

TREATY RIGHTS AND RESPONDING TO ANTI-INDIAN ACTIVITY

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This essay examines the evolution of modern anti-Indian movement in North America, and the varied ways that Indian and Indian support movements have responded to them. It is written by an organizer with a background in Native support groups throughout the Upper Midwest with a perspective in support of treaty rights.

The essay contends that anti-Indian movements cannot be countered without an understanding of deeper economic, political, and cultural issues. While Indians and some non-Indians in a certain region may be at loggerheads over treaty rights today, tomorrow they could be fighting together against the real threat to both their livelihoods -- governmental and corporate policies.

Some historical context is needed to understand the modern anti-Indian movement, which has its roots in Western society's longstanding effort to exterminate indigenous cultures. In much of North America, the theft of Indian national territories was not carried out to open the land for white settlement, but rather the other way around. Native lands were coveted by railroad, mineral, logging, and other interests, which widely advertised the promise of free land. Settlers were sent to claim land within the sovereign territories of many Indian nations, often unaware of or ill-prepared for the hostile reception they would face. The inevitable clash justified a rescue by federal armed forces, thus securing the land for business interests. Tribal leaders were convinced, coerced, or tricked into signing a total of 371 treaties up through the 1870's, ceding almost all their land to the government, save for some small reservations. By Supreme Court ruling, these reservations constitute "dependent nations."

While some Indian resistance was crushed by dramatic massacres, for the most part it was subdued by a combination of disease, alcohol, food rationing, the cooperation of Indian collaborators, and the theft of children for boarding schools - a situation not radically unlike today. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), until its transfer to the Interior Department, was part of the War Department. White homesteaders were used to police Indian people - some taking the task more seriously and viciously than the Army would have them, and others coming to see Indian neighbors as good trading partners. Indians were given U.S. citizenship in 1924 - some against their wishes - in addition to their Indian national citizenship. In 1936, federal authorities established tribal councils on the reservations, some superseding traditional forms of government.

Nevertheless, even against these overwhelming odds, the traditional cultures and religions (and even some governments) survived underground. Technologies and practices adapted to Western society, but the core values of Native peoples remained, including their strong relationship to the land. The traditionalists literally emerged from hiding in the 1960s and '70s, inspired by the example of African Americans, Latinos, and others. Members of the younger Indian generation were told by their elders of the definition of their Peoples not simply as tribes, but as sovereign nations (some with a larger land and population base than some United Nations member states). They found the legal basis of the supposedly 'old and outdated' treaties backed by Article Six of the even older U.S. Constitution as part of the body of law constituting the "Supreme Law of the Land." They found that these treaties guaranteed certain rights on the ceded lands off the

reservations, and strengthened their control over ownership of reservation land.

The modern Indian movement met heavy and sometimes physical resistance from all branches of government, including the BIA, FBI, state police, Justice Department, and some tribal councils. The 1973 Army-directed siege of Wounded Knee, South Dakota proved to be a defining moment. Soon afterwards, through the efforts of grassroots Native organizations, federal courts began to recognize the treaties as legally binding international documents, overriding many state and even federal laws. Congress and the White House couldn't reverse most of these decisions even if they wanted to.

In the meantime, some of the same business interests that had initially colonized Indian lands found themselves becoming more exposed and vulnerable in their new Third World frontiers, and decided to return some operations to their safer old stomping grounds. In the 1970's and '80s, they took another look at cheap resources on Indian- controlled and Indian-ceded lands, including a large percentage of the coal, oil, and uranium in western North America. These companies correctly saw the Indian movement, and the treaties, as probable obstacles to their plans. It is in this context that the modern anti- Indian movement emerged.

THE ANTI-INDIAN MOVEMENT

The modern anti-Indian movement was created out of a white "backlash" against gains made by the modern Indian movement since the 1960's. At least five major factors motivate anti-Indian groups. The first is the call for "equal rights for whites" - that the increased legal powers of the tribes infringes on the liberties of the individual white American taxpayer. The use of civil rights imagery can reach such extremes that whites are described as an oppressed people victimized by "Red Apartheid," and the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., is invoked in support of an agenda to roll back Indian rights.

