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# The Pueblo Confederation's Political Wing: The All Indian Pueblo Council, 1920—1975

Robin S. Walden

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Robin S. Walden


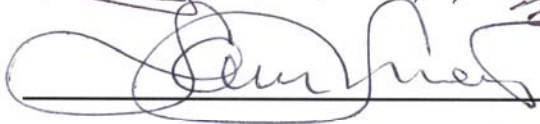
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**The Pueblo Confederation's Political Wing: The All Indian  
Pueblo Council, 1920–1975**

**by**

**Robin S. Walden**

B.A., American History with Politics, University of East Anglia, UK, 2007

**THESIS**

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**Master of Arts  
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**May, 2011**

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ABSTRACT

In the twentieth century, the nineteen Pueblos of New Mexico relied on their confederate council—the All Indian Pueblo Council (AIPC)—to negotiate the demands of the American political system. By organizing around a single, historic body, the Pueblos were able to shield much of their tradition, secure a degree of political and educational autonomy, protect their water rights, and increase their economic development. The leaders of the AIPC were on the front line in negotiating with federal and state authorities, and became adept at negotiating political networks to secure Pueblo interests. Despite the historic conflicts within the Pueblos, the actions of the AIPC during the twentieth century demonstrate that the Pueblos were keen to unite around a political confederation, representing all Pueblos, when their joint interests were threatened. Further, the AIPC became the single organization Pueblo people and tribal councils relied on to protect, bolster, and even increase the sovereignty of the Pueblos, amidst a larger Native sovereignty movement in the United States.

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## INTRODUCTION

On 30 January 2007, Pueblo governors gathered at Santo Domingo Pueblo to renew the bonds of friendship and political confederacy among New Mexico's nineteen Pueblos. A large contingent of female attendees, representing multiple generations, cooked red chile, tamales, green chile stew, and Pueblo oven bread for a crowd of over three hundred spectators—the largest remembered attendance for the ceremony. Witnesses stood by to observe each of the governors sworn into his position as an officer of the Pueblos' confederate council, the All Indian Pueblo Council (AIPC).<sup>1</sup> Each of the nineteen governors repeated the time-worn tradition of standing, expressing his appreciation for the unity of the Pueblos, or saying a prayer in his native tongue. And while in the early twenty-first century the AIPC has become a complex modern organization, on this day the governors mostly refrained from discussing the ins and outs of Pueblo politics. Instead, the council came together to remember the rich heritage of the AIPC, which stretches back four hundred years. The council's newly elected chairman, Joe Garcia from Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, reiterated the purpose of the AIPC. "The All Indian Pueblo Council," he said "is about finding solutions. . . . We are looking forward to uniting together to come to these solutions."<sup>2</sup>

In the twentieth century, the nineteen Pueblos of New Mexico relied on the AIPC to conduct negotiations and represent Pueblo interests to the outside world. Between the

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<sup>1</sup> The All Indian Pueblo Council (AIPC) was known before 1965 as the All Pueblo Council (APC). The organization is one and the same. The difference in name indicates only the signing of the organization's constitution in 1965. Thus I use the title interchangeably, dependent on the time frame in question.

<sup>2</sup> "Inaugural Feast," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 30 January 2007, C-1.

1920s and the mid 1970s, in particular, the AIPC became the most important element of Pueblo government when dealing with external issues. The confederate council developed a pragmatic governance of external Pueblo issues while fighting to protect Pueblo tradition. Occasionally the AIPC's defiance to protect their sovereignty was perceived as militancy, as was the case when it fought to negotiate a favorable outcome to the Pueblo land controversy in the 1920s. At other times, the AIPC struggled to sustain momentum when campaigning to protect Pueblo sovereignty during the stifling federal policies of the mid-century. Indeed the activity of the AIPC was frequently tempered by federal aggression toward tribal structures until the council began administering its own programs in the 1960s. The AIPC followed a philosophy termed by Pueblo historian Joe Sando, as "cooperation for progress," in which Pueblo leaders negotiated pragmatically the demands of twentieth-century America with non-Indians in order to maintain and protect tradition.<sup>3</sup>

During the twentieth century the Pueblos faced a vast array of issues that required the attention of the AIPC. In the 1920s, the Pueblos' land base faced destruction at the hands of Congress. The AIPC response to this issue led to a sustained period during which non-Indians and progressive Pueblos questioned the legitimacy of the AIPC to negotiate on behalf of all Pueblos. John Collier's tribal-friendly reign as federal Indian commissioner later encouraged a greater level of political activism from the AIPC, which began to negotiate the local terms of the Pueblos' water rights. During the midcentury, federal policies designed to destroy all tribal entities suffocated the activism of the council. And in the 1960s, during the rush for self-determination, the AIPC began to

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<sup>3</sup> Joe Sando, *The Pueblo Indians* (San Francisco, Calif.: The Indian Historian Press, 1976), 168.

negotiate the Pueblos' economic and educational independence, while asserting the sovereign right of the Pueblos to determine their own futures.

Historians have tended to focus on the Pueblo revolt of 1680 as the sole instance of solidarity among the nineteen Pueblos of New Mexico. And although Pueblo communities are internally and externally divergent, the historic existence of the AIPC demonstrates that inter-Pueblo cooperation is nowhere near as unusual as historians have previously suggested. In fact, the inter-Pueblo unity evident in the AIPC's actions in the twentieth century illustrates a culture of cooperation among New Mexico's nineteen Pueblos, which, despite its frays, is far deeper than has previously been suggested. The issues facing the Pueblos continually changed, but the function of the AIPC was always to provide a united face to the outside world that, by acting with external strength, protected the traditional elements of Pueblo government, internally. Regardless of the battleground, the AIPC conceived of its twentieth-century struggles around a single issue: the historic independence of Pueblo communities and their continuing sovereign right to self-government.

All current nineteen Pueblos of New Mexico are politically autonomous societies that speak different languages, practice distinct religions, and observe unique cultures. Within most Pueblos, however, there have historically been two systems of government. In one, the cacique heads the traditional system. During the sixteenth-century conquest of New Mexico, Spanish leaders coined the word "cacique," meaning chief, or king, when identifying the leader of each Pueblo. Along with the war chief and his assistants, the cacique is responsible for all theocratic matters within Pueblo society. In the traditional system, each position is held for life. After the Spaniards had established a presence in

northern New Spain, they introduced a second system of government to the Pueblos that was answerable to the crown. The village governor stands at the helm of this system. The governor is in charge of secular, normally external, matters for the Pueblo he serves. The Spaniards awarded each Pueblo a silver-headed cane, to be handed to the governor elected each year, normally at the new year, as a symbol of his authority to represent that Pueblo. Over time the position of governor was “converted by the Pueblos into an effective bulwark against intrusion by foreigners.” Today, governors continue to provide a face to the outside world for each Pueblo. The cacique and his staff have traditionally selected the governor each year, but today at Isleta, Laguna, Pojoaque, San Ildefonso, Santa Clara, and Zuni Pueblos, the governor is elected by popular vote.<sup>4</sup>

There is also a third system of government that exists *between* Pueblos: the AIPC, or the “political arm of the Pueblos.” The AIPC has functioned as a “confederation of 19 autonomous pueblo governments, providing a united voice for dealing with other governmental agencies.”<sup>5</sup> The AIPC consists of nineteen representatives; the governor of each Pueblo is automatically appointed to the AIPC; and the nineteen governors have one vote each to appoint the chairman, vice chairman, and secretary of the council every two years. Due to the caciques’ selection of the governors in their respective Pueblos, the traditional elders of each Pueblo maintain a connection to the council.<sup>6</sup> The AIPC, then, has no power to govern the internal affairs of individual Pueblo communities. Instead, the

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<sup>4</sup> For a fuller discussion of the political structure of the Pueblos, see Joe Sando, *Pueblo Nations: Eight Centuries of Pueblo Indian History* (Santa Fe, N.Mex.: Clear Light Publishers, 1992), 13–18.

<sup>5</sup> All Indian Pueblo Council Narrative, n.d., untitled folder, box 5, All Indian Pueblo Council Papers, Pueblo Archives, Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, Albuquerque, New Mexico [hereafter AIPC Papers-IPCC].

<sup>6</sup> For the AIPC constitution signed 16 October 1965, refer to Sando, *Pueblo Nations*, 264.

council has historically functioned as a single inter-Pueblo representative body that deals with external issues affecting all Pueblos.

The council has been a part of the political structure of Pueblo life since perhaps as early as the 1300s. Joe Sando states that, similarly to the Iroquois League, the All Indian Pueblo Council is one of the oldest confederate governments in North America.<sup>7</sup> He suggests that the arrival of the Athabaskans in the Southwest compelled a measure of unity between the Pueblos, and this unity gradually evolved into the formal organization of today.<sup>8</sup> Before the Spanish settled in New Mexico, there were at least thirty-five (and probably many more) individual Pueblo villages, populated by many tens of thousands of men and women.<sup>9</sup> According to Sando, a mutual Pueblo need to work in unison to fend off the newly arrived raiders led to the formation of the council. The AIPC went on to act also as an unofficial inter-Pueblo jury, resolving disputes when there was a problem in any village.<sup>10</sup> Sando suggests that the first evidence of the council's existence can be traced to July 1598, when thirty-eight leaders met at Santo Domingo Pueblo, gave Juan de Oñate permission to settle on the Rio Grande, and swore allegiance to the Spanish throne. Soon after, Oñate established a settlement near San Juan.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Sando, *Pueblo Nations*, 263.

<sup>8</sup> Archaeologist David Brugge has suggested that by 1300, the Apacheans were on the northern periphery of the Southwest area. See David Brugge, "Navajo Prehistory and History to 1850," in *Southwest*, ed. Alfonso Ortiz, vol. 10 of *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant, 20 vols. (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1983), 490.

<sup>9</sup> For a more full discussion on the demographics of the Pueblos before contact, and for more detailed numbers, see Albert H. Schroeder, "Pueblos Abandoned in Historic Times," in *Southwest*, ed. Alfonso Ortiz, vol. 9 of *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant, 20 vols. (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1979).

<sup>10</sup> Sando, *Pueblo Nations*, 263.

<sup>11</sup> Sando, *Pueblo Indians*, 210–11.

The precise history of the AIPC before the twentieth century is uncertain. A councilman of Santo Domingo in the late twentieth century explained, “the details of the history are so sacred, they have been kept a secret. The heart of the AIPC is buried at Santo Domingo Pueblo, depicting a bone which lies across the state of New Mexico.”<sup>12</sup> While there are many moments that can be pointed to as the beginning of the AIPC, as time passed and the twentieth century neared, the structure of the council became increasingly formal. Certainly, the Pueblos came together politically long before the Bursum bill struggle of 1922.

Despite the guarded history of the AIPC, late-nineteenth-century AIPC action indicates the role that the council fulfilled before the twentieth century. In 1889, for example, the Pueblos suffered many deaths at the hands of an influenza outbreak originating in Russia. The Pueblos vowed that in future they would meet in times of crisis, and more when necessary, to help one another.<sup>13</sup> Pablo Abeita of Isleta, who was born in 1871, remembered that the AIPC was “already in force” when he was a child. “The Indians would meet at the request or at the asking of any Pueblo for matters pertaining to the welfare of the Pueblo Indians,” he noted. Indeed, Abeita was a member of the council by the age of eighteen, and he experienced a tumultuous conflict in 1894. At this time the AIPC intervened in a land dispute between San Felipe and Santo Domingo Pueblos. Described as a “warpath” by Abeita, the conflict resulted in some deaths. The AIPC met at San Felipe to mediate the dispute, and ordered San Felipe to pay

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Sally Hyer, “Remembering Santa Fe Indian School, 1890–1990” (Phd diss., University of New Mexico, 1994), 285.

<sup>13</sup> “The All-Pueblo Council: A Veteran Confederation,” folder 23, box 4, Sophie D. Aberle Papers, 1913–1987, MSS 509 BC, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque [hereafter Aberle Papers, CSWR].

two hundred dollars in damages to Santo Domingo. Abeita remembers that the event brought the Pueblos closer together than they had been, and they vowed to be more responsive toward one another in the future.<sup>14</sup>

There is a surprising lack of historical literature on the nineteen Pueblos of New Mexico and their confederate council in the twentieth century.<sup>15</sup> Historians such as J. Manuel Espinosa, Ramón A. Gutiérrez, John Kessell, and Carroll L. Riley have successfully illuminated Pueblo history by focusing on the rich dynamics of Spanish-Pueblo relations from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. In this historiography, the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 has acted as a massive historical watershed.<sup>16</sup> The concentration of research on Spanish-Pueblo relations, however, has meant that Pueblo history after the establishment of U.S. power in New Mexico in 1848 is quite sparse. Some historians have tackled questions over the legal status of the Pueblos under the United States in the nineteenth century.<sup>17</sup> Yet, twentieth-century political history, if written at all, has rarely been told from the Pueblos' perspective. Only Joe Sando of Jemez Pueblo and James

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<sup>14</sup> See Pablo Abeita's statement in All Pueblo Council meeting minutes, September 1929, Santo Domingo, p. 9, reel 8, microfilm, John Collier Papers [hereafter Collier Papers]; and "The All-Pueblo Council: A Veteran Confederation."

<sup>15</sup> There is, however, an abundance of anthropological studies on the Pueblos. For example see Edward Dozier, *The Pueblo Indians of North America* (1970; repr., Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1983); or Ortiz, ed., *Southwest*.

<sup>16</sup> Most recently, J. Manuel Espinosa, *The Pueblo Indian Revolt of 1696 and the Franciscan Missions in New Mexico: Letters of the Missionaries and Related Documents* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988); Ramón A. Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500–1846* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991); John Kessell, *Pueblos, Spaniards, and the Kingdom of New Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008); and Carroll L. Riley, *The Kachina and the Cross: Indians and Spaniards in the Early Southwest* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Deborah A. Rosen, "Pueblo Indians and Citizenship in Territorial New Mexico," *New Mexico Historical Review* 78 (winter 2003): 1–28.

Vlasich have provided Pueblo perspective in the twentieth century by focusing respectively on cultural and agricultural factors.<sup>18</sup>

This is not to say that historians have ignored the Pueblo story altogether in the twentieth century. In fact, elements of the twentieth century have been covered in quite extraordinary depth. A few historians have subjected the Bursum bill, the Pueblo Lands Board Act, and the political context of these measures to great scrutiny. Yet within their examination of the land battle, historians have paid scant attention to the Pueblo people who helped determine their own futures.<sup>19</sup> Instead, they have focused on Stella Atwood and the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), John Collier and the American Indian Defense Association (AIDA), the political and artistic circles in Santa Fe and Taos, or the politicians who imposed the Bursum bill on New Mexico's nineteen Pueblos.<sup>20</sup> Despite the tendency of historians to focus on the white men and women of non-Indian organizations—illuminating a rich history on wider America at this time—the land struggle acutely affected local Pueblo communities. Within and between these

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<sup>18</sup> Sando, *Pueblo Nations*; Joe Sando, *Pueblo Profiles: Cultural Identity through Centuries of Change* (Santa Fe, N.Mex.: Clear Light Publishers, 1998); and James A. Vlasich, *Pueblo Indian Agriculture* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005).

<sup>19</sup> Only Joe Sando places the Indians at the center of this picture. See Sando, *Pueblo Profiles* and Sando, *Pueblo Nations*.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Karin L. Huebner, "An Unexpected Alliance: Stella Atwood, the California Clubwomen, John Collier, and the Indians of the Southwest, 1917–1934," *Pacific Historical Review* 78 (August 2009): 337–366; Lawrence C. Kelly, *The Assault on Assimilation: John Collier and the Origins of Indian Policy Reform* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983); Arrell Morgan Gibson, *The Santa Fe and Taos Colonies: Age of the Muses, 1900–1942* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983); and Kenneth R. Philp, "Albert B. Fall and the Protest from the Pueblos, 1921–23," *Arizona and the West* 12 (Autumn 1970): 237–254. Another key moment of historical focus has been the return of Taos Blue Lake to Taos Pueblo. See, for example, Andrew Graybill, "Strong on the Merits and Powerfully Symbolic": The Return of Blue Lake to Taos Pueblo," *New Mexico Historical Review* 76 (April 2001): 125–160.



communities, the Pueblos organized around the AIPC, a body that historians have typically mentioned only in passing.<sup>21</sup> Yet the AIPC and its leaders were crucial to the outcome of this struggle. Only Tisa Wenger, a historian of religious history, has begun to remedy the lack of Pueblo perspective during this critical time in her analysis of the Pueblo fight for religious freedom in the 1920s.<sup>22</sup>

Historians Francis Paul Prucha, Elmer Rusco, and Edward Spicer have incorrectly suggested that the Bursum bill coalition formed in 1922 “led to the establishment of the All-Pueblo Council.”<sup>23</sup> According to Rusco, “Inter-Pueblo cooperation goes all the way back to the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, and there had been irregular and ad hoc meetings of representatives of all or most Pueblos for some time before the 1920s.”<sup>24</sup> These informal gatherings, however, were likely pre-arranged AIPC meetings that had traditionally met “each month, since time immemorial.”<sup>25</sup> Despite these inaccuracies, Prucha, Rusco, and Spicer do highlight an important moment of cooperation between all nineteen Pueblos and outside organizations in twentieth-century Pueblo history. For this moment became

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<sup>21</sup> Historians have tended to mention the AIPC as a political body established by John Collier in 1922. See, for example, Lawrence C. Kelly, “John Collier and the Pueblo Lands Board Act,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 58 (January 1983): 6.

<sup>22</sup> Tisa Joy Wenger, *We Have a Religion: The 1920s Pueblo Indian Dance Controversy and American Religious Freedom* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

<sup>23</sup> Elmer Rusco, *A Fateful Time: The Background and Legislative History of the Indian Reorganization Act* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000), 23–24; Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*, 2 vols., combined and unabridged (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 799; and Edward 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, 1967), 173.

<sup>24</sup> Rusco, *A Fateful Time*, 23–24.

<sup>25</sup> Benny Atencio, U.S. House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, Subcommittee on Indian Affairs, *Rights of Members of Indian Tribes: Hearings on H.R. 15419 and Related Bills*, 90th Cong., 2d sess., 1968, p. 50.

formative for the AIPC in many ways, providing Pueblo leaders with the tools required to continue negotiating Pueblo sovereignty for many decades.

Despite this focus on the political wranglings of the Bursum bill, historians have little considered the events from the passage of the Pueblo Lands Board Act, in 1924, to and including the Indian Reorganization Act, in 1934, through the final settlements of the Pueblo Lands Board (PLB) in 1938. An analysis of this time frame demonstrates that the Pueblos' land and water struggles did not end with the legislation of the Pueblo Lands Board Act. Certainly the Bursum-bill struggle was formative for the AIPC. In particular, the relationship the APC formed with soon-to-be federal Indian commissioner John Collier—described by Vine Deloria Jr. as the first non-Indian to “understand, appreciate, articulate, and fight zealously” for Indian tradition—became vital to the Pueblos land- and water-based future.<sup>26</sup> In many ways the defeat of the Bursum bill was only the beginning of the Pueblos' story and the role of the AIPC in twentieth-century New Mexico. The Pueblos' land and water struggles continued into the 1930s and beyond, and necessitated that the APC grow as a representative body. Similarly, because of the federal government's campaign to end tribal sovereignty in the mid-century, historians have given almost no consideration to the actions of the Pueblos at this time. Vlasich does cover this period in his work on Pueblo agriculture, yet he gives little scope to the political ramifications of this difficult time period.

While the majority of Native American political histories have been written from the perspective of the federal government, the mid-to-late twentieth century has recently

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<sup>26</sup> Vine Deloria Jr. and Clifford M. Lytle, *The Nations Within: The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty*, (1984; repr. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 41.

been scrutinized from a different perspective.<sup>27</sup> More recently scholars of Native history have started to focus on twentieth-century events, emphasizing activist Red Power movements since World War II. Authors such as Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Warrior have commonly argued that Red Power movements led by American Indian Movement (AIM) after the Alcatraz occupation of 1969–1971 attained from the federal government self-determination for Native communities.<sup>28</sup> There is, however, a growing body of literature that diverges from the dominant discourse of this period. Charles Wilkinson's *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations* (2005) and Daniel Cobb's *Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty* (2008) have very recently argued that from the 1950s onward, Native tribes and their political leaders orchestrated a modern Native American movement for tribal sovereignty and political self-determination.<sup>29</sup>

When the AIPC is viewed alongside what Wilkinson describes as a “modern tribal sovereignty movement” in the twentieth century, the historical significance of the AIPC

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<sup>27</sup> For an overview of Native American federal policy, see Prucha, *The Great Father*. For twentieth-century federal Indian policy, see Kenneth R. Philp, foreword by Francis Paul Prucha, *John Collier's Crusade for Indian Reform, 1920-1954* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1977); Deloria Jr. and Lytle, *The Nations Within*; and Vine Deloria Jr., ed., *American Indian Policy in the Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985).

