



The World Archaeological Congress

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AUSTRALIA

World Archaeological Congress mourns the passing of Vine Deloria

“The World Archaeological Congress wishes to make known its sincere respect for Lakota scholar, Vine Deloria said Dr. Claire Smith, President of the World Archaeological Congress. “Without his insightful, powerful work on behalf of Native people, a truly decolonized archaeology would be a fantasy rather than the emerging reality evidenced by the successful Inter-Congress on Indigenous Archaeology recently held in Auckland, NZ.”

When Vine Deloria left this world he left behind a legacy of strengthening American Indian peoples. He is known for having raised challenges to American institutions that threatened the sovereignty and dignity of Native peoples and one of his more enjoyable targets was the discipline of anthropology. “Speaking for myself as a Native American archaeologist, I have to say that Vine Deloria was one of the guiding lights for Native peoples in the 20th and 21st centuries. His shrewd wit and dedication to American Indian sovereignty freed anthropologists from the boundaries of scientific paternalism. His passing is a loss to Indigenous people worldwide.” said Dorothy Lippert, Indigenous representative to the Executive of the World Archaeological Congress.

In his seminal work, *Custer Died for your Sins*, the chapter, “Here come the anthros” bewildered many anthropologists of the time, given that the prevailing notion was that anthropologists worked on behalf of Native peoples, working to inform the tribes about tribal culture. By puncturing the omniscient masquerade that anthropology had held until that time, Deloria pointed the way towards a new incarnation of anthropology in which Indigenous people are respected as leaders and partners in analyzing culture. The WAC code of ethics and The Vermillion Accords reflect the impact of his work.

BACKGROUND The World Archaeological Congress (WAC) is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization and is the only elected international body of practising archaeologists. WAC promotes interest in the past in all countries, to recognise the historical and social role and political context of archaeology, and endeavours to make archaeological studies relevant to the wider community. WAC acknowledges and recognises Indigenous methodologies for interpreting, curating, managing and protecting Indigenous cultural heritage.

Claire Smith, President, World Archaeological Congress, 20th November, 2005

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