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FRAMING RED POWER: THE AMERICAN INDIAN MOVEMENT, THE TRAIL OF BROKEN TREATIES, AND THE POLITICS OF MEDIA

By

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FRAMING RED POWER: THE AMERICAN INDIAN MOVEMENT, THE TRAIL OF BROKEN TREATIES, AND THE POLITICS OF MEDIA

Jason A. Heppler, M.A.

University of Nebraska, 2009

Adviser: John R. Wunder

This study explores the relationship between the American Indian Movement (AIM), national newspaper and television media, and the Trail of Broken Treaties caravan in November 1972 and the way media framed, or interpreted, AIM's motivations and objectives. The intellectual and political currents present in the 1960s, including the ideas of Vine Deloria, Jr., and the successes of the Civil Rights Movement, influenced the development of AIM's ideas about militant tactics and the role media played in social movements. AIM entered the national stage with the occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in late 1972 and used television broadcasts and print media to disseminate their ideas for federal policy reform. Media often missed the purpose of the Trail of Broken Treaties, instead focusing their narrative around a different set of political issues. Early reports of the Trail of Broken Treaties were sparse until the occupation led to a substantial increase in coverage, though what was considered "newsworthy" by the media differed from the issues activists hoped to raise. Final reports focused on the cost of the occupation, legal proceedings in the aftermath of the occupation, and high-level changes in the hierarchy of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Department of Interior.

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I have been fortunate throughout my life to meet many outstanding individuals who have helped, encouraged, and inspired me. First, Jon Lauck deserves my deepest gratitude for his assistance, encouragement, and serving as a sounding board for my ideas. He deserves more credit and thanks than I can offer here. My undergraduate

professor at South Dakota State University, Charles Vollan, provided an enthusiastic teaching style, constructive criticism, and help guide me to study at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I also want to thank my other professors at SDSU, in particular Jerry Sweeney, Michael Funchion, Connie Harris, Robert Watrel, and Del Lonowski. In addition, I would like to thank John Miller, Don Simmons, Nancy Koupal, and Akim Reinhardt. In many ways you all influenced my work and offered yourselves as exemplary models of scholars, teachers, and mentors.

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INTRODUCTION
THE BATTLEFIELD OF IDEAS:
POLITICS, RACE, AND THE PRESS SINCE WORLD WAR II

The ingenuity of the human mind in constructing worlds and the capacity of language to indulge that talent are subtle and concealed, but they are also the fundamental influences upon politics.
– Murray Edelman[1]

"[Media] sets the agenda for public discussion and this sweeping power is unrestrained by any law," wrote presidential campaign historian Theodore White in 1972. "It determines what people think about and write about, an authority that, in other nations, is reserved for tyrants, priests, parties and mandarins."[2] Technological advancements have all but eliminated the barriers of time and distance that once made politics personal and social affairs. The rise of mass media slowly eroded the political forums, mass rallies, parades, community debates, and political picnics that formed the core of political discourse in early America. The invention of the telegraph, followed by undersea international cables, radio, and television (and in today's age, the development of satellites, personal computers, and the Internet) redefined the practice of politics.

The ability of social and political movements to communicate their agendas through mass media was not lost on the activists of the American Indian Movement (AIM), which understood the importance of television in placing federal American Indian policy on the national agenda. Unlike the Black Panther Party that organized a Ministry of Information to handle interaction with the media, the American Indian Movement (AIM) never developed an official organ to voice their goals. Instead, drawing upon lessons learned by observing the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and other Indian

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[1] Murray Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1988), 102.
[2] Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President 1972* (New York: Atheneum, 1973), 26.

activists, AIM used high-profile forms of dissent to draw attention. The Trail of Broken Treaties caravan and subsequent six-day occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in November 1972 thrust AIM into national headlines. National television and newspaper news covered the event in significantly different ways. Television focused on the sort of changes in federal Indian policy the activists wanted, while newspapers were more concerned with the government response to the activists in the building. AIM leaders adopted the politics of confrontation to challenge institutions they were trying to change, and in so doing undermined their position of authority as the media focused on the *spectacle* rather than the *message*.[3]

The era of Red Power and American Indian cultural and political history during this period has generally received little attention from historians. Discussions of political and social activism in the late 1960s and early 1970s are often overshadowed by the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, and the downfall of Richard Nixon and have short-listed an examination of significant political, legal, social, and cultural changes acting upon and emanating from American Indians. Additionally, many accounts of AIM have been written by partisans and participants of the 1960s and 1970s, which tend to be sympathetic to their goals and tactics and results in what historian Charles Payne called "a history more theatrical than instructive."[4] Francis Paul Prucha has noted the failure to

[3] Other examinations of American Indian activism and the press can be seen in Rolland Dewing, "South Dakota Newspaper Coverage of the 1973 Occupation of Wounded Knee," *South Dakota History* 12 (Spring 1982): 48-64; James Stripes, "A Strategy of Resistance: The 'Actorvism' of Russell Means from Plymouth Rock to the Disney Studios," *Wicazo Sa Review* 14 (Spring 1999): 87-101; and Gail H. Landsman, "Indian Activism and the Press: Coverage of the Conflict at Ganienkeh," *Anthropological Quarterly* 60 (July 1987): 101-113.

[4] Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley, 1995), quoted in Scott Sandage, "A Marble House Divided: The Lincoln Memorial, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Politics of Memory, 1939-1963" in *The Journal of American History*, 80 (June 1993): 137. For example, see Peter Matthiessen, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992); Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement*

study "the creation and rising importance of pan-Indian organizations." He argued that historians must research the "Indian actions that transcend tribal lines" by examining groups like AIM, for which "there has been little study."[5] R. David Edmunds likewise noted that "a scholarly history of the American Indian Movement is long overdue."[6] Relatively little of the published history about American Indians addresses the relationship between mass media and American Indian political struggles. This thesis is an attempt to fill a gap in the historiography.

Only recently have scholars across disciplines begun to examine media representation of indigenous peoples in mass media. In the last decade several unpublished studies have examined the relationship between Native activists and print and television media, largely concluding that mainstream press reported on American Indians in stereotypical ways or did not fully represent their ideas. Native press also differed little from mainstream coverage, framing the American Indian Movement as militant, urban, and unrepresentative of the majority of Native Americans. Such reporting inhibited AIM's ability to build support among Native and non-Native publics, thus reducing their ability to mobilize supporters around their ideas.[7] Most prior studies

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(Cambridge: South End Press, 2002); Alvin Josephy, *Now that the Buffalo's Gone: A Study of Today's American Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984); Dennis Banks, *Ojibwa Warrior* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004); and Russell Means, *Where White Men Fear to Tread* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995).

5 Francis Paul Prucha, "American Indian Policy in the Twentieth Century," *Western Historical Quarterly* (January 1981): 13.

6 R. David Edmunds, "Native Americans, New Voices: American Indian History, 1895-1995," *American Historical Review* 100 (June 1995): 736. Historian Donald Parman also noted "historians have also not given a great deal of attention to the Red Power movement and other events of the past two decades." See "Twentieth-Century Indian History: Achievements, Needs, and Problems," *OAH Magazine of History* 9 (Fall 1994): 12.

7 See Miranda Jean Brady, "The Occupation of Wounded Knee: Press Coverage of the American Indian Movement" (MS thesis, San Jose State University, 2003); Jeremy Busacca, "Seeking Self-Determination: Framing, the American Indian Movement, and American Indian Media" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate University, 2007); Mavis Ione Richardson, "Constructing Two Cultural Realities: Newspaper Coverage of Two American Indian Protest Events" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota,

of AIM and media focus upon the seventy-one day occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973, largely treating the Trail of Broken Treaties as merely a stepping stone to the longer and highly reported occupation in the shortgrass country of South Dakota.[8] The Trail of Broken Treaties was AIM's first large scale and sustained demonstration, which propelled the group into national headlines and to the forefront of Native activism. The media began formulating its understanding of AIM during their demonstration in Washington, which served to inform their reporting three months later at the occupation of Wounded Knee.

Historians have tended to focus their attention on the connections between the Civil Rights Movement and the media, chiefly through television news. The broadcasted images of police dogs and fire hoses turned against protesters in the South remained fixed in the national consciousness. Those who consider these movements and similar ones portrayed through television believe them to be key moments where Americans witnessed violence and hatred directed at African Americans. Such broadcasts compelled white Americans to reconsider segregation in the South.[9] Reporters, commentators, public officials, and participants in political movements during the 1960s came to understand the

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2005); Bruce D'Arcus, "The Wounded Knee Occupation and the Politics of Scale: Marginal Protest and Central Authority in a Media Age" (Ph.D. diss., Syracuse University, 2001); Monica Lynnette Butler, "Check Your Local Listings: Indigenous Representation in Television," (Ph.D. diss., Arizona State University, 2008).

8 See Michelle D. Dishong, "*New York Times* Coverage of the Occupation of Wounded Knee, South Dakota" (M.A. thesis, Washington State University, 1996); Judith Anola Vick, "The Press and Wounded Knee, 1973: An Analysis of the Coverage of the Occupation by Selected Newspapers and Magazines" (M.A. thesis, University of Minnesota, 1977); Natalie P. Wells, "Television News Coverage of the American Indian Occupation of Wounded Knee, South Dakota: An Analysis of Network Newscasts, February-May, 1973" (M.A. thesis, San Francisco State University, 1982).

9 The role of television and the civil rights struggle has received recent attention in Sasha Torres, *Black, White, and in Color: Television and Black Civil Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), and Sasha Torres, ed., *Living Color: Race and Television in the United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); William Thomas, "Television News and the Civil Rights Struggle: The Views in Virginia and Mississippi," *Southern Spaces*, 3 November 2004, <http://www.southernspaces.org/contents/2004/thomas/4a.htm>.

power of mass media in shaping public opinion. The study of the relationship between mass media and the protest movements is important, historian Julian Bond writes, because "until historians unravel the complex links between the southern freedom struggle and mass media, their understanding of how the Movement functioned, why it succeeded, and when and where it failed will be incomplete."[10]

The media are particularly powerful in shaping people's views of the world, as Todd Gitlin illustrates in his study of the New Left. Through "selections and omissions, through emphasis and themes," he argued, mass media are a "significant social force in the forming and delimiting of public assumptions, attitudes, and moods."[11] Although media served an important factor in disseminating goals and communicating agendas, Gitlin concluded that the zeal for media coverage drove activists to engage in "newsworthy" events that did not necessarily advance their cause. Activists struck radical poses and shifted emphasis away from the *message*, and instead led the press to focus on the *image*—the symbols, slogans, garb, and performances that made up media events.[12]

I should perhaps define some key terms before continuing. "Framing" refers to the way news is packaged, the extent of its exposure, the placement within a newspaper (front page, lead story), the tone of the writing (sympathetic or critical), visual effects (headlines and photographs), and vocabulary.[13] I use the terms "media," "mass media,"

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[10] Julian Bond, "The Media and the Movement: Looking Back from the Southern Front," in Brian Ward, ed., *Media, Culture, and the Modern African American Freedom Struggle* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 16-40.

[11] Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media and the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 9.

[12] Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching*, 294.

[13] Michael Parenti, *Inventing Reality: The Politics of News Media*, (Wadsworth Publishing, 1992), 222; Shanto Iyengar, "Television News and Citizens' Explanations of National Affairs," *American Political Science Review* 81 (September 1987): 815-831.

"news," and "the press," interchangeably to describe the subjects under investigation. I take these news outlets to mean television video from ABC, NBC, and CBS, newspaper accounts and editorials from the key national newspapers, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, and memoirs to get at the significance of the event and what it tells us generally about America's image-ridden political culture. The national broadcast networks and newspapers maintained generally high audiences throughout the 1960s and 1970s, thus uniquely situated to shape and reflect public discourse about different national events.

Despite the problematic linguistic and cultural baggage, I use the terms "American Indian," "Native American," "Native peoples," and "indigenous" interchangeably. Where possible I try to refer to individuals by their social or linguistic affiliation, but in many places I find it necessary to speak of all people regardless of their affiliations. The word "tribe" is used occasionally in the pages ahead, if only because the term is so ingrained in the U.S. legal and historical lexicon, though I attempt to use the more appropriate term Indian nations.

Historians have been reluctant to study visual sources, instead preferring written documents. Rather than dismiss the study of images and media perceptions, argued historian David Greenberg, "we would do well to study them as part of history, as vehicles that convey important meanings and ideas about the world."[14] Media perceptions become a method for people to understand their world. "News" is not simply "the way it was," but rather a particular narrative transmitted through mediums to convey

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[14] David Greenberg, *Nixon's Shadow: The History of an Image* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2004), xxiv.

information. "News is a genre," writes historian Paul Weaver, "a distinctive mode of writing and of depicting experience."[15] Those depictions take many forms, including café conversation in Old Regime France, the bread and circuses of the Roman Empire, or the political broadsides written by American patriots in the eighteenth century.[16] The story in the pages that lie ahead are guided not only by what AIM *did* but what they *meant*, how it *mattered* to them, and how people *responded* to them.

Studies about television in the mid-twentieth century emphasize how technological innovation extended politics and entertainment culture into all aspects of American life. But to try and understand the affect mass media had not on the consumers but on those that tried to shape and use media for their own purposes requires a close examination. How did political actors conceive of media as a vehicle for their ideas? What sort of things were activists talking to the media about? What did the media report or omit? What was AIM's message? Did the media report the demonstrator's goals or was the message lost on the sensationalism of the occupation? Was the occupation of the BIA a successful strategy for disseminating their agenda? The ability of mass media to shape tastes, manufacture celebrities, and define the nation's public agenda illustrate the experiences, perceptions, and beliefs of Americans – a *politics* of media.

The politics of media—using the press to disseminate goals, shape an image, or influence politics—was not a new phenomena. But the postwar media network introduced new practices, attitudes, discussions, and habits that grew out of the modern

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[15] Paul H. Weaver, "Newspaper News and Television News," in *Television as a Social Force: New Approaches to TV Criticism*, ed. Douglass Cater and Richard Adler (New York: Praeger, 1975), 82.

[16] Robert Darnton, "An Early Information Society: News and the Media in Eighteenth-Century Paris," *American Historical Review* 105 (February 2000): 1-4. See Darnton's digital component to "An Early Information Society" at <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/105.1/ah000001.html>.

press. Modern politics left behind party bosses and regional biases that introduced two powerful components to the practice of politics. The first was a new political component joining such important factors as experience and ideas—that of visibility. Individuals and organizations had the ability to become overnight celebrities with mass media exposure. Visibility feeds into the second significant factor of offering power to the powerless. To be seen and heard was to have an impact on politics.

Blending together the insights of history, political science, communications and media studies, and sociology, I hope to understand the linkages between politics and the media. Assessing the reach and impact of media is not to suggest a method of measuring public opinion, as social scientists and political scientists have attempted to do by wrapping their examinations up with mathematical formulas and theoretical speculation.[17] The emergence of the field of digital history, however, is allowing historians to collect, store, and disseminate information in new ways, and provides the perfect medium with which to study mass media.

This thesis is a hybrid of print and digital scholarship, pulling together the traditional work of an historian with the new technologies available for digital research.[18] Digital history is both a new practice and an old art, and these new digital tools are changing the way people read. Online reading is a nearly ubiquitous experience, although most digital reading comes through the form of info-snacking (reading through

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[17] See, for example, Paul M. Kellstedt, "Media Framing and the Dynamics of Racial Policy Preference," *American Journal of Political Science* 44 (April 2000): 245-260; Larry M. Bartels, "Messages received: The Political Impact of Media Exposure," *American Political Science Review* 87 (June 1993): 267-285; Thomas E. Nelson, et al, "Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and Its Effect on Tolerance," *American Political Science Review* 91 (September 1997): 567-583; James N. Druckman, "The Power of Television Images: The First Kennedy-Nixon Debate Revisited," *Journal of Politics* 65 (May 2003): 559-571.

