

**Wasi'chu**  
**The Continuing Indian Wars**

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**Native American Genocide**

## *Wasichu*

The first people who lived on the northern plains of what today is the United States called themselves "Lakota," meaning "the people," a word which provides the semantic basis for Dakota. The first European people to meet the Lakota called them "Sioux," a contraction of *Nadowessiou*, a now-archaic French-Canadian word meaning "snake" or enemy.

The Lakota also used the metaphor to describe the newcomers. It was *Wasi'chu*, which means "takes the fat "or" greedy person." Within the modern Indian movement, *Wasi'chu* has come to mean those corporations and individuals, with their governmental accomplices, which continue to covet Indian lives, land, and resources for private profit.

*Wasi'chu* does not describe a race; it describes a state of mind.

*Wasi'chu* is also a human condition based on inhumanity, racism, and exploitation. It is a sickness, a seemingly incurable and contagious disease which begot the ever-advancing society of the West. If we do not control it, this disease will surely be the basis for what may be the last of the continuing wars against the Native American people.

...excerpt from *Wasi'chu, The Continuing Indian Wars*,  
Bruce Johansen and Robert Maestas  
with an introduction by John Redhouse

***“The white man made us many promises, but he only kept one. He promised to take our land, and he took it.” - Red Cloud (Ogallala)***

Throughout much of the twentieth century, Native Americans have participated in social movements, and in “Red Power” activism. In the 1950’s, 60’s, and 70’s, Indian activism progressed and became sometimes violent, and sometimes similar in their tactics to other civil rights groups, i.e., the “Black Panthers”. These Indian activists were comprised of mostly younger, more progressive, and better educated urban Indians and were initially formed to protect urban Indians from civil rights abuses. By the early 1980s, over 100 Indian studies programs had been created in the United States. Tribal museums opened, and the United Nations recognized an international indigenous rights movement. AIM (The American Indian Movement) continued fighting for Indian rights in land and grazing rights battles; protesting athletic team Indian mascots; and working for the repatriation of sacred objects taken from Indian land.

The path for Native Americans has not been an easy road. In fact, where other civil rights movements have had some successes, the evolution for Native Americans has been slower and much more contemptuous. We can look at one nation, the Lakota, and clearly see many of the problems plaguing their homeland. Lakota men have a life expectancy of less than 44 years, lowest of any country in the World. The Lakota death rate is the highest in the United States. The Lakota infant mortality rate is 300 percent higher than the U.S. average. The teenage suicide rate is 150 percent higher than the U.S national average for this group. More than half the reservation's adults battle addiction and disease and alcoholism affects 8 in 10 families. The Indian youth incarceration rate is 40 percent higher than whites. In South Dakota, 21 percent of state prisoners were Native. Indians have the second largest state prison incarceration rate in the nation. The tuberculosis rate on Lakota Reservations is approx 800 percent higher than the U.S.

national average. Cervical cancer is 500 percent higher than the U.S. national average. The rate of diabetes is 800 percent higher than the U.S. national average. The median income is approximately \$2,600 to \$3,500 per year and ninety seven percent of Lakota people live below the poverty line. Many families cannot afford heating oil, wood or propane and many residents use ovens to heat their homes. The elderly dies each winter from hypothermia and 1/3 of their homes lack basic clean water and sewage while 40 percent lack electricity. 60 percent of Reservation families have no telephone. 60 percent of their housing is infected with potentially fatal black molds. There is an estimated average of 17 people living in each family home and many only have two to three rooms. Some homes, built for 6 to 8 people, have up to 30 people living in them. An unemployment rate on Reservations is 85 percent or higher. Only 14 percent of the Lakota population can speak the Lakota language. The language is not being shared by their children, and the average Lakota speaker is 65 years old. Most importantly, the Lakota language is an endangered language, on the verge of extinction.<sup>1</sup>

Today, it has become almost a matter of conventional wisdom that “Vietnam was the first war the U.S. ever lost.” A far better case could be made that this crucial and humiliating event occurred a century earlier, in 1868, following the so called “Red Cloud War” in what are now the states of Wyoming and Montana. The United States, in patent violation of the territorial guarantees extended to the Lakota (western Sioux) under the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851, had moved to open a “direct route” northward from the fort, across the prime buffalo graze lying between the Black Hills and the Big Horn Mountains, to the newly discovered gold fields near Virginia City. Beginning in 1865, the U.S. Army was instructed to establish a string of posts along this route known as the “Bozeman Trail” to protect it from the “depredations” (i.e., defensive responses) of the Indians whose legally recognized homeland had thus been invaded.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.republicoflakotah.com/>

Under the political leadership of Red Cloud, the Ogallala's, the largest of the seven groups of Lakota, forged a unified military response to this invasion and threat to their traditional buffalo economy. In short order, the Lakota had also consolidated a defensive alliance with the Arapaho and Northern Cheyenne, two other Indian nations whose 1851 treaty areas were violated by the U.S. offensive actions. During 1866, the warriors of this powerful confederation halted all traffic along the Bozeman trail, isolating and laying siege to the military posts along it, and annihilating the troops of Captain William C. Fetterman outside Fort Phil Kearney on December 21st. By mid 1867, after two major engagements known as "The Hay Field Fight" (near Fort C.F. Smith) and "The Wagon Box Fight" (near Fort Phil Kearney) and with the realization that it had seriously underestimated the Indians ability to work in concert and mount a sustained campaign, the U.S. began a series of overtures for peace negotiations intended to avert a full-scale military disaster. Red Cloud refused to so much as discuss negotiations until all troops were withdrawn from the contested areas. The Ogallala's then burned the abandoned army posts to the ground before going to Fort Laramie to sign a new treaty on April 29, 1868. "For the first time in its history the United States Government had negotiated a peace which conceded everything demanded by the enemy and which extracted nothing in return."<sup>2</sup>

At the center of Edward Lazarus', book *Black Hills/White Justice* is the untold story of the longest running legal fight in American history: the Sioux nation's one-hundred-year effort to secure restitution for the seizure of the Black Hills of South Dakota. This fight has been ongoing which includes land legislation brought about by the three Sioux tribes which are moving to get the Docket 74-A money released, and many Sioux tribal members fear such a move will bring the Sioux tribes one step closer to termination. The Santee Sioux Tribe of Nebraska, the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe and the Fort Peck Sioux Tribe asked legislators to introduce

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<sup>2</sup> Deloria Jr., Vine. *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties: An Indian Declaration of Independence*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985. p. 281-283

legislation releasing Docket 74-A monies. Draft legislation is now pending with the Department of Interior's Office of Legislation that would provide for the release of Docket 74-A funds for the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe and the Santee Sioux Tribe of Nebraska. The Fort Peck Sioux Tribe is seeking the release of the award money through separate avenues according to Fort Peck Black Hills Sioux Council Representative Raymond 'Abby' Ogle. Other Sioux tribes involved in the land claim have opposed the awarding of Docket 74-A money and were unaware that legislation was pending to get the award money released.<sup>3</sup>

### **BACKGROUND OF DOCKET 74-A**

"Docket 74-A is a 48-million acre claim for 14 million acres of Aboriginal title land east and 34 million acres of recognized title land west of the Missouri River, which, before it was illegally confiscated by the U.S. Government, was known as the Great Sioux Nation.

