

was correct in his assessment that "we [the AICC] started this movement for federal recognition." The AICC was truly a vast experiment in action anthropology, whose overall significance to eastern Indians is becoming easier to comprehend more than three decades later.

The Roots of Contemporary Native American Activism

TROY R. JOHNSON

... The lessons of the civil rights movement were not missed by Indian people. As civil rights issues and rhetoric dominated the headlines, some Indian groups adopted the vocabulary and techniques of the Blacks in order to get Indian issues covered by the media and attract the attention of the American public. The National Indian Youth Council (NIYC), a group of young college-educated Indians who had organized following the American Indian Charter Convention held in Chicago in 1961, adopted some of the ideas of the civil rights movement and held numerous fish-ins in the Pacific Northwest, where Washington State was attempting to use state laws to restrict Indian fishing rights guaranteed by federal treaties. Earlier Indian protest groups such as the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), founded in 1944, had lobbied in Washington against the Termination Act of 1953. The NCAI was joined by organizations such as the Indian Rights Association and the American Friends Services Committee in its fight against termination. During the fish-ins, however, physical confrontation rather than lobbying became the protest tool. Indian people risked their boats, their nets, and their lives in confrontation with state authorities.

When Isaac Stevens was appointed governor of the new Washington Territory in 1853, he concluded the Medicine Creek (1854) and Point Elliott (1855) treaties, which guaranteed the Indians' rights to fish both on and off reservation and to take fish at their usual and accustomed grounds and stations. In the mid-1950s, the Washington authorities tried to control Indian fishing in off-reservation areas on the Puyallup River. The Indians protested, arguing that these were "usual and accustomed grounds and stations" within the meaning of the 1854 and 1855 treaties. In 1963 the U.S. Court of Appeals upheld the rights of Indian people to fish in accordance with the guaranteed treaty rights. In 1964, in defiance of the Supreme Court decision, the Washington State courts closed the Nisqually River to Indian fishermen in areas off of the Nisqually Reservation. In the same year, the Survival of American Indians Association (SAIA) was formed as a protest organization to assert and preserve off-reservation fishing rights. SAIA organized fish-ins at Frank's Landing on the Nisqually River to protest the state's latest attempt to deny Indian treaty rights. A large force of state and local officers raided Frank's Landing in 1965, smashing boats and fishing gear, slashing nets, and brutalizing Indian people, including Indian women and children. Seven Indian people were arrested in this particular incident, and in an incident in 1970 at Frank's Landing, sixty Indian

From Troy R. Johnson, "The Roots of Contemporary Native American Activism," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, vol. 20, no. 2 (1996), 127-154. Reprinted by permission of the American Indian Studies Center, UCLA. Copyright © Regents of the University of California.

persons were arrested. SAIA members, led by Janet McCloud, a Tulalip Indian, gathered in Seattle and marched in protest at the federal courthouse. Protests, raids, and arrests continued throughout the remainder of the 1960s and into early 1970. In January 1971 Hank Adams, a former member of NIYC and now a member of SAIA who had participated in a decade of fish-ins, was shot in the stomach by two white sport fishermen as he slept in his pickup truck. Adams had been tending a set of fish nets for a friend on the Puyallup River. Although Adams survived the shooting, police disputed his account of the incident. In February 1974 in *United States v. Washington*, Judge George Boldt upheld the treaty rights of Indian people to fish at their usual and accustomed grounds and stations off-reservation and "in common with" other citizens. The fish-ins and demonstrations came at a time when protest marches and political activism were common throughout the country.

Of equal concern to Indian people was the Vietnam War, where Indian men and women fought to defend a freedom that they themselves had never experienced. Although American Indians may have been the forgotten Americans in the minds of many politicians and bureaucrats during peacetime, this was not the case in time of war or national emergency. American Indians were required to serve and did serve honorably; 1,000 in World War I, 44,500 in World War II, and 29,700 during the Korean conflict. The Vietnam war proved no exception. A total of 61,100 American Indians served during the Vietnam era.

Beginning with the commitment of troops to Vietnam in 1963, American Indians either served voluntarily or were drafted into military service. In the minds of some Indian servicemen, this undeclared war was fought against a people who were an oppressed minority in much the same manner as American Indians. Wallace "Mad Bear" Anderson, a Tuscarora Indian who visited Vietnam seven times, stated, "When I walk down the streets of Saigon those people look like my brothers and sisters." Robert Thomas, a Cherokee anthropologist, stated that Indian people understood the war in Vietnam better than his university colleagues did. The conflict in Vietnam was tribal in origin, and the Vietnamese were tired of the war machine flattening their crops.

