

Timeline of 20th Century Indian Activism and Federal Efforts to Enact Self-Determination, 1944 to the Present

1944 - National Congress of American Indians (NCAI). About 100 Indian people met to create the nation's first large-scale national organization designed to monitor federal policies. Today, over 250 member tribes throughout the US work to secure for Indian Peoples the rights and benefits to which they are entitled; to enlighten the public toward the better understanding of Indian people; to preserve rights under Indian treaties or agreements with the United States; and to promote the common welfare of the American Indians and Alaska Natives.

1961 - National Indian Youth Council (NIYC). This organization seeks to resurrect a sense of national pride among young Indian people and to instill an activist message: Indians were no longer to bow their heads in humble obedience to the BIA and other institutions of white society. Instead, they were to look back to their own great cultural traditions and make decisions about their lives based upon such traditions.

1968 - Indian Civil Rights Act (ICRA). This Act of Congress revised Public Law 280 by requiring states to obtain tribal consent prior to extending any legal jurisdiction over an Indian reservation. It also gave most protections of the Bill of Rights and the Fourteenth Amendment to tribal members in dealings with their tribal governments. ICRA also amended the Major Crimes Act to include assault resulting in serious bodily harm as a federal crime on Indian lands.

1968 - American Indian Movement (AIM). Shortly after the Minneapolis Anishinaabeg formed an "Indian Patrol" to monitor police activities in Indian neighborhoods, three patrol leaders organized AIM. AIM's membership was primarily urban Indians who believed that direct and militant confrontation with the US government was the only way to redress historical grievances and to gain contemporary civil rights; and that the tribal governments organized under the IRA (1934) were not truly legitimate or grounded in traditional Indian ways.

1969 - "Indians of All Tribes" occupation of Alcatraz. A diverse group of Indians seized the abandoned Alcatraz Island in the San Francisco harbor. They issued a "Proclamation to the Great White Father" in which they stated that Alcatraz was suitable as an Indian Reservation and thus, should be converted into an Indian educational and cultural center. The Indians of All Tribes occupied Alcatraz for 19 months until June, 1971 when US marshals and FBI agents removed the remaining occupying force of 15 Indians.

1969 - Navajo Community College at Many Farms, Arizona. The first tribally-established and Indian-controlled community college in the US opened its doors to students. Two years later, Public Law 92-189 authorized Congress to appropriate \$5.5 million to “ensure that the Navajo Indians and other qualified applicants have educational opportunities which are suited to their unique needs and interests.” In 1997, it became **Dine College** and a four-year institution.

1970 - Nixon’s “Special Message on Indian Affairs.” President Richard M. Nixon delivered a speech to Congress which denounced past federal policies, pronounced the end of termination, and called for a new era of self-determination for Indian Peoples.

1970-71 - The occupation and founding of Deganawide-Quetzalcoatl University (D-QU). In 1970, a group of Indian and Chicano activists began discussions with the federal government on acquiring land for an American Indian university on a 647-acre site between Winters and Davis in Northern California. In November, 1970 when it appeared that the land would not be granted, 40 American Indians occupied the site. On April 1, 1971, the federal government formally turned over the title, and with funds from the Ford Foundation and federal grants, classes opened on July 7, 1971.

1972 - Trail of Broken Treaties. Over 800 Indian people traveled across the United States to Washington, DC, where they planned to meet with BIA officials and to deliver a 20-point proposal for revamping the BIA and establishing a government commission to review treaty violations. When guards at the BIA informed the tribal members that Bureau officials would not meet with them and threatened forcible removal from the premises, the Indians began a week-long siege of the BIA building. The BIA finally agreed to review the 20 demands and to provide funds to transport the activists back to their home. Shortly thereafter, the FBI classified AIM as “an extremist organization” and added the names of its leaders to the list of “key extremists” in the US.

1972 - Indian Education Act. This statute authorized funding for special bilingual and bicultural programs, culturally relevant teaching materials, and appropriate training and hiring of counselors. It also created an Office of Indian Education in the US Department of Education.