[18] Readers can find the digital project at <http://segonku.unl.edu/~jheppler/frp/>.

very short pieces or scanning text on newspapers, magazines, and blogs). However, digital history will transform the way historians communicate and what they communicate. The method of communicating ideas will no longer be confined to the logical structure of a book simply because historians cannot control how people approach and navigate digital scholarship. This requires historians to think of new ways to ensure readers get out of digital projects what historians hope to communicate; perhaps ideally, they will walk away from a digital project with fresh ideas that challenge our own arguments.[19]

Two digital works stand as the greatest inspiration for my digital methodology. *Television News and the Civil Rights Struggle* by William G. Thomas examined local television news broadcasts in Mississippi and Virginia, finding that television news in Virginia approached segregation with a balanced approach while print defended segregation, while in Mississippi television stations defended segregation and denied African Americans a voice. Thomas's digital essay presents digitized film footage of television reports and interviews that are to be viewed in conjunction with reading the analysis and offers an interesting approach to analyzing media and race that would be difficult without the aid of digital technology. The second work is Doug Seefeldt's Mountain Meadows project, which seeks to analyze the public discourse surrounding the event and the ways it was reported on, interpreted, and remembered. Seefeldt uses

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[19] Robert Darnton, "Google & the Future of Books," *New York Review of Books* 56 (February 12, 2009); Hayden White, "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory," *History and Theory* 23 (February 1984): 1-33; Jay David Bolter, "Hypertext and the Remediation of Print," in *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001); Jeff Gomez, *Print is Dead: Books in Our Digital Age* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008); Marie-Laure Ryan, "Will New Media Produce New Narratives?," in *Narrative across Media: The Languages of Storytelling* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Stephen Robertson, "Doing History in Hypertext," *Journal of the Association for History and Computing* 7 (2004).

language analysis tools to examine Mormon and non-Mormon newspapers and highlight the biases evident in their reporting. *Framing Red Power*'s digital aspect marries these two ideas together—on the one hand, television reporting and visual images, and on the other, print and language.[20]

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Living in a world today of nearly ubiquitous media exposure and twenty-four hour cable news beamed around the world through sophisticated digital technologies, it can be hard to comprehend the wonderment, excitement, and anxieties that accompanied television's rise as a mature political medium. Beginning in the 1950s, however, television signaled a remarkable political and cultural transformation. For the first time Americans began experiencing events nearly simultaneously, generating a new sort of national community. News events often became shared experiences as Americans turned to television to learn about events all at the same time without ideological or regional filters that accompanied local party leaders or the pages of newspapers, although local television broadcasts had the ability to drown out voices.[21] For the first time Americans experienced powerful and emotional events in vivid images rather than through text or word of mouth. The diversification of television content since the 1980s in the form of videocassette recorders, cable and satellite broadcasting, all-news channels, video on demand, and a bounty of new digital technologies scattered TV audiences, but the first decades after the foundations of network television the big three had immense power in

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[20] William Thomas, "Television News and the Civil Rights Struggle: The Views in Virginia and Mississippi," *Southern Spaces*, 3 November 2004, <http://www.southernspaces.org/contents/2004/thomas/4a.htm>. *Horrible Massacre of Immigrants! Mountain Meadows in Public Discourse*, ed. Douglas Seefeldt, <http://mountainmeadows.unl.edu/>.

[21] See Thomas, "Television News and Civil Rights," <http://www.southernspaces.org/contents/2004/thomas/4a.htm >.

shaping national discussions.[22]

Quantifying the emergence of television illustrates its widespread reach in American society. In 1951 nearly one-quarter of American homes contained a television; by 1957 the number jumped to seventy-eight percent, and by the early 1960s to ninety-two percent. Sixty-four percent of Americans claimed they received the majority of their news from television in 1967.[23] Accompanying the rise of TV purchases was a network shakedown that left ABC, NBC, and CBS vying for media supremacy. In early 1948 nineteen commercial television stations broadcast to only a few thousand television sets. Print and radio journalism dominated the marketplace of news throughout the 1940s and few thought television would establish itself as a serious medium. Reuben Frank, who would later serve as NBC's president, was told by his boss in 1950 when he joined the network that "nobody in radio who is worth anything thinks [television's] going to last."[24]

The technology of television limited the coverage of political news. For example, coverage of the 1948 party conventions was limited to the East Coast due to the reach of coaxial cables. The networks lacked camera crews until the early 1950s and relied upon newsreel companies to provide them with film; and immediate coverage of events would not be possible until advances in video and communication technology in the mid-1960s. Television journalists also faced the scorn of print and radio journalists. A. M. Rosenthal, a United Nations correspondent for the *New York Times*, complained that "the paraphernalia of TV – the glaring lights, the cameras, the portable power machines, the

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[22] G. Calvin Mackenzie and Robert Weisbrot, *The Liberal Hour: Washington and the Politics of Change in the 1960s* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), 34-36.

[23] Burns Roper, "Emerging Profiles of Television and Other Mass Media," *Public Attitudes* (New York: Television Information Office, April 5, 1967); Eric R. A. N. Smith, *The Unchanging American Voter* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 185.

[24] Quoted in Nancy Bernhard, *U.S. Television News and Cold War Propaganda, 1947-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 49.

huge coils of cable and the strong-arm men of the crew – force the newspaperman to work in a hectic, noisy movie-set atmosphere."[25] The new medium also faced challenges to its legitimacy as a news source. "Television is not interested in news but in entertainment," wrote Rosenthal.[26]

Television matured as a mainstream news medium in the mid-1950s. The Kefauver hearings on organized crime, Richard Nixon's "Checkers" speech, and the Army-McCarthy hearings in 1954 were dramatic political events viewed by millions of Americans in front of their television sets.[27] The big three networks provided national programming nearly twenty-four hours per day by 1970. Local television stations propagated in major population centers throughout the country (530 were in operation in 1960 and increased to 673 by 1969) and often were affiliated with one of the big three networks.[28] Each network developed evening news broadcasts covering national events. Networks planned public-affairs programming to reach audiences and compete for ratings; the *Today Show* launched in 1952, followed by interview programs like *Meet the Press* and news-magazine shows such as *60 Minutes*. Networks broke into their programming to broadcast presidential speeches, political conventions, and other national events. Color television emerged in 1968 when NBC began broadcasting entirely in color, followed by CBS and ABC. By October color television sets were outselling black

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[25] A. M. Rosenthal, "TV Antics Can Kill the Press Conference," *International Press Institute Report* (October 1953), 4.

[26] Rosenthal, "TV Antics," 4; Nancy Bernhard, *U.S. Television News and Cold War Propaganda, 1947-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 46-59; Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty*, 99-114, 189-214; Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (New York: Scribner, 2008), 38-41.

[27] Thomas Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 108-116; Erik Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty: The Evolution of American Television* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 112.

[28] Matie Malinaro et al., *Letters of Marshal McLuhan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 286-287.

and white for the first time.[29]

Not every American thought television would provide benefits to American politics. In his 1961 book *The Image: A Guide to Psuedo-Events in America*, historian Daniel Boorstin argued that the rise of mass media, including advertising and public relations, replaced heroes with celebrities, superseded truth with credibility, and favored personality over character. Boorstin coined the term "pseudo-event," an activity that became news not for fundamental reasons but because those who covered the news deemed it so. The pseudo-event became so pervasive that few areas of news remained an "authentic, uncorrupted, spontaneous event."[30] The pervasive reach of media, argued Boorstin, changed the way Americans thought about political democracy. The public image of politicians superseded what Americans believed of their character or judgment. National matters were reduced to "trivial dimensions" while peripheral matters like lighting, makeup, and appearance were given prominence. Boorstin saw this as a threat to representative democracy; when the citizenry can no longer distinguish "between sham and reality," between an image and truth, the image puts the future of the American republic in jeopardy.[31]

The startling rise of television in American culture introduced significant changes to the practice of politics, yet print media remained an important medium of information. Newspapers had once been fiercely partisan and openly supported political parties throughout the nineteenth century. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the ideal of

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[29] David Culbert, "Television's Visual Impact on Decision-Making in the USA, 1968: The Tet Offensive and Chicago's Democratic National Convention," *Journal of Contemporary History* 33 (July 1998): 420.

[30] Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Vintage, 1992 [1961]), 265, 254.

[31] Boorstin, *The Image*, 204, 41-43, 36.

objectivity became a key component in the professionalization of journalism. Objective journalism separated opinion from reports, and journalists strove to maintain neutrality.[32]

In the 1950s newspaper chains began to displace local family-owned newspapers. In 1953 independent family businesses owned 1,300 of America's 1,785 dailies, while only ninety-five newspaper chains owned a total of 485 papers. By 1980 the number of independent newspapers fell to 700.[33] In addition to the business challenge of competing with television, American journalism also faced the problem of just-the-facts journalism unsuitable for reporting on the complex changes occurring in postwar America. The Civil Rights Movement, a Cold War rise in government secrecy, and the questioning of their own ideals of objectivity confronted print journalists. Changing trends in publishing methods, rising costs, and suburbanization lead to a crisis in metropolitan newspaper publishing. Newspaper consolidation, which began in the 1920s, increased in the mid- to late-1960s. "To be specific," reported Raymond B. Nixon, the industry's authority on consolidation, in 1968, "only forty-five of the 1,500 daily newspaper cities in the United States had two or more locally competing dailies at the beginning of 1968."[34] Between 1945 and 1965, 421 daily newspapers merged or closed. As closings and mergers accelerated, so did chain ownership. Between 1945 and 1965 the number of papers owned by chains doubled from 368 in 1945 to 750 in 1965.[35]

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[32] See Richard Lee Kaplan, *Politics and the American Press: The Rise of Objectivity, 1865-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[33] Elizabeth MacIver Neiva, "Chain Building: The Consolidation of the American Newspaper Industry, 1953-1980," *Business History Review* 70 (Spring 1996): 1-42.

[34] Quoted in David Randall Davies, *The Postwar Decline of American Newspapers, 1945-1965* (New York: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 117.

[35] Davies, *Postwar Decline*, 118-119. As television and newspapers continued on their paths, radio became more profitable than ever with revenues jumping from $571 million in 1949 to $692 million in 1960. Radio stations disaffiliated themselves from the four national networks and promoted local disk-jockeys and talk-show hosts. Radio appealed to new audiences, specifically African Americans and youth.

While television succeeds in bringing an audience to the scenes of news, their greatest disadvantage is in scaling down analysis to short, interpretive statements rather than the in-depth scrutiny print can achieve. Furthermore, print media tends to sustain coverage on events longer than television. While broadcast networks turned their attention to national stories in the early 1970s—primarily the Watergate scandal and the drawdown in Vietnam—television coverage of events concerning Native Americans diminished rapidly. Among local communities, print often conveys the pulse of a community or region. News stories, cartoons, and editorials gauge the tenor of politics in local communities.[36]

The engagement with national mainstream press was not the only method of trying to connect to audiences. American Indians developed their own media to cover events and add their voice to public discourse. The creation of the American Indian press in the nineteenth century were the first attempts by American Indians to confront the problem of being presented and represented by white-controlled press. The nation's first American Indian newspaper, the *Cherokee Phoenix*, which began weekly publication in 1828 out of New Echota, Georgia, connected with wide audiences about Indian issues. Cherokee Chief John Ross explained to the Cherokee General Council in 1831 that "the wide circulation of the *Cherokee Phoenix* throughout the United States, have had a very salutary & happy effect of enlightening the great mass of the people of the United States upon the Indian Cause."[37] The struggle over political ideas and the power of self-representation has stretched over a century.

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[36] Darnton, "An Early Information Society." For an overview of approaches to print culture, see Jennifer Tebbe, "Print and American Culture," *American Quarterly* (1980): 259-279.

[37] Ross quoted in Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green, *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears* (New York: Viking Press, 2007), 75-76.

Beginning in the 1960s, Red Power activists sought ways to engage American Indian audiences and developed networks to feed news about Indians to the mainstream press. A nationalistic American Indian press offered Native voice to current events. Three major Native newspapers were founded in the 1960s and 1970s that brought tribal and urban news to American Indian audiences. *Indian Voices*, published in Chicago from 1962 to 1968, *Akwesasne Notes*, published by the Mohawk Nation since 1968, and *Wassaja*, published irregularly since 1973, offered a mix of news and editorials on Native issues. In 1970 Yakima journalist Richard La Course, along with Charles Trimble (Oglala Lakota) and Rose Robinson (Hopi), among others, founded and operated the American Indian Press Association (AIPA) until its demise in 1976. At one point AIPA provided more than 150 Indian newspapers and other sources with news.[38]

The transformations in media coverage led to two trends. The first was a more visible presence of Native American issues in public discourse beginning in the 1960s. Matters of public policy as it concerned Native Americans were discussed widely and sympathetically by media sources. Through the public attention that Red Power drew, Congressional leaders engaged Indian affairs, passed several bills and resolutions favorable to Native issues, and eventually embraced tribal self-determination. Second, political awareness among Native Americans focused beyond the confines of a tribe or region and embraced pan-Indian issues. Networks developed among tribal leaders, journalists, and activists who worked together to confront national Indian issues.

Press coverage of American Indians, while often sympathetic, carried with it a

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[38] Stephen Cornell, *The Return of the Native: American Indian Political Resurgence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 139.

pervasive culture of nineteenth century ideas. One image of Indians in the press portrayed them through the lens of the "noble savage." A *Time* story in the late 1960s described "the new American Indian" as "no longer content to play the obsequious Tonto to the white man's Lone Ranger."[39] Other press descriptions described an image of a modern warrior. The magazine *Ramparts* described a Nisqually fighting in Washington state for fishing rights as:

> Tall and sinuous, with fine features, his black shoulder-length hair secured with a red headband, Bridges cuts a flamboyant figure. . . . He has been arrested 21 times since becoming involved in the fishing rights and has a 15-year sentence on appeal; over the years, when few other sources of dignity were available, he has come to take pride in the ability to fight back, as he says, "so that it takes three or four of them to get the handcuffs on."[40]

The sympathetic, if biased, portrayals of Indians in the press fell apart, however, when militant activists began seizing property and brandishing weapons. The press depicted the activists as idealistic and dedicated to the restoration of traditional culture, challenging the mainstream attitudes about Indian peoples and adding their voices to the din of civil rights discourse.

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The story of the American Indian Movement and the Trail of Broken Treaties necessarily begins with a broad discussion of the media and the origins of Red Power's pre-AIM adoption of media tactics. Chapter 1 outlines the main Indian advocacy organizations and their intellectual currents that led them to adopt or reject strategies for

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[39] *Time* story quoted in Mary Ann Weston, *Native Americans in the News: Images of Indians in the Twentieth Century Press* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996), 137.

[40] Quoted in Weston, *Native Americans in the News*, 137.

using the media for their advantage. Different groups used the media in different ways, and discussing the formation of political ideas in the context of media relations leads to an exploration of the origins of AIM and their ideas. As admirers of the Civil Rights Movement and learning from other organizations, the leaders of AIM developed ideas for gaining exposure of their goals through a sympathetic press.

One of those ideas was the Trail of Broken Treaties caravan. Chapter 2 charts the planning of the Trail of Broken Treaties and the early media coverage prior to the occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Media coverage by the national press prior to the occupation was sparse. Both television and newspaper barely touched on the caravan's progress across the nation through October 1972. The lack of exposure changed with the occupation. Chapter 3 explains the reasons for the occupation and examines the press' reaction to the event. Newspapers covered the event more thoroughly and sustained than television, but their coverage focused on how the government would respond to the occupation rather than the message of the activists. Television networks were more interested in pursuing the sort of policy changes the government would undertake as a result of the occupation, but the amount of coverage was far less than newspapers. Both television and newspapers tended to simplify the event and neglected to investigate historical and contemporary currents that lead to the caravan and occupation.

CHAPTER 1
THE MEDIA AND THE ORIGINS OF RED POWER

Political movements feel called upon to rely on large-scale communications in order to matter, to say who they are and what they intend to publics they want to sway.
– Todd Gitlin[1]

To understand why AIM adopted media tactics, it is important to trace the political thought that existed prior to AIM's emergence. The ideology of AIM was founded on the cultural, political, and social ideas of the 1960s and drew from a wide body of existing ideas. The emergence of militant Indian activism closely paralleled similar trajectories within the Civil Rights Movement and antiwar protests. Prior to 1960 Indian advocacy organizations sought reform through the legal system, preferring legal action, grassroots organizing, and lobbying Congress. During the intense political atmosphere of 1968, Indian radicals fused together a new comprehensive worldview to explain their perspective on events, the roots of their grievances, and the configuration of their political ideals.

The onset of the Cold War following the Allied victory in World War II laid the seedbed of the 1960s protest culture. The editor of *Life*, Henry Luce, proclaimed in 1941 the next era of history as the "American Century." Americans returning home from the war were armed with the belief that the war ended the Great Depression, broadened U.S. power overseas, and inspired national pride. Veterans returned anticipating a bright future. In testament to that, the rate of pregnancy rose to astounding heights in the years after 1945. African American veterans returned home fighting for the "Double V," victory over U.S. enemies and over racism at home. The same was true of Native

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[1] Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media and the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 3.