"In 1970, the Indian Claims Commission awarded \$25 million for the lands west of the Missouri River and \$20 million for the lands east of the Missouri River. The \$45 million was reduced to \$40 million based on \$5 million in government off-sets allowed by the Indian Claims Commission. The \$40-million award was rejected by the Teton Lakota and Yanktonai Dakota.

"Docket 74-B is an award allowed for the compensation of the illegal taking of the Black Hills in 1877 and is separate from the Docket 74-A.

"Docket 74-A and Docket 74-B monies had reached a total of \$356.6 million as of June 1995. The Office of Trust Funds Management in Albuquerque, N.M., will no longer release the award figures saying the office is exempt from releasing that information under the Freedom of Information Act so a total figure for Docket 74-A monies to date could not be calculated." <sup>4</sup>

***“Almost immediately following the Indian War era, there began a series of governmental policies that were designed to make sure that we didn't exist anymore as tribal people, that we no longer kept our language, our cultural identity, our religion, and most importantly our land and natural resources.”***

**- Wilma Mankiller (Cherokee), Occupation Leader**

In the first ethno history of modern urban Indians, Donald L. Fixico, director of the Indigenous Nations Studies Program and professor of history at the University of Kansas,

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<sup>3</sup> Lazarus, Edward, Black Hills, White Justice - The Sioux Nation Versus The United States, 1775 To The Present, Harper Collins, 1999, p.482

<sup>4</sup> Prucha, Francis Paul, 1994, American Indian Treaties, The History of a Political Anomaly: Berkeley, California, University of California Press, p.199-200.

reviews the rise of an invisible majority. While the Reservation or “plains” Indian stereotype dominates popular culture, two-thirds of Indians today live in cities.

Fixico documents how post-World War II federal relocation policy sought to force Indians into mainstream American urban life and end the unique historic relationship between the federal government and Native Americans. The policy was a massive attack on Indian identity. It failed because external threats forced urban Indians to bond, rather than blend. With no places to socialize, Indians turned to bars or to group drinking in their homes. The phenomenon of group drinking, which created peer pressure to drink to excess, led many to alcoholism and death.

Seventy percent of relocated Indians returned to Reservation life, but the second generation of migrant Indians who stayed in the city became activists. The Red Power movement and American Indian Movement (AIM) sprang from urban Indian experience in the 1960s and 1970s.

In 1961 Indians called the first major urban Indian conference, and by the end of the decade Indian centers in forty urban areas helped Indians face common problems. In the early 1930s, a time when Native Americans’ needs were low on the list of national priorities, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) chief John Collier secured significant federal investment in reservation services.

The Indian New Deal improved neglected Indian education, health, and income levels to the point that many Native Americans were well equipped to participate as soldiers and defense workers a decade later. Experience in these occupations prepared some Native Americans for assimilation after the war. On the other hand, Collier's failure to support Indian sovereignty claims in several high-profile cases strengthened Indian desire for self-determination and a distinct identity apart from mainstream society. Most don’t recognize the magnitude of Native American participation in World War II. Twenty-five thousand Indian troops enlisted, and forty thousand others migrated to urban areas to work as riveters, chemists, truck drivers, and sheet metal cutters. Indians lent 840,000 acres of tribal lands for military use and bought some \$50

million in war bonds. Indian agricultural enterprises contributed significantly to the wartime economy. An interesting contrast is how non-Indians constructed Indian identity during the war. White soldiers were intrigued by Indian spirituality and believed they had a special “warrior spirit.” Indians themselves accepted this view and renewed lapsed warrior rituals. White officers assigned Indians special tasks such as rock climbing that supposedly conformed to their special capabilities. The Nazis as well, basing their views of Native Americans on romantic views of the nineteenth century warrior, identified Indians as Aryan and encouraged them to resist their American exploiters.<sup>5</sup>

In gratitude, in 1942, the northwestern 1/8th of the Oglala Lakota’s Reservation was impounded by the War Department, to be used as an aerial gunnery range for the duration of World War II. To date, this land has not been returned, a situation which may well have received major impetus on August 2, 1946, when Congress passed the Indian Claims Commission Act. The expressed purpose of this legislation was to establish a mechanism by which to apply a veneer of legality and respectability to all historical U.S. seizures of Indian land, regardless of the conditions or legality attending these expropriations at the time they took place. The method employed by the commission was to provide monetary compensation to Indian victims of government land thefts, or their descendants at prices deemed "fair" by the government; such dollar compensation was formally construed as ending Indian land claims/land rights, “quieting title” for the non-Indian holders of Indian land. Recovery of illegally taken lands by Indians was specifically prohibited within the practice of the commission. As Shoshone activist Josephine C. Mills stated in 1964, “There is no longer any need to shoot down Indians in order to take away their rights and land . . . legislation (in combination with) the Indian Claims

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<sup>5</sup> Fixico, Donald, *The Urban Experience*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000, P.229-230



Commission (is sufficient to do) the trick legally.”<sup>6</sup> This procedure required Indians to be, if not exactly cooperative, then at least quiet in the finalization of their disenfranchisement. In June of 1953, Representative William Henry Harrison of Wyoming introduced the “Termination Act” which stipulated: “It is the sense of Congress that, at the earliest possible time, all of the Indian tribes and the individual members thereof located within the States of California, Florida, New York, and Texas, should be freed from Federal supervision and control and all disabilities and limitations specifically applicable to Indians.”<sup>7</sup> Decoded, this language simply meant that Congress had empowered itself to dissolve (“terminate”) at its discretion Indian nations within the four designated states. At the second session of Congress, during January 1954, the act was amended to extend this power over the remaining states and Republican Senator Arthur V. Watkins of Utah then spearheaded a drive to apply it. In short order, several Indian nations, including the Menominee, Klamath, Siletz, Grande Ronde, several small Paiute bands, and a number of the Rancherias in California were declared no longer to exist. In such a context of raw coercion, Congress availed itself of the opportunity to trample the remaining residue of Indian sovereignty, passing in August 1953, Public Law 280 which was a bill that subordinated Indians not only to the federal government, but often to states as well. As all this was going on, Colonel Lewis A. Pick of the Army Corps of Engineers and William Glenn Sloan, assistant director of the Bureau of Reclamation regional office in Billings, Montana, were putting into effect a proposal to harness the Missouri River; wholly owned by the Lakota in the high plains area via a series of dams and reservoirs. The “Pick-Sloan Plan” approved by Congress in 1944 not only preempted Lakota water rights but would have flooded substantial portions of the best land in the Standing Rock, Cheyenne River, Crow Creek, Yankton and Rosebud Reservations as well.

