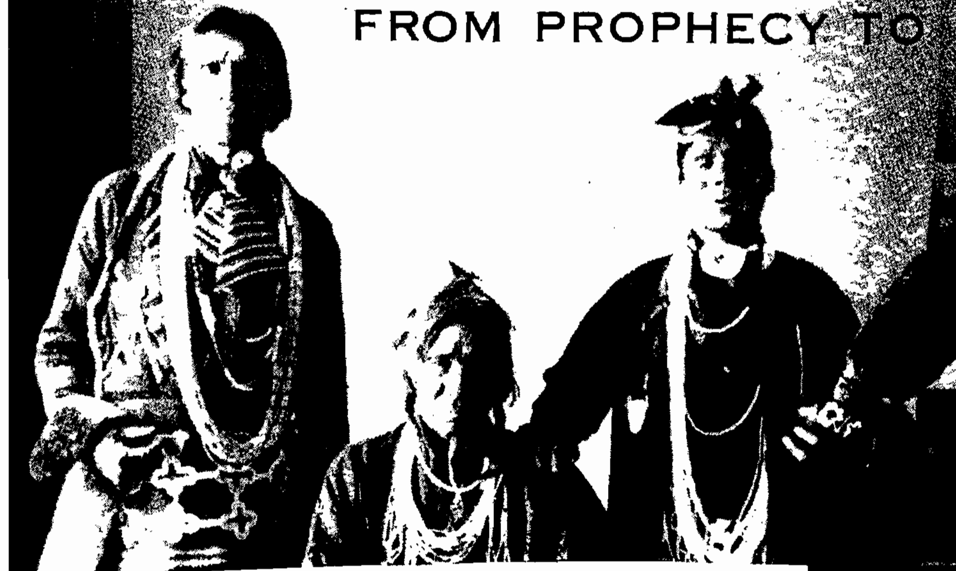
NATIVE AMERICAN TESTIMONY

A CHRONICLE OF INDIAN-WHITE RELATIONS FROM PROPHECY TO THE PRESENT, 1492–2000



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EDITED BY PETER NABOKOV

WITH A FOREWORD BY VINE DELORIA, JR.

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD BY VINE DELORIA, JR. XVII

INTRODUCTION XXI

PART ONE
FIRST ENCOUNTER TO DISPOSSESSION 1

CHAPTER 1 ▶ PREMONITIONS AND PROPHECIES 3

1 ■ He Will Use Any Means to Get What He Wants 6
(Dan Katchongva, Hopi)

2 ■ White Rabbit Got Lotsa Everything 7
(Lucy Young, Wintu)

3 ■ Visitors from Heaven 10
(Norval Morriseau, Ojibway)

4 ■ Thunder's Dream Comes True 12
(Black Hawk, Sauk)

5 ■ Easy Life of the Gray-Eyed 14
(James Paytiamo, Acoma Pueblo)

6 ■ The Spider's Web 15
(Black Elk, Oglala Sioux)

CHAPTER 2 ▶ FACE TO FACE 18

1 ■ Their Wondrous Works and Ways 21
(Charles Alexander Eastman, Santee Sioux)

2 ■ Before They Got Thick 24
(Percy Bigmouth, Lipan Apache)

3 ■ Silmoodawa Gives a Complete Performance 25
(Anonymous, Micmac)

5
STOPPING EROSION

By the beginning of the 1960s it was a reservation joke that whenever Indians seemed restive or poverty statistics made national news, someone would appoint a "task force," the "study" would come out, and things would simmer down again. Now, however, Indians were not taking it anymore, as suggested by the resentful tone of this Navajo reply to some land management experts.

THE FIRST TIME you came from Washington and brought with you your plans [indicating a very small written report] for conservation of the reservation we said there is an honest man who means well.

As time passed and nothing happened, we became suspicious. When you returned again with many more plans [indicating a stack of documents four or five feet high] and still nothing happened, we thought to ourselves, this man means well but is a fool.

Now you have returned after another interval with still more plans for controlling erosion [indicating a pile of reports reaching far in the distance], we are convinced that you are a liar and dishonest.

My advice to you is this; take your plans and wipe your rectum with them and throw them into the arroyo; that will stop the erosion.

ANONYMOUS, *Navajo*

LET'S RAISE SOME HELL

Most newsworthy of the militant Indian demonstrations during the turbulent 1970s was the takeover of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, by armed American Indian Movement (AIM) members and Oglala Sioux opposed to the existing tribal council.

By the late 1950s most experienced observers, even some Washington politicians, admitted that liquidating Indian reservations was a very bad idea. "Like the miner's canary," wrote the eminent legal scholar Felix S. Cohen in 1953, "the Indian marks the shift from fresh air to poison air in our political atmosphere . . . our treatment of Indians, even

more than our treatment of other minorities, reflects the rise and fall of our democratic faith." Termination was clearly one of the down cycles. In a catastrophic reprise of the Removal and Allotment episodes in the previous century, between 1948 and 1957 Indians lost about 3.3 million acres.

Moreover, "terminated" reservations were disintegrating into rural slums; many "relocated" Indian families had a tough time adjusting to big-city life. To halt the policies, the National Congress of American Indians organized representatives from more than eighty tribes to pack the corridors of Washington's buildings for eight weeks of protest. What America at large did not appreciate was the combustible Indian discontent that had been building for years. Termination and Relocation were the fuse. The atmosphere of militant confrontation over civil rights and the Vietnam War of the sixties provided the match.

Although the new administration of President John F. Kennedy repudiated Termination after 1960, Indian anger was not assuaged. Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall's call for Indian self-determination and new health, education, and welfare programs echoed the Collier reforms of the 1930s. But Indian doubts about government motives were too deep to be pacified by promises that they had heard before.

"As I look around at the Indian situation," warned the Cherokee scholar-activist Robert K. Thomas early in 1964, "it looks like one big seething cauldron about ready to explode." He was a prophet: between 1964 and 1974 a series of demonstrations, road blockades, land takeovers, and building occupations from coast to coast amounted to a firestorm of Indian outrage against wrongs past and present. Local dissatisfactions and generalized resentments against government and white society burst into the public eye.

