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In August 1961, a young Mohawk graduate student named Shirley Hill Witt stepped off a Greyhound bus and into the blistering heat of Gallup, New Mexico. She was far from her home in Massachusetts but happy the long journey had finally ended. The streets were jammed with Navajo wagons full of roasted corn, the discarded cobs dotting the sun-soaked pavement. The smell of lanolin filled the air, as tourists relentlessly snapped photos of Navajos and their sheep. Most visitors had come for the annual Indian ceremonial, which featured a vast array of arts, crafts, jewelry, dancing, and the celebration of Navajo and southwestern Native culture. But Shirley Hill Witt traveled there for another purpose. Her journey had begun two months earlier at the American Indian Chicago Conference, where she and a handful of other Native students resolved to establish a new intertribal organization that would confront and engage the profound problems that consumed Indian Country.[1]

"We rejected much of the 'hang around the fort' Indian leadership—the uncle tomahawks—which we saw as dedicated to appeasing the Washington bureaucracy, be it the new Kennedy administration or the Department of the Interior

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and its BIA entrenched minions," recalled Witt. "We kept reminding ourselves that honoring our elders was an important cross-cultural value among all the tribes—still it was time to break the 'youth does not speak' rule . . . in the end we would not be swayed from our mission as we saw it." That mission culminated in Gallup with the founding of the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC) during that hot summer of 1961.[2]

Years before the siege of Alcatraz, the creation of the American Indian Movement, and the takeover of Wounded Knee, young college-educated Native people established the organization that coined the slogan "Red Power" and first employed direct action to bring about change in Indian Country. They had traveled vast distances from myriad corners of North America. The Red Power movement they launched traced its origins not to the Twin Cities or the Bay Area but to a remote city—Gallup—in the Land of Enchantment, a place most Americans had never heard of. Like other student-driven organizations of the 1960s, the NIYC would branch out and look beyond its humble origins in Gallup, taking a national, pan-Indian view of Native issues—problems they came to believe had broad solutions that could be applied universally across diverse Native communities. Perhaps they were correct, but as in so many activist organizations of the day, their militancy to bring those solutions to fruition tore at their very fabric and threatened to rip the NIYC apart. Only by reorienting their agenda and focusing on more modest and tangible goals at a local level was the NIYC able to persist in the face of challenges and become an organization that continues to help New Mexico's Indian people today.

Until recently, scholars of modern American Indian history have focused their attention primarily on urban centers such as San Francisco, Minneapolis, Chicago, Los Angeles, and others. Red Power, they presume, began in the cities where relocated Natives had banded together at intertribal Indian centers or clubs and organized for action. However, many had only fleeting memories of the reservation, and some, none at all. In particular, the siege of Alcatraz Island in 1969, when urban Indians in the Bay Area occupied the former federal prison to bring attention to treaty rights and the underdevelopment of tribal nations, monopolized the historiography with countless books, articles, memoirs, and monographs chronicling this media sensation. One can hardly blame them; anyone who reads newspapers from the day will undoubtedly encounter a barrage of articles on the event. Unlike the modest origins of the NIYC, which barely made news in the *Gallup (N.Mex.) Independent*, Alcatraz captured national, even international, headlines. "Indians Take the Rock!"—it was and still is a truly gripping story. Troy R. Johnson's academic treatment, *The Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Indian Self-Determination and the Rise of Indian Activism*, remains the quintessential and most thorough source on the takeover, while

Paul Chaat Smith's and Robert Allen Warrior's *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* is the most engaging and readable.[3]

The occupation of Alcatraz dominated histories of Red Power and, in turn, had become as confining as the abandoned penitentiary itself. Then, about ten years ago, a succession of innovative studies took a deeper look into the origins of postwar Native activism. Paul C. Rosier's *Serving Their Country: American Indian Politics and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* and Daniel M. Cobb's *Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty* not only trace the movement back to the immediate postwar era but also broadens historians' perspective by situating American Indian activism in the global decolonization narrative. Bradley G. Shreve's *Red Power Rising: The National Indian Youth Council and the Origins of Native Activism* and Paul R. McKenzie-Jones's *Clyde Warrior: Tradition, Community, and Red Power* take a closer look at the NIYC and its leaders, illuminating how political militancy originated among young, college-educated Native intellectuals who grew up on reservations or in rural tribal communities. Collectively, these works have transformed the discourse on Red Power and revitalized a historiography that had become tired and repetitive.[4]

It should come as no surprise that New Mexico, home to the nineteen pueblos of the Rio Grande and large swaths of Apache and Navajo tribal lands, served as a main organizing hub during the rise of intertribal activism. Indeed, some of the earliest records of intertribal cooperation in response to European colonization began with the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, when the first peoples of the Southwest overcame linguistic and ethnic barriers to successfully drive the Spanish colonists out of their homelands and south to El Paso. Although such unity failed to keep the European colonizers out of New Mexico in the long run, the disparate Pueblos would again find common purpose in 1922, with the creation of the All-Pueblo Council. Pueblo leaders recognized the need to organize their communities into a united front to fight legislation that threatened their territorial integrity. With the help of other support organizations, such as the American Indian Defense Association and the Santa Fe–based New Mexico Association on Indian Affairs (NMAIA), the Pueblos succeeded in defeating the most-maligned legislative proposal, the Bursum Bill, which proposed to recognize non-Native claims on Pueblo lands and to allow New Mexico state courts to adjudicate Pueblo water rights. Both the All-Pueblo Council and the NMAIA would have an enduring influence on American Indian politics in New Mexico and beyond.[5]