The second factor is access to natural resources. These resources can be fish or game, land or water, but the case is the same: no citizens should have "special rights" to use the resources. (It is not mentioned that non-Indians also can retain property use rights over land they sell.) The case is made in anti-treaty pamphlets such as "Are We Giving America Back to the Indians?," "200 Million Custers," and the ironically titled book Don't Blame the Indians: Native Americans and the Mechanized Destruction of Fish and Wildlife by Massachusetts writer Ted Williams.

The third factor is the issue of economic dependency and sovereignty. In a rural reflection of the "Welfare Cadillac" myths used against urban African Americans, all reservation Indians are said to wallow in welfare, food stamps, free housing and medical care, affirmative action programs, and gargantuan federal cash payments - all tax-free, of course. (No one has to pay state sales tax on reservations, but otherwise Indians have had virtually identical tax obligations as non-Indians.) While any quick drive through a reservation will show the Third World conditions Indian peoples have to live under, anti-Indian groups maintain that these conditions are caused by alcoholism and the breakdown of the Indian family, rather than the reverse. In the same breath, the groups denounce any tribal effort to build some economic self-sufficiency, through appropriate industries, small businesses, tourism campaigns, gaming, or the sale of natural resources. The message is clear and consistent: Indians should be kept under the poverty line, by any means possible.

The fourth factor is the attitude of cultural superiority. Cultural bias comes out in many ways: racist team logos and mascots, the excavation of mounds and burial sites, disrespect of sacred

objects such as feathers and drums, and efforts to restrict Native languages and bilingual education. Any Indian objection to these practices more often than not provokes a strong counter-reaction. The very existence of a non-Western belief system, rooted in the middle of the most powerful Western nation, is seen by anti-Indian groups as a fundamental obstacle to overcome.

The fifth factor is simple racism. This includes not only vicious slurs and violent harassment of Indian people, but also the widespread belief that Indians are unfit to govern themselves. Williams describes Indian people as "children," as lazy recipients of outsiders' hand-outs. In a right-wing context, this view can easily be translated into a myth that holds Indians as passive components in a conspiracy run by more intelligent non-Indians. The final step of advocating genocide is not that difficult to make. In the words of one Wisconsin protester, "Just wipe 'em out." Anti-Indian groups also make an issue out of Indian people who look white, accusing them of using their "blood quantum" to obtain government benefits. Yet Indian identity is generally more cultural than racial, and based on tribal definition and self-definition.

Most anti-Indian groups go to great lengths to deny any trace of racism, and will even point to members whose great-grandmothers were Indian in order to prove their point. While many white supremacist groups see an organizing windfall in anti-Indian movements, there are also some racists who will make an 'exception' for Indians, who they romanticize as noble savages resisting big government. They see Indians as a pre-Christian warrior race (not unlike Hitler's images of ancient Teutonic warriors) that is being driven off the land. In 1982, Posse Comitatus leader James Wickstrom's Posse Noose Report praised the Big Mountain Navajo fight against relocation as a struggle against Jewish interests in the Peabody Coal company. According to the New York Times (Oct 4, 1991), Alabama Klan leader Asa Earl Carter may have posed as the "Cherokee" Forrest Carter to write the best-selling mystical portrayal of Indian life *The Education of Little Tree*. These complexities only show the necessity of Indian unity with African Americans, Jews, Latinos, and others that have been targeted by racist organizations.

THE WEST

The modern anti-Indian movement was born in the Pacific Northwest and moved from there to the Northern Great Plains, the Upper Midwest, the Southwest, East Coast, and Canada. Along the Pacific Coast where tribal fish harvests form the basis of the traditional tribal economies, the backlash to Indian rights was first felt in the 1960's. In Washington, Oregon, and Northern California, these harvests are seen as a threat to the commercial fishing industry (despite the real threat posed by pollution and huge fishing trawlers). Washington anti-Indian groups mushroomed in the 1970's, after Federal Judge George Boldt ruled that tribal members were entitled to 50 percent of the state salmon harvest. The leading group, Steelhead/Salmon Protective Association and Wildlife Network (S/SPAWN), was joined by such groups as the Interstate Congress for Equal Rights and Responsibilities (ICERR) and the Property Owners Association. The groups formed a base in the state legislature, in local communities, and among violence-prone vigilantes who shot at and beat up Indians on a regular basis. At one point in the early 1980's, the anti-treaty forces managed to get a statewide referendum passed, but could not sustain their movement after the State finally began to negotiate with the tribes on a government-to-government basis.

