



## Making a Difference: My Fight for Native Rights and Social Justice

### Ada Deer

University of Oklahoma (Oct 31, 2019)

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In 1954, the same year Menominee civil rights activist Ada Deer graduated from her masters program, the US government passed the Menominee Termination Act, erasing the Menominee nation's recognition under federal law. Deer spent the rest of her life fighting to restore sovereignty and basic rights to Native American people across the US, working at both the grassroots level and as the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs. *Making a Difference* is her fact-dense memoir, filled with names, dates, and details regarding major legislative issues affecting Native Americans over the last century.

Deer was born to a white mother and a Menominee father on the successful, self-governing Menominee reservation. Tribe members used sustainable forestry practices to supply raw materials to their lumber mill, where the majority of the men worked. Government termination of the nation destroyed this way of life. Deer's father, following indoctrination, was ashamed of his identity; Deer's mother was incensed by the government's treatment of Native Americans, and became politically active against it. With their examples, Deer grew into a powerful, dedicated activist.

Within the text, the Menominees' story is also Ada Deer's; as injustice befell the nation, so it befell her. Little is revealed about Deer's personal life beyond her involvement with Native rights and social justice issues; instead, the text concentrates on topics that have hounded Native nations and the Bureau of Indian Affairs for decades. Deer and her co-author, Theda Perdue, forward clear explanations and capture the magnitude of working with dozens of sovereign nations representing a vast array of needs unique to themselves.

*Making a Difference* is an extensive, eye-opening primer on Native American history and US government intervention in the twentieth century.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (November / December 2019)

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