

It refutes the work of Cronon and his predecessors who criticized the "laziness" and ineptitude of conservation efforts. The authors' perspectives require that the reader move beyond traditional definitions of conservation to embrace the complex and multidisciplinary approach that conservation is taking in the 21st century. The movement is evolving to include landscapes with cultural and historic resources and is embracing the strengths that communities and other disciplines provide. In *Reconstructing Conservation*, the contributors frequently cite the work of earlier advocates including George Perkins Marsh and John Muir as precedents for current practices.

Due to the inevitable redundancies created by multiple authorships, sampling chapters provides adequate information to reinforce the major concepts and principles described by the editors. The various contributions give readers an opportunity to explore different approaches to conservation that match or complement their own interests. Readers with an interest in theory will enjoy essays such as Stephen C. Trombulak's "An Integrative Model for Landscape-Scale Conservation in the Twenty-First Century." Practitioners will appreciate Rolf Diamant, Glenn Eugster, and Nora J. Mitchell's "Reinventing Conservation: A Practitioner's View." Academics and practitioners can benefit from reading essays that complement their discipline. For readers interested in a supplement to the book, the symposium report, *Speaking of the Future: A Dialogue on Conservation*, provides important case studies and a discussion of the thinking that led to the conservation principles outlined in *Reconstructing Conservation*.³

Reconstructing Conservation is an excellent entrée into conservation for those who seek to understand the state of the field and how current thinking can enhance their work. The writings seek to embrace a broad, multidisciplinary audience by avoiding technical language and by providing historical context for current conservation practice. The book invites preservationists, social scientists,

managers, and community leaders to embrace an open-minded approach that respects and engages new voices in protecting cultural landscapes. This engaging book is a useful contribution to the conservation field for its thoughtfulness, inclusiveness, and forward-thinking approach. It provokes the reader to think about how and why the conservation field is changing and argues for continuing to embrace new disciplines and local voices to enrich the policies and practice of conservation.

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1. William Cronon, *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: Norton, 1996).

2. Nora J. Mitchell, Leslie J. Hudson, and Deb Jones, eds., *Speaking of the Future: A Dialogue on Conservation* (Woodstock, VT: National Park Service, Conservation Study Institute, 2003).

EXHIBITS

Our Peoples: Giving Voice to Our Histories

Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, DC. Curators: Paul Chaat Smith, Ann McMullen, and Jolene Rickard

Permanent exhibit

The National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), which opened on September 21, 2004, is situated on the nation's "front lawn," the National Mall. The newest of the Smithsonian's 16 museums, NMAI seeks to weave voices previously missing from our historical texts into the national narrative. The new museum presents the story of Native Americans as active agents in shaping the cultural landscape of the Americas throughout the centuries. Even its architecture is part of the story, meant to convey American Indian connection to the natural world through its representation as rock shaped by wind and water.



The building for the National Museum of the American Indian was designed to represent a rock shaped by water and wind. (Courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian)

Cases in the balcony areas of the third and fourth levels of the museum feature a small portion of the museum's extensive collections. *Windows on Collections: Many Hands, Many Voices* highlights beads, peace medals, dolls, arrowheads, and other objects. A changing exhibitions gallery displays contemporary Native American art. A resource center offers researchers and visitors the opportunity to further explore and enhance their knowledge of American Indians, and the museum's collection and programs.

At NMAI, native communities tell their own stories through three permanent exhibits, *Our Universes*, *Our Lives*, and *Our Peoples*. Each presents eight

community-curated stories. The 24 galleries will periodically rotate in new stories to showcase the broad range of American Indian groups.

Our Universes: Traditional Knowledge Shapes Our World conveys Native American cosmology and how native communities interpret their relationship between the spiritual and earthly world. *Our Lives: A History of Resilience* presents the story of today's Native communities, the ways in which modern society and historical memory affect their traditions and daily lives, and the ongoing struggle of Native communities to adapt to change and maintain their traditions and culture.

The third in the permanent exhibit trio, *Our Peoples: Giving Voice to Our Histories*, presents the history of the Native peoples of the Americas since European contact over 500 years ago. The introduction to the exhibit invites the viewer to question how history is written and how the cultural biases of an author affect the telling of a story. A short video invites visitors to consider some fundamental questions: Who writes our national history? What agenda do they further by writing their interpretations of the past? How can history be more objective and holistic through the reinterpretation of old themes? The introduction encourages visitors to question the centuries-old stereotypical portrayal of American Indians in the dichotomous role of either noble or barbarian.

In an attempt to remedy some misinterpretations of Americans Indians' role in history, *Our Peoples* presents the clash of cultures that occurred when Europeans arrived on the North American continent. The impact of contact and conquest is addressed in three major themes: guns, religion, and treaties.

A panel titled *Guns as Instruments of Dispossession and Resistance* examines the centrality of guns to warfare among Indians and Europeans and offers a wall of firearms. A similar effect is achieved in *God's Work: Churches as*



In the Our Peoples: Giving Voice to Our Histories exhibit, warfare and religion are addressed in the display of guns and bibles. (Photograph by Katherine Fogden, courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian)

The Ka'apor community of Brazil is presented in Our Peoples: Giving Voice to our Histories exhibit using exhibit cases resembling logs, which illustrate the impact that the deforestation has on the community. (Photograph by Katherine Fogden, courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian)

Instruments of Dispossession and Resilience, with a wall of bibles. Stated Intentions: Treaties as Instruments of Dispossession and Survival uses treaties to remind visitors that the ultimate aim of the Europeans and later the United States Government was the dispossession of Indians from their lands. The three themes are central in shaping Native American history and culture, but also central to the Indians' strategy of survival through adaptation. The gun exhibit, for example, high-

lights Indians' adaptation to cultural change by incorporating guns as another tool of warfare.

Community galleries give voice to the history of eight tribes, currently, the Seminole (Florida), Tapirapé (Brazil), Kiowa (Oklahoma), Tohono O'odham (Arizona), Eastern Band of Cherokee (North Carolina), Nahua (Mexico), Ka'apor (Brazil), and Wixarika (Mexico). Using oral histories, video footage, artifacts, primary documents, and works of art, each community presents its tribal history and themes they believe best represent its historic and present-day experiences. Community curators had active roles in content development, and as a result, each gallery has a distinct flavor. The Ka'apor gallery, for example, addresses the importance of the forest to the community's history and the effects of deforestation on Ka'apor lifeways and survival.

Through the conservation, protection, and presentation of artifacts, NMAI provides exemplary stewardship and interpretation of its collections. A museum dedicated solely to the indigenous people of the Americas is a step toward the greater inclusion of groups that were previously marginalized in official histories. NMAI provides the preservation community the most up-to-date interpretation and analysis of American Indian culture and attempts to offer a more holistic view of history.

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