



Plunder of the Ancients: A True Story of Betrayal, Redemption, and an Undercover Quest to Recover Sacred Native American Artifacts

Lucinda Delaney Schroeder

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After taking an assignment as a supervisor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, agent Lucinda Schroeder felt chafed by the restrictions of her desk job. She'd spent her career making cases against wildlife poachers, smugglers, and people who exploited wildlife for huge sums of money. As a supervisor she wasn't allowed to carry a case load. Her responsibility was to oversee the work of five other agents as they investigated wildlife crimes. But she wanted to be in the middle of the action. Finally, she went undercover again, working to investigate a parrot-smuggling operation--only to narrowly escape disaster after several of her colleagues inadvertently blew her cover. Though she worried that she was losing her gift for undercover work, when she learned of the illegal trade in Native American artifacts and the hunting of eagles for their feathers, she set up another sting operation and called it "Operation Monster Slayer" after the Navajo deity that protected the Navajo from harm only to betrayed once again--this time intentionally. *Plunder of the Ancients* tells the story of the dangerous life of an undercover agent--and her persistence that led to the recovery of nearly a million dollars' worth of sacred Indian artifacts sold on the black market in Santa Fe in 1996.

Plunder of the Ancients: A True Story of Betrayal, Redemption, and an Undercover Quest to Recover Sacred Native American Artifacts Details

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From Reader Review Plunder of the Ancients: A True Story of Betrayal, Redemption, and an Undercover Quest to Recover Sacred Native American Artifacts for online ebook

Phyllis says

The story was interesting however the writing was hard to get through.

Leslie Fisher says

*** Received book for free as part of Goodreads First Reads ***

I really enjoyed this book. It is a non-fiction account of case files of a US Fish and Wildlife agent dealing with Native American artifacts, but it reads like a novel. It is very well-written and engaging, and I found that I learned a lot about various artifacts and tribes. Ms. Schroeder had a very interesting career, and I now want to read the other book she has written, and would look forward to any more to be written.

Zada says

I received this book from Goodreads. It tells in detail the problems involved in finding those who traffic in stolen Indian religious artifacts.

Sara says

I had a hard time getting through this book. The writing was poor. And she appeared to be all about herself. I'm highly aware of the theft of artifacts from public lands as I live in the heart of it. However not all are sacred. Look at the 2009 raids in Blanding Utah and you will see it was everything was taken not just sacred items.

I can't recommend this book to anyone.

Jim Collett says

This is an account of the efforts to stop the trade in Native American artifacts in the Southwest, told by a principal in the government efforts to achieve this. While the author clearly reveals her biases, her story makes one see her point. The story is pretty tragic in how widespread and damaging this business is and most tragic in how little much of the legal system even cares to do something about this. The Native Americans don't escape some blame as well, as persons on the reservation obviously participate in the illegal trade and the religious figures are so paranoid and absolute in their beliefs their is little coordination. I think Schroeder

perhaps got a bit too close to her subject in all the supernatural commentary. I wondered why the religious figures gave her and other in government so much grief while taking no action on those who stole and dishonored them.

Carlin says

The author lives in Montrose and was the subject of an article in the October 2014 Montrose Mirror.

Marcia says

I won this book on Goodreads. This is a fascinating story of how Native American artifacts have been sold and stolen and told by a person who has first-hand knowledge. Sometimes, it is amazing, even to the author, which people succumb to greed. The culture of the Native Americans is especially vulnerable, and more is lost daily. This book centers in Arizona and New Mexico, but similar problems may be applied to other places. Still, a few people are honest and courageous enough to fight this. Although much is lost, much has been retained and returned.

Jindalay says

An interesting first hand account told by the agent leading the operation. The narrative has a casual but engaging tone that really opens the reader to the author's feelings- both the triumphant and the frustrated. This isn't the typical book I read but I really liked it.

Tony Latham says

I fell into this book. Schroeder did an excellent job of what the artifacts mean to the tribe. It's unfortunate that the judicial system just doesn't get it.

Kim Messier says

Merriam Webster defines "ludicrous" as, *meriting derisive laughter or scorn as absurdly inept, false, or foolish*. That's the word that most often comes to mind when I think about this book.

I have collected and researched American Indian art for a little more than three decades so collectors and dealers in the field are counted among my friends; though I have never been acquainted with any of the dealers involved in the events depicted here which occurred between the years 1998 and 2000. And even though most of the names have been changed (likely to protect no one except the author from a lawsuit), they are so thinly veiled as to be easily discovered in a simple online search. Nonetheless, I attempted to read the book with an open mind.

However, *Plunder of the Ancients*, was often difficult to get through without laughing out loud. The author is not only arrogant and condescending (not just the "bad guys" are portrayed derisively, even her fellow government agents are depicted as buffoons), but also painfully ignorant of American Indian art. Every "artifact" she encounters, from an Acoma olla to Hopi flat dolls are SACRED and must have been stolen from the Indians.

Of an Acoma olla (pottery water jar) she claims, "The word 'fresh' is code language" (among dealers) "for something that has just been acquired. Maybe it was stolen." Actually, "fresh" is not a code word, it simply means an article is new to the market, that it hasn't been shopped from dealer to dealer. And later, concerning the same olla she writes, "No Indian matriarch would let go of such a significant household piece that had been handed down for generations. No way." For those unfamiliar with Indian Art, antique ollas are fairly commonplace (an internet search for "Acoma olla" reveals just how common they are), and Pueblo families have been selling them to the outside world for centuries.

I'm not so naïve as to think there is no black market in illegal and culturally sensitive material, all one needs is to read about the auctions of sacred objects occurring in Paris almost monthly, but this "sting" was so poorly conceived and executed it's, well, ludicrous.

This story would have been better served as a mystery novel, throw in a little murder on the Rez and it becomes Hillerman-esque. Unfortunately, this memoir reads like the case of an over-zealous government agent, with the misguided belief of a personal mandate from the Navajo god Monster Slayer, who writes of her past "achievements" only to inflate her ego, not to stem the flow of illegal material.
