

Responsive Librarianship: Guides to State/Provincial Research about Young People and Book Reviews on Diverse YA and Children's Books

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Abstract

This article presents an annotated list of websites with data that describe young people by community and, in the following section, book review resources for diverse children's and young adult literature. The very first section will point to general resources based on the U.S. & Canada, and then will dip into the specific places served by PNLA. State and Provincial education departments all have something like school report cards. Searches performed aimed at finding state/provincial or nonprofit agencies providing reports about demographics, disabilities, at-risk behaviors and resiliency factors. Book reviewing sites were found through various articles, databases, and recommendations from teacher-librarians. The final section lists a few books that are classified gatherings of book reviews and some periodicals that focus on or have book reviews in their pages.

Introduction

Young people are excited to see themselves in the books they borrow from their school and public libraries. The websites that follow point to resources, by province or state, that present information—both survey results and basic demographics—of the children in the communities PNLA serves. Included after those resources is a gathering of book review resources that focus on diversity. Librarians help young people discover the love of books and students are more drawn to books that reflect their identities and lived experiences.

On the positive side, books affirm students lived experiences and communities (Bennett, 2018), and provide opportunities for different students to both do storytelling and meaning-making of their own communities and learn about others (Carnesi, 2018). Storytelling provide students from different cultures with “momentum acting in unrealistic, magical and even absurd ways that fill their mental universe with cathartic and evocative nuances” (Pelegrín as cited by Pulido-Mantas & Ruíz-Seisdedos, 2018, p. 35). In addition, good books allow for visioning the future and “will ultimately help...challenge ableism” (Hughes as cited in Aho & Alter, 2018, p. 316) among other isms. All of us have experienced a young person excited when they encounter someone who looks like them in a library book. One writer described this: “A Muslim student was excited to point out to me that a girl in the story *The Rainy Day Monitor* by Raina Telgemeier and Dave Roman had a headscarf like hers. This was the first time she had the opportunity to identify with a character in this way— seeing someone who was just like her” (Oxley, 2015, p. 12). Books can affirm the positive and dispel some negative aspects of growing up different...and every child has some unique quality or experience that a good book can amplify, normalize, or reassure.

These books that act as mirrors and windows for young people are needed, and the sooner the better! Children by the age of 3 group people based on race and gender and exhibit prejudicial attitudes to-

wards others based on disability and even use “racial reasons for refusing to interact” with other children. (Rollins & Mahan, 2010). It is important not to have just any books but good ones, with characters depicted within that reflect both positive and difficult aspects and life experiences. “A predominance of oppression titles at the expense of other types of portrayals can send a message that suffering and struggle are definitive of a group’s experience, or even of victimhood” (Aronson, Callahan, & O'Brien, 2018, p.179). Book reviews can help librarians understand something about the tone and message of the book before spending precious dollars on a title that reinforces stereotypical notions, good or ill. The awards and prizes given *by* particular communities *for* books about that community does not ensure that everyone in that particular group would affirm the point of view in the prize-winning books, but it is valuable to get the perspective of the community being depicted.

In addition to issues around ethnicity, young people are experiencing emotional issues and life experiences that can make them feel isolated. Some of the resources below speak to substance use, diet, depression, suicide, bullying, sexual activity, etc. Librarians can take advantage of information found at the local/regional level, as either governmental or nonprofits do surveys that look at both risk factors and resiliency—connectedness, volunteering, prosocial peers, etc. Conversations with counselors at schools can help librarians understand the need for books about particular concerns that young people may be having, but a great deal of information is publicly available. These vary by the state and province.

The following succinctly annotated list of websites have data that describe young people by community and, in the following section, book review resources for diverse children’s and young adult literature. The very first section will point to general resources based on the U.S. & Canada, and then will dip into the specific places served by PNLA. State and Provincial education departments all have something like school report cards. Searches performed aimed at finding state/ provincial or nonprofit agencies providing reports about demographics, disabilities, at-risk behaviors and resiliency factors. Book reviewing sites were found through various articles, databases, and recommendations from teacher-librarians. The final section lists a few books that are classified gatherings of book reviews and some periodicals that focus on or have book reviews in their pages.

U.S./Canada – General Demographics

United States

The Census has one page where reports about children are gathered together: <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/children.html>. This subset of the United States Census links to multiple recent research reports about children, including basic statistics, child care, economic situation, and even one entitled *School Engagement Higher for Children in Extracurricular Activities*. This would be a starting place for understanding the overall pictures of young people in the United States.

