

DISCUSSION GUIDE for

#NATIVE READS

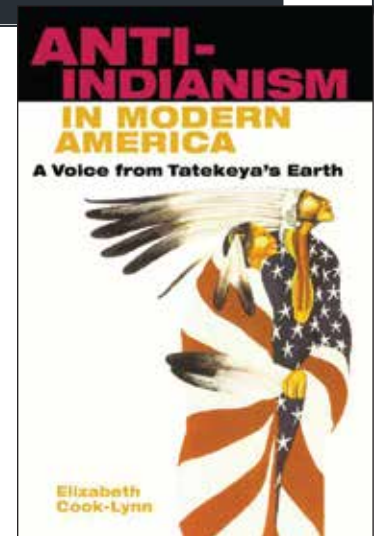
GREAT BOOKS from INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Anti-Indianism in Modern America: A Voice from Tatekeya's Earth

by ELIZABETH COOK-LYNN

Author Biography

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn is an enrolled member of the Crow Creek Tribe. She retired as a professor of English and Native Studies in 1971 from Eastern Washington University. Cook-Lynn became Professor Emerita in 1990. Her academic career was devoted to the development of Native Studies as an academic discipline. Cook-Lynn was one of the founding editors of the *Wicazo Sa Review: A Journal of Native American Studies*. She was awarded a National Endowment of the Humanities Fellowship in 1978. Cook-Lynn received the 1995 *Oyate Igluwitaya* Award by the Native American Club at South Dakota State University. In 2002, she received the Literary Contribution Award from the Mountain Plains Library Association. The Native Writers Circle of the Americas gave her a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2007. Cook-Lynn received the 2009 South Dakota Arts Council Living Treasure Award. Her work *Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner and Other Essays: A Tribal Voice* was cited by the Boston University Gustavus Myers Center for the study of bigotry and human rights in North America.



Book Summary

Cook-Lynn has observed five generations of Dakota as they have navigated the effects of treaties, U.S. laws and policies on their lives as *ikce wicaste*, or common man. Ordinary tribal citizens like her grandparents, parents, peers, children and grandchildren are survivors of many injustices as the result of colonization. Her work bears witness to the racism and oppressive imperialism experienced by the original peoples of this continent who have inhabited their aboriginal territories for centuries. In particular, the Oyate or Nation was comprised of Dakota, Lakota or Nakota dialect speakers who are also called the *Oceti Sakowin* or Seven Council Fires. Powerful outsiders who quickly became the majority attempted to seize the land and resources of the Oyate through massacres, imprisonment, persecution and exile of the Dakota from their homeland. Cook-Lynn names the colonizing tactics of the United States anti-Indianism.

In Anti-Indianism in Modern America: A Voice from Tatekeya's Earth, Cook-Lynn exposes and deconstructs recurring Native American myths and stereotypes in art and politics that have sought to oppress the *Oceti Sakowin* Oyate and many other tribal people and communities. *Anti-Indianism in Modern America* consists of 20 essays that confront anti-Indian policies and practices that occur in numerous settings, including academia, government and popular culture. Cook-Lynn's personal experiences with anti-Indianism inspired her to be a writer and to proactively forge a hopeful future for the Oyate in spite of the harsh realities of anti-Indianism.

Discussion Guide

This discussion guide was created by Oak Lake Writers' Society member Gabrielle Tateyuskaskan (Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota).

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- 1 In the Preface of *Anti-Indianism in Modern America* Elizabeth Cook-Lynn defines Anti-Indianism. What is Anti-Indianism? How does it impact Indigenous and non-Indigenous people?
- 2 America has a relatively short historical period as a nation compared to the hundreds of tribal nations that inhabited the continent for countless generations. Discuss the importance of oral narratives. How do these narratives establish the Dakota Oyate's longtime relationship with their homelands?
- 3 Tribal people were granted U.S. citizenship in 1924. How have the Dakota Oyate resisted and accepted the jurisdictional claims of the United States when it seized aboriginal territory, opening it up for settlement? Is it a contradiction for the United States to seize aboriginal territory for settlement and then assert that non-Europeans are ineligible for citizenship or immigration?
- 4 In Chapter 4, Cook-Lynn states: "What needs to be acknowledged, then, about the writer in America who claims to be or who is 'labeled' or who is thought by critics to be an American Indian Writer, is that he is not an artist unless he knows the myths, mores, experiences of his tribal society and knows how to depart from those records in the fashioning of his own artistic vision." In *Anti-Indianism*, how does Cook-Lynn both adhere to and depart from the Oceti Sakowin's myths, mores and experience? What other American Indian writers embody or challenge this definition?
- 5 As a writer, Cook-Lynn addresses the many wrongs that have been committed by America toward the original people of this continent. In Chapter 8 she states: "There are some ideas, facts, and myths about America's beginnings that are simply false, and the confusion about these matters makes it possible for America to continue its unceasing but futile search for its national identity, as well as its relentless defense for America's killing of millions of Indigenous peoples who lived here for thousands of years." How does Cook-Lynn use her writing to challenge these myths? What myths does she expose? How does exposing these myths impact Indigenous people – locally, nationally and globally?
- 6 Activism is often motivated by dissatisfaction and bitterness. Discuss the driving force of the participants in the 1974 "takeover" of the village of Wounded Knee by the American Indian Movement (AIM) as described in Chapter 9.
- 7 Both Cook-Lynn and the Nobel Laureate Rigoberta Menchu demonstrate that colonialism can be fought with the power of words and through the oral tradition. Compare and contrast how these two Indigenous women sought to protect and bring about change for their communities by mastering a language other than their Indigenous language and becoming writers.
- 8 Cook-Lynn's career was devoted to the creation of Indian Studies as an academic discipline. According to her, what are the core principles of this area of academic study? How can Indian Studies help expose, challenge or prevent anti-Indianism?
- 9 In Chapter 20, Cook-Lynn examines hate crimes as "the ultimate expression of Anti-Indianism in South Dakota." How can positive change occur in society to remedy this attitude?
- 10 In this work Cook-Lynn has important insight into ways anti-Indianism can be challenged in order to keep the traditions of the Oyate alive and to protect the Dakota homeland. What are some of the ways to fight against an America that threatens tribal communities through harms caused by anti-Indianism?