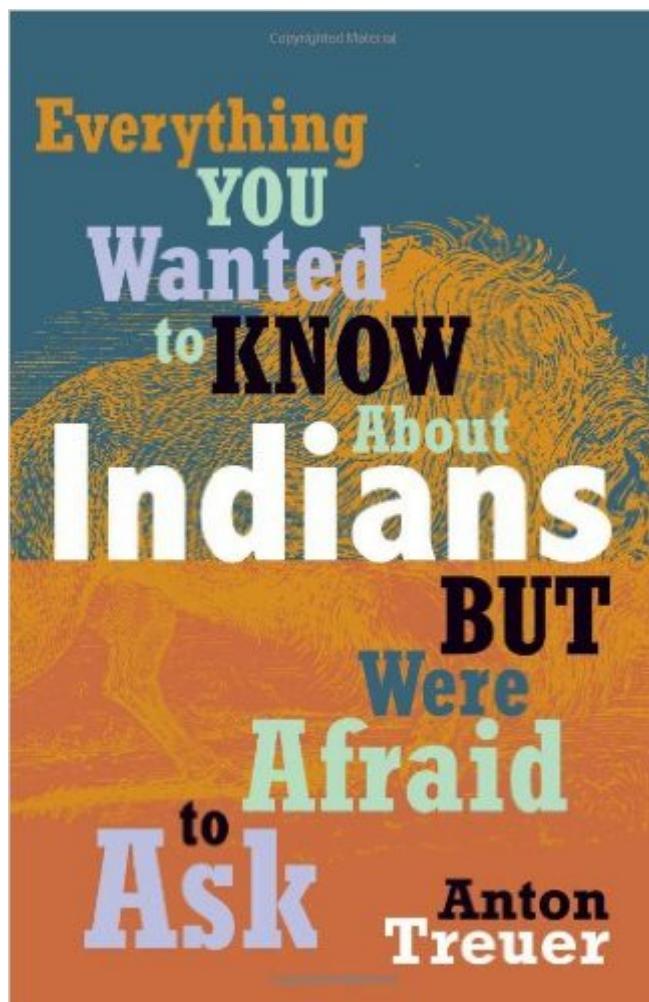


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# Everything You Wanted To Know About Indians But Were Afraid To Ask



## Synopsis

"I had a profoundly well-educated Princetonian ask me, 'Where is your tomahawk?' I had a beautiful woman approach me in the college gymnasium and exclaim, 'You have the most beautiful red skin.' I took a friend to see *Dances with Wolves* and was told, 'Your people have a beautiful culture.' . . . I made many lifelong friends at college, and they supported but also challenged me with questions like, 'Why should Indians have reservations?' 'What have you always wanted to know about Indians? Do you think you should already know the answers?' or suspect that your questions may be offensive? In matter-of-fact responses to over 120 questions, both thoughtful and outrageous, modern and historical, Ojibwe scholar and cultural preservationist Anton Treuer gives a frank, funny, and sometimes personal tour of what's up with Indians, anyway. "What is the real story of Thanksgiving?" "Why are tribal languages important?" "What do you think of that incident where people died in a sweat lodge?" White/Indian relations are often characterized by guilt and anger. *Everything You Wanted to Know about Indians but Were Afraid to Ask* cuts through the emotion and builds a foundation for true understanding and positive action.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Indian? Native? Indigenous? First People? For non-natives, the entire subject of the original occupants of the land we now call the United States can overwhelm to a neuron popping degree. Not to mention the vast number of tribes, 300 or so, that once roamed this then unindustrialized continent. And each one had a unique culture, language and history. Not only that, these cultures

have evolved and largely survived the United States government's forced and often brutal assimilation programs. Many also experience native people only in movies, books or tourist sites romanticizing the "Indian of old." American culture seems to have frozen its cultural predecessors in time something akin to a 19th century western. Things have improved, but most white people still likely know more about the "Indians" baseball team (and its rather grotesque caricature logo) than they know of the people the team is supposedly named after. But many non-natives grow up in a cultural vacuum that rarely, if ever, includes perspectives outside of the status quo. This disconnected environment provides plenty of fuel for misunderstandings and resentment. Anton Treuer, Professor of Ojibwe at Bemidji State University in Minnesota, has received numerous questions throughout his career, many that relate to or stem from the cultural disconnectedness mentioned above. Though admitting that he does not speak for all native populations, he hoped to collect a sort of frequently asked questions into book form as a reference for the curious. The resulting book uses the extremely familiar "Everything You Wanted to Know about [insert subject here] but were Afraid to Ask" title format. For the subject he chose "Indians."

As a white teacher who is trying to impart to my (primarily white) students what I have learned from my Indian brothers and good Niijii's, Dr. Treuer's version of a cultural "Dear Abby" will be a valuable text for my American Indian Aesthetics class. The PC Police has made it difficult for the young adults I work with to honestly and innocently ask questions about the first people of MN. Many of my students come from all over the State of MN and have never had "First Contact" with a Real Indian and it's a huge paradigm shift for them to actually engage in a meaningful relationship with other students their age who are Indian. For the less culturally experienced, "Everything You Wanted To Know . . ." is a much needed how-to book for the Indigenously Challenged. Dr. Treuer has found a voice that speaks from a gentle heart and an experienced, knowledgeable mind. Homosexuality, drug and alcohol abuse, casinos, taxes, blood quantum, corrupt tribal governments, and more topics are aboriginal rocks that are unturned in this book. He's not afraid to "rassle" with difficult issues that will, no doubt, cause him a lot of trouble. We should all admire his selfless courage and willingness to expose and be honest about many issues that many of the Native people don't want exposed. He made it clear from the beginning of the book that his ideas and opinions about issues are his as an American Anishinaabe man and not those of the entire Indian population. One strong message that is missing in this book that was the strongest message I ever got from Dr. Treuer is, "The Indian knows what's best for the Indian." In other words, don't come charging in to the closest reservation trying to tell the Indian how you can help them make things better. Historically, they've had enough

of that.

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