and grudges are let go of. Overall, the gathering celebrates friendships and turning over new leaves.

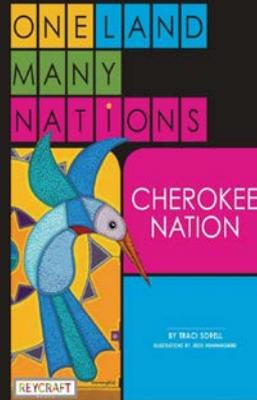
The Green Corn Ceremony is a celebration of the corn being ripe to harvest. This usually happens in August. People come together to fast and pray for 6 days. Afterwards a large party is held where people eat corn and dance.

The Cherokee National Holiday celebrates the reinstatement of the Cherokee Government after the signing of the Cherokee Nation Constitution in 1839 after they were removed from their land in the South East.

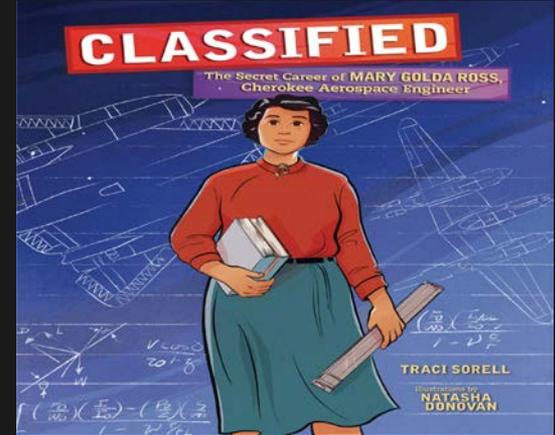
Some Books Written by Traci Sorell



We Are Still Here: Native American Truths Everyone Should Know



*One Land,
Many Nations
Vol. 1*



Classified: The Secret Career of Mary Golda Ross

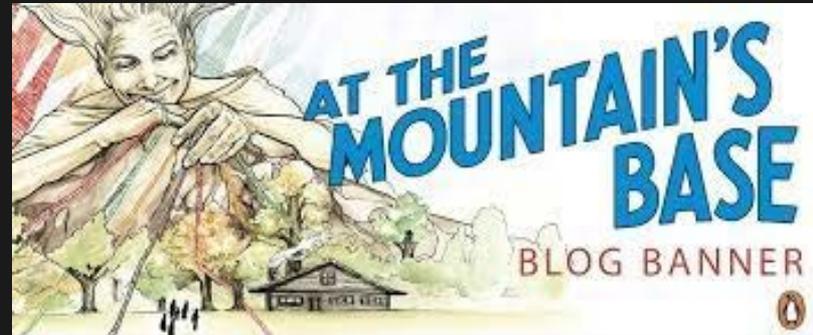
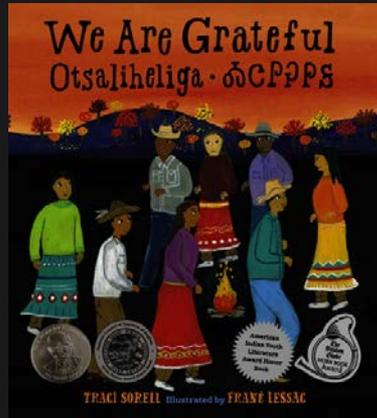
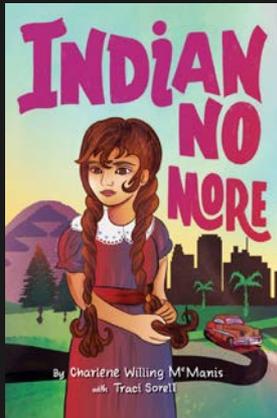
Other Books Include: At The Mountains Base, Indian No More

Common Themes

- Native American culture “to celebrate nulistandov, history, and listen to our tribal leaders speak at Cherokee National Holiday”
- Family “as older children teach the younger ones how to make corn-husk dolls and make cane flutes”
- Being grateful and expressing their gratitude “when showers fill streams and shoots spring up, we say otsaliheliga”
- Representing indigenous people and minorities “to remember our ancestors who suffered hardship and loss on the Trail of Tears”
- Being a part of a team, and community “while men sing, asking for thunder and lightning’s protection of the emerging sprouts that women attend”

Nominations and Awards

- *At The Mountain's Base*: 2020 Best Picture Book (nomination)
- *Indian No More*: 2020 Best Middle Grade Book
- *We are Grateful*: 2020 Best Picture Book (nomination), 2019 Sibert Honor Book, 2019 Orbis Pictus Honor Book, 2018 Book Launch Award (SCBWI), Kirkus Reviews Best Books of 2018, School Library Journal Best Books of 2018, 2018 JLG selection, 2019 Reading the West Picture Book



Questions for Traci

- How was it different growing up in rural Oklahoma compared to Southern California?
- What things does modern media get wrong about Native American lifestyle?
- How do you feel about #ourvoices (What authors use to help spread diversity amongst themselves)?
- How can others help stop stereotypes about Native Americans?
- What are things that you still remain curious about?

Learn more about #ourvoices here:

<https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Our-Stories-Our-Voices/Amy-Reed/9781534409002>

Discussion Questions for Teachers

- How could you implement one of Traci's books in your classroom?
- What are the biggest takeaways from Traci as an educator?
- How can Traci help students and teachers remain curious and help them want to be learners?
- How can Traci's examples of diversity help represent minorities in the classroom?

Interviews

Traci stated that she wanted to represent great people from history who do not get notices (inspired Classified)

Her grandparents played a big part in her wanting to learn about who she was and where she came from

Traci loves to learn from writing and her process of writing: “One (of the most enjoyable parts) is what I learn in the process of writing and about the book’s subjects”

She thinks that the hardest part about telling stories is figuring out how she wants to deliver stories to her audience

Sources

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