The Centers for Disease Control keeps tabs on young people on topics as specific as taking others’ prescription drugs to bullying at or on the way to school. This is a good way to find general trends: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm/>

Canada

Statistics Canada produces an excellent overview of Canadians youth, with demographics, rates of par-

participation in volunteer work, how connected they are (very), fields of study they enter, disabilities they experience, health, mental health, and suicides all in here: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-631-x/11-631-x2018001-eng.htm#a3>

PNLA REGIONS

Alaska

The American FactFinder. <https://factfinder.census.gov>. This is the best starting place for understanding any state in the U.S. It covers age, education, race, housing, income, veteran status in remarkable detail.

Alaska's Department of Education & Early Development. <https://education.alaska.gov/> Accesses Alaska's report card, graduation data, tech education data, special education data, and any number of assessment reports.

Alaska's Division of Public Health. <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/vitalstats/pages/data/default.aspx>. Points to the opioid epidemic and mental health conditions, as well as general public health information.

Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey: *Preliminary 2017 Highlights*. http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Chronic/Documents/yrbs/2017YRBS_PreliminaryHighlights.pdf
Describes consumption of sugary drinks, tobacco, other substances, as well as diet and nutrition and a survey of connectedness, sexual activity, and bullying.

Alaska Department of Health and Social Services: Division of Behavioral Health. Prevention and Early Intervention. <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dbh/Pages/Prevention/default.aspx>. This points to research about preventing underage drinking, opioid misuse, suicide, and how the community can help with prevention efforts.

Coalition for Education Equity of Alaska. <https://ceequity.org/eqq/>. Focuses on research about helping hire and keep teachers to improve equity of Alaska's schools.

Kids Count Alaska. <https://www.voicesakchildren.org/2018-kidscount-data-book/> Lots of research available here, one of the startling findings: "More than a third of Alaska children live in families where no parent has regular, full-time employment."

Alberta

Statistics Canada. <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/start>. Starting by clicking on the category Children & Youth, dip in to healthy behaviors, home life, risk behaviors, and self-perceptions of the young people of Canada in general, search each document for Alberta in particular.

Ministry of Education. <https://www.alberta.ca/ministry-education.aspx>. Besides assessment reports, the Ministry offers a special part of their website devoted to inclusivity, including strategies, resources for librarians, and information about particular populations.

Health Profile for Alberta. https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-student-tobacco-alcohol-drugs-survey/sites/ca.canadian-student-tobacco-alcohol-drugs-survey/files/uploads/files/cst14_provincialprofile_ab_20170125_a.pdf. Includes information about mental wellness, bullying, smoking, impaired driving, and marijuana use.

The Youth Prevention Survey: Understanding Youth Perceptions of Alcohol, Drugs & Sex. https://policywise.com/wp-content/uploads/resources/2016/07/407The_Youth_Prevention_Survey_-_Understanding_Youth_Perceptions_of_Alcohol_Drugs_and_Sex_November_2014.pdf Explores the knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes from the perspective of 418 survey participants.

Alberta Municipal Affairs. Public Libraries. http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/alberta_libraries Includes links to best practices, which include language about inclusivity, link to sign up for symposia, often on inclusivity and diversity.

British Columbia

Statistics Canada: Children & Youth. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/subjects/children_and_youth. Doing a search for British Columbia retrieves reports about screen time, physical activity, body mass index, and more.

Ministry of Education. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/education>. Besides standard reporting, BC's Ministry of Education has a report on earthquake preparedness and a link to StrongStartBC, a program to connect parents and their children with play based learning.

BC Adolescent Health Survey. https://www.mcs.bc.ca/ahs_reports. Includes links to recent reports on Metis youth, young people and their pets, the last health survey completed in 2013 (one is being conducted in the spring of 2018), included information on LGBT identification, sleep patterns, self-harm, thoughts of suicide and a wide array of issues.

Society of Children and Youth of BC. Resources. <https://www.scyofbc.org/resources/> Reports focus on children's rights.

The Stigma and Resilience among Vulnerable Youth Centre. <http://www.saravyc.ubc.ca/> "The Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre (SARAVYC) aims to understand the influences of stigma and discrimination on health disparities of marginalized youth, including sexually exploited, street-involved, and LGBTQ2S (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans*, Queer and Questioning, and Two Spirit) youth."

Idaho

American Fact Finder. <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>. Basic demographic Information.

Idaho Bureau of Vital Records & Health Statistics. <https://www.idaho.gov/agencies/vital-records-and-health-statistics-idaho-bureau-of/>. The Education link takes the user to a book a day, resources for

writing papers on Idaho, and children's resources from state agencies.

