



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

By Vine Deloria Jr.

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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.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Though Deloria (*Custer Died for Your Sins*) has a broad academic brief—he teaches history, law, religious studies and political science at the University of Colorado—here he ventures into a new area, attacking the way scientists have created "a largely fictional scenario describing prehistoric North America" and suggesting that Indian lore may offer better explanations. Given Deloria's not-so-temperate tone—"Christianity has been the curse of all cultures into which it has intruded"—it is hard to judge all his arguments. He finds flaws in scientific accounts of how Indians once traversed the Bering Strait land bridge; he also reports that geological evidence suggests an earlier Indian presence and notes that no tribal creation stories reflect such a migration. Similarly, he criticizes scientists who argue that Indians killed off North American megafauna of the Pleistocene era. Deloria's fiercely argued study sometimes overwhelms as a narrative, but his charges should provoke more evaluation, as well as examination of the consonance of science and Indian tradition.

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From Library Journal

Deloria, one of the most outspoken Native American voices of the century, is back—this time to take on the scientists. Demonstrating that a theory is just that until it has been solidly proved, the author of *Custer Died for Your Sins* (Univ. of Oklahoma, 1988) takes the scientific community to task for insisting on uniformity of opinion within academia while neglecting Native oral traditions about such events as the peopling of the Western Hemisphere and the disappearance of the giant animals of the Pleistocene era. While many will challenge Deloria's arguments, the author's insistence that scientists investigate non-Western knowledge in their search for the truth echoes a cry heard through Native American communities. An important addition to all collections. —Mary B. Davis, Huntington Free Lib., N.Y.

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From [Booklist](#)

Deloria's battle against ignorance about American Indians has frequently taken the form of paradigm-challenging books, such as the best-selling *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1969) and this bold critique of scientific theories in general and their application to American Indian history in particular. Deloria, invigoratingly outspoken, identifies the many ways science has been used against American Indians, from the technology of violence to a justification of racism. He goes on to expose erroneous assumptions behind the Bering Strait theory of the peopling of the Western Hemisphere and the "overkill" theory of the extinction of the mammoth and other "megafauna." Why, he asks, has the centuries-old oral tradition of American Indians been dismissed as mere stories, whereas the raw speculations of scientists have been enshrined as truths? Curiously enough, scientists are now "discovering" facts preserved in the oral tradition, such as information about ancient geologic events and how sick animals use plants to heal themselves. By disputing long-held scientific shibboleths, Deloria, as thorough as he is vehement, encourages recognition of the invaluable knowledge possessed by tribal peoples, knowledge all of us would benefit from. *Donna Seaman*

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