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# Indigenizing the Future: Why We Must Think Spatially in the Twenty-first Century

Daniel R. Wildcat

I have been saddened by the recent death of Vine Deloria, Jr. My sadness is compounded because outside of indigenous communities, institutions, and nations of North America, too few Americans knew and understood his work. In this essay recalling his life and work, which was completed before he started his journey to the stars, I write about my friend and mentor Vine Deloria, Jr. and his contributions as an indigenous thinker, public intellectual, and one of the most important voices of the twentieth century.

Vine Deloria, Jr. had a profound impact on American Indian scholarship and activism; few indigenous thinkers have been so influential.<sup>1</sup> As anthropologist Don Stull has written, “North American anthropology can be divided into two ages: BD and AD—Before and After Deloria.”<sup>2</sup> Deloria achieved recognition through his intellectual energy, virtuosity, and activism, but he never called attention to himself—it was unnecessary. Through five decades, Deloria articulated in his teaching and twenty-odd books the importance of tribal knowledge—indigenous wisdom. He called attention to American Indian ways of knowing and knowledge not as historical artifacts, but as practical knowledge relevant to the modern world. Given the breadth of Deloria’s work, in this essay I will focus on three important themes that have had an enormous influence on twentieth-century scholarship generally and indigenous thought specifically and have shaped my own thinking and activism.

First, Deloria always framed the topics he addressed in what I call the “big picture”—issues of world-wide importance.<sup>3</sup> Second, despite the nearly transcendent nature of his ideas, he always spoke as an indigenous thinker—a Standing Rock Sioux thinker, to be specific. On more than one occasion I heard him grouse about Indian professionals and scholars who contended that their tribal identity had not influenced their professional activities. He was always quick to ask, “Why not?”<sup>4</sup> He always took American Indian cultures—everything from habits and behavior to beliefs and values as well as material culture—seriously. Finally, among Deloria’s most fruitful and challenging ideas is his four-decades-old proposal to consider history as a spatial phenomenon.<sup>5</sup>

### Where Human Beings Are Today and the “Big Picture”

The United States operates on incredibly stupid premises. It always fails to understand the nature of the world and so does not develop policies that can hold the allegiance of people. It then alienates everyone who does not automatically love it. It worries about its reputation and prestige but daily becomes more vulnerable to ideologies more realistic than its own. This country could be easily influenced by any group with a more comprehensive philosophy of man if that group worked in a nonviolent, noncontroversial manner.<sup>6</sup>

Today leaders throughout the institutions of modern and postmodern societies desperately need modest indigenous maps of where public policy might presently move humankind—literally and figuratively. I suggest they start with three early works by Vine Deloria, Jr.: *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1968), *God Is Red* (1973), and *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence* (1979). Contemplate three salient issues today: peace in the Middle East, economic growth in China, and the future of Russia. These issues have been profoundly shaped by the unique histories of these places—their geographies, landscapes, ecological environments, and cultures. And in the early twenty-first century, war in Iraq, waged as a war against terrorism led by the United States, has dominated U.S. public concerns—as well it should.<sup>7</sup>

In a world dominated by increasingly global public policy issues, Deloria, a distinguished authority on American Indian affairs, has a lot to contribute. The strength of his writings is that they always put American Indian struggles in the big picture. From an analytic point of view, this meant that Deloria developed a keen understanding of American society’s dominant—that is, predominantly Western-informed—institutions and worldview. The problem of “history” is chief among the issues emerging from a world confronting Western ideologies, and is, I argue, central to why we should give serious consideration to Vine Deloria’s writings and the plausibility of *indigenizing the future*.

The concept of indigenization has been profoundly influenced by Vine Deloria, Jr., and I take as its most defining feature the sense in which the word *indigenous* means being native to or of a place.<sup>8</sup> As people around the world are forced to, enticed to, or “freely” choose to adopt an increasingly homogenous commodity culture, what is lost are diverse local cultures situated in places, landscapes, and ecosystems they call home. Indigenization is a set of practices that results in processes in which people seriously reexamine and adopt those particular and unique cultures that emerged from the places they choose to live today. It is an acknowledgement that the old ways of living contain useful knowledge for our lives here and now.

Unfortunately, Deloria’s suggestion in *God Is Red* to reorient and reconceptualize history from a spatial perspective has not circulated widely.<sup>9</sup> Few Americans consider Native Peoples as intellectuals. This prejudicial perspective, like so much of the dialogue between Indigenous People and European Americans in the United States, is fraught with irony. As Deloria’s iconoclastic unmasking of the character of higher education in America demonstrates, America’s academies seem increasingly to be institutions of fear and dogma—from both the ideological left and right.

To the extent that the general public identifies intellectuals with the academy, we should be thankful that few Americans identify Indians with such institutions and generally ignore what academic intellectuals say. However, given anti-intellectual sentiment among many Americans, the downside for indigenous thinkers is that we are seldom heard, read, or examined by anyone other than those who “love” Indians in the most stereotypical fashion. If we diverge from either the “noble savage” script or, conversely, the despondent dependent colonial victim motif, many Americans simply turn the channel or put the book down. That many people in addition to scholars, literati, social activists, and American Indians have read Vine Deloria’s books indicates his influence. With American Indians comprising only about 1 percent of the population, one cannot become well-known by simply writing for American Indian readers. More to the point, if one wants to improve the position of Indigenous Americans, European American and African American allies are needed. Deloria understood this point and worked to build intellectual alliances, but from a position of strength, never from a position of weakness.

That position of strength, for Deloria, was always American Indian metaphysics, or what I prefer to identify as worldviews. In *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence*, Deloria surveyed some of the most provocative thinkers of the 1960s and 1970s. He used Jean-Francois Revel’s book *Without Marx or Jesus* as a point of departure to search for an integrated synthesis of knowledge, both scientific and religious.<sup>10</sup> Given developments in the sciences throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Deloria was hopeful that a big picture might emerge:

The problem is not . . . forcing people to delve into the sophisticated theories of modern physics, astronomy, or psy-

choanalysis. Rather the problem is that Western peoples have stepped out of the mainstream of our species' traditional way of recording and remembering experiences. Western thinkers have erected a series of absolute concepts, some dealing with the physical world, others describing the world of human affairs. As a consequence, Western people have been taught to think in a restricted manner. The whole development of modern science today would suggest that we are returning to the ancient manner of thinking in which all the contents of experience are integrated in a single descriptive language.<sup>11</sup>

In *Metaphysics* Deloria discussed evidence supporting his hope that the old Western notions of science and religion would give rise to a “new,” integrated, experientially based sense of knowledge. He was not talking about a reductionistic consilience, as advocated by E. O. Wilson.<sup>12</sup> Instead, Deloria had in mind a much more complex integration or consilience, one that operated on several levels of experience and throughout what might be called different spheres of life, without reducing the world to materialist mechanisms.