<sup>28</sup> For example see Troy Johnson, *The Occupation of Alcatraz: Indian Self-Determination and the Rise of Indian Activism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); and Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Warrior, *Like A Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: New Press, 1996).

<sup>29</sup> Daniel M. Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008); Daniel Cobb and Loretta Fowler, eds., *Beyond Red Power: American Indian Politics and Activism Since 1900* (Santa Fe, N.Mex.: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007); Charles Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005).

becomes apparent.<sup>30</sup> The AIPC can be understood in a context where “tribal members might discuss their predicaments, assess the alternatives offered by both traditional and innovative political structures, and chart a course of action for the future.”<sup>31</sup> Wilkinson and other scholars have usually pointed to the National Congress of American Indians, established in 1944, as the root of this movement. The AIPC narrative, however, suggests that the Pueblos’ campaign for tribal sovereignty began far earlier. In *Beyond Red Power: American Indian Politics and Activism since 1900*, Daniel M. Cobb and Loretta Fowler show that Native activism was common from the beginning of the twentieth century. From the 1920s onward, I argue, the AIPC conceived of battles over land, water, and political authority as attacks on the sovereignty of the Pueblos. Further, the AIPC steadily led a campaign with a consistent message to protect Pueblo sovereignty from the 1920s to the 1970s.

Ultimately, the story of the AIPC, as a modern Native American institution fighting for Pueblo sovereignty, remains to be written. This work offers a beginning to writing that history by examining how the AIPC functioned during the twentieth century and aims to fill in some gaps in Pueblo history during this period. It pays particular attention to the development of the institution itself, to its chairmen during the crucial period of the mid to late twentieth century, to its interactions with federal institutions, and to the council-sponsored programs that enlarged the self-determination of Pueblo communities. I conceive of the AIPC as a Native American community or “active node in

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<sup>30</sup> Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle*, xiv.

<sup>31</sup> Frederick E. Hoxie, “Missing the Point: Academic Experts and American Indian Politics,” in *Beyond Red Power: American Indian Politics and Activism Since 1900*, ed. Daniel Cobb and Loretta Fowler (Santa Fe, N.Mex.: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007), 26. See also, Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America*.

a network of assessment, thought, and action.” The narrative focuses on the role of the leaders—and particularly the chairman—of the AIPC during this time because, as Frederick Hoxie astutely observes, Native political leaders during the twentieth century should be considered activists. Due to the unique position of tribes within America, these leaders “could not avoid acting within the boundaries of American political life.” As was the case elsewhere across Indian Country, AIPC leaders waged campaigns “to support the interests of indigenous communities, but their successes were won through interaction with the legal institutions of the United States.”<sup>32</sup> As leaders of a prominent outward-facing indigenous institution, AIPC chairmen were on the front line of the modern tribal sovereignty movement.

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<sup>32</sup> Hoxie, “Missing the Point,” 30.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **The All Pueblo Council's Formative Years: Pueblo Land Rights, Religious Freedom, and Political Autonomy in the 1920s**

On an early February morning in 1921, on the outskirts of Tesuque Pueblo, New Mexico, before the sun had fully risen over the snow-capped Sangre de Cristo Mountains to the east, over twenty-five men marched toward the fenced boundary of a nearby rancher's land. On arrival, encouraged by the defiance and leadership of their twenty-five-year-old lieutenant governor, Martin Vigil, the men from the Tewa Pueblo began tearing down the fencing and uprooting the fence posts that demarcated the boundary of the E. D. Newman Ranch. Newman soon arrived at the scene and, smiling wryly at Vigil, remarked, "you meant what you said." "Yes," Vigil replied, "I'm not talking behind a bush, I'm telling you right off."<sup>33</sup>

A few weeks earlier, Vigil had approached Newman on his ranch while he was installing a new fence across land that the members of Tesuque Pueblo considered theirs. With the backing of his governor, Elias Suazo—Vigil's father-in-law—Vigil told Newman, in Spanish, not to fence this place. Reiterating the Pueblo's historic ownership of the area, Vigil exclaimed, "This land is ours." Believing he had purchased the land only a few months previously, Newman considered his actions legitimate. "This is my

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<sup>33</sup> Martin Vigil, interview by Dennis Stanford, 14 July 1970, p. 9 (side 1, tape 646), transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, MSS 314 BC, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque [hereafter AIOHC, CSWR].

land,” he rebutted. “I’m not going to move.”<sup>34</sup> Vigil refused to argue: “I don’t want to talk, I’m just giving you orders by the governor, remove your fence and that’s the end of it, we will have no trouble.” Newman refused to take down his fence. Hence, a couple of weeks later and after much apprehensive discussion within the Tesuque community and tribal council, Vigil returned to remove the fencing with other men for support.<sup>35</sup> By the day’s end, the Tesuque men had carried off three-and-a-half miles of fencing from two separate ranches.<sup>36</sup>

The owner of the second ranch, Mr. Healy, whose fence the men also tore down, threatened the party from Tesuque with a shotgun. He promised that the first Indian who entered his property and refused to leave on demand was “going to stop a bullet.”<sup>37</sup> Vigil was confident that the ranchers were in the wrong and apparently laughed this threat off: “He can’t kill us all, let him shoot if he wants to.” Police cars and Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) agents from nearby Santa Fe soon arrived, along with Pueblo lawyer Francis C. Wilson, who advised Vigil and his cohort to cease their actions. They eventually did so, but Vigil vowed to establish legally who owned this disputed land once and for all: He

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<sup>34</sup> E.D. Newman to H. H. Johnson, 9 February 1922, folder: Indian Affairs, Controversy over Tesuque, box 2, Gov. Merritt C. Mechem Papers, Collection 1959-098, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico [hereafter Merritt Mechem Papers, NMSRCA]; and Vigil, interview, pp. 7, 8 (side 1, tape 646), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR. For E. D. Newman’s perspective on the Tesuque fence controversy, see the various Newman letters in folder 2, Merritt Mechem Papers, NMSRCA.

<sup>35</sup> Vigil, interview, pp. 7–8 (side 1, tape 646), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>36</sup> “Indian Agent Has Refused Amends, Say Two Ranchers,” *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 10 February 1922, 6. For the whole fence event see Vigil, interview, pp. 5–14 (side 1, tape 646), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR; and Martin Vigil, interview by Dennis Stanford, 10 December 1970, pp. 3–12 (side 1, tape 754), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR. The *Santa Fe New Mexican* also covered elements of the event. See “Tesuque Braves Make Fence of Ranchman into Kindling,” *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 8 February 1922, 11; and “Indian Agent Has Refused Amends, Say Two Ranchers.” Pueblo historian Joe Sando (Jemez) also provides a brief description of this event in Sando, *Pueblo Indians*, 165.

<sup>37</sup> “Indian Agent Has Refused Amends, Say Two Ranchers.”

recalled, “For the sake of my land and the sake of my people . . . if we don’t do something right now, pretty soon we’ll be surround[ed by] the Spanish with non-Indians, Anglos, everybody come and help themselves [sic].”<sup>38</sup> The local newspaper, the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, portrayed the Indians as land grabbers and declared that Tesuque Pueblo was “on the Warpath—more or less.”<sup>39</sup> Other ranchers in the area, “a representative bunch of red blooded true Americans,” armed themselves in response.<sup>40</sup> Having heard the newspaper reports, San Juan Pueblo (now Ohkay Owingeh) governor José Ramos Archuleta led a group of men, ready to fight, to Tesuque a few days later. He told Vigil, “We are standing behind you . . . the Tewa people, we want to help you.”<sup>41</sup> Vigil assured them that there was no war: “we’re fighting not with guns or arrow or anything [sic].” Instead, he told them, Tesuque was going to fight the incursions onto Tesuque land through official channels.<sup>42</sup>

This incident at Tesuque represented a much larger and long-running issue over Pueblo land rights across New Mexico. New Mexico’s nineteen Pueblos had lost thousands of acres of land to Anglo and Hispanic settlers since Europeans had first arrived in the valleys of New Mexico, beginning in the sixteenth century. In particular, since the U.S. annexation of the Southwest in 1848, settlers had erected fences adjacent to, and in many cases on, Pueblo lands. The rising tide of controversy over this issue, and the potential for violence, ultimately forced the federal government to act on the long-standing issue of land rights across New Mexico. In 1922, Congress passed the Bursum

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<sup>38</sup> Vigil, interview, pp. 9, 8 (side 1, tape 646), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>39</sup> “Tesuque Braves Make Fence of Ranchman into Kindling.”

<sup>40</sup> E. D. Newman to [Com. of Ind. Af.] Charles Burke, 11 February 1922, folder: Indian Affairs, Controversy over Tesuque, box 2, Merritt Mechem Papers, NMSRCA.

<sup>41</sup> Vigil, interview, p. 12 (side 1, tape 754), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>42</sup> Vigil, interview, p. 13 (side 1, tape 646), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.



bill, legislation that threatened to resolve most claims in favor of non-Indians. Stirred by the possibility of losing further lands, the APC began meeting regularly and formed a powerful coalition of Pueblo and non-Indian interests. With the help of community leader John Collier and clubwoman Stella Atwood—both Anglos—the APC coalition was able to defeat the Bursum bill and force the passing of the more favorable Pueblo Lands Board Act in 1924.

During the 1920s, the APC formalized itself as the official representative confederate council of all of the New Mexico Pueblos.<sup>43</sup> Significantly, the Bursum bill fight and the wider issue of Pueblo land rights affected all nineteen Pueblos. The willingness of the Pueblos to unite with one another demonstrates that the Pueblos could achieve great success in protecting their homelands and their culture through political confederacy. (And further, the cooperation evident in the APC at this time, and throughout the twentieth century proves that the Pueblos have been keen to act in unison when their collective interest is threatened from outsiders.) Similarly, the APC's willingness to co-opt a white coalition set a precedent that lasted throughout the twentieth century. The APC remained wary of individuals and organizations outside Pueblo society, but after working closely with Collier and Atwood during the Bursum bill struggle, the APC continued to cultivate meaningful political relationships with outsiders for the remainder of the century. These relationships ultimately proved invaluable in protecting Pueblo interests and preserving fundamental elements of Pueblo culture. This chapter in Pueblo history also acted as the springboard for the APC to become the most

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<sup>43</sup> During the 1920s and into the 1930s, the APC often went by the name "Council of All of the New Mexico Pueblos." For the sake of clarity I shall only refer to the organization by its more long-term name, the APC.

active and important element in collective Pueblo government during the twentieth century.

This is not to say that the APC stood unchallenged as a representative council of the Pueblos. The strength and success of the APC during and following on from the Bursum-bill fight brought the council into conflict with other groups with differing interests. First, during the Bursum-bill negotiations, the Pueblos' coalition became wracked by in-fighting between various non-Indian organizations. Ultimately, one of the organizations, the New Mexico Association on Indian Affairs (NMAIA), who had previously backed the APC's effort to defeat the Bursum bill, challenged the authority of the APC to speak for all Pueblos. While the APC had invited outside groups to represent the Pueblos' interests, these outsiders began to question the degree to which the APC represented Pueblo society and whether it operated independently. Second, individuals from various progressive factions within the Pueblo community formed the Council of Progressive Pueblo Indians. Backed by white reformers who wanted to see American Indians assimilate into the dominant culture, this council attempted to discredit the authority of the APC by denouncing its leaders to the Indian Office as backward traditionalists who governed the Pueblos with an iron fist. And last, in 1926, the Indian Office created the U.S. Pueblo Indian Council to rival the APC as an inter-Pueblo body. This new council was an attempt by the Indian Office to corral the members of the APC in a new forum controlled by the federal government. The Indian Office was perturbed at the actions of the APC because its members did not reflect the assimilationist line of national Indian policy.

In many ways, the challenges to the authority of the APC during this time strengthened the significance of the council. The APC emerged in 1928 as an organization that could hold court with federal and state authorities and command respect from the Pueblo people of New Mexico. The struggles over land and the political conditions surrounding these events necessarily demanded a strong and unified response from the Pueblo community as a whole. Within this, the leaders of the APC utilized the position of the confederate council to transform the institution into a powerful regional organization. In so doing, the APC began to emerge as the most important element of the Pueblos' political structure in dealing with outsiders.

The story of the APC during this period has important national consequences. The work of the APC in the 1920s can be considered a direct Native reaction against the general assimilation line of the Indian Office at the turn of the twentieth century. The APC was made up of more traditional but not completely conservative leaders who fought to maintain cultural continuity in Pueblo society. By expressing their right to represent the Pueblos independently from the federal government, they were also fighting assimilation. And further, their actions and successes in the 1920s and their relationship with Collier helped shepherd in a new day for Indians across America. The APC demonstrated that resistance to the dominant culture could be achieved by using political confederacy between Indians and with the help of sympathetic outsiders.

The action of Vigil and his Tesuque brothers in 1922 was only the latest incident in a centuries-long battle. By this time, the land situation in New Mexico had grown from a local issue to a state and federal embarrassment. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed in 1848 after the U.S.-Mexico War and the U.S. annexation of northern Mexico,

guaranteed the Pueblos their land from the United States. The Pueblos resided on land that the Spanish empire had granted to its Native citizens.<sup>44</sup> The Pueblos had lived alongside their Hispanic neighbors, predominantly on tightly packed fertile strips along the rivers of arid New Mexico. By the 1920s, the Pueblos still claimed historic ownership of their lands. Yet some Anglo and Hispanic settlers and squatters claimed they resided legally on Pueblo lands. Whether the Pueblos had legally relinquished the title to their lands, and thus whether the settlers were there legally, was a situation very much complicated by the changing citizenship status of the Pueblos under Spanish, Mexican, and then American rule.

The Pueblos were wards of the Spanish crown, but Mexico had granted the Pueblos citizenship in 1821. This status implied that the Pueblos could sell their land to non-Indians as well as purchase new lands. Complicating the legal position of the Pueblos under the United States, however, was their distinct position within the federal government's categorization of Indians owing to their relationship to Spain and then Mexico. Similarly, because of their sedentary and agricultural lifestyle, the Pueblos defied the general assumption held by the federal government that all Indians were savages, and thus noncitizens.<sup>45</sup>

In 1877, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on *United States v. Joseph*, which brought some legal definition to the Pueblos' position within America. The *Joseph* decision confirmed that the Pueblos were indeed able to hold title to their land, for they "hold their

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<sup>44</sup> For a concise explanation of the land situation, see Dozier, *Pueblo Indians*, 107–8. For a more detailed discussion on these land issues, see G. Emlen Hall, *Four Leagues of Pecos: A Legal History of the Pecos Grant, 1800–1933*, New Mexico Land Grant Series (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984).

<sup>45</sup> See Hall, *Four Leagues of Pecos*, 128–138.

lands by a right superior to that of the United States”: the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Further, the court considered the Pueblos “too civilized to warrant federal protection.”<sup>46</sup> The decision left the Pueblos’ land susceptible to exploitation by non-Indians for the next twenty-five years.<sup>47</sup>

In 1913, the U.S. Supreme Court once more weighed in on the land situation in New Mexico when ruling on *United States vs. Sandoval*. The opinion of the court on this occasion concluded that despite the Pueblos’ sedentary and peaceful lifestyle, they were “nevertheless Indians in race, customs, and domestic government . . . adhering to primitive modes of life, largely influenced by superstition and fetichism . . . they are essentially a simple, uninformed, and inferior people.”<sup>48</sup> While the language of this decision was derogatory toward the Pueblos, the *Sandoval* decision ruled that the Pueblos were indeed Indians, and thus could not alienate their lands. *Sandoval* eventually provided the Pueblos with a legal foundation to challenge the trespasses onto their land, for these violations contradicted the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Hispanic and Anglo settlers had undoubtedly bought and sold land on Pueblo property, in many ways because they assumed the Pueblos were citizens, as the Spanish affirmed. Santa Clara anthropologist Edward Dozier, however, doubted that “few, if any Pueblo Indians had ever sold land grants.”<sup>49</sup> Regardless of what had previously passed, the *Sandoval* decision was a major contributing factor to the growing land tensions in the 1910s.

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<sup>46</sup> *United States v. Joseph*, 94 U.S. 614, 618 (1876); and Hall, *Four Leagues of Pecos*, 135.

<sup>47</sup> Hall, *Four Leagues of Pecos*, 137.

<sup>48</sup> *United States v. Sandoval*, 231 U.S. 28, 39 (1913).

<sup>49</sup> Dozier, *Pueblo Indians*, 108.

The APC, too, was active during the *Sandoval* period, and fully aware of the growing issue of land rights affecting its constituents. On 18 May 1911, the APC met at Santa Clara Pueblo to request from the U.S. Indian Commissioner that the federal government commission a survey of all Pueblo lands. In its request to Commissioner Robert G. Valentine, the APC complained, “Every year somebody moves the boundaries in upon our lands, in some cases several miles.” The APC pointed out, “All of us have lost tracts of valuable land which were honestly ours under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.”<sup>50</sup> The APC pointed out the power of its political confederation: “We have organized into a federation of tribes and have had there [sic] meetings which have resulted in a great good to us all. We study our condition from every point of view and we believe we have inaugurated a new upward movement which all New Mexico, white and Indian, will feel.”<sup>51</sup> The APC closed its appeal by inviting the Indian Office to send a representative to its next meeting at Santo Domingo Pueblo.

In 1914, the federal government did indeed commission a survey of Pueblo lands in an attempt to establish how much Pueblo land non-Indians claimed. The Joy Survey may not have been a direct response to the APC appeal, but, more likely, a federal response to the *Sandoval* decision of the previous year. The Joy Survey aimed to provide the special attorney to the Pueblos, Francis Wilson, with “systematic, definite information about non-Indian claims to confirmed Pueblo land, so that he could begin the process of quieting title in the pueblos to their ancestral homes.”<sup>52</sup> Martin Vigil, who later led

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<sup>50</sup> U.S. Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Indian Affairs, *Survey of the Conditions of the Indians in the United States: Hearings on S. Res. 79, 308, and S. Res. 263 and 416*, 71st Cong., 2d sess., 1931, part 19, p. 9992.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9997.

<sup>52</sup> Hall, *Four Leagues of Pecos*, 215.

Tesuque Pueblo members to tear down contested fences on adjoining land, remembered the arrival of the survey team. He stated that no Pueblos “knew anything about it, nobody consult with the people [sic].”<sup>53</sup> The Pueblos and their supporters claimed that the surveyors “accepted any non-Indian claim, no matter how baseless or ludicrous.” The surveyors concluded that there were around three thousand non-Indian claims to “patented Pueblo land.” Perhaps equally significant, the survey indicated that non-Indian claims represented prime, irrigated land.<sup>54</sup> And while the federal government maintained that the survey was not official and did not represent title to the lands, by recognizing the claims of non-Indians, the Joy Survey set a dangerous precedent.

Soon, non-Indian claimants began erecting fences on contested land using the boundaries recognized in the Joy Survey as a guideline. Some settlers began to apply to the Department of the Interior for patents to lands that the Joy Survey suggested were theirs.<sup>55</sup> Vigil remembers that one particular fence erected at this time in Tesuque Pueblo represented fifty-five acres that the Pueblo considered theirs. In response, Tesuque elders began to question, “Why don’t we fight for our land or get some help?” Tesuque Pueblo leaders had little knowledge of what recourse they had legally, however, and had previously lived relatively peacefully with their non-Indian neighbors.<sup>56</sup>

Between the Joy Survey and the actions of Vigil in February 1922, the land situation became increasingly untenable for Pueblo communities. In May 1920, a U.S. House subcommittee on Indian Affairs visited Tesuque as part of a nationwide investigation into the operation of the Indian Office. Two Pueblo leaders used this

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<sup>53</sup> Vigil, interview, p. 3 (side 1, tape 646), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>54</sup> Hall, *Four Leagues of Pecos*, 215.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>56</sup> Vigil, interview, p. 3 (side 1, tape 646), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

hearing as an opportunity to highlight the growing land crises that had arisen, particularly since the Joy Survey. Representing seven of the Northern Pueblos, Ramos Archuleta of San Juan claimed, “to-day [sic] we have less than half of the lands contained in that survey of the patent.”<sup>57</sup> And further, non-Indians “live inside some of our land, and, of course, we want the Government to help us out in that question.” Porfirio Montoya of Taos Pueblo echoed Archuleta’s sentiments, claiming that his people, too, had lost significant land since the Joy Survey.<sup>58</sup> Importantly, both men became vocal leaders for the APC in the imminent Bursum-bill struggle, demonstrating that the Pueblos were both conscious and active on the issue of land well before John Collier and other white outsiders entered the fray surrounding Pueblo land. About eighteen months later, Vigil and other Tesuque men took the growing Pueblo frustrations out on fences that were erected in response to the Joy Survey. The message was clear: the Pueblos would no longer accept encroachment onto land that was legally theirs. Vigil vowed to establish legally who owned the disputed land, once and for all.