Although undeniably distressed by the legislative intimidation emanating from Washington,

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<sup>6</sup> Ditto p.235

<sup>7</sup> Churchill, Ward, and Jim Vander Wall. Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement. Boston: South End Press, 1988. p. 110

D.C., the Lakota's proved to be less than resigned to such a fate. Counter to the working assumptions of the commission, they argued that only the Lakota could provide a legal foundation from which the Pick-Sloan plan might be carried through, that the commission held no such legal prerogative and that the federal government held no inherent legal right to do anything at all in western South Dakota on its own initiative. Further, they adopted the position that monetary compensation for their treaty lands was unacceptable, that they required the return of all land guaranteed by treaty and suggested that they would decline any compensatory payment. They have never abandoned this position. By 1970, the dynamic of historical hostility shaping U.S. and Lakota relations was being aggravated by the rise of an overt activism and militancy among younger Indians across the country. Beginning in the mid 1960s, a Cherokee college student named Clyde Warrior, who described himself as "an academic Aborigine," became increasingly effective in asserting a vision of pan-Indian nationalism. This paralleled the SNCC demands for Black Power articulated by Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown. The Warrior's National Indian Youth Council pushed "Red Power" through its newspaper, "Americans before Columbus". A new generation of Indians began to consider direct confrontation with the federal government, using a synthesis of their own traditions and the tactics deployed by the civil rights, antiwar and new left movements. They were inspired by Warrior's writing:

"What can you do when a society tells you that you should be nonexistent? As I look at it, the situation will not change unless violent action comes about. If this country understands violence, then that is the way to do it. Some of the young Indians are already talking revolution. "We have tried everything else," they say. "The only thing left is our guns. Let's use them."<sup>8</sup>

Even such essentially conservative organizations as the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) became energized during the period as, under the leadership of Lakota law student and writer, Vine Deloria, Jr., it began to issue increasingly sharp criticisms of federal

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<sup>8</sup> Steiner, Stan, *The New Indians*, Delta Books, New York, 1968, p. 68.

Indian policy. In Oregon and Washington, younger Indian activists such as Janet McCloud (Suquamish) and Hank Adams (Assiniboin/Lakota) added their weight to the ongoing fishing rights struggles in the Northwest. Further expressions of American Indian rights to sovereignty and self-determination forcefully emerged during these years in locations as diverse as Florida, where the Seminoles had refused to even enter into a peace accord with the U.S. until 1964, the St. Regis Mohawk Reservation in upstate New York where Mohawk treaty relations extended not only to the U.S., but to Great Britain and Canada as well, and even among such “federally unrecognized” people as the Passamaquoddys of Maine and the Yaquis in Arizona. In this atmosphere of political upheaval, two Anishinabes (Chippewa’s), Dennis Banks and George Mitchell founded the American Indian Movement (AIM) in 1968. The organization was self-consciously patterned after the Black Panther Party's community self-defense model pioneered by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale two years previously in Oakland. AIM chapters quickly sprang up around the country and began to attract those who would comprise the organization’s future leadership.

The AIM impetus received a decided boost in November 1969, when an ad hoc group calling itself Indians of All Tribes (IAT) occupied Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay. Headed by Richard Oaks, a Mohawk, and a young Santee Dakota AIM member named John Trudell, IAT demanded title to Alcatraz under provision of an act passed on July 31, 1882, which indicated that abandoned federal facilities such as the empty prison situated on the island should be utilized for Indian schools. They also relied upon Title 25, U.S. Code 194: “In all trials about the right of property in which an Indian may be party on one side, and a white person on the other, the burden of proof shall rest upon the white person, whenever the Indian shall make out a

presumption of title in himself from the fact of previous possession or ownership.”<sup>9</sup> IAT released a statement that its agenda consisted of utilizing Alcatraz to establish a Center for Native American studies, an American Indian Spiritual Center, an Indian Center of Ecology, a Great Indian Training School and an American Indian Museum; it also offered to buy the island from the federal government, following the standards of equity set by the U.S. in its land acquisitions from Indians:

“We, the native Americans, re-claim the land known as Alcatraz Island in the name of all American Indians by right of discovery . . . We wish to be fair and honorable in our dealings with the Caucasian inhabitants of this land, and hereby offer the following treaty . . . We will purchase said Alcatraz for twenty-four (24) dollars in glass beads and red cloth, a precedent set by the white man's purchase of a similar island about 300 years ago. We know that \$24 in trade goods for these 16 acres is more than was paid when Manhattan Island was sold, but we know that land values have risen over the years. Our offer of \$1.24 per acre is greater than the 47 cents per acre the white men are now Raying the California Indians for their land (through the Indian Claims Commission)”.<sup>10</sup>

In the PBS documentary, “Alcatraz is not an Island”, the headlined states: “The takeover of Alcatraz was one of the most successful American Indian protest actions of the 20th century, fueling the rise of modern Native American activism. In fact, many of the 74 Indian occupations of federal facilities that followed Alcatraz were either planned by or included people who had been involved in seizing the island. The occupation also brought Indian rights issues to the attention of the federal government and American public, changing forever the way Native people viewed themselves, their culture, and their inherent right to self-determination. The occupation also succeeded in getting the federal government to end its policy of termination and adopt an official policy of Indian self-determination. From 1970 to 1971, Congress passed 52 legislative proposals on behalf of American Indians to support tribal self-rule. President Nixon increased the BIA budget by 225 percent, doubled funds for Indian health care and established

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<sup>9</sup> Churchill, Ward, and Jim Vander Wall. Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement. Boston: South End Press, 1988. p. 119

<sup>10</sup> Ditto p.119

the Office of Indian Water Rights. Also, during Nixon's presidency, scholarship funds were increased by \$848,000 for college students. The Office of Equal Opportunity provided more funds for economic development and drug and alcohol recovery programs and expanded housing, health care and other programs.”<sup>11</sup>

***“Before AIM, Indians were dispirited, defeated, and culturally dissolving. People were ashamed to be Indian. You didn't see the young people wearing braids or chokers or ribbon shirts in those days. Hell, I didn't wear 'em. People didn't Sun Dance, they didn't sweat, and they were losing their languages. Then there was that spark at Alcatraz, and we took off. Man, we took a ride across this country. We put Indians and Indian rights smack dab in the middle of the public consciousness for the first time since the so-called Indian Wars.... [AIM] laid the groundwork for the next stage in regaining our sovereignty and self-determination as nation, and I'm proud to have been a part of that.”***

**- Russell Means (Oglala Lakota)**

The lessons of this were not lost on the AIM leadership, especially not on Russell Means. As Robert Burnette, a former chairman of the Rosebud Reservation (and an activist during the period), recounts: “Means revealed his bizarre knack for staging demonstrations that attracted the sort of press coverage Indians had been looking for: the capture of the Mayflower II on Thanksgiving of 1970, a brief occupation of Mount Rushmore in June 1971, and an abortive attempt to seize the BIA central office on 22 September of the same year. His genius for public relations made him increasingly the group's spokesperson.”<sup>12</sup> Means went on to become one of the most radicalized activists of the Indian movement. He was arrested many times and was a “thorn in the side” of the government. The federal sector was unprepared for the dogged stamina AIM would exhibit, the amount of punishment it absorbed without yielding, or the depth of its support at reservation grassroots. The official government assessment of the organization in 1972 was that: “Some of their leaders are star-struck with self-righteousness, some are renegades, some are youthful adventurers, and some have criminal records. They come forward with great gusto when there is hell to raise; otherwise, they are loosely organized, slipping from one

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.pbs.org/itvs/alcatrazisnotaniland/activism.html>

<sup>12</sup> Ditto p.122

expensive-to-the-taxpayers event to the next under the cloak of false idealism.”<sup>13</sup> But if government policymakers miscalculated, so did AIM. As Indian activist Dennis Banks reflected later.