Integration, according to Deloria, would not operate through physical mechanisms but rather through a “single descriptive language.”<sup>13</sup> Of course, the “ancient manner of thinking”<sup>14</sup> about experience has had little opportunity to develop given scientific practices today, which are even more specialized than three decades ago. In indigenous worldviews all things are related and connected; however, they do not relate and connect through simple cause-and-effect mechanisms. Instead they are *understood* through language and culture built on ancient observations of correspondences and juxtapositions of phenomenal events and situations. Deloria's methodological approach was informed by what I call a modest indigenous epistemological position: knowledge resides in the construction of meaning found in the process of living in the world.<sup>15</sup>

Deloria's indigenous epistemological position is intrinsically ecological in character. Knowledge from this indigenous position cannot exist as an exclusively human construction, but must be an emergent property of life systems and environments. Therefore, in our Native traditions, it is not romanticism to refer to mountains, plants, animals, rivers, and so forth, as our teachers or elders—it is realism. Three decades ago Deloria was keeping indigenous traditions of leadership alive when he implored readers to pay attention to the “peculiar genius of each continent—each river valley, the rugged mountains, the placid lakes,” not merely to examine the obvious environmental problems, but more important, to find solutions.<sup>16</sup> A big-picture indigenous realism suggests “wisdom” does indeed “sit in places.” When we set out today to address the pressing problems of the planet, it is crucial that the *we* includes the many other-than-human entities who are also members of and critical to our communities.

Deloria's work has, unfortunately, been neglected. This is best illustrated by Deloria's mostly unknown, *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence*. The dis-

mal reception of this work can be largely explained by the publisher's view that the general U.S. reading public, although finding it plausible to think an American Indian might have something insightful to say about Indian affairs and Indian-white relations, finds it nearly impossible to believe a Sioux Indian could have anything intelligent or useful to say about modern non-Indian society, especially its science, metaphysics, and religion.<sup>17</sup>

Deloria's *Metaphysics* seems to challenge stereotypes of Indians; "real" Indians are not supposed to know Judeo-Christian theology, Western philosophy, and European American law. Thus, many Americans expect Indians to be angry, but when Deloria systematically called into question the internal coherence, assumptions, and practical consequences of Western civilization, many were intrigued but unable to appreciate fully his indigenous assessments of America and the metaphysics of modern existence.

Fortunately, American Indians have increasingly examined Deloria's discussion of North American intellectual traditions, including both his critique of dominant Western thinking and its consequences and his elaboration upon and extension of American Indian conceptual frameworks. Herein lies his most significant contributions on a host of issues. Deloria's thinking provocatively engages a wide range of issues such as science, indigenous sovereignty, theology, philosophy, and the environment. The power of his thought results in large part from his epistemological openness to nonlinear—for example, catastrophic and complex—events and explanations, which challenges those who want certainty in the world.

Not surprisingly Deloria's recent work, *Evolution, Creationism, and Other Modern Myths*, convincingly argues that the problem with the evolution-creationism debate is that both sides are adamant about having the "truth." Deloria pointed out that both sides arrive at their respective "truths" through two mutually exclusive abstract and closed systems of thought: "The quarrel between evolutionists and creationists, and between Western and other religious traditions, reduced to its most basic form involves the interpretation of history. Two views, irreconcilable with each other, vie for our approval."<sup>18</sup> As systems of thought, science and religion have virtually no meeting ground since the common ground of experience, "the contents" of our experience, are never really examined. If *experiences* were examined, both sides would be much more modest in their claims and would resort less to what Deloria and Paul Feyerabend rightly identify as arguments by authority.

We have relied on authority figures in both science and religion, and they have brought us to this impasse. We are expected to choose sides between two antagonists, neither of whom offers us an accurate and verifiable set of beliefs to follow. . . . The anomalies in Western science and religion are so numerous that they now constitute an easily identifiable alternative to what we are presently asked to believe. We

should demand that we be treated as adults—no more “Just So Stories” or religious myths need to be fed to us.<sup>19</sup>

The “Just So Stories” of Western scientific and religious institutions are problematic unless one recognizes that what Calvin Martin called the “ontology of fear” has been deeply embedded in the Western worldview and the personalities it produces.<sup>20</sup> As Deloria pointed out in *God Is Red*, the presence of fear is palpable in the main currents of Christianity.

Deloria’s and Martin’s identification of fear as a prominent feature of modern Western thinking is supported by Kirkpatrick Sale’s examination of the process of colonial conquest in *The Conquest of Paradise*.<sup>21</sup> Sale convincingly documented that the real tragedy of 1492 occurred before the voyage even began. Columbus and his learned European contemporaries were imbued with a fear of nature and the “natives” who lived in nature, outside the walls of the city. The way to overcome this fear was through control: control of nature and, of course, of the natives themselves. The great civilizing—that is—colonizing, process of the West had been well underway in Europe for several centuries before Cristobal Colon ever set sail. One need only examine the demonization and persecution of earth-based religions in the several centuries before Colon’s journey to sense how Christian religious leaders instilled a fear of those who lived and prayed outside the city walls, beyond “civilization.”

The existence of an ontology of fear goes a long way toward explaining what Michel Foucault and a host of postmodernist theorists have identified as the modern linkage between control and knowledge and, later, the identification of technique or science with control and, therefore, the necessity for “authorities.”<sup>22</sup>

Truth as it is represented in the largely Western debate between science and religion is about what John Dewey called the “quest for certainty.”<sup>23</sup> Although Deloria and Dewey might disagree on several philosophical issues, when it comes to the crippling legacy of the quest for certainty, both seem to agree that equating knowledge with truth or certainty is a largely unattainable goal in a dynamic and rapidly changing world. The Western trilogy of fear, control, and certainty does, it seems to me, sharply differ from indigenous North American worldviews, in which respect, cooperation, and choice dominate over fear, control, and certainty. Of course, such a perspective challenges Western social science models that assume tribal societies are dominated by customs, habits, and superstitions that preclude choice. The towers of control and certainty in Western thought appear in indigenous traditions more like tenuous bridges between different situations in space and time.

