

* Not for profit *

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Warriors are, left to right, Nugeun Kautz, Donald (Dawn) McCloud, Melvin Iyall (a direct descendant of martyred Nisqually Chief Leschi), George McCloud, Herman Johns (his father used to fish the Nisqually River but was killed in the 2nd World War. This American Flag was draped over his casket when he returned home), Jack McCloud, Bill Frank Jr., and Dorian Sanchez

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ALCATRAZ IS NOT AN ISLAND



Richard Oakes

Alcatraz Is Not An Island

by Richard Oakes

From 'Ramparts', Dec. 1972, Berkeley, California

I grow up on the St. Regis Reservation in New York, near the Canadian border. It's a big reservation, six miles square, with three thousand people and three thousand problems. My growing up was hard, as it is for most Indians. The hopes were there, the promises were there, but the means for achieving them weren't forthcoming. I couldn't adjust.

I went to the schools, went to high school until I was sixteen, but the system never offered me anything that had to do with being an Indian. They didn't teach me how to hunt, how to skin deer, how to tan hides. All they wanted me to do was to become a part of the machinery, to make me into what they wanted: a white Indian. I wanted to do something for my people. But I didn't know what.

I quit high school in the eleventh grade and went into iron work. My father and uncle taught me the trade. They passed it down, and when I was sixteen, I just started working. I worked all over, living on the reservation and off the reservation. I lived in New York, Massachusetts, the New England states . . . I went where the work was. I was an iron worker for eleven years. I made good money, but beyond that there was nothing.

I was working in Newport, Rhode Island when I decided to go out to California. I was building a bridge at that time, working a long shift. I just decided to go to California, gave up everything, and drove right across country. I wanted to come on out and see the world. It was a great experience. On the way, I stopped at other reservations, stopped here and there and saw the different conditions in which the tribes lived. I had done a lot of reading about Indian people when I was back home, but I saw little of what I'd read about.

There was a lot of talk about love and friendship for your fellow man, but I never saw it. What I saw instead was the bickering and barroom fights between the Indians, the constant drinking. Drinking seems to fill a void in the life of many Indians. It takes the place of the singing of a song, the sharing of a song with another tribe, the sharing of experiences that another tribe member might have had. Drinking is used as a way to create feelings of some kind where there aren't any. It fills a void, that's all. I saw the end of the rainbow, the wrong end.

When I got to San Francisco, I first took a job as a truckdriver. Then I went to work in Warren's Bar as a bartender. Warren's is an "Indian" bar in the Mission District of the city, where many Indians live, and I got familiar with quite a few of the problems down around that area. There was poor housing. The Indian people found that their own culture was inaccessible to them. They were enslaved by the white economic system and dependent on it in the city, either in the form of welfare or having to work to make someone else

Proclamation or Declaration of Facts

Nisqually Nation

January 1, 1965

WHEREAS the Treaty of Medicine Creek (10 Stat. 1132) and all other treaties with the Indian people as one party and the United States as the other party was a grant of rights and land from the Indians, to the United States Government. The Supreme law of the land is the right to govern and tax all citizens of the United States by the United States Government except the Indian people. The self governing rights were reserved by the Indian People.

WHEREAS the Bureau of Indian Affairs was created to protect the rights and interests of the American Citizens, not the Indian People.

WHEREAS the citizens of the United States has consistently and persistently with force and coercion denied the existing reserved rights and powers of the Indian people.

WHEREAS the United States Government has never, past or present, honored or protected in any way or manner the rights of the Indian people.

Be it therefore resolved that we the undersigned Indians declare:

That as much as the citizens of the United States have denied the power and effects of said treaty they no longer have a legal right to reside, tax or hunt or fish upon said lands or waters, within the ceded areas of the treaties made with the Indian people.

Be it also known that as we are without power to enforce or expel said citizens from this land we never the less declare that said citizens have denied their own right to be here legally.

Be it also resolved that we will resist to the best of our abilities the continued attacks upon the Indian people.

We also declare that we are weary of being forced into pauperism upon our own land.

This flag is raised today as a distress signal to any or all nations, kindreds, or tongues, who believes that the Indian people also have God given rights, upon this land.

We say to these nations, kindreds, or tongues, that if the policies enacted by the United States Government concerning the Indian people were examined under close scrutiny the similarities between them and Hitler's policies concerning the Jewish people would be self evident.

We declare that this declaration is just and true with only God as our witness.

(Signed and subscribed to by 150 people).

Proclamation

We, the native Americans, re-claim the land known as Fort Lawton in the name of all American Indians by the right of discovery.

We feel this land of Fort Lawton is more suitable to pursue an Indian way of life, as determined by our own standards. By this we mean “this place does not resemble most Indian reservations”. It has potential for modern facilities, adequate sanitation facilities, health care facilities, fresh running water, educational facilities, fisheries research facilities and transportation.

What use will we make of this land?

Since there is no place for Indians to assemble and carry on tribal ways and beliefs here in the white man’s city, we therefore, plan to develop?

1. A CENTER FOR NATIVE AMERICAN STUDIES which will educate them to the skills and knowledge relevant to improve the lives and spirits of all Indian peoples.
2. A GREAT INDIAN UNIVERSITY to teach our people the way to make a living in the world, improve our standard of living and to end hunger and unemployment among all our people.
3. AN INDIAN CENTER OF ECOLOGY which will train and support our young people on scientific research and practice to restore our lands and waters to their pure and natural state.
We will work to de-pollute the air and waters of the Seattle area. We will seek to restore fish and to revitalize sea life which has been threatened by the white man’s way.
4. AN INDIAN SCHOOL to develop arts and crafts of our people.
5. AN INDIAN RESTAURANT serving native foods, which will be open to the public.

With this great center, we will show the beauty, dignity and the spirit of our traditional Indian ways.