The passage of House Concurrent Resolution 108 in 1953, which initiated the process of terminating the federal government's trust responsibilities to recognized tribes, created an entirely new set of problems for all organizations concerned with Indian affairs. Founded less than a decade earlier, the National

Congress of American Indians (NCAI) struggled to make sense of the legislation and its far-reaching ramifications for Indian Country. Rather than combat the resolution, however, NCAI initially sought to prepare Native people for a future without federal services. To that end, the organization established American Indian Development, Inc., to encourage economic progress in tribal communities. In the remote village of Crownpoint, between Grants and Gallup, New Mexico, for example, the NCAI initiative launched a health education project and hosted an array of training seminars and workshops for local Navajo people. NCAI founder D'Arcy McNickle, an enrolled member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, played a pivotal role in the effort and in the selection of Crownpoint as the organization's proving ground. McNickle observed that the remote community had few physicians or nurses and no healthcare facilities or hospitals. If the people there—with NCAI's help—could remedy the situation, then perhaps so could Native people elsewhere. Despite the uncertainty that came with the federal Termination policy, success in Crownpoint would allow McNickle and other NCAI leaders to sleep better at night. Unfortunately, the project failed to make significant gains in workforce or economic development, seemingly illustrating just the opposite of what NCAI had hoped for: Native people were in no way prepared for Termination.[6]

NCAI would eventually shift its efforts toward overturning House Concurrent Resolution 108 rather than preparing Native people for it, but other organizations continued to pursue accommodation. In central New Mexico, NMAIA launched its own education efforts focused on what the organization believed to be the future leaders in Indian Country—Native college students. By the 1950s, NMAIA had earmarked nearly a third of its budget for educational purposes. A special education committee visited schools and sponsored an array of scholarships and grants. Charles Minton, the organization's executive director, traveled regularly to the University of New Mexico (UNM) in Albuquerque to meet with the Kiva Club, the school's Native-student organization. Founded in 1952, the Kiva Club offered Pueblo, Navajo, Apache, and other American Indian students a support base and vehicle to honor and celebrate their culture. The group hosted the annual Nizhoni Indian dances at UNM, which brought in a variety of dancers and artisans, but also served as a fundraiser to support a handful of scholarships. Minton hoped to collaborate with the Kiva Club and set about organizing a student-centered conference to address issues of leadership and the federal government's Termination policy. His efforts came to fruition in June of 1954 with the New Mexico Conference of Social Welfare. Although non-Native non-students moderated sessions and devised the agenda, the event established a blueprint for future gatherings and for the first Southwestern Regional Indian Youth Council (SWRIYC).[7]

Fig. 1. The Kiva Club at the University of New Mexico, *Mirage*, 1967. The Kiva Club at the University of New Mexico produced a new wave of Native leaders, including Beryl Blue Spruce (front row, left) and Herbert Blatchford (front row, second left). Courtesy of the Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.

Held just six months after NMAIA's pilot conference, the SWRIYC met at the St. Francis Auditorium in Santa Fe endeavoring to draw not just college students from UNM, but also high school students from the Santa Fe Indian School. Of foremost concern was Termination, so most of the council sessions dealt with the government's policy in one manner or another. Indeed, like many observers, Minton believed that the trust relationship, which had guided federal Indian policy since the nineteenth century, was coming to an end. Even the Bureau of Indian Affairs—the much-maligned agency that oversaw the government's trust responsibilities—would cease to exist in the bold new future of Termination. "By the time the Bureau is abolished, if we can prepare a substantial number of Indian youth for withdrawal of federal services, perhaps the result of withdrawal will not be as disastrous as so many fear," Minton wrote. "We should do all we can to help them prepare to meet the blow when it comes." Accordingly, the objectives of the first SWRIYC meeting in Santa Fe and all successive councils were three-fold: first, to motivate Native students to acquire skills that would help their tribes; second, to foment intertribalism among diverse Native peoples; third, to give Native students a greater understanding of Indian affairs and policy.[8]

Unlike the students who founded and built the Red Power movement in later years, those who took part in the initial youth councils were hardly militant. Rather, they mirrored the civic nationalism that characterized American politics in the 1950s. Jim Etcitty (Navajo), for example, stated that day schools were

ineffective because students would return home where their parents spoke only their Native tongues, hence undermining students' English retention. Boarding schools, in Etcitty's opinion, offered students a better education. Similarly, Carmelita Allapowa (Zuni Pueblo) remarked that bilingualism "slows our thinking" and that it was important to "stress English in the home and in the school." In speeches and discussion groups, students also pondered how they might better equip their respective tribes for the stark realities that Termination would bring. In one of the most-reprinted and oft-quoted speeches from the SWRIYC, Kiva Club president Beryl Blue Spruce (Laguna-San Juan Pueblos) called for a stronger work ethic and greater self-discipline. He lamented: "We complain about the troubles we have, but other people have just as many. And yet we expect them to come and pull us out of our rut. We just sit, waiting and waiting." He went on to assert, "The man who gets anywhere in this world is the man who gets out and works."[9]

Blue Spruce struck a chord with Native students in 1957, but at the dawn of the 1960s, as the disastrous effects of Termination became glaringly apparent, his message seemed antiquated and out of touch. Moreover, a growing sense of cultural pride permeated the SWRIYC, as the roots of Red Power took hold. At the 1961 meeting, a Ponca student named Clyde Warrior, who was running for the council's presidency, made a name for himself and electrified those in attendance with his three-line speech. "I am a full-blood Ponca Indian," he proclaimed as he rolled up his sleeves and tipped back his cowboy hat. "This is all I have to offer. The sewage of Europe does not run through these veins." A star was born, and Warrior went on to win the election in a landslide.[10]