American Indians returning from Vietnam faced difficult choices. Those who returned, or attempted to return, to life on the reservation confronted high unemployment rates, poor health facilities, and substandard housing conditions, just as Indian veterans who had returned from World War II had experienced. Those who elected to relocate or settle in urban areas encountered what can best be described as "double discrimination." First, they had to deal with the continuing discrimination against Indian people, which resulted in high unemployment, policy brutality, and, very often, alcoholism and death. Second, they experienced the discrimination being felt by other Vietnam veterans who were participants in an unpopular war. Rather than being hailed as heroes or shown some measure of respect for their sacrifice, they were considered third-rate citizens and were treated as outcasts of society. In an attempt to retreat for a period of time, to adjust to a changing society, or perhaps simply to acquire skills for future employment, many of these returning Indian veterans utilized their GI bill educational benefits and enrolled in colleges and universities in the Bay Area. Indian students from these colleges, many of them Vietnam veterans, filled the ranks of the rising Indian activism movement now emerging as Red Power.

The movement consisted of disillusioned Indian youth from reservations, urban centers, and universities who called for Red Power in their crusade to reform the conditions of their people. These disillusioned urban Indians were speaking out against the treatment they were receiving from the local, the state, and the federal government, both in the cities and on the reservations. In *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties*, Native American scholar Vine Deloria, Jr., states, "The power movements which had sprung up after 1966 now began to affect Indians, and the center of action was the urban areas on the West Coast, where there was a large Indian population." These Red Power groups strongly advocated the policy of Indian self-determination, used here as meaning, the right to real self-government or autonomy. The NIYC emphasized the psychological impact of powerlessness on Indian youth in connection with the need for self-determination. Powerlessness and lack of self-determination were explained by Clyde Warrior, a Ponca Indian and co-founder of NIYC, when he told government officials in Washington in 1967, "We are not allowed to make those basic human choices and decisions about our personal life and about the destiny of our communities which is the mark of free mature people. We sit on our front porch or in our yards, and the world and our lives in it pass us by without our desires or aspirations having any effect." An article in *Warpath*, the first militant, pan-Indian newspaper in the United States, established in 1968 by United Native Americans (UNA), summed up the attitude of the Bay Area Indian community:

The "Stoic, Silent Redman" of the past who turned the other cheek to white injustice is dead. (He died of frustration and heartbreak.) And in his place is an angry group of Indians who dare to speak up and voice their dissatisfaction at the world around them. Hate and despair have taken their toll and only action can quiet this smoldering anger that has fused this new Indian movement into being.

The rhetoric of Indian self-determination can be traced to the early 1960s, when Melvin Thom, a Paiute Indian from Walker River, Nevada, cofounder and president of the NIYC, recognized the need to alleviate the poverty, unemployment, and degrading lifestyles forced on both urban and reservation Indians. Thom realized that it was essential that Indian people, Indian tribes, and Indian sovereign rights not be compromised in the search for solutions to the many problems. Thom said, "Our recognition as Indian people and Indian tribes is very dear to us. We cannot work to destroy our lives as Indian people." Thom recognized that family, tribalism, and sovereignty had sustained Indian people through the many U.S. government programs designed to destroy them as a people and to nationalize Indian traditional lands. The official policy of the federal government, dating back to 1953, was termination of the relationship between the federal government and Indian communities. Termination would mean that Indian tribes would eventually lose any special relationship they had under federal law. They would lose the tax-exempt status of their lands; the federal government no longer would be responsible for their economic and social well-being; and the tribes themselves would be effectively destroyed. Thom described the termination policy as a "cold war" fought against Indian people:

The opposition to Indians is a monstrosity which cannot be beaten by any single action, unless we as Indian people could literally rise up, in unison, and take what is ours by force. . . . We know the odds are against us, but we also realize that we are fighting for

the lives of future Indian generations. . . . We are convinced, more than ever, that this is a real war. No people in this world ever has been exterminated without putting up a last resistance. The Indians are gathering.

Indian people wanted self-determination rather than termination. This included the right to assume control of their own lives independent of federal control; the creation of conditions for a new era in which the Indian future would be determined by Indian acts and Indian decisions; and the assurance that Indian people would not be separated involuntarily from their tribal groups. . . .

[A]ctivism . . . actually began to build in the 1950s, with more than twenty major demonstrations or nonviolent protests by Indian people. The demonstrations were aimed at ending further reductions of the Indian land base, stopping the termination of Indian tribes, and halting brutality and insensitivity toward Indian people. This rise in Indian activism was largely tribal in nature, however; very little, if any, pan-Indian or supratribal activity occurred. The militancy was primarily a phenomenon of traditional people typified by the participation of elders, medicine people, and entire communities, not the forging of alliances outside of tribal boundaries such as would later occur during the Alcatraz occupation.

In the 1950s, the Six Nations used passive resistance and militant protests to block various New York State projects. Tuscarora and Mohawk people demonstrated in opposition to the building of power projects such as the Fort Randall Dam on the Missouri River and the Kinzua Dam in upstate New York, which required the displacement of Indians and the flooding of Indian land. In 1957, Anderson, a Tuscarora Indian, helped the Mohawk fend off a New York State income tax, on the grounds of Indian sovereignty on Indian reservations. Anderson led a protest group of several hundred Indians from the St. Regis Reservation to the Massena, New York, courthouse, where they tore up summonses for nonpayment of state taxes.

