

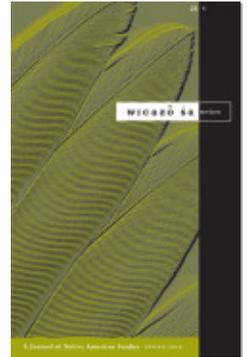


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*Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for
Sovereignty* (review)

David R. M. Beck

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an omnipresent surveillant whose goal is to change children's behavior and "inner voice of conscience" (219) from the pages of the publication. Children's reactions to his presence are largely unknown because they were not recorded directly by them but can be interpreted from the subtle admonitions and reproaches of Man-on-the-Bandstand. According to the author, in fact, his "constant complaints and lists of infractions" (223) reveal that students did disobey the rules (for example, did not march at tempo with the piano while exiting the chapel, walked on the grass, stole apples), found moments for speaking their native language, and even ran away. While personal accounts are missing, students' experiences can be inferred through a reading of the existing documents. For this analytical work, Fear-Segal certainly deserves praise. At the same time, however, she seems to make generalizations that should be cautioned precisely because of the lack of records by students. While it is undeniable that children found ingenious ways of responding to schools' oppressive environments, as numerous other scholars have documented, the author seems to read the reports of the *Indian Helper* with an assumption of uniformity of children's experiences. This erases individual differences and the unique way in which each student learned to cope with the new environment.

White Man's Club is a well-constructed and well-researched book that originally uses primary sources to unveil the covert agenda of race subjugation and control in the government schooling system and its impact on students' lives. By re-piecing together fragments of written records, Fear-Segal brilliantly brings back to light a fundamental chapter of Indian history that broadens our understanding of Indian-white relations: boarding schools and their legacy. This work makes important contributions to American Indian Studies, particularly for those interested in the history of American Indian education and race relations.

REVIEW ESSAY by *David R. M. Beck*

Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty

by Daniel M. Cobb
University Press of Kansas, 2008

Daniel M. Cobb's *Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty* reimagines and redefines the academy's understanding of Indian activism in the postwar era. This book is an argument against the historical profession's "tendency to fixate on AIM," the American Indian Movement. Cobb tells us he is attempting to "decenter and resituate [AIM] within a larger context of Native political action." In doing so he does not desire to

diminish the efforts of AIM, but to illuminate the actions of a broad variety of Native American political activists, including both those “who never embraced militancy—and those who did” (2). He focuses on the efforts of leaders preceding the events generally considered seminal in terms of Native activism, in the hopes of showing the reader the roots of modern Native activism.

The author applies Jean and John Comaroff’s metaphor of the “intricate fugue” to describe the intellectual bases of the militancy, activism, and change that developed in tribal communities, on and off reservations between the 1940s and about 1970, positing that, underlying the motivations of the native and non-native activists in this era, “one can discern the resonant tones of postwar anthropology, community development theory, modernization ideology, anticolonialism, anticommunism, cultural dissent, nationalism, and the politics of race, class and war” (194).

Employing chronological narrative, Cobb builds his story beginning with tribal opposition to the termination policy and culminating in the federal policy shift toward self-determination. He describes the lessons learned by participants in the summer Workshops on American Indian Affairs and follows the leaders who developed their powerful ideas for reform under the tutelage of Robert Thomas, D’Arcy McNickle, and others. He analyzes divisions and developments that grew out of the American Indian Chicago Conference of 1961, which contrasted the leadership ideas of the old guard in Indian Country with the increasingly impatient, budding young leaders.

This conflict is well represented in the analysis of direct action tactics of young leaders, on the national and sometimes local scenes, in contrast to the staid approach of entrenched tribal leadership. The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), under the direction of Vine Deloria Jr., acted under the notion that “[t]ribes had much to gain and nothing to lose from working the system” (154). In an increasingly volatile America, Indians were viewed as a “‘safe’ minority” and representative of the “deserving poor” (152).

The politics of the National Indian Youth Council, the National Congress of American Indians, federal bureaucrats and policymakers, and non-Indian friends and allies created a fertile and sometimes dissonant atmosphere in Cobb’s version of the intricate fugue. In telling the story of these people, events, and activities, he provides powerful insights into the motivations of the participants in the history. These included national Indian leaders, federal and tribal policymakers, Indian and non-Indian intellectuals, and local activists who moved into and back out of the national scene. The author uses a broad variety of archival records, supplementing these sources with interviews he conducted between 2001 and 2007 with more than a dozen and a half of the Indian and non-Indian actors in this history. The archival records included a

wide variety of writings by Indian and non-Indian participants in the story's events, as well as oral history interviews and recordings of the participants.