“It strikes me that we were incredibly naive in those days, for all our militancy and radical rhetoric. We actually believed that if we raised the issues, made people aware of the truth, and stuck to our guns in a strong way, that things would change, that that's all it would take. Oh, we expected to pay dues don't get me wrong we were prepared for beatings and arrests, time spent in jails and prisons to some degree or another. I guess, after Richard Oaks, you'd have to say we expected death. But somehow, we still didn't really understand the rules of the game; we weren't prepared for the magnitude of what happened. Part of that was maybe because we still didn't really comprehend what the stakes were.”<sup>14</sup>

The Means platform focused upon Oglala sovereignty, specifically a return of tribal decision making to the traditional councils of elders preempted by the Indian Reorganization Act in 1936, a resumption of Lakota treaty making with the U.S. and other nations and corresponding elimination of the BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) as Oglala liaison with the federal government part of the “Trail of Broken Treaties” 20 points; a program to recover Lakota jurisdiction and subordinate the BIA police to community control, and a program to recover Lakota treaty territory, including control of the many portions of Pine Ridge leased to non Indians by the BIA as a part of its exercise of “trust” responsibility over Indian lands. Means no doubt felt a personal interest in the latter element of his agenda. The Means brothers, for example, had inherited 190 acres of land on Pine Ridge, but the land, like all allotments, was held in trust by the federal government, and it was leased by the BIA to a white rancher. According to Russell Means, they no longer received lease payments after 1969 when they joined AIM.<sup>15</sup>

From here, divisions within AIM revealed a split in the movement between those who fought for the rights of the urban Indian community and others who favored a national activist agenda. In 1973 the president of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, also serving a two year term, was Dick

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<sup>13</sup> Ditto p.128

<sup>14</sup> Churchill, Ward, and Jim Vander Wall. Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement. Boston: South End Press, 1988. p. 223

<sup>15</sup> Ditto p. 135

Wilson, aged 38, a plumber by trade and a father of six children. The executive committee was composed of Dave Long, vice president; Toby Eagle Bull, secretary; Emma T. Nelson, treasurer; and Everett Lone Hill, fifth member. The referendum vote to accept self-government and the new constitution had been very close in 1935, and a sizable minority of Oglala remained strongly opposed to it. That group formed the core of a faction of discontent and opposition which was still very much in existence in 1973. Tribal government at Pine Ridge was split between the supporters of Dick Wilson and those against him. Those opposed to the chairman included Vice President Dave Long; a number of tribal councilmen, including Dick Little, Hobart Keith, and Birgil Kills Straight; the Oglala Sioux Civil Rights Organization; and AIM. From the time Dick Wilson took office in April 1972, until February 1973, there had been three attempts to impeach him, all unsuccessful. A major demand of AIM was that Dick Wilson be removed from office, that Stan Lyman be removed as superintendent, and that the tribal constitution be abolished. These internal struggles exacerbated an already complex situation of conflicting and overlapping authority and jurisdiction; a situation stemming from the particular relationship between an Indian tribe and the federal government. But the AIM also found support in other quarters: from some Reservation Indians, even those of older generations, who saw in AIM a glimmer of hope for the restoration of a way of life long past. An AIM slogan of 1973 proclaimed, "The Red Giant is on one knee, but he is getting ready to stand up."<sup>16</sup>

As if it were "paramnesia", on the twenty-seventh of February, 1973, in Wounded Knee, South Dakota, a tiny village on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, was occupied by a militant group of American Indians. That occupation lasted for several months during tortuous times of political upheaval in the United States. Even during the struggle over Watergate, the Wounded Knee occupation vied well in the national news for the attention of the American people. The

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<sup>16</sup> Lyman, Stanley David. 1993. *Wounded Knee 1973: A Personal Account*. Ed. Floyd A. O'Neil, June K. Lyman, and Susan McKay. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press. p.16

continuing violence disrupted every aspect of life on the Pine Ridge Reservation and created bitter divisions among its people, the Oglala Sioux Tribe. The occupation of Wounded Knee was preceded by a long chain of AIM activities, some constructive in purpose and outcome, but most violent and disruptive. The organization and its leaders rose in the estimation of many Oglala Sioux on the Pine Ridge Reservation because of its prompt and vigorous action following the murder of a man from the tribe. On February 13th, 1972, Raymond Yellow Thunder was beaten to death by a group of whites in nearby Gordon, Nebraska. AIM leaders led a band of 250 Pine Ridge Reservation Indians to Gordon for a confrontation with the town's mayor. They quickly won most of their demands, and convictions in the case were ultimately obtained. The AIM leaders and their followers returned to Pine Ridge as heroes in the eyes of many. AIM gained national attention again in November of 1972 when some of its leaders and members marched on the Bureau of Indian Affairs building in Washington, D.C., occupied it forcibly, and ransacked its files and offices. In the months between this occupation and that of Wounded Knee, the South Dakota area saw increasing unrest and disorder stirred up by AIM. During the first two weeks of February 1973, units of the South Dakota National Guard were called into active duty in Rapid City, Custer, and other locations, and the U.S. Marshal Service sent 105 deputies into the Pine Ridge Reservation to ensure against violence there. The events of the night of February 27th were thus prefaced by a long preparation.