In April 1958, Mad Bear Anderson led a stand against the tide of land seizures, a move that ultimately brought armed troops onto Indian land. The New York Power Authority, directed by chairman Robert Moses, planned to expropriate 1,383 acres of Tuscarora land to build a reservoir and back-flood of Indian lands. Anderson and others blocked surveyors' transits and deflated vehicle tires as harassment tactics. When Power Authority workers tapped the Indian leaders' telephones, Tuscarora people switched to speaking their tribal language. When the Tuscarora refused to accept the state's offer to purchase the land, one hundred armed state troopers and police invaded Tuscarora lands. The troops were met by a nonviolent front of 150 men, women, and children, led by Anderson, blocking the road by lying down or standing in front of government trucks. At the same time, Seneca and Mohawk people set up camps on the disputed land, challenging the state to remove them. Anderson and other leaders were arrested, but the media attention forced the power company to back down. The Federal Power Commission ruled that the Indians did not have to sell the land and the tribe did not sell. The *Buffalo Courier Express* reported that Mad Bear Anderson, more than anyone else, was responsible for the tribe's decision.

Following the Six Nations' success in New York State, the Miccosukee Indian Nation of Florida summoned Anderson to help fight the federal government's attempt to take land from them as part of the Everglades Reclamation Project. In 1959, several hundred Indian people marched on BIA headquarters in Washington,

D.C., protesting the government policy of termination of Indian tribes and attempting a citizen's arrest of the Indian commissioner. In California, Nevada, and Utah, the Pit River Indians, led by Chief Ray Johnson, refused \$29.1 million of claims case money awarded by the government and demanded return of their traditional lands. The Pit River Indian people carried on their battle for return of their lands until 1972, at which time they reached a negotiated settlement for partial restoration of land, along with monetary compensation.

The 1960s witnessed a continuation of localized Indian protest actions such as the brief Indian occupation of Alcatraz Island in 1964. Preceding this event, however, and attracting more of a national audience were the "fish-ins" along the rivers of Washington State. The fish-in demonstrations provided Washington Indian youth with an opportunity to express their disillusionment and dissatisfaction with American society and also to actively protest the social conditions endured by their people. Celebrities such as Marlon Brando lent their names to bring national media coverage of the protest actions. Indian people who participate in the fish-ins would later lend their assistance to the occupiers on Alcatraz Island.

In the summer of 1968, UNA was founded in the San Francisco Bay Area. Many of the Indian occupiers of Alcatraz Island were, or had been, members of UNA; many more were strongly influenced by the organization. UNA had a pan-Indian focus and sought to unify all persons of Indian blood throughout the Americas and to develop a democratic, grassroots organization. Its goal was to promote self-determination through Indian control of Indian affairs at every level. Lehman Brightman was the first president of UNA.

Nineteen-sixty-eight closed with a confrontation between Canada, the United States, and members of the Iroquois Nation. Canada had been restricting the free movement of Mohawk Indians (members of the Iroquois Nation) between the United States and Canada, demanding that the Mohawk pay tolls to use the bridge and pay customs on goods brought back from the United States. Members of the Iroquois League felt that this was an infringement of their treaty rights granted by Great Britain, and members of the Mohawk tribe confronted Canadian officials as a means of forcing the issues of tolls and customs collection on the Cornwall International Bridge (the St. Lawrence Seaway International Bridge) between the two countries. The protest was specifically over Canadian failure to honor the Jay Treaty of 1794 between Canada and the United States.

A number of Mohawk Indians were arrested for blockading the Cornwall Bridge on 18 December 1968, but when they pressed for presentation of their case in the court system, the Canadian government dismissed the charges. This protest action was not without precedent, however. In 1928, the Indian Defense League, founded in 1926, had argued that unrestricted rights for Indians to trade and travel across the U.S.-Canadian border existed based on the Jay Treaty of 1794 and the Treaty of Ghent in 1814. But it was not until the 1969 concession that the Canadian government formally recognized these rights, under Article III of the treaty, and allowed Indians to exchange goods across the border, duty-free, and permitted unrestricted travel between the countries.