The rise of Clyde Warrior, and all he represented, starkly demonstrated that a new era had arrived. African American students in the Civil Rights Movement likewise expressed a growing nationalist sentiment, Chicano/a students embraced "La Raza," and the predominantly white students at college campuses across the country forcefully advocated for free speech and increasingly questioned the political powerbrokers at the state and national levels. These insurgencies were part of a larger cultural and political shift fueled by postwar prosperity at home and influenced by decolonization abroad. Although American Indians remained among the most economically impoverished people in the United States, young Native people were also attending college in the largest numbers ever, as new educational opportunities opened. Technological innovations in communication and the more rapid dissemination of information reached far into what were once remote and isolated tribal communities. And news of independence and nationalist movements in faraway places like Vietnam, Algeria, and Kenya beamed into households across the country.[11]

Such social forces were beyond anyone's control, exerting a profound effect on people regardless of skin color or cultural background. For most non-Native students and other young people, however, the epicenters of revolt and the new political consciousness were metropolitan hubs, many of which were found along the nation's seaboards. But for Native people they were remote or even rural communities—places like Gallup, New Mexico, where Clyde Warrior, Shirley Hill Witt, and a handful of other students founded the NIYC just a couple of months after Warrior's visceral speech at the SWRIYC.

Gallup was one of many border towns adjacent to a large reservation with a significant Native population. Situated on the Interstate 40 corridor connecting the East and West Coasts, the town was only a day's drive from most reservations and tribal communities in New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Colorado, Southern California, Nevada, and Oklahoma. But perhaps more significantly, Gallup was home to the NIYC's chief organizer and one of its most enthusiastic founders, Herb Blatchford. Born in Fort Defiance, Arizona, to a family of sheepherders, Blatchford had served in the U.S. Air Force during World War II and had gone on to champion American Indian voting rights in Arizona and New Mexico. They were finally secured in 1948. In the spring of 1953, he enrolled at UNM and helped found the Kiva Club. He attended the first SWRIYC meetings as well as the historic American Indian Chicago Conference of 1961, where he met Witt, Warrior, and many of NIYC's other charter members.[12]

The Chicago Conference was the largest, most diverse intertribal gathering on record. Organized by the Anthropology Department at the University of Chicago with help from D'Arcy McNickle and other NCAI officers, the conference sought to produce a "Declaration of Indian Purpose" that would redirect federal Indian policy and bring about greater sovereignty and self-determination for tribal nations. The proceedings were largely orderly and productive. On the final day, however, as attendees worked to put the finishing touches on their policy statement, the student caucus grew disenchanted and rebelled. Blatchford oversaw the meetings and encouraged participants to speak their minds as they saw fit. They lambasted the "uncle tomahawks," who they believed were "fumbling around, passing resolutions, and putting headdresses on people." Members of the youth caucus drafted a separate statement, which they delivered before the main assembly in what some remember as a dramatic display of Red Power militancy. According to Dorothy Davids (Stockbridge-Munsee), leaders of the youth caucus forced their way onto the stage, seized the podium, and angrily delivered a statement calling for true sovereignty and respect for treaty rights.[13]

Blatchford believed they would have to do more than deliver statements if the students' energy, enthusiasm, and idealism were to be harnessed to effect changes at the national level. And Blatchford was a doer. Vine Deloria Jr.

Fig. 2. Herb Blatchford, 1958. Herb Blatchford graduated from UNM and went on to work for the New Mexico State Department of Education. He later played a pivotal role in the creation of the NIYC, serving as the first executive director. Photograph by Laura Gilpin, *Herbert Blatchford in the Field*, 1958, gelatin silver print. Courtesy of the Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas.

remembered him as a guy who "was very business-like and always wrote everything down." He collected addresses and contact information for all participants in the youth caucus. In those heady days before the luxuries of email and text messaging, Blatchford mimeographed letters he received from other activists and mailed them out to everyone on his contact list to create a group discussion and capture the diversity of opinion. He proposed that they meet the Native youth activists later that summer in Gallup, where he would serve as the host and use his connections with the Gallup Indian Community Center to make all the necessary local arrangements for room, board, and meeting space. In a typed, single-spaced, three-page letter to Mel Thom, Blatchford ruminated on the Chicago Conference, observing that the youth caucus was the most united and organized group there. The SWRIYC had served its purpose but was no longer a viable apparatus. The time had come to break from the predominantly non-Native NMAIA sponsorship and establish a formal, independent, Native-led youth organization.[14]

Blatchford's planning came to fruition in August 1961, when ten of the most devoted students from the Chicago Conference youth caucus congregated in Gallup. Although Blatchford had hammered out all the details on how to formally establish an incorporated, nonprofit organization beforehand, the attendees arrived with a blank slate. "What are we trying to do?" asked Clyde Warrior.

Were they really in Gallup because of the ideals they believed in or were they more concerned with "political climbing"? Indeed, some attendees, such as Mary Natani (Navajo), flatly stated that they should leave the political decision-making to the "adults." "Maybe someday, when I am older and I'm recognized as having some potential . . . I will get my chance to be a leader," she said.[15]

Natani was in the minority, however. Most of the students who made the long trip to Gallup had not come to form a social club or to party. The clear majority were college students or recent college graduates. They were a new kind of Native intellectual influenced by the growing tide of political activism and engagement. They meant business, and they believed passionately—even militantly—in sovereignty, self-determination, and treaty rights. They were also cultural traditionalists who took pride in their "Indianness" and reached back to their ancestors for inspiration and purpose. Their organization would be one "of service to Indian people based upon the Indian system of agreement." Older, more-established organizations like the NCAI too often became "bogged down by such mechanical problems as parliamentary procedure," they complained. Although they followed those "established organizations" when creating their own body and in devising their governance structure, they did so on their own terms and in their own way. Warrior, for example, took the floor and without holding an official vote, announced who he thought should serve in each post, naming Thom president, Blatchford executive secretary, Witt first vice-president, and Joan Noble (Paiute) second vice-president. The attendees agreed without dissension or debate.[16]