Americans, who hoped the disparity between race was erased.[2]

Aiding the development of AIM's political ideas was the hunt for subversives, particularly communists. With the Soviet Union asserting dominance over Eastern Europe, President Harry Truman rebuilt America's military might and forced anticommunist alliances between 1947 and 1949. Liberal anticommunists laid the groundwork that would serve as America's foreign policy against the Soviets. Political thinkers like Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.. defined anticommunism with liberalism rising to the challenge of protecting democracy from the threat of totalitarianism. Although Schlesinger emphasized that communism was a threat *to* the United States, not *in* the United States, countersubversives like Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin and Senator Arthur Watkins of Utah sought to prove otherwise and initiated a campaign against domestic communism. Countersubversives saw communism differently than liberals, deciding that communists were dangerous as themselves, impeding America's values and traditions to eventually replace the Republic with a Soviet-style government.[3]

The anticommunist crusade reached into American Indian communities through the adoption of the federal government's policy of termination, meant to deconstruct the reservations and relocate American Indians to urban centers. In the vernacular common to the Cold War, proponents of termination sought to "liberate" the Indians "confined" to "concentration camps" or "socialistic environments."[4] The "communistic" nature of reservations had risen in the 1930s as Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier

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[2] Terry H. Anderson, *The Sixties*, (New York: Pearson-Longman, 2004), 1-4

[3] Richard Gid Powers, *Not Without Honor: The History of American Anticommunism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 203, 213-214.

[4] Arthur Watkins, "Termination and Federal Supervision: The Removal of Restrictions over Indian Property and Person," *Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 311 (May 1957): 55.

promoted the Indian New Deal and the Indian Reorganization Act. Joseph Bruner, an Oklahoma Creek and cofounder of the American Indian Federation (AIF), argued that the IRA at its core was a "Russian Communistic" conception.[5] Flora Warren Seymore, an author and lawyer, likewise called the IRA "the most extreme gesture yet made by the administration in this country toward a Communistic experiment."[6] In the postwar years, the image of the reservation as a "concentration camp" took on added weight. U.S. Representative John Schafer of Wisconsin asked a Blackfeet nation politician whether the history of Indian policy "more than parallels the atrocities and so-called concentration camps abroad."[7]

The reservation policy's major shift came with the presidency of Harry Truman. While the old idea of acculturation remained, the popularity of maintaining reservations began to dwindle. Dillon Myer, President Truman's commissioner of Indian affairs, championed the new assimilationist cause. Myer, the former administrator who ran the War Relocation Authority that oversaw Japanese internment during World War II, proposed severing Indian ties to the Indian Bureau and transfering responsibilities such as education and health services to state and local governments. In 1953, Senator Watkins cosponsored Concurrent Resolution 108 which codified Congress's intent to terminate "Federal supervision and control" of Indian affairs by making American Indians "subject to the same laws and entitled to the same privileges and responsibilities" afforded to other citizens. Thus, Indian reservation termination took the route of legislation.[8]

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[5] Joseph Bruner, quoted in Kenneth R. Philip, *John Collier's Crusade for Indian Reform, 1920-1954* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1977), 172.

[6] Flora Warren Seymor, "Trying It on the Indian," 1934, in *Native Americans: Opposing Viewpoints*, ed. William Dudley (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1998), 207.

[7] John Schafer, quoted in Paul C. Rosier, "'They Are Ancestral Homelands': Race, Place, and Politics in Cold War Native America, 1945-1961," *Journal of American History* 92 (March 2006): 1307.

[8] For more on Arthur Watkin's role in termination, see R. Warren Metcalf, *Termination's Legacy: The*

When Richard Nixon occupied the Oval Office in 1970, many American Indians were encouraged by his concern for what he called "the first Americans." During the presidential campaign against Lyndon Johnson, Nixon proposed a bold new Indian policy that was "180 degrees from the past."[9] In late September 1968, Nixon sent a letter to the delegates of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) gathered in Omaha, Nebraska. "The sad plight of the American Indian," he wrote, "is a stain on the honor of the American people." His plan, if elected, was the abolishment of the termination program: "The right of self-determination of the Indian people will be respected and their participation in planning their own destiny will be encouraged."[10] Nixon would live up to that promise as president. In a special message to Congress on July 8, 1970, Nixon declared the federal government would help American Indians pursue "self determination . . . without the threat of eventual termination." He assured the Indians they "[could] assume control over [their] own life without being separated involuntarily from the tribal group."[11]

The American Indian community greeted Nixon's support of self-determination with enthusiasm. Bruce Willkie, the executive director of NCAI, declared in the fall of 1970 that Nixon was "the first U.S. President since George Washington to pledge that the government will honor obligations to the Indian tribes." Navajo tribal leader Peter

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Discarded Indians of Utah (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 21-48, 234-243. On HCR 108, see "House Concurrent Resolution 108," Aug. 1, 1953, in *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 233; Kenneth R. Philip, *Termination Revisited* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 168-175; and Donald L. Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945-1960* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1986), 91-102.

[9] Nixon quoted in Joan Hoff, *Nixon Reconsidered* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 27.

[10] Nixon quoted in Troy Johnson, *The Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Indian Self-Determination and the Rise of Indian Activism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 42.

[11] *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, Prucha, 256-258.

MacDonald agreed, declaring Nixon should "be viewed as the Abraham Lincoln of the Indian people."[12] However, Nixon's new policy went nowhere as legislators and bureaucrats in the BIA and Congress stymied his plans. Although BIA appropriations rose over two-hundred percent between 1968 and 1973, Indian activists were outraged at the continued paternalism of the government and the corruption of tribal governments.[13] Nixon, they argued, betrayed his promise of a break from the past. Native American radicals began connecting their ideas of reform to the global and domestic events of the Cold War. Drawing on postwar decolonization revolts around the world, domestic concerns of Indian treaty rights, and challenging the gap between American principles and American realities, the activists forged together a coherent ideology with which to explain and confront the world.

Sensing the new atmosphere in American politics, Indian intellectuals among the protesters began to define their distinguishing characteristics. The first group to undertake the task of comprehending the new movement and provide an ideology was the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), which acquired new leadership in 1964 in the person of Vine Deloria, Jr. A Standing Rock Sioux born in Martin, South Dakota, he initially sought to become a minister like his father. In 1963, he received his theology degree from the Lutheran School of Theology in Rock Island, Illinois, and then received a law degree from the University of Colorado in 1970. Deloria served as the executive director of the NCAI from 1964 until 1967.

Beginning in the late 1960s Deloria issued sharp criticisms of federal Indian

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[12] Willkie and MacDonald quoted in Hoff, *Nixon Reconsidered*, 28.
[13] Hoff, *Nixon Reconsidered*, 30.

policy. In 1969 Deloria published his most famous contribution entitled *Custer Died for your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, which provided Indian activists with an ideology that defined problems, offered solutions, and identified the agents of change—all essential to the development of social movements. The problem with American Indians in society, Deloria maintained, was that they were viewed as invisible: "To be an Indian in modern American society is in a very real sense to be unreal and ahistorical." Anthropologists, missionaries, and government authorities were all guilty of wrongs against the Indians and appropriating stereotypes. Deloria nominated urban Indians as the agents of change, contending that "urban Indians have become the cutting edge of the new nationalism" and the government and tribal leaders took a perilous risk by ignoring the activists. The widely read book become required reading for Indian radicals and secured Deloria's spot as spokesman and leading intellectual for the emerging activists.[14]

A host of other books as well as examinations of Indians by Hollywood thrust American Indians into American popular culture. A younger generation of Americans, anguishing in self-criticism over Vietnam, the Civil Rights Movement, and the environment, were more receptive to criticisms of what Peter Collier, writing in *Ramparts*, labeled "America's Most Neglected Minority."[15] A number of books released between 1968 and 1970, including *The New Indians* by Stan Steiner, *Custer Died for Your Sins*, and *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* by Dee Brown, helped to obtain popular support for Indians. As the nation confronted Watts, My Lai, and Watergate, Hollywood revised the concept of the Old West by portraying Indians more favorably. Films like *A*

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[14] Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins*, 2, 248; Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: The New Press, 1996), 122-123.

[15] Peter Collier, "Wounded Knee: The New Indian War," *Ramparts* (June 1973), 26.

Man Called Horse, *Soldier Blue,* and *Little Big Man* imbued the American public with a new attitude towards American Indians.[16]

Despite the tough rhetoric of Deloria and NCAI, they continued to operate within the conventional confines of legislative lobbying, legal action, and grass roots organizing focused mainly to assist Indians on reservations. This approach frustrated a younger generation of Indians who expected a rapid reverse of government policy. To confront this quandary, a new organization, the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC), detached itself from the tactics of the NCAI, a move similar to other activist groups of the 1960s. The journey from Black civil rights to Black nationalism occurred because of dissatisfaction with the moderate approach taken by the NAACP and Black leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. These older groups advocated integration and nonviolence in order to cast light on the injustices of Jim Crow laws and foster its demise. Stokely Carmichael, leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), scoffed at their ideas and formed a new political coalition, dropping the ideas of racial integration, their alliance with liberals, and the commitment to nonviolence.[17]

Carmichael concluded that nonviolence was a naïve plan for a society too blind to see racial injustice. Blacks who followed the ideals of King and Gandhi, he argued, "demonstrated from a position of weakness." The end had come for the integrationists, according to Carmichael: "Integration is a subterfuge for the maintenance of white

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[16] Rolland Dewing *Wounded Knee II* (Sioux Falls: Pine Hill Press, 2000), 16-19; Stan Steiner, *The New Indians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968); Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988); Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (New York: Rhinehart & Winston, 1970); *A Man Called Horse*, directed by Elliot Silverstein, 114 min. (New York: National General Pictures, 1970); *Soldier Blue*, directed by Ralph Nelson, 112 min. (New York: AVCO Embassy Pictures, 1970); *Little Big Man*, directed by Arthur Penn, 139 min. (New York: National General Pictures, 1970).

[17] Allen Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 345-349.

supremacy." In explaining his ideology, Carmichael wrote Black activists "don't want to 'get whitey'; they just want to get him off their backs." Carmichael argued that as "a person oppressed because of [his] blackness," he had a common cause with others who suffered similar "colonizing treatment" by the United States. The "colored masses," he continued, all shared a powerless relationship with the "powerful few."[18]

Among the "colored masses" were American Indians. A group of young student activists, primarily led by Clyde Warrior, engineered the militant development of Indian activism. Born to a traditionalist Ponca family in Oklahoma in 1939, he became a respected fancy-dancer at powwows across Oklahoma. He remained active in tribal culture and was admired for his knowledge of tribal songs and stories.[19] Spurred to action by the slow progress of NCAI, a younger generation of Indians realized integration was unlikely and looked beyond their own experiences for ideological insights. Warrior proved critical in the evolution of their thinking. Warrior's long-time commitments to Indian politics led him to assume the presidency of the National Indian Youth Council at the age of twenty-eight. Following a conference at the University of Chicago in 1961 that produced "A Declaration of Indian Purpose,"—a manifesto laying out what the more conservative activists hoped to achieve—a younger, more radical element at the Chicago conference formed the National Indian Youth Council. Although similarly critical of the federal termination policies as NCAI was, more criticism was leveled at their establishment elders and tribal leaders who, they argued, represented white society more than Indians.[20]

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[18] Stokely Carmichael, "What We Want," *New York Review of Books*, 22 September 1966, 5-7; David Burner, *Making Peace with the Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 49-83.

[19] Warrior and Smith, *Like a Hurricane*, 36-59.

[20] "Declaration of Indian Purpose," in *Red Power: The American Indians' Fight for Freedom* (Lincoln:

In February 1967, Clyde Warrior articulated Red Power's evolving ideas. In testimony before a presidential commission, Warrior explained that Indians "are not free. We do not make choices. Our choices are made for us." His testimony was remarkably similar to Carmichael's essay published a few months before. Warrior expressed frustration with the "not-so-subtle racist vocabulary of the modern middle class" and attacked assimilation and those sympathetic to integration. His frustration stemmed from the paternalistic nature of those wanting to help the "deprived" Indians.[21]

As student radicals like Jerry Rubin declared "war against Amerika," Indians shifted their ideas to focus on confrontational action to encourage social change.[22] NIYC and Warrior borrowed rhetoric and tactics from the Black Panthers to root its new ideas. In a nation that all-too-well remembered the threat of fascism and totalitarianism, Warrior condemned whites as racists, fascists, colonialists, and reactionaries and derided moderate and conservative Indians as "Uncle Tomahawks" or "Apples"—red on the outside but white on the inside.[23] Paralleling the SNCC demands for Black Power articulated by Stokely Carmichael, NIYC and Warrior called for "Red Power" and supported direct confrontation with the federal government, using tactics based on the civil rights, anti-war, and New Left movements:

> 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 really 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."[24]

University of Nebraska Press, 1999) eds. Alvin Josephy Jr., Joane Nagel, and Troy Johnson, 13-15.

[21] "We Are Not Free," Clyde Warrior, in Josephy, *Red Power*, 71-77.

[22] Quoted in Matusow, *Unraveling of America*, 318.

[23] Steiner, *The New Indians*, 65-72.

[24] Quoted in Steiner, *The New Indians*, 68.

Warrior's rhetoric was influential in shaping the way Indians conceived of the world around them. This shift is evident by examining the attitude towards political demonstrations within the Indian community. NCAI, which took an essentially conservative approach to confronting federal termination policies, continued flying a banner in late 1967 proclaiming "Indians Don't Demonstrate," and such a belief ran through the rest of the Indian community. Future AIM leader Dennis Banks insisted in 1965 that "demonstrations are not the Indian way." These beliefs would all change by 1970, when confrontations became the staple of AIM's political tactics.[25]

Red Power's militancy found expression in its evolving protest tactics. On November 20, 1969, for example, eighty Indians calling themselves Indians of All Tribes occupied the island of Alcatraz, a former federal prison shut down six years earlier. Basing their justification on a clause the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie, they claimed the land was theirs "by right of discovery" and announced their plan to convert the island to a Native American Cultural Center. The publicity generated by the event convinced many activists that confrontational politics was the path to success. In the months following, short occupations occurred at Milwaukee, Lake Michigan, the Twin Cities Naval Air Station in Minneapolis, Fort Lawton near Seattle, Sheep Mountain in North Dakota, and an attempted takeover of Ellis Island in 1970.[26]

Native activists were aware of media's power for their movement. John Trudell, who would later serve as a co-chairman of AIM in the 1970s, remarked that the Alcatraz

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[25] Warrior and Smith, *Like a Hurricane*, 37, 129.

[26] Dewing,*Wounded Knee II*, 27. The best full treatment of the Alcatraz takeover can be seen in Johnson, *The Occupation of Alcatraz Island.*

occupation was designed "so as not to offend the public too much, because that is where our support was."[27] Others credited media for the scope of the occupation. One activist recalled that "we were in full view of the entire world, and the government made no move to take us off the island."[28] Sympathetic support in the media helped to present the activists and their goals. "We got a lot of ink and airtime around the country," recalled Russell Means. "That was when I first realized that the white media loved it when Indians fight Indians. We could practically get any kind of coverage we wanted."[29]

The events of 1968 shaped the attitudes and ideas of AIM's founders. In the context of these new ideas, the questions of an Indian's place in American society gained overwhelming significance. The vast evidence of injustice, as they saw it, proved a recurring pattern in history regarding the subjugation of Indians and a legacy of broken laws and promises. Reinforcement for this belief was manifest in disillusionment within the urban centers where many were pushed to under the government's relocation policy, causing many to loose their roots in culture and tradition. While serving a nine-month prison sentence, future AIM co-founder Dennis Banks occupied his time by reading voraciously about the Civil Rights Movement, antiwar movement, and Indian treaties. Watching the progress of the African American and student rebellions, he realized "there was a hell of a goddamn movement going on that I wasn't part of . . . [and saw] the greatest war was going to go on right here in the United States."[30] Upon his release from prison, Banks sought to make a profound and lasting impact on Indian politics and

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[27] John Trudell, quoted in Butler, "Check Your Local Listings," 213.

[28] Monica Lynnette Butler, "Check Your Local Listings: Indigenous Representation in Television" (Ph.D. diss., Arizona State University, 2008), 212.

[29] Russell Means, *Where White Men Fear to Tread: The Autobiography of Russell Means* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 165.

[30] Banks quoted in Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*, 129.

constructing a movement served as the best vehicle for that change.