1973 - Wounded Knee II. At the Pine Ridge Reservation of the *Oglala Sioux* in South Dakota, trouble had been brewing between the Indian people who supported AIM, and tribal leaders who had the support of the BIA. After a violent confrontation in 1972,

tribal President Richard Wilson condemned AIM and banned it from the reservation. In February 1973, AIM leaders and about 200 activists who were supported by some Oglala traditional leaders took over the village of Wounded Knee, announced the creation of the Oglala Sioux Nation, declared themselves independent from the US, and defined their national boundaries as those determined by the 1868 *Treaty of Fort Laramie*. The siege lasted 71 days, during which time federal marshals, FBI agents, and armored vehicles surrounded the village. AIM members agreed to end their occupation under one condition: that the federal government convene a full investigation into their demands and grievances.

1975 - Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act. This law recognized the obligation of the US to provide for maximum participation by American Indians in federal services to and programs for Indian communities, established a goal to provide education and services permitting Indian children to achieve, and declared a commitment to maintain the federal government's trust relationship and responsibility to individual Indians and tribes.

1975 - Pine Ridge Reservation Shootout. In June, two FBI agents entered the Pine Ridge Reservation claiming that they were looking for a tribal member on theft and assault charges. Shots were fired under confusing circumstances, resulting in the death of two FBI agents and one AIM member. The violence that ensued was coupled with the criminalization of the AIM movement. AIM activist Leonard Peltier was arrested, tried, and convicted for the deaths of the FBI agents. He remains in federal prison after surviving some 25 years.

1976 - First Annual "Un-Thanksgiving Day." On Thanksgiving Day, AIM and The International Indian Treaty Council organized this event on Alcatraz to honor the men and women who participated in the occupation of Alcatraz, to keep the spirit of the occupation alive, to honor Indian elders and ancestors who struggled against the European invasion of the Americas, to continue the struggle for justice for Indian people today, and to remind all Americans that there still are Indian warriors fighting against the powers and oppression of the white government.

1978 - Indian Child Welfare Act. This law was approved by President Jimmy Carter and addressed the widespread practice of transferring the care and custody of Indian children to non-Indians. It recognized Indian extended family rights and the authority of tribal courts to hear the adoption and guardianship cases of Indian children and established a strict set of statutory guidelines for those cases heard in state court.

1978 - American Indian Religious Freedom Act.

This law promised to “protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise” traditional religions, “including but not limited to access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonial and traditional rites.” It was the first US policy statement recognizing traditional Indian religious practices and practitioners.

1978 - The Longest Walk.

This major national protest event of the Red Power Movement began in San Francisco when a group of American Indians set out for Washington, DC, to symbolize the forced removal and Indians from their ancestral homes and to draw attention to growing governmental and public backlash against efforts to protect Indian treaty rights and Native Peoples.

1978 - Tribally-Controlled Community College Assistance Act.

This law provided for federal grants to tribally controlled community colleges. By the 1990s, 29 tribally-controlled colleges were located throughout Indian Country, each of which offers curricula based on the needs of the college’s tribal population of all ages.

1979 - Treaty Fishing Rights decision of the US Supreme Court.

The Court upheld an Appeals Court decision in a matter popularly known as the Boldt case. It reaffirmed treaties in the northwest governing tribal fishing and allocated 50% of the fish in their “usual and accustomed places” to tribes for subsistence, commercial, and cultural purposes.

1981 - Camp Yellow Thunder.

The six-year occupation of the Black Hills at Camp Yellow Thunder began after the US Supreme Court affirmed a series of lower court rulings acknowledging that the Black Hills had never been legally ceded to the US by Native Peoples. Instead of returning the land, the federal government offered the Sioux tribes money which they refused. The occupation ended in 1987, leaving the question of the ownership of the Black Hills unresolved.

1982 - Indian Mineral Development Act.

This statute encouraged Indian tribes to mine their lands in a manner that would help them become economically self-sufficient.

1982 - Seminole Tribe v. Butterworth Supreme Court decision.

The Court ruled that tribes have the right to create *gambling enterprises* on their land, even if such facilities are prohibited by the state. The ruling enabled reservations to establish casinos and gave reservations greater authority for tribal governments

to levy taxes, own assets, and create judiciaries.

1983 - Nuclear Waste Policy Act. This law required either the President or the Secretary of the Interior to notify the governing body of any Indian tribe where it is proposed that a high-level radioactive waste or a spent nuclear fuel repository be located. Various studies show that a network of 280 facilities at some 20 weapons-making sites near Indian Country have produced mass quantities of highly radioactive waste which is transported through and near some 150 tribes' land. Because the facilities were contracted by the federal government and protected from regulation due to national security, much of the dangerous material was stored or buried or is being transported in ways that posed threats to human life.