Idaho Report Card. <https://idahoschools.org/>. Reports out test scores, ethnic background, and more detailed data such as students from low income families, English language learners, students with disabilities, students in foster care, students who are homeless, and from migrant and military families.

Youth Risk Behavior Survey. <https://www.spanidaho.org/uploads/2017-Youth-Risk-Behavior-Survey-Results.pdf>. An amazingly detailed look at Idaho's youth, including alcohol and drug use, but also responses to queries about driving while texting, sending sexual pictures of themselves through the internet, had seriously considered suicide (22 percent)!

The Idaho Out-of-School Network. <https://idahoutofschool.org/data-and-research/>. The Idaho Out-of-School Network's (ION) mission is to ensure Idaho's youth have access to high quality out-of-school programs. Reports include data on girls, Stem programs, and afterschool program research.

Montana

American Fact Finder. <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml> Basic demographic information.

Office of Public Instruction. Youth Risk Behavior Survey. <http://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Data-Reporting/Youth-Risk-Behavior-Survey>. Includes everything from homelessness to breakfast, mental health, tobacco use, and driving behaviors.

Growth and Enhancement of Montana Students. <https://gems.opi.mt.gov/Pages/HomePage.aspx>. Data center for school information.

Montana Kids Count. <http://www.montanakidscount.org/> Recent reports are about being LGBTQ in Montana, youth parenting, and co-occurring disorders in Montana youth.

Empower MT. <https://www.empowermt.org/> Organization focusing on after school programming, developmental opportunities and awareness building to create safer spaces.

Oregon

American Fact Finder. <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml> General demographic data.

Oregon Health Authority. <https://oregon.pridesurveys.com/regions.php?year=2017>. Survey responses to everything from substance abuse, depression, thoughts of suicide, bullying, connectedness to teachers, family members, physical fights, weapon possession, volunteering, sleep, virtually everything worth knowing about young people, by state, county and school.

Oregon Department of Education. Report Cards. <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/schools-and-districts/reportcards/Pages/default.aspx>. Information at a glance includes the basics plus inoculations, in English or Spanish. Detailed results per school based on math and English competency by group such as low-income.

Children First for Oregon. <https://www.cffo.org/>. Detailed information about young people, including children in foster care, number and percentage of youth who report have been abused, childhood food insecurity, teen pregnancy, and uninsured young people.

Washington

American Fact Finder. <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>. General demographic data.

Healthy Youth Survey. <http://www.askhys.net/Reports/Additional> Detailed information about everything from substance use, bullying, texting and driving, fighting, gang membership, firearm use, interaction with prosocial peers, volunteering, and parental attitudes toward substance use.

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Report Cards.

<http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/summary.aspx>. Assessment data on language and math by school or district. Also includes data by race, low-income, migrant, and English language learners.

Book Reviewing Sites

Quotation marks indicate direct importation of website verbiage.

ALA's Association of Library Service for Children (<http://www.ala.org/alsc/publications-resources/book-lists>) Has a number of different places to see book reviews, advocacy for diversity, also "Comforting Reads for Difficult Times" which has recommendations for books on abuse, adoption, depression, etc. MANY TOOLS here, including papers on The Importance of Diversity in Library Programs and Material Collections for Children, Children's Notable Lists, Recommended books from ALSC, and more.

Advocate's list of best children's books for LGBT *The Advocate* (<https://www.advocate.com/>) is a newsweekly for this population; their recommendations are from the community; they also track homophobic responses to children's books.

American Indian Youth Literature Award (<https://ailanet.org/activities/american-indian-youth-literature-award/>) "The American Indian Youth Literature Awards are presented every two years. The awards were established as a way to identify and honor the very best writing and illustrations by and about American Indians. Books selected to receive the award will present American Indians in the fullness of their humanity in the present and past contexts."

Ann Connor Brimer Award for Children's Literature. Part of Atlantic Book Awards. (<http://atlanticbookawards.ca/finalists-winners/2018-atlantic-book-awards-winners/>) "The Atlantic Book Awards Society (ABAS) is a registered non-profit organization with the mandate 'to promote and acknowledge excellence in Atlantic Canadian writing and book publishing through an annual awards ceremony and related events.'"

Award for First Nation/Inuit Young Adult Literature (<https://www.burtaward.org/burt-award-canada>)

“The CODE Burt Award is a literary award and readership initiative that recognizes excellent, engaging, and culturally relevant books in English for young adults (aged 12 through 18). The award program was established by CODE, a Canadian charitable organization that has been advancing literacy and learning for 59 years along with the generous support of William (Bill) Burt and the Literary Prizes Foundation.”