Indian defiance was led by two new interest blocs: off-reservation and urban Indians on the one hand, and Indian students on the other. In 1960 more than thirty percent of America's Indians existed outside of any reservation; ten years later they totaled nearly half the U.S. Indian population. Suffering much the same racial discrimination, police violence, and unemployment as other minorities, Indians in the cities began fighting back. Joining them were the postwar generation of articulate, college-educated Indian youth. Both the streetwise Indians and sophisticated students often found themselves shut out of national decision-making by "old guard" tribal leaders who had risen to prominence during the Collier years.

This gap widened in the summer of 1960 when nearly five hundred Indians representing more than sixty-five tribes converged on the University

An early expression of Indian self-defense was the fight between the Lumbee Indians of North Carolina and the local Ku Klux Klan. After their successful rout of a Klan gathering in January 1958, Lumbee tribesmen Charlie Warriax and Simeon Oxendine proudly display the Klan banner they confiscated.

of Chicago campus in response to an invitation for Indian ideas extended by the Kennedy administration. The younger generation's energy and priorities rang throughout the symposium's "Declaration of Indian Purpose," which demanded Indian involvement at all levels of government policy-making. But youthful delegates still felt outnumbered by non-Indian experts

and Collier-era Indian politicos, and stifled by an outmoded deference of Indians toward the power structure.

As a consequence, a few months later ten student leaders met privately in Gallup, New Mexico, to discuss more activist approaches. They were convened by Herbert Blatchford, a Navajo graduate from the University of New Mexico. As early as 1954 Blatchford began bridging the distance between Indian students and tribal elders by holding "Indian youth conferences" around the nation. That established a network of native talent upon which he drew for the Gallup sessions.

Clyde Warrior, a young Ponca who had recently joined the civil rights struggle in the South (instead of the Marine Corps), was particularly outspoken. Shirley Hill Witt, a Mohawk, Mary Natani, a Winnebago, and Mel Thom, a Paiute, also joined in. By the close of their sessions, Thom, a graduate student in civil engineering, was named spokesperson for a new voice in Indian affairs: the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC).

They were responding to grim realities of Indian life: an average death age of forty due to disease, alcoholism, and malnutrition; an infant mortality rate more than twice the national average; an unemployment rate ten times higher than the national average; the highest teen and pre-teen suicide rate in America; liver disease from alcoholism five times higher than the white population, and Indians under twenty-four years of age dying from alcoholism at a rate twenty-eight times the national average; more than fifty thousand Indian families living in unsanitary shanties or abandoned cars. Only now Indians themselves were thrusting these facts into the country's face.

As he surveyed the national scene in 1964, commentator Robert Thomas—himself also an NIYC member—underscored some hot spots where Indian patience had reached the breaking point: (1) in Upper New York State the Senecas were furious over the flooding of their valleys by the Kinzua Dam Project, a violation of one of the oldest U.S. treaties with Indians; (2) in Alaska both Eskimos and Indians were agitated over challenges to water rights; (3) in Washington State game wardens were stepping up arrests of Indian fishermen in a confrontation over fish and game laws; (4) in South Dakota Sioux groups were resisting the state's curtailment of the power of Indian reservation police; (5) in California the use of peyote cactus in rituals of the Native American Church came under new legal assault.

Although native outbursts over local crises were rarely nationally coordinated at first, they announced a Pan-Indian readiness to speak and act

out. At the usually placid Isleta Pueblo in New Mexico, the village's Indian leader moved against a Catholic priest who cemented over the earthen dance plaza. Handcuffed and escorted out of his church, the priest was banished from the pueblo. On the Atlantic Coast the Passamaquoddies, one of many little-known eastern Indian tribes who were fighting for federal recognition, donned turkey-feather bonnets and halted traffic on Maine's Route One, exacting tolls from motorists to pay for food and medicine for needy tribal members.

In late winter of 1964 came the first of two takeovers by Indian activists of the closed-up prison on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay. On the basis of an old Sioux Indian treaty that turned over surplus, unused federal land to Indians, the protestors claimed the infamous island. As Sioux activist Richard McKenzie declared, "Kneel-ins, Sit-ins, Sleep-ins, Eat-ins, Pray-ins like the Negroes do wouldn't help us, we would have to occupy government buildings."

That year Mel Thom and other NIYC members joined the "fish-in" protests of various tribes in Washington State—to be joined by such celebrities as Dick Gregory and Marlon Brando. At issue was the Medicine Creek Treaty of 1853, which Indians insisted assured their fishing rights. However, state officials argued that their treaty privileges were superseded by new fish and game laws. Before their dispute reached court, police clubs and Indian oars clashed along the Nisqually River.

Everywhere across the country Indians mocked Thanksgiving and Columbus Day holidays, harassed museums that they accused of desecrating their ancestral bones and exhibiting sacred regalia, closed public beaches and international bridges, demanded Indian Studies programs in schools and alcoholism clinics in cities, and picketed for nonstereotypical portrayal in books and movies. This unprecedented Indian militancy was documented by such best-selling books as Sioux author Vine Deloria, Jr.'s *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1969) and Stan Steiner's *The New Indians* (1968), and was reported in new Indian periodicals such as *The Warpath, Americans Before Columbus, The Indian Historian,* and *Akwesasne Notes.*

Born of the earlier Relocation era, urban Indian centers, often located in basements or community halls, offered a rallying spot for city activism. From makeshift headquarters Indians offered the support services that government failed to provide in counseling, apartment hunting, legal assistance, and opportunities for companionship. New urban leaders felt nostalgia for reservation life, and sometimes idealized the Indian past, but they were

When the New York State Power Authority planned a reservoir that would flood their reservation, Tuscarora Indians began a public and legal protest in 1958. Here, William Rickard (left) *and Wallace "Mad Bear" Anderson* (bottom right) *warn officials to leave their land alone. The reservoir was eventually constructed.*

also liberated from the reservation Indians' hesitation about offending the white man.

