

National Native American Hall of Fame  
2018 Inductee

**VINE DELORIA, JR**  
**STANDING ROCK SIOUX**



**WRITING**  
**SCHOLAR & AUTHOR**

1 or 2 50-minute class periods

## **SELECTED COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS**

### **CCSS Literacy SL 10-1**

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

### **CCSS Literacy SL 10-1d**

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

### **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1**

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

### **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2**

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

### **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3**

Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

## **GOALS FOR UNDERSTANDING**

### **Students will understand**

- Vine Deloria, Jr., was an important Native American scholar and author.
- His books, *Custer Died for your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, *We Talk, You Listen*, and *God is Red*, helped usher in a new era of de-colonization for Native Americans in the United States.

- Deloria wrote on many topics and was influential in establishing a modern understanding of sacred sites, and how to best approach their management from a collaborative perspective with Native Americans.
- His writing inspired many people throughout the world and nation, including many writers who have sought to follow in his footsteps as a Native intellectual.

## **ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS**

What was the Red Power movement, and what role did Vine Deloria play in this movement?

Why was Vine considered to be an very influential Native American writer and scholar in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

How can we honor Vine Deloria, Jr.'s legacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond?

## **ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE**

### **Suggested Formative Assessment of Learning Outcomes**

Active listening through note taking

Small group discussion

Class discussion

### **Culminating Performance Assessment of Learning Outcomes**

Students may produce a final product in the form of a written essay, or on a verbal recording. The culminating assessment will answer the essential questions outlined; i.e., Why is Vine Deloria Jr.'s lifework so important and how can we honor his legacy?

## **ENTRY QUESTIONS**

Who was Vine Delora, Jr?

Why is he noteworthy enough to be in the National Native American Hall of Fame?

What can we learn about Vine Deloria's life that can inspire us to strive to be better at what we do?

## **MATERIALS**

Computer and internet access are necessary to watch the videos. Additional written materials located at the end of this lesson can be printed for students.

5-minute video interview with Vine Deloria Jr. - "Time of Its Own"

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Vine+Deloria+God+Is+Red&ru=%2fvideos%2fsearch%3fq%3dVine%2bDeloria%2bGod%2bIs%2bRed%26FORM%3dVDMHRS&view=detail&mid=057F6DA7CE2BDDDBFD67E057F6DA7CE2BDDDBFD67E&&FORM=VDRV RV>

5-minute video about Vine Deloria's perspective on Native American spirituality when compared to Western religious traditions.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-nVoQ4cZBE&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-nVoQ4cZBE&feature=emb_logo)

3-minute video about Vine Deloria's thoughts about the spiritual yearning in the West.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=9&v=aH2tKUusg9g&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=9&v=aH2tKUusg9g&feature=emb_logo)

5-minute video about Vine Deloria's thoughts on sacred sites and time they deserve

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=4&v=syfLkkAQfBg&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=syfLkkAQfBg&feature=emb_logo)

## **LEARNING MODALITIES**

**Audio/Visual:** Students will watch videos of Vine Deloria, Jr., talking about key concepts of Native American ceremonial philosophy. These videos will enlighten students to ideas and concepts about Native American culture that they were likely unaware of.

**Writing/Recording:** Students will take notes while observing the films, identifying key concepts, sentences or statements that Vine makes during his interview. These notes will be used to complete the K/W/H/L chart in the small groups.

## OVERT INSTRUCTION

- 1) The instructor will begin the lesson by creating a “K/W/H/L” Chart, which stands roughly for “What they Know/What they Want to Know/How to Research this topic/What they Learned” chart on the white board for the students contribute their voices in a classroom exercise.
- 2) The instructor will ask the class to read the short biography of Vine Deloria, Jr., and follow that up with a 5-minute discussion in setting up the K/W/H/L chart. Using the information in the bio, the students will help the instructor begin completing the chart. Two biographies about Vine Deloria are attached as an addendum to this lesson.
- 3) The teacher will divide the class into groups of 4, with each person reading the longer biography article individually. Some of the words may be unfamiliar to students and searching for definitions may be a necessary part of this process.
- 4) After the reading, students will then watch the videos of Vine Deloria to hear him speak to the ideas introduced in the written biographies.
- 5) Following the video, students will spend 20 minutes answering the following questions in their small groups. Every team member will contribute, with one person recording the information on a separate sheet. This information can also be utilized for the group K/W/H/L chart.

### Questions

- a. What contradictions does Deloria see between a Western and Native American view of the natural world?
  - b. How does Deloria describe the relationship between scientific thought and anti-Native American racism?
  - c. In what ways is the concept and practice of education different in Native American and Western communities?
  - d. How are Deloria’s writings related to the “Red Power Movement” or the “American Indian Movement” of the 1960s-70s?
- 6) Following the small group discussions, each group will report out on their answers, and the answers will be included into the K/W/H/L chart.
- 7) The instructor will open up the discussion to include any final thoughts, questions or insights about Vine Deloria, Jr., and his legacy.