Indigenous thinkers not only acknowledge contingency and human’s lack of control in the world; they also see it as empowering and humbling, not something frightening. In a vast number of indigenous worldviews, power exists in and through the relations and processes that constitute life. That the universe

does not revolve around humans encourages an attentiveness to the world often neglected today. In the place of all of the post-Enlightenment *-isms* of Western Civilization—for example, romanticism, modernism, postmodernism, and so forth—Deloria suggested we take seriously big pictures of the world in which our human choices are highlighted not by control but by cooperation. The question of informed choice is critical because, as he so eloquently summarized three decades ago, modern civilized human beings are ill informed because of their inattentiveness:

The lands of the planet call to humankind for redemption. But it is a redemption of sanity, not a supernatural reclamation project at the end of history. The planet itself calls to the other living species for relief. Religion cannot be kept within the bounds of sermons and scriptures. It is a force in and of itself and it calls for the integration of lands and peoples in harmonious reality. The lands wait for those who can discern their rhythms. The peculiar genius of each continent—each river valley, the rugged mountains, the placid lakes—all call for relief from the constant burden of exploitation.

The future of humankind lies waiting for those who will come to understand their lives and take up responsibilities to all living things. Who will listen to the trees, the animals and birds, the voices of the places of the land? As the long-forgotten peoples of respective continents rise and begin to reclaim their ancient heritage, they will discover the meaning of the land of their ancestors. That is when the invaders of the North American continent will finally discover that for this land, God is red.<sup>24</sup>

The big picture in indigenous thinking is informed by the lands, by other living species (the trees, the animals, and the birds), and by the unique ecological and environmental features of the continents; in short, the custom of “viewing life in its totality” informs indigenous thinking. It means that the distinctions we make and the categories we form function very differently from those found in modern Western civilization.

For thousands of years indigenous pedagogy existed in “the traditions, beliefs, and customs of the American Indian people”—peoples who discerned the rhythms of the lands and sought out the meanings found in places. It was hardly romanticism; it was merely experiential knowledges always suggesting ways human beings might integrate in harmonious realities that tribal peoples called home. No doubt mistakes were made, and tribal peoples have not always everywhere been attentive, but even here we have our own stories about the devastating consequences of inattentiveness.



But, as Deloria so clearly articulated in *God Is Red* and other works, our indigenous mythologies seldom went the direction of Western mythology, in which humankind becomes the creator and earth their resource. Deloria expressed an indigenous stance toward science and religion:

If we compare religious experiences with scientific thinking, we arrive at the realization that the processes are much the same; we should not laud the “objectivity” of the scientists while deriding the “subjectivity” of the religious thinkers. Physicists and many other scientists receive their insights in pretty much the same way that mystics and tribal medicine men do.<sup>25</sup>

Looking at our own “religious” traditions and then looking at the traditions of science, Deloria saw possibilities for meaningful integration or, at least, respectful dialogue. He always insisted that there is another way—a Native way. Those wishing to escape the invidious dualisms, distinctions, and dichotomies of Western thinking would do well to examine Deloria’s work.

Deloria’s work has been influential for at least three generations of American Indian readers for several reasons. First, as suggested above, his discussion of issues was always framed in the big picture of human experience and comparative worldviews. Deloria understood that the problems Indians have faced in America cannot be analyzed independently from Western institutions. Second, his analyses were always couched in terms of American Indian points of view or, as I will suggest, knowledges. Finally, few indigenous scholars have so clearly identified a fundamental and paradigm-shifting idea in indigenous North American worldviews as Deloria did in his elaboration of American Indian “spatial thinking” and a spatial conception of history.

Deloria saw little opportunity or reward in mainstream academia for “synthesizers—those who try to paint the larger picture” of life and knowledge in the world:

Unfortunately, at the present time academics seem to be rewarded with advancement primarily when they keep the knowledge of the past grounded in narrowly focused specialty topics, thereby gaining an immense reputation by becoming an expert in a miniscule field defined exclusively by themselves and their colleagues. Synthesizers—those who try to paint the larger picture—do not do well in academia, and for that reason most of the truly creative work is being done outside the ivy covered walls.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, Deloria continued to encourage new generations of American Indian scholars to form their own institutions of education and to do so by taking American Indian knowledges seriously.

### **Taking American Indian Knowledges Seriously**

We stand today at a crossroads. . . . Clearly the current tendency is to attempt to reclaim the nineteenth-century roots of social existence that can give us a sense of permanency in a world of increasing change. But the stability of that era was at best a mythological memory of a golden age. Our very refusal to acknowledge the failures of both American and world history and our patriotic effort to make it into a golden age show how pathetic and inadequate our tools for confronting change really are.

Within the traditions, beliefs, and customs of the American Indian people are the guidelines for society's future. . . . White America and Western industrial societies have not heard the call of either the lands or the aboriginal peoples. In appalling indices of social disorder of the tribal peoples Westerners see only continued disruption and, being unaccustomed to viewing life as a totality, cannot understand the persistence of the tribal peoples in preserving their communities, lands and religions.<sup>27</sup>

Another distinguishing feature of Vine Deloria, Jr.'s books, essays, and articles is that, unlike many Indian experts writing about Indians in the 1960s and 1970s, Deloria took American Indian knowledges seriously. He did not view Indian knowledge systems in the past tense as artifacts or relics that must be preserved for history's sake, but rather as knowledges that should be taken seriously for contemporary and practical purposes.

I have heard Vine Deloria tell numerous audiences that when he became executive director of the National Congress of American Indians he always made it a point to listen to what the elders of tribal communities had to say.<sup>28</sup> He gained a tremendous amount of information by listening—not only when these elders spoke to critical contemporary issues of the day, but also when they spoke informally of their childhoods. He learned from their stories, information, and the knowledge they had gained from their parents and grandparents living before and in the early days of reservation life.

Deloria treated American Indian knowledges as wisdom, as living entities. As a result he influenced two generations of indigenous scholars who would not be trapped in the dominant Western dichotomy of either/or in any of its pernicious forms: primitive versus modern, spiritual versus physical, nature versus culture, and so on. He was an “indigenist” before the term became popularly applied to Native-based thinking and actions.<sup>29</sup>

In *Custer Died for Your Sins*, Deloria suggested that what was needed were American Indian intellectuals who could fight the battles of self-determination intellectually on the battlegrounds of the dominant society. Yet they would use their own indigenous intellectual weapons to “greatly influence the thinking of the nation within a few years.”

It would be fairly easy, however, with a sufficient number of articulate young Indians and well-organized community support, to greatly influence the thinking of the nation within a few years.

So it is vitally important that the Indian people pick the intellectual arena as the one in which to wage war. Past events have shown that the Indian people have always been fooled by the intentions of the white man. *Always we have discussed irrelevant issues while he has taken the land.* Never have we taken the time to examine the premises upon which he operates so that we could manipulate him as he has us.

