

Lakota Coalition
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Wounded Knee Bulletin #1

On Sunday, March 11, a meeting was held in Wounded Knee, South Dakota, of 14 of 18 tribal chiefs of the Pine Ridge Reservation. The 14 tribal chiefs, traditional and still-respected leaders of the Indian people, as well as eight of 20 members of the Bureau of Indian Affairs corporate tribal council, created by the U.S. government in 1934, met with American Indian Movement leaders and declared their independence from U.S. government control and domination.

It goes without saying that the starting point for this historical development lies in the inhuman treatment of the Indian people by successive white U.S. governments from Washington's time up to the present. Whole tribes have been wiped out, treaties have been consistently broken and the current living conditions of the Indian people are nothing less than wretched. According to a press release issued by the Independent Oglala Nation, "Since 1672 the U.S. Government has signed 411 treaties with various Indian tribes. 389 treaties have been ratified by Congress. In 1849 the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) was created by the U.S. government to serve all Indian concerns. Due to the government's complete ignorance and breach of the 389 treaties, the following problems have developed:

- "-- Indian male life expectancy is 44.5 years.
- "-- For every white child that is born and lives, one Indian child will die.
- "-- Suicide is 15 times the national average.
- "-- Malnutrition on reservations is common.
- "-- Unemployment is 90%.
- "-- School dropout rate is 75%.
- "-- The average annual Indian family income is \$1,000 (on some reservations it is \$500.00).
- "-- 95% of housing is substandard."

The specific events leading to the takeover of Wounded Knee by the American Indian Movement could begin at almost any point from the time the first white man came into the Lakota Nation and began to calculate how to wrench the wealth of the land from the Lakotas. The following chronology, which begins in March 1972, starts at a point where the individual fingers of the Indian people are beginning to come together into the universal symbol of solidarity and resistance: the clenched fist.

-- March 1972, Gordon, Nebraska: A 22-year-old Oglala Sioux, Raymond Yellow Thunder, was picked up by two white men and in a particularly vicious series of events was beaten, thrown into an American Legion dance naked, locked in a car trunk for two days, castrated and finally beaten to death. The murderers of Yellow Thunder were charged with 2nd degree manslaughter and unlawful imprisonment. Both men are now free.

The parents of Yellow Thunder called the national office of A.I.M. for assistance and their plea was responded to immediately.