In the name of all Indians, therefore, we re-claim this land for all our Indian nations. For all these reasons, we feel this claim is just and proper, and that this land is rightfully ours for as long as the rivers shall flow and for as long as the sun shall shine.

rich.

I went to work in a bar, the only sober Indian there. Then I started thinking of going back to school. I had been to Adirondack Community College and Syracuse University when I was working as an iron worker in Syracuse, so thought that coming to San Francisco might offer me the chance to continue. I got the chance to enroll in San Francisco State College in February of ’69. At that time, the college was going through a lot of changes itself in the Third World Liberation Strike. In the turmoil, an Ethnic Studies Program was being explored. When I went out there, they asked me to enroll. Through my job in the bar and my contacts in the community, I was able to recruit other students. They came out and we got into State. We started a Native American Studies Program.

I felt that Indians needed attention . . . not tomorrow, or the week after, but today. At about this time, the papers were full of controversy over what to do with Alcatraz. Lamar Hunt was proposing his preposterous plans for some kind of astrodome or space needle. Someone wanted to make it a pigeon-feeding station. There was an offer to turn it into a park, and somebody proposed that the government make it into a cemetery. I thought, “Why the hell make it for the dead? Why not make it for the living? We have a specific need. We need to live too, in our way!”

All of this was going on in the spring of 1969. During this time, while we were still in school, there was a meeting of all the Indian students throughout the state — state college students, university students, students from the Native American Studies Programs. We all got together, and I mentioned it there that taking Alcatraz would be a good thing to do. I announced it to all the students. At that time, they all laughed. However, it was there that one of the older people said, “All you young people, listen: We have been looking forward to this day when there would be something for you to do. You are our leaders.”

Well, the idea stayed in the minds of many of the students. I didn’t get a chance to meet some of them until much later, many months later. It was at the American Indian Center in San Francisco. We discussed the possibilities of it. We made tentative plans to do it in the summertime, in 1970. However, one fellow had jumped the gun and was already making plans with local reporters to develop the first news release in November 1969. We were supposed to get dressed up in all of their “television costumes” and just make a pass around the island, to symbolically claim Alcatraz.

But a lot of us were sick of doing things for the public; so when they sailed around the island, we decided to jump off the ship when it got close to Alcatraz, swim out to the island, and claim it. When we got within two hundred fifty yards, I said, “Come on. Let’s go. Let’s get it on!” So I left all my stuff in the boat and dove into the water. Four others followed, but they went all the way around the island and jumped when the boat was closer to the dock, on the east side. I jumped when it was way out. The tide was on the

ebb, going towards the Golden Gate Bridge. The boats, the main boat and the press boats, well, they just kept going. They went right on by. People on the boats saw me and yelled, “Man overboard, man overboard,” but they just kept or going.

Before jumping I felt a great sense of urgency. I felt I had to do it, so I just jumped off. I didn’t have time to be scared. I didn’t weigh the possibilities of being attacked by a shark or the current taking me across the bay toll-free. It never entered my mind. I was too busy trying to get to the Rock, because that water was cold, and it was swift. I landed just to the left of the dock, on the rocks. I was being dragged in by the waves or the current, or something, underneath the barge. I was exhausted when I hit land. I’ve done a lot of swimming, but this was the toughest swim I’ve ever made.

I crawled up on the rocks to rest, and a dog came up and began to lick the salt off my body. I had to get that dog away from me. It just kept licking me up. I found out later that this was their “ferocious” guard dog. I found the other four guys. We claimed the island by right of discovery. We represented five different tribes, so we claimed it in the name of the Indians of all the tribes, not just one tribe. That was the first time we used the name which would become our name on the island; ” Indians of All Tribes.”

When we first discovered Alcatraz, we felt like Christians. The natives were very hostile and savage. After we were there for a couple of hours, their warriors, the Coast Guard, came and took us off. That same night fourteen students from UC Berkeley, some from UC Santa Cruz, and some from San Francisco State College set out again.

It was November 9, 1969, when we spent our first night on Alcatraz. We got a ride over with some Sausalito yachtsmen. We landed at about six o’clock and hid. I guess the caretaker was alerted that we had landed. I think by newsmen. He, his three patrolmen, and their ferocious guard dog came out and tried to find us. There were fourteen of us hiding in the grass, and at times they passed within inches of us. Even with their dog they couldn’t detect us. We could see that dog, wagging his tail and barking occasionally. I guess he was used to us by then.

They soon gave up the search, and we split up into three groups, just to be safe. Some of us slept outside and some in the buildings. It was cold that night. The next morning, we did a lot of exploring, looking for food, wood supplies, places to sleep, and generally getting the lay of the land for the next landing. The place was desolate. It was so run down that it was already beginning to feel like a reservation.

We had expected the natives to attack at sunrise, but they didn’t. Finally, Thomas Hannon, the GAO’s [correction: Government Services Administration (GSA)] regional administrator for the island (the GAO has responsibility for all U.S. government surplus property), came on with the Coast Guard and a horde of newsmen. The government couldn’t find us, but the newsmen did, in one of the cell-blocks where we had spent the night. The

Foundation] and the City [of Seattle respectively,] to negotiate and submit a single application before any property would be transferred.

After negotiating from July to November of 1971, it was agreed that United Indians would lease twenty acres for a ninety-nine year period, with options for successive ninety-nine year periods without renegotiation, and have full development and administrative authority to build its Indian Cultural Center.

United Indians also required the City to provide \$600,000 to the American Indian Women’ Service League for a Social Services Center. This \$600,000 underwrote the Seattle Indian Services Commission, the City’s only Native American Public Development Authority.

The United Indians developed a Master plan which was approved by the City that provided for the development of several facilities: The Daybreak Star Arts Center, the Heritage Resource Center which included an Archives and Library, a Performing Arts Center, a Restaurant, the Peoples lodge, a multi-use facility, and a traditional Northwest Coast Longhouse.