A redefinition of Indian Affairs, then, would concentrate its attention on the coordination among the non-reservation peoples and the reservation on a regional or area basis. In that way migrations to and from urban areas could be taken into account when planning reservation programs.<sup>30</sup>

There are several reasons developments in Indian Country have not unfolded exactly as Deloria suggested in 1969. For example, the modern corporate structures that he hoped might serve as vehicles for an Indian recolonization of the land may rather have precluded effective tribal innovations. His hope was that once Indians adopted corporate structures to accomplish a wide range of goals, they would adapt these structures to fit their own worldviews. Some success has certainly been met by the efforts of several tribes in the Great Plains to reclaim land and to reintroduce (recolonize) the bison or American buffalo into that environment. More widespread and less certain in the big picture of future tribal economies and cultures are the numbers of tribal corporations developing around casino-style gaming.

In challenging the status quo, Deloria surprised Indians and non-Indians alike by picking metaphysics as an intellectual arena in which to battle. Imagine the reaction of the non-Native readers who found an American Indian confidently articulating Indian solutions to modern social problems—and identifying the solutions based on American Indian traditions and worldviews.

During the 1960s and early 1970s themes of love were common in American popular music; singers and songwriters suggested love as the answer to humankind’s most pressing social problems. However, beyond *Billboard’s* top 40 lists few Americans, especially intellectuals, took popular music’s love solu-

tions seriously, nor were they willing to reassess the modern Western worldview, which was producing serious distortion in the world. Deloria was an exception.

Of course, the hippies, yippies, and many youth of the era saw the problems and desperately sought solutions outside the dominant materialist and militarily reinforced conventions of America. Buddhism, self-help psychologies by the dozen, Jesus Freaks, and all manner of counterculture movements, groups, and sects were afoot. Nevertheless, intellectuals in the United States during this time continued for the most part to labor within the confines of Western worldviews and philosophies. This is not to deny that some were doing very good work in identifying problem areas: democracy, the environment, religion, and applications of science to technology. But, I shall argue, following Deloria's formulations at the time, that the problems were and remain inextricably bound up in the Western worldview.

As the institutions of science, politics, economics, and, of course, religion in America were all discovering the "environment" in the early 1970s, Deloria was pointing out that American Indians had long-standing human cultures (and I mean culture in the big picture—all of those features of our humanity that involve creativity and choice) and, specifically, worldviews built on what I would call an ecological foundation. In *We Talk, You Listen* Deloria described the artificiality of modern American ways of living in both rural and urban areas. He described with great vision what an increasing number of Americans now realize as we begin the twenty-first century:

Technological progress totally defines the outlook of most of America, so long as newer buildings and fancier roads can be built, additional lighting and electrical appliances can be sold, and conveniences for modern living can be created there is not the slightest indication that urban man realizes that his *artificial universe* is dependent on the real world.<sup>31</sup> (emphasis mine)

The "artificial universe" Deloria described three decades ago is so prominent today that many children think of trips to theme parks as outdoor adventures, and skyscraper metropolitan hotels create several-stories-high lobbies with waterfalls, lagoons, and tropical plants to give guests a calming environment and, above all else, a convenient and completely artificial sense of nature. Deloria saw no evidence that the dominant ideas of America could be reoriented to achieve a worldview that would hold some hope for a sustainable future for humans and other species on the planet.<sup>32</sup> Modern industrial, and now postindustrial, technology has so isolated us from plants, animals, and the so-called natural elements that it is amazing we have any "nature" and "natives" left anywhere on the planet.

The alienation from indigenous tribal identities, worldviews, and knowledges is marked by matriculation into what Deloria called an "artificial universe."<sup>33</sup>

Considered collectively, Deloria's work has suggested what it means to indigenize American Indian policies and programs. There is much good work to be done: we must both extract ourselves from a culture dominated by Eurocentric colonial policies and institutions that are called American Indian only because that is to whom the policies and programs are directed, and also create communities where educational policies and institutions are denominated Indigenous because they have emerged from our tribal cultures.

In the place of corporate plans for an America and a planet increasingly "malled" and characterized by a homogeneous commodity culture disconnected from unique peoples and places, Deloria suggested the feasibility of an indigenous map to the *summum bonum*. Long before the term *globalization* became popular, Deloria saw American society exporting destruction. He saw solutions in tribal worldviews:

*Meanwhile, American society could save itself by listening to tribal people.* While this would take a radical reorientation of concepts and values, it would be well worth the effort. The land-use philosophy of Indians is so utterly simple that it seems stupid to repeat it: man must live with other forms of life on the land and not destroy it. The implications of this philosophy are very far-reaching for the contemporary political and economic system.<sup>34</sup> (emphasis mine)

Deloria concluded his discussion of our new "artificial universe" with an admonition: "The only answer will be to adopt Indian ways to survive. For the white man even to exist, he must adopt a total Indian way of life."<sup>35</sup> Our indigenous ancestors were not ecologists or environmentalists as we think of them today—they simply lived and thought ecologically and environmentally. In American Indian traditions, there is no tension and opposition between philosophy and how one lives.

Not surprisingly, in a review of Paul Feyerabend's works on Western scientific methodology and epistemology,<sup>36</sup> Deloria began his essay by quoting the words of Osage Chief Big Soldier to Indian Agent George Sibley in 1920:

I see and admire your manner of living, your good warm houses: your extensive fields of corn, . . . workhouses, and a thousand machines, that I know not the use of. . . . In short you can do almost what you choose. You whites possess the power of subduing almost every animal to your use. You are surrounded by slaves. Everything about you is in chains and you are slaves yourselves. I fear if I should exchange my pursuits for yours, I too should become a slave.<sup>37</sup>

The quote is not token “nativism”; rather it indicates the extent to which Deloria, regardless of the topic under scrutiny, finds wisdom in the words of indigenous peoples who, only one or two centuries ago, were viewed as primitive.

In *Against Method*, Feyerabend identified the inconsistencies between orthodox scientific methodology and epistemology and pointed out that alternative approaches to knowledge are epistemologically precluded. Deloria was correct to see Feyerabend as an ally on the battleground of scientific mythologies, especially in his advocacy of maturity when determining the value of special forms of knowledge “to the totality of human existence.”<sup>38</sup> Deloria elaborated a definite indigenous notion of maturity that drew on his years of attentiveness to indigenous North American elders or, dare I say, scholars:

Maturity, in the American Indian context, is the ultimate goal of all human existence. Here we have a good many similarities with Feyerabend’s conception of mature understanding. . . . Maturity, in the American Indian context, is the ability to reflect on the ordinary things of life and discover both their real meaning and the proper way to understand them when they appear in our lives. This idea sounds as abstract as anything uttered by a Western scientist but it is not abstract in the Indian context.<sup>39</sup>

In an American society fixated on youth, Deloria’s work may point out as well as anyone’s the value of paying attention.