In the beginning, AIM modeled itself after the Black Panther Party's community self-defense patrol in Oakland, California.[31] Hoping to curb police brutality and the disproportionate number of Indian arrests, AIM activists devised strategies to monitor police activity. They patrolled Minneapolis's Franklin Avenue armed with walkie talkies and donned red leather jackets that read "American Indian Movement" across the back. More often than not, they also rode around in red Cadillac convertibles. If a patrol came across Indians facing arrests, they would videotape the whole affair. They later began offering rides home to Indians at bars, catching them before the police could, or bailing Indians out of jail. Before long, AIM as a local organization had grown to a place where Indians could come and receive help in finding a job, education, or get a loan. The poor housing and education, joblessness, and general lack of respect for Native Americans reached its tipping point as Indian pride hit full bloom.[32]

A large part of their change in thinking occurred when a group calling themselves Indians of All Tribes (IAT) occupied Alcatraz Island in 1969. Headed by Mohawk Indian Richard Oakes and Santee Dakota John Trudell (later to become AIM's national chairman), the group arrived on the island and demanded title to the location with plans 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. Some members of the American Indian Movement participated in the

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[31] For a look at the Black Panther Patrols, see Curtis J. Austin, *Up Against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2006), 53-56.

[32] Fay G. Cohen, "The Indian Patrol in Minneapolis: Social Control and Social Change in an Urban Context," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1973, 45-46; "Objectives of the American Indian Movement (A.I.M.)," Cohen, "The Indian Patrol," 47.

occupation, and the lesson was not lost on them. The publicity of the event convinced many that confrontational politics was a successful form of political protest.

The Alcatraz Island occupation had a profound impact on AIM member Russell Means. Robert Burnette, former chairman of the Rosebud Reservation, recalled that Means had a "bizarre knack for staging demonstrations that attracted the sort of press coverage Indians had been looking for."[33] Such talent secured Means's spot in AIM as a chief spokesperson. He would articulate and epitomize most forcefully the emerging radical posture and ensure the dominance of AIM. A native of Pine Ridge who moved to California when his father took a naval shipyards job during World War II, Means often travelled down the wrong track in life, caught up with drug and alcohol abuse. Despite his vices, he completed a college degree in accounting and worked for the Rosebud Reservation tribal offices before becoming acquainted with Dennis Banks in 1969. Though initially skeptical of AIM, he quickly embraced them and would later go on to start the second AIM chapter in Cleveland.[34]

Means epitomized the image AIM tried to create in the media. Tall, well-built, and charismatic, Means became an expert in confrontational politics. In 1970 on Thanksgiving Day, he led the capture of the *Mayflower II* replica. In 1971, he led the brief occupation of Mount Rushmore in June and attempted to take over the BIA headquarters later that year. His fearless and volatile approach made AIM attractive to those who approved of their militant posture. "The only way we could get publicity was

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[33] Burnette and Koster, *The Road to Wounded Knee*, 196-197.

[34] Dewing, *Wounded Knee II*, 26; Means, *Where White Men Fear to Tread*, 148-149; James Abourezk interview with Clyde Bellecourt, Russ Means, and John Thomas, July 20, 1980, Folder 17, James Abourezk Papers, Wounded Knee Occupation 1973, Richardson Collection, University of South Dakota, 38-40.

by threats," Means recalled. "We had to threaten institutions we were trying to change."[35] The media's role in disseminating information was always important, and maintaining their image meant using political theatrics and violent confrontations. The public, notes legal scholar John Sayer, "must get their information from news coverage, making both the actors and the audience subject to the media's ability to influence public opinion concerning who society's heroes and villains are."[36] AIM leaders proved especially capable of drawing media attention.

The American Indian Movement was not without its critics. Vine Deloria Jr. contended that "AIM was too much the publicity hounds" to manage a successful coalition of Indian activists.[37] *Minneapolis Tribune* reporter Gerald Vizenor (Anishnaabe) described AIM as a "symbolic confrontation group" that generated media coverage of what he called "the heroes of confrontation."[38] Later protest events were also criticized. During the seventy-one day occupation of Wounded Knee in early 1973, South Dakota Senator George McGovern bemoaned, "We cannot have one law for a handful of publicity-seeking militants and another law for ordinary citizens."[39] Their publicity tactics, however, seemed to succeed in generating enough attention that AIM exploded onto the national scene within two years of its founding.

The visible, confrontational protests lent itself to a process of selection and

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[35] Robert Burnette and John Koster, *The Road to Wounded Knee*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1974), 19-197; Russell Means, quoted in James Abourezk interview with Clyde Bellecourt, Russ Means, and John Thomas, July 20, 1980, Folder 17, James Abourezk Papers, Wounded Knee Occupation 1973, Richardson Collection, University of South Dakota, 41.

[36] William Sayer, *Ghost Dancing the Law*, 9.

[37] Quoted in Joane Nagel, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and the Resurgence of Identity and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 163.

[38] Gerald Vizenor, *Crossbloods: Bone Courts, Bingo, and Other Reports* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 160.

[39] "McGovern, Abdnor Ask U.S. Officials to End Confrontation at Wounded Knee," *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader* April 4, 1973.

framing that gave audiences drama and excitement. Stories about American Indians during the 1960s were often packaged with news about confrontations. The frame of conflict left few instances where national media covered events such as basic arguments for the restoration of treaty-making with Indian Nations. The media often failed to convey how a movement developed or changed over time. In part this was built into the institution of journalism. Paul Good, an ABC reporter in the early 1960s, recalled that competition among networks led to "a policy of crisis reporting, moving on a story as it boiled up, quickly dropping it the moment its supposed public interest had died and racing off to a newer crisis. . . . Our procedure crimped perspective and often substituted the superficial glance for the needed long look."[40] The drive to cover "Big Events" instead of a process clouded the intent of activists. While press coverage was generally sympathetic to the movement, the stories often lacked complexity and nuance. National stories on Red Power first surfaced in 1968 when the *New York Times* ran a book review of Stan Steiner's *The New Indians*.[41] By the 1970s Red Power had become a regular feature in news headlines as Indian activism accelerated around the country.

The American Indian Movement's political thought embraced existing ideas both within and without the American Indian community to formulate direct-action protests to achieve reform in federal policy. Drawing on the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power movement, Indian intellectuals, and other Indian activists, AIM formulated a tactic of confrontational politics as a method of achieving visibility in the national press. Russell Means proved especially adept at seizing headlines. AIM's visibility offered

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[40] Quoted in Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 393.

[41] Charles Poore, "Red Power," *New York Times*, February 29, 1968.

them a method of communicating to a wide audience and inserting their voice in public discourse about federal Indian policy. AIM began to matter in the early 1970s, appealing to a broad base of supporters. Their political thinking fed directly into the culture of confrontation, which likewise gave life to the politics of media. The explosive growth of new media ensured that news of Indian protests spread quickly and could be replicated in other communities throughout the nation. In this context emerged the idea of a march on Washington, D.C., on the eve of the 1972 presidential election, which would propel the American Indian Movement into national headlines and generate public discourse about Native politics.

CHAPER 2
"THE CARAVAN MUST BE OUR FINEST HOUR": IDENTITY, MILITANCY, AND THE POLITICS OF LAW AND ORDER

It is no accident of history or of culture that our newspapers and television present little news, that they overdramatize what they report, and that most citizens have only a foggy knowledge of public affairs though often an intensely felt one. If political acts are to promote social adjustment and are to mean what our inner problems require that they mean, then these acts have to be dramatic in outline and empty of realistic detail.
– Murray Edelman[1]

It is obvious to me that the seizure and continued occupation of the building are nothing more than a form of blackmail by a small group which seek to achieve through violence objectives which are not supported by a majority of reservation Indians.
– Rogers C. B. Morton[2]

The American Indian Movement became the best-known proponent of Indian self-determination, catapulted to the public consciousness through the mass media. News media was crucial to delivering AIM's message to a national audience, but the message was too often lost in the drama surrounding a protest or demonstration. Television crews and newspaper reporters only noticed the activists when they engaged in showmanship and created dramatic images. For example, although the fight for treaty rights had been ongoing for decades, it only became a public issue when the press took notice. Red Power surfaced as a news item at the beginning of 1968, but would not be associated with the American Indian Movement until late 1970.[3] The first mention of Red Power in the national newspapers was in relation to the publication of Stan Steiner's 1968 book *The New Indians*, a series of profiles about American Indian activists. Popular culture and the seizure of Alcatraz Island in 1969 propelled Native activism to the public consciousness.

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1 Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 8-9.

2 "Eviction of Indians by U.S. Delayed by Appeals Court," *New York Times*, 7 November 1972, 36.

3 The phrase "Red Power" first enters national newspapers in "New Work Studies Life of the American Indian Today," *New York Times*, 13 February 1968. The national newspapers first reports on the American Indian Movement in "Young Lutherans Open Convention," *New York Times*, 20 August 1970.

Street crime, riots, and demonstrations fueled new political discussions in the 1960s that eventually came to hurt political progressives. Civil disobedience, Supreme Court decisions like *Escobedo* and *Miranda*, and the perception of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society rewarding participants of urban riots drove anxious voters—of all races—away from liberals and toward conservatives, who offered new ideas for combating violence and disorder. The loss of faith in liberalism protecting an individual's personal security dramatically transformed American politics, destabilizing the Great Society and contributing to President Richard Nixon's victory over Hubert Humphrey. Nearly twelve million voters abandoned the Democratic Party between 1964 and 1968, in part because it failed to address the issue of social chaos.[4]

Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater raised the issue of law and order during the 1964 campaign against Johnson. During the March New Hampshire primary, Goldwater demanded that Johnson provide the "lights of law and order." "Government seeks to be parent, teacher, leader, doctor, and even minister," Goldwater charged. "And its failures are strewn about us in the rubble of rising crime rates."[5] By connecting liberalism to the source of civil unrest, he tied together disorder with liberal ideas as twin threats to American society. As the decade marched onward, the logic gained wider acceptance by the general population. Fueling the unease over the direction of social change was mass media and their depiction of violent crime and political demonstrations. These ideas and attitudes extended into the 1970s.

The major news outlets first discovered the American Indian Movement in 1970,

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[4] Michael Flamm, *Law and Order: Street Crime, Civil Unrest, and the Crisis of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 2-3.

[5] Quoted in Flamm, *Law and Order*, 33.

two years after its founding in Minneapolis. CBS first reported on AIM's police patrols in June, which was their attempt to curb police harassment by monitoring and videotaping the actions of law enforcement. As AIM began national campaigns, they staged larger protests and developed relationships with reporters. Members of AIM invited reporters to their Thanksgiving Day protest in 1970, where they buried Plymouth Rock in sand and seized the *Mayflower II* replica. Jim Hale with ABC and John Chancellor of NBC were present during the Thanksgiving protest, as was a reporter with the *New York Times*. AIM hoped to present these symbols as oppressive and colonial, thus challenging Americans to consider what they were celebrating.[6] Throughout the summer and fall of the following year, a scattering of news stories followed AIM's protest activities, but the media never fully explored the reasons or message of this new form of Indian dissent. What the press chose to cover they framed as black-and-white issues of law versus lawlessness and Indian versus the government.

An earlier event at the Bureau of Indian Affairs foreshadowed events to come a year later. As the National Tribal Chairmen's Association (NCTA) was meeting with government officials in September 1971, Russell Means led members of the American Indian Movement and National Indian Youth Council in a demonstration at the BIA. The activists did not target Commissioner of Indian Affairs Louis Bruce (Mohawk) because they felt he was working for the benefit of Indian tribes. Instead, they attempted to place the Deputy Commissioner of Indian Affairs, John O. Crow, under a citizen's arrest,

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[6] "Thanksgiving / Indian Protest," *Evening News*, ABC, 26 November 1970, Vanderbilt Television Archive, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee (hereafter Vanderbilt Television Archive); "Plymouth Burial," *Evening News*, NBC, 26 November 1970, Vanderbilt Television Archive; "Mourning Indians Dump Sand on Plymouth Rock," *New York Times*, 27 November 1970, 26; Monica Lynnette Butler, "Check Your Local Listings: Indigenous Representation in Television" (Ph.D. diss., Arizona State University, 2008), 220-221.

accusing him of impeding BIA reforms. On orders from the Interior Department, guards moved in to arrest the activists and clear out the building.[7] Commissioner Bruce urged that the charges brought against the activists be dropped. Means recalled that "even if we hadn't dragged John O. Crow out of his office, we accomplished what we had wanted: we called attention to his hidden agenda."[8] Despite Means' claim, only CBS covered the event on national television while the *New York Times,* the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Chicago Tribune* each ran a single story on the incident.[9]

The idea for another demonstration at the Bureau of Indian Affairs emerged in August 1972 at a Sun Dance on Leonard Crow Dog's property. Robert Burnette, a former chairman of the Rosebud Reservation, presented an idea to those in attendance of a march on Washington, D.C., to draw attention to treaty rights and issues facing Native American communities. The idea was well received and several Indian organizations pledged support. Fifty representatives from various organizations met at the end of September at the New Albany Hotel in Denver to discuss plans for the march. The group voted on two names to call the caravan, the Trail of Broken Treaties and the Pan American Native Quest for Justice. The participants formed eleven committees to manage publicity and tasks related to the Trail.

The idea took shape by the end of the two-day meeting in Denver. Several caravans would travel from west to east across the United States to bring national

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7 "Indians Raid U.S. Bureau," *Chicago Tribune*, 23 September 1971, A5; "Indian Militants Fight Police in Bureau Lobby," *Los Angeles Times*, 23 September 1971, A4; "24 Indians Seized in Capital Clash," *New York Times*, 23 September 1971, 49.

8 Russell Means, *Where White Men Fear to Tread: The Autobiography of Russell Means* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 192.

9 Butler, "Check Your Local Listings," 222. "Indians Raid U.S. Bureau; Seize 21," *Chicago Tribune*, 23 September 1971, A5; "Indian Militants Fight Police in Bureau Lobby," *Los Angeles Times*, 23 September 1971, A4; "24 Indians Seized in Capital Clash," *New York Times*, 23 September 1971, 49; "26 Indians Arrested in D.C. Protest," *Washington Post*, 23 September 1971, B1.

attention to treaty rights. The caravans originated from Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles and would stop at Indian communities along the way to gather supporters, eventually converging on Washington, D.C., in the last week of the 1972 presidential election. To protect their image, the organizers took precautions to ensure nobody who would "cause civil disorder, block traffic, burn flags, destroy property, or shout obscenities in the street" would be included in the Trail. "Today, Indian identity is defined and refined by a quality and a special degree of suffering," explained Robert Burnette in a press release. "The Caravan must be our finest hour."[10] Committees were formed to begin organizing supporters across the country. Burnette went to New York, while Ho-Chunk Reuben Snake led the Midwest organizing effort and Assiniboine Hank Adams, who was active in the Pacific Northwest regarding fishing rights, worked on the West coast.[11] The American Indian Movement returned to Minneapolis to begin organizing their effort.

The caravans started out for their destinations a week after the Denver conference. More than a dozen organizations signed on to the Trail, either participating in the caravan or endorsing its goals, including the American Indian Movement, the National Indian Brotherhood of Canada, the National Indian Youth Council, the Native American Rights Fund, the American Indian Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, the United Native Americans, the Native American Women's Action Council, and the Coalition of Indian Controlled School Boards.[12] The caravan reached Minneapolis by the end of October

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[10] Quoted in Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: The New Press, 1994), 143.

[11] Akim Reinhardt, *Ruling Pine Ridge: Oglala Lakota Politics from the IRA to Wounded Knee* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2008), 147; Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*, 142-144; Vine Deloria Jr., *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties: An Indian Declaration of Independence* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994 [1974]), 46-47; Means, *Where White Men Fear to Tread*, 223-230.

[12] Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*, 143.

where they created the "Twenty Points Position Paper" that spoke against the "quasi-protectorate status" of Indian Nations. Hank Adams crafted most of the document and voiced the Trail's ideology and goals, which included a demand for the federal government to return to treaty-making with Indian Nations, the creation of a treaty commission to review treaty violations and appropriate compensation, and a call to conduct federal Indian policy in the context of treaty relations. The activists planned to present these ideas to Richard Nixon and George McGovern, hoping to force Indian issues to the front of public discourse.[13]

Throughout the caravan's march to Washington, D.C., the national media remained remarkably silent. The *New York Times* and *Washington Post* each ran only one story about the Trail before October 31. What they reported was unremarkable, straightforward, and brief. Each story provided basic facts about the Trail but gave no context to the reasons for the demonstration. The *New York Times* first picked up the story on October 5 and printed a mere paragraph deep in the paper quoting Vernon Bellecourt that the Trail plans to "remind elected officials of the common mistreatment and neglect of the American Indian," but never explained the context in which the remark is made.[14] The *Washington Post* was likewise vague in its explanation of the Trail, explaining to its readers that the protest targeted proposed funding cuts without specifying what effect or influence such cuts would have on American Indians.[15]

The event-oriented, shallow reporting that characterized early coverage of the

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[13] "The 20-Points Position Paper," *Legislative Review* 2 (November 1972): 57-64; Reinhardt, *Ruling Pine Ridge*, 148; Deloria, *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties*, 65-66.