British Columbia Book Prizes. Multiple: (<https://bcbookprizes.ca/winners-finalists/>). “To recognize and promote the achievements of the book community in BC and Yukon through the BC Book Prizes and related programs.”

Canadian Children’s Book Center. (<http://bookcentre.ca/programs/awards>) has multiple awards, by genre and intended audience.

The Children’s Book Council. (<https://www.cbcbooks.org/readers/reading-lists/diverse-kids-and-ya-lit/>). The Children’s Book Council (CBC) is the nonprofit trade association of children’s book publishers in North America, dedicated to supporting the industry and promoting children’s books and reading. Includes a Diverse Kids and YA literature place.

Cooperative Children’s Book Center. (<https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/default.asp>). Thematic book lists, book of the week, annual best of the year and The Charlotte Zolotow Award winning Picturebooks. A list of the 30 Multicultural Books Every Teen Should Know was updated in 2018.

Database of Award Winning Children's Literature. (<http://www.dawcl.com/>). “The purpose of this database is to create a tailored reading list of quality children's literature or to find out if a book has won one of the indexed awards. I expect the user to be a librarian or a teacher intervening for a child-reader, however anyone may make use of it to find the best in children's literature including parents, book store personnel, and children and young adults themselves. DAWCL has over 13,000 records from 154 awards across six English-speaking countries (United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, England, and Ireland).

Guys Read. (<http://www.guysread.com/>). Guys Read is a web-based literacy program for boys founded by author Jon Scieszka in 2001. Its mission is "to help boys become self-motivated, lifelong readers by bringing attention to the issue, promoting the expansion of what is called reading to include materials like comic books, and encouraging grown men to be literacy role models.”

Hmong ABC (<https://www.hmongabc.com/>). “Nyob zoo and welcome to Hmong Arts, Books & Crafts: The First Hmong Bookstore (also known as Hmong ABC). At Hmong ABC, we are dedicated to preserving and promoting the Hmong people through our large collections of Hmong arts, books and crafts. We're pleased to have the honor of serving you online through our secure website.”

International Board on Books for Young People (<https://www.ibby-canada.org/awards/>) Several Awards including books for children with disabilities, and the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award

KidsReads. (<https://www.kidsreads.com/>). “Ever craved a good book and just not been inspired by

anything you see? Or felt annoyed that you bought a book that was merely so-so? Or closed a book and JUST wanted to talk about it? Or wished you had a place to discover new books? We know what this feels like. The Book Report Network aims to solve these reader dilemmas, with thoughtful book reviews, compelling features, in-depth author profiles and interviews, excerpts of the hottest new releases, contests and more every week. We hope you'll visit our websites and discover why since 1996 The Book Report Network has been the best place online to talk about your last great read --- and find your next one.” Find reviews by author/title/age group/genre/date.

McNally Robinson Book for Young People Award. (<https://www.mcnallyrobinson.com/kids/browse/category/1115/>). The McNally Robinson Book for Young People Award was established in 1995 to celebrate the best in Manitoba writing and publishing for children. This award, divided into the categories of Young Adult and Children, is presented to the two Manitoba writers whose English language books for young people are judged the best written.

Mr Schu Reads. (<http://mrschureads.blogspot.com/>). “I am a part-time lecturer at Rutgers University and the Ambassador of School Libraries for Scholastic. I work diligently to put the right book in every child's hand. Book trailers are one way to connect readers with books. (All opinions shared are on own.)” Search this blog for Mr. Schu’s take on children’s books.

Norma Fleck Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children’s Non-Fiction (<http://bookcentre.ca/programs/awards/norma-fleck-award-for-canadian-childrens-non-fiction>). “Canada’s non-fiction books for young people are internationally renowned for the superb quality of their text, illustration and design. The Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children’s Non-Fiction was established by the Fleck Family Foundation and the Canadian Children’s Book Centre on May 17, 1999 to recognize and raise the profile of these exceptional non-fiction books.”

Ontario Library Association. Multiple Awards. (<http://www.accessola.org/web/OLA/default.aspx>). “The Forest of Reading® is Canada's largest recreational reading program! This initiative of the Ontario Library Association (OLA) offers seven reading programs to encourage a love of reading in people of all ages. The Forest helps celebrate Canadian books, publishers, authors and illustrators. More than 270,000 readers participate annually from their School and/or Public Library. All Canadians are invited to participate via their local public library, school library, or individually.”