Stanley David Lyman became the superintendent of the Bureau of Indian Affairs agency at Pine Ridge in 1972. Lyman was a native of South Dakota and had been raised in the Quaker tradition. He grew up on a ranch in western South Dakota on the edge of the Black Hills. During the Great Depression he attended Yankton College in South Dakota, receiving a bachelor's degree in English. He later took a master's degree in education from Colorado Teacher's College. During World War II, Lyman, fluent in Spanish, worked for the War Food Administration



bringing Mexican laborers from Mexico to work in the fields while “our boys” were overseas. After a stint at ranching, he began his career in the Bureau of Indian Affairs as an employee of the Relocation Program, which provided American Indians with urban employment and education during the 1950s. His work was at the Pine Ridge Reservation; in Aberdeen, South Dakota; and in Denver and Chicago. In 1941 Stanley married June Kremer, who was a teacher and counselor in various Indian schools. Following highly successful appointments as the superintendent of the Fort Peck Reservation in Montana and the Uintah-Ouray Reservation in Utah, he was sent to Pine Ridge with the express purpose of creating an economic revival in this impoverished area, as he had been able to do in Utah. The initial stages of this work had begun when the occupation of Wounded Knee occurred.<sup>17</sup>

In response to the Wounded Knee occupation, federal officials and negotiators had to face serious and delicate questions: How much power did the tribal council have in attempting to remove the Indians, non-Indians, and locals who had occupied Wounded Knee? Should police power be used by the BIA? Should the FBI exercise its usual jurisdiction over such matters? The narrative and testimony of Stanley David Lyman reveals that the various federal agencies brought together to resolve the Wounded Knee crisis did not have the same answers to the questions. A unifying thread running throughout Lyman's personal account of these events, is his unrelenting efforts to support the elected officials of the Oglala Sioux Tribe and to protect the interests and prerogatives of tribal government from any encroachment by the federal establishment. Lyman asserts that one of the issues to cause problems for the tribal council was a split between those of mixed-blood Sioux ancestry and those who were full-bloods. The full bloods felt that those of mixed ancestry were too close to the white establishment and that basic Sioux interests and culture were compromised. The mixed-bloods were often viewed as far more

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<sup>17</sup> Lyman, Stanley David. 1993. *Wounded Knee 1873: A Personal Account*. Ed. Floyd A. O'Neil, June K. Lyman, and Susan McKay. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press. p.21

articulate in dealing with the outside world, and they, in turn, often thought of the full-bloods as less able to accommodate to a rapidly changing society and economy. According to Lyman, as the situation heated up, the AIM position became more and more radicalized. After attending a member's funeral, and following a meeting, the group was reportedly split over a proposed confrontation at the BIA building in Pine Ridge. Two AIM members, Means and Bellecourt were at odds. Russell Means favored a passive approach, and Vernon Bellecourt favored an aggressive stand. No agreement was reached. The next day, Tuesday, February 27th, about 200 AIM members and supporters met at a meeting place called Calico Hall, and many of them were armed with rifles, shotguns, pistols, and knives. In the evening they formed a caravan, allegedly heading for the town of Porcupine and a larger meeting hall. Instead, the caravan stopped at the village of Wounded Knee, took over the town at gunpoint, raided the trading post, ransacked the museum, and took eleven residents' prisoner, including Father Paul Manhardt, a Jesuit priest at Sacred Heart Catholic Church. The takeover was described by an observer from the press as "a commando raid in the most accurate sense: well organized, lightning fast, and executed in almost total darkness."<sup>18</sup> More than one hundred law enforcement officials from the FBI, the BIA police, and the U.S. Marshal Service quickly surrounded the area and established roadblocks on the four roads into Wounded Knee. Shots were fired from within Wounded Knee at oncoming vehicles and at the roadblocks, the bridge over Wounded Knee Creek was burned, and the occupiers began to set up fortifications. One casualty resulted from the gunfire: a young man, seventeen years old, in the occupying force lost his hand when a rifle exploded. He was evacuated out of Wounded Knee by BIA firemen and taken to a hospital. The following day, February 28th, Carter Camp, a Pawnee from Ponca City, Oklahoma, and a national coordinator for AIM, presented the demands of the occupiers: that the Senate committee headed by Senator

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<sup>18</sup> Ditto p.23

Edward Kennedy launch an immediate investigation of the BIA and the Department of the Interior for their handling of the affairs of the Oglala Sioux Tribe; that Senator William Fulbright investigate the 371 treaties between the federal government and the Indians to show how the government had failed to live up to those treaties; that the Oglala Sioux be allowed to elect new leaders, from among the ranks of the traditionalists, not, as Camp said, puppets like now in office; and that state and local governments become more sensitive to Indian problems.

The hostages were declared to be in no immediate danger unless the area was stormed by police, but it was made clear that the occupation of Wounded Knee would be maintained by force. "We have the men and the weapons to hold it," declared Camp. "We are not going to give in without a fight"<sup>19</sup> Tribal President Wilson issued an official written statement that same day condemning the takeover as a criminal act; "an attempt at mob rule and the overthrow of the legitimate tribal government by individuals who had "assumed self-appointed positions . . . as leaders of the Oglala Sioux people. . . The current crisis on this reservation, as created by members of the AIM organization, and instigated by a small group of chronic complainers on the reservation, which infects every community, is certainly causing annoyance, disgust and concern among the overwhelming majority of the Oglala Sioux on this reservation." The statement concluded with the request that the leaders of the takeover "be held liable for their actions and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law." This was the beginning of a hardline attitude on the part of the tribal government toward the insurgents; a position that was constantly ignored by the Justice Department representatives throughout the months of the occupation.

Lyman writes those negotiations between the Indians and the government went on for days. On the morning of Saturday, March 3rd, a team of six attorneys requested by AIM were allowed to pass through the federal roadblocks. They conferred with the occupiers and then

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<sup>19</sup> Ditto p.24

participated in negotiations with Justice Department representatives later that day. A key issue in the negotiations of March 3rd and 4th was the nature of the criminal charges to be brought against the insurgents and who would be charged. The AIM representatives and their lawyers insisted that charges be filed only against AIM leaders and that these not include charges for kidnapping. Russell Means said, "I can see two or three years in jail, but I can't see seventeen years," referring to the minimum sentence for kidnapping in South Dakota.

According to Lyman, late Sunday afternoon, on March 4th, U.S. attorney Ralph Erickson, in consultation with and with the approval of U.S. Attorney General Richard Kleindienst, presented the government's proposal to end the armed standoff. Beginning at 8:00 A.M. on Monday, March 5th, all nonresidents of Wounded Knee would be allowed to leave the area, subject to certain conditions. All men, but not women and children, must identify themselves to the personnel at the roadblocks as they departed. They could neither carry weapons nor approach the checkpoints with weapons. Arrangements would be made for them to leave their weapons with identification if they owned them and wished to recover them later. If the departure was orderly, no arrests would be made and no charges would be filed against any of the participants withdrawing in this manner, pending the findings of a federal grand jury. All those wishing to leave Wounded Knee under these conditions had to do so by 6:00pm Monday. Once nonresidents of Wounded Knee had left the area, and provided there was no further violence, there would be no reason for the federal peacekeeping forces to maintain the present guard. The roadblocks would then be taken down and free access to the village restored. A proposal was written up by the government's attorney's which was to be read and signed by lawyers on both sides, but when the proposal was read in the AIM camp that night, it was jeered, and the paper on which it was written was burned. AIM leaders declared that they would not leave the area or lay down their arms, and then asked to negotiate for a flow of supplies through the roadblocks. All

the while, negotiations continued, with the Indians broadening their demands and the federal negotiators becoming ever more conciliatory. Although only a few of the occupiers accepted the offer to leave without immediate arrest, U.S. attorney Ralph Erickson and his negotiators felt that an agreement was near. But when it became clear that the federal government could and would accept the AIM demands, those demands were shifted to something unacceptable, and the hope of an agreement slipped away. Lyman testifies that once again the crux of the matter was the government of the Oglala Sioux Tribe. The occupiers demanded that the Department of the Interior remove Wilson as president, suspend the tribal council, and revoke the tribal constitution. Even though a cease fire was in effect, gunfire broke out between a patrol of Indians outside of the village and a government emplacement. Two Indians were wounded in the skirmish one in the hand, and the other in the leg. Neither left the AIM stronghold for medical attention, but instead was taken to the Catholic Church, which served as an infirmary, and treated there. Leonard Crow Dog, a medicine man from the Rosebud Sioux Reservation, removed the bullet from the leg wound.