[14] "Indians to Drive to Capital," *New York Times*, 5 October 1972, 95. Full texts of the newspaper articles related to the Trail of Broken Treaties can be found at *Framing Red Power*, <http://segonku.unl.edu/~jheppler/frp/>.

[15] "300 Indians Protest Proposed Fund Cuts," *Washington Post*, 19 October 1972, A8.

Trail gave way to more detail in two October 31 stories as early Trail marchers started arriving in the capital city. The *Washington Post* reported on the purpose of the Trail and that the activists were "scheduled to call for fulfillment of all U.S. treaty obligations with Indian tribes and for protection of Indian rights to water, minerals and land." In commenting on the rise of Indian protests since 1969, the *Washington Post* referred to the activity as "Indian activism" rather than "militancy."[16] The *New York Times*, the only other national newspaper to cover the event, also carried a balanced appraisal of the marchers.[17] In the early stages of the Trail the press constructed the event around the purpose of the caravan and the key leaders involved in its planning. Central to the narratives of the two newspaper reports on the Trail is Robert Burnette, whom the newspapers identified as the co-chairman of the Trail caravan. Both news stories indicated the centrality of treaty obligations to the Trail and emphasized complaints against the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Thus, the press attempted to understand the reason for the Trail, although the depth of analysis remained shallow. No news articles hinted at a possibility of violence.

The Trail caravan faced two problems when they began arriving in Washington. First, with the end of the presidential campaign approaching, Nixon and McGovern were out of town shoring up votes in battleground states. The demonstrators would be unable to present their Twenty Points directly to the candidates. Second, as the caravan began arriving in Washington, D.C., on the first of November, they found their lodging arrangements had fallen apart. Several area churches withdrew their invitation for lodging. Many Trail members blamed the government for the lack of adequate housing,

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[16] "Indians Converging on D.C. For Rallies," *Washington Post*, 31 October 1972, C1.
[17] "Indians to Begin Capital Protests," *New York Times*, 31 October 1972, 31.

although part of the blame rests with Trail planners who failed to anticipate the logistics required for the caravan. The National Park Service rejected their plan to hold religious ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery for Frank Young Horse (Lakota) and Ira Hayes (Pima). The Army claimed such an event violated their policy banning groups to engage in "partisan activities" at Arlington.[18] By the end of the first day, the activists were frustrated and tired. They shuffled into the St. Stephen's Episcopal Church and the People's Involvement Corporation Shelter for the night.[19]

Trail activists gathered at the Bureau of Indian Affairs the next morning to discuss their plans with Commissioner Bruce. Assistant Interior Secretary Harrison Loesch greeted the activists and permitted them to stay in the BIA auditorium while he, Bruce, and Trail leaders discussed possible housing arrangements. The activists were told they could stay in the Department of Interior building across the street from the BIA. Immediately, however, things began to break down. Upon their arrival at the building, the marchers found the doors to the building locked. Security at Interior was unaware of Loesch's agreement and never unlocked the doors. Feeling they had been double-crossed and tricked into leaving the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the marchers returned to the BIA building. Furthermore, General Services Administration (GSA) guards began ushering caravan members from the building. Trail members unaware of the planned move over to the Interior building, along with those returning to the BIA from Interior, refused to leave and were met with force. Suspicions, tension, and paranoia on both sides launched the occupation. The guards were expelled from the building and the activists barricaded

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[18] "Indians Refused Permission to Use Arlington Cemetery for Services," *Washington Post*, 2 November 1972, B1.

[19] Deloria, *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties*, 48-53.

themselves inside.[20]

The press arrived shortly after the Trail members began blocking off doors and windows to prevent another attempted police eviction. The press reframed the event away from the purpose of the Trail and its key organizers and instead now focused on the American Indian Movement and damage to the building. Leslie Stahl of CBS failed to interview any caravan members but reported on damage to the building. ABC's Bill Matney managed to cover the frustrations of the demonstrators. At a press conference aired by ABC, Loesch was pressured by the media to address the Twenty Points and a specific charge that the government owed Indians money, which Loesch dismissed; he was immediately met with ridicule and profanities from Indian members in the audience. At one point during the conference, Martha Grass (Cherokee) approached the microphone and explained: "We want someone, one of *our* kind, here and doing our thing for us. Why the *hell* do we have to put up with some 'I don't know' people?"[21] Remarkably, none of the national newspapers covered the Loesch press conference.

As the occupation of the Bureau entered its second day, the activists ignored a court order requiring they leave the building or face eviction by police. The order renewed fears within the building and fueled a new wave of barricades and weapons as activists began assembling molotov cocktails.[22] A *Washington Post* headline declared that "Another 'Wounded Knee' Was Feared Friday Night," and reported on activists arming themselves "with clubs, knives, and a few bows and arrows and put on (lipstick) war

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[20] Reinhardt, *Ruling Pine Ridge*, 149; Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*, 153-157.

[21] "Indian Protest," *Evening News*, CBS, 2 November 1972, Vanderbilt Television Archive; "Indian Protest," *Evening News*, ABC, 2 November 1972, Vanderbilt Television Archive.

[22] "Indians Continue Occupation of BIA," *Washington Post*, 4 November 1972, A1; "Indians in Capital Defy a Court Order," *New York Times*, 4 November 1972, 42.

paint."[23] Now calling the building the "Native American Embassy"—an assertion of the sovereignty they sought—the activists stated their demands to federal reform. AIM consistently referred back to issues of sovereignty and treaty rights when the press offered their voice in news stories. For their part, however, the press generally hesitated investigating claims to Indian sovereignty as the reporting remained fixated on federal property (the BIA building) and the government response. Newspapers focused on the building to a greater degree than television, which occasionally pressured government officials to respond to the Twenty Points.[24] Television's coverage, however, does not suggest their reports were substantially more thorough than newspapers. Often reports on the BIA occupation were placed in between news segments as matter-of-fact statements.[25] Thus, the focus on the drama encouraged little discussion of the issues the Trail sought to raise.

In one of the few editorials published about the protest, the *Washington Post* seemed to understand that the press was missing the point of the Trail. The protest "has become a focus of media attention and public dispute, while the purpose for which the Indians came to town is largely ignored." The editorial briefly recounts a history of Indian-white relations and "widely and often brutally" abrogated treaties. The paper criticizes termination established under President Dwight Eisenhower. Then, with "exceptional enlightenment" President Nixon proposed self-determination, but the Trail wants to go further than Nixon and restore treaty-making and sovereign Indian status.

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[23] "Another 'Wounded Knee' Was Feared Friday Night," *Washington Post*, 5 November 1972, A10.

[24] For example, "Indian Protest," *Evening News*, NBC, 21 November 1972, Vanderbilt Television Archive.

[25] Several news clips about the occupation run only twenty or thirty seconds long. See, for example, "Indian Protest," *Evening News*, NBC, 2 November 1972, Vanderbilt Television Archive; "Indian Protest," *Evening News*, CBS, 3 November 1972, Vanderbilt Television Archive; "Indian Protest," *Evening News*, ABC, 6 November 1972, Vanderbilt Television Archive; "Indian Protest," *Evening News*, CBS, 10 November 1972, Vanderbilt Television News Archive.

While applauding Nixon's platform, the editors find it "inconceivable" that the President or Congress restore treaty-making with Indian Nations. In the editorial's opinion, Nixon already introduced a "more positive federal-Indian relationship" and demonstrated himself as open to Indian suggestions. The protest would be better served, according to the editorial, at aiming their frustrations at "the slow-moving and still overly paternalistic Congress." The editorial ends on a hopeful note, concluding that the protest should not "delay or sidetract the hopeful experiment."[26] Government's role was portrayed not as one that caused problems but rather as a solution to Indian disputes.

The press continued the theme of the government as a neutral and benevolent actor throughout the occupation. A notable example was a lengthy story run in the *Washington Post* about Harrison Loesch, which portrayed the Assistant Interior Secretary as a victim of bureacracy and misinformation. In answering the call by AIM for Loesch to resign, he cited his accomplishments, including a reclamation project in Arizona, which he claimed benefited eleven tribes, and the start of the Indian Business Development program that provided grants to Indian entrepreneurs. Part of the reason for drawing the ire of AIM was his admission on the Dick Cavett show upon his appointment that he knew nothing about the "Indian problem." The article cites repeatedly programs and accomplishments under Loesch's regime and discusses his career at length. Hank Adams and Navajo tribal president Peter MacDonald offered the other side of the story, but both only received a fraction of the space devoted to Loesch. More importantly, the newspapers never ran a similar expose on the Trail of Broken Treaties or the American

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[26] "Behind the Indian Protest," *Washington Post*, 7 November 1972, A18. Reader C. E. Harris penned a letter-to-the-editor in response to the *Washington Post*'s "inconceivable" remark explaining that "Indians are a sovereign nation and were long before the white man came to this country." See "Behind the Indian Protest," *Washington Post*, 15 November 1972, A15.

Indian Movement. Rather than investigate AIM's claim that Loesch blocked reform, the paper presents Loesch as key to the economic development of reservations—far from the roadblock AIM insisted upon.[27]

If newspapers were distracted by the drama, television at least offered a platform that AIM wanted to present an unvarnished message to television audiences. Press conferences by AIM offered the mix of drama the television media sought and the information AIM wanted to communicate to the public. For instance, Dennis Banks spoke on the issues of what he saw as a racist curriculum in public schools and a U.S. policy of fighting Vietnam to uphold Western colonialism. Banks was aware of the street theater he was performing. "We appealed to the media to let the country know the reasons for the takeover and what our demands were," he recalled. "And we dressed up for the occasion."[28] Banks also told reporters, in an attempt to dissuade another forced expulsion by police, "I invite you all to stay and witness the atrocities that are about to happen." The occupiers took the threat of police eviction seriously and began fashioning weapons out of whatever was available. Vernon Bellecourt declared to the press: "We have now declared war on the United States of America."[29] Support for the activists started coming in from well-known figures in the country. Stokley Carmichael and the Black Panther Party offered their support, as did the fundamentalist preacher Carl McIntire. New York Representative Shirley Chisholm and presidential candidate Dr. Benjamin Spock also supported AIM's cause.[30]

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[27] "BIA's Loesch: A Bureaucrat Unafraid to Speak Out," *Washington Post*, 22 November 1972, C1.

[28] Dennis Banks, *Ojibwa Warrior: Dennis Banks and the Rise of the American Indian Movement*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 137.

[29] Banks and Bellecourt quotations in Deloria, *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties*, 19.

[30] "Officials, Indians Parley on Protest," *Washington Post*, 5 November 1972, A1; Deloria, *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties*, 18-19; Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*, 158.

The Trail of Broken Treaties was the start of a close relationship between AIM and the press that began to decline during the occupation of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1973.[31] However, the activists and the public learned important lessons from the occupation. The activists began to understand that one tactic of the government was to deny the legitimacy of the demonstration. Government officials were just as likely to use the press to make their point as AIM was. For their part, the public saw that Indians were not "vanishing" but rather more visible than ever. They would fight for treaty rights and sovereignty by force if necessary.

One lesson lost for both Native activists and non-Native publics was the poor choice of confrontation and militancy as an agenda-setting tool. The media's emphasis on militancy ignored the entire purpose of the Trail and the Twenty Points. Thus, the politics of confrontation only added to the American Indian Movement's problems of misconstrued representation in the media. Furthermore, AIM had tarnished its image among the Native and non-Native public and now had to deal with the unintended consequence. As the occupation of Wounded Knee would later prove, the public had little patience for confrontations after having already gone through a decade of civil unrest in the 1960s.[32]

Compounding AIM's image problems was the lack of support from other Indian leaders. Key planners in the Trail were dismayed by AIM's tactics. Hank Adams

[31] For analyses of the press coverage at Wounded Knee, see Michelle D. Dishong, "*New York Times* Coverage of the Occupation of Wounded Knee, South Dakota" (M.A. thesis, Washington State University, 1996); Judith Anola Vick, "The Press and Wounded Knee, 1973: An Analysis of the Coverage of the Occupation by Selected Newspapers and Magazines" (M.A. thesis, University of Minnesota, 1977); Natalie P. Wells, "Television News Coverage of the American Indian Occupation of Wounded Knee, South Dakota: An Analysis of Network Newscasts, February-May, 1973" (M.A. thesis, San Francisco State University, 1982).

[32] Terri Schultz, "Bamboozle Me Not at Wounded Knee: The Making of a Media Event That Had Everything But the Truth," *Harper's* (June 1973), 46-56.

returned to the Pacific Northwest feeling that AIM blew the chance for real, aggressive policy reform.[33] Robert Burnette also criticized AIM for shifting the Trail away from a peaceful demonstration to a violent confrontation. AIM leaders "who had taken over Commissioner Bruce's plush office . . . were lounging around like Napoleon and his marshals," Burnette recalled.[34] Another activist claimed all AIM "wanted was publicity and money. They sold the Indians out, so we're leaving."[35] Both the National Congress of American Indians and National Indian Youth Council condemned AIM's destruction to the building.[36] Tribal leaders also condemned the occupation, with one tribal president describing AIM as "a small handful of self-appointed revolutionaries" who "[must have] been funded by do-gooders and subversive elements."[37] To the press, public, and some influential Indian leaders, the Trail was just an attack on the establishment rather than a legitimate plan for federal Indian reform. For AIM's part, publicity was certainly a tool for them to gain greater visibility. The organization was yet a young one looking to prove itself as a legitimate voice that could speak for all indigenous people. As their first nationally publicized protest, AIM wanted to leave a favorable impression on the Native and non-Native public.

The media portrayed AIM via specific images or stereotypes. First, AIM was framed as confrontational and violent. News focused on weaponry or contentious quotations that emphasized the threat of violence. Reports surfaced that the BIA building was possibly wired with explosives, although it appears this was never

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[33] Charles Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 143.
[34] Robert Burnette and John Koster, *The Road to Wounded Knee* (New York: Bantam Books, 1974), 207.
[35] Quoted in Burnette and Koster, *The Road to Wounded Knee*, 215.
[36] Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*, 153-162,
[37] "Amnesty Denied to Indians," *Washington Post*, 10 November 1972, A1.

the case. Also, AIM was framed around ceremonies, Indian warriors, and other images that tended to reinforce stereotypes rather than what AIM wanted to emphasize. Treaty rights were peripheral to the media's reporting on the BIA. News media often presented the event as a conflict between the American Indian Movement and the government rather than a diverse collection of Indian organizations seeking to address problems at the federal and local level.[38]

While the press often adopted certain frames with which to understand and narrate the occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the roots of a cult of celebrity surrounding Russell Means and Dennis Banks emerged as well. Increasingly, the news media turned to Banks or Means for their news rather than Burnette or a handful of other organizers.[39] The elevation of leaders to celebrity status reflects media culture's tendency to personalize news stories to attract audiences, often at the expense of reducing complexity. Packaging news around violence, drama, and personalized conflicts are used to maximize audience size and figure prominently into media's coverage of significant events.[40]

Further influencing the coverage of the Bureau of Indian Affairs was the systematic structure of journalism. Journalistic adherence to notions of balance and impartiality are meant to let the subjects of news speak for themselves, while providing balance on the other side to prevent taking a side. The duality structure of impartiality often leads the media to present social and political conflicts between two—and often *only* two—perspectives. The selection or omission of voices, political actors, and issues

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[38] Jeremy Busacca, "Seeing Self-Determination: Framing, the American Indian Movement, and American Indian Media" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate University, 2007), 146-147.

[39] Burnette disappears from media coverage once the occupation begins on November 2 and the press elevates Banks and Means into positions of spokesmen for the Trail.

[40] Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 146-153.

highlights the way media sympathized or criticized the American Indian Movement and established boundaries of discourse and public meaning to the event.[41]

The occupation entered its final day on November 7 when the White House promised to formally address the Twenty Points within thirty days. Additionally, the administration guaranteed there would be no arrests or charges related to the occupation of the building and offered the Trail $66,000 in "travel money" for their trek out of the capital city. The news narrative, however, was far from complete. While television coverage virtually ended as the last of the activists left the city, newspapers continued extensive and detailed coverage of the occupation's aftermath. If the press had already begun to cast AIM as violent and angry, reports on the aftermath accelerated such an image.