Warrior, Blatchford, and Thom, all of whom had attended and served as officers at the SWRIYC, took the lead in devising the organization's articles of incorporation and bylaws. Their experience, along with Blatchford's penchant for writing everything down, proved especially useful, enabling them to hammer out an official document that they would formally file at the McKinley County Courthouse. Calling themselves the National Indian Youth Council and with an eye toward making history, the members declared their mission with this statement:

> We, the younger generation, at this time in the history of the American Indian, find it expedient to band together on a national scale in meeting the challenges facing the Indian people. In such banding for mutual assistance, we recognize the future of the Indian people will ultimately rest in the hands of the younger people, [and] the Indian youth need to be concerned with the position of the American Indian. We further recognize the inherent strength of the American Indian heritage that will be enhanced by a National Indian Youth Council. We, the undersigned

believing in a greater Indian America, [united] in order to form a non-profit corporation for the purposes hereinafter enumerated.[17]

With the officers selected, their purpose stated, and the organizational structure finalized, the NIYC stepped out into the big, bright 1960s with high hopes of making change.[18]

Of course, that was easier said than done. Although African American students had provided a template on civil disobedience through their sit-ins and freedom rides, Native people, it was widely understood, were not supposed to make such waves. "Indians don't demonstrate," the axiom went. The tradition of working within established political channels that characterized twentieth-century Native activism to that point created tensions and even confusion within the NIYC. Clearly, Warrior had expressed a new, confrontational nationalism that startled the NCAI and other, more-proven political actors. But even so, there was a hesitancy to take it to the streets in protest. Although the NIYC members criticized the older "uncle tomahawks," their belief in tradition, cultural preservation, and respect for their elders weighed heavily in their initial decision to refrain from direct action.[19]

What the activists did instead was vent their frustration and discontent through the written word. NIYC's newsletter, *Aborigine*, first hit mailboxes in March 1962. Largely the labor of Blatchford and Witt, who served as co-editors, the mimeographed publication was financed, at least in part, by the sixteen dollars they had deposited in the First State Bank in Gallup. Modest in every regard, *Aborigine* featured articles that assessed news and Indian-policy developments through the lens of NIYC's youthful idealism. Perhaps the first edition's hardest hitting essay was Mel Thom's "Statement of the National Indian Youth Council," in which he condemned the federal government for suppressing Native people and called on the younger generation to uphold traditional values. Thom left no doubt about the organization's reverence for tradition and elders, proclaiming: "WE BELIEVE IN A FUTURE WITH HIGH PRINCIPLES DERIVED FROM THE VALUES AND BELIEFS OF OUR ANCESTORS [Thom's emphasis]."[20]

It was not long before the NIYC and its burgeoning audience outgrew *Aborigine*. With the help of the United Scholarship Service, a Denver-based organization that offered financial aid to Native college students, NIYC launched *Americans Before Columbus* (*ABC*). The new publication eclipsed *Aborigine* in both its editorial quality and, perhaps more significantly, its militancy. The first few issues spared no one. One anonymous essay ripped the NCAI, claiming the organization's meetings "waste time, energy and talent on petty tattle tailing [*sic*] and personal vengeance." Another article targeted the federal government for Public Law 280, which in the wake of Termination transferred trust

responsibilities to the individual states. And a series of essays attacked Washington state, arguing that its authorities were undermining tribal sovereignty and long-held treaty rights that guaranteed Native peoples the right of subsistence fishing. One article referred to the struggle between Puget Sound's local Native fishers and Washington State game officials as nothing short of a "war." Game wardens had employed an "armed militia," and something had to be done to protect the ancestral rights of the region's Indigenous people.[21]

From the outset, *ABC*, and to a lesser extent *Aborigine*, served as a sounding board for a new generation of Native activists to express and develop their growing political militancy. In 1961, when those wide-eyed students first met in Gallup, their ideals were a collection of nascent sentiments reflective of what historian David Farber calls "an age of great dreams." But in working through those sentiments—pondering them—via letters, newsletters, and eventually *ABC*, they cultivated a more refined and uncompromising consciousness with sharpened edges—a newly forged ideological weapon that they themselves created. And it was only a matter of time before they would break past protocols and deploy their weapon—their truth—to direct action.

That moment came not in New Mexico, where the NIYC's organizational activities were based, but in Washington State, where Native fishing rights, guaranteed by federal treaties, were under siege. State game officials, who were closely aligned with the Washington State Sportsmen's Council—an organization that represented recreational anglers—targeted Native subsistence fishers who took salmon and steelhead trout from the rivers and tributaries that emptied into Puget Sound. They claimed that such fishing needed regulation to conserve the region's fisheries. Unregulated gillnet fishing, in particular, caused an uproar. Federal treaties protected regional tribes' fishing at "all usual and accustomed" places, but the state's Department of Game and Fish, backed by the Sportsmen's Council, argued that the treaty terms were antiquated and no longer in step with the times. Dwindling fisheries necessitated new conservation measures and limits on when, how, and where people could fish—including the Puyallup, Nisqually, Muckleshoot, and all the other tribes covered by nineteenth-century treaties that stipulated fishing rights. Accordingly, game officials began arresting anyone who broke Washington's game laws—even treaty Indians.[22]