After bloodshed was only “narrowly averted” at Tesuque, the local impetus to resolve this particular incident, and the wider problem, ballooned. Consequently, there was a four-day court hearing in Santa Fe to hear the opinions of all parties.<sup>59</sup> By this point, however, it was unlikely that any number of court hearings would resolve the Pueblos' land nightmare. In July 1922, Congress attempted to quiet the growing frustration when Sen. Holm O. Bursum of New Mexico drafted the Bursum bill. The bill

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<sup>57</sup> U.S. House Subcommittee of the Committee on Indian Affairs, Investigation of the Field Service: *Hearings on Indians of the United States*, 66th Cong., 2d sess., 1920, vol. 3, pp. 595, 596.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pp. 600–5.

<sup>59</sup> Philp, *John Collier's Crusade*, 28; and Sando, *Pueblo Indians*, 165.



contained many dangerous provisions for the Pueblos. Significantly, those non-Indian claimants who could provide “secondary evidence” of possession of their lands before 10 June 1900 would have been entitled to a decree from a local court that gave them title to the land. Similarly, the Bursum draft gave the Pueblos very limited water rights, and dictated that they correspond with the courts before irrigating any new acres. Perhaps most disturbingly for the Pueblos, the bill also directed the New Mexico District Court to accept all Joy Survey boundaries as final. Most importantly, the legislation placed on the Pueblos the onus to provide evidence of continuous ownership of their lands. Congress quickly pushed the legislation through before the summer recess.<sup>60</sup> The Bursum bill would have officially handed virtually all contested lands to non-Indian claimants.

Non-Indian organizations and individuals began rallying to the Pueblos’ cause. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs (GFWC), a rather conservative community-based women’s philanthropic organization with substantial lobbying power, formed a standing committee on Indian welfare in 1921. The committee was designed to improve the economic conditions of Indians nationwide and, with federal cooperation, aid them in regaining land rights. The GFWC appointed Atwood, who had a close relationship with Hopi Pueblo, chair of the newly established committee. Quite separately, in the winter of 1920–21, community organizer John Collier made a visit to Taos Pueblo and fell in love with what he considered the communal and mystic way of life the Tiwa Pueblo practiced. In July 1921, Atwood and Collier met in Salt Lake City at a GFWC meeting, where the pair realized their mutual concern for Native American tribes and the Pueblos in

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<sup>60</sup> For a concise legislative narrative of the Bursum bill, see Philp, “Albert B. Fall and the Protest from the Pueblos,” 240–243. Lawrence Kelly’s analysis of the legislative process is also valuable. See Kelly, *The Assault on Assimilation*, chap. 6.

particular. The following summer, Atwood appointed Collier the Indian field agent of the GFWC. According to historian Karin L. Huebner, in fall 1922 Atwood became aware of the Bursum bill and informed Collier of the pending legislation, and “together they launched a publicity campaign to defeat it.”<sup>61</sup>

Back in New Mexico, the Pueblos also began organizing politically. Pablo Abeita, a prominent member of Isleta Pueblo, an Indian Office judge, and long-time APC delegate, began rousing opposition to the Bursum bill and was soon joined by Collier.<sup>62</sup> In September and October 1922, Collier and Abeita traveled to many of New Mexico’s Pueblos in an attempt to bring the bill to each Pueblo’s attention.<sup>63</sup> When passing through Tesuque, Collier stopped by Governor Suazo’s house, where Vigil later remembered meeting Collier for the first time. Vigil felt that their conversation was unremarkable and was wary of informing this strange-looking white man about the problems Tesuque and other Pueblos had encountered. According to Vigil, Collier looked “like a tramp” and struck him as the “nervous type.”<sup>64</sup> Nonetheless, this was one of the first moments in a relationship between Collier and the Pueblos that would span over many decades and help protect the most important elements of Pueblo life and culture from Anglo encroachment.

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<sup>61</sup> Huebner, “An Unexpected Alliance,” 349–350, 350–51, 354.

<sup>62</sup> Wenger, *We Have a Religion*, 105.

<sup>63</sup> The historical record is unclear as to whether John Collier was the first to bring this bill to the Pueblos’ attention. Certainly, he spent the month of September traveling to many Pueblos. Historian Tisa Wenger suggests Abeita took similar actions in October. See Wenger, *We Have a Religion*, 105. Either way, both Abeita and Collier were central to publicizing the bill to Pueblo communities. For more on Abeita, see Patricia Burke Guggino, “Pablo Abeita: (1871–1940) Cultural Broker between Isleta Pueblo in New Mexico and the United States Government” (M.A. thesis, University of New Mexico, 1995).

<sup>64</sup> Vigil, interview, pp. 12–13 (side 1, tape 754), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

After Collier had journeyed farther south, Cochiti, Santo Domingo, and Isleta Pueblos organized an APC meeting at Santo Domingo Pueblo on 5 November 1922 to thrash out the Pueblo response to the Bursum bill.<sup>65</sup> At this historic meeting chaired by Charlie Kie of Laguna Pueblo, 121 delegates from twenty Pueblos, including the abandoned Pecos, attended, along with a number of key members of the Indian Office, Pueblo lawyer Francis C. Wilson, and other white friends of the Pueblos such as Collier. After a lengthy general discussion and a smaller, private, Pueblo-only deliberation lasting two or three hours, the APC drafted “An Appeal by the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico to the People of the United States,” which was then read to the wider group in English, Spanish, Keresan, Tewan, and Zunian. The appeal noted the urgency of the threat facing the Pueblos: “We have reached a point where we must either live or die.”<sup>66</sup> The document was unanimously adopted and signed by all Pueblo delegates present. At Collier’s recommendation, the council also agreed to send a number of delegates on a high-profile trip to the Northeast. The meeting represented a powerful declaration of cooperation between the Pueblos. Even though this was not the APC’s first meeting—by any means—Collier concluded, “Henceforth they intend to stand together for mutual

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<sup>65</sup> For a more full description of the series of events that led to this meeting and some limited description of the meeting itself, see Collier’s testimony in U.S. Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Public Lands and Surveys, *Pueblo Indian Lands: Hearings on S.3865 and S.4223*, 67th Cong., 4th sess., 1923, pp. 120–21.

<sup>66</sup> The full version of this appeal exists on record in U.S. Senate, *Pueblo Indian Lands: Hearings*, 1923, pp. 77–78. A limited version of the text also appeared on the front page of the *Santa Fe New Mexican* the day after the meeting. “Indian Bill Will Destroy Pueblo Life, Say Indians in Memorial to Country,” *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 6 November 1922, 1. The *New York Times* also covered the event in an overly romanticized article by Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, “Big Powwow of Pueblos,” *New York Times*, 26 November 1922, 69.

aid.”<sup>67</sup> Indeed the Pueblos’ willingness to accept the help of Collier, Atwood, and their respective organizations was a significant step towards larger cooperation among Pueblos and Anglos.

In late 1922 and into early 1923, Collier and Atwood began publicizing the Pueblos’ cause. Collier used *Survey* magazine and *Sunset Magazine* to highlight the deficiencies of the Bursum bill, which resulted in the close involvement of the NMAIA and Eastern Association on Indian Affairs in the land fight. Using the various voluntary organizations that came to the Pueblos’ aide, interested individuals penned a number of articles that published in prominent national newspapers and magazines. These articles appeared in *Outlook*, *New Republic*, *Nation*, *New York World*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *New York Times*, and the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, among others.<sup>68</sup> The Pueblo coalition collected money for its campaign from the constituents of these organizations.

The Pueblo response to the Bursum bill and the help they received from outsiders made the legislation a toxic issue in Congress, which recalled the bill on 21 November 1922. And while the repeal of the Bursum bill was a success for the APC, its leaders needed to include their voice in any new measures Congress took next. At the behest of Collier, the Pueblos began planning a delegation for a visit to Washington, D.C., via Chicago, and New York City. The APC hoped that the delegation could publicize the Pueblos’ land struggle to the wider public, and drum up lobbying and financial support enroute. In mid-January 1923, Sotero Ortiz, who was elected APC chairman at the meeting in Santo Domingo, came to Tesuque in his Cadillac to pick up traditional Pueblo regalia to take on the tour. While he was there, Ortiz elected Vigil to travel with the

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<sup>67</sup> U.S. Senate, *Pueblo Indian Lands: Hearings*, 1923, p. 121.

<sup>68</sup> Philp, *John Collier’s Crusade*, 34.

delegation, pointing to Vigil's long-term attendance at APC meetings as proof of his suitability. Vigil put on his traditional Tesuque clothing, had a farewell dinner, and departed with fourteen Pueblo "costumes"—the Tesuque Lincoln cane in hand—as the youngest member of the Pueblo delegation.<sup>69</sup> The delegation met at Lamy, New Mexico, and boarded a Pullman car for Chicago.<sup>70</sup>

After a bumpy ride on the train, Abeita, Ortiz, Antonio Romero (Taos), and others spoke in front of various organizations in Chicago, including the Chicago Indian Rights Association, to encourage members to lobby Congress on the Pueblos' behalf. They also appealed for financial assistance to fund their trip and other general efforts. Next, part of the delegation stopped in New York City, and on 15 January the *New York Times* reported Romero's feelings on the land situation: "We want the white squatters put off our lands, and we ask that we have a voice in governing ourselves."<sup>71</sup> A number of the Pueblo delegation also danced outside the New York stock exchange. Collier remembers that their performance sent two thousand bankers "wild." He deemed the dances a grand success because many of these bankers subsequently lobbied Congress in opposition to the Bursum bill.<sup>72</sup>

Vigil and the Pueblos used their dances to achieve political success. Collier consciously aimed to use Pueblo performances to arouse "the feeling of the American

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<sup>69</sup> Martin Vigil, interview by Dennis Stanford, 26 January 1971, pp. 19–20 (side 2, tape 764), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR. The Lincoln canes represent the authority of an individual to represent his respective Pueblo. For more on the Lincoln canes, see Sando, *Pueblo Nations*, 244.

<sup>70</sup> Vigil, interview, p. 21 (side 2, tape 764), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>71</sup> "City Too Cramped for Pueblo Indians," *New York Times*, 15 January 1923, 28. For more on the trip to Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C., from John Collier's perspective, see Philp, *John Collier's Crusade*, 38–41.

<sup>72</sup> All Pueblo Council meeting minutes, 17 January 1924, n.p., reel 8, microfilm, Collier Papers.

people.”<sup>73</sup> Historian Philip Deloria has pointed out that the identities of “Indianness” and “Americanness” are laden with connections. Both Anglo Americans and Native Americans have co-opted Indian identities for political purposes since the birth of the American republic. As the idea of “Indianness” was under threat during this period, many Native American leaders “played Indian,” employing “antimodern primitivism to defend native cultures against the negative stereotypes left over from colonial conquest.”<sup>74</sup> As an expert eagle dancer, Vigil saw no harm in performing Pueblo dances, saying “our dances are not wicked like you people.”<sup>75</sup>

The delegation spent a further week in New York City after returning from Washington and spoke at a town-hall meeting attended by “many thousand people,” according to Vigil. The audience was so numerous, they seemed “just like ants.” At this meeting, Vigil finally worked up the courage to speak after a series of other men had done so. He spent a few moments addressing the audience in his native Tewa language before making a heartfelt plea in English concerning the conditions of Tesuque and Pueblo life. During his twenty-minute speech, Vigil defended Pueblo land, religion, and life. “I kind of light up,” Vigil remembered, and along with the other Pueblo speakers, he made quite an impression on the audience.<sup>76</sup> After they had spoken, many people came to shake hands with the delegation, Vigil was embraced by a Catholic archbishop, and individuals from the audience contributed fourteen hundred dollars to the Pueblos’ cause.<sup>77</sup> After this experience, Vigil thought he “was big then, boy!” and went on to

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New York: Yale University Press, 1998), 122.

<sup>75</sup> Vigil, interview, p. 25 (side 2, tape 764), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>76</sup> Vigil, interview, pp. 32, 33 (side 1, tape 646), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>77</sup> Vigil, interview, p. 27 (side 2, tape 764), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR. According to

speak at every subsequent engagement with the APC delegation. Equally important was that, despite his youth, his Pueblo peers encouraged Vigil to speak up at future APC meetings.<sup>78</sup> Indeed public engagements such as this became increasingly common for many of the Pueblo leaders, who used this experience as a blueprint for the future.

Speaking at events hosted by interested parties and dancing in front of crowds ensured that the news media covered the Pueblos' campaign, as historian Herman Viola states.<sup>79</sup> It was in Congressional hearings in Washington, D.C., however, that the APC's success was realized. Between 15–25 January 1923, the Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Public Lands and Surveys listened to testimony from Abeita, Collier, and Wilson. Together, they pointed out the inherent wrongs in the Bursum bill. Indeed Abeita appealed to the committee by pointing out the Pueblos' long history of facing outsiders: "We were civilized and lived as such until you came in to disrupt and corrupt our method of civilization."<sup>80</sup> Having convinced the subcommittee that the Bursum bill was grossly unfair, the delegation departed Washington. Its lawyer, Wilson, remained to negotiate a substitute proposal. The eventual bill he agreed to—the Lenroot bill—was not authorized by the APC, was sympathetic to the settlers' interests, and contained no provision for

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Vigil, this particular event netted the Pueblos sixteen hundred dollars. The *New York Times*, however, quoted this figure at fourteen hundred dollars. "Plea For Pueblo Indians," *New York Times*, 25 January 1923, 9.

<sup>78</sup> Vigil, interview, p. 26 (side 2, tape 764), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>79</sup> Herman J. Viola, *Diplomats in Buckskins: A History of Indian Delegations in Washington City* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), 193. This Pueblo delegation to Washington, D.C., was not the first of its kind by any means. Anthropologist Peter Whitely found that Tesuque Pueblo sent five men to Washington City in 1852, while New Mexico's territorial period was still in its infancy. Peter M. Whiteley, "Reconnoitering 'Pueblo' Ethnicity: The 1852 Tesuque Delegation to Washington," *Journal of the Southwest* 45 (Autumn 2003): 437–518.

<sup>80</sup> Pablo Abeita, in U.S. Senate, *Pueblo Indian Lands: Hearings*, 1923, p. 190. Abeita's surname is listed in this document as "Abeyta."

compensation to the Pueblos for any lost lands. As the APC delegation returned to New Mexico, Collier made his way back to Washington to fire Wilson as the Pueblos' lawyer.<sup>81</sup>

Defeating the Bursum bill and then the Lenroot bill was equally divisive for the APC as it was transformative. Soon, "the whole matter of the lands and the rights of the Pueblo Indians" became "sorely entangled in the cobweb of politics."<sup>82</sup> When Wilson, backed by the NMAIA, agreed to the Lenroot bill and was subsequently sacked, the Pueblos non-Indian coalition fell apart. Collier and the APC felt betrayed by Wilson's actions in agreeing to a substitute proposal that could potentially ruin the Pueblos land situation. Having worked on Pueblo land for a long period, Wilson had some sympathy for the interests of the Hispanic settlers who, he believed, had purchased land from the Pueblos in good faith before the *Sandoval* decision in 1913.<sup>83</sup> Thus, representing the NMAIA and other interests including the Eastern Association, Wilson claimed the middle ground, a position that was more favorable to the political community in Santa Fe than Collier's and the APC's position.

Collier, on the other hand, told Wilson, "You, Mr. Wilson, were given complete trust by the Indians and their friends who believed you would stand immutably for certain gains and against certain surrenders."<sup>84</sup> Wilson claimed that Collier's position was

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<sup>81</sup> Vigil, interview, p. 2 (side 2, tape 646), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>82</sup> Elwood Hendrick to Dr. Burton E. Livingston [Am Assoc. for the Advancement of Science], 29 January 1923, folder: 89ELH .046, box 4, Edgar Hewett Collection, Archives of the Laboratory of Anthropology, Santa Fe, New Mexico [hereafter Hewett Papers, LA].

<sup>83</sup> Wenger, *We Have a Religion*, 129. Wenger's text contains a more complete version of these complicated events. Further, Wenger's work is more up to date than Philp and Kelly's assessment and focuses more on a Pueblo perspective.

<sup>84</sup> John Collier to Francis C. Wilson, 13 April 1923, p. 3., folder 34, box 41, Francis C.



“vicious and destructive” due to his “opposition to law and forms of law.”<sup>85</sup> Having sacked Wilson, Collier wrote to him, “I hope there will be no controversy. . . . But controversy is better than surrender.”<sup>86</sup>

Partly in order to help defeat the Lenroot Bill, in the spring of 1923 Collier formed a new New York-based organization, the American Indian Defense Association (AIDA). Collier was installed as executive secretary of the new body, which aimed to fundamentally reform federal Indian policy.<sup>87</sup> In her analysis of Pueblo religious struggles in the 1920s, Tisa Wenger points out that the white coalition in many ways split along lines that represented their views on Pueblo culture. While Collier and the GFWC respected Pueblo culture and wanted to protect it as it was, the NMAIA and Eastern Association ultimately believed that the Pueblos should assimilate into mainstream America.<sup>88</sup> These assimilationist organizations certainly believed they represented the interest of the Pueblos, but, as was the case in many aspects of his life, Collier had a powerful need to control proceedings from the center. And only by running his own organization could he achieve this.

Significantly, Collier’s policy of defending Pueblo land with little compromise secured the official backing of the Pueblos when, on 25 August 1923, the APC held another meeting at Santo Domingo. Despite protest from Wilson to support the Lenroot substitute, the APC produced a statement articulating its express support of Collier, the

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Wilson Papers, collection 1981-017, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico [hereafter Wilson Papers, NMSRCA].

<sup>85</sup> Wilson to Collier, 17 April 1923, p. 2, folder 34, box 41, Wilson Papers, NMSRCA.

<sup>86</sup> Collier to Wilson, 13 April 1923, p. 3.

<sup>87</sup> For more on the formation of the American Indian Defense Association, see Kelly, *The Assault on Assimilation*, 255–94.

<sup>88</sup> Wenger, *We Have a Religion*, 129–130.

AIDA, the GFWC, and any work these organizations may do on the Pueblos' behalf in defeating the Lenroot bill.<sup>89</sup> The APC also demanded that the federal government provide compensation for lost lands—a provision absent from the Lenroot substitute.<sup>90</sup> Significantly, the APC gave no mention of other organizations, including the NMAIA and Eastern Association on Indian Affairs, that had previously helped defeat the Bursum bill.

Five days after this APC meeting, the NMAIA hosted a meeting of its own in Santa Fe to discuss the emergence of the AIDA, and the APC's apparent shunning of their support. Roberts Walker attended, representing the Eastern Association and members of other smaller regional organizations were also present. Obviously unaware of how the APC functioned, Walker protested against the APC meeting of the previous week, suggesting that since there was no legislation to discuss, a meeting was unnecessary. Walker also accused the APC of being unrepresentative of the inter-Pueblo community. He did not understand "by what method" individual Pueblos sent delegates to the meeting, and accused the APC's vote of being "no more pueblo action, or Indian action, than action by this informal meeting here would be action of the city of Santa Fe."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Council of All the New Mexico Pueblos meeting statement, 25 August 1923, folder 891SC.006, Ina Sizer Cassidy Papers, Archives of the Laboratory of Anthropology, Santa Fe, New Mexico [hereafter Cassidy Papers, LA].

<sup>90</sup> The statement also exists in "Pueblos Take Strong Stand to Get Lands," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 27 August 1923, 2.

<sup>91</sup> New Mexico Association on Indian Affairs meeting minutes, 30 August 1923, p. 2, folder: correspondence 1922–23, box 9689, Southwestern Association on Indian Affairs records, collection 1976-037, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico [hereafter SWAIA Papers, NMSRCA].