Meanwhile, in the Northern Great Plains, land and water disputes erupted between the tribes and white ranchers. The result was the formation of Montana groups like the Fast Slope Taxpayers Association, All Citizens Equal (ACE), and the Citizens Rights Organization (CRO); groups in the Dakotas like the Cheyenne River Landowners Association, and the North Dakota Committee

for Equality, and Nebraska groups like the Concerned Citizens Council. Some of these groups have members living on reservations, which have been heavily allotted (divided) since the 1920s. Resident whites voted for Bennett County to secede from South Dakota's Pine Ridge Reservation, and other whites have opposed many forms of tribal jurisdiction.

Connections of Western U.S. groups to organized right-wing networks have been documented. The Coors brewing family in Colorado has donated to the cause, as it has donated to other groups involved in the Western "Sagebrush Rebellion." The Center for World Indigenous Studies, based in Washington State, has also documented links with Christian Identity and neo-Nazi groups such as the Idaho based Aryan Nations. In its report "Competing Sovereignities in North America and the Right Wing Anti-Indian Movements," the Center states that "individuals associated with the anti-Indian movement now appear to have occasional, if not frequent association with right-wing extremist groups." For example, an ACE chapter vice president on Montana's Flathead Reservation has been known to engage in Identity activities. In 1991, the Aryan Nations sided with the Idaho state government against the Coeur d'Alene Indians' claim to Coeur d'Alene Lake.

THE MIDWEST

In the Upper Midwest, the 1983 Voigt decision affirmed the treaty rights of the Anishinabe (Chippewa) to harvest off-reservation natural resources in Northern Wisconsin, Northeastern Minnesota, and Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The decision upheld the treaties of 1837, 1842, and 1854, which secured U.S. access to the Lake Superior region's timber and copper. (Many local settlers maintained a respectful relationship with the Chippewa through the 1800s - even protecting the Wisconsin Chippewa from forced removal - until the beginnings of sport fishing. Traditional Chippewa spearfishing in Wisconsin ceded territory was outlawed in 1908.) At the same time as the 1983 court ruling, mining companies began moving back into ceded territory, potentially endangering the fish, deer, and wild rice that the treaties guarantee to the Chippewa. (It seems to be no coincidence that Wisconsin's Republican Governor Tommy Thompson's top aide, who has tried unsuccessfully to convince Chippewa bands to sell their rights, is a lobbyist-on-leave for at least two mining firms interested in these minerals.)

Anti-Indian sentiment in Northern Wisconsin - seemingly dormant since white vigilantes fought against Menominee Indians in 1975 - regrouped in opposition to the Chippewa in the 1980's. Some whites decried what they saw as the "rape" of the fish resource, vital to the local tourist economy, even though the Chippewa never took more than three percent of the fish. Among the local groups were Equal Rights for Everyone (ERFE), and the Wisconsin Alliance for Rights and Resources (WARR). The groups merged in 1987 with Protect Americans' Rights and Resources (PARR), led by paper mill foreman Larry Peterson. PARR committed itself to lobbying Congress to limit the legal power of the treaties, which it did through lobbying and recall efforts against politicians. (PARR had some clout in the state's powerful paper industry - an industry which at one time unsuccessfully urged the state AFL-CIO to take an anti-treaty stance.)

At the same time, protesters clad in hunter blaze orange began gathering at boat landings on Spring nights during the two-week Chippewa spearfishing season. They chanted racist taunts such as "timber niggers," "welfare warriors," and "spearchuckers," and carried signs reading, "Save a Spawning Walleye, Spear a Pregnant Squaw," and "Too Bad Custer Ran Out of Bullets." The often drunk crowds threw rocks, bottles, and full beer cans. The image-conscious PARR leadership left it up to individual members whether to protest at the lakes. This initial timidity led to the formation of a more militant group, Stop Treaty Abuse (STA), led by pizza parlor owner (and ex- Illinoisan) Dean Crist. Crist marketed an alcoholic beverage he dubbed "Treaty Beer,"

and organized mass rallies and civil disobedience, claiming to take his inspiration from Dr. King.

