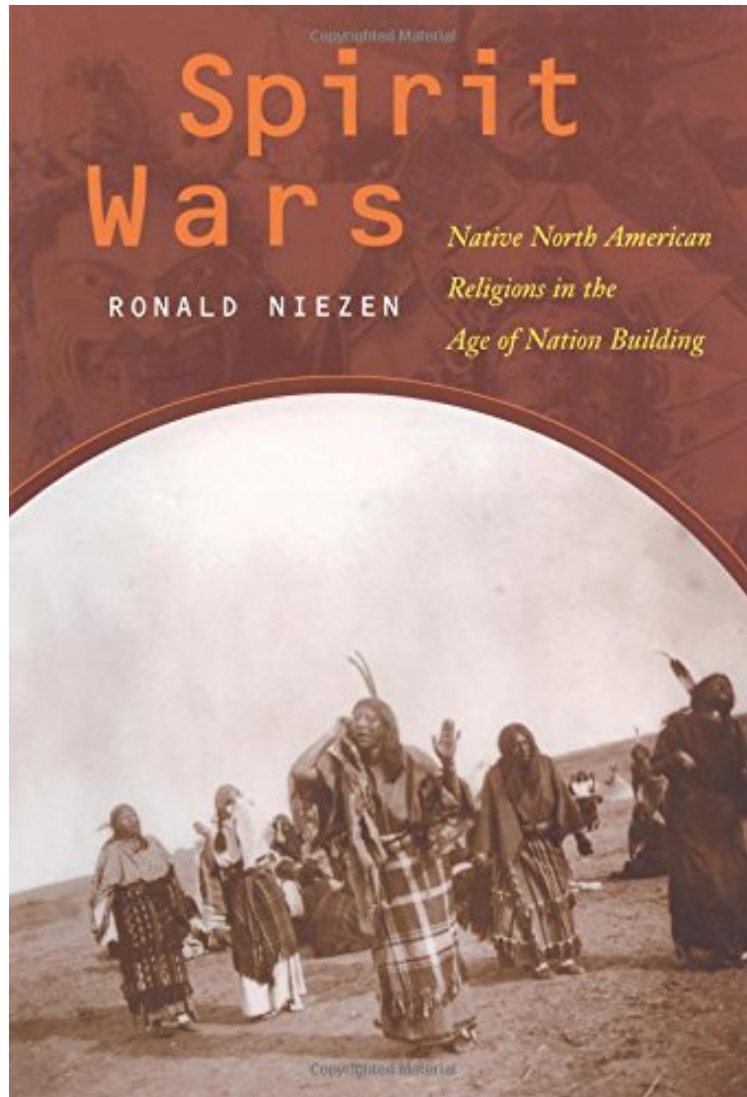


# Spirit Wars: Native North American Religions in the Age of Nation Building

Ronald Niezen

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**Ronald Niezen : Spirit Wars: Native North American Religions in the Age of Nation Building** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Spirit Wars: Native North American Religions in the Age of Nation Building:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Outstanding! By W. Wedenoja The author is an historian with an excellent knowledge of anthropology who has conducted extensive ethnographic fieldwork with native communities in Canada. In this outstanding book he gives us a brilliant and hard-hitting history of native North American (U.S. and

Canada) religion or spirituality under siege, from the Spanish conquistadors to the present. The book is tightly organized and well-written. There are seven major topics. The main topic, addressed explicitly in the first and final chapters, is the right of indigenous peoples to practice and preserve their languages, religions, and cultures, which have been under constant assault. The other six topics are the evangelical colonialism of missionaries, focusing on Spanish Franciscans in the Pueblo Southwest; boarding schools; Western medicine and the suppression of native medicine; state suppression, focusing on the Ghost Dance, the Potlatch, the Peyote Religion, and sacred spaces; amateur and professional collectors of native artifacts and cultural knowledge, with a discussion of NAGPRA; and the spiritual imperialism of New Age "healers." We learn that native religions have been, of course, transformed by a long history of Western oppression, but they are alive and dynamic and have served as forms of resistance to assimilation as well as healing wounds of cultural genocide. This is probably the best book I have read on native North America. It should be highly regarded by scholars and by native peoples alike. After reading it, there is no mystery why "despondency and despair" and "hopelessness and self-destruction" are such common experiences in Indian Country. The big question is, what can we do about it? 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. GoodBy Lorna Evans This book was quite good. It came on time and I liked the fact that it was alright. Keep it up. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This book should be mandatory reading in every seminary By Baba-John As a white, Christian, soldier (ex-soldier) this was the most painful, soul wrenching read I have experienced. But, anyone who claims to be a Christian, believes the the American Mythos, and considers themselves a moral person is living a lie if they do not try to make it through this book and understand what happened to the First Nation in America. You see accounts of the same problems that have always plagued the church, some of which many Christians are only now becoming aware of. If we cannot learn from our mistakes how will we ever find the truth and "enter the Kingdom of Heaven"? If we cannot learn from our mistakes we will keep making them, cutting group after group from our own herd until we have devoured ourselves. Then there is Western Medicine, Western Science, forming their own rigid brand of theology ignoring the inconvenient evidence that what was learned through trial and error through the ages was indeed valid. Herbal medicines, methods of healing that sound primitive, but have their roots in successful practice have been lost and are having to be rediscovered. A comparison is made in this book of the cultural evisceration of the Americans that proceeded us (White Christians) in North America to the weapons testing that took place at Wounded Knee. A chilling adulterous triangle of technology, economics, and industrialized warfare that, maybe, set the stage for the military industrial complex that many deny in the same way they deny climate change or the fact that oil will one day run out. And it became clear to me that ripping out someones sole to replace it with one of your liking if at least as cruel as murdering them. If you do not read this book, you have failed yourself. It is not an easy read, but it is an important one. So do it. Then write your own review.

*Spirit Wars* is an exploration of the ways in which the destruction of spiritual practices and beliefs of native peoples in North America has led to conditions of collective suffering--a process sometimes referred to as cultural genocide. Ronald Niezen approaches this topic through wide-ranging case studies involving different colonial powers and state governments: the seventeenth-century Spanish occupation of the Southwest, the colonization of the Northeast by the French and British, nineteenth-century westward expansion and nationalism in the swelling United States and Canada, and twentieth-century struggles for native people's spiritual integrity and freedom. Each chapter deals with a specific dimension of the relationship between native peoples and non-native institutions, and together these topics yield a new understanding of the forces directed against the underpinnings of native cultures.

From the Inside Flap "Niezen's fascinating analysis explores indigenism as a key concept of present-day international relations." Jean-Loup Amselle, author of *Mestizo Logics: Anthropology of Identity in Africa and Elsewhere*