In the middle-western cities of Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Chicago, a brand-new group, the American Indian Movement (AIM) borrowed tactics from black militants. It monitored police who were harassing the Indian bars and skid rows of the Twin Cities area. Leaders like Dennis Banks, the Bellecourt brothers, and Russell Means outfitted "Indian Patrol" cars with

two-way radios, cameras, tape recorders, and red jackets and reduced police brutality.

When the "Indians of All Tribes" took over Alcatraz Island for a second time in November 1969, AIM joined in. The following summer its "warriors" climbed Mount Rushmore, South Dakota, taking well-publicized custody of the gallery of presidential faces. AIM's intimidating effectiveness was demonstrated in August 1970 when Dennis Banks hefted a large cross onto a Lutheran Church conference podium to dramatize the plight of the Indian today. The churchmen quickly pledged them $250,000; AIM also won financial help from Catholics, Baptists, and Mormons.

In the fall of 1972, an automobile caravan composed of urban and reservation Indians calling themselves the "Trail of Broken Treaties" converged on Washington to present a twenty-point position paper to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. They wanted a radical return to Indian sovereignty—renegotiation of all treaties, restoration of a 110-million-acre land base, and exemption from all state laws. When BIA officials refused swift compliance, AIM members occupied and trashed the Bureau's headquarters. Next AIM turned to racial discrimination against South Dakota's Indians. After a white man was charged with manslaughter for killing a Sioux in Buffalo Gap, AIM led angry protesters to the courthouse of Custer, South Dakota, which was burnt to the ground.

It was in February 1973, however, that the decade's major protest captured the American imagination. At the request of Oglala Sioux traditionalists, AIM took sides in a local dispute between them and the regime of Pine Ridge Reservation chairman, Richard Wilson. They claimed that Wilson, backed by his authoritarian tribal police and local BIA officials, was denying the traditionalists their say in tribal government. Eventually armed AIM members stormed the hamlet of Wounded Knee—the same site where Sioux Indians were massacred by U.S. troops in 1890.

Occupying the community church and general store, AIM's riflemen posed with guns as national media exploited the spectacle of embattled Indians encircled by the most heavily armed force of white soldiers to confront Indians in this century. The veteran protester and essayist Vine Deloria, Jr., reminded the militants of the American public's short attention span, and urged them to use their moment in the limelight to publicize Indian problems on and off reservations.

Tracer bullets lit up the Pine Ridge sky; Indians returned fire from frozen bunkers; two AIM members were killed in crossfire. When negotiators finally

arranged a cease-fire and evacuation, the ten-week news story was over. Chairman Wilson's administration was effectively crushed, but some Indians said that so was their chance to educate the public about wider issues confronting Indians everywhere. To AIM leader Dennis Banks, however, Wounded Knee was "the ultimate in a man's life, to see your own people moved to that type of action. Looking back, I really believed that the broken hoop was mended at Wounded Knee, and that the water was being given to the tree of life. Wounded Knee was an attempt to help an entire race survive. . . ."

Meanwhile, the FBI and other government agencies added Indians to the antiwar and civil rights militants they intimidated, infiltrated, and provoked into crimes they could then prosecute. Discontent at Pine Ridge simmered for another two years, with many AIM members dying under mysterious circumstances. It peaked with a gun battle between federal agents and Indians in which two FBI agents and one Indian were slain. The ensuing trial and conviction of AIM member Leonard Peltier provided a lightning rod for new Indian protest through the 1980s.

By 1978, as activists from various tribes joined "The Longest Walk" to Washington, D.C., demonstrating against a slew of "new termination" legislation, Indian fury was largely replaced by a new tone of self-reflection and quiet renewal. The following selections provide personal sidelights on the "Red Power" era. These fifteen explosive years exposed deep Indian concerns and cleared the air to address them.

1

THE NEW INDIAN WARS

In mid-October 1965 a group of Washington State Indians staged one of their "fish-ins" to protest state conservation prohibitions against traditional fishing. In jeopardy were rights which Northwest tribes like the Nisqually, Puyallup, and others enjoyed since the days of their treaties, signed in the 1850s, to fish and net salmon on the Nisqually and other rivers. According to the protesters, the white man's dams, pollution, and commercial fishing were depleting the salmon, not their smaller operations.

During the 1960s the fishing controversy caused numerous "battles" around Puget Sound, and on the Columbia River, between state officials and lawmen and Indians who refused to stop fishing. In the forefront was Janet McCloud, a Tulalip Indian mother of eight. Six Indians were arrested and temporarily jailed; their trial was held six years later. This "fish-in" and its consequences is recounted by Laura McCloud, one of her daughters.

ON OCTOBER 13, 1965, we held a "fish-in" on the Nisqually River to try and bring a focus on our fishing fight with the State of Washington. The "fish-in" started at 4:00 P.M. and was over at about 4:30 P.M. It ended with 6 Indians in jail and dazed Indian kids wondering "what happened?"

My parents, Don & Janet McCloud; Al and Maiselle Bridges; Suzan Satiacum and Don George Jr. were arrested that day. They were released after posting bail a few hours later. The charges against these six Indians was "obstructing the duty of a police officer." Now all we could do was wait till the trials started. There was a seventh Indian who was later arrested for the same charge, Nugent Kautz. And he had not been at Frank's Landing on that day.

The trial was to begin on January 15, 1969, at 9:30 A.M. We went into the courthouse that Wednesday certain that we would not receive justice as was proven to us in other trials. As we walked into the hallways there were many game wardens standing there, some dressed in their uniforms and some in plain clothes, but we recognized all of them.

Many of us were dressed in our traditional way with headbands, leggings and necklaces. As we walked the length of the corridor to the courtroom, the game wardens were looking us up and down, laughing at us. I said to my cousin, "Don't pay any attention to them, they don't know any better." . . .

The first witness for the State was a field marshal for the game department—Zimmerman. He stated that he was directing the game wardens at the Landing on Oct. 13. He was in charge of the reinforcements from all over the State that came down on us like a sea of green. At the time of the fish-in I thought that there were about a hundred game wardens.