Ground breaking for the Daybreak Star Center took place on September 27, 1975 and was completed and dedicated on May 13, 1977. Funding for the Center came from the City of Seattle, the Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, private donations from the Colville, Quinault, and Makah Tribes, and from corporations.

The Daybreak Start Center serves as the Headquarters for the United Indians which owns two other major Service Centers in the City, and leases space for another Center in downtown Seattle. The United Indians employs over 100 staff and operates 11 separate programs.

The United Indians is also working on a Master Plan for the 21st Century which includes a Pre-school through Higher Education campus, Native American Veterans Center, Student and Homeless Housing, and Long Term Care and Housing for Indian Elders.

The 21st Century Master Plan — A Native American “Commons”— is the United Indians contribution to the City’s Urban Villages and ComPlan visionary planning efforts for the next 100 years and beyond.

(Bernie Whitebear (Colville), is the Executive Director of the United Indians of All Tribes Foundation.)

[In honor & in memory, Bernie Whitebear 1937-2000, United Indians of All Tribes Foundation]

and were eager to assist in the taking down of the tipis. Their jubilation was short-lived when they discovered the press conference was called to reaffirm the Indian's claim to Fort Lawton. On signal, hundreds of Indians, followed by television news cameras, stormed past the surprised MP's for one last invasion through Fort Lawton's only access through the concertina wire.

Thus the United Indians of All Tribes Foundation was born, adding "United" and "Foundation" to the name borrowed from Alcatraz to show distinction between the two sister efforts.

The invasions and occupations had achieved on major objective, gaining commitments of support from the local residents of Seattle. Over 40 non-Indian organizations throughout King County now supported the Indian's claim to part of Fort Lawton.

A delegation from United Indians managed to fly to Washington, D.C. and testify before Congressman Morris Udall's committee on Senator Jackson's Amendments to the Land and Water Conservation Act of 1965, later referred to as Senator Jackson's Fort Lawton Bill. This delegation included Gary and Beverly Beaver, Randy Lewis, Grace Thorpe, Douglas Remington, and Bernie Whitebear.

Congressman Brock Adams received the Indian delegation in his office and pledged to support their efforts with Senators Jackson and Magnuson.

In November of 1970, a delegation from United Indians Nations including JoAnn Kauffman, Dr. Frances Svensson, Ron Gibbs, Randy Lewis and Bernie Whitebear attended the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) in Anchorage, Alaska.

[In exchange for United Indians support in passage of block-voting rights for the Small Tribes of Western Washington (STOWW), the STOWW tribes helped pass] a resolution requesting then Bureau of Indian Affairs Commissioner, Louis Bruce to place a freeze on the Fort Lawton property while in its Excess Status, thus blocking the City of Seattle's eligibility for the property. Cities, being non-federal agencies are only eligible to apply for federal property if the property has passed from "excess" to "surplus" status. The author, Vine Deloria, Jr., and newly elected President of the NCAI, Frank Ducheneauz supported the effort.

The Administrative Freeze was enacted by Commissioner Louis Bruce. Eventually, political pressure by the Department of Interior (DOI) on the BIA forced an end to the freeze, but not until considerable attention was given to the United Indians plan by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW). HEW solicited applications for use of the Fort Lawton property and Regional Director Bernard "Buck" Kelly accepted the United Indians application for part of the property prior to the City of Seattle's application filing through the Department of Interior for all of the property.

The General Services Administration, responsible for final disposition of federal surplus property, ordered [the two sister federal agencies HEW and DOI to order their counterparts,] the United Indians [of All Tribes

Coast Guard offered us a ride off, and at around noon time we went down to the exercise yard for a conference. We went down to the dock and read them our proclamation, claiming the island in the name of Indians of All Tribes and giving them our demands. We again vowed we'd be back.

This time, instead of going back to the Indian Center, I went down to UCLA. We felt that we needed more people and a little more time to think it over. By this time, we were sure that there was nothing to fear. The first two missions had confirmed this. They were like reconnaissance missions, each group returning to confirm that we'd be able to do the job.

I made a speech to the Indian students at UCLA and told them of our experiences, told them that there was nothing to fear. I said that we needed people who would be willing to live out there. I told them that it would mean a great deal to all Indians, and that it would take great dedication on the part of those that came out to stay. Eighty of them decided to come up to San Francisco. On November 20, 1969 we went out to Alcatraz, and this time we planned to stay.

Again, we came from Sausalito, and again, we came at night, dispelling the myth that Indians don't attack after dark. This time the Coast Guard put up a blockade. They tried to take our boat that night, but some of us jumped on the Coast Guard boat and told them that if they tried to take our boat, we'd take theirs. They told us to get off the island, and we told them "No. This is Indian Land. Stay clear 200 yards." They got out.

They set up a blockade. They sailed around in circles like the Indians did around wagon trains in movies and in pictures. This went on for a couple of days after that third landing. Also, that night, there were helicopters circling overhead. With the Coast Guard's searchlights and all, it was quite a spectacle.

The little Irish guy, the caretaker, came out and started blowing his bugle. He called up his boss on the phone and said, "The Indians are here, the Indians are here. I think they're here to stay. It's taken them thirty minutes to unload their boat." He told us that we were trespassing, but we just didn't give a damn. We told him that he was trespassing, and if he would cooperate, we would set up a Bureau of Caucasian Affairs and make him head of it. He laughed like hell, and later really did help us. He came over to our side.

The blockade was completely ineffective. We expected more people the next morning. Well, that day was just a fine day for sailing. The Sausalito Yacht Club just happened to have a sail that day, and there were so many boats out on the bay that the boats bringing people out to the island were able to slip by under the cover of the yachts. I don't know if the yachting that day was intentional so far as we were concerned, but it was superb!

