

Response to the Ecological Indian

The *Ecological Indian* by Steven Krech is an extremely interesting look at Native Americans and their environment. The book starts by discussing the crying Indian, which is an ecology poster made in the early seventies that depicts an Indian with a tear rolling down his cheek. The slogan on the poster is “pollution: it’s a crying shame.” This poster is probably the most famous ecology poster ever created. Krech’s goal is to disprove the belief that Indians lived in perfect harmony with their environment and that it was white people that caused the destruction of animal populations and the pollution of the land. I found his chapters to be extremely interesting. Each one was an independent section describing a different aspect of the environment that was impacted by the Indians. I found the first chapter particularly interesting, because I enjoy reading about the migration to North America. The chapter takes a hard look at how the migration occurred focusing on when people moved down the American continents. I found his discussion of the killing off of big game animals to be interesting as well. I think that it is a good place for him to start proving his point, because if the Indians had cared about keeping the environment in balance, there would never be mass extinctions if the top priority was the environment. I did not really see how his second chapter added much to the book. That chapter is a discussion of the Hohokam tribe and their massive irrigation system. It discussed the problems that the environment caused them, but lacks much of the same material about actually impacting the land. All the subsequent chapters are about different resource.

I felt that the book was very well constructed and well supported through statistics and research. In the introduction Krech states that it is his goal to open the discussion on the subject of the Indian impact on their environment. He definitely accomplishes this goal. He does a good job of not going too far by making sweeping generalizations, but instead sticks to his facts and the instances that he has researched. My only complaint about the book is that I wished he could have had more of a purpose or a better constructed thesis, and used each chapter to build on the previous one, tying it all together at the end of each chapter. This complaint is relatively minor in the scheme of things and his book, being well research and well written was extremely enjoyable and interesting.