The NMAIA's opinion on the APC was further complicated by the position taken by Laguna Pueblo at this time. Laguna was a more progressive Pueblo and its leadership was very much influenced by Father Fridolin Schuster, a man who ultimately hoped to assimilate his Native flock fully into American society. Thus, Laguna sent delegates to APC meetings, but they did not have the authority to vote in an official capacity. When, on 29 August, the *Santa Fe New Mexico* incorrectly reported that Laguna, Santo Domingo, San Felipe, Cochiti, Santa Ana, and Sandia were not present at the APC meeting on 25 August, the NMAIA saw this as further evidence of the APC's unrepresentative nature.<sup>92</sup> Ina Sizer Cassidy, a close friend of Collier and the Pueblos, pointed out to the NMAIA, however, that this report was "absolutely wrong." Cassidy was present at the APC meeting and remembered that "a general vote was taken and every pueblo were in favor [of being represented by the AIDA and GFWC] and voted on it except Laguna, who was given instructions not to vote on anything."<sup>93</sup> While this was discussed at the NMAIA meeting, the only Indian present, Martin Herrera of Santo Domingo, attempted to quell the suspicion surrounding the APC and Collier: "John Collier is doing what the Indians want, and he is going to do it."<sup>94</sup>

Wilson eventually backed down from attacking the APC, conceding that "it isn't really a question of whether the Indians are for Mr. Collier's proposition, but with us it is the question of whether Mr. Collier's proposition is actually one that can be actually

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<sup>92</sup> "Pueblos Take Strong Stand to Get Lands," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 27 August 1923, 2; and "New Mexico Association On Indian Affairs Takes Issue with Action at Domingo; Statement of its Position," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 29 August 1923, 2.

<sup>93</sup> New Mexico Association on Indian Affairs meeting minutes, 30 August 1923, p. 20, SWAIA Papers, NMSRCA

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

accomplished.”<sup>95</sup> Perhaps the main motivation for the objections of Wilson was that he and the NMAIA wanted to work alongside the Indian Office and local Hispanics. The APC, on the other hand, was explicitly turning to a more extreme position at this time, and threatened to disrupt the local political conditions in New Mexico. Wilson was worried that Collier and the APC were determined not to compromise. He noted, “the Indian Office is very much aroused and feels highly injured.”<sup>96</sup>

Despite the protests of the NMAIA, the APC and AIDA formed a strong coalition that, by not backing down and asserting Pueblo sovereignty, was able to negotiate a more favorable outcome for the Pueblos. After a meeting on 17 January 1924, the APC chose thirteen delegates to visit Washington once again, this time in conjunction with the AIDA. According to Vigil, this time around “it didn’t take long” to settle the issue and after two or three days in the capital, “everything was alright.”<sup>97</sup> In fact, this APC delegation helped convince Congress to pass the Pueblo Lands Board Act, which sanctioned the formation of a three-person body in Santa Fe to hear land claims and establish Pueblo boundaries. Significantly, the legislation put the onus on Hispanic and Anglo claimants to prove continuous possession of contested land, and also included the “principle of compensation” for the Pueblos.<sup>98</sup> All non-Indian settlers found to be on Pueblo lands unlawfully were to be evicted by the Indian Office. The Pueblos Lands

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>96</sup> Francis Wilson to Antonio Romero [Taos Pueblo], 3 June 1924, folder 5, box 42, Wilson Papers, NMSRCA.

<sup>97</sup> Vigil, interview, p. 3 (side 2, tape 646), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>98</sup> Philp, *John Collier’s Crusade*, 53. In his analysis of Indian delegations to Washington, historian Herman J. Viola points out that Indians often achieved great success by visiting Washington, D.C., stating that they are “perhaps second only to the environmentalists in their ability to have favorable legislation introduced and enacted.” They became “some of the most sophisticated lobbyists on the Washington scene.” Viola, *Diplomats in Buckskin*, 11.

Board Act was landmark legislation for the Pueblos and the APC. The Pueblos had suffered from unofficial encroachment on their lands for many decades and had also faced down Supreme Court decisions and Congressional legislation that would have formally displaced the Pueblos from their homelands. And while the Pueblos would never reclaim all lost lands, the PLB had the potential to draw a line under the encroachment on their land and provide monetary support for lands lost.

According to Vigil, the APC “learned so many things” because of Collier’s input in the land struggle, and “the All Pueblo Council start[ed] improving.” Non-Indian encouragement to go to Washington, D. C., in a united front was a significant step in the council’s evolution.<sup>99</sup> Indeed this moment was equally important for the delegation members. These experiences laid the foundation for the governing of the APC and the pursuit of pragmatic Pueblo governance in the twentieth century. A string of Pueblo leaders gained formative experience defending Pueblo sovereignty and the APC made only limited concessions regarding Pueblo land as its negotiations with the federal government evolved. By standing united and with the help of outsiders who understood Pueblo culture and the significance of land to the Pueblos, the APC negotiated the Pueblos a favorable position for the twentieth century. The dynamics of the Pueblo coalition also demonstrated that by choosing their friends carefully, employing outside help could help protect tradition and sustain Pueblo sovereignty.

Negotiating the passage of the Pueblo Lands Board Act was not the only significant challenge to the Pueblos or the APC during the early 1920s. In the midst of the Lenroot substitute fiasco in February 1923, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Charles

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<sup>99</sup> Martin Vigil, interview by Dennis Stanford, 16 February 1971 (tape 775), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

Burke—a hard-line assimilationist—denounced traditional Pueblo dances as “evil . . . foolish . . . useless and harmful.”<sup>100</sup> Burke eventually attempted to ban the dances, as “missionaries and government officials” expressed “renewed concerns about the moral influence of Indian dances.”<sup>101</sup> The Indian Office thought the dances were inappropriate and sexually oriented. In response, the APC accused the Indian Office of “religious persecution.” “Our religion is more precious than even our lives.”<sup>102</sup> Importantly, however, the attacks on Indian dances came from many corners. While the Indian Office led the charge from non-Indians, backed by missionaries and Christian-based organizations such as the Indian Rights Association of Philadelphia, so-called progressive Pueblo Indians also began a series of attacks on Pueblo culture and political organization. As the voice of more traditional authority, the APC became the focus of many internal and external attacks on legitimate Pueblo governance. Thus, as well as becoming a debate between competing and interested non-Indians on the relative need for assimilation of the nation’s Indians, the Pueblo dance debate also became a dialogue that challenged the APC’s very legitimacy as a representative body from inside and outside the Pueblo community.

Factionalism within individual Pueblos was a fairly common and organic phenomenon well before the twentieth century, as different clans and moieties clashed

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<sup>100</sup> Charles H. Burke to All Indians, 24 February 1923, folder: 891SC. 012, Cassidy Papers, LA. For a more thorough discussion on the threat to religious freedom faced by the Pueblos in the 1920s, see Wenger, *We Have a Religion*.

<sup>101</sup> Wenger, *We Have a Religion*, 142.

<sup>102</sup> Declaration of All Pueblo Council, 5 May 1924, Santo Domingo Pueblo, folder: 891SC. 012, Cassidy Papers, LA. In *We Have a Religion*, Wenger analyses the events of the early 1920s centered on the dance controversy and the “religious” struggles of the Pueblos during this time. For the sake of brevity, and to avoid echoing the excellent work within Wenger’s text, I forgo the vast majority of this narrative and instead focus on how this situation in many ways transcended into a challenge to the authority of the APC.

over the legitimate governance of internal affairs. This situation was exacerbated at the end of the nineteenth century when the federal government sent Native Americans from across the United States to federally administered, off-reservation, Indian boarding schools. Some students returning to their homelands brought back different conceptions of modernity and frequently favored a more progressive approach going forward. As outside interests began questioning the morality of what they labeled pagan Pueblo dances, progressive Pueblo Indians from many tribes voiced their concerns over more traditional or conservative leaders and the power of caciques within Pueblo society. And while progressive Indians were able to gain publicity by piggybacking on external criticisms of Pueblo culture, the genuine intentions and sentiment of the progressives was complicated by controversies caused by non-Indians.

In an attempt to reform many aspects of Pueblo life, progressive Indians themselves took center stage during the dance controversy. John Dixon, from Cochiti Pueblo, who was educated at Carlisle Indian School, in Pennsylvania, and worked as an Indian Office–appointed judge, eventually became the chairman of a progressive Pueblo Council. Holding a rather extreme position even within the progressives, Dixon believed: “The old parties are still savages, barbarians, idolaters. There are only two ways to settle our disputes, either we of the new parties become savages again, or . . . they [more traditional Pueblo society] become at least a little civilized, as we of the new are trying to be.”<sup>103</sup> Men such as Dixon were unhappy with multiple facets of Pueblo society, and due to the scrutiny the Indian Office gave the Pueblos’ religious and political institutions at this time, they were able to gain a strong foothold in inter-Pueblo politics.

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<sup>103</sup> John Dixon to John Collier, 14 November 1922, Peña Blanca, New Mexico, reel 4, microfilm, Collier Papers.

Despite the legitimate complaints of progressive Indians, the majority of whom were not looking to destroy their culture, only adjust it, their cause was often complicated by the interference of outsiders connected to the Indian Office or other assimilationist and Christian organizations. The more traditional Pueblo leaders, including the majority of Pueblo governors and caciques, and thus APC members, at this time also had to defend their culture against outsiders. “The so-called progressive element in our pueblos,” stated Jose Aguilar of San Ildefonso, “provides a wedge by which outsiders manage to become parties in our internal disputes.”<sup>104</sup>

On 12 April 1923, Antonio Abetia (Isleta), Sotero Ortiz, and José Alcario Montoya (Cochiti) were among a few men hosting an APC meeting at Santiago Pena’s house at Santo Domingo Pueblo. And in an incident that exemplifies the impact of non-Indians on the progressive cause, while the men attempted to draw up the APC response to Burke’s dancing circular, Nina Otero-Warren rushed through the back door of the house and burst into the meeting. In an attempt to discredit the APC’s remaining coalition, Otero-Warren, a close associate of the Indian Rights Association and an Indian Office inspector of Indian schools in New Mexico, accused the APC’s friends of being propagandists.<sup>105</sup> While Collier and white friends to the APC were frequently present at APC meetings, this was one of many meetings held during this time where the Pueblos wanted to speak to one another without the interference of outsiders—especially as the subject matter in this case was culturally specific. Montoya, who was instrumental to the

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<sup>104</sup> Jose Aguilar [San Ildefonso] to John Collier, 16 March 1926, reel 4, microfilm, Collier Papers.

<sup>105</sup> For more on Nina Otero-Warren outside of her association with Indian affairs, see Ann M. Massmann, “Adelina ‘Nina’ Otero-Warren: A Spanish-American Cultural Broker,” *Journal of the Southwest* 42 (winter 2000): 877–896.



APC during these early years, remembered that no non-Indian was invited to this meeting and, further, when they asked Warren to leave, she refused.<sup>106</sup> Otero-Warren also visited other Pueblos across New Mexico in an attempt to discredit Collier, the AIDA, and the APC.

At this time, the Indian Office as well as Christian organizations presented the APC and Collier as opponents to progress and as supporting outdated and irrelevant cultural and religious practices, which were supported by the Pueblos' traditional political structures. One organization in particular, the eastern-based Indian Rights Association, became closely involved with denouncing Pueblo dances, the peyote practice at some Pueblos, and other cultural practices. According to Wenger, the Indian Rights Association encouraged and publicized the progressives' complaints.<sup>107</sup> IRA president Herbert Welsh articulated his goal as simply "Indian progress towards a better day."<sup>108</sup> Yet other associates of the organization, such as Clara True, were accused of deliberately agitating the religious and political conditions on the ground in New Mexico. Even Schuster, who supported much of the progressives' cause, accused True and Warren of "sniffing around" Acoma and Laguna. He was suspicious of their intentions.<sup>109</sup> Aguilar thought that True reveled in creating trouble within Pueblos and, in an appeal to Collier, labeled her a "meddlesome busybody." Expressing his support for Pueblo autonomy, while simultaneously requesting Collier's help (he and the APC did not consider the two

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<sup>106</sup> Diary, folder: correspondence 1922–23, box 9689, SWAIA Papers, NMSRCA. For more on José Alcario Montoya, see Sando, *Pueblo Profiles*, 51–55.

<sup>107</sup> Wenger, *We Have a Religion*, 183.

<sup>108</sup> Herbert Welsh to Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Thorp, 25 September 1923, folder: 89 ELH. 048, Hewett Papers, LA.

<sup>109</sup> Father Fridolin Schuster to Francis C. Wilson, 26 November 1923, Wilson Papers, NMSRCA.

mutually exclusive), Aguilar asked for “the chance to run our own affairs in our own way.”<sup>110</sup>

In May 1924, True and Warren helped progressive Pueblo parties form the Council of Progressive Pueblo Indians, composed of twenty-five men from the progressive factions of Santa Clara, Cochiti, San Juan, and Santa Ana Pueblos. The Progressive Council hoped to assert itself as an inter-Pueblo body recognizable to the Indian Office, and aligned itself in direct opposition to the more traditionally composed APC. The newly formed Progressive Council penned a statement highlighting their grievances, which included being chastised for refusing to partake in community ditch work and being held under the power of the conservative factions of their pueblos, and caciques in particular. They articulated many of their arguments around the notion of American religious freedom, and claimed that they should be free to practice Pueblo religion to any extent they wished without the fear of punishment from Pueblo leaders.<sup>111</sup>

In June 1924, the GFWC hosted a convention in California, which Wenger labels “a showdown event between competing reformers in the dance controversy.”<sup>112</sup> True and Warren organized the progressives, inviting seven members of the council to speak in front of the clubwomen in an attempt to shift the sympathies of the women away from the APC. Simultaneously, Atwood and Collier circulated APC resolutions and gained the support of the *Los Angeles Times* to portray favorably their version of Pueblo life. Members of the APC also appeared at the convention to defend their traditional lifeways.

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<sup>110</sup> Jose Aguilar to John Collier, 16 March 1926.

<sup>111</sup> Resolutions of the All-Pueblo Progressive Indian Council, 27 May 1924, Santa Clara Pueblo, folder: 89ELH .046, Hewett Papers, LA. See also, Wenger, *We Have a Religion*, 201–5.

<sup>112</sup> Wenger, *We Have a Religion*, 214.

Employing the terminology of religious freedom, True and Warren essentialized the debate, claiming that the progressives were fighting a Christian battle to defeat paganism.<sup>113</sup> Ultimately, the event did not noticeably impact the result of this debate. The convention does show, however, how outside interests and the influence of outsiders were important elements in the Pueblos' battles.

Responding to the multiple accusations of the progressive council back in New Mexico, the APC quickly defended the traditional elements of Pueblo society and governance. The APC released a statement to the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, primarily defending the position of cacique within Pueblo government. They stated that while caciques have the right to nominate Pueblo officials, such as the governor and thus APC members, they do not do so to harm any person or faction. The APC then attacked the progressive council, labeling the members a "few persons, a bunch of grunted [sic] fellows who refuse to do your share of the work in your own Pueblo." Finally, the APC accused the progressive council of attempting to split the unity of the Pueblos and the strength of the APC during the crucial period of the PLB.<sup>114</sup>

At a packed APC meeting in July 1924, multiple progressive Pueblos, including Dixon, as well as Warren and True, were present and spoke at length about the recently enacted PLB. The APC feared that dissension between and within the Pueblos would weaken their ability to reclaim lost lands. Since progressive Pueblos tended to have a more formally recognizable education, they could appeal to the PLB more effectively than APC leaders. Thus while the conflict between progressive and traditional leadership

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 213–16.

<sup>114</sup> "All Lies, Declare Governors of Pueblos, and Village Officials," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 2 July 1924.

arose over cultural and religious matters, the question of land still loomed large over Pueblo communities. Undoubtedly, the APC was composed primarily of more traditional leaders from within Pueblo society. Yet, the APC did include progressive voices. Pablo Abieta, for example, considered himself a progressive member of Isleta and served for a long period as an Indian Office–appointed judge there. Yet he remained a key leader of the APC for many years and was consistently nominated by his peers into high-profile positions of leadership.

At the meeting, APC chairman Ortiz called for calm and unity: “The only way we can defend our rights is that we shall be united as brethren.”<sup>115</sup> And while Dixon expressed his willingness to work with the APC on the question of Pueblo lands, True and Warren spent much of the meeting questioning whether the assembly was even representative of the Pueblos across New Mexico.<sup>116</sup> They pointed to the presence of delegates from Zuni and accused them of not representing that Pueblo’s community due to a conflict in governance there. True and Warren also considered it inappropriate that a Pueblo barely affected by the land situation would have delegates present at the meeting.<sup>117</sup>

As evidenced here, the APC was far from immune to external and internal questions over how representative it was of all Pueblos, despite its success in protecting Pueblo homelands. In disagreements over the role of religion in Pueblo culture, the APC did not ignore the progressives. The meeting from July 1924 shows the APC considered the concept of Pueblo unity as the number-one priority, and this included the progressive

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<sup>115</sup> All Pueblo Council meeting minutes, 17 July 1924, Santo Domingo, p. 5, reel 8, microfilm, Collier Papers.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 30–33.

factions of Pueblo society. And while the APC surely did not respect some progressive individuals as much as traditional ones, its leaders recognized the importance of presenting a united front to the outside world on the question of land.

Equally important, the Indian Office began to stand with the progressives and in opposition to the APC. While factionalism within Pueblos continued to be a legitimate issue within many Pueblo communities, the significance of the progressive council soon declined. The question of assimilation, however, led the Indian Office to challenge the authority of the APC. In 1926, the Indian Office created another body to rival the All Pueblo Council: the United States Pueblo Indian Council. Earlier in that same year the former chairman of the NMAIA, Margaret McKittrick, proposed to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Charles Burke that a new body might help open a dialogue between the Indian Office and Pueblo governors and officials. McKittrick still held grievances over the split of the coalition and felt that such a council would help dissolve Collier's influence in Pueblo politics.<sup>118</sup> She suggested that the Indian Office mould the new council in the same form as the recently established Navajo Tribal Council, which former New Mexico territorial governor Herbert J. Hagerman helped set up. Commissioner Burke requested that Hagerman preside over the council. Apparently he saw no conflict of interest in Hagerman heading this council, while also being the chair of the PLB. Burke stated that each Pueblo would send two delegates to meetings, and, where factionalism existed, opposing parties would both be represented.

The APC, however, already represented the Pueblos through a very similar format. The key difference was that the APC was independent of outside control. At an

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<sup>118</sup> Rusco, *A Fateful Time*, 25.

APC meeting on 6 October 1926, Collier addressed the council and articulated his opinion: that the new council was a direct attempt to subvert the APC and its historic independence. The APC responded at this meeting by reasserting their legitimacy to negotiate without federal approval. Headed by Abeita, a committee drew up a short set of written by-laws explaining how the council functioned. “The purpose of this organization,” stated the committee, “is to promote the welfare of the Pueblo Indians and their good relations with their white neighbors and to enable them to stand united.”<sup>119</sup> The by-laws agreed that every Pueblo is eligible to vote at the APC, and could send as many delegates as they wished to each APC meeting. Significantly, each Pueblo was allowed only one vote, confirming the APC as equally representative of all Pueblos. The APC hoped that these by-laws—in many ways its first constitution—would force the Indian Office to concede that the APC was a sovereign, functioning, and representative inter-Pueblo government.

The APC could not stop the first meeting of the Indian Office council on 15 November 1926. At this meeting, Hagerman presided over matters, setting the agenda and controlling its direction. Many members of the APC attended, including Abeita and Joe Luhan of Taos. Hagerman explicitly told the attending delegates, many of whom were suspicious of his intentions, that the Indian Office would not recognize any Pueblo meeting as official unless representatives of the U.S. government were present.<sup>120</sup> He named the new organization the United States Pueblo Indian Council. And while he stated directly that this new Indian Office–run council would not necessitate the end of

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<sup>119</sup> All Pueblo Council meeting minutes, 6 October 1926, Santo Domingo, p. 22, reel 8, microfilm, Collier Papers.

<sup>120</sup> United States Pueblo Indian Council meeting minutes, 22, 23 November 1926, p. 1, reel 8, microfilm, Collier Papers.

the APC, the traditional delegates still considered the meeting a blatant attempt to convince the Pueblo governors to abandon their traditional council.

