

Native American scholar Vine Deloria dies (November 14, 2005)

The Rocky Mountain News of Denver reported today that revered Native American scholar Vine Deloria Jr. died Sunday at the age of 73.

Vine Victor Deloria Jr. was born on March 26, 1933 in Martin, South Dakota. He was a member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of Fort Yates, North Dakota. The son of a Sioux clergyman, Deloria obtained a Master of Theology degree from the Lutheran School of Theology in Rock Island, Illinois in 1963 and a J.D. from the University of Colorado in 1970. He was an expert on Indian treaties. He was Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Colorado, Boulder and retired in 2000. He was Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians, Chairman of the Repatriation Committee of the National Museum of the American Indian, and earned the Native Writers Circle of the Americas 1996 Lifetime Achievement Award.

He was one of the most outspoken figures in Native American Affairs. His works promote Native American cultural nationalism and a greater understanding of Native American history and philosophy. He was an award winning scholar best known for his more than 20 scholarly books on tribalism and Indian nationalism, including "Custer Died For Your Sins" (1969), "We Talk, You Listen" (1970) and "God is Red." As an activist, author, scholar, and philosopher, his writings on political, cultural, and legal issues changed the way people view American Indians. He explored a variety of topics including challenging theories of religion and science, examining the problems of modern education, and expounding on the understanding of the world. In 1974 he testified for the defense in Russell Means' Wounded Knee trial. Throughout the 1970s he stood up to the state of Washington over the bloody Indian fishing-rights conflict that finally forced the federal government to reaffirm long-ignored treaties.

In March 2001, the University of Michigan's School of Public Health hosted Deloria for the Center for Research on Ethnicity, Culture and Health's (CRECH) annual Distinguished Lecture on Public Health and Human Rights.

In 2004, Time magazine called him one of the 11 most influential thinkers of the 20th century.

This year, 2005, he received the American Indian Visionary Award because he displayed "the highest qualities and attributes of leadership in defending the foundations of American freedom." Former Cherokee Nation Chief Wilma Mankiller called Deloria the Indian Martin Luther King.

For more information on the life and works of Vine Deloria, visit the website
<http://www.indigenouspeople.net/vine.htm>