The next State witness was the public relations man for the game department. He had 16 millimeter motion pictures to show. He had been posing as a newsman on the day of the fish-in. Our attorney objected to the pictures because they could have been cut and fixed to the State's advantage or taken

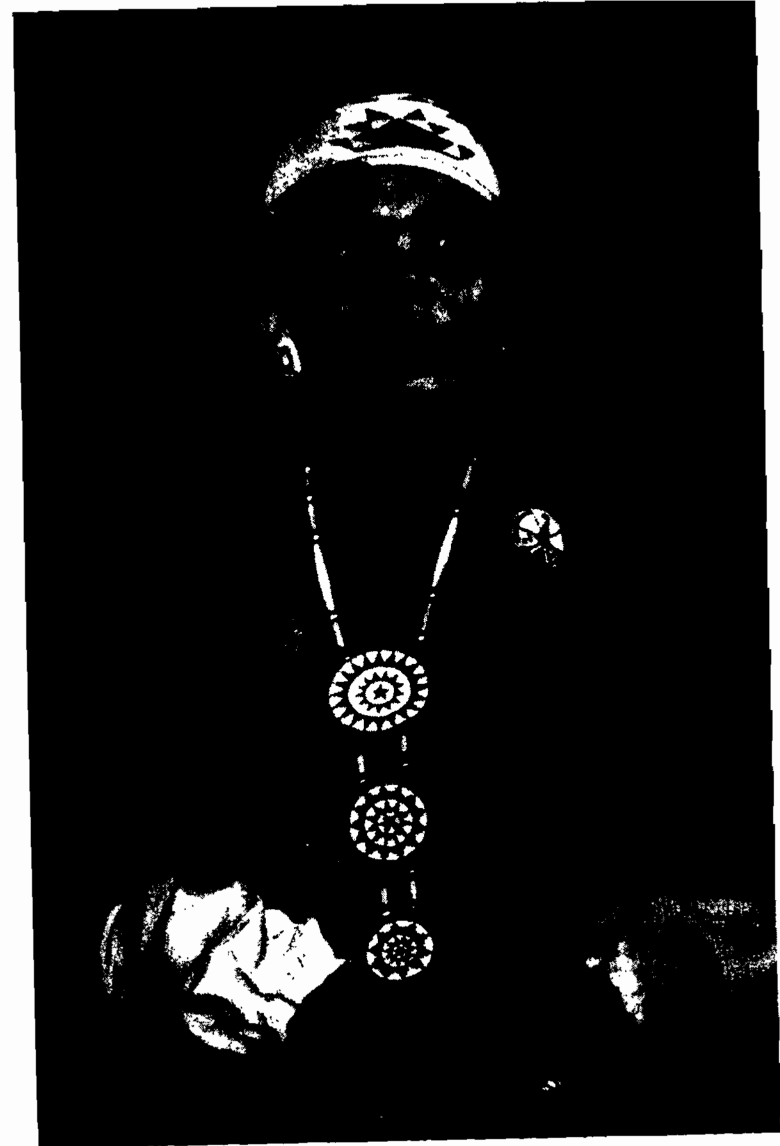
for the State's advantage. But the State got their way and the motion pictures were shown. And to this moment I can not understand why they wanted these pictures shown because they sure looked better for our side than for theirs. . . .

The next morning the State started off with their last witness, State Fisheries Biologist, Lasseter. He talked about how we Indians are the ones who depleted the fish in the Puyallup River and if we weren't controlled we would do the same to the Nisqually River. The Puyallup River is filled with pollution more than it is with water. And why would we want to wipe out our livelihood? Our attorney made Lasseter state that it could have been the pollution not the Indians who depleted the fish in the Puyallup River.

Now, it was our turn! The first witness for our defense was Bob Johnson. At the time of the fish-in he was the editor of the "Auburn Citizen" newspaper. He told of the tactics the game wardens used on us. Mr. Johnson also had evidence with him, pictures of the game wardens, showing billie clubs and seven-celled flashlights. The Prosecuting attorney got real shook up about these. It seemed like he was saying "I object" every few minutes. . . .

The next defense witness was Janet McCloud, Tulalip Indian. She told the facts about why the Indians had had the fish-in demonstration on that day and what the mood the Indians had before the fish-in. This was important because the State thought we were after blood that day. And we were not expecting any violence because all my brothers and sisters were there and the youngest was 4 at that time. And if we had expected any violence none of the children would have been there. She told how she felt when she realized that the game wardens were going to ram our boat and how she felt when she realized these men meant business with their 7-celled flashlights, billie clubs, and brass knuckles. My two little brothers were in that boat when it was rammed, the youngest was 7 and could not swim. Besides, once you get tangled in nylon mesh it is very easy to drown. While she was telling this story, we could tell she was trying very hard to keep from crying, but this did not help because she started to. And every Indian in that courtroom that was there that horrible day started to remember the fear and anger that they had felt that day. . . .

The next witness was Don McCloud, Puyallup Indian. He was one of the Indian men in the boat that day. He told how the boat was rammed. (Oh, incidentally, the game wardens said that they did not ram the boat.) He also said how he had seen a game warden with a steel pipe and how a game



Janet McCloud

warden tried to knee him in the groin. And the other acts of violence that he had witnessed the game wardens doing. . . .

With all this testimony and evidence, it was plain to see that the game wardens had lied. We only hoped that the jury would believe our side of the fish-in story. We also learned the names of the game wardens whose pictures we had, especially the one who had been beating on Alison and Valerie Bridges.

Mr. Ziontz called one last witness—a hostile one—a game warden. This was the one who had been carrying a leather slapper which the Indians confiscated on 1/13/65 from his hip-pocket and had entered as evidence. His name was engraved on the slapper. He admitted that it was his and had been taken out his pocket but he said that he never used it.

The State called "Colonel Custer" Neubrech for their rebuttal witness. He said at the briefing he had given his men the night before the fish-in he had told them to have extreme patience with the Indians. Either they don't know the meaning of extreme patience or else they didn't understand him right. . . .

After the two lawyers gave their summations the jury went into session. This was at ten o'clock at night. They were out until midnight. The foreman came in first and said, "The rest are afraid to come in." I thought, here comes another guilty. When the foreman handed the judge the decision the room became very silent. Then the judge read, "The jury finds the defendant Nugent Kautz 'not guilty.' " He read the rest of the names with the same verdict. I didn't believe it. I turned to my cousin and said, "Did I hear right?" She nodded her head, yes. Everyone was happy, except for the State. The game wardens were very hostile after this.