The 1968-69 Cornwall Bridge confrontation also brought about the creation of an Indian newspaper called *Akwesasne Notes*, which began as an effort to bring news to Indian people regarding the international bridge crisis by reprinted articles

from diverse newspapers. Edited by Jerry Gambill, a non-Indian employed by the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs, *Akwesasne Notes* developed into a national Indian newspaper with a circulation of nearly fifty thousand and providing full coverage of the Cornwall Bridge incident. As a result, Cornwall Bridge became a prominent discussion topic of Indians across the nation. The influence of the Iroquois power movement of December 1968 and January 1969 that occurred on the Saint Regis Mohawk Reservation in New York and Canada is considerable. Out of this confrontation grew not only *Akwesasne Notes*, which would provide the Alcatraz occupation an Indian media voice, but two other influences as well, both of considerable import. In addition to founding *Akwesasne Notes*, Jerry Gambill assisted Ernest Benedict, a Mohawk Indian, in establishing the North American Indian Traveling College and the White Roots of Peace, a Mohawk group committed to the preservation of leadership in the Mohawk Longhouse. The White Roots of Peace harked back to an earlier Mohawk group, Akwesasne Counselor Organization, founded by Ray Fadden, a Mohawk Indian, in the mid 1930s. The counselor organization had "traveled far and wide inculcating Indian pride among Mohawk youth . . . hoping to influence a group of young Mohawk . . . to take up leadership roles in the Mohawk Longhouse." This was largely an attempt by Fadden and other Mohawk people to preserve and revive Iroquois lifeways. Seeing the spiritual crisis caused by the death of key elders and the movement of many young Indians away from the faith, Gambill founded this organization, which was committed, through speaking engagements to Indian and non-Indian communities and school audiences, to preserving tradition by bringing back the Great Binding Law.

In addition to the rise in activism among the Mohawk, the Miccosukee, the Pit River Indians, and the Bay Area Indians mentioned above, the Taos Pueblo Indians of New Mexico also reasserted their claims to ancestral lands in the 1960s. In 1906, the United States government appropriated the Taos Blue Lake area, a sacred site belonging to the Taos Pueblo Indians, and incorporated it into the Carson National Forest. In 1926, the Taos Indians, in reply to a compensation offer made by the U.S. government, waived the award, seeking return of Blue Lake instead. As a result, they got neither the compensation nor Blue Lake. On 31 May 1933, the Senate Indian Affairs Committee recommended that the Taos Indians be issued a permit to use Blue Lake for religious purposes. The permit was finally issued in 1940. On 13 August 1951, Taos Indians filed a suit before the Indian Claims Commission, seeking judicial support for the validity of title to the lake. On 8 September 1965, the Indian Claims Commission affirmed that the U.S. government had taken the area unjustly from its rightful owners, the Taos Pueblo Indians. On 15 March 1966, legislation was introduced to return Blue Lake to the Taos Indians; however, the bill died without action in the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Subcommittee. On 10 May 1968, House Bill 3306 was introduced to restore the sacred area to the Taos Indians. Although it passed the House of Representatives unanimously, it once again died in the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Subcommittee.

The return of Taos Blue Lake would become the centerpiece of the Indian policy for the incoming Nixon presidential administration. Two other significant events also had a strong effect on Nixon's developing policy of Indian self-determination. The first was the receipt of Alvin M. Josephy, Jr.'s study of the BIA entitled *The American Indian and the Bureau of Indian Affairs—1969, A Study with*

Recommendations. Josephy's report, completed on 24 February 1969, chastises the federal government for its ineptitude in the handling of Indian affairs. Specifically, the report condemns the failure of the various presidencies to affect any change in the multilayered, bureaucratically inept BIA, the failure of the government policy in Indian education, and the high rates of unemployment, disease, and death on Indian reservations that resulted from neglect of Indian people by the federal government. The second significant event that affected Nixon's developing policy of Indian self-determination was the publication of Edgar S. Cahn's edited book *Our Brother's Keeper: The Indian in White America*. Published in 1969, *Our Brother's Keeper* is a study of the ineptitude of the BIA and an indictment of the agency for its failure to carry out its responsibilities to the American Indian people. Recognizing that Indian people have been studied to death, *Our Brother's Keeper* highlights the numerous studies, all conducted by non-Indians with one exception, and states that "recommendations have come to have a special non-meaning for Indians. They are part of a tradition in which policy and programs are dictated by non-Indians even when dialogue and consultation have been promised."

Nixon's announced policy of self-determination would also be tested in California, particularly the Bay Area, which had become the hotbed for the newly developing Indian activism. Jack Forbes, a Powhatan/Lenape Indian and a professor of Native American studies and anthropology at the University of California, Davis, became advisor and mentor to many of the new Indian students. In the spring of 1969, Forbes drafted a proposal for a College of Native American Studies to be created on one of the University of California campuses. American Indian or Native American studies programs were already being formed on the various college campuses in California, such as the University of California at Berkeley, the University of California, Los Angeles, and San Francisco State College. These programs grew out of the Third World student strikes in progress on the various campuses and included Indian students who would soon be intimately involved in the Alcatraz occupation: Richard Oakes, Ross Harden, Joe Bill, Dennis Turner, LaNada Boyer, and Horace Spencer.