Starting in 1988, STA organized thousands of protesters to go to the boat landings, and the level of violence increased markedly. On the roads leading to and from the lakes, spearers' and other treaty supporters' tires were slashed, vehicles run into ditches, and elders nearly run down. On the landings, Chippewa were assaulted, threatened with death, harassed with whistles and mock drum chants, and pipe bombs were exploded. On the lakes, spearing boats were rammed, swamped, and blockaded by protest boats, youths fired metal ball bearings with high-powered wristrocket slingshots, and snipers fired rifles from the shoreline. Spearer Walt Bresette said in 1990, "Currently, the only Chippewa who are spearfishing are those willing to risk their lives. Everyone else, through violence or threat of violence, has already lost their rights."

Central Wisconsin is the headquarters of some right-wing populist groups, such as the John Birch Society and the Posse Comitatus. While the anti-treaty groups seem home-grown in the depressed northeastern counties of the state, some links to the national far-right are evident. Crist was quoted in the Wisconsin State Journal in 1990 that David Duke "is saying the same stuff we have been saying, like he might have been reading it from STA literature." In 1989, the Milwaukee Sentinel reported the formation of a death squad, armed with land mines and offering money for the assassination of two Indian leaders. The same year, notes were found of a phone call from the "AN Underground" (a possible reference to the Aryan Nations) urging anti-Indian snipers to open fire on spearing boats on their way to the lakes. PARR leaders Wayne Powers and Darlene Hangartner also spoke at meetings of the state's minuscule Populist Party chapter; and Milwaukee Skinheads of the White Patriot League have attended PARR rallies, and Klan members may have been present at at least one boat landing.

Elsewhere in the Midwest, the potential still exists for similar anti-Indian movements to grow. Opposition to Chippewa fishing in Michigan has developed since the 1979 Fox decision upheld treaty rights, resulting in groups such as the Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) and Enough Is Enough. In Northeast Minnesota, only the Fond du Lac Chippewa spearfish, with no protests yet apparent. In Northwest Minnesota some non-Indian residents of the White Earth Chippewa Reservation have opposed Chippewa claims on lands illegally allotted (divided) earlier this century. White Earth Equal Rights Committee and Totally Equal Americans (TEA) have taken up the cause. (As with timber and water rights, the issues of land rights has serious economic implications.) In Illinois, the white backlash centers on cultural/religious issues, such as Indian efforts to change demeaning team mascots, to preserve burial sites, or rebury their dead interred in museums and tourist attractions.

CANADA

The anti-Indian movement in Canada is still in its nascent stages, but its potential is virtually boundless. While Indian issues are considered marginal in the United States, in Canada they have taken center stage. The question of sovereignty has become paramount due to the secession drive in Quebec, and due to the Indian majority population on large expanses of Northern lands. The survival of aboriginal peoples challenges the very definition of Canada as a nation-state, and would also challenge the definition of an independent Quebec. Anti-Indian sentiment has been growing slowly since the Native assertion of sovereignty came into public view in the 1960s. Reaction has ranged from protest camps at Ontario bingo halls to the opposition of a white minority to the planned partition of the Northwest Territories into Dene (Athabaskan) and Inuit (Eskimo) self-governing regions. Extensive Indian land claims in British Columbia and other

provinces has aroused fierce opposition from timber, mining, energy, and fishing interests.

The 1990 armed confrontation between Mohawks and the Canadian armed forces provided fertile ground for anti-Indian groups. During the crisis, numerous spontaneous attacks against Indian people took place throughout the Montreal area. Many residents of the city of Chateauguay had an ugly reaction to the Mohawk blockade of a St. Lawrence River bridge linking them to Montreal. A former Montreal policeman formed a group of these residents called Solidarit, (Solidarity). The group held regular rallies in the summer of 1990 (one drawing 4000 people), which at times erupted into pitched battles with provincial police, who it claimed was not being tough enough on the Indians. The group's key demand, that the Army be mobilized to break the blockade, was taken up by the local Member of Parliament, and was met by the provincial and federal premiers. Solidarit, also formed the local vigilante patrol Justicier (Justice Committee), which intimidated local businesses that had donated food to the Mohawks. Solidarit, followers used rocks to pelt car caravans evacuating Mohawks from the area (using a local radio station to announce the secret routes), causing one Mohawk elder to die of a heart attack.