Abeita protested: "We come here like blind men and do not know what was going to be done. I would ask the chairman what the real object of this meeting is."<sup>121</sup>

Hagerman responded that many Pueblo-related issues needed resolving, not least the link between the government and the Indians. Francis Wilson was also present. Seemingly dismissing the role of the APC, he told the delegates, "In past years we had no such thing as this and we had to guess at what the pueblos wanted."<sup>122</sup> Showing a lack of understanding of the process of Indian and Pueblo government, Hagerman asked the delegates to decide on an array of issues while in the meeting. Abeita responded: "If it was only me they could finish the business in fifteen minutes. But I have to consider 1000 people at home." Similarly, Lujan said, "We cannot decide this matter until we have talked it over with our council."<sup>123</sup>

Quite prophetically, during the meeting a strong gust of wind displaced the chimney on the roof of the building, sending debris onto three of the delegates below. Abeita was hurt by falling *vigas*.<sup>124</sup> Antonio Lujan later remembered that this event "scared us out" of the meeting and, perhaps, added to the Pueblos' reluctance to return to the United States Pueblo Indian Council. Similarly, the delegates realized that when Hagerman appointed Frank Paisano of Laguna as the future chairman of the council without any discussion, "we were on the wrong road."<sup>125</sup> At an APC meeting a couple of

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>125</sup> All Pueblo Council meeting minutes, September 1929, p. 11, reel 8, microfilm, Collier

weeks after the first Hagerman-run council meeting, the APC denounced Hagerman's body as a trap and, with the exception of Abeita, vowed to boycott further meetings.<sup>126</sup> The APC members reiterated that they were representative of the Pueblo community by individually announcing how they came to be at APC meetings. All delegates declared that they were sent by their respective tribal councils. Chairman Ortiz stated that the APC was not fighting against the government but was simply "fighting for our rights and we want to retain our ancient customs and form of government in our Pueblos." Similarly the APC expressed their thanks to those non-Indians whom they considered their real friends, who did not do "just what they wanted; they have done what we wanted, what we told them to do."<sup>127</sup> The APC unanimously voted that all negotiations between the Pueblos and the Indian Office should be through the APC. And in April 1929, the APC drafted a letter sent to the Indian Office expressing "the honest hope that you may meet with us in council. We will be glad to call a meeting of the council at any time that you may desire, to discuss any matters with the pueblos as a group."<sup>128</sup>

The APC did not wish to cut ties with the Indian Office; they merely wanted to meet at a forum controlled by all the Pueblos. And while the U.S. Pueblo Indian Council met again in November 1927, delegates from only eight Pueblos attended. The majority of those attendees were not associated with the APC. An APC member later declared that the United States Pueblo Indian Council appeared to be operating in an underhanded manner, and felt there was no need to attend. He stated, "Our own council meetings are

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Papers.

<sup>126</sup> All Pueblo Council meeting minutes, 10 December 1926, Santo Domingo, p. 34, reel 8, microfilm, Collier Papers. Abeita saw no harm in continuing to attend the meetings.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>128</sup> All Pueblo Council meeting minutes, 19 April 1929, Santo Domingo, p. 26, reel 8, microfilm, Collier Papers.



powerful enough to carry on transactions with Washington.”<sup>129</sup> Indeed at a meeting in September 1929, the newly appointed Indian commissioner, Charles Rhoades, attended an APC meeting, where he witnessed delegates denouncing the U.S. Council and voting to recognize the APC as the “official body through which business of the Pueblos should be transacted with the government.”<sup>130</sup>

With little support from the Pueblos or the Indian Office, the United States Pueblo Indian Council soon faded into obscurity. Once again, the APC was able to resist being overtaken by an outside organization. Further, through the efforts of traditional leaders to defend the APC as the representative confederate council of New Mexico’s nineteen Pueblos, the APC soon became the first point of contact for the Indian Office. The persistence of the APC—even while defending tradition—protected the Pueblos from the disintegration of their political and cultural structures.

The Bursum-bill fight and the eventual passing of the Pueblo Lands Board Act were a major success for the APC in protecting the Pueblos’ way of life. In the process of defending their homelands, the APC had made a staunch ally in Collier. Their experience with him and other non-Indian organizations taught Pueblo governors the value of outside organizations when they were co-opted carefully. Ultimately, the APC grew as a body, all the while achieving success in securing their land base and ending decades of land-based consternation. And while the APC and its members had to defend their role in Pueblo life and politics—sometimes in the face of a barrage of criticism—the experience of defending Pueblo tradition through the APC allowed the council to secure respect as an inter-Pueblo organization. The result was that by the end of the 1920s, the APC had

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<sup>129</sup> APC meeting minutes, September 1929, p. 12, reel 8, microfilm, Collier Papers.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

become a cooperative body, not an insular one. Further, the APC had also become a responsive organization that was capable of negotiating the difficulties of twentieth-century America. Certainly the Pueblos' difficulties in the twentieth century did not end when Congress passed the PLB—far from it. But the APC entered the 1930s as a robust, outward-facing organization, competent at negotiating at the state and federal level.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **The All Pueblo Council in the Pueblo Lands Board Era: Water, Jurisdiction, and the Indian Reorganization Act, 1928–1940**

The ownership and use of land and water in many ways defined day-to-day life for New Mexico's nineteen Pueblos in the early-to-mid-twentieth century. When the APC convinced Congress to pass the Pueblo Lands Board Act, this law was far from the end of the story and there was no time for the Pueblos to celebrate their success. At the end of the 1920s, the deteriorating ecological condition of New Mexico's rivers, particularly the state's main artery, the Rio Grande, led to a sharp decline in the agricultural use of the state's water. In 1928, the newly established Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD)—which aimed to help the Anglo, Hispanic, and Indian residents of the state's valleys—began working on the lands of six Pueblos in an effort to regulate water use and control flooding on the historic river. Similarly, in 1935, after he had merged the Pueblos' Indian offices into the United Pueblos Agency (UPA), Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier instituted a period of close cooperation between the Office of Indian Affairs and the Office of Agriculture. Led by Dr. Sophie Aberle, the UPA began to expand its role in maintaining Pueblo land and water use and presided over Pueblo Lands Board (PLB) settlements.

Due to the activism surrounding the Pueblo Lands Board Act, the APC was at this time particularly alert to the threats facing the Pueblos. When these outside bodies, concerned primarily with Pueblo water issues, began interacting with the Pueblos and the APC, they reshaped the day-to-day realities of Pueblo life up and down New Mexico's

rivers. The sheer number of new bodies had the potential to overwhelm the sovereignty of the Pueblos to govern their water-based issues, for land and water management became a jurisdictional nightmare. As the single Pueblo organization that faced outwards, the APC had to grapple quickly with these new bodies in order to maintain control over Pueblo affairs and protect the Pueblos' access to their river-based lifeblood. The APC gradually became the middle-man for the negotiations between Pueblos and those organizations imposing new rules on water in New Mexico. Only by the APC confronting these organizations and inserting a Pueblo voice into the equation, did the Pueblos maintain some authority over their own water rights.

Arising in the midst of these local questions over Pueblo land and water in New Mexico was an issue of national importance for Indian Country. In 1933, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt installed Collier to the position of Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Collier proposed returning a strong degree of self-government to tribes and ending the Dawes allotment act. Collier's landmark legislation, the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA), marked a crucial philosophical turning point in Indian-white relations across the country. It essentially promised to end the destructive period of cultural assimilation and land displacement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The legislation allowed each tribe to draw up a constitution or charter, which, in theory, would return self-government to tribes.

Collier introduced the IRA to the APC at a meeting at Santo Domingo in March 1934. The Pueblo leaders deemed the legislation more than palatable but, ultimately, only one Pueblo adopted an IRA constitution by the end of the decade. The IRA offered little to the Pueblos' already strong political institutions. The day-to-day realities for the APC

during the PLB era revolved around protecting and improving their water sources, developing new irrigable land, negotiating with the UPA in practical matters, and ensuring that Pueblo Land Board settlements were fair. Put simply, adopting IRA constitutions was less important to Pueblo councils across New Mexico than mastering their negotiations with the UPA, MRGCD, and other irrigation and agricultural programs. Despite the APC's support for Collier's Indian self-government reforms (in principle), in reality the confederate council had little reason, and too many distractions, to pressure their home Pueblos to adopt IRA constitutions or charters.

This chapter aims to explain the Pueblo experience of the PLB era, 1928–1940, by exploring how the APC dealt with the emergence of the MRGCD, the UPA, and subsidiary bodies concerned with land and water-based improvements. By examining the Pueblos' experience through the APC during this time, I hope to show that regional conditions defined the late 1920s and 1930s for New Mexico's nineteen Pueblos. Similarly I hope to explain that regional water-related concerns marginalized the significance of the IRA for the Pueblos. While this policy dominated national Indian policy in the 1930s, and was proved a watershed in Indian history, land and water truly determined Pueblo futures during the PLB era.

In 1933, Collier claimed the “pueblos of New Mexico have more control over their own affairs than any other Indians.”<sup>131</sup> In a national context, the period leading up to Collier's selection as commissioner of Indian affairs was already a marked change from the explicit assimilation policies of the early twentieth century. The actions of reformers like Collier and Atwood was complemented by sympathetic groups, such as the Indian

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<sup>131</sup> All Pueblo Council meeting minutes, 4, 5 July 1933, Santo Domingo, p. 17, reel 28, microfilm, Collier Papers.

Rights Association. Even though these organizations often tried to involve themselves in the internal dynamics of Pueblo affairs—much to the chagrin of the APC—their interest in Indians nonetheless influenced Indian policy. In 1926, in response to this political pressure, Secretary of the Interior Hubert Work called for a “comprehensive survey of Indian affairs.” Published in 1928, the report found “deplorable conditions in health, education, and economic welfare,” which reformers like Collier used “as a whip with which to chastise the government for its mismanagement of Indian affairs.” Prucha notes that the Hoover administration (1929–1933), was transitional for Indian policy. Under the direction of Commissioner of Indian Affairs Charles Rhoades, the Indian Office “pointed the way to a new future.” And while the Hoover administration “failed to revolutionize Indian affairs,” there was nonetheless a growing federal recognition that the condition of the nation’s wards was unacceptable.<sup>132</sup>

Illustrative of the declining condition for Indians nationwide was the agricultural situation faced by the Pueblos in New Mexico. One of the aims of the Pueblo Lands Board Act was to award the tribes compensation, which they could use to increase tribal landholdings. And in 1924, the PLB took its first action by awarding Tesuque Pueblo \$29,000. PLB deliberations continued for a decade, and while the APC was more-or-less satisfied with the general principles of the Pueblo Lands Board Act—especially as the PLB began distributing significant monetary compensation to many Pueblos—Pueblo leaders remained vigilant against potential new threats to their agriculturally based world.<sup>133</sup> As historian James Vlasich has pointed out, “agriculture has defined the

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<sup>132</sup> Prucha, *The Great Father*, 808, 810–11, 921.

<sup>133</sup> It should be noted that while the APC was satisfied that the Pueblo Lands Board Act began to sort out the land situation, individual Pueblos had to fight hard for individual

Pueblos throughout their history.” During the Spanish and then Anglo colonization of the Southwest, “non-Indian minds” applauded the “industry, stability, prosperity, legality, and technology” associated with the Pueblos’ sedentary agricultural lifestyle.<sup>134</sup>

Colonizers associated the Pueblos’ very agricultural foundation with civilization, and this perception helped shield the Pueblos from the most-destructive elements of the removal and reservation policies of the nineteenth century.

By 1920, the Pueblos’ cultural practices and political institutions were perhaps more intact than those of tribes elsewhere in Indian Country, especially when compared to those of the Plains tribes. The Pueblos’ ability to prosper was still threatened, however, because of their reliance on river water for agriculture. In 1920, the middle Rio Grande valley was in a “woeful state.” After “Centuries of irrigation from numerous primitive ditches,” the Rio Grande water table stood at over 90 percent of the valley floor, alkalizing the soil and destroying the nutrients capable of fueling food growth. Ironically, in a place where water was in short supply, the valley was often waterlogged and had turned to marshland. Consequently, between 1850 and 1920, while the population of Anglo and Hispanic residents legitimately or illegitimately using Rio Grande waters increased, the total agricultural acreage from White Rock Canyon in the north to Elephant Butte reservoir in the south declined by over two thirds.<sup>135</sup>

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claims and the APC also pressed the federal government to increase the financial compensation they received, per acre. This was eventually rectified in the Pueblo Relief Act in 1933. For a complete compensation chart, broken down to individual pueblos, see All Pueblo Council meeting minutes, 4, 5 July 1933, Santo Domingo, p. 20, reel 28, microfilm, Collier Papers.

<sup>134</sup> Vlasich, *Pueblo Indian Agriculture*, xv.

<sup>135</sup> Ira G. Clark, *Water in New Mexico: A History of its Management and Use* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 205.

In 1923, concluding that the Rio Grande required drainage and flood control if it were to continue to support its inhabitants, the state of New Mexico enacted a Conservancy Bill. And while this decision was made primarily for the benefit of non-Indian agriculturalists based in Albuquerque, the Pueblos' land, too, was in need of attention. In 1928, the Six Middle Rio Grande Pueblos—Cochiti, Santo Domingo, San Felipe, Santa Ana, Sandia, and Isleta—were cultivating a little over eight thousand acres of land. Significantly, there was “no cultivatable land lying idle” for these Pueblos; their agricultural production had hit a glass ceiling while their population was slowly increasing. Further, the cultivatable land available for these six Pueblos was considered “insufficient for these Indians to make even a reasonable living on.”<sup>136</sup> Martin Vigil, for example, remembered that during his Tesuque childhood in the 1910s, he planted small patches of wheat corn and exchanged the produce for clothing in towns like Santa Fe.<sup>137</sup> Thus, farming was not a large-scale and profitable enterprise for Tesuque Indians or any Pueblos of the middle Rio Grande. Instead, agriculture provided a means of subsistence and self-sufficiency for New Mexico's Pueblos, and in many ways it was also the basis of their culture.

In order to bring the Six Middle Rio Grande Pueblos under the conservancy plan, the MRGCD, on behalf of the state, had to negotiate a contract with the Interior Department for the valley's Indian inhabitants. Essentially at stake was the price the Pueblos would have to pay for the MRGCD work undertaken on Pueblo land. The

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<sup>136</sup> U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, *The Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District: Hearings on S. 700*, 70th cong., 1st sess., 1928, part 2, p. 33; and *Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District: Hearings*, 1928, part 1, p. 33.

<sup>137</sup> Martin Vigil, interview by Dennis Stanford, 28 April 1972, p. 29 (side 2, tape 869), transcript, AIOHC.



MRGCD proposed work that would include “flood protection, drainage, storage of water with a proper distribution system, and river control.”<sup>138</sup> At an APC meeting in March 1928, all Pueblos but San Juan rejected the idea of the MRGCD.<sup>139</sup> After conservancy surveys took place, however, and the Indian Office looked into the matter, the MRGCD concluded that they could add a further 15,000 acres, or newly reclaimed lands, to the six Pueblos’ land as well as improving the 8,000 acres they already cultivated. Significantly, all other groups that fell under the MRGCD plan were in favor of the District’s plans. Without Pueblo support, the project could not move forward.

The APC became the indicator of Pueblo support for the project. In APC meetings on 17 September and 2 December 1927, the council invited MRGCD engineers to discuss the provisions and decided it would endorse the MRGCD as long as it included “protective measures” for the Pueblos and did not threaten “the destruction of any Pueblo village now or in the future.”<sup>140</sup> And at an APC meeting on 19 January 1928, the council came out as strongly in favor of the bill. The council drafted a resolution that stated their support “for the protection of Indian land and rights” but maintained they were against “any reimbursable debt . . . even as to newly reclaimed lands.” The APC-endorsed version of the bill passed through the U.S. Senate only to be changed significantly in the House.<sup>141</sup> While the original bill proposed that the Pueblos be charged only for work

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<sup>138</sup> Clark, *Water in New Mexico*, 209.

<sup>139</sup> All Pueblo Council meeting minutes, 24 March 1928, Santo Domingo, p. 5, reel 8, microfilm, Collier Papers.

<sup>140</sup> *The Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District: Hearings*, 1928, part 1, p. 33; and The Council of All the New Mexico Pueblos [All Pueblo Council] meeting minutes, 17 September 1927, folder 891SC.007, Cassidy Papers, LA. See also All Pueblo Council meeting minutes, 24 March 1928, Santo Domingo, p. 5–6, reel 8, microfilm, Collier Papers.

<sup>141</sup> For a more thorough analysis of the legislative process of the Middle Rio Grande

undertaken on the fifteen thousand “newly reclaimed lands,” the House version essentially added an extra half a million dollars of debt to the Pueblos, because it would also charge them for the eight thousand acres they already cultivated.

The irony of charging the Pueblos for their own land was sharply articulated by Dr. W. J. Spillman of the Indian Office’s agricultural department at the hearings in 1928:

the Indians were out in the Rio Grande valley before the white man ever came there and have every moral right to it. The white man came along and took the water away from them and now they go to work to develop the water which the Indians originally had and charge them for the water rights.<sup>142</sup>

After passing through the House, the revised bill returned to the Senate, where a Committee on Indian Affairs, chaired by sympathetic Sen. Lynn J. Frazier of North Dakota, looked over the changes. Collier attended the Senate hearings to represent the Pueblo position and all Rio Grande Pueblos—not only the middle six included directly in the MRGCD—authorized him to speak on their behalf.<sup>143</sup> The whole Pueblo community was invested in the outcome of the MRGCD, which threatened to rob the Pueblos of their collective right to govern their own water rights. Long-time APC chairman Sotero Ortiz sent a telegram to the Senate hearings in a last ditch plea to stop the bill: “We Pueblos will be ruined if debt of one and one-half millions [*sic*] placed on our lands . . . We kindly ask that . . . [the] conservancy bill be recalled and considered. This is desire all Pueblos [*sic*], which is the truth.”<sup>144</sup> Collier made a

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Conservancy District (MRGCD), see Joshua Mann, “A Reservoir Runs Through It: A Legislative and Administrative History of the Six Pueblos’ Right to Store ‘Prior and Paramount’ Water at El Vado,” *Natural Resources Journal* 47 (summer 2007): 733–768.

<sup>142</sup> *The Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District: Hearings*, 1928, part 1, p. 60.

<sup>143</sup> These Pueblos were Taos, Santa Clara, San Juan, Nambe, San Ildefonso, Santo Domingo, Tesuque, San Felipe, Santa Ana, Cochiti, Sandia, and Isleta. See *The Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District: Hearings*, 1928, part 1, p. 31.

<sup>144</sup> *The Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District: Hearings*, 1928, part 2, p. 59. The

robust defense of the Pueblo position and insisted that the Senate should amend the legislation back to its original form. He also pointed out that these changes meant the Pueblos would be saddled with debt at a higher rate per acre than those non-Indian parties benefiting from MRGCD work.<sup>145</sup> Despite the Pueblos' opposition to the new version of the bill and the obvious objections of the committee chair Frazier, who voted against the measure, the committee voted in favor of the MRGCD, seven votes to four.

The outcome of the legislation was not particularly favorable to the Pueblos and the APC was unable to negotiate for the Six Middle Rio Grande Pueblos an ideal position within the MRGCD, even with substantial outside help.<sup>146</sup> However, the APC did support the project in principle, and that position may have harmed the council's ability to achieve the exact terms they preferred. Further, in the long term the MRGCD did not work closely with the APC; more often than not, the Indian Office remained a more crucial partner to the Pueblos.

By 1931, the MRGCD had begun work on diversion dams in Cochiti and Isleta. Similarly, the PLB continued to sort through individual land claims adjoining Pueblo land. On a national level the issues of Indian land and water had become crucial conversations in Indian Affairs after the publication of the Meriam Report. In response to

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Congressional record indicates that Sotero Ortiz was representing San Juan. However, this must be incorrect as San Juan did not fall under the jurisdiction of the MRGCD.

<sup>145</sup> See Collier's testimony in *The Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District: Hearings*, 1928, part 2, pp. 49–54.

<sup>146</sup> After the MRGCD was authorized to negotiate a contract with the Department of Interior, the APC hired prominent attorney Louis Marshall to represent the Pueblos cause. Eventually, Collier and Marshall managed to achieve an agreement by which the Pueblos paid no more per acre than non-Indians. Twenty percent of the newly reclaimed lands were to be leased out to repay the debt to the Interior Department.

the political pressure the report created, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, still chaired by Senator Frazier, was authorized to investigate and inquire into “the condition of the Indians throughout the United States” in 1931.<sup>147</sup> Significantly for the APC, on 6 May 1931, the committee traveled to Santo Domingo Pueblo, where the APC hosted the touring senators. Pablo Abeita welcomed the committee: “We hereby turn the All-Pueblo Council over to you so that you may go ahead and proceed with anything pertaining to the welfare of us Pueblo Indians.”<sup>148</sup> The majority of Pueblo comments, delivered almost exclusively by the members of the APC, was directed toward land and water issues.

