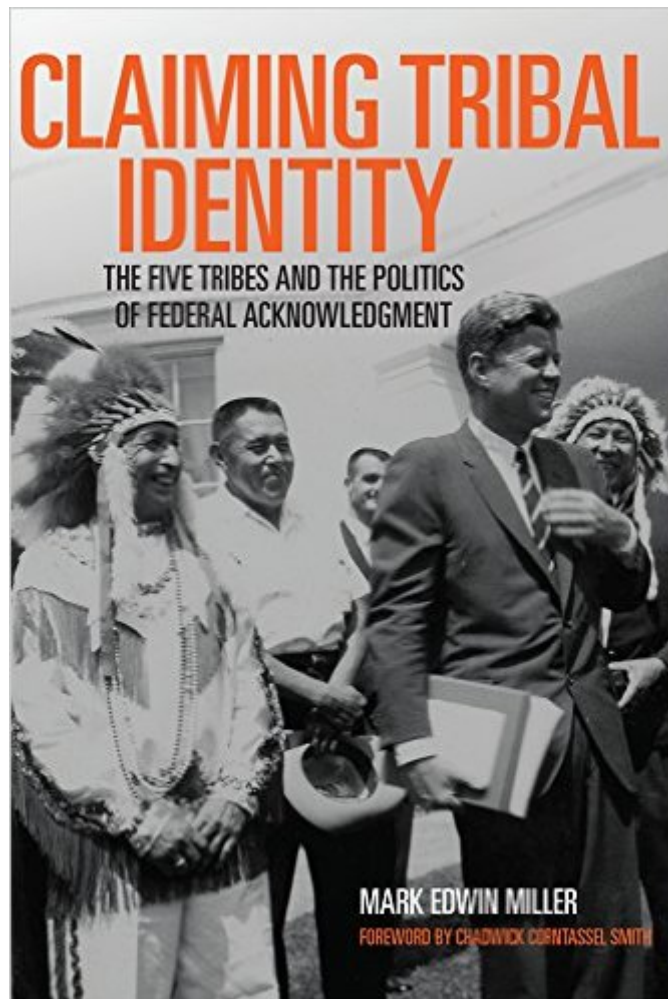


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Claiming Tribal Identity: The Five Tribes And The Politics Of Federal Acknowledgment



Synopsis

Who counts as an American Indian? Which groups qualify as Indian tribes? These questions have become increasingly complex in the past several decades, and federal legislation and the rise of tribal-owned casinos have raised the stakes in the ongoing debate. In this revealing study, historian Mark Edwin Miller describes how and why dozens of previously unrecognized tribal groups in the southeastern states have sought, and sometimes won, recognition, often to the dismay of the Five Tribes—the Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks, and Seminoles. Miller explains how politics, economics, and such slippery issues as tribal and racial identity drive the conflicts between federally recognized tribal entities like the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, and other groups such as the Southeastern Cherokee Confederacy that also seek sovereignty. Battles over which groups can claim authentic Indian identity are fought both within the Bureau of Indian Affairs's Federal Acknowledgment Process and in Atlanta, Montgomery, and other capitals where legislators grant state recognition to Indian-identifying enclaves without consulting federally recognized tribes with similar names. Miller's analysis recognizes the arguments on all sides—both the scholars and activists who see tribal affiliation as an individual choice, and the tribal governments that view unrecognized tribes as fraudulent. Groups such as the Lumbees, the Lower Muscogee Creeks, and the Mowhatchie Choctaws, inspired by the civil rights movement and the War on Poverty, have evolved in surprising ways, as have traditional tribal governments. Describing the significance of casino gambling, the leader of one unrecognized group said, "It's no longer a matter of red; it's a matter of green." • Either a positive or a negative development, depending on who is telling the story, the casinos' economic impact has clouded what were previously issues purely of law, ethics, and justice. Drawing on both documents and personal interviews, Miller unravels the tangled politics of Indian identity and sovereignty. His lively, clearly argued book will be vital reading for tribal leaders, policy makers, and scholars.

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Customer Reviews

I bought the book and read it. I am a member of the MOWA Choctaw Tribe. Here's what I think. I like his objective point of view and it gave me some perspectives to be more aware of for both positions while doing my own research. With that said, I do appreciate his work. Here's some of my findings: 1. The Alabama Indian Tribes were classified as Creek, Choctaw, Cherokee, Chickasaw, etc. according to a European standards and classifications. The reality of the era was a different aroma. In fact, there were many tribes and they were mostly familial and the ability of one person or family to join with another community, tribe, clan, etc. was mostly transparent to the Native Americans, especially in the light of the genocide of the times conducted by Jackson. 2. The BIA/BAR discounted Cecile Weathers as not being the same person referred to by the Children of Dave Weaver when they applied for the Cherokee Rolls, as they were not found to be Cherokee. Fine. The BIA/BAR also determined that the baptism records for Cecile Weathers was not a mis-spelling of the Weatherford name as suggested by Matte, the tribal historian for the MOWA Choctaw. Fine. - Now for the truth of the matter: W. Weathers was listed in the 1810 Census. His family changed the family surname from Weathers to Weathersford, and finally to Weatherford. Whew!!! Further Nancy Fisher (the lady is reported in the newspaper of the times to have been about 15 years and escaped the Ft. Mims Massacre by canoe with a child - Cecile Weathers), was also a concubine of Weathers (Weatherford) and known to have had a child for him as well. This is documented in the 1810 census, the book on William Weatherford, and the book on the Tensaw Country.

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