Footnote: The game wardens, incensed at the adverse verdict, left the Tyee Motel where they had been celebrating, prematurely, their victory and went down in large numbers to Frank's Landing. A sympathetic soul overheard the wardens and called the Landing to warn the Indians. Nevertheless the wardens caught a car load of Indians at the railroad trestle and surrounded them in their state game cars—they proceeded to hit the Indians' car with their nightsticks, cussing them and trying to provoke Al Bridges and Hank Adams to fight. It was obvious to the Indians that they had been drinking. . . . So the war goes on—which goes to prove that the history books are wrong when they talk about "the last Indian wars." They have never stopped!

LAURA MCCLOUD, *Tulalip*

2

INVADING ALCATRAZ

An early alert of the feisty Indian spirit of the 1960s was the symbolic occupation, for three hours in March 1964, of Alcatraz Island by four urban Sioux. The previous year the federal prison had been shut down; the militants invoked an 1868 treaty turning over to Indians abandoned federal properties. Next the militant coalition Indians of All Tribes staged a second symbolic takeover on November 9, 1969. Slipping ashore at night, fourteen Indians evaded "capture" for nineteen hours.

But these were rehearsals for the true Alcatraz occupation eleven days later. For nineteen months Indians camped on the island, demanding attention to Indian health, educational, and cultural needs and broadcasting over Radio Free Alcatraz.

Adam Fortunate Eagle joined the November 9 invasion, as he relates here. Born in 1929 on the Red Lake Chippewa Reservation in Minnesota, he spent ten years at Pipestone Indian Boarding School. For another five years he attended Haskell Indian Institute in Kansas, and today is a sculptor on the Stillwater Indian Reservation in Fallon, Nevada.

WE SET OUT from San Leandro, my family and I, with our tribal outfits packed, and with $24 in beads and colored cloth arranged in a wooden bowl for the symbolic purchase of Alcatraz Island from the government. With a feel of optimism we were soon on the Nimitz Freeway, driving for Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco, and Pier 39.

The weather on Sunday morning, November 9, 1969, was beautiful and calm. This was a pretty strange thing we were doing. Indian people, twentieth-century urban Indians, gathering in tribal councils, student organizations, clubs, and families, and joined by concerned individuals from all over the Bay Area, with the intention of launching an attack on a bastion of the United States government. Instead of the horses and bows and arrows of another era, we were riding in Fords and Chevys, armed only with our Proclamation but determined to bring about a change in federal policy affecting our people.

We didn't drive so fast that we couldn't take in the beauty of this place where we'd chosen to live after boarding school, Treasure Island, and across the bay the Golden Gate Bridge. And there in the middle was the forlorn,

abandoned little island of Alcatraz—our destination. If things backfired I couldn't see myself involved in Indian programs anymore for the community; an Indian would be banished if he brought embarrassment to his people. I also worried about that other half of my life, my business and family. What if there was violence? What if I went to jail?

At Fisherman's Wharf we parked and joined a growing group of Indian students. When I learned that our scheduled boat was nowhere around I suggested they stall while I looked for another. Richard Oakes went to the end of the pier to read our Proclamation, with Indians and television crews in tow, while I looked around. Then I noticed this beautiful three-masted barque that looked like it had come right out of the pages of maritime history. Its name was the *Monte Cristo*, and its owner, who, with tight pants and ruffled shirt looked like Errol Flynn, was Ronald Craig.

When I approached he said, "Hey, I'm curious—what's going on over there with all those Indians?" I explained the fix we were in, pointing out the media contingent that had come to cover the landing. "I'll take you," he said, "on condition we get permission from the Coast Guard and that we carry no more than fifty people. The boat rides deep because of the keel, and I can't land on the Alcatraz dock. We'll circle a couple of times, a sort of sight-seeing tour to get your message across, OK?"

After he counted to make sure we were only fifty, he fired off the little cannon on the bow. Here were Indians sailing on an old vessel to seek a new way of life for their people. I thought of the *Mayflower* and its crew of Pilgrims who landed on our shores. The history books say they were seeking new freedoms for themselves and their children which were denied in their homeland. Never mind that Plymouth Rock already belonged to somebody else. What concerned them was their own fate, their own hopes. Now, 350 years later, its original citizens, to focus national attention on their struggle to regain those same basic rights, were making landfall on another rock.

The *Monte Cristo* headed for the west side of the island, with its huge walls surrounding the former prisoners' recreation yard. We made out the catwalks and the coiled barbed wire atop the walls, the old guard towers, silent and empty now. The metal ramps and catwalks were corroded by salty air and were buckled into grotesque shapes. The empty machine shops and laundry facilities came into view as we rounded the northwest corner.

Suddenly Richard Oakes climbed on the vessel's rail and dove overboard. All he had stripped off was his shirt; he was still wearing his boots! A cheer went up. Another student followed into the frigid waters, then another, then

another. Four Indians were swimming as hard as they could toward the island before the captain could react.

"What the hell are those guys doing, Adam?"

"They're swimming to Alcatraz," was all I said.

"What the hell for?"

"To take it for the Indian people."

"Jesus Christ, man," Captain Craig shouted, "don't you realize we're flying the Canadian flag? This could be considered an act of war. You've got to stop them."

To discourage more leaping into the water his helmsman swung wide, turned, and headed back to San Francisco. One swimmer, Joe Bill, an Eskimo, made it to the craggy shore. All of the other swimmers were brought back by friendly boats. With one swimmer's landing we achieved at least a token victory.

Back at the Indian Center that evening the building was jammed with excited people of all ages and tribes. We went over and over the day's events. Everybody was eager to go back and land in force. As it happened, my brother had skippered for some deep-sea sports-fishing parties, so I called some of his friends. Our luck held out. The *New Vera II* had just docked and her crew was washing the decks. The captain would take us for three dollars per person or fifty dollars minimum. Some called it scalping, white man's style, but beggars can't be choosers.