Local Native fishers spoke out against the proscriptions, pointing to their treaties and arguing that they were the law of the land. They even took their individual cases to court on multiple occasions, but the decisions varied, and no clear legal consensus materialized. Meanwhile the raids and arrests continued, eventually attracting the attention of the NIYC. Through the articles published in *ABC*, the organization's young activists worked through the dilemma and resolved to do something to stand up for Native treaty rights. "The time

comes when we must take ACTION!" wrote Mel Thom in his regular column, "For a Greater Indian America." But what form would that action take? The adage "Indians don't demonstrate" weighed heavily on the young idealists, but so did the tactics of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which confronted segregation and racial discrimination with sit-ins, freedom rides, peaceful protests, and other methods of civil disobedience. After much discussion and debate, the NIYC resolved to join the Native fishers in Washington State and stage a nonviolent "fish-in" as an act of civil disobedience to draw attention to their treaty rights.[23]

Launched in March 1964, the NIYC fish-in garnered a tremendous amount of media attention at the local and national levels. Actor Marlon Brando joined the activists and was himself arrested, bringing further national exposure to Native causes and illuminating the issue of treaty rights to a country that largely viewed American Indians as relics of the past. Although the NIYC failed to bring about any immediate change in Washington State's laws or an end to the Fish and Game Department's raids and arrests, the fish-ins catapulted the organization from its humble abode in Gallup into the national spotlight. NIYC staffers received an array of invitations to speak at conferences and universities and before government committees—not just in the Land of Enchantment but all over the country. They used these opportunities to spread their message and to recruit new members, growing the organization by nearly three-fold. The council's higher profile also gave staffers the name recognition to land a handful of grants that enabled them to pursue a variety of educational projects. Increasingly, activists within the organization believed that tribally controlled schools were essential to protect tribal sovereignty and Native cultures. Rough Rock Demonstration School on the Navajo reservation served as a template for how to develop such Native institutions and culturally responsive curricula. With Blatchford taking on full-time work with the Northwest New Mexico Economic Opportunity Council, the NIYC's new executive director, Mel Thom, moved the organization's main office to Berkeley, California, where he connected with Native education specialist Jack Forbes (Powhatan) at his Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development. Meanwhile, NIYC president Clyde Warrior oversaw the development of the Institute for American Indian Studies, which offered Native college students intensive summer workshops steeped in identity theory and Native political history.[24]

As the 1960s steamed into its latter years, the NIYC became increasingly militant in its message and its tone. Precisely why this happened is impossible to pinpoint; the lack of immediate change following the fish-ins and the ongoing raids and arrests of Native fishers in Washington State angered many in the

organization. Also, as well-educated young people, NIYC activists gravitated toward social theories and political manifestos that sought to make sense of the world around them. By today's standards, many of these tomes read like a collection of commonsense lessons on multiculturalism heard from our grandparents. But in the 1960s, these were cutting edge and even radical, challenging the societal and political norms that many took for granted. One book that served as a mainstay at the Institute for American Indian Studies, was Edward H. Spicer's *Cycles of Conquest* which examined the "impact of Spain, Mexico, and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest" from first contacts to 1960. Published in 1962, Spicer's account examined the degree of "cultural contamination" in various southwestern tribes. He pointed out that the greater the separation from the mainstream, the less of a threat assimilation would pose. Spicer further maintained that in the history of New Mexico and the Greater Southwest, strong "Nativistic" or intertribal alliances and movements had served as an effective front against "transacculturation." For NIYC activists, Spicer's ethnohistorical study of the acculturation process was a political manifesto that influenced their thinking and inspired them to action.[25]

Such intellectual discourse remained an influential force in the NIYC, but other dramas playing out on the national stage moved young Native people advocating for sovereignty, self-determination, treaty rights, and cultural preservation. The war in Vietnam continued to escalate, drawing increased criticism and protest as casualties mounted on both sides. Unlike any war before, Vietnam unfolded in Americans' living rooms every evening with newscasts featuring burning villages, saturation bombing, and casualty statistics. Young people witnessed their friends being drafted and shipped off to fight in this remote part of the world and often returning shell-shocked, maimed, or dead. In an era that emphasized immediate gratification and for many of a generation that viewed the world in starkly black and white terms, the war in Vietnam was morally wrong, and it had to end at once. Some even identified with the Viet Cong, believing in a Marxist reality that pitted "the people" against what sociologist C. Wright Mills called "the power elite." A decade earlier, the Navajo, Apache, and Pueblo students who attended the SWRIYC at UNM concerned themselves with their respective tribes and improving their local economic and social condition. In 1960s America, where local identities fell before a national one, the Native plight was much larger in scope and meaning. This conflict necessitated an intertribal front, similar to those alliances chronicled in Spicer's *Cycles of Conquest*, and eventually an even broader alliance with other peoples subjected to the yoke of the white ruling elites.[26]

Viewed in this light, it should come as no surprise that NIYC activists embraced the nationalist, pan-Indian slogan "Red Power!" shortly after the