Canadian anti-Indian activists have been encouraged by their counterparts south of the border. Crist often speaks in Canada, even during important periods back home in Wisconsin. During the Mohawk crisis, the Confederate Knights of America, based in Huntsville, N.C., passed out leaflets inside the English-language Montreal Gazette. Klan members were present at some of the Solidarit, protests, according to local white Qu, b, cois residents.

NATIONAL GROUPS

Anti-Indian groups throughout the continent are beginning to better coordinate their efforts. Both PARR and ICERR say they are national organizations representing thousands of members throughout the United States. But they and other groups have united in a national coalition known as the Citizens Equal Rights Alliance (CERA). Its executive and advisory boards reflect participation from at least 13 states. CERA's national headquarters and president Bill Covey, are based in Montana. CERA concentrates on pressuring Congress to modify or abrogate treaties. The National Association of Counties (NACO) has also led lobbying efforts, funded by county governments, to "modify" the impact of treaties on non-Indians. Perhaps the most insidious national groups are those that use legitimate sports or conservation images to cover for their anti-Indian activity. Among these groups are the National Wildlife Association and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Local chapters of other environmental, sports, or resort owners organizations can turn overnight into anti-Indian groups, if not first approached with alterative information. Some ecological and animal rights groups - who took issue with Inuit whaling, Cree fur trapping, or Havasupai jurisdiction in the Grand Canyon - were dissuaded from continuing their campaigns after pressure from pro-Indian groups.

Another source of resistance to Indian rights comes from some archaeologists and anthropologists, who defend their professional "right" to dig up and display Indian people's ancestors and sacred objects. They militantly contend that the interest of science cannot be subordinated to the interest of the tribes. This is especially said to be true when the deceased cannot be directly tied to the tribe asking for their return, even though the tribes see themselves as the caretakers of all who are buried on their ancestral lands. When the Smithsonian Institution finally "agreed" in 1991 to return some bones for reburial, it set up a board made up of leading figures opposing reburial to review each claim. North Dakota reburial advocate Pemina Yellowbird said, "If this society has no respect for our ancestors who have passed on, it cannot

have respect for us who are living."

The anti-drug sentiment that has swept the country has resulted in a Supreme Court ban on peyote, an Indian sacrament that previously was exempted from anti-drug laws for members of the Native American Church. Wisconsin police have gone so far as to confiscate samples of ceremonial sage and tobacco for drug testing, at the request of anti-Indian protesters. No matter what the defining issue, anti-Indian activity can emerge from any number of sources. The 1992 Columbus quincentenary has turned into a symbolic flashpoint for anti-Indian activity, particularly from government officials and local communities frustrated by Indian objections to their celebration plans.

THE PRO-INDIAN MOVEMENT

The pro-Indian movement is defined as Indian groups and Indian support groups. Many of the support groups were specifically founded in response to the formation of anti-Indian groups, but have since taken on a life of their own and tackled other issues. The "movement supports treaty rights, and counters racism, cultural and religious bias directed against Indian people. The support groups take it as their duty to lessen racism in their own non-Indian communities. This is done through cultural events, media work, TV and radio programs, distribution of factual materials, and the development of curricula on Indian history and culture for the schools. Wisconsin Indian groups won the introduction of mandatory public school curriculum in 1990, largely because legislators agreed that anti-Indian beliefs should not so easily be passed on to the next generation. PARR has announced plans to picket schools in protest of the move. In a strange twist such anti-Indian groups have focused more public attention on Indian values and traditions, resulting in the long term in a wider public understanding - precisely the opposite of their goals. Some Chippewa have publicly thanked PARR for agitating against them, since they have made more legal gains than they would have in its absence. Other Indian groups around the continent also see anti-Indian activity as an ironic opportunity for improving their situation beyond the status quo that existed before that activity began.

Many Indian activists are acutely aware of government policies of "divide-and-conquer" when it comes to their white neighbors. Even more so than most support groups, some Indian groups have developed a sophisticated class analysis of non-Indian communities, tying declines in the economy (such as unemployment and the closing of small businesses) to the search for an Indian scapegoat. They tend to emphasize the outside "common enemy" -whether governments or corporations - that confront both communities. Tied to this common enemy is often a threat to the environment shared by Indians and non-Indians alike.

