

Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact

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Vine Deloria, Jr., leading Native American scholar and author of the best-selling *God is Red*, addresses the conflict between mainstream scientific theory about our world and the ancestral worldview of Native Americans. Claiming that science has created a largely fictional scenario for American Indians in prehistoric North America, Deloria offers an alternative view of the continent's history as seen through the eyes and memories of Native Americans. Further, he warns future generations of scientists not to repeat the ethnocentric omissions and fallacies of the past by dismissing Native oral tradition as mere legends.

In this latest work by the prominent historian, Deloria turns his audacious intellect and fiery indignation to an examination of modern science as it relates to Native American oral history and exposes the myth of scientific fact, defending Indian mythology as the more truthful account of the history of the earth. Deloria grew up in South Dakota, in a small border town on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. There he was in a position to absorb the culture and traditions of Western Europeans, as well as of the native Sioux people. Much of the formal education he received about science, including how the earth and its people had formed and developed over time, came from the white, Western world; he and his fellow students accepted it as gospel, even though this information often contradicted the ancient teachings of the Native American peoples. As an adult, though, Deloria saw how some of these scientific "facts", once readily accepted as the truth, now began to run against common sense as well as the teachings of his people. For example, the question of why certain peoples had lighter or darker skins posed an especially thorny problem - one that mainstream journals and books failed to answer in a way that was satisfactory to this budding skeptic. When he began to reexamine other previously irrefutable theories - of the earth's creation, of the evolution of people, of the acceptance of the notion that the Indians themselves had been responsible for slaughtering and wiping out certain large animals from their habitat over time - he also began to reconsider the value of myth and religion in an explanation of the world's history and, in the process, to document and record traditional knowledge of Indian tribes as offered by the tribal elders. Vine Deloria Jr. is a leading Native American scholar whose research writings, and teaching have encompassed history, law, religious studies, and political science. He is the former executive director of the National Congress of American Indians. Named by *Time* magazine as one of the eleven greatest religious thinkers of the twentieth century, he is the author of numerous acclaimed books, including *God is Red*, *Custer Died for Your Sins*, *Power and Place*, and *Red Earth, White Lies*. Mr. Deloria lives in Golden, Colorado.

Other Books

Radicals in Their Own Time, *Radicals in Their Own Time* explores the lives of five Americans, with lifetimes spanning four hundred years, who agitated for greater freedom in America. Every generation has them: individuals who speak truth to power and crave freedom from arbitrary authority. This book makes two important observations in discussing Roger Williams, Thomas Paine, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, W. E. B. Du Bois and Vine Deloria, Jr. First, each believed that government must broadly tolerate individual autonomy. Second, each argued that religious orthodoxy has been a major source of society's ills - and all endured serious negative repercussions for doing so. The book challenges Christian orthodoxy and argues that part of what makes these five figures compelling is their willingness to pay the price for their convictions - much to the lasting benefit of liberty and equal justice in America.

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