## **This concludes the first 50 minutes of the Lesson**

### **Extension Exercises: Part 2**

- 1) Students who wish to continue their research on Vine Deloria, Jr., can utilize time in class to write a short essay and focus on the following questions: What does Vine's work mean to both Native and non-Native Americans? How can we use Vine's research to inform our own lives? What aspects of Vine's writings do you find most insightful?
- 2) How is the 'Red Power Movement' considered in the context of the Self-Determination Era? How did one thing lead to another?

### **CRITICAL FRAMING**

Instructors should remind students of the history of Native American colonization, and how Vine Deloria, Jr., was writing during a time when Native American communities were beginning to transform themselves into more sovereign and contemporary nations. Despite the federal policies during the era of **Termination** (1949 – 1972), in which 109 tribes were terminated, the modern era of **Self-Determination** (1972 - present) is still progressing in 2020, and Vine Deloria's role in this epic transition was essential. He was the smart and capable spokesperson that Native Americans needed during the Red Power Movement.

### **DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION FOR ADVANCED AND EMERGING LEARNERS**

Many students may have difficulty in understanding Vine Deloria Jr.'s writing, especially his cultural references and historical context. Assistance should be expected for most students, including the difference between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

<https://globalsocialtheory.org/thinkers/vine-deloria-jr/>

<https://www.infoplease.com/people/vine-deloria-jr>

*Custer Died for Your Sins*, Vine Deloria, Jr., 1969

## **Vine Deloria, Jr.**

*Leading Standing Rock Sioux scholar, writer and activist*

**Born:** March 26, 1933

**Birthplace:** Martin, S.D

Deloria, of Standing Rock Sioux origin, was born in South Dakota near the Pine Ridge Oglala Sioux Indian Reservation. He was educated at reservation schools, graduated from Iowa State University in 1958, received a master's degree in theology in 1963 from the Lutheran School of Theology in Illinois, and a law degree at the University of Colorado in 1970.

He began his career as an eloquent, and often highly provocative spokesperson for Indian identity and social change while working as the Director of the National Congress of American Indians in Washington from 1964 to 1967. In 1969 he published the first of more than 20 books, *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*. In this, his most famous book, Deloria shattered Indian stereotypes and challenged white audiences to take a hard look at brutal history of American expansionism across the West. His prose and ideas were charged with biting wit ("When asked by an anthropologist what the Indians called America before the white man came, an Indian said simply, 'Ours.' ") and incendiary statements meant to shock audiences out of their complacency (Custer, he said, was "the Adolf Eichmann of the Plains.")

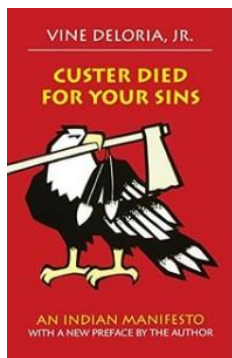
Among his other books are *We Talk, You Listen* (1970), *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties: An Indian Declaration of Independence* (1974), *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (1994), and a variety of works on history, theology, and contemporary Indian life.

He taught at the University of Arizona from 1978 to 1990, and then at the University of Colorado at Boulder. He retired in 2000 but continued to write and lecture until his death.

**Died:** Nov. 13, 2005

## Vine Deloria, Jr.: A Giant Thinker & Writer

A member of the Standing Rock Sioux (Lakota) nation, Vine Deloria, Jr., is one of the most important intellectual and cultural voices in American and Native American philosophy and politics from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An amazingly eclectic thinker and scholar, Deloria was trained in both Christian theology and American law, and wrote on subjects ranging from the political history of the United States, to the uses of media and cultural narratives by American Indians in the 1960s-1980s, to critiques of scientific theory and academic power. The son of an Episcopal deacon, Deloria served in the US Marines in the 1950s before earning a degree in Theology in 1963 and a Law degree in 1970. Known for his acerbic wit, defiance of categorization, and arguments in favour of the intellectual validity of Native American knowledge, Deloria was a key public intellectual from the emergence of the Red Power movements in the 1960s through to his death in 2005.



Deloria is possibly most well-known for his landmark book, *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, which articulated the historical and intellectual basis for American Indian protest movements that were already mobilizing across the United States and Canada in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Through his familiarity with both Judeo-Christian cultural narratives and American legal and political structures, Deloria was able to express the centuries of colonial frustration, Native American pride, and economic desperation that informed American Indian resistance but which were all but invisible to mainstream Americans. He took a more philosophical bent with his twin volumes *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion*, and *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America*, in which Deloria argued that debates over ‘Indian rights’ were fundamentally rooted in conflicting spiritual relationships to the land that inherently divided native and newcomer peoples.

