



American Indian History, Vols 1 & 2: Five Centuries of Conflict & Coexistence

Robert W. Venables

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American Indian History chronicles the dynamic process of interaction among Indian nations, Europeans and the United States during the past five centuries. Through his meticulous research and excellent narrative style, Robert Venables, Ph.D., makes this history come alive. Starting with the early period of contact, "discovery" and conquest, this two-volume set presents a detailed study of all sides of many complex issues, allowing the reader to look at American history from a new perspective and presenting, often for the first time, the Native sides of these issues. This work also provides insights into the cultural misunderstandings between Indian nations and the Eurocentric-thinking U.S. government. The survival of both cultures despite their conflicts has brought about an alliance between the two, both still struggling to shape their identities while sharing the same lands, as well as the values of freedom and individual liberties. Every American who cares about the future of our nation should read this two-volume set.

Volume I: Conquest of a Continent, 1492-1783 begins by comparing and contrasting the different worldviews held by Indian and European nations as reflected in their philosophies and religions. It progresses to comprehensively document the contact, conflict and alliances that shaped and influenced their histories. During the initial conflicts in the 1500s, the Europeans debated the morality of conquest, then set the legal precedents that continue to affect Indian nations down to the present day. The Doctrine of Discovery and the Papal Bulls shaped these policies of conquest for both the Europeans and later the colonists. Indian nations developed political philosophies to cope with the pressures of colonial governments. Some adapted to European ideas and technologies as a means of survival. Some went to war with the Europeans, and others made alliances with them. Often these alliances were against other Indian nations, making the frontier far more complicated than red versus white. During these times, the descendants of the Europeans, believing the entire North American continent was their destiny, began the long process of coercing the Indian nations from their lands, a practice that continues today.

Volume II: Confrontation, Adaptation & Assimilation, 1783-Present continues the saga of Indian-U.S. government relations, beginning after the Revolutionary War, when the United States turned on both its former Indian enemies and allies. The Policy of Removal forced most Indian peoples to lands west of the Mississippi. New policies such as the Dawes Act of 1887 succeeded in breaking up the communal land holdings of many Indian nations. The tragic end of the era's struggles occurred at Wounded Knee, where Lakota followers of the Ghost Dance religion were slaughtered by the Army. During the first half of the 20th century different Indian programs reflected the goals of their United States government and eras more than they recognized the variety of Indian perspectives. After World War ii, U.S. policies such as the relocation of thousands of Indians to urban areas and the attempted "termination" of treaty rights and reservations eventually forced a choice between assimilation and political resistance. Treaty rights and land claims demonstrate how the present day continues past history, even as new controversies, such as casino gambling on Indian reservations, arise. Because Indian America remains diverse, all the issues remain complex.

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