We needed food and supplies. The blockade was still on that night (November 21), but it didn't stop us. A canoe slipped into the water, went over to San Francisco, and requested some supplies from the people over there. The mercy ship came over that night and beached on the Golden Gate

side of the island, where there's a sheer cliff. We made a makeshift ladder and brought up supplies that way. While all of this was going on, someone started a fire on the other side of the island, throwing firebombs at the rocks, to create a diversion. We followed all the rules in the book. Of course the Coast Guard fell for it.

We couldn't have survived without all the people who ran that blockade, especially those first few days, that first week. I guess the people around San Francisco and the Bay Area saw the symbolic gesture of what we were doing, saw just how important this action was. They realized that it could be possible if they would contribute something. And they did, and it was very possible. They made it possible.

Sometimes, especially later, it felt like the monthly commodities coming in for the Indians. You know, surplus food for the Indians. "Here it comes, fellas." We were sent a whole load of cans of goods and drinks containing cyclamates. I remember unloading it. I told them to take it back, and they did. Some of the cans that were given us were spoiled, leaking and probably poisonous. We weren't getting only good stuff out there. We were even getting party dresses, high-heeled shoes, white starched shirts. I even found a tuxedo.

Those were hilarious times. Someone donated a live turkey. That poor turkey. He didn't know what he was getting into. He had a beautiful coloring at first, white and other colors, but he soon turned gray, the color of the concrete. It would have been good if he'd gone into the frying pan, but he didn't. He ended up living off what garbage there was in the dump. Ended up eating glass.

At first we did all of our cooking outside on an open fire. There was a big fire on the dock. The kids would fish for crab, and we would put a big pot on and cook the crab in there. Any fish that we caught were put right in tinfoil and directly into the fire. It was good. Everyone just came and ate the food that was there. There wasn't any sense of mine and yours. Everything belonged to everybody.

We tried our best to set up housing for all the people coming onto the island. We set up a housing committee, a security committee, a school for the children. We appointed a head of security and would elect different people to work on the force. The housing committee would search out the island and find the available spots that were free for anybody to flop down on. Pete Bluecloud set up the kitchen, and he and his wife took great pains to see that it was done well.

We did a lot of singing in those days. I remember the fires at nighttime, the cold of the night, the singing around the campfire of the songs that aren't shared by the white people . . . the songs of friendship, the songs of understanding. We did a lot of singing. We sang into the early hours of the morning. It was beautiful to behold and beautiful to listen to.

Indians, and anti-war activists. Without really appreciating it at the time, the Indian movement has achieved through Jane Fonda's presence, a long sought credibility that would not have been possible otherwise.

The evening before the first invasion, a pow-wow was held at the Filipino Community Hall in south Seattle on a street today named after Martin Luther King, Jr. The purpose of the pow-wow was to announce the invasion plans to the largest possible gathering, including times and locations of the marshalling area for the organizing of car caravans.

The next day as scheduled, two half-mile long columns of vehicles began forming at the Southend Neighborhood House's Henderson Hall. The two caravans with vehicles displaying red cloth banners from car aerials, travelled on different routes to their two different invasion sites. Although an attempt was made during the pow-wow to observe the utmost secrecy, the next day, radio news reports broadcast the ongoing invasion and were received on the caravan's car radios.

The caravans reached their targeted sites on both the north and south sides of Fort Lawton and the Indians proceeded to climb fences, move in tipi poles and canvases, and set about occupying the property.

The Military Police and Army personnel responded by marching in formation and setting up skirmish lines in an attempt to close off further access to the interior areas of the fort. On the south side, Military Police tried to arrest a number of Indians who had entered the Army chapel while Sunday church services were in progress, much to the surprise of the parishioners.

As arrests and jailing in the fort stockade of the "American Indian Fort Lawton Occupation Forces" continued throughout the afternoon and early evening, hand-to-hand combat happened frequently as tempers flared on both sides due to overly aggressive handling by the MP's [and extreme efforts by the Indians to avoid capture.]

This pattern of urban guerilla warfare occurred again and again: Invasions, arrests, jailing, letters of expulsion from military property, physical effort off the fort, re-invasion

The Army began getting heat from the Pentagon about not being able to secure Fort Lawton and responded by moving in two companies of troops from Fort Lewis and fourteen truckloads of concertina wire. In what seemed like overkill, the Army cordoned off the Fort with concertina wire and manned foxholes, leaving only the main gate accessible.

A tipi encampment was set up at the main gate of Fort Lawton, and on going demonstrations to block traffic into the fort continued to be a constant form of harassment to the MP's.

After about three months, Indian leaders felt the encampment was becoming more of a liability than an asset, and plans were made for its dismantle. A press conference was scheduled at the Main Gate encampment to explain the next course of action. The MP's were ecstatic about the plans

50s. Fish-ins resulted in Indian tribal men and women and their supporters being physically beaten and arrested by State and County police. [Indian supporters included comedian Dick Gregory, actor Marlon Brando, and attorney Melvin Belli.]

The [only too recent] assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, his brother Senator Robert Kennedy and the great civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, Jr., further enraged many people, including Indians, who felt that this nation had to reassess its priorities, and in doing so, live up to the more than 300 treaties it used as a premise for stealing Indian land.

In essence, it seems there could have been no other choice for Seattle's Indian community, than to follow the activist efforts of a growing number of dissidents, discontent with the nation's seeming disregard for human equality. The stage now seemed set for the Indian community to follow the path of the "brothers and sisters" on Alcatraz, and attempt to physically occupy the Fort Lawton Military Base.

Information from the Indians of All Tribes on Alcatraz that some of them would be willing to travel to Seattle and join the occupation efforts added incentive to the on-going discussions. Similar commitments from "envoys" from Canada and other hot spots sealed the decision to invade and occupy Fort Lawton.

The "Moccasin Telegraph" worked surprising well and within days, numbers of supporters began arriving in Seattle and moved into a number of community homes. Confidence increased with the arrival of Richard Oakes, the charismatic leader of Alcatraz and Grace Thorpe, daughter of the legendary Sac & Fox athlete, Jim Thorpe.