Our people gathered up their sleeping bags and blankets and once again headed for Fisherman's Wharf. This time there was no press, no curious bystanders, no tourists. We were secretive, Indians in little bunches walking past Castagnola's Restaurant, past boats under repair on their sides, past reeking fish containers, until we saw the *New Vera II* across from Scoma's Restaurant.

"Hurry up, you guys," the skipper yelled, "we've got to get going!" As we cleared the dock area, we clasped our jackets around us, others wrapped in blankets, Indian style, against the damp chill wind. The wet deck soaked through our moccasins. My family went below. The tide was going out, resisting the skipper as he sidled up to a water barge at the Alcatraz dock. A single light was no help. He revved the throttle to position his boat, but had to pull away. Then a watchdog began barking at us. The skipper swung sharply, heading straight for the barge, reversing the propeller at the last moment so we gently nudged the barge.

Indians spilled over the bow, one securing a line while the rest clambered

overboard. Sleeping bags and blankets were passed after them. "What's going on?" the skipper asked. In an offhand way, I said, "We're taking over the island." His sudden realization that he might be charged with a crime, plus his worry about the rushing tides, made him throw the gears into reverse. The tie line snapped and one of our guys was knocked back into the boat.

As we accelerated for San Francisco, disappointed we hadn't made it off the boat too, we spotted fourteen Indians on the island's shore. One was Richard Oakes, three were women. Scrambling up the stairway, they disappeared quickly into the darkness. The occupation of Alcatraz was now a fact. In its heyday desperate men went to any extreme to escape the place; now Indians were just as desperate to get on it for their freedom.

The morning of November 10. The scene that greeted the Alcatraz Indians seemed right out of a Keystone Kop movie. Ships, motor boats, sailing yachts, launches, dinghies, cutters—all heading toward them. Banner newspaper headlines and TV and radio bulletins had spread the word through the Bay Area and beyond. One bold headline proclaimed: "INDIANS INVADE ALCATRAZ; U.S. PLANS COUNTER-ATTACK."

As the armada docked at Alcatraz, federal marshals, the representative of the General Services Administration, Coast Guardsmen, newspaper, radio, and TV crews searched for Indians to interview. At the landing area Richard Oakes read our Proclamation again to reporters. Thomas Hannon, the regional administrator of the GSA, with authority over the abandoned prison, had been brought by a Coast Guard cutter. He listened patiently, but his distress was apparent. Then he told the assembled reporters that if the Indians didn't leave peacefully, he would consult with the U.S. Attorney's office about filing trespassing charges. Finally, Richard and the rest agreed to leave the island, so negotiations could take place ashore in a calmer atmosphere. As the fourteen boarded his boat for the ride back to San Francisco, Richard Oakes's voice could be heard loud and clear: "This occupation has established Indian squatters' rights to Alcatraz Island. We'll be back."

ADAM FORTUNATE EAGLE, *Red Lake Chippewa*

3

DISCOVERY: THE BEEAH TRIBE

Shortly after college-educated Indians organized their National Indian Youth Council in 1960, they founded their own newspaper, ABC, *which stood for "Americans Before Columbus." Its editorial perspective was often satirical, as exemplified by this anonymous column from* ABC *for April 1970. It should be no mystery which federal government agency is the butt of its attack.*

RECENTLY anthropologists, who are dedicated to keeping the Indian alive if for no other reason than they can make money studying them, discovered a new tribe.

This newly discovered group is known as the Beeah Tribe (pronounced BIA Tribe). A new book, *A Man Called Horse S——,* by Dr. He-Sells-Out, beloved Indian expert, has been released by the Association on Preserving the Cute Ways of Brown People.

The book describes the strange rites and rituals of this much persecuted tribe. Torn from their ancestral homes on Fifth Avenue in New York City to far flung agencies around the country, the Beeah Tribe is held together by its function of running the affairs of all other tribes.

Incantations such as "Let me refer you to this other office," and "I'll look into that," are invoked daily to magically free one's self from harassment by people asking questions as "I'm hungry, what can I do?"

The chief is appointed by the President of the United States and all members are ranked from GS-1 to GS-18. The lowest ranking members are usually those who belong to other tribes as well as to the Beeah Tribe.

The daily rituals of the tribe are graphically described. These include one hour coffee breaks, 100 dollars a day consulting fees, the feet-propped-up-on-desk-cigar-in-mouth-ritual, being photographed holding an Indian child, buck passing, and back slapping.

One of the most terrifying rituals described is the back stabbing ritual by which a member of a lower rank stabs a higher ranking member in the back so that he can take his place. This ritual is traced from primeval times when their ancestors were living in caves in Europe.

Dr. He-Sells-Out, in one of his more revelatory findings, has noted that the Beeah Tribe exists only at the expense of other Tribes. It cannot seem

to live unless it has drained the other Tribes' human and natural resources and has sapped its leadership and initiative. In the language of the Beeah Tribe this is known as "community development" (pronounced rob-ber-ry).

Needless to say, the mind of the Beeah Tribe is mystifying to outsiders.

With a straight face a member of the Beeah Tribe will say that Indian religion and dances are bad and should be eradicated. But if you can find some white people to charge other white people to see you perform them, it is all right. Or, they will say that every Indian should be educated; but once educated he should not be given a job that his education merits.

This is a war-like tribe in constant conflict with other tribes. Occasionally, through incompetence the Beeah Tribe does something the other tribes like but these lapses are quickly corrected.

We thank Dr. He-Sells-Out for his valuable contribution to Knowledge we already know.

ANONYMOUS

4
BIRTH OF AIM

The Bellecourt brothers were city-smart Indians from Minneapolis. As Vernon Bellecourt remembers here, they helped found the American Indian Movement, or AIM, the most militant of the Indian protest groups of the 1960s. Some of its members were urban Indians and ex–prison inmates with little patience for nonviolence and carrying placards. As with more militant black and Hispanic rights organizations, AIM preferred armed self-defense and direct confrontation. As they protested police excess and other urban Indian problems, they also tried to support reservation Indians in their struggles. But their threatening, theatrical style could cause differences between them and the more conservative rural peoples they sought to serve.