African American SNCC leader Stokely Carmichael called for "Black Power!" Indeed, Mel Thom and others in the council began referring to themselves as "Red Muslims," not because of any religious persuasion but because of the militant, confrontational connotations that the tag implied. The ideological alignment with Black Power activists illustrates how NIYC underwent a dramatic political transformation in the second half of the sixties. During the fish-ins of 1964, Thom accused African American civil rights leaders of "meddling" in Indian affairs: "This is Indian business. . . . This is an Indian treaty, not a civil right issue." Four years later, the NIYC joined civil rights activists for the "Poor People's Campaign" in hopes of forcing the federal government to pass an "Economic Bill of Rights." Thom and other activists in the organization traveled to Washington, D.C., for the historic event, marching alongside figures such as civil rights leader Ralph Abernathy of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Reies Tijerina who had led the Tierra Amarilla courthouse raid in northern New Mexico in 1967, and members of the militant Black Panthers and their Chicano counterpart the Brown Berets. Together, they set up tents in "Resurrection City," a makeshift campground located near the National Mall in West Potomac Park. From this base, they took their protest to the streets and to symbols of federal power throughout the nation's capital. They marched on the U.S. Supreme Court to call for judicial decisions that upheld Native treaty rights. They marched on the Department of the Interior to advocate for BIA reforms. And they marched on the U.S. Capitol to demand economic justice for all poor people. The campaign came to a dramatic and sudden end with mass arrests, resulting in prison time for Thom and other NIYC activists.[27]

Although the NIYC had shattered the notion that "Indians don't demonstrate," many activists with strong and significant connections to the organization stood by the adage and expected nothing less from its leaders. NCAI officials were outraged over the council's participation in the Poor People's Campaign, and powerful donors at the Ford Foundation who had given a large grant to the NIYC for its educational projects were discomfited being associated with rabble-rousing protests. Unhappy with the council's quarterly reports, Ralph Bohrson of the foundation sarcastically chided Thom, "It seems hardly necessary for NIYC to spend six months or to participate in the Poor Peoples' Campaign in order to draw conclusions that 'it became strikingly clear that any meaningful change (social, economic, or educational) can only come about by change in the form and structures in Indian communities and reservations to the degree that they have at least an equal controlling factor in that government as do the Federal agencies.'" The lack of progress on setting up a viable demonstration school eroded support and confidence in the council. With the

Fig. 3. NIYC Activists Mel Thom and Hank Adams with Ralph Abernathy and Reies López Tijerina at the Poor People's Campaign in Washington, D.C. The photograph is in the Karl Kernbeger Collection, PICT 2000-008-00843. Courtesy of the Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.

premature death of its president, Clyde Warrior, in 1968, the NIYC faced an organizational crisis that threatened its very existence.[28]

In August of 1968, just months after the Poor People's Campaign, matters came to a head at the council's annual meeting in Gallup. NIYC vice-president, Browning Pipestem (Otoe) wrested control of the organization by leading a large contingency of new recruits to oust Thom, Witt, and other founding members. With an eye to the NIYC's financial issues and in hopes of salvaging respectability among donors and established Native leaders, Pipestem and the newly instated officers quickly reoriented the council and moved the executive office back to New Mexico. They directed Thom's office secretary, Sam English (Ojibwe), to pack up all files and council property and relocate them from Berkeley to an office in Albuquerque. English rented a truck and, within weeks, set up operations in a storefront on Central Avenue near UNM. Located just catty-corner from the Lobo Theater, the new office had no electricity; English took no salary and slept on the office floor while the new officers penned an "emergency grant letter" to the Ford Foundation. They received a paltry $7,500, but the sum was enough to keep the NIYC afloat and hire Gerald Wilkinson (Cherokee) as the council's new executive director. If stability was the officers' primary goal, bringing in Wilkinson proved to be an astute move, for he remained in his post for the next twenty years.[29]

Fig. 4. Arrest of Mel Thom. Shortly before his ousting from the NIYC, Mel Thom was arrested in Washington, D.C. during the Poor People's Campaign. Photograph by Diana Jo Davies. Courtesy of Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archive and Collection, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Wilkinson also had a talent for fundraising and organization-building. After taking the council's reins, he successfully applied for a slew of grants and dramatically increased membership from 5,000 in 1970 to 15,000 just two years later. But Wilkinson's most-enduring legacy was that he completely reoriented the NIYC from a student-driven, Red Power engine with a national outlook to a local job placement agency for Native people in New Mexico. This program was made possible by the passage of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) of 1973, which enabled the NIYC to secure massive grants to fund its workforce program. The council moved into a new, permanent office (with electricity) on Elm Street just east of downtown Albuquerque and opened field offices in both Gallup and Farmington. Although the NIYC continued to advocate for sovereignty, self-determination, treaty rights, and cultural preservation, its primary focus was helping Native people who had relocated to New Mexico's urban areas secure the job training they needed to find employment remunerative enough to support them and their families. The cries of "Red Power!" faded and were taken up by other organizations such as the American Indian Movement. The NIYC survived the tumultuous 1960s, but it did so by transforming itself into a more localized organization focused on the tangible goal of securing a viable future for the Native people of New Mexico.[30]

In many ways the NIYC had come full circle. That hot August day in 1961, when Herb Blatchford walked into the McKinley County Courthouse in Gallup

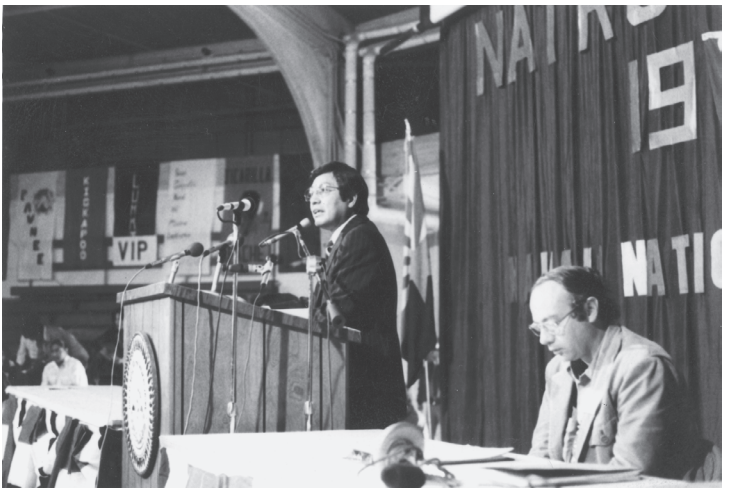

Fig. 5. Peter MacDonald and Gerald Wilkinson. As executive director, Gerald Wilkinson (right) helped transform the NIYC into the organization it is today. Nevertheless, during the 1970s, Wilkinson's NIYC retained much of its activist spirit, challenging Navajo Tribal Chairman Peter MacDonald (left) over the development of coal gasification in the Navajo Nation. The photograph is in the National Indian Youth Council Pictorial Collection, PICT 000-703-0030. Courtesy of the Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.

