Winter 1999

Review of *Indians and Anthropologists: Vine Deloria, Jr. and the Critique of Anthropology* Edited by Thomas Biolsi and Larry J. Zimmerman

Donald D. Stull
*University of Kansas*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly](http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly)

Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly)


[http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/1613](http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/1613)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

North American anthropology can be divided into two ages: BD and AD—Before and After Deloria. In 1969 cultural anthropology in the United States was shaken by Vine Deloria’s witty diatribe, Custer Died for Your Sins. Twenty years later, cultural anthropologist Tom Biolsi and archaeologist Larry Zimmerman organized a symposium on the subsequent relationship between anthropologists and American Indians. Indians and Anthropologists assembles several of these papers and some new ones in what will certainly be an often-cited collection.

The book’s introduction reviews “What’s Changed, What Hasn’t” since Deloria fired his shot across anthropology’s bow in Custer’s chapter on “Anthropologists and Other Friends.” It closes with Deloria’s conclusion on “Anthros, Indians, and Planetary Reality.” In between, ten chapters explore Deloria’s critique of anthropology, archaeology and American Indians, and “the connections between ethnography and colonial discourses and modes of domination.” Six contributors are cultural anthropologists, two archaeologists, one a historian, and one an Indian educator—three are American Indians.

North American anthropology was born among the Iroquois and the Zuni, and until the 1960s it was hard to find an anthropologist who had not worked among American Indians. This bond explains why the discipline was so shaken by Deloria’s attack. In “Growing up on Deloria,” Elizabeth Grobsmith speaks for anthropologists who grew to professional maturity in the immediate aftermath of Custer. Elocutently examining Deloria’s decidedly mixed legacy for anthropology, Grobsmith alone among the contributors acknowledges the substantial contributions of applied anthropology to Indian people.
Nothing has strained recent Indian-anthropologist relations more than repatriation and reburial. Archaeologists and anthropologists themselves are often bitterly at odds over these matters. Randy McGuire does a masterful job of explaining how archaeologists came to believe that “all the real Indians are dead” and belonged to them. Larry Zimmerman’s review of anthropology and the reburial issue shows how we got into this mess and suggests principles for future archaeological investigations.

Cecil King argues for the Indian right not to be researched over the anthropological right to know, but his case is weakened by hyperbole and by blaming anthropology for the sins of others, such as the federal government. More damning by far is Marilyn Bentz’s critique of the ethnographic enterprise itself in “Beyond Ethics: Science, Friendship, and Privacy.” Bentz, a Gros Ventre social worker and anthropologist, questions how ethnographers obtain their information and report it. Focusing on ethical problems inherent in life histories, kinship studies, and reflexive accounts for Indian subjects of anthropological writings, her chapter should be required reading for every ethnographer.

*Indians and Anthropologists* reveals the complex and evolving relationship between these two groups After Deloria. But the man himself is apparently still mired in the Sixties. Indeed, “the Indian world has changed dramatically” over the past thirty years. But Deloria’s “planetary reality” ignores the fact that anthropology has changed even more. For the most part, anthropology has left Deloria—and Indians—behind. They have, in fact, gotten what they wished for. Maybe this book will enable anthropology and American Indians to move on.

**Donald D. Stull**

Department of Anthropology

University of Kansas