APC delegates critiqued the ongoing work of the PLB and the MRGCD. At a meeting a few days before the congressmen arrived at Santo Domingo, the APC had organized a campaign to increase Pueblo compensation from the PLB. The council formed an ad-hoc committee, composed of Pablo Abeita, Antonio Mirabal (Taos), and Sotero Ortiz to argue—for individual Pueblos and all Pueblos collectively—for an increase in the PLB compensation from Congress. At the hearings, Sotero Ortiz remarked, “We are not satisfied with the [Pueblo Lands Board] Act. . . . We have not been compensated the value of our lost land.”<sup>149</sup> In 1933 the Pueblos’ pressure paid off. Collier’s first legislative success as Indian commissioner was the passage of the Pueblo Relief Bill. This legislation built on the Pueblo Lands Board Act by increasing the total Pueblo compensation from \$621,000 to over \$1.3 million. The Pueblo Relief Act

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<sup>147</sup> U.S. Senate, *Survey of the Conditions of the Indians in the United States: Hearings*, 1931.

<sup>148</sup> U.S. Senate, *Survey of the Conditions of the Indians in the United States: Hearings*, 6 May 1931, Santo Domingo, New Mexico, 1928, p. 9935.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9936.

demonstrates the success of the APC's collective cry for an increase in compensation at Santo Domingo.<sup>150</sup>

Beyond PLB issues, the MRGCD took center stage. Porfirio Montoya from Santa Ana, for instance, told the congressmen that too many roads, railroads, and now canals were being constructed on their land. And Santa Ana already had less land per capita than any other Pueblo in the MRGCD.<sup>151</sup> Prompted by the intended plans of the MRGCD to carve up yet more land with a fresh canal, Montoya demanded that Congress pass legislation so that "anything that is built through Indian land . . . will be built so that it will be satisfactory to the Indians and . . . not put any more expense on the Indians in lost crops or labor."<sup>152</sup> Explaining the situation at Isleta, Pablo Abeita stated that much of the newly reclaimed land is "hard soil. . . . A lot of it is in bosk and a lot of it is in sand hills and high places."<sup>153</sup> He requested that the government level the land so that it would be fit for cultivation. APC members made dozens of other specific requests to the committee.

The demands and concerns of the Pueblo leaders on issues of land highlights the greater significance of the event to the APC. Hosting a senatorial committee at Santo Domingo served notice of the growing influence of the confederate council. The traveling senators also visited Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Taos in New Mexico to discuss similar problems with other tribes. At Santo Domingo, however, the traditional home of the APC, the senators gauged the mood of the APC. The meeting in Santo Domingo and the

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<sup>150</sup> All Pueblo Council meeting minutes, 4, 5 July 1933, Santo Domingo, p. 20, reel 28, microfilm, Collier Papers.

<sup>151</sup> U.S. Senate, *Survey of the Conditions of the Indians in the United States: Hearings*, 6 May 1931, Santo Domingo, New Mexico, 1928, p. 10066.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10067.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

input of the Pueblo leaders on their home ground signifies the important role the APC played at this time in helping to resolve Pueblo land and water issues.

MRGCD-related practical considerations remained tantamount to Pueblo priorities and APC meetings became the forum for the Pueblos to attempt to resolve these issues. At a two-day APC meeting in early July 1933, for instance, Diego Abeita illustrated the problems individual Pueblos faced in their dealings with MRGCD work. Abeita explained that the MRGCD was “aloof” from the Pueblos and “unwilling to understand our methods [for conservancy].” He went on to give an example in which the district “put in an intake on the worst ditch. Isleta informed the engineers that it would silt over in a year unless they eliminated a certain elbow on their drainage canal.” While the MRGCD undoubtedly had excellent engineering knowledge, they would not work closely or collaboratively with Isleta men who had worked on the ditches for generations. “We have tried to coordinate with them,” Abeita maintained, but “they refuse that.”<sup>154</sup> Elsewhere, San Felipe complained that the MRGCD employees felled trees on Pueblo land but refused to pay for them, despite their contractual obligation to do so. And at Santo Domingo, the MRGCD allegedly took gravel without Pueblo consent, while employing “Mexican” men for work on Pueblo property.<sup>155</sup> The MRGCD contract required it employ only Pueblos on Pueblo projects. The APC was clearly unhappy with MRGCD infractions on their sovereign soil.

While the APC continued to grow as a source of Pueblo voice, the Indian Office necessarily remained crucial to the Pueblos’ achieving change. Before 1935, the nineteen

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<sup>154</sup> All Pueblo Council meeting minutes, 4, 5 July 1933, Santo Domingo, p. 48, reel 28, microfilm, Collier Papers.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

Pueblos were under the jurisdiction of the Northern, Southern, and Zuni Pueblo agencies.

As Collier, who at this time was operating outside the Indian Office, recognized, “The Indian Bureau Irrigation office stands, as it were, between the pueblos and the [Middle Rio Grande Conservancy] District.”<sup>156</sup> Working alongside these agencies provided the APC and its delegates a means to gain influence with important players in the Indian Office. APC meetings were increasingly attended by Indian Office personnel, who realized the necessity and utility of corresponding closely with the APC. For instance, at the APC meeting in July 1933, H. C. Nueffer, a supervising engineer for the Indian Office’s irrigation district, and Robert H. Rupkey, assistant engineer for the Southern Pueblos Agency, joined Southern and Northern Pueblos Agency superintendents L. A. Towers and Chester Faris to help deal with land and water issues for all Pueblos. Despite their long-held suspicion of the Indian Office, APC leaders respected the work of Towers and Faris. Various Pueblos voiced their approval of the agricultural work they were doing on behalf of the Pueblos. Roland Duran of Picuris Pueblo stated that Faris had been particularly attentive to the remote mountain Pueblo’s needs.<sup>157</sup> Towers and Faris, along with the Indian Office engineers, played a crucial supervising role in helping the Pueblos deal with the MRGCD. Despite the APC’s emergence as the space for the Pueblos to negotiate with and exert their influence over outsiders on their own terms, the council’s very limited resources meant that achieving change in practical matters still required the work of the Indian Office.

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<sup>156</sup> APC meeting minutes, 4, 5 July 1933, Santo Domingo, p. 49, reel 28, microfilm, Collier Papers.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99–100.

The political landscape of Indian Country was changing progressively as the APC was busy negotiating with the MRGCD in New Mexico. By the end of the Hoover administration, “All the elements were in place for a complete revitalization of the Indian Bureau.” Only “a steady and determined person able to bring together a synthesis of ideas and actions” was required to articulate the concerns of those individuals involved with Indian affairs.<sup>158</sup> Roosevelt won the presidential election over Hoover in 1932, and instituted a series of nationwide reforms, collectively known as the New Deal. Roosevelt aimed to put Americans to work, expand and modernize the country’s infrastructure, and pull the nation out of the Great Depression. Importantly for the Pueblos and Indian Country, was his new appointment of Collier as commissioner of Indian affairs.

It is difficult to imagine that the APC as a council could have had more respect for Collier, describing him in 1934 as “one of our best friends.” Diego Abeita (Isleta) nicely summarized their mutual relationship: “I can truly say that Mr. Collier has had a great part of his Indian education from the Pueblos. He has gathered the Indian knowledge; he has had to work with largely from his [*sic*] observances of the Pueblos, and if the Pueblos have been mistaken then Mr. Collier is mistaken also.”<sup>159</sup> By 1934, Pueblo leaders were confident that any changes Commissioner Collier proposed would in no way threaten their well-being. After all, Collier patently valued tribal structures. Since 1922, the hard work of the council, and the allies they had made, particularly the now-powerful Collier, allowed Pueblo leaders and communities to feel relatively secure about their future in New Mexico.

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<sup>158</sup> Deloria and Lytle, *The Nations Within*, 53.

<sup>159</sup> All Pueblo Council meeting minutes, 6 April 1936, Santo Domingo, n.p., reel 28, Collier Papers.



After shepherding successfully the Pueblo Relief Bill through Congress, Collier spent “much of 1933 . . . connecting the existing programs of the Bureau of Indian Affairs with the new agencies that the New Deal was then creating.”<sup>160</sup> For instance, using funds from the Civilian Conservation Corps, a New Deal program, Collier established an Emergency Conservation Work program, which provided Indians living on reservations with local jobs during the depression.<sup>161</sup> Historians Vine Deloria Jr. and Clifford M. Lytle have asserted that Collier began involving federal agencies in reservation programs because “it would be much easier to secure landmark legislation [ie. the IRA], since more of the federal establishment would have a stake in the outcome.”<sup>162</sup> As evidenced here, however, Collier’s early work as commissioner involved more than merely the IRA. And the Pueblos were entangled in every aspect of these broad reforms.

In New Mexico, Pablo Abeita worried that after Collier’s appointment, the Pueblos would now have to argue with their old friend, rather than embrace his assistance.<sup>163</sup> And while Collier continued to work closely with the APC as Indian commissioner, some of his decisions were inevitably not well received by the Pueblos. One of his first steps was to merge many Indian Office jurisdictions into larger units in order to create more powerful institutions. He intended to give his local superintendents greater executive power over their jurisdictions, so that the Indian Office would be more responsive to local needs. Previously, local superintendents tended to be in or nearby

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<sup>160</sup> Deloria and Lytle, *The Nations Within*, 62.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.; and Vlasich, *Pueblo Indian Agriculture*, 189.

<sup>162</sup> Deloria and Lytle, *The Nations Within*, 63.

<sup>163</sup> All Pueblo Council meeting minutes, 6 April 1936, Santo Domingo, n.p., reel 28, Collier Papers.

Indian communities. They lacked any executive power, however, and always had to confer with Washington, D.C., for any real action to be taken.<sup>164</sup>

For the Pueblos, this meant that the Northern, Southern, and Zuni Pueblo agencies became the United Pueblos Agency led by Aberle, and headquartered in Albuquerque. Collier expanded the manpower of the agency so that it would include men and women working in specialized roles. As part of his wider national initiative, Collier also began a period of close cooperation between the Indian and Agricultural Offices for work on UPA lands, increasing the funds available to the Pueblos in the process. His ten years of experience with the Pueblos had taught Collier that responsible land use and maintenance was “fundamental to everything else if you are going to have a long future.”<sup>165</sup> He instituted a nationwide cooperative program between the Indian Office and the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) under the Office of Agriculture in an effort to give Indians “a role in determining how conservation programs were to be operated on their reservations.”<sup>166</sup> From 1935 onward the SCS began work on riverbank protection, ditch cleaning, and dams across Pueblo country.

As was the case with the MRGCD, the SCS also caused a degree of jurisdictional and practical confusion for the Pueblos. Martin Vigil, for example, brought to the APC a difficulty Tesuque was suffering due to a misunderstanding between the Irrigation Service and the Pueblo.<sup>167</sup> And in an effort to stop soil erosion between 1935 and 1936, the SCS constructed an arroyo diversion at Sandia, a dam at Laguna, riverbank protection

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<sup>164</sup> See Collier testimony in All Pueblo Council meeting minutes, 6 April 1936, n.p., reel 28, Collier Papers.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Deloria and Lytle, *The Nations Within*, 62–63.

<sup>167</sup> All Pueblo Council meeting minutes, 6 April 1936, Santo Domingo, n.p., reel 28, Collier Papers.

at Nambe, spreader dykes at Acoma, an arroyo at Laguna, and a diversion dam at Cochiti, among other projects. Yet in almost every case, these projects failed with the first significant rainstorm floods of the season. A UPA report suggested that “absolutely no engineering or construction ability or knowledge were used in this work.”<sup>168</sup>

These failings naturally brought Aberle under pressure from the APC early in her tenure. She conceded, “We have had to get used to working with many different people.”<sup>169</sup> The APC and the Pueblos were already disgruntled that they had lost their good friends, superintendents Faris and Towers. Some members of the Taos delegation felt that Aberle, as a woman, was an inappropriate choice for leading the UPA. Charlie Kie, Martin Vigil, Pablo Abeita, and Diego Abeita, however, defended Aberle and mentioned her good work in helping Santa Clara write its IRA constitution.

Despite the elaborate and overlapping work of the PLB, MRGCD, UPA, and SCS, then, the Pueblos land and water situation remained insecure. In March 1936, the APC sent a delegation to Washington, D.C., to testify in front of a congressional committee on Indian Affairs regarding the land situation in New Mexico. Martin Vigil, Charlie Kie, Antonio Abeita, and John Bird (Santo Domingo), while not entirely happy with the help they had received from outside organizations, appealed for more land for the Pueblos and further assistance with agriculture and grazing. Under Collier’s recommendation they also appealed for continuing funding for the cooperative work of the SCS and Emergency

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<sup>168</sup> Evaluation of the Soil Conservation Service Administration, folder 23, box 3, Aberle Papers, CSWR.

<sup>169</sup> All Pueblo Council meeting minutes, 6 April 1936, n.p., reel 28, Collier Papers.

Conservation Work.<sup>170</sup> The vocal leaders of the APC at this time, such as Vigil, Kie, Diego Abeita, and Pablo Abieta, defended Aberle and the work of the UPA. While the UPA was a centralized body representing all Pueblos, in many ways similar to the APC, the APC delegates recognized that the council exerted little executive power. They thus acknowledged the potential benefits of an organization wielding the power of the UPA could bring the Pueblos. The APC was able to exert pressure on the UPA via Collier's relationship with Aberle. Indeed, Aberle claimed she was very well treated by the Pueblos because Collier had hand-picked her as UPA superintendent. The Pueblo leaders' close relationship with Collier meant that the UPA was particularly responsive to APC concerns.

The UPA managed to achieve some success for the Pueblos in terms of land management under Aberle. By the time she assumed control of the UPA, the Pueblos' land base was already growing due to land purchases that were paid for by PLB compensation. Indeed fifteen Pueblos (not including Acoma, Zuni, and Zia) eventually added 47,054 acres to their land base with PLB money.<sup>171</sup> During this time, other opportunities arose for the Pueblos to increase their land base because, under the terms of the IRA, the secretary of the interior was authorized to acquire additional lands for reservations.<sup>172</sup> At Acoma, for instance, the tribe took advantage of the land acquisition program to purchase 27,247 acres within their reservation. A raft of other New Deal

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<sup>170</sup> U.S. Senate, Subcommittee of the Committee on Indian Affairs, *Survey of Conditions of the Indians in the United States: Hearings on S. Res. 79, Part 34: Navajo Boundary and Pueblos in New Mexico*, 74th Cong., 2d sess., 1936, pp. 17429–37.

<sup>171</sup> Sophie Aberle, *The Pueblo Indians of New Mexico: Their Land, Economy and Civil Organization*, Titles in the Memoir Series of the American Anthropological Association, no. 70 (New York: American Anthropological Association, October 1948), 12.

<sup>172</sup> Prucha, *The Great Father*, 962.

agencies or acts—including the Submarginal Lands Board, Federal Surplus Relief Corporation, Federal Emergency Relief Administration, and Bankhead-Jones Act—also led to significant land gains that enlarged the size of the Pueblos' land.<sup>173</sup> The UPA supervised these proceedings.

Before the Pueblos had uncontested use of their newly acquired and old land, however, Aberle “aggressively sought settlements to finish the work begun by the Pueblo Lands Board in 1924, clearing claims against Indian land.”<sup>174</sup> After finally removing all non-Indian settlers from Pueblo lands, as determined by the PLB, Aberle announced that all PLB lands had been cleared in 1938. The work of the PLB, MRGCD, and New Deal legislation resulted in the Pueblos securing approximately 667,500 acres of new land between 1934 and 1944. They had increased their land base by 50 percent.<sup>175</sup> These land gains were was not an unqualified success, however. For example, MRGCD work increased the Six Middle Rio Grande Pueblos' land by over thirteen thousand acres. Yet many of the Pueblos had neither the technology nor the need to capitalize on this tripled land acreage.<sup>176</sup> Similarly, because local non-Indians were reluctant to sell irrigated land to Pueblos, only 2,869 of 47,054 total acres of land purchased by the Pueblos using PLB funds were irrigated. In the arid valleys of New Mexico, land without irrigation was virtually useless for agricultural purposes.

By 1935, the Pueblos had to contend and negotiate with multiple Indian Office agents, and a myriad of conservancy and irrigation bodies, while corresponding closely

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<sup>173</sup> For more detail on these land gains, see Aberle, *The Pueblo Indians*, 12–13.

<sup>174</sup> Katherine Faulstick Ferris, “Sophie D. Aberle and the United Pueblos Agency, 1935–1944,” (MA. Thesis, University of New Mexico, 1997), 52.

<sup>175</sup> Aberle, *The Pueblo Indians*, 16.

<sup>176</sup> Vlasich, *Pueblo Indian Agriculture*, 168.

with their attorneys to ensure that the work of the PLB was producing favorable outcomes. This was undoubtedly a transformative period for the APC, who often found it difficult to distinguish the MRGCD from the Indian Office irrigation division. Pueblo communities often considered federal administration to be arbitrary and confusing. Yet despite these struggles, the APC had become *the* forum for Pueblo negotiations with outside organizations by the mid 1930s. As an example, an APC meeting in April 1936 was attended by representatives of eighteen Pueblos (Zuni was absent due to poor road conditions); the commissioner of Indian affairs; the UPA superintendent; field representatives and Irrigation Division officials from the Indian Office; and Pueblo attorney William Brophy (who later succeeded Collier at the Indian Office). Certainly, this cooperation reflects the changes Collier instituted within the Indian Office and across Indian Country. Only ten years earlier, the Indian Office had attempted to undermine the authority of the APC by creating a rival council. Yet in 1936, the APC was hosting the most important men and women of the Indian Office, working closely with them to solve Pueblo matters. This change demonstrates both the national shift in valuing tribal political structures and the APC's growing willingness to work with outsiders to increase their regional power.

That the Pueblos could meet together and host outsiders was significant. The APC began to realize that increasing the breadth of input from outsiders was helpful to their day-to-day and long-term objectives. APC delegates also began to show increasing sophistication with regard to the political process. Eli Beardsley of Laguna during this time referred to the U.S. constitution to demonstrate that "in union there is power. If we

stand together, united, we can [succeed].”<sup>177</sup> Still, the APC remained wary of excluding older and more traditional leaders from its consultation with outsiders. The conservative Santo Domingo Pueblo was invariably the host of APC meetings, and their entire council often attended APC meetings. In 1933, Augustine Aguilar of Santo Domingo described the difficulties he faced in helping his councilmen understand the wider concept of working with outsiders:

I have been a member of the [All Pueblo] Council for fourteen years. I have attended every meeting we have had with the Conservancy and your Engineers, and everyone in the room knows me as a member of the Council, and I am representing the pueblo here. I talk for my Council men here and interpret for them everything you say, although it is a very hard job for me to make these old people understand your ways.<sup>178</sup>

While the APC was certainly transitioning into a more responsive body that hoped to protect and adapt to the changing circumstances of the twentieth century, the council remained wary of the need to maintain the traditional hierarchy of Pueblo society.

Considering the bevy of negotiations that the APC had to contend with at this time, it is easy to forget that across Indian Country, Collier’s proposed IRA dominated the 1930s. Owing to his close work with the Pueblos and other tribes across the country, Collier’s legislation aimed to return to tribes a degree of self-government that was previously unparalleled. Title I of the legislation allowed tribes to draw up constitutions and charters that had the ability to protect them from outside interference by putting them on a stable legal footing. Also available was more financial aid for tribes and the ability to assume gradually responsibility from the Indian Office for certain functions. The

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<sup>177</sup> All Pueblo Council meeting minutes, 4, 5 July 1933, Santo Domingo, p. 35, reel 28, Collier Papers.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 59.

legislation was intended to produce “the progressive transfer of municipal functions to the organized tribe.”<sup>179</sup> The IRA also attempted to end the Dawes Allotment Act, improve Indian education, and establish Indian courts.

On 15 March 1934, in the council hall of Santo Domingo Pueblo, the APC discussed the relative merits of the proposed IRA and how it would affect the Pueblos. Taos delegate Antonio Mirabal declared, “We are not going to fight against ourselves. . . . We are in favor of this bill.” In the presence of Collier, Diego Abeita lauded the spirit of the legislation: “The Bill embodies many policies that have been advocated and voiced by the All-Pueblo Council for many years.” Chairman Ortiz urged the governors of the Pueblos to take advantage of the bill, believing that “now is the time for us to take the protection we have been asking for.”<sup>180</sup> After the meeting had concluded, each individual Pueblo council gave the IRA due consideration, and all but Jemez approved of Collier’s national plans to return a degree of self-government to tribal councils and end the destructive results of the Dawes Allotment Act. Yet despite the apparent enthusiasm these men expressed, by the end of the decade only Santa Clara Pueblo had taken advantage of the IRA by acting on its central provision and adopting a constitution. Why did almost all Pueblos choose not to adopt legislation that aimed to return self-government to tribes while increasing land rights—two of the most pertinent issues for the Pueblos?