to file the group's articles of incorporation, he was turned away. According to the law, the NIYC had to post a public notice in advance that gave the time and location of the chartering meeting. Blatchford didn't sweat it and simply filed the articles the next year, officially incorporating the council and launching the Red Power movement.[31]

Such movements for social change sometimes begin in far-off and unexpected places. Often, they have modest, even humble origins. And many times, they are works in progress with steep learning curves. That process can be difficult to navigate, as it was in 1960s America, a rapidly changing place where forces larger than any individual were at high tide. The sixties capsized many of those movements. Groups such as SNCC and Students for a Democratic Society persist only in the pages of books. As they became increasingly radicalized in their latter days and sought unsuccessfully to bend history to their will, they began devouring their young. If those groups sunk with their weighty ideologies and destructive tendencies, others remained afloat only through transforming and reorienting. Since its reorganization at the end of that tumultuous decade, the NIYC has helped thousands of Native people in New Mexico get on their feet and carve out a livelihood for themselves

Fig. 6. The NIYC's Main Office Today. The NIYC's national office is currently located in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Courtesy of the author.

and their families. High ideals of changing the world can be worthy and great, but sometimes it is the seemingly modest, local efforts that endure and truly change lives for the better.

Notes

1. Shirley Hill Witt, email to author, 17 January 2009.

2. Shirley Hill Witt, email to author, 5 December 2008.

3. See Troy R. Johnson, *The Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Indian Self-Determination and the Rise of Indian Activism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); and Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: The New Press, 1996). Other historical accounts of Alcatraz include, Rupert Costo, "Alcatraz," *Indian Historian* 3, no. 1 (1970): 4–12; Steve Talbot, "Free Alcatraz: The Culture of Native American Liberation," *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 6, no. 3 (1978): 83–96; Richard DeLuca, "'We Hold the Rock!' The Indian Attempt to Reclaim Alcatraz Island," *California History* 62, no. 1 (1983): 2–22; Jeff Sklansky, "Rock, Reservation and Prison: The Native American Occupation of Alcatraz Island," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 13, no. 2 (1989): 29–68; and Troy R. Johnson, *You Are on Indian Land!: Alcatraz Island, 1969–1971* (Los Angeles: University of California American Indian Studies Center, 1995). For firsthand accounts of the occupation, see Peter Blue Cloud, *Alcatraz Is Not an Island* (Berkeley, Calif.: Wingbow Press, 1972); Adam Fortunate Eagle, *Alcatraz! Alcatraz! The Occupation of 1969–1971* (Berkeley, Calif.: Heyday Books, 1992); and Adam Fortunate Eagle with Tim Findley, *Heart of the Rock: The*

Indian Invasion of Alcatraz (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002). The *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* published a special issue on Alcatraz, titled "Alcatraz Revisited: The 25th Anniversary of the Occupation, 1969–1971," which included twelve articles by historians and participants; see *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 18, no. 4 (1994): 1–320. Most of these pieces were collected and reprinted in Troy R. Johnson, Joane Nagel, and Duane Champagne, eds., *American Indian Activism: Alcatraz to the Longest Walk* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997). Finally, Troy Johnson has collected poems and political statements regarding Alcatraz in Troy R. Johnson, ed., *Alcatraz: Indian Land Forever* (Los Angeles: University of California American Indian Studies Center, 1994).

4. See Paul C. Rosier, *Serving Their Country: American Indian Politics and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009); Daniel M. Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008; Bradley G. Shreve, *Red Power Rising: The National Indian Youth Council and the Origins of Native Activism* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011); and Paul R. McKenzie-Jones, *Clyde Warrior: Tradition, Community, and Red Power* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015).

5. Statement of the New Mexico Association on Indian Affairs, 26 February 1923, folder 37, box 2 (9684), Southwestern Association on Indian Affairs Records, collection no. 1976-037, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe [hereafter NMSRCA-SWAIAR]; and Lawrence C. Kelly, *The Assault on Assimilation: John Collier and the Origins of Indian Policy Reform* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), 213–54.

6. Thomas W. Cowger, *The National Congress of American Indians: The Founding Years* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 123; D'Arcy McNickle Diary Entry, 1947, folder 130, box 13, D'Arcy McNickle Papers, Edmund E. Ayer Manuscript Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago [hereafter McNickle Papers]; Letter from D'Arcy McNickle to John Collier, 29 September 1955, r. 39, microfilm, John Collier Papers, Center for Southwest Research, Zimmerman Library, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque; and Dorothy Ragon Parker, *Singing an Indian Song: A Biography of D'Arcy McNickle* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 166–67.

7. Board Meeting Minutes, 9 July 1958, folder 41, box 2 (9684), NMSRCA-SWAIAR; and Shreve, *Red Power Rising*, 43–44.

8. Shreve, *Red Power Rising*, 45; Report on Meeting with Indian Youth at Brigham Young University and Fort Yates, folder 41, box 2 (9684), NMSRCA-SWAIAR; and Charles Minton, "The Place of the Indian Youth Council in Higher Education," *Journal of American Indian Education* 1, no. 1 (June 1961): 29.

