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Review of *When Did Indians Become Straight?:
Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty*
by Mark Rifkin

Clark D. Hafen
University of California, Riverside

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When Did Indians Become Straight?: Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty. By Mark Rifkin. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. viii + 436 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$99.00 cloth, \$35.00 paper.

Mark Rifkin's *When Did Indians Become Straight?* is a thoughtful examination of the complicated landscape that lends itself to answering the question the title poses. Rifkin carefully and methodically scrutinizes the rhetoric of straightness within settler colonialism, highlights the intersection between Indigenous kinship models and conjugal couplehood, and problematizes subsequent nuclear/bourgeois homemaking as the dominant model for "family" within U.S. borders.

Rather than producing the obvious answer to the rhetorical question, "When did Indians become straight?" (Indians were always gay to begin with), Rifkin combines Native epistemologies and subjectivity discourse to illustrate how kinship, sovereignty, and geopolitical relationships for Native peoples extend beyond the counterhegemonic projects that characterize contemporary LGBTQ social movements. Additionally, Rifkin locates pivotal moments in history when "bribes of straightness" were negotiated within Native cultural production in order to retain some sense of autonomy within the discourse of gender, sexuality, and homemaking. Furthermore, the book argues that through poetry, fiction, and state policy, Native kinship models have been recast and recapitulated by both Native and non-Native as a queer form of resistance, thereby situating straightness as the most pervasive component for political legitimacy in settler-state negotiations with Native communities.

Rifkin's ability to situate the reader in the sociogeopolitical intricacies of multiple Native nations and their experiences with the settler state speaks to the book's strength in cultural awareness by championing tribal specificity. Great Plains content in *When Did Indians Become Straight?* primarily focuses on the writings of Zitkala-Ša, Craig Womack, and Ella Deloria. Rifkin contends Zitkala-Ša's *American Indian Stories* is crafted in such a way that it both generates political currency for straightness and educates a predominantly white readership about various familial and gender structures within Sioux society. Conversely, Rifkin points to Womack's contemporary novel *Drowning in Fire* to demonstrate a vision of Creek kinship that historically incorporates same-sex relationships and desire within the context of Muscogee nation-building. The book's fourth chapter argues that Deloria's *Speaking of Indians* and *Waterlily* resist the naturalization of straightness inherent in the Indian Reorganization Act and allotment acts by privileging conceptions of culture and community within Dakota kinship.

When Did Indians Become Straight? is a pioneering theoretical work in intellectual and critical interventions developing in Native American and queer studies. Insightful, meticulous, provocative, Rifkin crystallizes and problematizes histories of cultural dissemination that continue to perpetuate Native sexuality as straight.

CLARK D. HAFEN
Department of English
University of California, Riverside