



Dream Catchers: How Mainstream America Discovered Native Spirituality

Philip Jenkins

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In books such as *Mystics and Messiahs*, *Hidden Gospels*, and *The Next Christendom*, Philip Jenkins has established himself as a leading commentator on religion and society. Now, in *Dream Catchers*, Jenkins offers a brilliant account of the changing mainstream attitudes towards Native American spirituality, once seen as degraded spectacle, now hailed as New Age salvation.

While early Americans had nothing but contempt for Indian religions, deploring them as loathsome devil worship and snake dancing, white Americans today respect and admire Native spirituality. In this book, Jenkins charts this remarkable change, highlighting the complex history of white American attitudes towards Native religions from colonial times to the present. Jenkins ranges widely, considering everything from the 19th-century American obsession with "Hebrew Indians" and Lost Tribes, to the early 20th-century cult of the Maya as bearers of the wisdom of ancient Atlantis, to films like *Pocahontas* and *Dances With Wolves*. He looks at the popularity of the Carlos Castaneda books, the writings of Lynn Andrews, and the influential works of Frank Waters, and he explores the New Age paraphernalia found in places like Sedona, Arizona, including dream-catchers, crystals, medicine bags, and Native-themed Tarot cards. Jenkins examines the controversial New Age appropriation of Native sacred places; notes that many "white Indians" see mainstream society as religiously empty; and asks why a government founded on religious freedom tried to eradicate native religions in the last century--and what this says about how we define religion.

An engrossing account of our changing attitudes towards Native spirituality, *Dream Catchers* offers a fascinating introduction to one of the more interesting aspects of contemporary American religion.

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