On 30 June 1969, the California legislature endorsed Forbes's proposal for the creation of a separate Indian-controlled university. Forbes wrote to John G. Veneman, assistant secretary, Health, Education, and Welfare, and requested that Veneman look into the availability of a 650-acre site between Winter and Davis, California, as a possible site for an Indian-controlled university. Additionally, in 1969, the Native American Student Union was formed in California, creating a pan-Indian alliance between the newly emerging Native American studies program on the various campuses. In San Francisco members of the Native American Student Union prepared to test Nixon's commitment to his stated policy of self-determination before a national audience by occupying Alcatraz Island. For Indian people of the Bay Area, the social movements of the 1960s had not only come to full maturity but now would include Indian people. The heightened social awareness generated by the highly unpopular war in Vietnam, the Black Panther movement, the New Left generation, the Third World strikes, the emerging LaRaza movement, and the nascent feminist movement provided a sympathetic national audience for a new Indian activism. In November 1969, Indian people moved onto the national scene of ethnic unrest as active participants in a war of their own. Alcatraz Island was the battlefield.

In actuality, there were three separate occupations of Alcatraz Island. The first was a brief, four-hour occupation on 9 March 1964, during which five Sioux Indians, representing the urban Indians of the Bay Area, occupied the island. The event was planned by Belva Cottier, the wife of one of the occupiers. The federal penitentiary on the island had been closed in 1963, and the government was in the process of transferring the island to the city of San Francisco for development. Meanwhile, Belva Cottier and her Sioux cousin developed plans of their own. They recalled having heard of a provision in the 1868 Sioux treaty with the federal government stating that all abandoned federal lands reverted to ownership by the Sioux people. Using this interpretation of the treaty, they encouraged five Sioux men to occupy Alcatraz Island and claim it for the Sioux people. They issued press releases claiming the island in accordance with the 1868 Sioux treaty and demanded better treatment for urban Indians. Richard McKenzie, the most outspoken of the group, pressed the claim for title to the island through the court system, only to have the courts rule against him. More importantly, however, the Indians of the Bay Area were becoming vocal and united in their efforts to improve their lives.

The 1964 occupation of Alcatraz Island was a forewarning of the unrest that was fermenting, quietly but surely, in the urban Indian population. Prior to the 1964 occupation, Bay Area newspapers contained a large number of articles about the federal government's abandonment of urban Indians and the state and local governments' refusal to meet their needs. The social clubs that had been formed for support became meeting places for Indian people to discuss the discrimination they were facing in schools, housing, employment, and health care. They also talked about the police, who, like law officers in other areas of the country, would wait outside of Indian bars at closing time to harass, beat, and arrest Indian patrons. Indian centers began to appear in all the urban relocation areas and became nesting grounds for new pan-Indian, and eventually activist, organizations.

The second Alcatraz occupation came out of the Bay Area colleges and universities and other California college campuses, where young, educated Indian students joined with other minority groups during the 1969 Third World Liberation Front strike and began demanding that colleges offer courses relevant to Indian students. Indian history written and taught by non-Indian instructors was no longer acceptable to these young students, who were awakened to the possibility of social protest to bring attention to the shameful treatment of Indian people.

Among the Indian students at San Francisco State was a young Mohawk named Richard Oakes. Oakes came from the St. Regis Reservation, had worked on high steel in New York, and had traveled across the United States, visiting various Indian reservations. He eventually had reached California, where he married a Kashia Pomo woman who had five children from a previous marriage. Oakes worked in an Indian bar in Oakland for a period of time and eventually was admitted to San Francisco State. In September 1969, he and several other Indian students began discussing the possibility of occupying Alcatraz Island as a symbolic protest, a call for Indian self-determination. Preliminary plans were made for a symbolic occupation to take place in the summer of 1970, but other events caused an earlier execution of the plan.

The catalyst for the occupation was the destruction of the San Francisco Indian Center by fire in late October 1969. The center had become a meeting place

for Bay Area Indian organizations and the newly formed United Bay Area Indian Council, which had brought the thirty private clubs together into one large organization headed by Adam Nordwall (later to be known as Adam Fortunate Eagle). The destruction of the Indian center united the council and the American Indian student organizations as never before. The council needed a new meeting place, and the students needed a forum for their new activist voice.

After the fire, the second occupation of Alcatraz Island was planned for 9 November 1969. Richard Oakes and the other Indian college students, along with a group of people from the San Francisco Indian Center, chartered a boat and headed for Alcatraz Island. Since many different tribes were represented, the group adopted the name *Indians of All Tribes*.

The initial plan was to circle the island and symbolically claim it for Indian people. During the circling maneuver, however, Richard and four others jumped from the boat and swam to the island. They claimed Alcatraz in the name of Indians of All Tribes and left the island after meeting with the caretaker, who asked them to leave. Later that same evening, Oakes and fourteen others returned to the island with sleeping bags and food sufficient for two or three days; they left the island the following morning without incident.

In meetings following the 9 November occupation, Oakes and his fellow students realized that a prolonged occupation was possible. It was clear that the federal government had only a token force on the island and that no physical harm had come to anyone involved. A new plan began to emerge.