This story culminates with the War on Poverty and the efforts of the Poor People's campaign. In the latter, Cobb describes "the many roads that carried . . . hundreds of . . . Native people to Washington, D.C." (148). He believes that "[a] narrative focused narrowly on Alcatraz and the American Indian Movement reduces these many roads to a superhighway. Those who travel it might be able to get to their final destination quickly and efficiently, but they never come to know the space between" (148).

The space between is multifaceted and complex in Cobb's telling of history. Tribal leaders and their allies used cold war anti-colonialist philosophies and models to argue for tribal needs for self-determination, but federal officials used the models of U.S. response to underdeveloped nations to define American responses to tribal needs within the United States. This caused paternalistic, top-down problem solving to continue to serve as the framework for U.S. policy efforts, even as national policymakers believed they were supporting nation building in Indian Country. President Lyndon Johnson's policies and advisors are presented as both paternalistic and almost terminationist in their efforts.

Nonetheless, the Community Action programs of the Johnson administration drew power away from local Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) officials in Indian Country and put it in the hands of tribal leaders, creating a significant shift toward self-determination. In some tribal communities this brought about positive change, while in others the history of underdevelopment only caused the continuation of patterns of chaos and dysfunction. Ironically, Blackfeet leader Forrest Gerard observed to Cobb that, as one result of the development of Indian professionals in this era, "Now we have an Indian bureaucracy!" (202).

Although Cobb analyzes this growth of Indian leadership at the national level and in reservation communities, he does not explore the conundrum of a BIA that developed from this era with an increasing representation of Indian employees—yet failed to break out of its colonialist modes of action, control, and decision making. To what extent does the development of Indian bureaucracy within reservations and within the BIA force the colonized to become the colonizer? This was the first generation of leaders in many tribes for whom English was the first language. What role, if any, did that play in the evolution of tribal leadership in this era? Cobb's focus is on community empowerment; nonetheless, his work raises these as questions for researchers interested in the development of modern tribal America to address.

Native Activism in Cold War America provides an intricate view of the changes occurring in Indian Country during the years of the greatest

modern federal attack on Indian communities. Upon reflection, the reader can see in this story the roots of change in tribal leaders' perceptions of how to work the system, the roots of modern tribal governing systems in relation to federal policy, and the limitations of and opportunities for tribal self-determination in the modern era. This book brings to light the efforts of a broad variety of Native leaders who shaped the future of Indian intellectualism, Indian policy, and tribal development in the latter twentieth century. It will be used best in upper-division or graduate courses and is essential reading for anyone attempting to understand the forces of change and the precursors to AIM in the years between the end of the Second World War and 1970.

REVIEW ESSAY by *Greg Johnson*

Taxidermic Signs: Reconstructing Aboriginality

by Pauline Wakeham
University of Minnesota Press, 2008

A central, organizing taxonomic device of numerous nineteenth- and twentieth-century North American museums bespeaks the layered and complex cultural politics of late colonialism. Namely, the placement of indigenous cultural exhibits in natural history museums—often alongside a backdrop of wild animals—reveals the ways in which native peoples have been imagined, engaged, and reconstituted throughout various periods of colonial history as specimens of nature. This taxonomy of natives as nature locates indigenous fates in a narrative of historical progress wherein nature simultaneously provides the grounds for and bears the costs of the advance of “civilization.” While other scholars have reflected upon this museological phenomenon, cultural studies scholar Pauline Wakeham reinvigorates analysis of the cultural logic behind such troubling taxonomies, showing the ways they are regnant in various discourses up to the present. Wakeham launches *Taxidermic Signs: Reconstructing Aboriginality* through an interrogation of the fraught juxtaposition of simulated indigenous cultures and people with preserved and stuffed animal skins in various museum settings. Wakeham ferrets out the logic that binds these museological forms in the process of developing a theory of taxidermic signs and the linked processes of destruction, recovery, and nostalgia enabled by this “active colonial logic” (14). Wakeham argues that “‘taxidermy’ may be conceptualized as a sign system inclusive of but not restricted to the literal stuffing of skins that reproduces a continually rearticulating network of signs that manipulate the categories of humans and animals, culture and nature, and life and death in the service of white supremacy” (6). Pursuing her