Lyman's account goes on to explain that throughout the negotiations of Friday, March 9th, AIM had asked for reduction of the government forces around Wounded Knee and for removal of the armored personnel carriers because they feared they would be gunned down if they approached the government emplacements unarmed. This offer was accepted by the government, and the government withdrawal began at about two o'clock Saturday afternoon. The roadblocks and armored personnel carriers were removed, and surveillance was maintained by agents with binoculars from automobiles placed several miles outside the perimeter.

Ralph Erickson issued a press release in Washington, announcing, "We are doing this because we believe this is the proper step at this point in moving toward a peaceful resolution." The response within the AIM fortress to the government withdrawal was not, however, the long-

sought resolution that federal officials had been led to expect. Instead, AIM leaders claimed victory over the federal establishment. "We have won this war," proclaimed Dennis Banks at a victory rally inside Wounded Knee, "but there are other wars to come. We have a war in Washington State; we have a war in Pawnee, Oklahoma. All these wars are next, and the FBI and the Justice Department better lay their plans for these."<sup>20/21</sup>

The report goes on to say that the federal forces in Pine Ridge watched and waited. Late in the afternoon, after the federal withdrawal was accomplished, two FBI agents approached Wounded Knee by car to determine whether the occupiers had withdrawn. To all appearances there had been no change. The next day, March 11th, around seven o'clock in the morning, FBI agents again approached Wounded Knee to verify whether it was in fact an open area as promised. They were turned back with threats and pointed rifles. Later that morning several U.S. postal inspectors, who had heard the area was open, went to Wounded Knee to ascertain the condition of the village's post office. The six men were detained at gunpoint, searched, and held prisoner for two hours. Then they were marched out of the village by armed Indian guards and driven by truck to an AIM roadblock, still manned and armed, contrary to the agreement. They were ordered out of the truck and lined up on the roadside with their hands on their heads. After a time they were allowed to march off one by one to their vehicle, a quarter of a mile down the road. In another incident that day, two ranchers were similarly "arrested" by the insurgents, tied to chairs, and held prisoner for several hours. The most serious incident occurred north of the village when FBI agent Curtis A. Fitzgerald was wounded by armed Indians firing from a van as they entered Wounded Knee. He suffered gunshot wounds to the right forearm and the left hand.

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<sup>20</sup> Churchill, Ward, and Jim Vander Wall. *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement*. Boston: South End Press, 1988. p. 276

<sup>21</sup> Lyman, Stanley David. 1993. *Wounded Knee 1973: A Personal Account*. Ed. Floyd A. O'Neil, June K. Lyman, and Susan McKay. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press. p.31

It is important to look at the radicalization of two AIM activists in particular, Russell Means and Dennis Banks. Inside Wounded Knee, Russell Means, talking over a loudspeaker to the occupiers, proclaimed Wounded Knee an independent nation and threatened that any federal official attempting to enter the area would be shot on sight: "If any foreign official representing any foreign power, specifically, the United States comes in here, it will be treated as an act of war and dealt with accordingly." Dennis Banks declared, "We're going to establish here a symbolic Indian government, and we're going to stay here indefinitely. We expect Indians from all over the country to help us demonstrate our ability to rule ourselves."<sup>22</sup> A blizzard hit Pine Ridge on Wednesday, March 14th, piling up deep snowdrifts and making roads impassable. Negotiations were halted for two days because both the AIM camp and the federal officials were snowed in. AIM's response to the government's gesture of withdrawing its roadblocks had caused a hardening of opinion toward the occupying force among federal officials. For instance, as quoted by the Associated Press on March 15th, Senator George McGovern said that the time had come to arrest the occupiers: "Every reasonable effort at negotiation has failed; every concession made by the government has been matched with yet another American Indian Movement demand. We are at the point where we are either going to enforce the law or we are not. . . . The law must be enforced. Those who have broken the law must be arrested and pay the penalties under the law." In statements quoted by the Associated Press on March 16, Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton defended his department's refusal to meet with the militants in an area held by illegal force of arms: "Nothing is gained by blackmail. You cannot run this government or find equitable solutions with a gun at your head or the head of a hostage. . . . Any agency of government that is forced into a fast deal by revolutionary tactics, blackmail, or

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<sup>22</sup> Ditto p.32

terrorism is not worth its salt.” Morton was quoted as saying that these were “criminal operations and should be dealt with accordingly.”<sup>23</sup>

Again, according to Lyman, more government proposals came and went and on a Saturday night the federal emplacements again took fire and returned it. One of the occupiers, Rocky Madrid, a paramedic from San Luis, California, was grazed in the side by a rifle bullet. On Sunday, March 18th, a press conference was held at the trading post inside Wounded Knee, and a government proposal was denounced as “total capitulation and submission to arrest and disarmament.” Stanley Holder, standing in front of a sign reading “Independent Oglala Sioux Nation,” pledged continued resistance by a society of new warriors and ceremoniously burned the proposal. Harlington Wood and Wayne Colburn met with AIM leaders for nearly two hours concerning the proposal, but nothing was achieved. The response from the militants came on Monday, March 19th, in the form of a counterproposal that they termed their “final ultimatum” to the United States. They demanded that President Nixon name a special emissary from among the Sioux to negotiate with them a settlement based on the treaty rights of the Oglala Sioux Nation dating from 1868 and 1876.

Amid the stalemate in the armed confrontation, significant steps were being taken through government channels. On Monday, March 19th, petitions were also presented to Superintendent Lyman and to Charles Soller, associate solicitor of the Department of the Interior, by tribal councilmen Dick Little and Hobart Keith and by tribal members Delores Swift Bird, Barbara Means, and Louis Bad Wound. This petition called for a referendum election on whether to abolish the tribal constitution and with it the existing tribal government. The referendum movement led by those opposed to Dick Wilson and encouraged by AIM had gathered 1,450 signatures from members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe. The petition reflected the

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<sup>23</sup> Ditto p.35



split, mentioned several times by Lyman, between the full-blood traditionalists on the Reservation, many of whom lived in the outlying areas, and the mixed-bloods of Pine Ridge. Affiliation with one group or the other was more a matter of outlook and attitude than of ancestry, but the division was very real.