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<sup>179</sup> Felix Cohen, quoted in Graham Taylor, *The New Deal and American Indian Tribalism: The Administration of the Indian Reorganization Act, 1934–45* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 30.

<sup>180</sup> All Pueblo Council meeting minutes, 15 March 1934, pp. 53, 38, 52, reel 30, Collier Papers. Vine Deloria Jr. also published a modified version of these meeting minutes in Vine Deloria Jr., ed., *The Indian Reorganization Act: Congresses and Bills* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002). For more on Sotero Ortiz, see Sando, *Pueblo Profiles*, 33–39.



Historian Graham Taylor concludes that the IRA aimed “to promote forms of community self-determination enabling Indians to function in a modern economic environment within the framework of their own traditional cultural institutions.”<sup>181</sup> For the Pueblos, merging their traditional institutions into modern governmental formations while protecting their historic sovereignty was not feasible. The APC felt that the general principles of the IRA were acceptable and would help protect the sovereignty of the Pueblos. As Orlando Durand of Picuris noted, however, “It is very simple to talk, but it is pretty hard to fulfill. . . . We all desire to preserve our pueblo traditions and our pueblo rights and to obey our officers.”<sup>182</sup> While supportive of the IRA in principle, he believed the reform could potentially empower the governor instead of the caciques or war captains who were charged with maintaining the continuity of Pueblo life. Sotero Ortiz, a man particularly respectful of tradition himself, said that he tried to engage his tribal council in a discussion on the IRA, but was told “nothing doing.”<sup>183</sup> Quite simply, many of the more traditional Pueblo leaders neither understood, nor particularly cared to understand, the provisions of the IRA. The APC itself was composed of predominantly traditional leaders who had been elected governors or delegates to the APC by their traditional councils. The work and cooperation of the APC with outsiders, though, meant little to the more conservative tribal councilmen who were concerned that the IRA was an unnecessary intrusion on their political institutions. Despite his support of the IRA, even

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<sup>181</sup> Taylor, *The New Deal*, 30.

<sup>182</sup> All Pueblo Council meeting minutes, 6 April 1936, n.p., reel 28, Collier Papers.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

the fairly progressive Pablo Abeita stated, “I hope that I will be seven feet under the ground when my people start voting.”<sup>184</sup>

Collier realized the quandary the Pueblos were in. “How can we draw up constitutions,” he asked, “which can be adopted by a Pueblo without in any way shattering the traditional system?”<sup>185</sup> After discussion with the APC and despite their enthusiasm, at least superficially, the IRA’s chief architect conceded that if the Pueblos could not form a way to adopt constitutions without disturbing “the old institutions, then you oughtn’t to have it.”<sup>186</sup> Indeed the only Pueblo to adopt an IRA constitution in the 1930s was Santa Clara, which had been deeply divided for many decades by internal disputes between four rival factions.<sup>187</sup> For Santa Clara, the IRA offered an opportunity to construct a stable political structure. For the majority of the other Pueblos, however, reforming or formalizing their stable self-government did not seem a particularly pressing or necessary issue. Combined with the changing dynamics that day-to-day life in the late 1920s and early 1930s entailed, and despite their trust in Collier, it becomes easy to understand why the Pueblos almost universally chose not to adopt IRA constitutions in the 1930s. The Pueblos believed that the IRA had little potential to boost their sovereignty, and thus they almost universally rejected IRA constitutions.

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> For more on factionalism and Santa Clara’s adoption of an Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) constitution, see Marilyn Norcini, “The Political Process of Factionalism and Self-Governance at Santa Clara Pueblo, New Mexico,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 149 (December 2005): 544–590. It should be noted that Isleta adopted an IRA constitution in 1947 and Laguna did so in 1949. See these constitutions, as well as Santa Clara’s, at the Native American Constitution and Law Digitization Project: <http://thorpe.ou.edu/IRA.html>.

Despite the constant struggle the Pueblos faced in the Pueblo Lands Board era to maintain land and water rights, and thus preserve the basis of their culture, it was nonetheless a transformative period for the APC. Historians have debated the merits and long-term impact of Collier's IRA reforms. What seems clear is that the political momentum he created, due to his respect for Indian self-government, allowed the APC to establish itself as an organized political confederate council. When Collier eventually left office in 1945, the momentum of his reforms diminished, and soon, Indian Country faced the potential for federal termination of their tribal status. Yet APC members gained a significant political education as leaders between 1928 and 1940. Martin Vigil, for example, went on to serve as APC chairman for ten years in the 1950s and protected the Pueblos from termination's most destructive elements. Similarly, Diego Abeita built on his time with the council in the New Deal era by eventually representing the APC Irrigation Committee in midcentury battles over water rights. Taylor states that during this time period, with the help of Collier, the APC moved "beyond representing the villages in a legal capacity in the courts and before Congress, as it had largely done in the previous decade." Instead, the APC began to "take a more assertive role in internal matters affecting the pueblos generally," for economic and administrative requirements "created some pressure for greater centralization of control."<sup>188</sup> The threats to Pueblo sovereignty, too, forced the APC to tighten its control of Pueblo affairs.

For the nineteen Pueblos of New Mexico and their confederate council, the PLB era was dominated by negotiating with various state and federal institutions to defend and advance Pueblo land and water rights while protecting political sovereignty. The added

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<sup>188</sup> Taylor, *The New Deal*, 73–74.

layers of bureaucracy from the MRGCD and Indian Office often caused confusion and battles over jurisdiction. More importantly, the various organizations began to impinge on the Pueblos' control of their own water rights. The APC, however, became the front line in maintaining a semblance of Pueblo control over water-rights negotiations. Further, these issues allowed the APC to develop connections and political clout that would eventually protect them. This development was particularly aided by the political optimism that Collier's time with the Pueblos had created. Local conditions often defined life on reservations and in Pueblos. The modern complexities of the twentieth century presented the Pueblos with fresh challenges that affected their everyday existence. By organizing around the APC, the Pueblos found the means to grapple slowly with their land and water situation in a rapidly evolving New Mexico.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Midcentury Transitions: The All Pueblo Council in Post–World War II America, 1940–1962**

In 1940, after leading the APC for almost two decades, Sotero Ortiz and Pablo Abeita stepped down as respectively APC chairman and secretary to make way for Joseph Tafoya of Santa Clara Pueblo and Abel Paisano of Laguna. Ortiz and Abeita had been present before and during the Bursum-bill fight. Their absence from the APC leadership represented a changing of the guards. Tafoya was chair for the next six years, but the activism of his leadership was hampered by the national and regional conditions caused by World War II. Before the end of the war, the landscape of Indian Country, including New Mexico's nineteen Pueblos, changed dramatically. By the end of 1941, the New Deal programs of the previous decade had been replaced by wartime policies and resources were appropriately redirected away from Indian affairs. Early in 1945, before the war had ended, Collier resigned from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) after a long-standing feud with Congress.<sup>189</sup> World War II also drained Pueblo society of leadership during the war, as Pueblo men joined the U.S. military in droves. These men were of leadership age and tasted non-Pueblo life during their military experience. On their return, the industrial boom of the war continued across the United States and many Pueblo men chose to divide their time between non-Indian and Pueblo life.

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<sup>189</sup> In 1947 the Office of Indian Affairs was renamed the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). I hereafter refer to this organization as the BIA.

Suffering from the loss of Collier's influence and a lack of cooperation from a resource-poor Indian Bureau, the APC went through a period of relative inactivity during and immediately after World War II. As chairmen of the APC, Tafoya and then Paisano struggled to sustain meaningful relationships with outside organizations. As federal Indian policy shifted toward assimilation and then termination, the BIA ceased to support tribal organizations as it had during Collier's reign. The BIA was also low on manpower and the political clout required to react to the needs of the Pueblo population.

Only in the early 1950s, motivated by the potential impact of federal termination policies, did the APC once more sustain enthusiasm for a single pressing issue. The chairman during this time, Martin Vigil, fought termination while beginning to modernize the format and procedure of the APC, all the while corresponding closely with the BIA and other organizations. Vigil increased the executive authority of the APC chairman, limited APC input on religious matters, and formed more in-depth relationships with outsiders. Thus, despite the midcentury representing a transition for the APC and a lull in their activities, by the early 1960s, the Pueblos had avoided termination and sat in a healthy position to push for a greater degree of self-determination.

When the APC elected Tafoya chairman of the APC in May 1940, Indian Country's enthusiasm for reform, originally sparked by Collier's Indian New Deal, was already waning. Only 35 percent of Native American tribes voted to accept Collier's vision of tribal government. Landless and politically weak Indians in California, the East, Oklahoma, and the Great Plains gained little from the IRA's economic incentives.<sup>190</sup> Many tribes were skeptical of the speed at which Collier implemented his vision of tribal

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<sup>190</sup> Kenneth R. Philp, *Termination Revisited: American Indians on the Trail to Self-determination, 1933-1953* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 11.

government, while others—including the Pueblos—could not consolidate modern governmental structures with traditional ones.<sup>191</sup> Further, the nation's most populous tribe, the Navajo Nation of New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah, fiercely resented the devastating impact of another of Collier's policies: the Livestock Reduction Program. While the tribal reception of the Indian New Deal was only lukewarm, Collier was also deeply unpopular in Congress between 1937 and 1945. Described by Prucha as "a man besieged," Collier was accused of being a communist and of working against the federal long-term goal of assimilating Indians into the mainstream.<sup>192</sup> In 1937, Congress even attempted to repeal the IRA.

After the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the entrance of the United States into World War II immediately changed Congressional priorities. The BIA became one of the biggest casualties in the wartime political economy, and this drastic reduction forced Indian policymakers to take another step back from tribal entities. During the war, the BIA received both an "absolute loss of dollars" from Congress, as well as a disproportionate cut in funds "in comparison with other agencies." In 1942, in an example of the newly peripheral nature of the BIA, the government moved the bureau from Washington, D.C., to Chicago. The following year the BIA's funding was cut by 25 percent.<sup>193</sup>

The landscape of Indian Country changed dramatically during the war years. Alison R. Bernstein, a historian of the Indian experience during World War II, notes that as America moved closer to entering the war in 1940, the BIA issued a memorandum that

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<sup>191</sup> Taylor, *The New Deal*, 144.

<sup>192</sup> Prucha, *The Great Father*, 994.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 1004 contains a run down of these financial constraints.

recommended “placing tribal resources at the government’s disposal.”<sup>194</sup> This move essentially opened up Indian lands to the federal government for war purposes in the realm of food production and mineral extraction. Similarly, the BIA made its hospitals and education programs available for non-Indian uses. Historian Kenneth R. Philp has also suggested that the Selective Service Act—which did not discriminate against Native Americans—meant Indians were “no longer . . . classified as a separate group of citizens.”<sup>195</sup> Outside military service, Indian life changed dramatically when a vast array of jobs near reservations sprang up to support the needs of the war. Many Indians not engaged in the military effort, and those willing to leave their homelands, began flocking to cities such as Albuquerque to fill vacant positions in industry and production.<sup>196</sup> For the majority of Indian workers, war-time jobs were their first experience of a wage-based economy.

World War II also ushered in demographic shifts in Pueblo society. When Pueblo men began returning from fighting in overseas theaters, they had to decide whether to continue functioning within white society or to return to their homelands. Of the twelve hundred Pueblo men who fought abroad, by the end of 1945 six hundred had returned to their villages. And of these six hundred, the BIA reported that one-third planned to find work in Albuquerque.<sup>197</sup>

These changes meant that during the war, many Pueblo people who normally would have participated in their Pueblo’s political process were instead exposed to the

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<sup>194</sup> Alison R. Bernstein, *American Indians in World War II: Toward a New Era in Indian Affairs* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 64.

<sup>195</sup> Philp, *Termination Revisited*, 11.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>197</sup> Bernstein, *American Indians in World War II*, 132.



values of white society. Those who ventured away from home were able to earn regular paychecks and taste the positive (and negative) aspects of mainstream society. Despite the potentially devastating impact of the loss of leadership-aged men, Pueblo society retained a core of its leaders and structures. And while precise figures of the demographic impact of the war are unknown, the Pueblo population grew by 15 percent between 1940 and 1950.<sup>198</sup> In 1946, many Pueblos held a weeklong festival to honor the contributions of their veterans in World War II.<sup>199</sup> This was not the case at Zuni Pueblo, however, where returning veterans received a hostile reception from tribal elders. Because of their experience in the white world, elders considered the returning men impure and infected with the ills of white society. Consequently nearly seventy of the two hundred Zuni men who fought in the war soon left their home Pueblo.<sup>200</sup>

Despite the difficulties of returning to Pueblo life, however, many men who had served in the military soon moved into leadership positions within Pueblo society. Well before World War II, Pueblo men who had fought in American wars had returned to their homelands to find leadership positions. APC chairman Tayofa, for example, fought in the Great War, while Abel Paisano served in the campaigns against Pancho Villa in Northern Mexico. World War II veterans such as Joe Sando (Jemez), Miguel Trujillo (Isleta), and Popovi Da (San Ildefonso), among others, returned to work in leadership positions with their respective Pueblos and the APC. Thus, while the APC certainly lacked men of leadership age during and immediately after WWII, in the long term many of these men reintegrated into Pueblo society and filled positions of leadership. As we shall see,

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<sup>198</sup> Marc Simmons, "History of the Pueblos Since 1821," in *Southwest*, Ortiz, 221.

<sup>199</sup> Bernstein, *American Indians in World War II*, 132–33.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 134,

however, these men's worldviews were frequently challenged and changed by their experience in white society.

Collier's resignation as Indian commissioner was illustrative of the shifts in Indian policy that occurred during and after the War.<sup>201</sup> For the APC, Collier's resignation meant that they lost a valuable friend and ally. Similarly, his resignation represented the true end of the Indian New Deal and ushered in a new era of federal skepticism toward the tribal nature of Indian communities. In part because of American Indians' contributions to the war effort, many lawmakers believed the nation's original inhabitants ought to be treated like all other (white) Americans. Despite the optimism apparent in this opinion, the direction of Indian policy soon turned away from helping tribes, and toward the integration of Indians into American society.

In the mid 1940s, Congress passed the Indian Claims Commission (ICC) Act, which ultimately indicated the changing tide of Indian policy. In 1946 Congress established the ICC to settle tribes' long-standing land claims. Some supporters of the bill—such as Collier, his successor William Brophy, and organizations supportive of tribal sovereignty—saw the bill as the final act of the Indian New Deal and believed the commission would force the government to live up to treaty obligations with its indigenous wards. Yet the ICC also received support from those who hoped to see the integration of Indians into wider society. These integrationists saw the ICC as a means to an end. By settling tribal claims, integrationists believed that not only would tribal members finally be free from their tribal structure, but the federal government's

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<sup>201</sup> For more on the resignation of Collier, see Prucha, *The Great Father*, 997–1005.

responsibility to its indigenous wards would be fulfilled.<sup>202</sup> They felt that after receiving compensation, Native individuals would be free to join the wider American society. The direction of federal Indian policy, and the interpretation of the ICC, was crystallized in 1948, when President Harry Truman's Hoover Commission on Executive Reorganization recommended that federal policy support the full integration of Native Americans into wider society.<sup>203</sup>

The limited resources of the BIA in WWII and the subsequent drive toward integrating Native Americans into wider society posed a number of challenges to the APC and its leaders. Jemez historian Joe Sando, who joined the Navy during World War II, remembered that the economic impact of the war caused a "dangerous shortage of personnel upon whom the Indian people relied."<sup>204</sup> One tangible loss for the Pueblos due to this decrease in available personnel was the reassignment of Aberle, the UPA director. In 1944, Aberle, who had a doctorate in anatomy, was transferred to the National Medical Research Center in Washington, D.C.

Due to the political and economic conditions caused by the war, the APC's drive for sovereignty faltered. In many ways the APC's main priority during this time became to ensure merely that the BIA's limited funds continued to provide the Pueblo people with enough resources for food and education. After Santa Clara adopted an IRA constitution in 1935, the Pueblo elected Tayofa governor, and he soon began participating in APC meetings. Within five years, the APC had elected him chairman. Tafoya had to

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<sup>202</sup> Bernstein, *American Indians in World War II*, 162–63.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>204</sup> Sando, *Pueblo Profiles*, 75. For Joe Sando's experiences during the war, see Joe Sando, *Pueblo Recollections: The Life of Paa Péh—Joe Sando* (Santa Fe, N.Mex.: Clear Light Publishing, 2008), 47–69.

lobby the BIA particularly hard during this period to avoid the impoverishment of Pueblo communities. There was a shortage of teachers at Indian schools in New Mexico, and Tafoya attempted to ensure that schools attended by Pueblo children were properly funded. Tafoya also worked within Pueblo society and, backed by the APC, directed that tribes should only allow Pueblo children to be withdrawn from school on special occasions. Previously, parents withdrew their children in the springtime to participate in sheep camps and fiestas. Similarly, the APC informed the local boarding schools that for Pueblo fiestas, students should only be absent for their home fiesta, once per year. As a graduate of Carlisle Indian School and as a member of the Winter moiety at Santa Clara, which believed ceremonial practice should not be compulsory, Tafoya aimed to ensure Pueblo children received a modern American education.<sup>205</sup>

In October 1946, Abel Paisano of Laguna replaced Tafoya as APC chairman. Paisano was educated at Albuquerque Indian School and spent a considerable period of his life in the Duke city, working as a mechanic for the UPA. Some of the older Pueblo leaders looked on Paisano with suspicion because of his connections with the BIA, and the recent memory of Hagerman's Indian Office run Pueblo council.<sup>206</sup> Still, Paisano spent his tenure as APC chairman attempting to reach across institutional divides. And although he could not unite the Pueblos into determined action, Paisano did achieve some success when he encouraged cooperation with outsiders. Due to his ties to the BIA, for example, Paisano secured the use of the Albuquerque Indian School auditorium for APC

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<sup>205</sup> Sando, *Pueblo Profiles*, 67–68; and Nancy S. Arnon and W. W. Hill, “Santa Clara Pueblo,” in *Southwest*, Ortiz, 302.

<sup>206</sup> Sando, *Pueblo Profiles*, 75.

meetings.<sup>207</sup> This was not necessarily a popular measure among APC delegates. Indeed in 1939, the APC had rejected the idea of moving away from their “time-honored capital” of Santo Domingo.<sup>208</sup> And in 1943, Diego Abeita stated that “the Pueblos don’t feel free to express themselves while they are guests of the Indian Bureau,” because “they must always comply with the wishes of the Indian Bureau while they are on the Government Indian school grounds, or Indian Bureau property.”<sup>209</sup> And while the APC operated independently from BIA control at AIS, the forum undoubtedly posed problems for more traditional delegates.

The council also weighed in on a range of other local issues. The APC had to deal with BIA cuts to local schools in 1947. The next year Paisano accused the federal government of discriminating against Indians in an attempt to overturn the continued ban of liquor sales to Native Americans.<sup>210</sup> Paisano also hired James Stewart, the superintendent for the Navajos, to represent them before the ICC.<sup>211</sup> Paisano’s chief success as APC chairman, however, was in conjunction with the BIA, when he helped secure the construction of the Bernalillo County-Indian Hospital in Albuquerque in 1952. Drawing on his relationship with Commissioner William Brophy, Paisano was selected to become a member of the hospital’s board of trustees in 1949. In June 1950, the APC unanimously backed the construction of the hospital and wired President Truman to

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>208</sup> “The All-Pueblo Council: A Veteran Confederation,” p. 12, folder 23, box 4, Aberle Papers, CSWR.

<sup>209</sup> U.S. Senate, Committee on Public Lands and Surveys, *Administration and Use of Public Lands: Hearings on S. 1152*, 78th cong., 1st sess., 1943, part 10, p. 3406.

<sup>210</sup> “Pueblo Heads Told Schools Will Have Fewer Teachers, More Pupils,” *Albuquerque (N.Mex.) Journal*, 21 August 1947, p. 2; “Law Prohibiting Liquor Sales to Indians Blasted,” *Las Cruces (N.Mex.) Sun-News*, 28 November 1948, p. 10.