The late Muskogee Creek spiritual leader Philip Deere said in 1981, "Multinational corporations don't care what color you are; they're going to step on you. They're going to slap you in the face like they did the Indians. So you are going to be the next Indians". Chippewa activist Walt Bresette put the same idea in a local context by saying, "Sooner or later, people in Northern Wisconsin will realize that the environmental threat is more of a threat to their lifestyle than Indians who go out and spear fish...I think, in fact, that we have more things in common with the anti-Indian people than we have with the State of Wisconsin."

In South Dakota, Lakota (Sioux) Indians and white ranchers were at odds over water rights in the 1970s, until underground water supplies were threatened by mining and energy interests. Lakota leaders approached the ranchers with the news that if corporate plans were allowed to proceed, there would be no water left in ten years to argue about. Together with environmentalists they

formed the Black Hills Alliance, which successfully headed off major mining and coal slurry projects. This three-way alliance was repeated around the country, from the Western Shoshone fight to stop the M-X missile in Nevada, to the Cowboy and Indian Alliance (CIA) in Montana's coal country, to Wisconsin rural whites' support for using Chippewa treaties to stop metallic sulphide mines. These alliances have not only scared the boards of resource companies, but have lessened the appeal of anti-Indian groups by showing who is really interested in protecting the land.

LEGAL STRATEGIES

Pro-Indian groups use legal, educational/organizing, and action strategies to lessen the appeal of anti-Indian groups. Legal strategies center both on strengthening the treaties in federal court, and on blocking harassment by anti-Indian groups. Any court victory for the tribes presents anti-Indian groups with *fait accompli*, since few such decisions have been overturned on appeal. The risk is, of course, that decisions can go both ways, and Indian nations can find their sovereignty infringed by a judge representing the colonizing power. Yet in Washington state, the anti-Indian movement was largely marginalized by a court decision allowing the state and tribal governments to co-manage natural resources in treaty-ceded territories. The decision gives the tribes legal standing to limit off-reservation projects that may endanger salmon. The interest of the resource was put ahead of either Indian or non-Indian interests, removing S/SPAWN's main arguments.

In Wisconsin, Federal Judge Barbara Crabb issued a mixed series of rulings on the treaties during the late 1980s and early 1990s. In 1991, the Lac du Flambeau Chippewa asked her to keep protesters away from the boat landings, to order three county sheriffs to enforce laws against protesters, and to stop protesters from physically harassing tribal members, especially on the lakes. She rejected the first two requests, but granted the third - issuing an injunction that strictly limited STA's direct action options. The order was backed by undercover observers from the FBI and U.S. Marshals (who ironically have been the main culprits in violence against the American Indian Movement since Wounded Knee). Anti-Indian leaders also knew that the state's Hate Crimes Law could be used to stiffen penalties against them if they assaulted Indians. On one hand, such federal and state intervention may strengthen the identification of Indians with "big government" in the eyes of some populist-minded whites. The use of federal agents could later prove to be a double-edged sword that eventually turns against "radical" Indians and environmentalists, since government action often tries to appear neutral by attacking "extremism on both sides." On the other hand, Crabb's court order effectively scared hundreds of potential protesters away from the lakes, severely embarrassing both STA and PARR.

EDUCATIONAL AND ORGANIZING STRATEGIES

The most important long-term strategy is education and organizing. This is especially true in the white "border towns" near the reservations, where even a small anti-racist minority can dramatically lessen anti-Indian sentiment. The use of reservation radio stations - such as WOJB on Lac Courte Oreilles (Wisconsin), and KILI on Pine Ridge (South Dakota) - has proved invaluable in this effort. Many educational strategies focus on building cultural understanding, fostering knowledge of the legal basis of treaties, or the idea of living in peace with one's neighbors.

Another approach is to directly refute the false claims made by anti-Indian groups (about resources, welfare, and other issues), point by point. While this may be necessary, it is important to recognize the irrationality of many of these claims, and realize they are put forth for deeper

economic, political, and psychological reasons. In other words, if one "fact" is effectively disproven, it will quickly be replaced by another fraudulent claim. The "facts" are there to fill more substantive needs; only by addressing those needs, and putting forth an entirely new framework for viewing the conflict, can we hope to erode the grassroots base of anti-Indian groups. It is also important not to let these groups set the agenda for debate, such as fish population or blood quantum statistics, but to focus on issues that THEY HAVE TO RESPOND TO.