As told, as the occupation dragged into its fourth week, the attention of the press began to wane. A few press representatives were withdrawn. ABC radio and television recalled some of its crews who had been maintaining round the clock vigils outside Wounded Knee. The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, and Reuters News Agency all withdrew reporters. The press corps at news conferences held on March 22nd and 23rd was much reduced. With the deadlock in negotiations, violence from within the AIM fortress increased. Raids outside the Wounded Knee perimeter and assaults on federal positions became more numerous and more threatening. There were exchanges of gunfire between the militants and federal emplacements every night, sometimes amounting to between five hundred and one thousand rounds from each side. Under those conditions it was only a matter of time until serious injury would be inflicted. That happened on Sunday, March 25th, when Lloyd Grimm, one of the U.S. marshals manning a federal bunker, was critically wounded in the chest by a high-powered rifle bullet. Then, what represented to many on the Reservation the ultimate act of violence befell one of their own: that same Sunday, March 25th, Leo Wilcox, a member of the tribal council and a friend and staunch supporter of Dick Wilson, was found burned to death in his car on the road to Scenic, a site north of the Reservation, near the Badlands National Monument. Although the evidence was lacking, many believed he was murdered by AIM. The stalemate went on for quite a while longer and when finally, over, unhealed wounds would linger for many years.

So where is AIM today? AIM is alive and well, continuing its long struggle for political and religious rights of Native peoples. In 1993, AIM reorganized into “an alliance of fully

autonomous but reciprocally supporting chapters.” AIM chapters are dedicated “to advance the cause of indigenous sovereignty and self-determination within its own context and regional conditions.” Decisions of local and state chapters are made independently, emphasizing their local constituencies. In April 1993, AIM held a Western Regional Conference of its many chapter organizations where AIM members were joined by John La Velle, the Santee Lakota founder of Center for the SPIRIT (Support and Protection of Indian Religions and Indigenous Traditions). San Francisco area based SPIRIT is “a nonprofit organization of American Indian people dedicated to the preservation and revitalization of American Indian spiritual practices and religious traditions.” La Velle announced a joint commitment with diverse tribal elders and the AIM chapters to continuing to work for the protection and maintenance of Native religious rights. At the Lakota Summit V, in June 1993, an international gathering of United States and Canadian Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota nations, including 500 representatives from as many as 40 tribes, unanimously passed a “Declaration of War Against Exploiters of Lakota Spirituality.” At the conference, Wilmer Mesteth, a traditional Lakota leader, and instructor at Lakota Oglala College, spoke about the imitation and sale of Lakota ceremonies by non-Indian peoples. Mesteth, along with Darrell Standing Elk and Phillis Swift Hawk, drew up the declaration to warn non-Natives against the appropriation of Native spirituality. The concerns of both AIM and SPIRIT are summarized in the Lakota Summit “declaration of war” against all “plastic Indians,” or “Indian wannabes”. This declaration expresses the frustration and anger that many Native peoples feel about the sale of Native American religious objects as well as the marketing of Native ceremonies by unqualified and usually non-Native people. AIM and SPIRIT have adopted the terms "exploiters" and "exploitation" as part of a regional and national strategy to confront people, whether Indian or non-Indian, who profit from Native American religious traditions. Actions are presently underway by AIM to mandate tribal identification cards or tribal

legal verification for anyone claiming to represent Indian people in any public forum, including powwow vendors and artisans. Anyone profiting from religious activities associated with a claimed tribal affiliation should be able to provide references from that tribe affirming the good standing of that person with tribal members. Finally, AIM delegates have resolved to work toward getting a bill to Congress making it illegal to falsely impersonate a medicine man or a medicine woman and to stop, where possible, the selling of ceremonies and sacred objects.<sup>24</sup>

### **Declaration of War against Exploiters of Lakota Spirituality**

At the Lakota Summit V, an international gathering of US and Canadian Lakota, Dakota and Nakota Nations, about 500 representatives from 40 different tribes and bands of the Lakota unanimously passed a "Declaration of War against Exploiters of Lakota Spirituality." The following declaration was unanimously passed on June 10, 1993 WHEREAS we are the conveners of an ongoing series of comprehensive forums on the abuse and exploitation of Lakota spirituality; and

WHEREAS we represent the recognized traditional spiritual leaders, traditional elders, and grassroots advocates of the Lakota people; and

WHEREAS for too long we have suffered the unspeakable indignity of having our most precious Lakota ceremonies and spiritual practices desecrated, mocked and abused by non-Indian "wannabes," hucksters, cultists, commercial profiteers and self-styled "New Age shamans" and their followers; and

WHEREAS with horror and outrage we see this disgraceful expropriation of our sacred Lakota traditions has reached epidemic proportions in urban areas throughout the country; and

WHEREAS our precious Sacred Pipe is being desecrated through the sale of pipestone pipes at flea markets, powwows, and "New Age" retail stores; and

WHEREAS pseudo-religious corporations have been formed to charge people money for admission into phony "sweatlodges" and "vision quest" programs; and

WHEREAS sacrilegious "sundances" for non-Indians are being conducted by charlatans and cult leaders who promote abominable and obscene imitations of our sacred Lakota sundance rites; and

WHEREAS non-Indians have organized themselves into imitation "tribes," assigning themselves make-believe "Indian names" to facilitate their wholesale expropriation and

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<sup>24</sup> Irwin, Lee. 1997. Freedom, Law, and Prophecy: a Brief History of Native American Religious Resistance. *American Indian Quarterly* 21, no. 1: 35-55. p. 46

commercialization of our Lakota traditions; and

WHEREAS academic disciplines have sprung up at colleges and universities institutionalizing the sacrilegious imitation of our spiritual practices by students and instructors under the guise of educational programs in "shamanism;" and

WHEREAS non-Indian charlatans and "wannabes" are selling books that promote the systematic colonization of our Lakota spirituality; and

WHEREAS the television and film industry continues to saturate the entertainment media with vulgar, sensationalist and grossly distorted representations of Lakota spirituality and culture which reinforce the public's negative stereotyping of Indian people and which gravely impair the self-esteem of our children; and

WHEREAS individuals and groups involved in "the New Age Movement," in "the men's movement," in "neo-paganism" cults and in "shamanism" workshops all have exploited the spiritual traditions of our Lakota people by imitating our ceremonial ways and by mixing such imitation rituals with non-Indian occult practices in an offensive and harmful pseudo-religious hodgepodge; and

WHEREAS the absurd public posturing of this scandalous assortment of psuedo-Indian charlatans, "wannabes," commercial profiteers, cultists and "New Age shamans" comprises a momentous obstacle in the struggle of traditional Lakota people for an adequate public appraisal of the legitimate political, legal and spiritual needs of real Lakota people; and

WHEREAS this exponential exploitation of our Lakota spiritual traditions requires that we take immediate action to defend our most precious Lakota spirituality from further contamination, desecration and abuse;