As the marchers began making their way out of town, newspaper reports surfaced that AIM had stolen Bureau of Indian Affairs documents from the building and trucked them out of the city. The documents, Dennis Banks claimed, contained "scandalous if not criminal" evidence of the abuse of Indian land on the part of western senators. The documents, Russell Means told reporters, showed evidence of "ripping off Indian land, water, fishing, agriculture, and mineral rights."[42] The press immediately turned to the damage the building suffered. In addition to the documents, news reports highlighted damage or theft of paintings, artifacts, and the destruction of furniture and office equipment.[43] The *New York Times* reported on November 10 that the Trail members

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[41] Edward P. Morgan, "The Good, the Bad, and the Forgotten: Media Culture and Public Memory of the Civil Rights Movement," in *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory*, eds. Renee C. Romano and Leigh Raiford (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 147-148.

[42] "Indians Seize Files as Some Go Home," *Washington Post*, 8 November 1972, B1.

[43] "Indians Take Documents as They Leave U.S. Building," *New York Times*, 9 November 1972, 52; "Indians Leave Building With Files, Artifacts," *Los Angeles Times*, 9 November 1972, A7.

"wrecked nearly every piece of furniture and office equipment" and painted graffiti on the walls.[44] The Interior Department estimated $1.98 million in damage to the building, which included the cost of repairing the structure, replacing office equipment, lost or damaged artwork, and stolen records.[45]

As news about the damage continued to filter out, the White House announced that their agreement to not prosecute Indians for the occupation did not extend to the damage done to the BIA. The next day, on November 11, the government announced a new estimate on the damage, placing the toll at $2.28 million and claimed the damage committed was the most extensive ever perpetrated by U.S. citizens to a federal building. The cost of the occupation, government spokespersons claimed, was only surpassed by the burning of Washington, D.C., by the British in 1814 and the destruction of federal buildings in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.[46]

The public criticized both the government and the caravan members for the damage the BIA building suffered. Members of the National Tribal Chairmen's Association (NTCA) toured the building on November 9 and called on the White House to prosecute the participants. The president of NTCA, Webster Two Hawk, declared that AIM "destroyed records so vital to our people—real estate, enrollments, leases—that it will take years to recover."[47] Two Hawk also accused the government of "bungling" the occupation by allowing the demonstrators to "dig in." Robert Him, chairman of the Yakama Nation, asked the government to "not stand for this criminal action."[48]

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44 "Indians Ripped Up Federal Building," *New York Times*, 10 November 1972, 17.
45 "Damage to Capital Building by Indians Put at $1.98 Million," *Washington Post*, 10 November 1972, 2.
46 "Damage to BIA Third Heaviest Ever in U.S.," *Washington Post*, 11 November 1972, A4.
47 "Indians to Be Libel for Damage," *Los Angeles Times*, 10 November 1972, A5.
48 Two Hawk and Him quotations in "Indians Take Documents as They Leave U.S. Building," *New York Times*, 10 November 1972, 17. See also "Sioux Leader Outraged," *Washington Post*, 18 November

Newspaper reactions likewise ran hostile reports on the damage to the building. The *Chicago Tribune* ran a story detailing the "extensive criminal records" of the leaders of the occupation. The newspaper identified Dennis Banks and brothers Clyde and Vernon Bellecourt as the principle leaders of the American Indian Movement, and wrote that they all had served time in Minnesota penitentiaries for a "variety of felony offenses including burglary, aggravated assault, and armed robbery." The report continued by detailing each man's crimes, driving the point that AIM had a history of violence in its highest echelons of leadership.[49]

In an editorial entitled "Government Mishandled Indian Militants," columnist Nick Thimmesch expressed outraged at the "criminal actions of the militant Indians" and accused the Nixon administration of "permissiveness" in committing several errors in dealing with the caravan. Thimmesch charged that the administration knew the "caravan was more interested in televised confrontation than peaceful petition." The administration, he claimed, had "paid off" its mistake with the $66,000 given to the caravan members to leave Washington, but "some officials should be red-faced over their mistakes with the redskins."[50]

Another editorial appearing in the *Los Angeles Times* by James Officer, a professor of anthropology at the University of Arizona, also found plenty to criticize. He wondered if "government officials [would] have stood aside and permitted a group of unhappy farmers to dismantle the Department of Agriculture . . . The answer is, probably

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1972, A23.

[49] "Led Building Takeover: Criminal Records of 3 Indian Leaders Told," *Chicago Tribune*, 13 November 1972, 3.

[50] Nick Thimmesch, "Government Mishandled Indian Militants," *Chicago Tribune*, 19 November 1972, A5.

not." Officer found the original intentions of the caravan honorable, but the problem stemmed from "some protest leaders . . . [who] thought that a bit of mayhem would bring added attention to their cause." The editorial highlighted the criminal past of the "three principle leaders" and claimed reservation-residing Indians would suffer because of the "destruction and theft of records on which many important decisions depend." Officer saw the possibility of federal support for Indian programs declining because of the occupation, which he finds a tragic outcome because of the Nixon administration's positive steps to improve the lives of American Indians.[51]

As BIA employees began returning to work on December 6, Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton fired Loesch, Commissioner Bruce, and Deputy BIA Commissioner John O. Crow.[52] By the beginning of December, however, news interest in the Bureau of Indian Affairs began to dwindle. A few stories followed the theft of the documents, reporting that Hank Adams had arranged to return the documents as swiftly as possible, only to find himself and others arrested by the Federal Bureau of Investigation on the basis of the stolen documents several months later.[53]

By February 1973, even before the occupation of Wounded Knee, the press had altogether moved on from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. With the drama gone and threat of violence no longer existing, the press found little interesting about the BIA. The demands for treaty rights remained unexplored by the press. What had mattered—the confrontational tactics, the boisterous leaders, the possibility of bloodshed—disappeared,

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[51] James E. Officer, "Sacking of Indian Bureau – a 20-Year Setback?," *Los Angeles Times*, 24 November 1972, B7.

[52] "Employees of BIA To Resume Work," *Washington Post*, 4 December 1972, C1; "Three Aides Fired at Indian Bureau," *Chicago Tribune*, 3 December 1972, 7.

[53] "An Indian Leader Pledges Return of U.S. Property," *New York Times*, 12 January 1973, 36; "Columnist's aide arrested," *Chicago Tribune*, 2 February 1973, A10.

and the BIA could no longer hold the interest of journalists.

The centrality of law and order in American politics influenced the media's narrative about the occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the expectation that government officials would respond to the protest sternly. However, public discourse about the occupation was not limited to social chaos. Over the course of the Trail and its aftermath, discourse about American Indian political activity, tribal government, and federal Indian policy emerged as important dynamics for understanding the American Indian Movement and the Trail. Media drove a set of discussions framed around American Indian political issues that injected Native voice into public discussions while also shaping the Trail around the American Indian Movement, projecting the leaders as spokesmen for the demonstration and, thus, serving as the key player in Red Power.

CHAPTER 3
MEDIA AND THE DISCOURSE OF INDIAN POLITICS

For the real environment is altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting for direct acquaintance. We are not equipped to deal with so much subtlety, so much variety, so many permutations and combinations . . . [W]e have to reconstruct it on a simpler model before we can manage with it.
—Walter Lippmann[1]

In December 1972 the Senate Subcommittee on Indian Affairs held hearings on the White House's response to the occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Although meant to investigate the Nixon administration's role in resolving the occupation, the hearing highlighted the broader role of the BIA and its relationship with American Indians. Three trends emerged in the media's reporting that demonstrated the activists had successfully utilized media coverage in their protest. First, throughout the seven-day occupation and subsequent fallout, the media focused on the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the criticism the activists leveled against it. Second, the media redefined the nature of Indian activism and Red Power. And the media provide a general reflection on government's purposes in Indian affairs and criticisms of Nixon's Indian policy. The media, in both news reports and editorials, became forums about Indian politics. Media coverage of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and its relationship with American Indians, Nixon's Indian policy, and the nature of Red Power political activity served as key frameworks for the media to understand and narrate the context surrounding the BIA occupation.

Over the course of the late twentieth century, American media began confronting the changing definitions of power, politics, and identity. Postwar journalism confronted the task of reporting racial discord and ethnic activism around the nation, a task critics

[1] Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922), 16.

seized as evidence of media bias or outright racism. The media's inadequate reporting of racial issues in the 1960s faced criticism from the Kerner Commission, chaired by Illinois Governor Otto Kerner, Jr., appointed in 1967 by President Lyndon Johnson to investigate the race riots in Detroit, Newark, and elsewhere in the country. In their *Report of the National Advisory Committee on Civil Disorders*, the commission concluded that news media

> have failed to analyze and report adequately on racial problems in the United States and . . . to meet the Negro's legitimate expectations in journalism. . . . The media report and write from the standpoint of a white man's world. The ills of the ghetto, the difficulties of life there, the Negro's burning sense of grievance are seldom conveyed. Slights and indignities are part of the Negro's daily life, and many of them come from what he now calls "the white press"—a press that repeatedly, if unconsciously, reflects the biases, the paternalism, the indifference of white America.[2]

The report advised the press to cover race relations in a broader context, hire more African American journalists, and integrate African American news into all sections of newspapers.

While the Kerner Commission dealt exclusively with African American media coverage, the report became a benchmark to measure press coverage of other minorities, including American Indians. James Kuehn, a news executive for the South Dakota newspaper *The Rapid City Journal*, remarked that the paper's employees did not understand Native "plight or problems." In their study of the American Indian press, James E. Murphy and Sharon M. Murphy note the commission's criticism "could have easily been applied to the media treatment of Indians." The press, they write, were

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[2] National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1968), 366.

"crisis-activated and did little to further the ongoing story of Indian life and needs."[3]

As the press began confronting criticism over its coverage of racial issues, it also faced an introspective on the notion of objectivity, which had guided the values and practice of journalism since the turn of the century. As Richard Kaplan explains, the press was once "the organ of the partisan political community," but in the early twentieth century it "broke its historical ties with the Republicans and Democrats" and "elaborated a new occupational ethic and reconstructed their political role in the public arena." The press articulated new ideals to "impartiality and public service," to "represent only the general public," and represented, "ideally, a whole range of political voices."[4] Media critics in the 1960s, according to historian Michael Schudson, lambasted objectivity as reproducing "a vision of social reality which refused to examine the basic structures of power and privilege. It was not just incomplete . . . it was distorted. It represented collusion with institutions whose legitimacy was in dispute."[5] Critics targeted assumptions about society held by journalists, the emphasis on events rather than processes, and a tendency to rely on the viewpoints of establishment figures.

Mass media helped to shape the terms and discussions of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and informing the non-Indian public about the issues surrounding the colonial relationship between the federal government and Native Americans.[6] Reporting on the purpose of the Trail and the Twenty Points paper, the *Washington Post* remarked that the

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[3] James Murphy and Sharon Murphy, *Let My People Know: American Indian Journalism, 1828-1978* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 14, 7.

[4] Richard L. Kaplan, *Politics and the American Press: The Rise of Objectivity, 1865-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2.

[5] Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 160.

[6] Akim D Reinhardt, *Ruling Pine Ridge: Oglala Lakota Politics from the IRA to Wounded Knee* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2007), 19-41.

key significance of the march was the reestablishment of treaty-making with Indian nations. Treaty relations ended in 1871, the article continued, and Congress "assumed a kind of colonialist supervision over Indian matters." "The treaties amounted to agreements between sovereign Indian nations and the Washington authorities," the paper continued, and "the militants seem bent on establishing that kind of relationship again."[7] The *Post* captured the core reasoning behind the march on Washington and the underlying reasons for the frustrations that fueled Red Power political ideas, although it made little attempt to connect those ideas to a broader context of American Indian politics.

The public discussions about the BIA were augmented by general criticism from conservative and liberal columnists and newspapers over the government's handling of the events or the policies that they felt led to the occupation. Conservative columnist Nick Thimmesch accused the Nixon administration of "mishandling" the activists and allowing the destruction of federal property "in the name of free speech and assembly, and during a week in which President Nixon spoke firmly of the end of 'an era of permissiveness.'" Despite his criticisms, Thimmesch praised Nixon for surpassing "previous administrations in taking actions on behalf of Indians" and found the occupation a threat to legislation that "lies fallow" in Congress.[8]

The "permissiveness" of the Nixon administration was also the focus of columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak in the *Washington Post*. The columnists blamed the White House for getting in the way of resolving the conflict, writing that

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[7] "Protest by Indians Sought an End to Paternalism," *Washington Post*, 9 November 1972, C1.

[8] Nick Thimmesch, "Government Mishandled Indian Militants," *Chicago Tribune*, 19 November 1972, A5.

officials in the Interior Department "recognized the top three Indian leaders as violence-prone hoodlums with no claims to legitimacy" and who wanted them evicted immediately from the building. The White House began "protracted legal proceedings," the column continued, which served to thwart any attempts to remove the activists from the building. The column accused the President of political pandering, suggesting that by the White House entering negotiations "he [Nixon] preferred appeasement to firmness the day before the election."[9] The choice of political expediency over direct action tarnished the image of the administration in its dealings with American Indian militants and in general.

Right or wrong, politics played a role in the White House's timid response to the occupation. Vice President Spiro Agnew, who was appointed to the National Council on Indian Opportunity by President Nixon, wrote to the President advising him that he should "not allow the progressive policies of your administration with regard to Indian matters to be submerged by the unlawful activities of a few urban militants who are not representative of the Indian community." Although Agnew wanted to avoid looking "McGovernish"—as being "soft" in their response to the activists—he felt that the best response would be a negotiation to the standoff rather than a forceful eviction.[10] Despite the attacks from the political left and right, the administration followed its course to resolve the issue. Nixon remained silent on the issue in the press, never once speaking to a newspaper or television network about the occupation.

The confrontational demands alienated the Nixon White House, who had proved to be sympathetic to American Indian demands. A successful case of Native activism

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[9] Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "The Nixon Permissiveness," *Washington Post*, 27 November 1972, A23.

[10] Agnew quoted in Joan Hoff, *Nixon Reconsidered* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 29.

found its resolution under the Nixon administration when Blue Lake was returned to the Taos Pueblo. In 1906, the U.S. appropriated Blue Lake and made it part of the Carson National Forest. The government offered compensation for the sacred site to the Taos in 1926, which the tribe refused to take. They demanded the return of Blue Lake instead. The offer was refused, and not until 1951 did the Taos file a complaint to the Claims Commission for title to the lake. The Claims Commission supported the claim of the Taos, arguing that the U.S. took the lake from its rightful owners. Legislation to return the like died in Congress in March 1966, but House Bill 3306 was introduced two years later. The House bill died in the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Subcommittee. A third bill, Public Law 91-550, entered Congress in 1969, in the aftermath of the occupation at Alcatraz Island, and was signed by President Nixon in December 1970. The gradual process of reform through traditional avenues proved to be more successful than the demands of the American Indian Movement.[11]

To some observers the lack of reform did not belong with the activists, but with the government's lack of comprehension. Washington lawyer Bobbie Greene Kilberg, who would later serve as associate counsel to President Gerald Ford and became a liberal Republican representative from Virginia, laid the blame on Congress for the lack of reform in Indian politics. Commenting on the House investigation launched in early December, she asserted that the first question that should be asked is: "Why can a President introduce a new, progressive approach to governmental Indian policy in 1970

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[11] R. C. Gordon-McCutchan, *The Taos Indians and the Battle for Blue Lake* (Santa Fe: Red Crane Books, 1991); "The Return of Blue Lake to the Taos Pueblo," in *Red Power: The American Indians' Fight for Freedom*, eds. Alvin M. Josephy, Joane Nagel, and Troy R. Johnson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 147-149.

and still have a Congress ignoring its most important legislative components in 1972?"[12] Kilberg lambasted Congress for failing to bring self-determination legislation to the House or Senate floor two years after Nixon's speech advocating Indian self-determination. The threat of Congress withholding funds and the slow pace of legislative reform in Indian policy led to the conditions of Indian frustration, argued Kilberg, and the issue would remain unresolved until the members of the House and Senate moved forward with reform legislation.

Richard Shifter, writing in the *Washington Post*, argued the blame belonged to government as a whole and its misunderstanding of Indian frustration. Schifter found the problem primarily an economic one. "The single most important problem of the Indian country is unemployment," he opined, "all-pervading, debilitating, chronic large-scale unemployment." The solution to the dire problems on the reservations, as he saw it, was not "bureaucratic abstractions" like whether tribal schools were to be operated by the tribe or by federal officials, or whether the Justice or Interior Departments should litigate Indian water rights. What the reservations needed was a New Deal or Great Society work program to combat the extreme poverty on the reservations. His solution, he proposed, would eliminate the "paper-shuffling and sloganeering in the government" and introduce real reforms that would improve lives and, thus, curtail the need for political activism.[13]

Encapsulated in the editorial debates was the struggle over who should address American Indian issues. The responsibility largely belonged to the U.S. government to find a remedy for Indian frustrations, according to the logic of editorial boards. Fearing

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[12] Bobbie Greene Kilberg, "Indian Affairs Hearings: Beyond the Destruction," *Washington Post*, 2 December 1972, A22.