Following the brief 9 November occupation, Oakes traveled to UCLA, where he met with Ray Spang and Edward Castillo and asked for their assistance in recruiting Indian students for what would become the longest Indian occupation of a federal facility to this very day. Spang, Castillo, and Oakes met in UCLA's Campbell Hall, now the home of the American Indian Studies Center and the editorial offices of the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, in private homes, and in Indian bars in Los Angeles. On 20 November 1969, the eighty Indian people who occupied Alcatraz Island included seventy Indian students from UCLA.

The occupation of Alcatraz would last nineteen months and would bring together Indian people from across the United States, Alaska, Canada, Mexico, and South America. Most importantly, Alcatraz would force the federal government to take a new look at the situation faced by urban Indian people, the long-forgotten victims of a failed relocation program.

The federal government, for its part, insisted that the Indian people leave and placed an ineffective coast guard barricade around the island. Eventually, the government agreed to the Indian council's demands for formal negotiations, but, from the Indians' side, the demands were nonnegotiable. They wanted the deed to the island; they wanted to establish an Indian university, a cultural center, and a museum; and they wanted federal funding to establish all of these. The government negotiators turned down their demands and insisted that they leave the island.

By the end of 1969, the Indian organization on the island began to fall into disarray. Two groups rose in opposition to Richard Oakes, and, as the Indian students began returning to school in January 1970, they were replaced by Indian people from urban areas and reservations who had not been involved in the initial occupation. Where Oakes and the other students claimed title to the island by right of discovery,

the new arrivals harked back to the rhetoric of the 1964 occupation and the Sioux treaty, a claim that had been passed through the court system by Richard McKenzie and had been found invalid. Additionally, some non-Indians now began taking up residency on the island, many from the San Francisco hippie and drug culture. Drugs and liquor had been banned from the island by the original occupiers, but they now became commonplace.

The final blow to the early student occupation occurred on 5 January 1970, when Richard Oakes's twelve-year-old stepdaughter fell three floors down a stairwell to her death. Yvonne Oakes and some other children apparently had been playing unsupervised near an open stairwell when she slipped and fell. Following Yvonne's death, the Oakes family left the island, and the two remaining groups maneuvered back and forth for leadership. Despite changes of leadership, however, the demands of the occupiers remained consistent: title to Alcatraz Island, the development of an Indian university, and the construction of a museum and cultural center that would display and teach the valuable contributions of Indian people to the non-Indian society.

By this time, the attention of the federal government had shifted from negotiations with the island occupants to restoration of navigational aids to the Bay Area—aids that had been discontinued as the result of a fire on Alcatraz Island and the discontinuance of electrical service. The government's inability to restore the navigational aids brought criticism from the coast guard, the Bay Area Pilot's Association, and local newspapers. The federal government now became impatient. On 11 June 1971, the message went out to end the occupation of Alcatraz Island that had begun on 20 November 1969.

The success or failure of the Indian occupation of Alcatraz Island should not be judged by whether the demands for title to the island and the establishment of educational and cultural institutions were realized. If one were to make such a judgment, the only possible answer would be that the occupation was a failure. Such is not the case, however. The underlying goals of the Indians on Alcatraz were to awaken the American public to the reality of the plight of the First Americans and to assert the need for Indian self-determination. In this they were indeed successful. Additionally, the occupation of Alcatraz Island was a springboard for Indian activism, inspiring the large number of takeovers and demonstrations that began shortly after the 20 November 1969 landing and continued into the late 1970s. Many of the approximately seventy-four occupations that followed Alcatraz were either planned by or included people who had been involved in the Alcatraz occupation or who certainly had gained their strength from the new "Indianness" that grew out of that movement.

American Indian activism and broken Indian treaties once again grabbed the newspaper headlines and America's attention in October and November 1972 when more than five hundred Indian protesters participated in the "Trail of Broken Treaties" (the march on Washington and the occupation of the BIA building). The idea for a Trail of Broken Treaties began at the Sioux Rosebud Reservation in 1972 as an attempt to sensitize both the Republican and Democratic parties to the problems faced by Indian people. Although there was enthusiastic support in every section of Indian Country for such a protest march, a catalyst was needed to serve as the focal point. On 21 September 1972, Richard Oakes was shot to death

by a YMCA guard in northern California. AIM leaders, including Russell Means, Hank Adams, and Sid Mills, held a press conference in Seattle to denounce the killing of Oakes. One week following Oakes's death, approximately fifty Indians gathered at the New Albany Hotel in Denver to formalize the concept of the Indian pilgrimage to Washington, D.C. Plans called for one part of the caravan to begin on the West Coast. Those coming from the Southeast followed the Cherokee Trail of Tears; the Sioux passed by Wounded Knee, the site of the massacre in 1890. When the caravan arrived in Washington and found that the accommodations promised them were not available, the group moved to the BIA headquarters building. On 2 November 1972, in a disagreement over housing and food provisions, members of the Trail of Broken Treaties occupied and barricaded the BIA building and presented a list of twenty civil rights demands that had been drawn up during the march. The Indians occupied the BIA building for seven days. Eventually, the government promised to review the demands, refrain from making arrests, and pay the Indians' expenses home. The occupation was a great moral victory for the Indians, who, for the first time, faced white America as a united people. The two governmental negotiators were Brad Patterson and Leonard Garment, who had overseen the Alcatraz occupation for the government. Although many of the Alcatraz occupiers participated in the Trail of Broken Treaties, the occupation was directed by AIM and NIYC. Other sponsoring groups included the National Indian Brotherhood of Canada, Survival of American Indians, National American Indian Council, Native American Rights Fund, National Council on Indian Work, American Indian Commission of Alcohol and Drug Abuse, and National Indian Leadership Training.