I HAD seven sisters and four brothers. First I went to a public school, and it became a parochial school open to all the kids in the community. I went there until the eighth grade, to junior high school for one year and

quit. Couldn't handle the racist attitudes, the abuse I got, so I dropped out in the ninth grade. . . .

I lived on the reservation until I was fifteen. I recognized despair was setting in, because I was caught up in poverty in a large family with never quite enough food on the table. Leaving the reservation and going into the city was the start of becoming Anglo-oriented. . . .

When I was about twenty years old, I was an armed robber, sort of a Robin Hood type. It was my way of getting back at the system for ripping us off. This was in Minnesota. I ended up in prison doing a forty-year sentence. They have what they call a youth program; if you don't commit any more crimes after they release you, they wipe your record clean. But I was bitter. When they let me out I did it again, and I got caught. Then I had forty years to do plus another five. I did three and a half years, finally won a discharge on the forty-year sentence and got paroled on the five. Then I knew I could never do that again—not especially because I thought it was wrong, but because I didn't want to go to jail anymore. In prison they taught me how to be a barber, and after I came out, I ended up owning a beauty salon. From that I went into the import business, gift items and such. . . .

My brother Clyde was doing a tremendous amount of time in Stillwater State Prison in Minnesota, and he just gave up in despair and wouldn't eat. He went on a hunger strike and was going to stay on it until he died. He met a young Ojibwa brother who was from a medicine family, a family of spiritual leaders, and this young man was also a spiritual leader.

This young medicine man, Eddie Benton, was sort of a trusty, and he'd come by my brother's cell and try to talk to him and ask him to eat. But Clyde wouldn't eat. Finally Eddie started throwing candy bars in there, but they just piled up, and my brother wouldn't touch them. Then one day he started quoting literature, telling about the Ojibwas and our proud heritage. And finally one day, I guess just out of boredom, my brother picked up a piece of this literature and started reading about us. And he finally recognized he wasn't the dirty Indian he'd been told he was by White students at school. . . .

So anyway, Clyde started reading this literature, and it brought him back to life and gave him renewed strength and dignity. He started eating and started to get involved. He and Eddie Benton started an Indian awareness program in the prison and were instrumental in keeping our young Indian men out of jail once they got out. . . .

Vernon Bellecourt

When Clyde got out of prison early in 1968, he went to work for a power company. He had one of the first organizational meetings, in mid-1968, with a group of people in Minneapolis, in the Indian ghetto community. Everything was deteriorating rather than getting better. There were police harassment and brutality, because of a complete breakdown of police-community relations.

At the first meeting Clyde attended, they voted him the national director. There were twenty-seven or twenty-eight other Indian organizations in the Minneapolis community. Most of them were related to various churches—missionary work in disguise. For the most part, the boards of these organizations were White dominated. White do-gooders as consultants and advisers controlled them.

So the first AIM was formed in Minneapolis, as a non-profit corporation with an all-Indian board and staff. They were going to call the organization The Concerned Indian Americans, CIA. They couldn't use that! So a couple of older, respected women said, "Well, you keep saying that you *aim* to do this, you *aim* to do that. Why don't you call it AIM, the American Indian Movement?" That's how we got our name. . . .

I watched what they were doing, and I could see the pride in these young men and women. A new dignity, a new awareness, a new power, a new strength. Then I looked at myself, I was making money and living in White suburbia. . . . So I went up to Minnesota, and for about a week I visited with my brother and other people in the movement—Russell Means, Dennis Banks and some of the founders. Finally I got so involved I started letting my hair grow long, and I stopped wearing a tie and started to sort of de-program myself, to become just a simple person, a simple man. More humble. I saw in that something I could identify with. . . .

When AIM was forming, one of the first things they zeroed in on was police-community relations. Young men and women in the community formed the AIM Patrol. They had red jackets with thunderbird emblems on the backs.

Sometimes they appointed somebody to the Patrol who had a bad drinking problem; one of the qualifications, of course, was being sober. So it was really an alcoholic rehabilitation program at the same time. . . .

They got a small grant from the Urban League of Minneapolis to put two-way radios in their cars and to get tape recorders and cameras. They would listen to the police calls, and when they heard there was going to be an arrest or that police were being dispatched to a certain community or bar,

they'd show up with cameras and take pictures of the police using more than normal restraint on the people.

They got evidence of beatings and of ripping people around with handcuffs too tight, ripping their wrists. It was very vicious. This sometimes becomes a way of life for the police. They just fall into it. They think that's the way Indians have to be treated. So AIM would show up and have attorneys ready. Often they would beat the police back to the station. They would have a bondsman there, and they'd start filing law suits against the police department. . . .

Members recognized there was something missing from the movement. They heard about a medicine man in South Dakota, a holy man, a spirit leader. Now, the spirituality of Indian people has always been strong and has remained intact in some areas of South Dakota. They heard about Leonard Crow Dog, a medicine man who was maybe twenty-five. They were curious, and they went to visit him and his dad. . . . Well, they went there for advice, and one of the first questions they asked was, "What is an Indian?" They wanted to redefine what they were. And they were told that to be an Indian is to be spiritual. . . . We have the spirituality, yet we are warriors. We'll stand up and fight for our people. We haven't had that for many years. The warrior class of this century is bound by the bond of the drum. . . . That circle around the drum brings us together. We can have two or three hundred people around that drum, all from different tribes, all singing the same song. We put out a bumper sticker, "AIM for Sovereignty." Most of our people didn't even know what the word meant. Now they know.

VERNON BELLECOURT, *Chippewa*

5

CONFRONTATION OR NEGOTIATION

Not all Indians felt comfortable with the AIM approach. In 1972 the prolific Chippewa Indian novelist and poet Gerald Vizenor witnessed a meeting between the militants of the American Indian Movement and local Indian leadership at the Leech Lake Reservation, a Chippewa community in Minnesota. It inspired the following biting blend of journalism, satire, and editorial, in which Vizenor weighs the pros and cons of physical threat as a catalyst for social change.