Pura Belpré Award (<http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/belpremedal>). “The award is named after Pura Belpré, the first Latina librarian at the New York Public Library. The Pura Belpré Award, established in 1996, is presented annually to a Latino/Latina writer and illustrator whose work best portrays, affirms, and celebrates the Latino cultural experience in an outstanding work of literature for children and youth. It is co-sponsored by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), and REFORMA, the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking, an ALA affiliate.”

Sheila A Egoff Prize. (<https://bcbookprizes.ca/submissions/categories-criteria/sheila-a-egoff-childrens-literature-prize/>). “Awarded to the author(s) of literary books, including novels, chapter books, and

non-fiction books, aimed at juveniles and young adults, which have not been highly illustrated.”

We Need Diverse Books. (<https://diversebooks.org/resources/where-to-find-diverse-books/>) A listing of where to find books, by group membership of all kinds. Links to *Social Justice Books* (<https://socialjusticebooks.org/about/see-what-we-see/>)

Vicky Metcalf Award for Literature for Young People: (<https://www.writerstrust.com/awards/vicky-metcalf-award-for-literature-for-young-people/>). “The Vicky Metcalf Award for Literature for Young People is given annually to the author of an exceptional body of work in children's literature. The winner is selected by a three-member, independent judging panel.”

Teen Book Finder. (<http://booklists.yalsa.net/>) Young Adult Library Services Association compiles lists, including: Amazing Audiobooks, Best Fiction for Young Adults, Fabulous Films, Great Graphic Novels, and Outstanding Books for the College Bound, Popular Paperbacks, and Quick Pics for Reluctant Young Adults, Readers' Choice, and Teens Top Ten.

Books and Journals for Book Reviews

Price, A., & Rowland, M. (2010). *Children's core collection* (20th ed., Core collection series). New York: H.W. Wilson. More than 17,000 books with annotations from *School Library Journal* reviews, arranged by Dewey, includes a star if it is a “most highly recommended” title. Indexed by subject and author.

Barr, C., & Naidoo, J. (2015). *Best books for children: Preschool through grade 6* (10th ed., Children's and young adult literature reference series). Santa Barbara, California: Libraries Unlimited, AN IMPRINT OF ABC-CLIO, LLC. There are *Best Books for...* many grade levels, children, young adult, and teens. ABC-CLIO publishes them. They are compilations with reviews coming from *Booklist*, *School Library Journal*, *VOYA*, *Horn Book* etc. Huge sections of books on “contemporary life and problems.”

Marantz, S., & Marantz, K. (2005). *Multicultural picturebooks: Art for illuminating our world* (2nd Ed.). Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press. Worthwhile reading for just the two introductions, the authors recommend “Reading reviews and asking members of that culture who may be in your community are the best defenses to avoid utilizing disturbing stereotypes” (p. xiii). The reviews, based on geography (African and African Americans, The Middle East and North Africa, etc.). Includes numbers of pages and grade level recommendations.

Horn Book. Bimonthly. Stars indicate outstanding book by the editors. Reviewers are librarians, teachers, and freelance writers. The latest issue has an article with reviews on LGBTQ+ books. *School Librarian*. 4 times per annum. British. Arranged by age levels. Beautifully written, longer reviews.

School Library Journal. Monthly. Arranged by age level and fiction/nonfiction (early childhood/fiction, for example). Signed reviews end with verdicts that can be acerbic (VERDICT: Other than the illustrations, there is little else to recommend this book.) or specific reasons to buy the book

(VERDICT: With beautiful, cool blue illustrations and simple text, this book is a welcome addition to any library; great for lapsits or storytimes with a “never give up” theme.).

Teacher Librarian. 5 times per annum. Not produced for the book reviews but for professional guidance, but has both book and media reviews.

VOYA. (Voices of Youth Advocates). Monthly. Reviews in the back include quality indicators (from hard to imagine it being better written to hard to understand how it got published), popularity, and grade level interest.

Every individual community will differ about the surveys that are administered and the agencies that pull the results together. In Minnesota, the Legislative Reference Library continually reviews, categorizes, and promotes websites on their “Links to the World.” Another website, Substance Use in Minnesota collates the results from any number of different surveys, making it possible to get down to the county level understanding of what students say about their support network, whether they eat meals together as a family, any of factors that might contribute to substance use and abuse. The Wilder Foundation is continually posting new reports about young people—everything from chemical dependence to homelessness, child care issues, and a lot more. Particularly in these difficult budgetary times, it is valuable to intentionally seek out the agencies in local communities that do surveys and use the results to purchase the best collection for our patrons, especially our young ones who are still developing their love of books.

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