Ongoing demonstrations by American Indian soldiers stationed at Fort Lewis south of Tacoma and near Frank's Landing on the Nisqually Indian reservation, brought together other coalitions represented by Private Deni Leonard, fishing rights activists Don and Janet McCloud, Al and Maiselle Bridges and their daughters Susette, Valerie, and Alison, Sid Mills and Hank Adams, founders of Survival of American Indians, which gave increased emphasis to the impending occupation.

This coalition was responsible for actress Jane Fonda's presence at Fort Lewis simultaneous to the date of the first invasion of Fort Lawton, March 8, 1970. [Jane Fonda was encouraged to lend her support to the Fort Lawton battle and arrived in Seattle immediately.] The support and presence of the internationally known Jane Fonda gave the invasion and occupation worldwide attention, and captured the imagination of the world press. American Indians were attacking an active military fort, along with one of the nation's leading opponents of the United States involvement in the Vietnam war.

It seemed that what began as an effort to secure a land base for urban Indians had suddenly taken on a bizarre, ready for prime time, movie scenario, complete with soldiers defending an Army against modern day

A few of us would go off alone and start talking about our experiences on the different reservations, about the more advanced problems and finding solutions to them. The outfit from Alaska would talk about their problems. The fellow from Oklahoma talked about how they got a terrible screwing. We talked of the Creeks and how they were once a great nation.

Pete Bluecloud and I, being the only Mohawks there, would talk about our own Iroquoian problems. We knew we had to keep the Idea of Alcatraz going. We knew we had to bring the experience back home, to the reservations. We vowed to ourselves to keep it going.

About a week after we had taken the island for the third time, the government began to realize that we weren't going to leave. They were dealing with a new breed of Indian. They began to use all kinds of political moves and militant threats to get us off the island.

Thomas Hannon offered to build us another American Indian Center, to replace the one in San Francisco that had mysteriously burned down about two weeks before we seized the island. He said that the Presidio, the Army Base in San Francisco, would be an ideal place for us to have the Indian Center. You know, they wanted to move us back to the fort again, where they could watch us.

We said, "This is our place. This is it. It offers the kind of isolation necessary for the kind of intellectual development we need to build our movement." This movement is one in which we are doing things for ourselves. It was just beginning. We weren't about to give it up.

They told us that we were trespassers and that they could not be responsible for our safety. They stopped delivering water to the island. They turned off the lighthouse and all of the electricity on the island by refusing to service the generator and, finally, made plans to take us off the island by force. We refused to move, and they realized that there wasn't a damned thing they could do about it. By this time, the whole world knew of the Alcatraz invasion, and the government wasn't about to risk its shaky image by evicting us.

After Alcatraz was taken, Indians started coming in from all over. The people that came were not only from the United States. They came from Canada, from Mexico, from South America, from all over. For some, it was the first time that they had met with the people of other tribes, the first time they felt a unity with all Indians. The getting together of all Indians was something undreamed of since the Ghost Dance of 1889.

Alcatraz was symbolic to a lot of people, and it meant something real to a lot of people. There are many old prophecies that speak of the younger people rising up and finding a way for the People to live. The Hopi, the spiritual leaders of the Indian people, have a prophecy that is at least 1,200 years old. It says that the People would be pushed off their land from the East to the West, and when they reached the Westernmost tip of America, they would begin to take back the land that was stolen from them.

There was one old man who came on the island. He must have been eighty or ninety years old. When he stepped up onto the dock, he was overjoyed. He stood there for a minute and then said, "At last, I am free!"

Alcatraz was a place where thousands of people had been imprisoned, some of them Indians. We sensed the spirits of the prisoners. At times it was spooky, but mostly the spirit of mercy was in the air. The spirits were free. They mingled with the spirits of the Indians that came on the island and hoped for a better future.

Ironically, Alcatraz was a fitting place for us to take. As I've said before, in many ways it was like a reservation: barren, isolated, devoid of water. When we landed, the place felt full of despair, very hopeless, very uncompromising. It wouldn't yield any kind of harvest at all. The white man has taken all of the productive land, the real Mother Earth. In a sense, the invasion represented the end of the era of the white man's harshness to Mother Earth. All the white man does is spread concrete over the land. There are no vibrations; there's no breath. Nothing can come from our Mother. She has been smothered.

When we got there, Alcatraz was twelve acres of concrete, full of barbed wire. It just looked like an army concentration camp. Coming up from the dock, there was a stair that seemed to go right up into the wall. They were huge stairs, going right to the top of the wall. I think they were made for Giants. Then we had to go across the yard into another long set of stairs to get up to the main cellblock. When you get up there, you either die of exhaustion or come away with massive muscles on your legs.

Walking into Cellblock One reminded me of walking into one of those huge airplane hangars, but when you walked further back, you found that there were no airplanes. Maybe grounded pilots, but no airplanes. We're the only kind of birds that don't fly . . . jailbirds. Jailbirds, wards of the government, prisoners of war . . . what's the difference. Before it was known as the Bureau of Indian Affairs, our "governing agency" was the War Department. We were called "Prisoners of War" then. The two agencies are synonymous. During the Second World War, the Japanese prisoner of war camps were run by the same people that run the BIA. Somebody in Washington probably said, "Hey, this is a natural!" We still consider ourselves prisoners of war. We'll always be at war with the values of this society!

On January 5, 1970, our daughter, Yvonne, fell three stories down a stairwell in the officers' quarters. Two days later she died in a San Francisco hospital. She was just thirteen. About a week before the accident, my wife Anne told me of dreams and feelings of premonition she was having. She was afraid that someone in our family would be hurt if we stayed on the island. She felt that it was time to leave. I had been thinking about leaving to develop the idea of Alcatraz in other places. However, I put her off. I wish I had listened.

