



Zuni and the Courts: A Struggle for Sovereign Land Rights

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Three decades ago-years after most tribes had filed land claims-the Zuni initiated legal battles related to aboriginal claims, rights, and use that few experts thought they could win. Yet by 1991 they had achieved three major victories.

In the first case, the Zuni sued the United States seeking payment for aboriginal territorial lands taken without adequate compensation. In the second, also against the United States, the tribe sought compensation for environmental damages to Zuni trust lands caused by the U.S. Government and by private industry where the federal government should have provided protection. And in the third, the U.S. government sued a private rancher on the Zuni's behalf to establish an easement protecting an ancient religious trail.

Providing a new overview of these cases and Zuni history, Richard Hart has gathered together essays written by many of those who testified for the Zuni-historians, archaeologists, anthropologists, and scientist-as well as commentary from the tribe's lawyers. The authors simplify the complex nature of the testimony, making it accessible to a wide audience. They cover such diverse but significant issues as Spanish law and land grants, tribal aboriginal title, the Navajo Wars, U.S. territorial policy, deforestation, erosion, geomorphology, dendrochronology, environmental history, anthropology, archaeology, education, folklore, oral history, and religion.

Tying together current events with cultural and legal history, *Zuni and the Courts* provides not only expert observations on how and why the Zuni succeeded but offers insight into how similar cases can be fought and won.

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