Following the BIA takeover, AIM members led by Dennis Banks and Russell Means responded to an invitation from traditional members of the Oglala Sioux to investigate corruption and mistreatment of tribal members by the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) tribal government led by Richard "Dick" Wilson. Charges were made that Wilson and his appointed council misused tribal funds, awarded reservation jobs to Wilson's cronies, and maintained a "goon squad" to intimidate those who opposed him. AIM leaders allied themselves with the traditionalists. Tensions began to mount on 21 January 1973, when Wesley Bad Heart Bull, a local Oglala, was stabbed to death. The white man accused of his death was charged with second-degree manslaughter. On 6 February 1973, as part of an effort to protest the leniency of the charges, Indian demonstrators stormed the courthouse in Custer, South Dakota, and set the courthouse on fire. National guardsmen were called to active duty as tensions mounted and Indian people clashed with national guard troops and local police, including Wilson's goon squad.

On the afternoon of 27 February 1973, approximately two hundred members and supporters of AIM gathered at Calico Hall, near the community of Pine Ridge, some carrying rifles, pistols, and knives. That evening a car caravan departed Calico Hall and slowly wound its way to Wounded Knee, South Dakota, the site of the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre. Tensions between the protesters and the local authorities grew until the situation became a siege of the town, which lasted for seventy-one days. The Indian occupiers were surrounded by three hundred federal marshals and FBI agents, equipped with armored personnel carriers (APCs), M-16s, automatic infantry weapons, chemical weapons, steel helmets, gas masks, body

armor, illuminating flares, military clothing, and rations. The army's 82nd airborne division provided leadership and logistical support for the government "peace-keeping" force. On 12 March 1973 the Indian occupiers declared Wounded Knee a sovereign territory of the new Oglala Sioux Nation according to the Laramie Treaty of 1868, which recognized the Sioux as an independent nation. The siege finally ended on the morning of 8 May, when the two sides began firing on each other and two Indians, Frank Clearwater and Lawrence (Buddy) Lamont, were shot and killed, an act that called national attention to the Native American civil rights movement. Two hundred thirty-seven arrests were made during the course of the seventy-one-day occupation, and thirty-five weapons were confiscated. The primary leaders of the Wounded Knee takeover were members of AIM, supported by a coalition of organizations including former occupiers of Alcatraz Island.

The murder of Wesley Bad Heart Bull and the occupation of Wounded Knee were symptomatic of the problems faced by Indian people on reservations throughout the United States, with Pine Ridge being perhaps the most violent. The corruption and protest did not end with the Wounded Knee occupation however. Following the end of the occupation, terror stalked the small community. While AIM leaders sat in jails and prisons, went into hiding, or awaited trial, atrocities continued. It is estimated that, following the Wounded Knee occupation, some 250 Oglala people, many of whom were AIM members or participants in the Wounded Knee occupation, disappeared from the face of the earth. The IRA tribal police, under Wilson's control, and the FBI refused to investigate the disappearances, and newspapers failed to cover the stories. It was not until June 1975 that events on Pine Ridge again captured national attention.

On 26 June 1975, a shootout occurred on the Pine Ridge Reservation between AIM members and the FBI, resulting in the death of an Indian man, Joseph Stuntz, and two FBI agents, Jack Coler and Ronald Williams. Following the incident, the FBI reported that the agents had been ambushed from sophisticated bunkers and were riddled with bullets as they attempted to serve arrest warrants. Officials later admitted that the initial reports were false and that it was unclear exactly what had happened. An FBI spokesman in Washington told newsmen, "We're going to make sure that the people who killed our agents don't get out of there."

The original reports that the two FBI agents were ambushed and killed with repeated blasts of gunfire were later found to be inflammatory, distorted, and inaccurate. FBI agents claimed that they were serving arrest warrants, but AIM members state that "they came in shooting." Falling on the heels of the large number of disappearances, the FBI decided to investigate; two of their own had been killed. As a result, FBI agents swarmed all over the reservation. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights later condemned the FBI's "full-scale military-style invasion" of the Pine Ridge Reservation.