THEREFORE WE RESOLVE AS FOLLOWS:

1. We hereby and henceforth declare war against all persons who persist in exploiting, abusing and misrepresenting the sacred traditions and spiritual practices of our Lakota, Dakota and Nakota people.
2. We call upon all our Lakota, Dakota and Nekota's brothers and sisters from reservations, reserves, and traditional communities in the United States and Canada to oppose this alarming take-over and systematic destruction of our sacred traditions actively and vocally.
3. We urge our people to coordinate with their tribal members living in urban areas to identify instances in which our sacred traditions are being abused, and then to resist this abuse, utilizing whatever specific tactics are necessary and sufficient --for example demonstrations, boycotts, press conferences, and acts of direct intervention.
4. We especially urge all our Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota people to take action to prevent our own people from contributing to and enabling the abuse of our sacred ceremonies and spiritual practices by outsiders; for, as we all know, there are certain ones among our own people who are prostituting our spiritual ways for their own selfish gain, with no regard for the spiritual well-being of the people as a whole.

5. We assert a posture of zero-tolerance for any "white man's shaman" who rises from within our own communities to "authorize" the expropriation of our ceremonial ways by non-Indians; all such "plastic medicine men" are enemies of the Lakota, Dakota and Nakota people.

6. We urge traditional people, tribal leaders, and governing councils of all other Indian nations, to join us in calling for an immediate end to this rampant exploitation of our respective American Indian sacred traditions by issuing statements denouncing such abuse; for it is not the Lakota, Dakota and Nakota people alone whose spiritual practices are being systematically violated by non-Indians.

7. We urge all our Indian brothers and sisters to act decisively and boldly in our present campaign to end the destruction of our sacred traditions, keeping in mind our highest duty as Indian people: to preserve the purity of our precious traditions for our future generations, so that our children and our children's children will survive and prosper in the sacred manner intended for each of our respective peoples by our Creator.<sup>25</sup>

Another interesting outcome of the Red Power Movement is happening right now in the Lakota Nation, with the insight and leadership of Russell Means, who still remains very active and is now known as Chief Facilitator for the Provisional Government of the Republic of Lakota. It is (T.R.E.A.T.Y.), The Total Immersion School, which is based on the successes achieved by the Total Immersion School experience of the Maori Peoples in New Zealand. This unique program created a revolutionary approach to teaching by focusing on culturally centered private schools for preschool through university for the indigenous population. Total Immersion into the root culture's language, art, dance, music, science and oral tradition grounded the children in their identity and rich heritage. The self-esteem engendered through these private schools empowered the Maori children to succeed at the top levels of academia and athletics after they entered public schools. The successes were so remarkable the government of New Zealand adopted the concept throughout the country and established over 180 Total Immersion Schools.<sup>26</sup>

At Porcupine, South Dakota on the Pine Ridge Sioux Reservation a Total Immersion School is being created. The Reservation is located in Shannon County, the poorest county in the

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.geocities.com/ourredearth/declaration.html>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.republicoflakotah.com/>

United States. The concept of Culture Total Immersion Education has now spread worldwide. Indigenous Peoples in Hawaii and Canada are creating their own Immersion Schools. The (T.R.E.A.T.Y.) Total Immersion School is the first for American Indians in the United States. The (T.R.E.A.T.Y.) Total Immersion Educational Endowment Fund, a tax exempt foundation, has purchased an 85 acre ranch with a 1917 structure built for the first Indian Agent at Pine Ridge. This historic structure is currently being renovated to its original state and will serve as the ranch/business offices. Russell Means and his brothers have donated an additional 160 acres to the project. In June 2009, the first preschool class will begin with 5-12 students in a prefab tipi (teepee), invented by Russell Means and architect Randal Jay Ehm. Another project, the Lakota Youth Center for Healing Addictions, will also restore healthy self-esteem as proven by the Maori People. The (T.R.E.A.T.Y.) Total Immersion School will offer an expanded program to include environmental design, culinary arts, aquaculture and agriculture. Fundraising for the new school is underway. A new dimension to Total Immersion will be developed; a self-sustaining community directed through the reinstatement of the Lakota matriarchal way of life. The community will utilize wind and renewable energy to engender a self-reliant village. The beginning of a horse breeding ranch has begun with one studhorse and two pinto mares with foals. The horses will be a source of economic self-sufficiency and help reintroduce the traditions of the Lakota Horse culture to the children. According to its founders, the logistics of creating and sustaining such ambitious projects will require cooperation and partnership with many like minded individuals and organizations. Documentation of the process and startup will create a transferable model suitable for other American Indian Nations. Sustaining sponsorships, educational grants and seed money are currently being sought.

Russell Means wants to develop a prototypical community on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. The project involved design of a new hurricane proof, lightweight tipi that will be

fabricated as modular units and erected by three workers. These structures are more aerodynamic than the wind tested domes that resist 120 mph winds in the Arctic. They are mold resistant, fire-proof, and movable. A self-contained generator unit provides auxiliary power, while wind energy will provide the main source of electricity. The tipi will be connected to septic systems and will utilize “gray water reclamation”. The design is based on traditional Lakota tipi styles where a central fire pit exhausts through the “arms” above. The Ungar Foundation generously donated half of the funds necessary to begin constructing the first prototype. Funds are being sought to complete this prototype that will serve as the Total Immersion School. The tipi kits will be marketed worldwide, with proceeds contributing to the (T.R.E.A.T.Y.) School Endowment Fund.

### **It's Philosophy**

- The universe, which controls all life, has female and male balance that is prevalent throughout our Sacred Grandmother, the Earth.
- This balance must be acknowledged and become the determining factor in all one's decisions, be they spiritual, social, healthful, educational or economic.
- Once the balance has become an integral part of one's life, all planning, research, direct action, and follow-up becomes a matter of course. The goals that were targeted become a reality on a consistent basis.
- Good things happen to good People; remember, time is on our side.

*Mitaku Oyasin (We are all related) -Russell Means, 1991*

**It's Objectives**

- Return to the matriarchal system of traditional Lakota thought and philosophy.
- Nurture each child's body-mind and spirit, so that they may walk in balance with the Great Mystery.
- Establish within each child a sense of grounded-ness, strong self-esteem, pride in their culture and traditions and wonder in the miracle of the priceless creation and unique contribution they are.
- Show love, honor and respect to each child and foster their love, honor and respect for all of the Great Mystery's creation.
- Re-establish the connection between the generations and involve the parents and family.
- Repair the Sacred Hoop of Nations.

*“I hear your voices, on the wind, faint in the exile my ancestors gave; I glimpse the fires of your hearths and homes in the trodden land my people stole. I hear your stories in words my family caught or see your words on a scattered page. I feel your songs inside my soul -- but rest content with my heritage. A daughter of pillagers, don't let me steal that last life from you: the dignity to sing your songs in your voices, your words.” –Katherine Pearce*



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