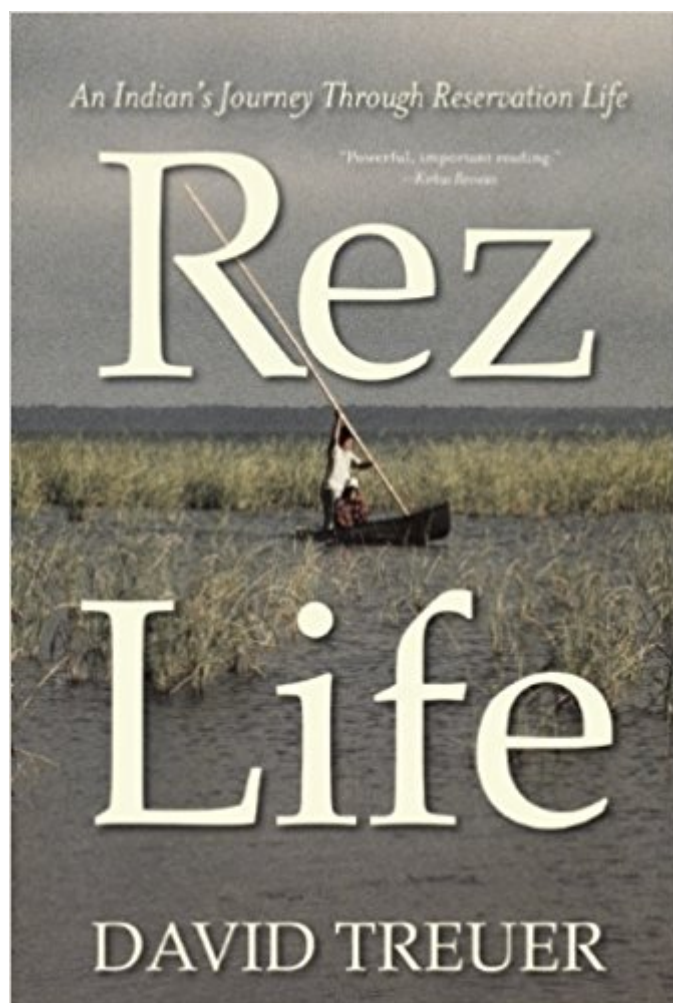


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Rez Life: An Indian's Journey Through Reservation Life



Synopsis

Celebrated novelist David Treuer has gained a reputation for writing fiction that expands the horizons of Native American literature. In *Rez Life*, his first full-length work of nonfiction, Treuer brings a novelist's storytelling skill and an eye for detail to a complex and subtle examination of Native American reservation life, past and present. With authoritative research and reportage, Treuer illuminates misunderstood contemporary issues like sovereignty, treaty rights, and natural-resource conservation. He traces the convoluted waves of public policy that have deracinated, disenfranchised, and exploited Native Americans, exposing the tension and conflict that has marked the historical relationship between the United States government and the Native American population. Through the eyes of students, teachers, government administrators, lawyers, and tribal court judges, he shows how casinos, tribal government, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs have transformed the landscape of Native American life. A member of the Ojibwe of northern Minnesota, Treuer grew up on the Leech Lake Reservation, but was educated in "mainstream" America. Treuer traverses the boundaries of American and Indian identity as he explores crime and poverty, casinos and wealth, and the preservation of his native language and culture. *Rez Life* is a strikingly original work of history and reportage, a must read for anyone interested in the Native American story.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“An affecting portrait of his childhood home, Leech Lake Indian Reservation, and his people,

the Ojibwe. "The New York Times"; [Rez Life] is not, for all its intimacy, just as it is not exactly a work of reportage or a work of history. Rather, it is a nuanced hybrid, a memoir, broken into six chapters, each of which begins in the personal, then expands outward to a larger theme. Sovereignty, fishing, treaty rights, the tribal justice system, education, language and assimilation; Treuer examines all of it, finding associations between the broadest stories and the most individual. "David Ulin, Los Angeles Times"; [Treuer's upbringing on an Ojibwe reservation in Minnesota makes him adept at delving behind stereotypes of Indian life and infuses his account with passion and meticulousness. "The New Yorker" Smartly, this book blends journalism, history and memoir... to provide both anecdotes of present-day reservation life and history... Treuer's message - the picture he gives of Indian reservation life today - is not one of defeat or demise but of miraculous survival." Greg Sarris, San Francisco Chronicle; Rez Life is a fascinating, air-clearing look at Native American reservation life, strengthened in equal measure by its anecdotes and its scholarly attention. "Jonathan Messinger, Time Out Chicago"; Blends memoir and history to reveal what life on a reservation is really like - neither the festival of dysfunction nor the oasis of noble, nature-loving stoics that many non-Indians imagine. [A] blistering, illuminating, ultimately hopeful book. "Kate Tuttle, Boston Globe"; In a book that is part memoir, part journalistic exposé and part cultural history, novelist Treuer offers a movingly plainspoken account of reservation life... Powerful, important reading. "Kirkus Reviews" An invaluable study and vivid account of problematic life on our reservations by a writer--a very good writer!--raised 'on the rez' who knows what he's talking about only too well and also knows how to tell a story, lots of stories, that document and effectively banish a number of misconceptions still held by white society. Highly recommended." Peter Matthiessen; Out of the people and places of Native America David Treuer has crafted a story of vital interest to all Americans." Vice President Walter Mondale; A compelling account of life on native American reservations. "The Christian Science Monitor"; Treuer's poignant, penetrating blend of memoir and history illustrates that despite long-standing problems, including poverty and high rates of alcoholism, reservations remain strong, proud bastions of Native American life. "Eric Libetrau, People Magazine"; Applied to a book, the word 'important' can glaze the eyes. An 'important' book sounds like an earnest, educational one you should read, when you get to it, someday, maybe. Rez Life is important in the word's best sense -- one you'll want to read if you're at all curious about contemporary American Indians. It's important in the way Dee Brown's

Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee was when it came out in 1970, deeply moving readers as it schooled them about Indian history in a way nothing else had. —Pamela Miller, Minneapolis Star-Tribune; Treuer sees all the poverty, the gangs and the alcohol, but he also sees great beauty in some of the last places untouched by commercial development. He hears the stories of his people in the language of his people, and he sees the pride of survivors. —Neal Conan, NPR

David Treuer is the author of three novels; Little, The Hiawatha, and The Translation of Dr. Appeles; and Native American Fiction: A User's Manual, a book of essays. A professor of literature and creative writing at USC, Treuer is the co-editor of the American Indian Culture and Research Journal. He divides his time between Los Angeles and Leech Lake Reservation in Minnesota.

I have been reading many Indian authors and this is one of the best I have read. Being a Minnesotan who never gave much thought to the Native American people living in my state this was an eye opener. Treuer's writing style is very engaging and authentic. His discussions of so many subjects interlaced with personal stories made it very entertaining and educational. Great stuff.

I enjoyed this book very much. I love the author, but hadn't read this book. It's a sprawling memoir with quite a bit of history thrown in. If you're interested in what life is really like for the first Americans today, it'll do it. And, if you're interested in learning more about things you may think you already know - about the reserved rights that they've finally been allowed to use, about the history behind them, and AIM, and how some nations have been able to benefit from casinos - and others haven't - this is an eye-opener. The author writes beautifully, but in a natural voice, so it's an easy read. I believe you'll enjoy it, too.

I consider myself quite well-versed in the annals of U.S. history. For anyone with a similar opinion of himself, this book will quickly dash your self-estimation on the rocks. Most of us, that is. This man--David Treuer, that is--takes history and offers it up through the eyes of those who live on the strange bounty of history in the most palpable way. Reservations are to be pitied no more than they are to be loathed. In fact, they should be surveyed in an entirely different light. It's not as if the white man (myself) should give up shame in the story of Europeans versus the true native Americans. Far from it. This book appropriately provides a narrative of the broken promises, lies, murder, and

mistaken good intentions of my people. But *Rez Life* provides a window into a world, an existing world, tied to all those things and much more. The people of the reservations today have much to take pride in and don't deserve pity. The white man's burden in all its manifestations, former and latter-day, blind too many to what an Indian reservation really is. That may not be Treuer's point or even an intended effect, but it is one particular conclusion of one man seeing the story of reservations through the author's wide vantage.

This is about as far as one can get from a rose-colored view of Indian lives. David Treuer holds back none of the social pathologies that beset many reservations that he has known and studied. Yet he manages through an engaging style (which almost makes one forget the scholarly research that informs the chapters) to let the reader understand the chaotic chains of events that set the stage for the present conditions. The story literally comes alive as the author tells of his own family and friends. A special delight are lyrical descriptions of the Minnesota lake country. The book also educates us on the casino culture and some of the different ways that is playing out.

Very informative and evocative perspective on life on Indian reservations today. I found David Treuer's book to be very eye-opening and surprising. He goes into the history of various aspects of Native American life, particularly in the Ojibwe tribe, including housing, poverty, the gaming industry, fishing and hunting rights, and family. A great look at what life is like for many Indians today, and how conditions evolved over the past centuries. He has a great explanation of the impact of the various treaties that the federal government made and broke, and the impact of the mismanagement by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. A great read, especially for the portraits that Treuer paints of his family members and friends.

Can we in America ever gain forgiveness for our treatment of the Native American Indian? Even today we treat this particular culture with such disrespect that one wonders how we can call America the land of the free. How long will the average American refuse to recognize that this freedom is only available to a certain culture and economic class? This book brings to the forefront the arrogance of certain groups, groups that have no respect for the diverse range of humanity. This book we need to have for required reading in some sort from 6th grade on.

A history and narrative well told of Reservation Life from Casinos, tribal councils, and politics that is an informative and realistic insider's unflinching observation. A must read for those with an interest

in the reality instead of the 19th century noble savage mythology that either puts the Native Americans on a pedestal or focuses on the squalor of Rez Life. I believe I know a lot from close experience but this book expanded my perceptions beyond what I knew before.

Finally a book on reservation life written from the inside. Well-researched historic overview and terrific narrative of the complicated reality of the Indian and white interactions. Community and family stories blend together with treaties, laws, rights, privileges and federal, state and tribal negotiations. Although primarily focused on the Ojibwa it portrays the pan-Indian dance within their colonized trap and opportunities. This amazing combination between a novel and historical facts gives the reader an accessible insight in what it was and is to be an American Indian. Treuer's depiction of rez life is harsh and beautiful at the same time. According to Peter Nabokov it is "a courageously intimate memoir of family life and community survival ... it deftly sashays between gritty everyday realities and their well-researched historical contexts and cultural resonances through the magically readable kind of nonfiction that perhaps only a novelist could pull off ... destined to be a classic." I cannot agree more.

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