[13] Richard Shifter, "Indians Without Jobs," *Washington Post*, 8 February 1972, A22.

actual bloodshed that could erupt in subsequent demonstrations, perhaps a reaction to the 1960s and the decade's sometimes violent political protests, editorial writers turned to government for a solution. Only once did an editorial diverge from the prevailing logic and assert that the tribes had the power and ability to reform the livelihood of American Indians if only government paternalism ended and allowed Indian nations to make their own decisions.[14] The solution to the modern-day "Indian problem" belonged in the hands of government rather than the tribes.

An important breakthrough in media coverage was the emergence of Native voice into print and television. The ability to use media to broadcast messages and raise public awareness increased the potential for reshaping public policy. American Indian activists were able to use media to voice their opinions about federal Indian policy and what role it should play in their lives. "Indian people should control their own lives," George Mitchell, a co-founder of the American Indian Movement, told journalists. The dominant view of the activists was the complete abolishment of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the removal of government intrusion in the daily lives of American Indians. Equally important was the resumption of treaty relations with Indian tribes.

Despite the presence of their voice and the elucidation of policy changes, the media's focus remained on other aspects of the protest. In a political age just beginning to be dominated by the sound bite, the media gravitated to the loudest and most visible. Dennis Banks, Vernon Bellecourt, and Russell Means emerged as spokespersons for the occupation. AIM members held press conferences, placing themselves at the front of the

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[14] C.E. Harris, "Behind the Indian Protest," *Washington Post*, 15 November 1972, A15.

Trail of Broken Treaties, despite the involvement of dozens of other organizations.[15] By doing so the press defined AIM as the leading movement in Red Power. "The American Indian Movement," reported the *New York Times*, "has been at the forefront of Indian groups demanding more aid from the Nixon Administration."[16] While true that AIM had become a significant voice on behalf of American Indians, few attempts were made by the press to connect AIM and the Trail to the larger context of Red Power, and where context did exist the media focused on displays of militant activism. The press frequently referenced the occupation of Alcatraz Island in November 1969 as the starting point for Red Power. Neither print nor television connected AIM's emergence and tactics to the previous decade of Indian activism, which rarely drew upon confrontational tactics that defined AIM's *modus operandi*.[17] Media narratives about indigenous activism framed "Red Power" around a set of criteria that journalists took to be expressions of the movement. In part, the media's focus on the American Indian Movement was fueled by AIM claiming leadership in the Trail. But this also reflected media's view of social movements, which had been conditioned by a decade of political activity in the 1960s.

There were some exceptions to the media's focus on issues beyond the reason for the Trail. A lengthy *Washington Post* story entitled "Protest by Indians Sought an End to Paternalism" highlighted many of the Native criticisms toward the federal government. The *Post* reported on the broad spectrum of American Indian opinion regarding government interference in their lives, remarking that opinions ranged from "outright

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[15] Butler, "Check Your Local Listing," 226-227.

[16] "500 Indians Seize U.S. Building After Scuffle With Capital Police," *New York Times*, 3 November 1972, 81.

[17] See Daniel M. Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008).

separatism to the more prevailing view that Indians are entitled to a greater voice" in directing federal policy. In one of the few attempts to contextualize Red Power thinking, the story notes "forced assimilation" under the Termination policy "haunts [the memory of] the Indians anxious to reconcile their quest for dignity of independence with a continuing reliance on Washington's financial support."[18] By bringing up recent history, the article attempted to examine the origins of political frustrations and the suspicions of government policies. Few other stories go beyond the narrow focus on the occupation, submerging public discourse into a shallow pool of knowledge.

Television had even less success uncovering American Indian political thinking in its Trail of Broken Treaties coverage, which was sparse compared to print journalism. Television journalists often noted that activists were protesting Indian "grievances" without exploring the extent of those demands. Television coverage largely focused on the extent of the damage done to the building rather than the underlying causes of the protest. In other cases television media emphasized the federal response to the occupation, such as whether there would be prosecutions for the occupation or changes in BIA leadership. Very little airtime was given to interviewing participants or capturing the reasons underlying the protest. The images of destruction and the progress of legal investigations captivated television journalists, causing them to miss the purpose and message of the Trail.

News feeds off confrontations. Philosophical divisions among American Indians, what Todd Gitlin called "the drama within the drama," was highlighted by the media.[19] A

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[18] "Protest by Indians Sought an End to Paternalism," *Washington Post*, 9 November 1972, C1.

[19] Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 109; ABC Evening News, 23 November 1972.

confrontation between activists and members of the National Tribal Chairmens' Association (NTCA) in the final days of the occupation stirred up heated debates. NTCA accused AIM of engaging in "senseless acts" of destruction. AIM members reacted with equal vigor. Carter Camp, a leader of the Oklahoma City chapter of AIM, accused NTCA of being "part of the establishment You flew here first class, wear $200 suits, live in $20,000 houses and don't give a damn who goes to jail."[20] Nathan Little Soldier, a tribal chairman from North Dakota, observed that the frenzy of AIM's protest was "what the press and TV enjoys. We should work together. We will work together. My door and my hand is open to anyone. We should adjourn rather than make fools of ourselves." The executive directory of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), Charles Trimble, also criticized the "tactics of disruption or destruction" although the organization supported many of the issues AIM raised.[21]

Just as important to AIM's message was their public image. AIM activists symbolically asserted their sovereignty by declaring the BIA building the "Native American Embassy" and deployed other cultural symbols in their performances before the media. In their revolutionary posturing, AIM leaders spoke openly about still fighting the "Indian Wars" of the nineteenth century. One activist told a journalist that "we are ready to fight and die for what we believe in, just like the people who lived here 100 years ago."[22] Slogans such as "Custer died for your sins" and "Remember Wounded Knee" were heard throughout the Bureau during the occupation or scribbled on walls. A

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[20] "News Conference Confrontation," *Washington Post*, 11 November 1972, A1; ABC Evening News, 10 November 1972.

[21] "News Conference Confrontation," *Washington Post*, 11 November 1972, A1; "Indians Take Documents as They Leave U.S. Building," *New York Times*, 10 November 1972, 17; ABC Evening News, 10 November 1973.

[22] "'Indians First, Always,' Demonstrator Declares," *Washington Post*, 4 November 1972, A8.

map of the United States displaying Indian reservations was altered to include the entire country.[23] The media narrative over confrontations during the BIA occupation often centered upon cultural symbols and demonstrations of "Indianness." For example, on November 5 the *Washington Post* headlined a story "Another 'Wounded Knee' Was Feared Friday Night." Occupiers in the building, wrote the *Post*, had "armed themselves with clubs, knives, and a few bows and arrows and put on (lipstick) war paint" to fight back against possible law enforcement attempts to evict them from the BIA building.[24] Adding to cultural symbols were allusions to historical figures.

Embracing their legendary history or influenced by South Dakota Indians relocated to the Twin Cities area, AIM leaders often referenced nineteenth-century Lakota warriors and wore Native clothing drawn from Siouxan tribes. Members grew their hair long and dressed in traditional Indian garments that found their basis in Lakota culture.[25] For many, the young generation of Indians participated in traditional religious ceremonies for the first time in their lives. Dennis Banks had his first experience with a sweat lodge after his release from prison when he visited Frank Fools Crow on the Rosebud Reservation. Fools Crow would later become AIM's spiritual leader.[26] Many key figures in AIM – including Russell Means, Leonard Peltier, and John Trudell – claim Sioux ancestry. During the occupation the activists frequently cited figures like Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse, while Russell Means once quipped in response to orders to leave the building: "It's a good day to die."[27]

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23 "'The Government Forced Us To Action,'" *Washington Post*, 9 November 1972, C1.
24 "Another 'Wounded Knee' Was Feared Friday Night," *Washington Post*, 5 November 1972, A10.
25 Rolland Dewing, *Wounded Knee II* (Chadron: Great Plains Network, 1995), 19-20.
26 Banks, *Ojibwa Warrior*, 95-104.
27 "Another 'Wounded Knee' Was Feared Friday Night," *Washington Post*, 5 November 1972, A10. Robert Burnette and John Coster, *The Road to Wounded Knee* (New York: Bantam Books, 1974), 210.

Press reporting of the standoff between AIM and law enforcement often presented an image of heroic warriors prepared to fight a stronger federal force. Activists "wearing warpaint and armed with makeshift tomahawks" sought to mount a "defense of the building."[28] Judge John Pratt, who refused to sign a show-cause order that would allow the U.S. government to evict the activists, asked government officials to negotiate peacefully an end to what the *Los Angeles Times* called an "uprising."[29] Another article noted two activists "carrying what appeared to be powerful bows and a number of arrows" while others "had table legs with sharp spikes embedded in the ends."[30]

The deployment of cultural images, historical illusions, and the nature of AIM's political activity encapsulated public discourse over the notion of "Red Power." The press reflected popular American memory by portraying AIM as modern Plains Indian warriors, and AIM members played into these images by their rhetoric and their clothing. Red Power warriors used direct action to fight modern-day Indian wars to stand up against a government that seemed willing—if not eager—to stamp out American Indian culture. Members of the American Indian Movement fed into these images for the precise reason of wanting to be perceived as modern day warriors. But certainly AIM also adopted certain ideals of nineteenth-century Plains Indian culture because they so deeply revered their ancestors. Homage on the part of American Indian Movement members often surfaced in the press as an image of "the Indian" rather than a complex understanding of cultural heritage.

Nevertheless, the politics of media only served to justify AIM's self-promotion, by

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[28] "Judge Stalls Eviction of Indians; U.S., Protesters Hold Site Talks," *Chicago Tribune*, 5 November 1972, p. B10; "Judge Refuses to Evict Indians," *Los Angeles Times*, 5 November 1972, 1.
[29] "Judge Refuses to Evict Indians," *Los Angeles Times*, 5 November 1972, 1.
[30] "Order Delayed, Indians Stay in Offices," *Washington Post*, 7 November 1972, A1.

which media coverage made immediate celebrities from the national attention given to them. Acting out modern "Indian wars" would not end paternalism or bureaucratic entanglements, but rather substituted substance with style. The dramatic reenactment of self-determination was not the ultimate expression of freedom, but instead the dramatization of political street theater. In the aftermath of the Trail, members of the American Indian Movement had so few meaningful results to show for their activities that one can conclude that the embrace of confrontational politics had little to do with practical results, because it served to fuel narcissistic self-dramatization.[31]

By the end of 1972, members of the American Indian Movement were regrouping in South Dakota and the prominence of the movement in public discourse made it clear that theatrical politics had attracted considerable media attention. The strategists in AIM believed that escalating opposition to American Indian policies and its portrayal in a friendly media environment could bring the Native establishment to its knees. The tactic of confrontational politics embraced by AIM in 1970 began, in their eyes, to pay dividends in 1972. "Many of us are ready to die for our beliefs," Russell Means said in defense of the BIA occupation.[32] But rather than provoke public reaction against the government, AIM's confrontational politics only enhanced calls for law and order, while also fragmenting American Indians and drawing in "revolutionary" non-Indian or tribal elements into the group. The end of the occupation had already put into motion AIM's collapse less than a year later.

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[31] Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: Warner Books, 1980), 82-83.

[32] "Indians Seize Files as Some Go Home," *Washington Post*, 8 November 1972, B1.

EPILOGUE

Most of the change we think we see in life
Is due to truths being in and out of favor
– Robert Frost, "The Black Cottage"[1]

On the cold night of February 27, 1973, a car caravan numbering hundreds of members and supporters of the American Indian Movement flooded into the small town of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in southwestern South Dakota. The arrival at the symbolic site to protest the regime of tribal president Richard Wilson and to raise awareness of Native issues attracted the immediate attention of national and international media. The American Indian Movement once again became featured news throughout most of another occupation, this time for seventy-one days.

By the late 1960s television had become the dominant form of communication. Race became visible in entirely new ways as African American activists confronted the spartan tactics of dedicated segregationists in the American South, all captured by cameras and broadcasted to a national audience. The pervasive reach of segregation met powerful images and arguments through unfiltered and direct communication that unraveled the social landscape in the South. The power of media communication was recognized by activists who tried to persuade public opinion through mass media.

Several facets of contemporary society have been addressed in the previous pages. The political currents at work in the 1960s and 1970s influenced the underlying activism of the American Indian Movement members as well as media's approach to race and politics. In an epoch defined by radical ideas, revolutionary impulses, and conservative restraint, the American Indian Movement emerged as a symbol of hope for some and a

[1] Robert Frost, "The Black Cottage," in The Poetry of Robert Frost, ed. Edward Connery Lanthern (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2002), 58.

villain of order to others. The embrace of confrontational politics, although useful as an attention-grabbing tactic, divided constituents and eroded support for AIM. The organic premise underlying the Trail of Broken Treaties was lost in a flurry of stories focusing on violence, destruction, and legal matters rather than the status of American Indians in society. The decision to use confrontations as a method of instigating reform drew from the dominant intellectual currents present in the 1960s. American Indian intellectuals and activists, influenced by the African American Civil Rights Movement, developed tactics for promoting their ideas and foresaw mass media and friendly journalists as a method for disseminating goals.

For its part, television and newspapers addressed the Trail with narrative frameworks encompassing law and order, Native activism, Indian policy, tribal governments and leaders, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In stark contrast stands a relative lack of discussion about treaties, sovereignty, and the human conditions and context for activism. The press's omission of the underlying reasons for the Trail indicates that journalists attempted to understand events based on stereotypical ideas. Yet, images and depictions of American Indians in media were so at odds with the prevailing idea of "the Indian" that they were deemed newsworthy.

Taken as a whole, the occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs was a watershed moment for the American Indian Movement, forcing itself to the forefront of Native activism and generating a name for itself as a group that could capture attention. What had been a relatively unnoticed organization save for a handful of high-profile political demonstrations was now talked about by journalists, editorial writers, tribal leaders, and other Indian organizations throughout the nation. AIM built a reputation as a group that

would directly challenge establishment institutions, drew people to sites of protest, and attached their message to mass media. These bedrock dynamics came into play again three months later with the occupation of Wounded Knee.

The political, cultural, and intellectual history of the twentieth-century United States is irrevocably tied to mass media. In our own age, mass media has become more acutely—and pervasively—political. During the presidential campaign between President George W. Bush and Senator John Kerry, *Time* magazine called 2004 the "year of the blog," crowning new media as an important political player. If 2004 was a year for blogs, 2008 was a year for social media. President Barack Obama extended the reach of new media into social media venues such as Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook to mobilize supporters and voters. Advances in technology, from the newspaper, telegraph, railroad, radio, television, and Internet have transformed the practice of politics. Political campaigns, advocacy organizations, lobbyists, and activists worked to use new communication technology to their advantage and reshaped political dynamics, a transformation the American Indian Movement placed itself into and influenced in significant ways.

APPENDIX
DIGITAL HISTORY AS A RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Framing Red Power sought to utilize digital technology to investigate and analyze the interaction between media and politics by focusing on the Trail of Broken Treaties as a lens to understand the complex connections between political movements and mass media. The American Indian Movement was well-known for its propensity for grabbing headlines. While the occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973 is highly significant and symbolic, it has received substantial attention from scholars. The Trail of Broken Treaties, on the other hand, was AIM's first sustained media coverage of the sort they always hoped to garner. The type of language and rhetoric deployed by the media and by AIM as well as the narrative frameworks and public discourse shaped and were shaped by the Trail of Broken Treaties and the context of the 1970s. At its core, this thesis attempted to shed light on the broader interaction between media and politics, and how this complex relationship shapes political culture and ideology at microlevels.[1]

The advent of digital technologies is changing and challenging the ways historians practice their craft. The way we collect, present, and store information has changed rapidly in the last twenty years. Digital history is several things: a methodology meant to aid the traditional art and practice of historians; tools to gain insight into information that cannot be done with a pad and pen and that allows historians to disseminate and present their information in new ways; and a means to reach wide audiences through nearly ubiquitous digital exposure. The digital medium is a versatile atmosphere for historians that allows the presentation of historical data in several formats (images, sound, moving pictures) and manipulated in dynamic ways (textual analysis, text mining, GIS maps).

[1] The *Framing Red Power* digital project can be found at http://segonku.unl.edu/~jheppler/frp/.

