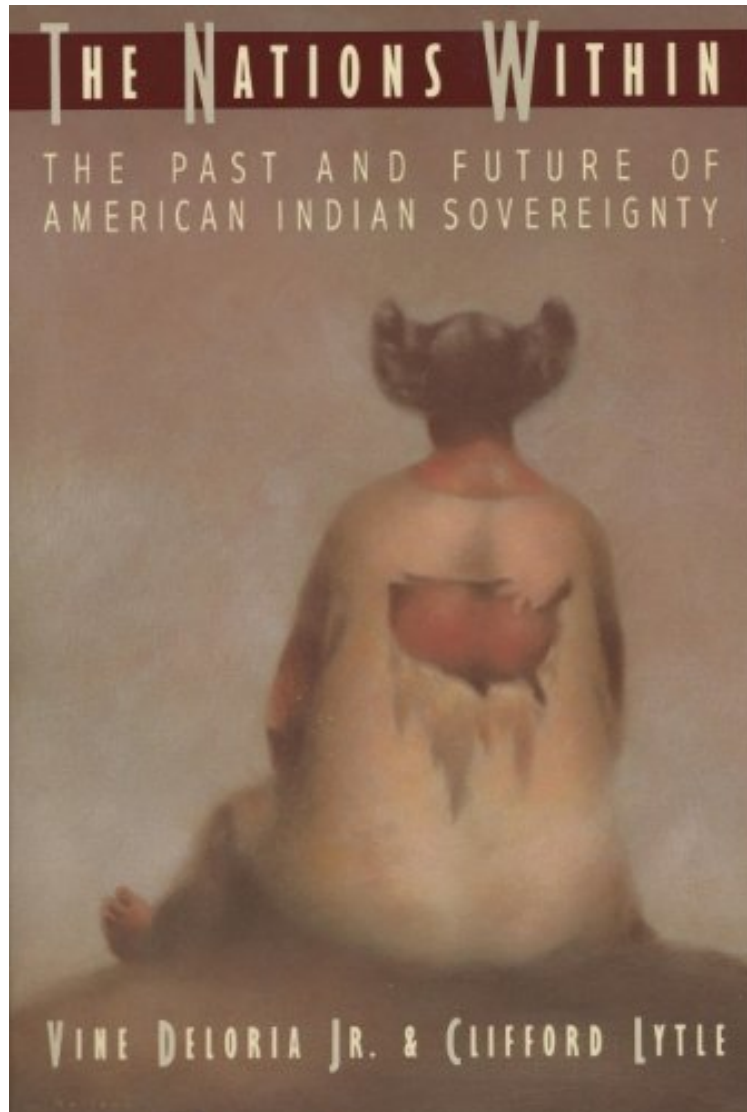


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The Nations Within: The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty

Vine Deloria Jr

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Vine Deloria Jr : The Nations Within: The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Nations Within: The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty:

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Sovereignty and its renewalBy Arthur DigbeeThis book provides a history of native "sovereignty" wrapped around a particular political manifesto. That manifesto very much reflects the concerns of the 1960s and 1970s, and part of this book represents a criticism of the approach of the American Indian Movement. It's written in a level-headed and balanced style despite the authors' obvious passion.This book emphasizes

the history of sovereignty, the struggles, successes, and failures. It is lightly informed by theoretical notions of sovereignty, self-government, and self-determination. This is sociological theory of the type found from the 1960s through the 1980s, not the critical theory of the humanities that have dominated such thinking since the 1990s. The middle chapters give us a fairly detailed legislative history of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. That's more detail than most people will want. However, the authors' hero is John Collier, whose actions they defend vigorously but not uncritically. Understanding what Collier wanted to do, the obstacles to his vision, and the scope for evading congressional intent inform Deloria and Lytle's own political concerns. The authors' larger agenda is to argue for self-determination, to show that Indian participation in social programs tend to make them federal agencies and not self-governing communities. Government-to-government relations, similarly, does not make the tribes sovereign. Instead, they argue for a cultural, political, and economic renewal of the reservations. This should be grounded in the "tribal Indians" living in a native linguistic and cultural environment, and not among the "ethnic Indians" who speak English, feel at ease working with the federal government, and who live in the agency towns or in larger urban areas. They also believe that the ethnic Indians' movement has led to unnecessary conflict with white society. Tribal Indians have pursued both autonomy and mutual respect with respect to other cultures, they argue, and this provides a stronger political foundation for renewal. This part of the argument is overstated, I suspect. The book does not provide much evidence about any individual tribe or reservation, so the authors' statements must be seen as generalities based on their personal histories of working with a large number of tribes around the country. Though this book is now dated after 25 years, it still very much warrants reading. After this moment, writings on Native sovereignty move away from political, legal, and economic concerns and toward postmodern approaches. As I've noted in other reviews, I think this humanistic turn is a political mistake. Deloria and Vine provide an excellent example of previous approaches, one that those with humanistic inclinations would be well-advised to consider.

39 of 39 people found the following review helpful. This book provided an added bonus. By LaLoren I bought this book to try to understand how tribal governments fit into our federal system. I got the added bonus of learning how a bill becomes law. In outlining Collier's attempts at getting the Indian Reorganization Act passed during the FDR administration, DeLoria and Lytle explain in detail, the committee hearings, the compromises and the way the two houses of Congress work together. I am sorry to say that, up to this point, I had no understanding of this complicated process. This is a well-written, even handed book. It makes complicated issues easier to comprehend, and it casts blame, as well as praise, on both sides of the issues. During the time that I was reading this book, members of the Lakota nation on the Pine Ridge reservation took over tribal government buildings as a protest against their Tribal Council. Because of my reading, I was able to understand a little bit better what was happening. I would strongly recommend this book to anyone who wants to learn about what has happened in Indian policy since the end of the Indian Wars, and also to anyone who wants a better understanding of how our own government works.

The message of *The Nations Within* is an urgent one, and should be read by anyone concerned with American Indian affairs today. Those of us who try to understand what is happening in North American Indian communities have learned to see Vine Deloria, Jr., both as an influential actor in the ongoing drama and also as its most knowledgeable interpreter. This new book on Indian self-rule is the most informative that I have seen in my own half-century of reading. Deloria and his co-author focus on John Collier's struggle with both the U.S. Congress and the Indian tribes to develop a New Deal for Indians fifty years ago. It is a blow-by-blow historical account, perhaps unique in the literature, which may be the only way to show the full complexity of American Indian relations with federal and state governments. This makes it possible in two brilliant concluding chapters to clarify Indian points of view and to build onto initiatives that Indians have already taken to suggest which of these might be most useful for them to pursue. The unheeded message has been clear throughout history, but now we see how if we let Indians do it their way they might more quickly than we have imagined rebuild their communities.

Sol Tax, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology, University of Chicago

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