Despite conflicting evidence and the withholding of evidence by the FBI, Leonard Peltier was arrested, charged, and convicted for the murder of the FBI agents and is currently serving two life prison sentences. American Indian people continue to protest against the imprisonment of Peltier. They have demanded that the case against Peltier be reopened based on new information that allegedly proves FBI involvement in the manufacturing and withholding of evidence used to convict Peltier. The death of Joseph Stuntz went unpunished.

The years following 1975 saw a shift in American Indian activism away from a national agenda led by AIM to a focus on specific issues and local problems, some with national implications. These included the continuing fight over treaty fishing rights, protection of sacred sites for the practice of traditional religions, the repatriation of human skeletal remains and associated funerary objects, as well as the protection of gaming on Indian reservations as a function of tribal sovereignty. As a result of federal government infiltration under the CONTERINTELPRO program and internal dissension among leaders, AIM split into smaller regional chapters with no national organization. Dennis Banks, Russell Means, and Clyde Bellecourt pursued different agendas that prevented them from coming together as a unified force. In 1982 Dennis Banks called for a meeting to be held in San Francisco. His goal was to pull AIM together as a national organization once again. Although some consensus was reached and 250 people responded to AIM's call for a Walk for Religious Freedom, no sustaining national organization emerged. AIM continues to represent Indian people today when called upon and to press for fair treatment and recognition of rights guaranteed by U.S. Indian treaties. The organization continues to do this primarily from state or local chapters rather than a strong national organization with the charismatic leadership of people such as Banks, Means, Bellecourt, and John Trudell. . . .

◆ FURTHER READING

- Akwesasne Notes, *Trail of Broken Treaties: BIA, I'm Not Your Indian Any More* (1974)
 ———, *Voices From Wounded Knee, 1973, in the Words of the Participants* (1974)
 Thomas R. Berger, *Village Journey: The Report of the Alaska Native Review Commission* (1985)
 Joy A. Bilharz, *The Allegany Senecas and Kinzua Dam: Forced Relocation Through Two Generations* (1998)
 Peter Blue Cloud, *Alcatraz Is Not An Island* (1972)
 Paul Brodeur, *Restitution: The Land Claims of the Mashpee, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot Indians of New England* (1985)
 David M. Brugge, *The Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute: An American Tragedy* (1994)
 Robert Burnette and John Koster, *The Road to Wounded Knee* (1974)
 Jack Campisi, *The Mashpee Indians: Tribe on Trial* (1991)
 George P. Castile, *To Show Heart: Native American Self-Determination and Federal Indian Policy, 1960–1975* (1998)
 Fay G. Cohen, *Treaties on Trial: The Continuing Controversy Over Northwest Fishing Rights* (1986)
 Stephen E. Cornell, *The Return of the Native: American Indian Political Resurgence* (1988)
 Philip J. Delona, *Playing Indian* (1998)
 Vine Deloria, Jr., *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties: An Indian Declaration of Independence* (1974)
 ———, *Custer Died For Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (1969)
 ———, *We Talk, You Listen: New Tribes, New Turf* (1970)
 Estelle Fuchs and Robert Havighurst, *To Live On This Earth: American Indian Education* (1972)
 Mario Gonzalez and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, *The Politics of Hallowed Ground: Wounded Knee and the Struggle for Indian Sovereignty* (1998)
 R. C. Gordon-McCutchan, *The Taos Indians and the Battle for Blue Lake* (1991)
 Alexandra Harmon, *Indians in the Making: Ethnic Relations and Indian Identities Around Puget Sound* (1998)

- Laurence M. Hauptman, *Formulation of American Indian Policy in New York State, 1970–1986* (1988)
 Peter Iverson, *The Navajo Nation* (1981)
 Troy R. Johnson, *The Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Indian Self-Determination and the Rise of Indian Activism* (1996)
 ———, Joane Nagel and Duane Champagne, eds., *American Indian Activism: Alcatraz to the Longest Walk* (1997)
 Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., ed., *Red Power: The American Indians' Fight for Freedom* (1971)
 Jerry Kammer, *The Second Long Walk: The Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute* (1980)
 Stuart Levine and Nancy Lurie, eds., *The American Indian Today* (1966)
 D'Arcy McNickle, *Wind From an Enemy Sky* (1978)
 N. Scott Momaday, *House Made of Dawn* (1968)
 Joane Nagel, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and the Resurgence of Identity and Culture* (1996)
 John William Sayer, *Ghost Dancing the Law: The Wounded Knee Trials* (1997)
 Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (1977)
 Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement From Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (1996)
 Sam Stanley, ed., *American Indian Economic Development* (1978)
 Stan Steiner, *The New Indians* (1968)
 Kenneth S. Stern, *Loud Hawk: The United States Versus the American Indian Movement* (1994)
 Jack O. Waddell and O. Michael Watson, eds., *The American Indian in Urban Society* (1971)
 James Welch, *The Death of Jim Loney* (1979)
 ———, *Winter in the Blood* (1974)
 Robert White, *Tribal Assets: The Rebirth of Indian America* (1990)