

Robert A. Williams

Robert A. Williams, Jr., E. Thomas Sullivan Professor of Law and American Indian Studies, University of Arizona:

. . . . [A]nyone who's followed the field of American Indian Studies for the past three decades would immediately recognize Ward Churchill as an important scholar, writer and advocate, whose published works are widely cited and relied upon. His body of written work and teaching has inspired a generation of younger Native students and activists to unashamedly assert indigenous sovereignty and Indian rights over a broad domain of intellectual and cultural life in American society. In many ways and in many forums, he has helped to shape the discourse of the modern Indian rights movement. He is, in fact, the unquestioned intellectual leader of a vanguard movement of AIS scholars who brandish a no-holds-barred, no compromise form of Indian political rhetoric that upsets and even incites many non-Indians. Professor Churchill also oftentimes challenges Indian people themselves to take responsibility for an unthinking, uncritical adoption of non-indigenous, colonially-dominated ways of thought and talking about Indians and also about contemporary American society. His most challenging writings therefore make him few friends, while earning him many enemies. While at times tendentious and almost always pushing the envelope, if not tearing it to pieces, Professor Churchill, through sheer force of intellect, energy, and a radical reformer's zeal, has established himself as a major scholar and public intellectual when it comes to the field of American Indian Studies. Some people may not like that, but what does one expect of a tenured professor who teaches and writes about American Indians in a highly respected ethnic studies department at a major research university that supposedly values academic freedom –that he would only have nice things to say about this country in his scholarship?"