Maturity is a reflective state suggesting a lifetime of experiences that, through an increasing ability to reflect on experience, has produced a personal hierarchy of relationships. This hierarchy has three major components that, because of the intensely personal nature of experience, are appropriately related to the experiences of the individual and, on the tribal level, the group. Maturity seems to be essentially about attentiveness: the development of what I have called a “synthetic attentiveness” to the web of complex relationships that constitute our experience.

Deloria’s suggestion that maturity is best found in those societies and traditions that scholars have labeled as “primitive” is explored in considerable depth in *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence*. In a chapter entitled “Tribal Religious Realities,” he once again found intellectual enrichment in the perceptions of reality held by so-called “primitive” people:

We conclude that primitive peoples’ perceptions of reality, particularly their religious experiences and awareness of divinity, occupy a far different place in their lives than do the conceptions of the world religions, their experiences, and the-

ologies, philosophies, doctrines, dogmas, and creeds. Primitive peoples preserve their experiences fairly intact, understand them as a manifestation of the unity of the natural world, and are content to recognize these experiences as the baseline of reality. . . . Primitive peoples always have a concrete reference—the natural world—and the adherents of the world religions continually deal with abstract and ideal situations on an intellectual plane. “Who is my neighbor?” becomes a question of great debate in the tradition of the world religions, and the face of the neighbor changes continually as new data about people becomes available. Such a question is not even within the world view of primitives. They know precisely who their relatives are and what their responsibilities toward them entail.<sup>40</sup>

Deloria emphasized that if we were to take seriously the knowledges and wisdom possessed by tribal peoples we might find something useful for understanding the crises modern humans face daily: “abandonment, despair and anguish,” to borrow an apt description from Sartre.<sup>41</sup> We need not try to go back to the “good ol’ days” or become “natives.” A good place to begin this much-needed honest assessment of tribal knowledges is a consideration of what would happen if human beings once again took the places—the spatial dimension—where we lived as being as constitutive of our histories as time or the temporal dimension. What American Indians, indigenous people worldwide, and a growing number of non-Native peoples now recognize is that we have an opportunity historically and culturally to assess the wisdom held by tribal peoples before the onslaught of industrially dominated nation-states.

### **Thinking Spatially: What It Means and Why It Is Important**

When the domestic ideology is divided according to American Indians and Western European immigrants, however, the fundamental difference is one of great philosophical importance. *American Indians hold their lands—places—as having the highest possible meaning, and all their statements are made with this reference point in mind.* Immigrants review the movement of their ancestors across the continent as a steady progression of basically good events and experiences, thereby placing history-time in the best possible light. (my emphasis)<sup>42</sup>

Throughout his writing, Deloria articulated an indigenous philosophical foundation for the unique expression of different tribal identities: a foundation

fundamentally spatial in character. His years of experience working with indigenous people throughout the United States led him to recognize the cultural uniqueness of specific peoples from particular places on the planet. His formulation of spatial thinking, which counts as the metaphysical antidote to the abstractions and mythologies of Western views of history, necessarily emphasizes experience. In spite of the homogenizing cultural influence of globalization, one must approach the world as landscapes identifiable with “a series of non-homogeneous pockets of identity that must be thrust into eventual conflict, because they represent different arrangements of emotional energy.”<sup>43</sup> Today we are living through the “eventual conflict” that three decades ago Deloria anticipated would take a primarily religious form, for example, the Middle East and central Asia. His sustained use of spatial thinking is important to explicate.<sup>44</sup>

At the beginning of the twenty-first century—as Western chronology would denominate the “time” we live in—increasing numbers of scholars, policy makers, and the general public around the world are beginning to recognize that the exclusively Western notions of historical progress, civilization, and enlightenment are not so simple nor so innocent as once believed. Deloria’s repeated radical critique of Western conceptions of history presently eclipses rediscoveries and reassertions of the importance of spatial concepts and realities found throughout French postmodernist theories and discourses.<sup>45</sup> It does so because it offers both criticism of the overwhelmingly abstract linear temporal conception of history that infuses current Western thinking with deadly consequences, on the one hand, and an indigenous spatial conception of history that suggests solutions to some of the most entrenched problems found in the world today, on the other.

There is no romanticism in Deloria’s views; he was a realist. His spatial conception of history is fundamentally experiential and based on the words of American Indian leaders and elders. As one tries to wrap one’s mind around Deloria’s spatial conception of history in all its richness, it is worth reflecting on the Yamparika Comanche Ten Bears’s words at one of the largest treaty-making events in U.S. history at Medicine Lodge Creek in 1867. Ten Bears, after hearing of some of the government’s plans for his people, stated:

But there are things which you have said to me which I do not like. They are not sweet like sugar, but bitter like gourds. You said that you wanted to put us upon a reservation, to build us houses and make us medicine lodges. I do not want them. I was born upon the prairie, where the wind blew free and there was nothing to break the light of the sun. I was born where there were no enclosures and where everything drew a free breath. I want to die there and not within walls. I know every stream and every wood between the Rio Grande and the Arkansas. I have hunted and lived over that country. I lived like my fathers before me, and, like them, I lived happily.



Great White Father told me that all the Comanche Land was ours, and that no one should hinder us from living upon it. So, why do you ask us to leave the rivers, and the sun, and the wind, and live in houses?<sup>46</sup>

Ten Bears eloquently speaks to what it means to be indigenous—to be a Comanche—a human being. Ten Bears’s home was not a house; it was a prairie with rivers, woods, wind, and the sun, all of which he knew well.

There is a fundamental difference between the way indigenous peoples of North America and the Western European immigrants understood their respective histories. To the Western mind, human beings look backward and forward in time to get a sense of their place in history, whereas American Indians literally looked around the natural world to get a sense of their place in history. The significance of invoking the four winds or directions, the sky, and the earth, widespread throughout many tribal traditions, is more profound than any New Age guru can imagine. This invocation literally signifies, as *God Is Red* explained three decades ago, the spatial nature of North American indigenous worldviews and illustrates the place-based or spatial features of American Indian metaphysics Deloria suggested. His spatial conception of history serves as a compelling counterpoint to a view of history in which one primarily seeks to identify one’s place in history relative to a particular set of ideas that situates one either forward or backward along some abstract time line of human history.

Luther Standing Bear’s observation regarding “the spirit of the land” illustrated yet a deeper sense of spatial history:

The white man does not understand America. He is too far removed from its formative processes. The roots of the tree of his life have not yet grasped the rock and the soil. The white man is still troubled by primitive fears; he still has in his consciousness the perils of this frontier continent, some of its fastnesses not yet having yielded to his questing footsteps and inquiring eyes. He shudders still with the memory of the loss of his forefathers upon its scorching deserts and forbidding mountaintops. The man from Europe is still a foreigner and an alien. And he still hates the man who questioned his path across the continent.