Yvonne's death cast an air of gloom over the whole island. It was like a symbol of all the doubts we had hidden from ourselves during the whole

introduced amendments in Congress to the U.S. Land and Water Conservation Act of 1965, to reduce costs for surplus property from 50-100% to 0-50%. In effect if the amendment passed, the City would be able to receive the multi-million dollar property at zero cost.

[Bernie Whitebear and] members of a newly formed American Indian organization in Seattle under the name of "Kinatechitapi," (Blackfoot for "All Indians") began making overtures to the City's leaders, requesting that a portion of Fort Lawton [also] be set aside. They wanted to create an Indian Cultural Center similar to the one planned by the "Indians of All Tribes" [organization which was still] occupying Alcatraz Island.

The City Administration, obviously not taking the request seriously, responded that maybe the Indians should wait until the City received the property and then they would review the request. They suggested that in the mean time, the Indians submit their request to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. This action displayed their ignorance of both the BIA's restricted service policy, which excluded urban Indians, and also the disregard and disfavor urban Indians held for the BIA.

A few weeks later, then Mayor of Seattle, Wes Uhlman, and Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson held a press conference on the Fort Lawton property, promising the community that it could look forward to the City receiving the land for the exclusive use as a City Park. No mention was made of the [interest or] desire of the American Indian community to participate in the City's future plans for the property, nor the City's intention to include Indians in the planning process.

Follow up meetings within the Kinatechitapi organization revealed a widening philosophical split developing as to the future course of action. More conservative members favored a more diplomatic and low-key approach — to wait for the City to receive the property and resubmit their requests at that time. The other, more impatient and untrusting members of the organization favored a more extreme course of action. The conservative members said that if anyone pursued any of the more extreme remedies being discussed, they could not use the name, Kinatechitapi. This position was accepted and respected by all members, and it was understood that if a more activist element evolved, it would more likely split off and form a new organization, and both organizations would pursue their goal of gaining some of the Fort Lawton property.

After considerable discussions, the activist element feared that unless some extreme actions were taken, Indian interests would wane and dissolve as mere pipe dreams.

It should be noted that at this period in time, a great many [activist] efforts were on-going throughout the nation. Seattle had the Students for Democratic Society (SDS), the Black Panthers, United Black Contractors, Vietnam War and United Farm Workers protestors. Indian Tribes had become embroiled in fishing rights struggles against the State since the early

nation, and the first to receive a doctor, dentist, and nurse from the National Health Service Corps.

During the pre-invasion period in Seattle, Indians had little experience in preventative health care, seeking assistance only in emergency or life threatening circumstances. This situation was the result of our people being ping-ponged from one hospital to the next under the mistaken assumption that the Federal Government was responsible for the welfare of all Indians.

In reality, the two federal agencies responsible for administering the trust status and “advocacy” of American Indians: The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Indian Health Services (IHS), had [already] developed a policy that in effect meant, “Once you leave the reservation, you were no longer Indian.” A technical translation basically meant that the BIA Affairs and IHS restricted their services to Indians who still resided on or near reservations and were under the administrative authority and jurisdiction of Tribal Governments.

This policy, which began with the Federal Government’s attempt to move the Indian people off their ancestral lands and into the mainstream of society, was known as the “Termination era of the Fifties.” In an attempt to end trust status and liquidate all tribal assets, the federal government set up relocation programs moving thousands of Indians into cities with promise of better employment and educational opportunities.

This was the final injustice to Indian people by the government, after having stolen all but 55 million acres of our land, and presided over the decimation of our culture and religion. The grand planners of the Eisenhower administration saw this as the coup de grace in segregating our people from our last vestiges as a distinct race of people.

In 1969, Indians in San Francisco Bay area occupied Alcatraz Island, in an attempt to use the former federal prison site as the location for a Native American cultural center. Alcatraz was deactivated as a federal penitentiary in 1963, shortly after what is believed to have been the only successful escape from the “escape proof” prison. A Native American inmate, Al Carnes, was reported to have been an accomplice to the three escapees, who have never been captured. Rewards are still being offered for their capture.

Also in 1969, news surfaced that Fort Lawton, an active military base in Seattle, was going to become surplus property [to the Army’s active military needs]. The City of Seattle had hopes that the property could revert to City ownership and be used for a grand park, somewhat on the scale of Stanley Park in Vancouver, British Columbia.

At the time, federal law required that non-federal entities such as the City of Seattle would have to pay between 50-100% of fair market value, in order to receive [the] surplus property. This was an exorbitant cost that the City could not afford.

U.S. Senators Henry M. Jackson and Warren G. Magnuson, from Washington State, two of the most influential Senators in the U.S. Senate,

Alcatraz experience. There had always been the possibility of failure, as there is in every movement, but we had to suppress this idea in order to survive. This time was the test. It was a time to look inward.

I think we have survived. We passed the test. The sorrow couldn’t bring her back. We could only take it and deal with it. Even in death she was still within the circle, the circle of life, our universe.

A few days after Yvonne died we returned to the island to get our clothes and few possessions and left. We had to go. We needed to be away from there. We needed time to gather ourselves together. Leaving the place itself wasn’t hard, and we have never left the people.

Proclamation: To the Great White Father and All His People

We, the native Americans, re-claim the land known as Alcatraz Island in the name of all American Indians by right of discovery.

We wish to be fair and honorable in our dealings with the Caucasian inhabitants of this land, and hereby offer the following treaty:

We will purchase said Alcatraz Island for 24 dollars in glass beads and red cloth, a precedent set by the white man’s purchase of a similar island about 300 years ago. We know that \$24 in trade goods for these sixteen acres is more than was paid when Manhattan Island was sold, but we know that land values have risen over the years. Our offer of \$1.24 per acre is greater than the 47 cents per acre the white men are now paying the California Indians for their land.

