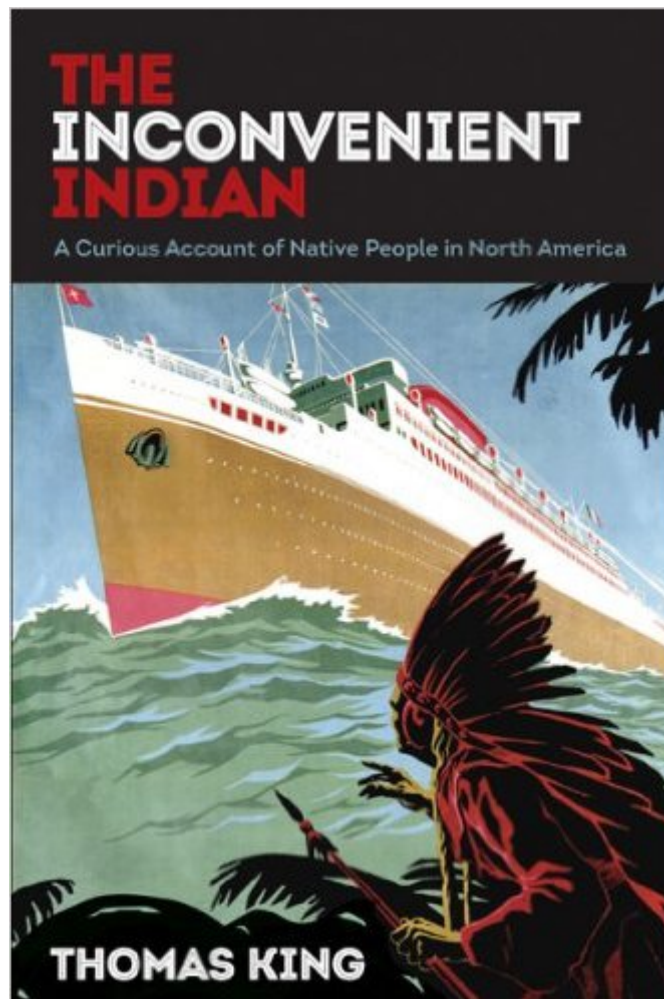


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# The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account Of Native People In North America



## Synopsis

In *The Inconvenient Indian*, Thomas King offers a deeply knowing, darkly funny, unabashedly opinionated, and utterly unconventional account of Indian-White relations in North America since initial contact. Ranging freely across the centuries and the Canada-U.S. border, King debunks fabricated stories of Indian savagery and White heroism, takes an oblique look at Indians (and cowboys) in film and popular culture, wrestles with the history of Native American resistance and his own experiences as a Native rights activist, and articulates a profound, revolutionary understanding of the cumulative effects of ever-shifting laws and treaties on Native peoples and lands. Suffused with wit, anger, perception, and wisdom, *The Inconvenient Indian* is at once an engaging chronicle and a devastating subversion of history, insightfully distilling what it means to be Indian in North America. It is a critical and personal meditation that sees Native American history not as a straight line but rather as a circle in which the same absurd, tragic dynamics are played out over and over again. At the heart of the dysfunctional relationship between Indians and Whites, King writes, is land: "The issue has always been land." With that insight, the history inflicted on the indigenous peoples of North America—broken treaties, forced removals, genocidal violence, and racist stereotypes—sharpens into focus. Both timeless and timely, *The Inconvenient Indian* ultimately rejects the pessimism and cynicism with which Natives and Whites regard one another to chart a new and just way forward for Indians and non-Indians alike.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Living in the generation of the 500th anniversaries of various European "settlements" of North America, I have always wondered about the story from the point of view of those who were here first. From the cover and subtitle I had the impression that the focus of this book would be early contact between invading and native cultures throughout North America. Instead, the scope is broader in time and narrower in geography. This is not a criticism, but for those more interested in the former angle on things, Charles Mann's 1491 and 1493 are pretty hard to beat. Thomas King sets out to convey what the long history of European "settlement", right up to the present day, feels like from an Indian's point of view. As he points out in the Preface, his is not a scholarly dissertation and is free of footnotes. This is why, at his wife's urging we are told, the word "account" replaced "history" in the subtitle. A master storyteller, he uses instead an anecdotal, conversational style that carries the reader back and forth across the Canada - U.S border and the centuries. His justifiable rage at the litany of mistreatments and abuses of Indians is palpable. What saves the book from being unreadably depressing are his comically sarcastic interjections, which had me laughing out loud at times despite myself. The only improvement would have been to take another of his wife's suggestions and avoid indulging in occasional detailed lists of atrocities. These break the narrative flow that is more powerful when he fleshes out selected incidents in human detail, like the murder of Indian youths by police officers in modern-day Saskatoon. Because of his breezy style, I felt swept along despite the difficult subject matter.

I thought THE INCONVENIENT INDIAN was going to address Native American history directly. If not precisely in an academic format, then as a 'popular' guide to this under-represented area of study. Something along the lines of the great historian, Carl J. Ekberg's works. [see, "French Roots in the Illinois Country" and "Stealing Indian Women."] Instead THE INCONVENIENT INDIAN is something more. Not only History, but also historiography. A thoughtful examination of how history is done. Something like Marc Bloch's "The Historians Craft". And it's a useful hybrid. King not only outlines and details numerous historical events, but he also examines how and why history has led the people of North America so far astray. Now most of us understand the pervasive effect of racial bigotry and how it's effected textbooks, novels, movies, artwork, and worse, how it has limited academic studies. But fewer of us understand the effect of economics, religion, and politics on what is deemed important in history, and this is some of what King makes clear. He does this with facts. And he does it by personalization, so that we get to see the effect that our common history has had on the author and his family and friends -- and ourselves. ~WHAT I LIKED about the book, beside the personalization, was the attention to the Metis. (The word Metis originally --and I would note I'm

not an authority by any means -- was used to indicate some one of half-blood. The children of white and Native American parents. But it's evolved, at least north of the border to mean more. So I refer you to Wikipedia for clarification.)The Metis are important because their historical significance has been mostly ignored by we common folk.

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