But in the Indian the spirit of the land is still vested; it will be until other men are able to divine and meet its rhythm. Men must be born and reborn to belong. Their bodies must be formed of the dust of their forefathers’ bones.<sup>47</sup>

In much of modern Western discourse the land and nature, when invoked, are abstractions or mere materials for control and manipulation. For Luther Standing Bear, on the other hand, the “spirit of the land” is phenomenal and

manifests itself uniquely in its “rhythm,” which is manifold—wetland, prairie, forests, mountains, and desert. Human cultures and their rhymes and reasons are as diverse as the environments from which they emerged.

The key feature of indigenous thought is its particularity: power plus place equals personality is Deloria’s formulaic response to Western thinkers, both modernist and postmodernist.<sup>48</sup> His intellectual efforts in metaphysics aimed to articulate indigenous North American metaphysics and to identify a coherent discourse for discussing the typical fundamental miscommunication between American Indians and European-Americans when they discuss topics ranging from science to religion. Universal “truth” cannot be a domain laid claim to by one small group of people who have an experience of one small place on this planet—Europe. Human beings have a sense of history that is both spatial and temporal because they experience it as such.

It is of critical practical importance that some cultures express history as primarily temporal and others express history as fundamentally spatial in character. Once history-as-time is universalized and human beings are, so to speak, all put on the same clock, it is inevitable that in the big picture of human history some peoples will be viewed as “on time,” “ahead of time,” or “running late.” It makes little difference that the clock hands rotate in circles, for they are thought of and acted on as if they were wheels moving down a single road called progress.

This road ought to be the ultimate metaphor for Western civilization and modernity, for it is an ideological abstraction. As John Mohawk concisely elaborated in his essay “The Right of Animal Nations to Survive,” the metaphysics of progress presents itself as the greatest threat to the future biology of the planet.<sup>49</sup> In the mind’s eye of “progressive” thinking “civilized” folks, there are no savannas, forests, canyons, mountains to be respected in building this road called “progress”; nor are there peoples living in these ecosystems that account for much—except as materials or resources for the road builders. And this is precisely the problem.<sup>50</sup> It has become obvious that the indigenous cultures emergent from many places on the planet operate on assumptions, paradigms, and a unique sense of history and time that contradict Western notions.

Officials of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund seldom give a second thought to the question of what indigenous tribal peoples desire for their children and the environments they inhabit, and the same could be said for the U.S. Department of the Interior. It is the height of hypocrisy—blatantly undemocratic—to think that democracy can be achieved by methods of imposition.<sup>51</sup>

We are simultaneously shaped by past events and participants in future events—through our present deliberations and actions. But the advocates of progress demand that everybody must get “on board” with their essentially Western program. Fortunately, American Indians, as we are wont to do, must ask where we are going. The linear view of history is, figuratively speaking, a road existing nowhere, going nowhere, and of course producing nowhere women

and men, resulting in the exponential growth of what James Howard Kunstler called a “geography of nowhere.”<sup>52</sup>

The irony of the increasing development of “nowherevilles” is that they are happening somewhere—often in our own backyards. It is naive to think that Western models of economic development and social and cultural institution building will not change where we live and how we live, and these are the ultimate issues at the center of education in general.

American Indian or indigenous traditions resist ideas of universal homogeneous world history; there is no single road per se to human improvement. There are many paths, each situated in the actual places, such as prairies, forests, deserts, and so forth, and environments where our tribal societies and cultures emerged. The experiences of time and history are shaped by places. This is not a pre- or postmodernist or deep ecologist position. It is an indigenous realist position, one that increasing numbers of ecologists, such as Wes Jackson at the Land Institute, are recognizing as crucial if we human beings are to learn how to live in healthy sustainable communities utilizing appropriate technologies.

Unlike the Western linear view of history, the experiential continuum of history upon which indigenous people rely has spatial boundaries with time understood as space mediated. Western civilization and the ideologies attendant to it have done their best to get people all over the planet on the same road and running on the same schedule. But indigenous people who have survived this brutal Western metaphysical road-building project still retain knowledge and wisdom overlooked today. The linear metaphor is a central stumbling block to the kind of knowledge, I argue, that advances democracy: wisdom emergent from complex biological interactions and cultural communities (environments), a much broader experience than current human-centered conceptions. Once we have discarded the assumption that history moves in a linear “manifest destiny” fashion, we can then tackle the other unconscious assumption of Western metaphysics: that human history exists unto itself.

The idea of a human history existing unto itself is foreign to the Native peoples of North America. Native peoples’ worldviews of history are not separated from the entire geological and biological history, nor are they separated from the environment to which they belong. Our human history is, so to speak, a part of a larger natural history.

Although it is convenient for us in many instances to separate human history from other aspects of the world’s historical existence, it is profoundly significant that when world history is taught in modern classrooms it inevitably is understood as the history of human cultures. That few modern Western thinkers would find it problematic to speak of world history in this conventional sense is indicative of the extent to which, one could argue, following John Dewey and Vine Deloria Jr., our educational system itself, as an experience, runs counter or is an obstacle to human growth and development.<sup>53</sup>

The more human beings act as if their history is independent of the larger histories and realities of the natural world, the more increasing numbers of people

are beginning to explore a more holistic or ecological understanding of their place in this world. However, before people go haphazardly creating New Age and/or new technology solutions, they might examine potential solutions based on a very old Native or indigenous wisdom—a wisdom encompassed in what I have called an “implicit environmental ethos.” Some of the best examinations of this idea are now coming from the fields of medicine and biology. David Suzuki’s *Wisdom of the Elders* and Mark Plotkin’s *Tales of a Shaman’s Apprentice* are examples of scientists and scholars who have done work respectfully and built on indigenous knowledge.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, cooperative research methodologies need to be developed to ensure that proper recognition is given to traditional knowledge holders or indigenous scholars. Native Americans distrust many scientists and academic scholars because they have not taken the time to gain acceptance into indigenous communities for extended examinations of experiential knowledge, a fair amount of suspicion and distrust toward them exists among Native peoples. Many Natives are unwilling to work with “outside” scholars and scientists. This issue will not be resolved immediately, and a “special” methods seminar won’t solve it either, for ultimately trust must be earned. And earning trust involves learning. Trust cannot be taught didactically; no certificate program exists that can bestow it. In fact, trust itself is a perfect example of the ontological criteria of the continuum of experience, for it emerges out of experience, as do many of the most important lessons we learn.