Deloria firmly believed that Native American knowledge systems, far from their portrayal as ‘superstition’ or ‘myth,’ contained vast stores of wisdom regarding ecology and sustainability, human history and anthropology, political and economic equality, and spiritual well-being. He was among the first and most vigorous voices to speak up against the ‘Bering Strait Theory’ – which posited that peoples arrived in the Americas by walking across an ice age land bridge from Siberia approximately 10,000 years ago –



which for centuries was used as justification for ignoring Native American peoples' rights to land and self-determination, and which has since been largely disproven. He was often labelled as 'anti-scientific' because of his critiques of academic and scientific authority on matters relating to Native American people, including in his books *God is Red* and *Evolution, Creationism and Other Modern Myths*. In reality, Deloria had a great appreciation for diverse scientific theories. His preference was rather for complexity, and for seeing Native American knowledges – including spiritual practices, oral histories, and place-knowledge – as constituting separate streams of knowledge, equally rigorous if not more so than scholarly knowledge, and deserving of equal respect and authority as Western science. Deloria was especially critical of the discipline of anthropology and its paternalistic approach to Native culture and society, critiques that were later echoed during the 'postcolonial turn' in anthropological studies.

Deloria was well known for his public engagement. He sat on the founding board of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), and the NMAI library is named in his honour. He frequently pushed the NMAI and other museums to demystify their portrayals of Native American peoples, and helped to shape a public discourse that accepted Native American nations and cultures as complex and advanced societies in contrast to the superstition and savagery that marked most representations of Native Americans at the time. He also helped to establish the first graduate program in American Indian Studies in the United States, at the University of Arizona, and was also a long-time faculty member at the University of Colorado – Boulder. He appeared on numerous documentaries and television programs, and frequently accepted speaking engagement across the United States, Canada, and the world, especially when he would be speaking to Native audiences. Deloria was named by *Time Magazine* as one of the ten most influential religious thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and he is often regarded as the intellectual lodestone of late-20<sup>th</sup> century Native American politics.

### **Essential Reading**

Deloria, V. Jr. (1969). *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Deloria, V. Jr., Deloria, B., Foehner, K., eds. (1999). *Spirit and Reason: The Vine Deloria Jr. Reader*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing.

Deloria, V. Jr. (2003). *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion, 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing.

Deloria, V. Jr. (2006). 2006. *The World We Used to Live In: Remembering the Powers of the Medicine Men*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing.

### **Further Reading**

Deloria, V. Jr. (1979). *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing.

Deloria, V. Jr. (1995). *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing.

Deloria, V., Jr. (1999). *For This Land: Writing on Religion in America*. New York: Routledge.

## **Video Clip of Red Power Movement**

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=red+power+movement+1960s&ru=%2fvideos%2fsearch%3fq%3dred%2520power%2520movement%25201960s%26qs%3dWebSearch%26form%3dQBVRMH%26sp%3d2%26pq%3dred%2520power%2520movement%26sc%3d8-18%26cvid%3DFB1464156224B25BDD597C2E143B8C3&view=detail&mid=5C78FF50541EFA78B16D5C78FF50541EFA78B16D&&FORM=VDRVRV>

## **Civil Rights**

The Civil Rights movement in the United States began in the 1950s. It originated among Blacks who experienced oppression under Jim Crow laws and violence in the South. However, other groups, who felt marginalized in a society they felt was too dominated by White men, began to organize and march. Women's and gay rights came into focus; Mexican Americans marched for the rights of farm workers, education and better treatment by law enforcement. All of these groups saw that change was needed in the US and that people were ready for that change as they recognized the right of every person to equal treatment under the law.

Another group saw that it was time for them to speak for their rights. Native Americans first banded together in 1944 as the **National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)**, which was a group attempting to influence national politics. From that group came the **National Indian Youth Council (NIYC)**, young people who disliked the slow pace of change under the NCAI and organized into local bands. Members of the NIYC were the first to use the words "Red Power." However, a newer generation of Native Americans realized that change would not occur until the media got involved. Thus, they started staging elaborate protests the entire country would see from their living rooms.

# History of the Red Power Movement

The history of the **Red Power movement** began in 1944 when the NCAI was founded and began to lobby for Native American rights in the US. This group built its membership during the 1940s and 1950s and worked within all levels of government. In 1961, they met to determine a platform that could be presented to the newly elected John F. Kennedy administration.

Unfortunately, there were disagreements within the NCAI due to the pace of change. The NCAI had become a national group who worked slowly to effect lasting change. Some young people in the organization did not see it that way. They formed the NIYC in 1961 to enact local change that impacted lives in a more rapid fashion. They had three goals:

- Self-determination
- Tribal sovereignty
- Improved Native American living conditions

These goals would continue to be the main thrust of red power, but how that was to be achieved changed.

In 1968, a new group of young Native Americans met in Minneapolis intent on enacting a new type of protest. Seeing how well media involvement had worked for Blacks and women, the **American Indian Movement (AIM)** planned protests in prominent places that would garner media attention. The AIM had a three-prong plan to realize their media goals:



The AIM Flag

- Occupy unused federal facilities in accordance with an 1868 treaty with the Lakota Sioux.
- Occupy federal sites significant to the governance of Native American affairs.
- Protest at Indian affairs sites and lands.

The AIM conducted protests at various sites around the US to advertise the plight of Native Americans nationwide.