EIGHT YEARS AGO Dennis Banks, dressed in a dark suit, white shirt and narrow necktie, strode into the office of the director of the American Indian Employment Center and told him to stop picketing the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

"Demonstrations are not the Indian way," Banks said then, wagging his finger. The director of the center had organized a peaceful demonstration in front of the Minneapolis area office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, demanding equal services for urban tribal people.

Since then Banks and hundreds of young adventurers have trouped across the country, from Plymouth Rock to Alcatraz, dressed in century-old tribal vestments, demanding recognition of treaty rights, equal justice and sovereignty. The occupation of Wounded Knee may be the last symbolic act for the aging militant leaders.

The American Indian Movement is an urban revolutionary movement whose members have in recent years tried to return to the reservations as the warrior heroes of tribal people. . . .

In the late 1960s the American Indian Movement became a symbolic confrontation group. The confrontation idiom means punching out the symbolic adversary of racism and oppression at the front door, with the press present, and walking out the back door. Those who followed the ideologies of confrontation were in conflict with those who believed that confrontation should lead to negotiation and institutional changes. The negotiation idiom means punching out the adversary at the front door with the press present, but waiting around for an invitation to return and grind out some changes.

The problem in the differences of approach was not only political ideology, but the response of the press. Journalists seldom reported what happened beyond the symbolic punch-out at the front door. The press presented the heroes of confrontation, but not of negotiation. . . .

Behind the scenes, tribal people have been arguing about the use of violence as a means of change. Some say that violence has only polarized the dominant white society and strained interpersonal relationships. Other tribal people argue that violence has made the job of moderates working within the system much easier. White people listen better after violence. . . .

Consider these changes through education: Hundreds of tribal people have

earned high-school equivalency certificates on three reservations in Minnesota in the past three years. Many have gone on to college and have found better-paying jobs. Six hundred tribal people are attending colleges in Minnesota compared with fewer than a hundred fifteen years ago.

Consider these changes through the law: There are legal-services programs on most reservations, and hundreds of tribal people are studying in law schools across the country. There have been several successful treaty-law arguments in federal and state courts, including the hunting and fishing suit won by the Leech Lake Reservation.

Consider these changes through economic development: The Red Lake Reservation has a home-construction business and a new vocational school. The Leech Lake Reservation has a food market and service station and a camping and recreation complex.

Now consider the changes through violence and radical ideologies: At Cass Lake the leaders of the American Indian Movement were critical of elected tribal officials for negotiating a legal agreement with the state over the hunting and fishing rights won through a federal court decision. The agreement, ratified by the state legislature, will bring millions of dollars a year to the reservation.

This was the scene:

Thirteen armed leaders of the American Indian Movement, including Russell Means and Dennis Banks, filed into the tribal Headstart classroom on the Leech Lake Reservation and took their seats on little-people chairs. They sat with their knees tucked under their chins, dressed in diverse combinations of Western cowboy clothes and traditional tribal vestments from the turn of the last century. . . .

Simon Howard, then president of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, entered the classroom, took his little seat, and twirled his thumbs beneath his heavy stomach while the leaders argued about their places in the chain of command—who would stand next to whom at the next television press conference. Howard wore a nylon bowling jacket and a floral print fishing hat in contrast to the renascence of traditional vestments worn by the militants. Howard was born on the reservation and had lived there all his life. He was at the meeting as an elected tribal official to keep peace between white people and the militants. The militants were there for an armed confrontation with white people on the opening day of fishing. . . .

"All right boys, quiet down now and take your seats again," Howard said.

The tribal leaders and militants had agreed to meet twice a day with each other and then with the press. "Now, I don't know everyone here, so let's go around the room and introduce ourselves," Howard said. "Let's start with you over there. Stand up and introduce yourself."

The man stood up, dragging his feet forward and swinging his rifle. "My name is Delano Western, and I am from Kansas," he said in a trembling voice. Western, leaning forward and looking down like a shy school child, was dressed in a wide-brimmed black hat with an imitation silver headband, dark green sunglasses with large round lenses, a sweatshirt with "Indian Power" printed on the front, two bandoliers of heavy ammunition, none of which matched the bore of his rifle, a black motorcycle jacket with military colonel's wings on the epaulets, "Red Power" and "Custer Had It Coming" patches, and a large military bayonet strapped to his body next to his revolver.

"We came here to die," Western said in a loud voice and sat down. He and about six hundred militant followers had come to Cass Lake on the Leech Lake Reservation to fight for the treaty rights to hunt and fish on the reservation, which had already been won by reservation tribal officials in federal court.

When white officials from Cass Lake had refused to pay the money demanded by the militants, who were camping on treaty land given over to a church group by the federal government for a summer camp, the leaders held a press conference on a rifle range to scare the public.

Means, smiling for television cameras, was plinking with his small-caliber "white people shooter," as he called his pistol. Banks . . . was preparing for fast-draw target practice. Dressed in a black velvet shirt with ribbon appliqué, he stood before a collection of empty food cans . . . dropped to one knee, and attempted to draw his small-gauge sawed-off shotgun. It stuck on the rope holder attached to his belt. He stood up and tried again, but it still stuck. This was the first time the Movement had taken up the use of firearms.

During the occupation of the offices of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington, radical leaders demanded another investigation and reorganization of the paternalistic bureaucracy that has controlled the lives of tribal people on reservations for more than a century. The militants had a powerful position from which to negotiate their demands: It was an election year and scores of congressional liberals were sympathetic. But rather than negotiate

the demands, the leaders of AIM accepted more than $60,000 to leave the building and the city. . . . The leaders were at Wounded Knee voicing the very same demands which they sold out in Washington. . . .

The American Indian Movement has raised good issues through the press, but it has seldom followed through to negotiate. At Custer the militants drew national attention to the wrongful death of Wesley Bad Heart Bull. They said the white man who stabbed Bad Heart Bull should be charged with murder. The fire in the courthouse was a violent stunt that detracted from the issue of legal injustices.

The militant leaders are dedicated men who have given many years of their lives to a cause, but it takes more than a rifle and the symbolic willingness to die to bring about institutional changes that will benefit tribal people.

GERALD VIZENOR, *White Earth Chippewa*

SO LONG AS THIS LAND EXISTS

The sacred Blue Lake, Taos Pueblo, New Mexico