Indian activists are often very familiar with their adversaries in anti-Indian groups. They may have gone to school together, or have had business relationships. These activists often refrain from taking on hard-core racist groups directly, preferring to address their comments to the groups' followers, who may be genuinely affected by the groups' scare tactics, or are simply going along for the excitement. Native leaders go through pains to emphasize that their land claims are not made at the expense of local non-Indians. In a key 1980 speech, American Indian Movement leader Bill Means said that the Lakota claim to the sacred Black Hills covered only state, federal, and corporation-owned lands, not private landowners. A subsequent claims suit by the Sioux Nation Council narrowed in on government lands.

In a 1987 article in the Daybreak newspaper, Native journalist Ismaelillo offered an original educational approach to land claims disputes. He wrote that many white settlers were, in fact, lied to when the federal government told them they had clear title to their new homesteads. By not telling them of the clouded title stemming from previous Indian ownership, the government committed an act of fraud. People or local communities whose lands may be covered by Indian land claims could, therefore, refrain from taking action against the tribe, and instead sue the federal government for compensation, with INDIAN SUPPORT. In Wisconsin, the Chippewa have taken a similar approach, by trying to redirect sports groups' anger toward state government, which has tied its lowering of fish bag limits to spearfishing, even though it knew for years that the real damage to the fish population was caused by habitat destruction and mismanagement.

Two parallel networks were born out of the Wisconsin treaty crisis, which worked in different but complementary ways. Honor Our Neighbors Origins and Rights (HONOR) is primarily a church-based organization, involved in lobbying, and working closely with tribal governments. It has focused most of its educational work on racism, whether from PARR and STA, or from the anti-timber rights agenda of the Wisconsin Counties Association. The Midwest Treaty Network (MTN) is a looser alliance of grassroots pro-treaty groups, including reservation associations. Its base is mainly in the environmental and social justice movements, and it built the Witness for Nonviolence to actively monitor violations of Chippewa rights. Its educational work stresses positive economic and environmental uses of the treaties. HONOR and MTN have grown together in the realization that they need to confront both the racism emerging in the region, and provide alternative plans for change that can pre-empt such racism in the future.

ACTION STRATEGIES

Ultimately, once people have been educated they can be mobilized for far more than signing a petition to their senator. A number of successful action strategies have been used by Indian and Indian support movements to directly counter anti-Indian groups. For example, STA leader Crist marketed Treaty Beer Nationwide as a fundraising and publicity gimmick, but didn't realize how his product would unite pro-Indian groups. Mass rallies at the Washington State capitol secured a denunciation of "hate in a can" by the governor. On the steps of the Wisconsin state capitol, community figures poured the beer into a pink toilet bowl. Indian groups in Illinois and Oregon

successfully petitioned local liquor stores not to carry the product. Three breweries that started canning the beer - in Wisconsin, Ohio, and Louisiana - were one by one threatened with boycotts by HONOR, and dropped the "true brew of the working man." Crist gave up after four frustrating years.

Some action strategies take more commitment and risk from Indian support activists. At the height of some conflicts, some activists have put themselves physically between Indian and anti-Indian forces in visible displays of support. During the 1973 Wounded Knee siege, and the 1986 Big Mountain crisis, non-Indians stood before government forces attempting to evict people from the land. A peace camp was also set up between Mohawk and government positions in 1990 by the Montreal-based Centre for Nonviolence Resources. All these efforts - like similar 'presences' in Central American and Middle Eastern war zones - are a way to express that any assault on Indian people could also injure non-Indians.

This strategy developed in a highly organized and effective way in Wisconsin, with the Witness for Nonviolence. "We were asked that, if we can witness in Central America" said organizer Sierra Powers, "why not in our own backyard?" The Witness started informally during the 1987 spearfishing season when local women stood with Chippewa friends at the boat landings, in a gesture of moral support. Within two years, the multiracial Witness came to involve treaty supporters not only from all parts of Wisconsin, but from all adjacent states, and from around the nation and world. By 1991, a total of about 2000 treaty supporters had documented anti-Indian harassment at the lakes.