The power of digital tools allows historians to pose new questions to historical problems. The goal is not simply to create an archive of material that drives no argument; historians must interpret and analyze material, not simply digitize sources and place them online. Nor is the goal cliometrics 2.0 or to augment the theory-driven social sciences, but to abide by the historian's commitment to complexity and nuance while utilizing digital technologies to aid that task.[2]

Digital history is both a new practice and an old art. The process of becoming an historian may shift as digital scholarship becomes more prevalent. The skepticism of digital history is understandable because the profession has developed its own hierarchy —a clear path for how historians "do history." Dan Cohen, a key scholar in digital humanities, warns that digital historians

> need to recognize that the digital humanities represent a scary, rule-breaking, swashbuckling movement for many historians and other scholars. We must remember that these scholars have had—for generations and still in today's graduate schools—a very clear path for how they do their work, publish, and get rewarded. Visit archive; do careful reading; find examples in documents; conceptualize and analyze; write monograph; get tenure. We threaten all of this. For every time we focus on text mining and pattern recognition, traditionalists can point to the successes of close reading—on the power of a single word. We propose new methods of research when the old ones don't seem broken.[3]

New methods of research allow historians to read and collect a vast number of sources with relative ease and analyze sources.

Given the nearly unending limitations of digital space that allows for an

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[2] Daniel J. Cohen et al., "Interchange: The Promise of Digital History," *Journal of American History* 95 (September 2008): 452-491. <http://www.journalofamericanhistory.org/issues/952/interchange/index.html>

[3] Dan Cohen, "The Pirate Problem," *Dan Cohen's Digital Humanities Blog*, April 22, 2008, http://www.dancohen.org/2008/04/22/the-pirate-problem/.

incomprehensible amount of information on the Internet, any foray into digital history necessarily begins with a clear outline to guide the research or risk an unending project that merely seeks to digitize primary sources. The research question, like any piece of scholarship, requires boundaries and a clear purpose. The design process entails several important considerations for digital historians: the purpose of a research project, the tools that will be offered, the argument that drives the research, the technologies that are available, and the limitations placed on available sources factor into digital scholarship. *Framing Red Power* is limited to national news sources for two reasons. One, editorial and time constrains forced me to make choices about what would be included in my analysis. Second, national media had wide audiences that responded in different ways. The original plan was to analyze major newspapers only and focus on the national (*New York Times* and *Washington Post*), regional (*Minneapolis Tribune* and *Chicago Tribune*), and local (*Sioux Falls Argus Leader* and the *Rapid City Journal*) levels, but there was a striking lack of news coverage at the regional and local levels. The occupation of the BIA grabbed national headlines to a much greater extent than local news outlets. Sources were compiled by researching online digital repositories like ProQuest and tracking down microfilm for anything not digitized.

The next task once materials were located was the longest process in the digital project: the transcription and mark-up of the media reports and editorials. The process used encoding called eXtensible Markup Language (XML), an international encoding standard designed for sharing and structuring data on the web that allows users to define mark-up elements. XML defines the elements behind newspaper articles and preserves the original text. For example, a section of one of the transcribed newspapers might be

encoded as follows:

```
<p><name type="person" key="Adams, Hank">Adams</name> does not
dismiss as unimportant the $2 million damage to the BIA building,
but he does not like to dwell on it.  He largely regrets it
because the publicity &quot;has diverted attention&quot; from the
original purpose of the protest, which was to urge changes in the
handling of Indian affairs.</p>

<p>He takes the same stance regarding criminal records of some of
the movement's leaders.</p>

<p>(Newspaper clippings in Minneapolis indicate that <name
type="person" key="Bellecourt, Vernon">Vernon Bellecourt</name>
was convicted of a tavern holdup in <name type="place" key="Terre
Haute, Indiana" reg="Terre Haute, Indiana">Terre Haute,
Ind.</name>, in 1951, and of a holdup in <name type="place"
reg="St. Paul, Minnesota" key="St. Paul Minnesota">St. Paul</name>
as a juvenile.  <name type="person" key="Bellecourt, Clyde">Clyde
Bellecourt</name> and <name type="person" key="Banks,
Dennis">Banks</name> have been arrested several times in
connection with protests.)</p>[4]
```

In the above example, elements in the primary text received tags that are invisible to the reader of a document on the project site, but are useful in making the text machine-readable. Editorial decisions for tagging elements have little impact on the text itself. In this case, `<p>` tags define paragraphs, `<name>` tags define specific people and places, and so forth. The markup of electronic text allows for the searching, querying, and manipulation of the text. The machine-readable text can be plugged into analysis tools like TokenX or create mashups between text and maps. For example, *Envisioning the West* uses XML encoding and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping to link text and maps together; users can select a text and view every location mentioned by the document on an interactive map.[5] Markup allows for easy retrieval of information as well as providing clear distinctions when querying text. Searching "Kansas" might lead a

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[4] Excerpt from "Activist Tells of BIA Sacking: Brutality Movie Called Spark," *Washington Post*, 25 November 1972, A1.

[5] *Envisioning the West: Thomas Jefferson and the Roots of Lewis and Clark*, ed. Douglas Seefeldt. <http://jeffersonswest.unl.edu/>.

query to assume the U.S. state, but markup makes the distinction between the state, the 1970s progressive rock band, and the 1988 film.[6]

XML also allows digital historians to develop sustainable projects for the future. Since the tags within XML documents are "intelligent," both machines and humans can easily identify markup text. Furthermore, any changes in the design of the website displaying XML documents can easily maintain the integrity of encoded material since XML is displayed through stylesheets. Digital resources, suggests Abby Smith, are best "facilitating access to information and weakest when assigned the traditional library responsibility of preservation." "The real challenge," she continues, "is how to make those analog materials more accessible using the powerful tool of digital technology."[7] She raises some important concerns about digital collections, arguing that digitizing information should not displace analog. Technology can become obsolete and render older versions of digital resources inaccessible or, at the least, cumbersome to access. However, this should not discourage historians from entering the digital realm. Newer technologies and languages have made storing data easier, but digital historians should think about the available technology when developing their projects to ensure a structured and sustainable project.

With a corpus of digitized newspaper articles, next came the process of integrating digital tools that can assist historians in analyzing material. Digital technologies are not an end in and of themselves but rather a method for querying and analyzing material in

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[6] Allen H. Renear, "Text Encoding," in *A Companion to Digital Humanities*, ed. Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004). <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/companion/>.

[7] Abby Smith, *Why Digitize?* (Washington, D.C.: Council on Library and Information Resources, 1999), 3.

new ways. Analyzing language required textual analysis tools, specifically TokenX, a powerful analysis tool developed by Brian Pytlik-Zillig at the Center for Digital Research in the Humanities at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This project also used a free, web-based service called Wordle that allowed the generation of word clouds from digitized newspapers (see Figure 1). Developing visual representations of the newspaper articles allows historians to spot themes in text that might otherwise be hidden.

Figure 1
A Wordle word cloud generated from the entire corpus of digitized newspapers in Framing Red Power.

The word clouds appeared to reveal a focus on Indians, the BIA building, and the federal government far more than they focus on what American Indian activists have to say or why they are leading a demonstration. The issues that AIM wanted to call attention to during the demonstration, such as treaty rights or tribal government, are lost in a narrative more interested in the federal response. To prevent skewed results in the word cloud, certain phrases were strung together. For example, the “Indian” in

"American Indian Movement" is not read by Wordle as an individual word but rather as part of a phrase. The same is true for the "Bureau of Indian Affairs," "the Trail of Broken Treaties," "Indian bureau," "White House," and several other phrases. The word cloud itself reveals little without interpretation. The question of why the press focused on the building and government rather than the purpose of the Trail led to the argument that the press shaped its narrative around the issues of law and order and a discussion of American Indian politics. Tools like word clouds help highlight the frequency of language in text, a process impossible (or nearly so) to achieve in print, and reveal ways to visualize narratives and analyze their significance.[8]

Using digital tools comes with a word of warning. The integration of tools and visualizations must convey insights to the research. Though experimenting with visualizations and tools can be useful, integrating these into digital scholarship simply for the sake of having visualizations without purpose contributes little to digital scholarship. No matter how much energy is poured into the design of a digital project, it means nothing if quality content and argument are not foregrounded.

Moving scholarship to the networked environment of the web opens historical work to wider audiences—much wider audiences than historical monographs. More and more people turn to the web for information, and thus far the profession has been left behind in producing the history web. The web sends our information everywhere to engage many and wide audiences. Furthermore, the historical record is open to all and the work of the historian becomes transparent.[9] Readers can probe the sources for

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[8] John Burrows, "Textual Analysis," in *A Companion to Digital Humanities*, ed. Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004). <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/companion/>.

[9] See Daniel Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and*

themselves or even generate their own projects from prior work, building a larger network of historical data and interpretation on specific people, themes, or events. "The goal for historians working in the new digital medium needs to be to make the computer technology transparent," writes William G. Thomas, "and to allow the reader to focus his or her whole attention on the 'world' that the historian has opened up for investigation, interpretation, inquiry, and analysis."[10]

An issue historians must confront in the digital realm is what being an author in this medium will look like. Readers of online material do not approach websites the same way they approach books. Sustained reading is not quite possible with the current technology of the computer screen. Chunking text or formatting text for info-snacking may be the models best suited for online reading. Furthermore, readers will want to interact with the text. "History," notes Orville Vernon Burton, "similar to all disciplines, is badly in need of models beyond the monograph for the demonstration of excellence, and where the scholarship itself is in need of new genres and new strategies for reaching new audiences."[11] A possible solution comes in the form of hypertext that can weave together several aspects of a digital project, allowing readers to roam freely through the argument. The nonlinear approach to history allows readers to move through narratives in unrestrained ways.

Despite its advantages, digital history has issues that historians must evaluate. Because the profession has not embraced the medium as serious scholarship, no quality

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Presenting the Past on the Web (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

[10] William G. III Thomas, "Computing and the Historical Imagination," in *A Companion to Digital Humanities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/companion/ >.

[11] Orville Vernon Burton, "American Digital History," *Social Science Computer Review* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 206-220.

controls, peer review, or promotion and tenure incentives exist for those doing digital history. This reluctance by the profession translates to historians who will not consider digital technologies as part of their work because they remain unsure how it will affect their careers. By failing to engage the history web, however, others outside the profession will define what constitutes "good" history. The fear and misgivings are understandable (especially given the large failures of combining computing technologies and history under cliometrics) but the goal of digital history is not to upend the profession. What the profession respects most (the book) can also be produced digitally. The future is where the two co-exist.

The early forms of digital history were software packages distributed to libraries and universities, digitized historical material sitting in online archives, or material used in courses. Roy Rosenzweig's 1993 CD-ROM *Who Built America?* combined images, text, and audio files to produce an interactive narrative. Even the early conception for the Valley of the Shadow Project was meant for CD-ROM distribution until the release of the Mosaic web browser in 1993. The Library of Congress started offering online exhibits in 1992 with Select Civil War Photographs in 1992. Other forms of the early history web included digitized course material and syllabi. These projects were interactive, though not "participatory" in the way William Thomas has identified.[12] The dynamic, networked, participatory technologies available on the web today have transformed how scholars can disseminate scholarship digitally. Digital scholars have gone beyond static representations of the past represented in collections of images or the pasting of text onto a screen to the more dynamic and active capabilities of the web. Rather than guide

[12] Daniel J. Cohen et al., "Interchange: The Promise of Digital History," *Journal of American History* 95, no. 2 (September 2008): 460.

readers through the framework of a print narrative, users can freely explore projects to experience a historical argument. Material in digital projects can be manipulated and experimented with to build their own connections between sources and the argument.

The interactive nature of the web makes this easier. Rather than lead readers through a narrative, they can present a host of interpretive elements that get at the historical question under investigation. Text can be mined for information, hypertext can generate associations among elements, and material can be annotated and queried (such as tagging elements) in an effort to understand how everything fits together. Historians might define the parameters of their projects, but users have the ability to contribute to knowledge production, what Steve Mintz called "active learning," emphasizing collaboration and interaction with digital resources.[13] Digital history also allows scholars to convey the shifting nature of history and how it is interpreted by historians. Over time projects will change due to the ability to continually edit, add, or annotate digital projects, becoming open access arenas constantly undergoing changes and modifications as research is built upon and interpretations shift and transform.

Thomas writes that digital history is "a process, an active, spatial, virtual-reality encounter with the past."[14] *Framing Red Power* embraces certain threads of that definition but has yet to fully address narrative or allowing users the full ability to query or manipulate material in the digital medium. The project sits between the archival approach but does not fully embrace certain Web 2.0 technologies that allow users full interaction with material. My experiments with hypertext and using popup dialogues gets at an interactive narrative that allows users to draw associations or retrieve contextual

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[13] Cohen, et. al., "The Promise of Digital History," 456.
[14] Cohen, et. al. "The Promise of Digital History," 460.

information about topics.[15]

One of the earliest digital history projects was the *Valley of the Shadow*, an ambitious project that sought to present a new way of doing historical scholarship. Several other projects, including *Los Angeles and the Problem of Urban Historical Knowledge* and *Race and Place: An African American Community in the Jim Crow South* also introduced new methods for historical scholarship and presentation. Student-directed digital projects can serve to broaden the work on theses and dissertations, such as Andrew Torget's examination of slavery's extension into Texas. Additional spatial narratives including Timothy Mahony's *Gilded Age Plains City*, Richard White's *Spatial History Project*, and William Thomas's *Railroads and the Making of Modern America*, explore and attempt to understand spatial relationships.[16] *Framing Red Power* stands alongside Torget's work and other student-directed projects as an extension of a thesis, but embraces textual analysis rather than spatial analysis to understand the consequences of language. While the *Valley* project was a multi-year project encompassing thousands of original sources, *Framing Red Power* is smaller in scale much like the projects of Torget and Mahony. The range of open source and free digital tools available to

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[15] However, I'm still expending metal energy on what narrative and scholarship look like in this environment. My interpretive elements such as Wordle and Timeline allow users to visualize text and the dissemination of information, but I would be more pleased if users could add or subtract elements at their whim; for instance, having the ability to add or remove newspaper articles, words, or phrases from my word clouds. However, the XML markup of newspaper articles are fully available and open for use.

[16] *Valley of the Shadow: Two Communities in the American Civil War*, Virginia Center for Digital History, University of Virginia <http://valley.vcdh.virginia.edu>; *Los Angeles and the Problem of Urban Historical Knowledge*, ed. Philip J. Ethington <http://cwis.usc.edu/dept/LAS/history/historylab/LAPUHK/index.html>; *Race and Place: An African American Community in the Jim Crow South*, Virginia Center for Digital History, University of Virginia <http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/afam/raceandplace/>; *Texas Slavery Project*, ed. Andrew Torget <http://www.texasslaveryproject.org/>; *Gilded Age Plains City: The Great Sheedy Murder Trial and the Booster Ethos of Lincoln, Nebraska*, ed. Timothy Mahoney <http://gildedage.unl.edu/>; *Spatial History Project*, Bill Lane Center for the American West, Stanford University <http://www.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/index.php>; *Railroads and the Making of Modern America*, ed. William Thomas <http://railroads.unl.edu>.

historians makes it easier for interested scholars to create and maintain their own digital scholarship without the assistance of digital research centers or computer experts.[17]

Historians must take an active role in developing and defining digital history. Open access and open source scholarship allows historians to connect with new and wider audiences. Given the problems facing the publishing industry, historical scholarship must find something beyond the monograph in order to present knowledge. People increasingly turn to the web for information and often go no further. If historians are concerned about the low quality of historical information online, then they need to take an active role in improving the quality or it will be left to others outside the historical profession. Technological barriers, wariness about using technology, and negative ideas about cliometrics has restricted the number of historians engaging digital technology in their research. The result, as Edward L. Ayers points out, is that no large-scale project like the *Valley of the Shadow* has emerged in the last ten years.[18] Our task should be not only to help define the history web, but to convince others in the profession that scholarship and interpretation stands at the center of digital projects; they're not merely vehicles for entertainment, but an efficient medium for presenting knowledge, sources, interpretation, and making associations. History seems especially suited for digital technologies, and historians should embrace the medium to pioneer new methods of conveying knowledge, arguments, and interpretations.

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[17] For an overview of exemplar digital projects and a discussion of where digital history may go in the future, see Douglas Seefeldt and William G. Thomas, "What is Digital History? A Look at Some Exemplar Projects," *AHA Perspectives* 47 (May 2009).

[18] Edward L. Ayers, "Doing Scholarship on the Web: Ten Years of Triumphs - and a Disappointment," *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 35 (April 2004): 143-147.

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