1987 - *California v. Cabazon* Supreme Court decision. The Cabazon Tribe in Southern California operated a high stakes bingo game and card club on reservation lands. The State claimed it had the legal authority to prohibit such activities on Indian lands if such activities were prohibited elsewhere in the State. The Supreme Court found that tribes could operate gambling businesses on tribal lands and that states which permitted any form of gambling could not prohibit Indians from operating gambling facilities.

1988 - *Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Association* Supreme Court decision. The Yurok Indians and several other Northern California tribes argued that the construction of a 6-mile, two-lane paved road between the towns of Gasquet and Orleans (*the G-O Road*) and the implementation of a timber management plan would interfere with traditional tribal religions. The Court held that construction of the road did not violate their freedom of religion. Thus far, the road has not been built due to an administrative decision.

1988 - Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA). This statute affirmed the right of tribes to conduct gaming on Indian lands, but made it subject to tribal/state compact negotiations for some types of gaming.

- Class I includes social games solely for prizes of minimal value or traditional forms of Indian gaming engaged in by individuals. These are under the sole jurisdiction of tribes.
- Class II includes all forms of bingo and other similar games, provided such games are played in the same location as bingo games; non-banking games that are either expressly allowed or not expressly prohibited by state law; and banking card games existing in certain states on or before May 1, 1988.
- Class III includes all forms of gaming not mentioned in Class I or II and makes them lawful on

Indian lands only if authorized by a tribal ordinance approved by the chairperson of the NIGC, and if such gaming is permitted by the state for any purpose by any person, organization, or entity, and if the tribe has entered a tribal-state compact.

1989 - National Museum of the America Act. This law was signed by President George Bush and established the museum within the Smithsonian Institution; nationalized a private trust's one million Native artworks and objects; authorized three facilities in New York City, Maryland, and on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.; and mandated the return of requested Native remains, sacred objects, and cultural patrimony.

1990 - Native American Languages Act. This law made it US policy to "preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop Native American languages." Thus, the federal government encourages and supports of the use of Native languages as a medium of instruction in schools; recognizes the right of Indian tribes to give official status to their languages for conducting their own business; supports proficiency in Native languages by granting the same academic credit as for comparable proficiency in a foreign language; and encourages schools to include native languages in the curriculum in the same way as foreign languages.

1990 - Indian Arts and Crafts Act (IACA). This law promotes Indian artwork and handicraft businesses, reduces foreign and counterfeit product competition, and tries to stop deceptive marketing practices. It also set stiff penalties for persons and businesses promoting art as Native-produced when it is not made by an artist who is a citizen of a federal- or state-recognized tribe.

1990 - Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. This law requires all institutions that receive federal funds to inventory their collections of Indian human remains and artifacts, make their lists available to Indian tribes, and return remains to their tribal or Native owners.

1994 - Native American Free Exercise of Religion Act. This amendment to the American Indian Religious Freedom Act protects the rights of American Indians to use peyote in traditional religious ceremonies.

1994 - President Clinton's Executive Memorandum, April 29th. President William Jefferson Clinton issued this statement "to clarify our responsibility to ensure that the Federal Government operates within a government-to-government relationship with federally recognized Native American tribes. I am strongly committed to building a more effective day-to-day working

relationship reflecting respect for the rights of self-government due the sovereign tribal governments.”

1996 - National American Indian Heritage Month. President Clinton declared November of each year to be National American Indian Heritage Month.

1996 - Executive Order, October 21 on Tribal Colleges and Universities. President Clinton authorized a White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities within the US Department of Education to continue the support and development of tribal colleges into the 21st Century.

1996 - Executive Order on Indian Sacred Sites. President Clinton issued this statement to reaffirm the American Indian Religious Freedom Act policy and protection of Indian sacred sites.

2000 - Sand Creek National Monument Act. This law authorized the site of the Sand Creek Massacre of Cheyenne and Arapaho people by US and Colorado soldiers to be turned into a national monument park. An earlier law apologized for the Massacre and directed that a study report on the exact location of the site.