### **The “Big Picture”: Experience, Space, and Honesty**

It is becoming untenable to continue thinking about our present situation and, more importantly, our future in the context of linear and anthropocentric ideologies typically associated with the Western tradition. Instead, a different sense of history, politics, ethics, and economics is required. Stated positively, examination of the old ways of living may be critical for our human survival and the health of Mother Earth. Like Deloria, I believe that a recovery and reconstruction of a metaphysical foundation for indigenous worldviews can improve existing models of education and advance democracy and human dignity. These worldviews exist in a context, an environment, of which many current theories of knowledge and philosophies of education seem increasingly unaware or to which they give only lip service: the experiential realm of human existence wherein spirit and reason reside.

This experiential point of departure explains the humility inherent in discussions of what is known and not known among traditional American Indian wisdom keepers or scholars. Acknowledging how little we can know about the world as a result of our individual direct experience leads us to be modest in knowledge claims and conscious of how important trust is in searching for truths. Experience makes us mindful of how much we depend on our relatives and personal relationships to truly understand who we are as human beings.

Places do not count for much in the contemporary world because most of the interiors and exteriors that modern humans inhabit are shaped by Western ideas that are disconnected from physical geography and ecology. Consequently, many Americans live as if the ideas and models of our age are the real world. There is no better example of this point than the conspicuous consumer spaces—homes the size of small hotels and climate-controlled shopping malls larger than many farms were one hundred years ago. Most Americans' lives are increasingly shaped by technologies and practices that direct them away from interacting with the plants, animals, and places where they live.

But convenience has come at a very high price, not only to the places where we live, but also to ourselves. We have lost the knowledge that grew out of direct experience with plants, animals, and geographies—that is, ecosystems. Central to this knowledge is what we learn about what it means to be a human being. Again, this is not romanticism—it is realism. Many measures of environmental quality, human health (especially once one includes mental health), and socioeconomic sustainability, suggest we are in trouble. The irony is lost to many in modern societies; however, the more science and technology have directed energy to controlling nature, the more disturbed the emotional, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of our existence have become. The Western desire and energy invested in reshaping the exterior world has resulted in neglect for our “interior” selves or, more appropriately, for *that* which moves and moves through us.

The dichotomy between fact and value, between science and religion (with a small *r*), and between material wealth and mental health reflects a worldview and reality resulting from a metaphysics with a split personality. This Western metaphysical schizophrenia is a direct result of our disconnection, insulation, and isolation from the natural world. Consequently, our youth are more excited about virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and what Deloria described more than two decades ago as an “artificial universe” than they are about developing their own authentic intelligence that comes from direct experience in the natural world.<sup>55</sup>

Experience also reminds us that the ideas, models, and maps we use to interpret and understand the world are simply that—ideas and models, not the real world itself. At an intellectual level this statement seems obvious, but, the way we live today suggests that this is the most profound problem of our age. Like Deloria, I, too, see opportunities for collaboration between Western-trained scientists and indigenous peoples, and, like Deloria, I recognize such collaborations will not be easy.<sup>56</sup> Deloria's works are rich with suggestions for future research projects American Indian scholars need to undertake, and thankfully, he has set the bar very high in terms of scholarship.

Yet one of the most valuable lessons I learned from working with Vine Deloria, Jr. and elders is the importance of being attentive. When asked by a student after a presentation at Haskell Indian Nations University how he gathered all of the rich information and insights in his books, Deloria simply said, “I

paid attention when the old-timers talked.”<sup>57</sup> In addition to attentiveness, one of Deloria’s gifts was his ability to get the attention of others, not for himself in a selfish way, but rather to call attention to ideas and their practical consequences.

It is far too early fully to assess Vine Deloria, Jr.’s legacy. I will say this much, however: but for the written works of Vine Deloria, Jr., I would be hard pressed to find a person so encouraging of asking hard questions, the questions modernity avoided and postmodernity too often elided with nihilism. I have not addressed Deloria’s legal genius; others are better suited than I for that project. Instead, I have focused on Deloria’s unremitting encouragement to take seriously North American tribal worldviews that reflect the central components of *practices, ways of living*, very old and born of a people’s experience. Even today this knowledge is well known by traditional American Indian scholars, who are often referred to within their own communities as “elders.” These Native practices and ways of living are recognizable as excellent examples of what John Dewey called “instrumentalities.”<sup>58</sup>

As I hope has been apparent throughout this essay, I have been profoundly influenced by Vine Deloria, Jr.; I have benefited enormously from his activism, his teaching, his scholarship, his mentoring, and, above all, his friendship. What my encounter with the man and his work revealed most clearly to me was perhaps his most important virtue—his honesty. I see in his work and in his life not just theories, and models, but an exercise of spirit and reason, an exercise requiring a dedication to speak honestly—something a good number of those in the academy today, as Deloria has pointed out, ought to take more seriously.<sup>59</sup> In “If You Think About It, You Will See It Is True,” Deloria offered a brief review of Western Teton Sioux philosophy, providing a statement that constituted the touchstone for his writing and research:

In fact, tribal peoples are as systematic and philosophical as Western scientists in their efforts to understand the world around them. They simply use other kinds of data and have goals other than determining the mechanical functioning of things. A good way to determine the relevance of tribal knowledge and illustrate its potential for providing insights for the present body of scientific knowledge is to examine some of the knowledge of a particular tribe and discuss what they knew and how they gathered this information.<sup>60</sup>

Deloria’s ideas provide a point of departure, like Ten Bears’s and Luther Standing Bear’s observations, for answering the question, how ought American Indian tribes at the beginning of the twenty-first century exercise sovereignty in practical acts of indigenization? The response suggested in Deloria’s work always begins with a question—where? He certainly wrote in general terms, from what I call a “foundational perspective,” but he always illustrated his general points with specific examples from various tribal traditions and landscapes.

How definitive or broadly applicable are Deloria's foundational ideas to indigenous peoples around the globe? My suspicion is that the influence of the particularity of places and the corresponding cultures of *peoples* emergent from particular places guarantees that ceremonial and symbolic expressions of indigenous worldviews will vary and reflect great diversity. However, cross-cultural research suggests there may be knowledge forms that are widely shared among indigenous peoples around the world. Such knowledge is most likely the result of a way of living that experientially produces similar worldviews based on a shared metaphysical foundation.

Is it ironic or inevitable that humanity has reached a "time" when spatial or place-centered considerations are emerging around the world? This much I know: throughout his life Deloria challenged indigenous and nonindigenous thinkers alike to be wary of doctrinaire platitudes and methodologically induced myths. He did this by suggesting that we think indigenously and spatially and speak honestly. For my generation of indigenous scholars, we can thank Vine Deloria, Jr. for reminding us that what we do should be important in the "big picture."