We will give to the inhabitants of this land a portion of that land for their own, to be held in trust by the American Indian Government for as long as the sun shall rise and the rivers go down to the sea — to be administered by the Bureau of Caucasian Affairs (BCA). We will further guide the inhabitants in the proper way of living. We will offer them our religion, our education, our life-ways, in order to help them achieve our level of civilization and thus raise them and all their white brothers up from their savage and unhappy state. We offer this treaty in good faith and wish to be fair and honorable in our dealings with all white men.

We feel that this so-called Alcatraz Island is more than suitable as an Indian Reservation, as determined by the white man’s own standards. By this we mean that this place resembles most Indian reservations, in that:

It is isolated from modern facilities, and without adequate means of transportation.

It has no fresh running water.

The sanitation facilities are inadequate.

There are no oil or mineral rights.

There is no industry and so unemployment is very great.

There are no health care facilities.

The soil is rocky and non-productive and the land does not support game.

There are no educational facilities.

The population has always been held as prisoners and kept dependent upon others.

Further, it would be fitting and symbolic that ships from all over the world, entering the Golden Gate, would first see Indian land, and thus be reminded of the true history of this nation. This tiny island would be a symbol of the great lands once ruled by free and noble Indians.

What use will we make of this land?

Since the San Francisco Indian Center burned down, there is no place for Indians to assemble and carry on tribal life here in the white man's city. Therefore, we plan to develop on this island several Indian institutions:

A CENTER FOR NATIVE AMERICAN STUDIES will be developed which will education them to the skills and knowledge relevant to improve the lives and spirits of all Indian peoples. Attached to this center will be traveling universities, managed by Indians, which will go to the Indian Reservations, learning those necessary and relevant materials now about.

AN AMERICAN INDIAN SPIRITUAL CENTER which will practice our ancient tribal religious and sacred healing ceremonies. Our cultural arts will be featured and our young people trained in music, dance, and healing rituals.

AN INDIAN CENTER OF ECOLOGY which will train and support our young people in scientific research and practice to restore our lands and waters to their pure and natural state. We will work to depollute the air and water of the Bay Area. We will seek to restore fish and animal life to the area and to revitalize sea life which has been threatened by the white man's way. We will set up facilities to desalt sea water for human benefit.

A GREAT INDIAN TRAINING SCHOOL will be developed to teach our people how to make a living in the world, improve our standard of living, and to end hunger and unemployment among all our people. This training school will include a center for Indian arts and crafts, and an Indian restaurant serving native foods, which will restore Indian culinary arts. This center will display Indian arts and offer Indian foods to the public, so that all may know of the beauty and spirit of the traditional INDIAN ways.

Some of the present buildings will be taken over to develop and AMERICAN INDIAN MUSEUM, which will depict our native food & other cultural contributions we have to given to the world. Another part of the museum will present some of the things the white man has given to the Indians in return for the land and life he took: disease, alcohol, poverty and cultural decimation (As symbolized by old tin cans, barbed wire, rubber tires, plastic containers, etc.). Part of this museum will remain a dungeon to

the United States.

Can 50 states and 225,000,000 people now shield themselves from their own obligations under their Constitution and their treaty contracts to deny Indian people the protections due them? They can — it is obvious — because they have done it.

The question is simply whether the United States and its citizens shall continue doing so.

**Taking Back Fort Lawton:
Meeting the Needs of Seattle's Native American
Community Through Conversion
by Bernie Whitebear**

[Sinixt / Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation]

From 'Race, Poverty & the Environment', Spring-Summer 1994, San Francisco; an edited version with some removed and other added lines was later published as 'A Brief History of the United Indians of All Tribes Foundation' at the site of the United Indians of All Tribes Foundation in 2006 (the link to the article is currently non-functional), with the additional lines from this later version added here in brackets

The March 8, 1970 invasion and occupation of Fort Lawton, an active military base in the northwest section of Seattle, was an attempt by Seattle's Native American community to establish a land base to serve the largest urban Native American population west of Tulsa and north of San Francisco.

Before the invasions and occupations, which lasted approximately three months, there were no Federal, State, County, or City funds available for services to Native Americans in Seattle. The only social services were provided by an organization of Indian women, operating from an old church, existing primarily on donations and volunteer help. The organization was the American Indian Women's Service League.

Pearl Warren was the director, and Joyce Reyes was the League's President. Other important members who have since passed away were Ella Aquino, Josephine Kauffman, Dorothy Lombard, and Tillie Cavanaugh. Mary Jo Butterfield, Alma Chastain, Adeline Garcia and Lindsay Buxton continue as important members of the community today.

The only other services available were provided by an Indian free clinic, operating from donated space [on the 2nd floor] at the Marine Public Health Hospital [on Beacon Hill, using the Ortho clinic] three nights a week [when not in use by the hospital], and staffed by volunteer doctors, nurses, and donated pharmaceuticals, which were stored in the lady's restroom.

The Indian free clinic later organized as the Seattle Indian Health Board [SIHB] and today is the largest urban Indian health delivery system in the

Richard Oakes, Alcatraz and More

by Hank Adams

From 'Akwesasne Notes', Late Autumn, 1972

(Hank Adams is 29, an Assiniboine-Sioux who resides at Frank's Landing, Washington. He has been active in fishing rights, and was himself the target of a late-night vigilante shooting in February, 1971. He was an acquaintance of Richard Oakes — and he wrote after his death this memoir.)

The death of Richard Oakes provides emphatic proof that there has been no ebb in the sickness and sea of violence which White America has maintained against Indian people throughout its history to sweep away the lives of our nameless and our renowned.

The flood of Indian deaths and murders has swept unabated throughout all the states — repeatedly in California, New York, New Mexico, Arizona, Pennsylvania, Minnesota and Washington — beyond American borders in Canada, Mexico and Brazil to cover the full expanse and breadth of the Native American continents. But in the United States the record of late is most foul and savage.

The pastime of killing Indians has not been surrendered from the self-esteemed “pioneer spirit” of White America in the 1970's. Both policemen and private citizens, as vigilantes and as hunters, recognize no sanctions against stalking Indians and shooting them for any cause and on any occasion.

