

# The american indian movement essay



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BUSTER**

The American Indian Movement (AIM) is a Native American organization in the United States. It was founded in 1968, with the purpose to eliminate discriminating against the Native Americans and to establish recognition of their treaty rights. The founders of this organization are Dennis Banks, Herb Powless, Clyde Belle court, Eddie Benton Banai, Russell Means, and many others. Russel Means is one of the earliest leaders of AIM. He is one of contemporary America's best-known and prolific activists for the rights of Native Americans.

Since AIM's founding, the group has led protests releasing Indigenous American interests, they have inspired cultural renewal, monitored police activities and coordinated employment programs in cities and in rural reservation communities across the United States. AIM has often supported other indigenous interests outside the United States, as well. During 1972, members of the AIM began to take over the Bureau of Indian Affairs headquarters in Washington, D. C. They began to complain the government had created tribal councils on reservations in order to take control over Native American development.

AIM has been active in opposing the use of indigenous caricatures (cartoons) as mascots for sports teams, such as the Atlanta Braves and the Washington Redskins. These caricatures are used as protests at World Series and Super Bowl games involving those teams. AIM's National Coalition on Racism in Sports and Media works to educate and overturn stereotypes about American Indians that are perpetuated through American popular culture which serve to continue oppression of native peoples.

Today AIM's original mission is based on protecting indigenous people from police abuse. They are using CB radios and police scanners to get to the scenes of alleged crimes involving indigenous people before or as police arrive. They are doing this to prevent police brutality. AIM Patrols are still found in the streets of Minneapolis today. AIM has committed itself in improving the conditions that face Native people and address their needs as well.

Some of the most popular institutions include: the Heart of The Earth School, Little Earth Housing, International Indian Treaty Council, AIM Street Medics, American Indian Opportunities and Industrialization Center (one of the largest Indian job training programs), KILI radio, and Indian Legal Rights Centers. The Founders of AIM are presented on Peter Matthiessen's book, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*. His book includes the name of Dennis Banks, Clyde Bellecourt, the directors the

Peace Maker Center in Minneapolis and administrator of the U. S. Department of Labor, Eddie Benton-Benai, the author and school administrator for the Red School House in Minneapolis and, Russell Means. Means has worked as an actor and remains politically active. He has run for Governor of New Mexico and for president of the Oglala Sioux nation in 2002. Another well-known AIM member is Leonard Peltier, who is currently serving a prison term for his conviction in the murder of two FBI agents at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in 1975.

Outside of the United States many AIM members remain committed to confronting the government and corporate forces that seek to exclude

indigenous peoples such as in Nicaragua during the Sandinista/Indian conflict in the mid-1980s. The Sandinista is a Nicaraguan political party founded on broad socialist principles. They ruled Nicaragua for roughly 12 years from 1979 to 1990, during that time they were able to establish democratic elections and a national constitution.

During this conflict Russell Means, one of the founders of AIM sided with Miskito Indians opposing that country's Sandinista government due to allegations that they had forced relocations of about 8, 500 Miskito. This opposition damaged some of AIM's support from many organizations in the U. S. , who opposed Contra activities and supported the Sandinista movement. Contra activities included rebellious recruitment among Nicaraguan Indian groups including some Miskitos.

Many more Actions were taken by AIM to express their opinions such as in 1973; AIM activists barricaded themselves in the hamlet of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. They were suspected to have taken eleven hostages, which led to a seventy-one-day standoff with federal agents. In the following trials most accused AIM members were released. The 1973 the allegations of the standoff centered on federal and tribal police brutality on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Allegations of brutality by a tribal group affiliated with the tribe's government Guardians Of the Oglala Nation also known as GOONS.

On June 26, 1975, a gun battle between AIM members and FBI agents resulted in the shooting deaths of Joseph Stuntz and two other FBI agents, Jack Coler and Ronald Williams. Leonard Peltier, a Native American activist

and member of the American Indian Movement was eventually convicted of the agents' deaths. Many AIM activists claim that the AIM members who shot at the FBI agents shot in self-defense, so the killing was not a murder. Two of Peltier's co-defendants in the murder were released on grounds of self-defense in a separate trial. Peltier's critics point out that one of the agents was shot and killed at close range after being wounded.

This killing and the subsequent conviction of Peltier have created major controversy between activists and FBI agents. US Court of Appeals Judge Gerald Heaney concluded that " Native Americans" were partially culpable for the gunshot incident in which they three FBI agents died but he believed the incident was over reacted and it created a climate of terror. AIM maintained that Wounded Knee residents had invited their assistance in 1973 to defend their homes against official and vigilante attacks, but that the FBI then surrounded them, ultimately holding the AIM members hostage.

Many Wounded Knee residents argue to this, and say that the AIM occupation led to the destruction of their community and homes. Several trials of AIM members resulted from the confrontation, which resulted in some courtroom brawls with U. S. Marshals, but few AIM members were convicted for their roles in the standoff. AIM has been the subject of much controversy, most of it centering around the 1977 trial of Leonard Peltier, the AIM member convicted the murders of two FBI agents. Some activists doubt that he was responsible for these murders. The Amnesty International and others throughout the world, has called for his release.

Other activists say the murders occurred in a war-like environment, and that Peltier's role in the killings should be reviewed due to the circumstances.

Another famous AIM member was Anna Mae Pictou-Aquash, she was a Mi'kmaq activist from Nova Scotia, Canada who became one of the most active and prominent female members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) during the early 1970s. Anna Mae became involved in the Teaching and Research in Bicultural Education School Project (TRIBES), a program designed to teach young Indians about their history.

She soon moved to Boston where she met members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) who were protesting against the Mayflower II celebration at Boston Harbor. She was found murdered in 1976 on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation during a time of tremendous social and political upheaval. She was found dead with a bullet to her head. John Graham and Arlo Looking Cloud, were indicted in 2003 for the murder. Fritz Arlo Looking Cloud, a homeless Lakota man, and John Graham, a Southern Tutchone Athabaskan man from Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada.

Eventually Cloud was convicted to prison. Graham's trial is still awaiting his extradition from Canada. The cause and murder of Anna Mae is not yet uncovered since there is no hard evidence. In the decades before the indictments, some activists alleged that the FBI played a part or covered up her murder. She has become a symbol of the movement for Indian rights. Folk singer Larry Long detailed the anti-FBI allegations in a song titled Anna Mae (re-released on Run For Freedom/Sweet Thunder, Flying Fish, 1997).

Singer-songwriter Buffy Saint-Marie wrote Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee, referencing both Peltier and Pictou-Aquash. In order to maintain advocating their concerns AIM offers a web radio continuous live broadcast, which offers, “ cutting edge American Indian news, including phone interviews, commentaries by elders, rare archival speeches and music live from the studio in Minneapolis. ” [http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia\\_761580662/American\\_Indian\\_Movement.html](http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761580662/American_Indian_Movement.html)

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