The MTN's Witness program has five purposes, not all easily coexisting in the same project. The first is simply to be a presence for all the Chippewa families at the boat landings, so they don't take 100 percent of the abuse. The second is to show by this presence that not all non-Indians oppose treaty rights, as is often conveyed in the media. The third is to prevent a high level of tension and violence, with a calming influence, and the deterrent use of cameras and recorders. The fourth is to actively use nonviolent tactics to defuse tense or violent situations. The fifth, and most important is to document harassment, intimidation, and violence that does occur, using detailed notes, photos, and audio/video tape. Red Cliff spearer Andrew Gokee comments that "The more Witnesses on a given night, the more peaceful the lake will be." Even some protesters have been heard to say to each other, "Don't say that, the Witnesses will hear you." Other protesters have said to Witnesses, "You white people are all traitors," and "We have red niggers, black niggers, and a few white niggers too."

Witnesses are not pro-treaty protesters. At the Chippewa's request, they don't wear political buttons, carry signs, chant slogans, or carry on any unnecessary dialogue with the often drunk anti-treaty protesters. They are identified only by white armbands, go through an intensive training session, and have signed a pledge of peace saying they will not participate in any conflict. Yet state and federal politicians have tried to discredit Witnesses as pro-treaty counterparts of PARR and STA, and as an obstacle to peace. One reason may be that one of the main targets of documentation has been the state-coordinated law enforcement effort, which has been spotty at best. While in some counties the riot gear-clad police helped protect the Chippewa, in counties with the largest PARR/STA memberships, many officers either looked the other way, or openly sympathized with the protests. The 1990 Witness report detailed incidents of racial intimidation, violence, and police response. The documentation is used not only for legal purposes, but for political purposes, such as responding to Governor Thompson's contention that little racism is evident at the protests, and there have been "no ugly incidents" lately.

By 1991, the Chippewa and Witnesses regularly outnumbered the dwindling numbers of protesters during the spearing season. The media proclaimed 'Crist's Last Stand,' but it is abundantly clear that STA and PARR are down to a hard core that is far more racist and threatening than in previous years, driving away more moderate protesters. The Witness, and a police presence, will most likely be needed in the future. But some resort owners stopped supporting the protest groups because their racism and violence (including against African American Witnesses) began to keep tourists away. The fact that groups claiming to protect fish didn't lift a finger about threats from mercury and mining was not lost on environmentally conscious Wisconsinites. In a May 1991 Wisconsin State Journal poll, 59 percent of southern Wisconsinites supported treaty rights, and 42 percent of northerners agreed - a substantial growth in pro-treaty sentiment in only four years.

As each year passes, the Witness wrestles with various questions. Witnesses' obvious support for the Chippewa, such as standing between the protesters and the drum, can at times lessen the credibility of their documentation, unless it is collected by unimpeachable electronic means (such as camcorders). Also, protesters' attacks on Witnesses can become a media issue, detracting attention from attacks on Indians, unless it is made clear that Indians remain the primary target, and Witnesses are only present at their invitation.

Other potential pitfalls need to be addressed by Indian support groups. One is the stereotyping of working-class whites as "rednecks," without taking into account the similar economic forces working against both reservation and off-reservation communities. Local whites should be encouraged and supported to take a strong role in Indian support work. Another area to develop is a respectful relationship with grassroots Indian organizers, by keeping out of internal tribal politics. Non-Indians should be involved in Indian issues only inasmuch as other non-Indian individuals and governments are trying to limit Indian rights. Lastly, the cultural distinctiveness of Indian peoples needs to be protected not only from racists, but from romantic New Age consumerists of the "Wannabe" tribe (who have been known to exploit Native spirituality for their own fulfillment), and from political activists who see Indian resistance as identical to other anti-racist struggles, lacking its unique national, cultural, and spiritual dimensions.

It can never be emphasized enough that the main threat to Indian peoples and their rights does not come from the anti-Indian movement, but from the government and corporations that the anti-Indian groups often front for. Many a politician, judge, sheriff, or business leader can take the pro-Indian side against an anti-Indian group, only to later "balance it out" by curtailing Indian rights. All Native peoples have to rely on is themselves, and their allies in the non-Indian community. At this time, ancient Native cultures are subjected to the greatest internal and external pressures in their history. At the same time, a support movement is also growing to an unprecedented size among non-Indians who see their own freedom as tied to freedom for Native Americans. If that alliance prevails over anti-Indian forces, the coming decade could be a milestone in North American Indian history.

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News From Indian Country,

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Northeast Indian Quarterly,
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Red Nations Movement,
Alliance of Native Americans,
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Treaty Council News,
International Indian Treaty Council,
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