9. "Third Annual Indian Youth Council," *NMAIA Newsletter*, February 1957, folder 19, box 29, National Indian Youth Council Records, MSS 703 BC, Center for Southwest Research, Zimmerman Library, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque [hereafter CSWR-NIYCR]; and "We Are Born at a Time When the Indian People Need Us," *NMAIA Newsletter*, January 1958, folder 8, box 55, Clark S. Knowlton Collection, collection no. 1980-D27, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe.

10. Warrior quoted in McKenzie-Jones, *Clyde Warrior*, 46.

11. In his book, *The Age of Great Dreams*, David Farber maintains that postwar economic realities fostered new values based on personal consumption, immediate

gratification, self-expression, and egalitarianism. They clashed with the old values of discipline, character, and hard work, producing the era's culture wars. The contrasting speeches of Beryl Blue Spruce and Clyde Warrior epitomize this split. See David Farber, *The Age of Great Dreams: America in the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 4–6.

12. Bill Donovan, "Fire Claims Life of Early Activist," *Navajo Times*, 5 December 1996, A7; and Stan Steiner, *The New Indians* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 29.

13. Steiner, *The New Indians*, 36–37; and Robert Paul Brown, "'The Year One': The American Indian Chicago Conference of 1961 and the Rebirth of Indian Activism" (master's thesis, University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire, 1993), 65–67.

14. Herb Blatchford to Mel Thom, 28 June 1961, folder 11, box 1, CSWR-NIYCR; and Vine Deloria Jr. to Edward F. LaCroix, folder 4, box 4, 10 February 1997, CSWR-NIYCR.

15. Shreve, *Red Power Rising*, 103–104; and Minutes of the National Indian Youth Council, 10–11 August 1961, folder 11, box 1, CSWR-NIYCR.

16. Report of the National Indian Youth Council, n.d., folder 16, box 1, CSWR-NIYCR; McKenzie-Jones, *Clyde Warrior*, 58; and Shreve, *Red Power Rising*, 105.

17. Certificate of Incorporation, 26 September 1962, folder 11, box 1, CSWR-NIYCR.

18. Minutes of the National Indian Youth Council, 11 August 1961, folder 11, box 1, CSWR-NIYCR; and National Indian Youth Council By-Laws, n.d., folder 1, box 1, CSWR-NIYCR.

19. Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*, 37.

20. Herbert Blatchford to Charter Membership, n.d., folder 11, box 1, CSWR-NIYCR; and Mel Thom, "Statement of the National Indian Youth Council," *Aborigine* 1, no. 1 (March 1962): 1.

21. Shreve, *Red Power Rising*, 114; and Bradley G. Shreve, "'From Time Immemorial': The Fish-in Movement and the Rise of Intertribal Activism," *Pacific Historical Review* 78, no. 3 (August 2009): 416.

22. Shreve, "From Time Immemorial," 409, 411–12. Washington's territorial governor, Isaac Ingalls Stevens, brokered most of the treaties guaranteeing fishing rights in the 1850s. The treaties of Point Elliot, Medicine Creek, and Point No Point were three such accords that came under scrutiny in a slew of federal and state court cases. See, Charles A. Hobbs, "Indian Hunting and Fishing Rights," *George Washington Law Review* 32 (1964): 504–32; and Charles A. Hobbs, "Indian Hunting and Fishing Rights II," *George Washington Law Review* 37 (1969): 1251–73.

23. Mel Thom, "For a Greater Indian America," *Americans Before Columbus* 2, no. 1 (March 1964): 1–2.

24. Shreve, *Red Power Rising*, 164–67; and Herbert Blatchford to NIYC Members, 3 August 1964, folder 1964–65, Robert V. Dumont Papers, Native American Educational Service College Archives, Chicago, Illinois [hereafter Dumont Papers]. The collection to which this correspondence belongs has been renamed and moved to the Native American Educational Services, Robert V. Dumont Jr. Papers, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

25. See Edward H. Spicer, *Cycles of Conquest: The Impact of Spain, Mexico, and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest, 1533–1960* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1962). Other books assigned at the Institute for American Indian Studies include Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1934) and Harold Fey and D'Arcy McNickle's *Indians and Other Americans: Two Ways of Life Meet* (New York:

Harper, 1959). The curriculum included essays and articles by legal scholar Felix Cohen and social scientists Alfred Schuetz and Robert Redfield. Institute for American Indian Studies, n.d., folder NIYC—Educational Planning, file drawer 2, Dumont Papers. The collection to which this correspondence belongs has been renamed and moved to the Native American Educational Services, Robert V. Dumont Jr. Papers, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

26. Farber, *The Age of Great Dreams*, 4, 140–41; and C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).

27. Steiner, *The New Indians*, 4, 39; "Indians Tell Negroes to Stay Out of Fishing Case," *Seattle (Wash.) Post-Intelligencer*, 1 March 1964, 10; and Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America*, 172–90.

28. Ralph Bohrson to Mel Thom, 25 July 1968, folder 32, box 3, CSWR-NIYCR; and Shreve, *Red Power Rising*, 177.

29. Sam English, interview by author, 27 February 2007, Albuquerque; and Sam English to Ned LaCroix, 27 May 1996, folder 22, box 5, CSWR-NIYCR.

30. NIYC press release, 24 March 1972, folder 33, box 2, CSWR-NIYCR; and Shreve, *Red Power Rising*, 199.

31. Shreve, *Red Power Rising*, 107.