

The autobiography of an American Indian woman who challenged the federal government's assault on tribal sovereignty and won

Making a Difference

My Fight for Native Rights and Social Justice

By Ada Deer

With Theda Perdue

Foreword by Charles Wilkinson

This stirring memoir is the story of Ada Deer, the first woman to serve as head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Deer begins, "I was born a Menominee Indian. That is who I was born and how I have lived." She proceeds to narrate the first eighty-three years of her life, which are characterized by her tireless campaigns to reverse the forced termination of the Menominee tribe and to ensure sovereignty and self-determination for all tribes.

Deer grew up in poverty on the Menominee Reservation in Wisconsin, but with the encouragement of her mother and teachers, she earned degrees in social work from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and Columbia University. Armed with a first-rate education, an iron will, and a commitment to justice, she went from being a social worker in Minneapolis to leading the struggle for the restoration of the Menominees' tribal status and trust lands.

Having accomplished that goal, she moved on to teach American Indian Studies at UW–Madison, to hold a fellowship at Harvard, to work for the Native American Rights Fund, to run unsuccessfully for Congress, and to serve as Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs in the Clinton Administration.

Now in her eighties, Deer remains as committed as ever to human rights, especially the rights of American Indians. A deeply personal story, written with humor and honesty, this book is a testimony to the ability of one individual to change the course of history through hard work, perseverance, and an unwavering commitment to social justice.

Ada Deer (Menominee), Distinguished Lecturer Emerita at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, remains an activist for American Indian rights. **Theda Perdue** is the Atlanta Distinguished Professor Emerita of History at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and an author of *North American Indians: A Very Short Introduction*, as well as other books on American Indians. **Charles Wilkinson** is Moses Lasky Professor of Law at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and the author or coauthor of numerous books on Indian law, including *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations*.

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