## Notes

A slightly different version of this article will appear in Steve Pavlik and Daniel R. Wildcat, eds. *Destroying Dogma: Vine Deloria Jr. and His Influence on American Society* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum, forthcoming, 2006).

1. Two recent books are good examples of how but for Deloria's nearly four decades of criticisms of archaeologists and anthropologists, the kinds of issues addressed today might be very different. Thomas Biolsi and Larry Zimmerman, eds., *Indians and Anthropologists: Vine Deloria Jr. and the Critique of Anthropology* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997) and Nina Swindler *et al.*, *Native Americans and Archeologists: Stepping Stones to Common Ground* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1997).

2. See Donald Stull's book review in *Great Plains Quarterly* 19, 1 (1999): 63.

3. Three books set the tone for Deloria's scholarship. Adept at discussing law, history, religion, philosophy, and public policy, Deloria was at his best when he connected several of these areas or subjects in ways that most academics are incapable of doing. See *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (New York: Macmillan, 1969); *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1973); and *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).

4. I first heard this remark some years ago at one of Vine's many Western Social Science Association presentations.

5. See Deloria Jr., *God Is Red*, 75-89; 111-50.

6. Deloria Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins*, 256.

7. See Michael Ignatieff's "The Burden," *New York Times Magazine*, January 5, 2003.

8. The brief statement of what I take to be an indigenization process is found in Vine Deloria Jr. and Daniel Wildcat, *Power and Place: Indian Education in America* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum, 2001), 21-28; 31-32; 38-39.

9. Deloria Jr., *God Is Red*, 75-89.

10. See Jean-Francois Revel, *Without Marx or Jesus* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1970).

11. Deloria Jr., *Metaphysics*, 211.

12. Edward O. Wilson, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998).

13. Deloria Jr., *Metaphysics*, 211.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Deloria Jr., *God Is Red*, 101-9 and *Spirit & Reason: The Vine Deloria, Jr. Reader* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum, 1999), 40-60.

16. *Ibid.*, 301.

17. Vine related this unfortunate episode many times and commented on it in passing in *Spirit and Reason*, 5.

18. Vine Deloria Jr., *Evolution, Creationism, and Other Modern Myths* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2002), 159.
19. *Ibid.*, 221. For Feyerabend's views, see *Science in a Free Society* (London: New Left Books, 1978) and *Farewell to Reason* (London: Verso, 1988).
20. Calvin Martin, *The Way of the Human Being* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 160-92.
21. Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Conquest of Paradise* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990).
22. For a good introduction to this theme in many permutations see: Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge, 1978) and *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1998); Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Vintage Books, 1973) and *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings* (New York: Random House, 1980); Richard Lane, *Jean Baudrillard* (London: Routledge, 2000), 27-45.
23. John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1929).
24. Deloria Jr., *God Is Red*, 300-301.
25. Deloria Jr., *Evolution, Creationism, and Other Modern Myths*, 58.
26. *Ibid.*, 179.
27. Deloria Jr., *God Is Red*, 300.
28. Deloria made this comment at a public presentation at Haskell Indian Nations University on Sept 24, 2003. This statement was made in response to a student question about how he gained so much information from elders.
29. Ward Churchill, "I Am Indigenist: Notes on the Ideology of the Fourth World," in *From A Native Son: Selected Essays on Indigenism, 1985-1995* (Boston: South End Press, 1996).
30. Deloria Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins*, 251-252.
31. Deloria Jr., *We Talk, You Listen: New Tribes, New Turf* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 185.
32. *Ibid.*, 189.
33. *Ibid.*, 181-197.
34. *Ibid.*, 189.
35. *Ibid.*, 197.
36. See Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method* (London: New Left Books, 1975).
37. Deloria Jr., *Spirit and Reason*, 4.
38. *Ibid.*, 13.
39. *Ibid.*, 13-14.
40. Deloria Jr., *Metaphysics*, 159.
41. Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism Is a Humanism," in *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York, Meridian Books, 1956), 287-311.
42. Deloria Jr., *God Is Red*, 75-76.
43. *Ibid.*, 78.
44. See Deloria's *God Is Red*, 75-167; *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence*, 1-45, 184-217; *For This Land* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 175-186, 203-213, and 250-260; *Spirit and Reason*, 78-122, 189-98, and 223-229; and *Evolution, Creationism, and Other Modern Myths*.
45. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 271-71; Jacques Derrida, *Positions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) and *Writing and Difference*, 154-68, 278-94; Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* and "Space, Knowledge and Power," in *Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 239-56; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (London: Blackwell, 1991); and Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993): 1-37.
46. Virginia Irving Armstrong, *I Have Spoken: American Indian History through the Voices of the Indians* (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1971), 85-86.
47. Luther Standing Bear, *Land of the Spotted Eagle* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), 248.
48. See Deloria Jr. and Wildcat, *Power and Place*, 21-28.
49. John Mohawk, "The Right of Animal Nations to Survive," *Daybreak Magazine*, Summer 1988.
50. A good example of an indigenous response to one very contentious road building project can be found in Haskell Indian Nations University's response to a proposed trafficway construction on the southern edge of its campus and through a wetlands ecosystem: see the Haskell Interdisciplinary Team (IDT), *All Things Are Connected: A Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement* (Lawrence, KS: Haskell Indian Nations University, 1994).
51. Worse yet, it is ethnocentric prejudice to presume tribal peoples have no knowledge of or practices of democracy, simply because their practices do not resemble Western practices and conceptualizations.
52. James Howard Kunstler, *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscape* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993).



53. See John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1959) and Deloria's *Power and Place*, 21-28.

54. David Suzuki and Peter Knudtson, *Wisdom of the Elders* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992); Mark Plotkin, *Tales of a Shaman's Apprentice* (New York: Viking, 1993).

55. Vine Deloria Jr., *We Talk, You Listen*, 181-197.

56. Deloria Jr., *Spirit and Reason*, 77.

57. This exchange took place on September 24, 2003, at an afternoon presentation Vine graciously agreed to give for students after delivering the keynote address the night before at a conference entitled "Indian Records for the Twenty-first Century and Beyond: Creating a Tribal/Federal Vision at Haskell Indian Nations University."

58. In fact, Dewey's philosophy of knowledge and its grounding in a complex notion of experience, although never fully elaborated, came closer than any modern Western thinker to capturing the ontological and epistemological foundation of Native worldviews.

59. I can think of no better illustration of Deloria's honesty than his refusal to accept an honorary doctoral degree from the University of Colorado in light of the revelations about widespread violence against women by university football players and a general "anything goes" attitude in methods of football player recruitment. Deloria's decision was precipitated not only by player behavior, but also by an official declaration by university authorities that they simply did not know these "things" were happening.

60. Deloria Jr., *Spirit and Reason*, 41.