If Richard Oakes is only to be publicly identified with Alcatraz to the public by news media, then let the public remember that Alcatraz was instrumental in placing the needs and concerns of Indian people upon the national agenda. Remember that, despite its own failure in claims, Alcatraz had direct and powerful bearing upon the final results in settlement of claims with Alaska Natives, in return of Blue Lake to Taos Pueblo, Mt. Adams to the Yakimas, the establishment of DQU [Deganawidah-Quetzalcoatl University] in Davis, California, and the Seattle Indian involvement in the President of the U.S. “legacy of parks” decisions at Ft. Lawton, Washington.

For Indians, Alcatraz was never meant for confinement of people or of purpose nor to constrain the ideas or dreams of any. Its impact has been felt elsewhere.

Richard Oakes' presence beyond Alcatraz and his influence upon many Indian people shall continue to live within the body and soul of Indian experience. Born to the American soil, and responding strongly to his peoples' struggle and suffering upon it, the living spirit of Richard Oakes could not now die nor cease to be remembered upon American land.

Neither elegy nor eulogy can satisfy his life or death. But both can be looked to for generation within this land a legacy of protection for Indian people throughout it, a simple legacy promised Indian people during the infancy of

symbolize both those Indian captives who were incarcerated for challenging white authority, and those who were imprisoned on reservations. The museum will show the noble and the tragic events of Indian history, including the broken treaties, the documentary of the Trail of Tears, the Massacre of Wounded Knee, as well as the victory over Yellow Hair Custer and his army.

In the name of all Indians, therefore, we re-claim this island for our Indian nations, for all these reasons. We feel this claim is just and proper, and that this land should rightfully be granted to us for as long as the rivers shall run and the sun shall shine.

Signed,

Indians of All Tribes
November 1969
San Francisco, California

Declaration of the Return of Indian Land

How Did We Lose Our Land?

Wars – Massacres – Fraud – Occupation – Expropriation – Forced Sales – Division of Tribal Lands – Deprivation of Water – Flooding.

Who Took It?

Government – Railroad – Oil – Mining – Timber Companies – Settlers – Homesteaders – Robbers.

When England ruled our right to our land was recognized by the British Crown. After the revolution, Indian title was recognized by the United States in proclamations by Presidents, in Treaties & in statutes. Vast areas of the United States were ceded by Indian tribes to the government. Could anyone believe that any Indian tribe would voluntarily cede their ancestral land, more precious to them than life itself, and the sole source of satisfaction for their spiritual, religious and material needs? Almost before the Treaties were signed they were broken – in order to take still more land.

Finally within the past two or three decades the government has confirmed the wrongs done to the Indian people. Statutes have been passed concerning illegality, unconstitutionality and unconscionable behavior and the courts and the Indian claims commission have been authorized to find specifically the types, places and victims of these wrongs.

How Does The Government Propose To Right These Wrongs?

In place of their land the government offers to the Indian tribes, and the Indian people, money. How much money? For California they offer 47 cents an acre for land which, in some areas is worth 5 million times that. For the hundreds of billions taken from or earned by Indian land – nothing. For more than one hundred years that Indians have been without their land – nothing.

Will Indians Accept Money For Their Land?

To the government of the United States the Indian people say: You cannot be relieved from your legal and moral obligations, your conscience cannot be assuaged, the historical, spiritual and material needs of the Indian people cannot be satisfied – except by what we demand and by this declaration affirm.

The Return of Our Land

Under the white man's law we have the right to the return of our land. When your white man illegally deprives another of his land the wronged one always gets back his land. At this very moment the government is promising the Taos Indians that they reject their Indian Claims Commission checks and their historic Blue Lake land will be restored to them. It would have been better for the white man's conscience, self-esteem & world-image if he had done what we must do. Indian patience and endurance being exhausted, we cannot, will not wait any longer. From the facts, the logic and the verities we have recited it flows as inevitably and relentlessly as the great rivers of our country, that we must, and we do declare,

Our Land Is Ours Again

As a first step we announce on behalf of all the Indian people, or tribes, that from this day forward we shall exercise dominion, and all rights of use and possession, over Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay. Hence forth, from time to time, the Indian people, or tribes or other groupings of Indian people, will similarly announce the restoration of other land to Indian dominion, use and possession. What we have done by this declaration we have done [as] Indians – but to those whites who desire their government to be a government of law, justice and morality we say,

We Have Done It Also For You.

Indians of All Tribes, Inc.
Alcatraz Island, May 31st, 1970

Rock Talk

The following question was asked of Alcatraz residents: "What would you like to see on Alcatraz?"

Vicky Santana, Blackfoot, Browning, Montana, former child welfare case worker, works at the Alcatraz mainland office, said: "My tribe always says when the buffalo comes back they will come from the west, I hope that Alcatraz is the beginning."

Douglas Remington, Ute, Denver, Colorado, former teacher, current educational coordinator on the rock said: "I would like to see Alcatraz returned to its original state, with a blending of the buildings in harmony with the earth."

Marilyn Maracle, Mohawk, Six Nations Reservation, Ontario, Canada, former counselor O.E.O., works in Public Relations Alcatraz office said: "I would like to see a new way of life, which is a return of the old life style in today's terms."

Willie Lewis, Apache – Pima, Phoenix, Arizona, former upholsterer, currently working on the shuttle boat as a security guard said: "I would like to see hot water."

David Leach, Colville – Sioux, college student, on the first invasion, former member of Alcatraz council said: "I would like to see the strengthening and the return of our Indian religions by establishing a branch of the Native American Church and a revival of the Sioux and other religions."

Grace F. Thorpe, Sac & Fox



Oohosis, Cree from Canada, and a friend on the mainland dock on the day of their forced removal from Alcatraz Island, June 11, 1971.