<sup>211</sup> Sando, *Pueblo Profiles*, 75.

declare their support for the project. The APC helped convince the BIA to fund the project to the tune of \$1.5 million. The total cost was over \$3 million.<sup>212</sup>

Ultimately, Paisano's tenure was constrained by the national context of the time and Paisano was also conscious of the APC's apparent lack of direction. He called an APC meeting in February 1947, and invited multiple members of the BIA to attend in an attempt to encourage greater participation between Pueblo governors and the BIA. "Lack of clear statements of Indian wants" noted Paisano, "has hampered the [All Pueblo] council."<sup>213</sup> Under Tafoya, the APC had begun paying Felix Cohen, a prominent attorney and architect of the Indian New Deal, to represent their interests in Washington, D.C, and to advise them on the actions of the BIA. However, in 1950, Cohen complained to the APC that they had not met frequently enough to stay abreast of events in the capitol. In particular, Cohen believed that the APC should have frequently visited Washington, D. C., to help him represent their interests. The APC paid Cohen \$100 per month for his services, yet he reported that between July 1949 and October 1950, the APC did not meet, or, at least, report their meetings to him.<sup>214</sup>

Perhaps the primary difficulty the APC faced at this time was the lack of a single issue that necessitated a unified Pueblo response. Yet in 1948, the APC failed to act when presented with an opportunity to advance the rights of the Pueblos. In 1947, the President's Committee on Civil Rights criticized the inability of Indians to vote in New Mexico and Arizona. Given that they had fought in World War II, the report read, Indians

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<sup>212</sup> "Many Lend Efforts to Hospital Project," *Albuquerque Journal*, 5 June 1952, p. 11.

<sup>213</sup> "More Authority Aim of Pueblos at Meeting Here," *Albuquerque Journal*, 21 February 1947, p. 9.

<sup>214</sup> Felix Cohen to All Pueblo Council, 19 October 1950, folder 24, box 25, Aberle Papers, CSWR.

were considered citizens, and that they were subject to an array of taxes (except for those lands held in trust), Indians should have full representation. On 14 June of the following year, Isleta-born Miguel Trujillo, a member of the APC who was educated at Albuquerque Indian School and Haskell Institute in Kansas, deliberately challenged his inability to vote. Having served as a Marine during World War II, Trujillo realized that Indians faced inherent discrimination in American society and, in New Mexico, were also disenfranchised. Thus he attempted to register to vote in Los Lunas, near Isleta Pueblo, but was refused on the grounds that Indians were not taxed. Trujillo then approached the APC in an attempt to convince them to back his cause.<sup>215</sup> According to Sando, however, “there were still some old-timers on the council who were fearful of losing their lands and their autonomy,” and thus the APC did not weigh in on Trujillo’s case.<sup>216</sup> Undeterred, Trujillo still attempted to vote in the elections, and was consequently arrested. With the help of Cohen’s legal counsel, Trujillo sued the recorder of Valencia County, claiming that Indians in New Mexico paid a variety of taxes. His case reached the U.S. District Court of New Mexico. On 3 August 1948, in *Trujillo vs. Garley*, the court declared unconstitutional the sections of the New Mexico constitution that denied Indians the right to vote. Significantly, the verdict of the court was influenced by Trujillo and the wider Indian community’s military service during the war. The verdict concluded that the state’s Indian inhabitants were patriots, paid taxes, and thus deserved the right to vote.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Gordon Bronitsky, “Isleta’s Unsung Hero: Veteran’s Toughest Fight Earns Voting Rights,” *New Mexico Magazine*, August 1989, 87.

<sup>216</sup> Sando, *Pueblo Profiles*, 60.

<sup>217</sup> For more on Trujillo see “Miguel H. Trujillo, Isleta Pueblo,” in *Pueblo Profiles*, Sando, 57–62; and Bronitsky, “Isleta’s Unsung Hero.” For a more thorough study on the

Perhaps ironically, once the Pueblos had the right to vote, the APC unified quickly around their newly won franchise. After an eight-hour session at a meeting in Santo Domingo on 2 October, the APC issued a “strong plea for all eligible Indians to register” to vote. The addition of seventy-five hundred Pueblo voters of eligible age had the potential to impact significantly the direction of state elections. Indeed the *Gallup Independent* noted that for the 1948 election, the entrance of the Pueblo vote had the potential to decide the outcome of the state races. At this time, the APC refrained from endorsing any specific candidates—so as not to impinge on individual Pueblos’ independence from one another—but vowed that all Pueblo governors would receive APC-collected information on each candidate.<sup>218</sup> It is difficult to know exactly why the APC failed initially to get behind this issue, or to unite around another issue during this time. Certainly, WWII and its consequences, including the loss of Collier as Indian commissioner, combined with an unhelpful and resource-poor BIA to constrain the APC. Yet even when presented with the issue of Indian civil rights, the APC refrained from taking an official position.

Further complicating the APC and its policies in the postwar years was the formation of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI). The NCAI is a “truly Indian and truly national” Native American-run council, established in 1944, that in its infancy, “transcended IRA tribal councils.”<sup>219</sup> The NCAI hoped to capitalize on the changing dynamics of Indians in America by emphasizing both tribal and individual

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historical context of Native franchise in the Southwest, see Carol A. Venturini, “The Fight For Indian Voting Rights in New Mexico” (M.A. thesis, University of New Mexico, 1993), especially chap. 5.

<sup>218</sup> “Pueblos Place Approval on Indian Voting,” *Gallup (N.Mex.) Independent*, 2 October 1948, 1, 4.

<sup>219</sup> Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle*, 102; and Philp, *Termination Revisited*, xiii.



rights for Native Americans. The NCAI did not have a single cause, however. Some members lobbied the council to help decrease the power of the BIA over tribes, and others hoped to legitimize tribal hiring of attorneys, while many championed Indians' civil rights.<sup>220</sup> Secretary of the APC, John Rainer (Taos), communicated with and directed policy for the NCAI, becoming in 1950 its first executive secretary. And while Rainer and Paisano worked together for the APC, their roles representing separate organizations with different agendas shaped their conceptions of leadership at home.

By 1950, the NCAI was advocating a “fundamental change in federal Indian policy,” which focused on curbing the authority of the BIA.<sup>221</sup> Yet NCAI members did not necessarily agree on what this meant. For example, in early 1940, the NCAI accused John Crow (Cherokee), the superintendent on the Mescalero reservation who advocated IRA tribal structures, of interfering with the tribe's self-determination. As executive secretary of the NCAI, Rainer charged the BIA of paternalism and deliberately restricting the self-determination of the Mescaleros. Rainer and others in the NCAI felt that tribes organized around IRA constitutions became pawns of the BIA, and he vented his disagreement with their refusal to reprimand Crow. Paisano, on the other hand, felt that special interest groups had used this situation to manipulate the NCAI into attacking the BIA, and, in particular, an Indian representative (Crow) of the bureau.<sup>222</sup> While this narrative is complicated, importantly this event and the divide in opinion between

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<sup>220</sup> For more on the National Congress of American Indians, see Thomas Cowger, *The National Congress of American Indians: The Founding Years* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

<sup>221</sup> Philp, *Termination Revisited*, 94.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 99–103.

Paisano and Rainer clearly demonstrates the fragmented nature of national and Pueblo Indian politics at midcentury.<sup>223</sup>

In these early postwar years, the BIA expressed “widely divergent definitions” of Indian policy.<sup>224</sup> Similarly, the NCAI also experimented with different goals and tried to establish an identity as an organization. In Pueblo life, too, the confusing state of Indian affairs restricted Paisano and the APC from making strong commitments to threats and projects. Paisano’s connections to the BIA, too, surely influenced his feelings toward the NCAI’s anti-BIA policy, for many Pueblo leaders and communities relied on and supported the continued assistance of the BIA. Thus, the leadership of Tafoya and then Paisano in many ways mirrored the transitions occurring in postwar America and Indian Country.

Over the following decade, the leadership of Martin Vigil began to change the policies and format of the APC. In 1952, the highly experienced Vigil, at the age of fifty-six, accepted his election as chairman of the APC. Serving until 1955, he was reelected in 1957, and ultimately filled the office until 1964. Born in 1896 in Tesuque, Vigil grew up in his home Pueblo as well as spending considerable periods of time in Anglo America. With only a limited education at St. Catherine’s Indian School in Santa Fe, Vigil spent his teenage years working on movie sets in Hollywood, in mines in Cerrillos, New Mexico, and on rail yards in New Mexico and Colorado.<sup>225</sup> In 1912, at the age of only

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>225</sup> Martin Vigil, interview by Dennis Stanford, 20 May 1970, pp. 3, 10 (side 1, tape 645), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR; and Vigil, interview, p. 28 (side 2, tape 869), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

sixteen or seventeen, Vigil began attending APC meetings.<sup>226</sup> He remembered that during this time, there was “hardly any cooperation with the Bureau of Indian Affairs.” In fact Pueblo elders were “suspicious of the BIA and the government.”<sup>227</sup>

Vigil had been elected chairman of the APC before 1952, but had declined the position. In 1927, Vigil rejected his nomination as he was insecure about his ability to articulate himself proficiently in English. He was selected again in 1938, but once more declined the position, citing his lack of education. He felt that Pueblo men who had gone to college, or at least completed high school, would be more intellectually qualified than he was to govern the APC, given the need for the chairman to communicate with outsiders.<sup>228</sup> Despite his lack of education, Vigil was continually active in Pueblo affairs. After tearing down the fence posts at Tesuque and participating in the Bursum-bill struggle in the 1920s, Vigil established a long and fruitful relationship with Collier. Vigil traveled on Pueblo delegations to Washington, D.C., to Collier’s home near San Francisco, and to New York to highlight the land and religious struggles of the Pueblos. Once he assumed leadership of the APC, he carried with him forty years of experience with the confederate council and a vast experience of working with outsiders.

Vigil’s tenure as APC chairman coincided with the most dangerous federal legislation of the twentieth century: the termination policies of the early 1950s. Beginning in 1953, federal Indian policy under President Dwight D. Eisenhower became “rigorously aimed at quickly assimilating Indians into American society” by terminating

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<sup>226</sup> Martin Vigil, interview by Dennis Stanford, 16 February 1971, p. 1 (side 1, tape 775), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>227</sup> Vigil, interview, pp. 1, 2 (side 1, tape 775), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>228</sup> Vigil, interview, p. 6 (side 2, tape 754), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR; and Vigil, interview, p. 10 (side 1, tape 775), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

the trusteeship of the federal government over Native American tribes.<sup>229</sup> The Eisenhower administration installed a commissioner of Indian affairs who was keen to liquidate the federal government's trusteeship of Indian tribes "just as rapidly as possible."<sup>230</sup> Glenn L. Emmons, a banker from Gallup, New Mexico, was previously known to the APC and the council did not support his nomination in 1953. At a meeting in January 1953 at Santo Domingo, the APC had officially backed the New Mexico State welfare director, Alva Simpson, for the position of commissioner. Simpson had promised the Pueblos a greater voice in their own government.<sup>231</sup> Quite unsurprisingly, Emmons's hostility toward tribal organizations made him a national "focal point of tribal criticism, as federal-Indian rapport suffered."<sup>232</sup> Vigil remembered this period as "when everything was going haywire."<sup>233</sup>

Termination represented a severe threat to the existence of the Pueblos as tribal and political entities. Wilkinson deems the midcentury attack on tribes "a relentless political oppression."<sup>234</sup> Termination began in earnest when Congress passed House Concurrent Resolution 108 in 1953 and continued with a series of measures to end the federal responsibility towards all Native American tribes. In line with his policy of cooperating with outsiders, Vigil made a conscious effort to build a relationship between the APC and Emmons, who promised Vigil a policy of transparency regarding the government's intentions. When the federal government proposed Public Law 280 and the

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<sup>229</sup> Donald L. Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945–1960* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), 91–92.

<sup>230</sup> Emmons, quoted in Prucha, *The Great Father*, 1041.

<sup>231</sup> "NM All-Pueblo Council Gives Backing to Alva," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 11 January 1953, 1.

<sup>232</sup> Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*, 158.

<sup>233</sup> Vigil, interview, p. 15 (side 1, tape 764), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>234</sup> Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle*, xii.

so-called Competency and Malone bills as part of the drive towards termination, Vigil accused Emmons of backtracking on his promise to consult the APC on all relevant matters. The APC vigorously opposed the measures.<sup>235</sup> The Malone bill would have liquidated the BIA on a federal level, while Public Law 280 would have placed the Pueblos under state control. Along with the competency bill, Vigil labeled these proposals “the most ruinous in the black record of 150 years of broken promises by the federal government.”<sup>236</sup> On 18 July 1953, the APC unanimously passed a resolution stating the Pueblos were “not yet ready” to exist without federal assistance. Vigil explained the APC’s opposition to Public Law 280, believing that the state of New Mexico was “not able to provide facilities for education, health and other Indian problems.”<sup>237</sup> In January 1954, Vigil appealed to Emmons to “stand up and fight for us.”<sup>238</sup>

Motivated by the potentially destructive impact of termination, Vigil led the APC into a new era of Pueblo politics. Sando explains Vigil’s leadership philosophy as “cooperation for progress.”<sup>239</sup> Vigil began routinely to invite outsiders to APC meetings so that federal, state, and BIA officials were aware of Pueblo issues. “They won’t come unless you invite them,” Vigil observed. He even established biannual meetings with

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<sup>235</sup> Vigil to Emmons, 12 January 1954, Tesuque Pueblo, in U.S. House, Subcommittee on Indian Affairs of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, *To Provide a Degree of Competency for United States Indians in Some Cases: Hearings on H.R. 4985*, 83d Cong., 2d sess., 1954, n.p.; and “Eight to Attend Indian Meeting,” *Albuquerque (N.Mex.) Journal*, 21 February 1954, 12.

<sup>236</sup> “Pending Bills Blasted as Unfair to Indians,” *Albuquerque (N.Mex.) Journal*, 18 January 1954, 2.

<sup>237</sup> “APC Resolution: H.R. 4985,” in U.S. House, *To Provide a Degree of Competency for United States Indians*, 1954, n.p.; and Vigil to Emmons.

<sup>238</sup> Vigil to Emmons.

<sup>239</sup> Sando, *Pueblo Indians*, 168.

Apache and Navajo delegates from New Mexico. Vigil claimed the Pueblos had a number of “good friends that want to help . . . but we don’t let them know what is going on.” He said that council elders gradually accepted the growing APC cooperation with the BIA, Congress, the state government, and representatives of industry.<sup>240</sup> As a result of Pueblo co-operation with the state of New Mexico during Gov. Edwin Mecham’s administration, 1950–54 (and 1956–58), the state established the New Mexico Commission on Indian Affairs in 1955. Vigil invited Charles E. Minton, the Commission’s secretary, to APC meetings. According to Vigil, “he was a great big help . . . [and] everybody liked him.”<sup>241</sup> Vigil himself was named to the State Commission in 1955 as the influence of APC leadership grew into state politics.<sup>242</sup>

Vigil was equally concerned that APC meetings should become a forum for political matters only—“outside of the religious, culture.”<sup>243</sup> He feared that religious matters too often dominated APC meetings and hindered addressing crucial political issues. Vigil was in no way unsympathetic to religious and traditional matters, and did not want to “abolish” or “forget about it.”<sup>244</sup> Indeed he himself had worked hard to protect the Pueblos’ right to dance in the 1920s. However, he believed that the APC should function as a “face to face” organization to address “business from outside.”<sup>245</sup> He recalled that eventually, council members “all understood” that these measures were

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<sup>240</sup> Vigil, interview, pp. 11, 13, 11-12 (side 1, tape 775), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>241</sup> Vigil, interview, p. 3 (side 1, tape 764), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>242</sup> “Simms Names Nine Members to State Indian Commission,” *Las Vegas (N.Mex.) Optic*, 12 December 1955, 1.

<sup>243</sup> Vigil, interview, p. 11 (side 1, tape 775), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>244</sup> Vigil, interview, pp. 1, 2–3, 3 (side 1, tape 776), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3; and Vigil, interview, p. 11 (tape 775), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

necessary for the council to function effectively. Subsequently, the APC “never went back to tradition,” and focused solely on external political matters instead.<sup>246</sup>

During Vigil’s leadership of the APC, he also proposed increasing the executive power of the chairman. Vigil announced to the APC, “I want for you people to give full authority to your chairman, if the bill come[s] up in Washington, good or bad, let the chairman speak to them and write a resolution on behalf of the All Pueblo Council.” Vigil was concerned that the protocol of APC meetings, which required prior organization and lengthy discussion, prevented communicating a Pueblo perspective to the nations capitol or state government on pending bills that affected the Pueblo way of life. Learning from the land controversy and termination policies, Vigil realized that, sometimes, the national and state political process moved quickly. “We have got to watch out,” he warned.<sup>247</sup>

As the APC joined the wider fight against termination, Vigil counted on the cooperation of supporting organizations to protect Pueblo interests. The NMAIA—once a relative foe to the APC—provided the APC with legal counsel to deflect the most harmful aspects of termination.<sup>248</sup> More importantly, the NCAI then invited the APC to an “Emergency Conference” to discuss the federal termination policies in February 1954. Forty-three tribes were represented at the emergency summit in Washington, D.C. On 27 February, Vigil spoke on behalf of the APC and denounced the government’s plans for termination.<sup>249</sup> Despite the opposition to termination, however, the federal government

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<sup>246</sup> Vigil, interview, p. 3 (side 1, tape 776), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>247</sup> Vigil, interview, p. 12 (tape 775), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>248</sup> “Indian Leaders Declare Peace Treaty Obligations Precede Independence,” *Albuquerque (N.Mex.) Journal*, 24 January 1954, 2.

<sup>249</sup> “Eight to Attend Indian Meeting”; and Paul C. Rosier, *Serving Their Country: American Indian Politics and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 170–175, 324 n. 14.

terminated the tribal status of over one hundred tribes nationwide. Yet the tribal and inter-tribal resistance to termination and the logistical problems the government encountered while implementing the measures stopped Congress from terminating all Indian tribes. “Federal officials failed to comprehend the existing strength of Native American cultures,” says historian Donald Fixico.<sup>250</sup> Organizations such as the APC and NCAI proved crucial in limiting the impact of these destructive reforms. It is impossible to know the tangible impact the APC had on the final outcome in the fight against termination measures. Vigil’s willingness to work with others and form a political bloc in opposition to termination, however, certainly contributed to the wider long-term defeat of these policies.

Despite Vigil’s collaborative philosophy, the APC’s cooperation with outside organizations, and the NCAI in particular, was conditional under his chairmanship. Rainer was the secretary of the APC during Vigil’s first term and was elected chairman in February 1955, serving two years in between Vigil’s two stretches. Rainer apparently put pressure on Vigil and the APC to accept an NCAI-written constitutional by-law that would have allowed the council to receive thousands of dollars in funding from the NCAI. Vigil felt that as a nonprofit organization this was not appropriate for the APC. Further, he claimed that the NCAI intended to manipulate the strength of the APC for wider, pan-Indian causes: “they want to use all our [APC] rights and our help and our authority and our power.” Vigil even accused Rainer of running the APC with NCAI money.

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<sup>250</sup> Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*, 188.



The Vigil-Rainer relationship was strained, and the issue of APC cooperation with the NCAI was evidently a sticking point. Still, Vigil remarked that he considered Rainer his “son.” “We got along alright,” he said, “but I am against the NCAI.”<sup>251</sup> While Paisano had been reluctant to defer to the NCAI because of their hostility toward the BIA, Vigil considered the NCAI an organization that represented Indians who had been more explicitly affected by nineteenth-century removal and reservation policies. Whereas New Mexico’s Pueblos remained in their (reduced) homelands and maintained much of their sovereignty and tradition, the NCAI concentrated less on protecting traditional cultural values than finding a role for Indians within America. This distinction led him to conclude, “I don’t know what kind of culture you [the NCAI] have and if they are [real] Indians [sic].”<sup>252</sup> Ultimately, Vigil wasn’t willing to concede any measure of APC sovereignty to a national organization—Indian or otherwise.

On one occasion during Rainer’s chairmanship, Zuni Pueblo asked the APC to mediate a factional dispute at the same time that an NCAI meeting was scheduled in Washington, D. C. Rainer opted to go to Washington, while Vigil remained determined to aid his Zuni brothers settle the disagreement. He told Rainer, “You promised those people down there at Zuni, they need your help, they need our help.” And despite suffering from stomach ulcers and arthritis, Vigil traveled to Zuni alone, listened to each side’s grievances, and offered his counsel until 2 AM, when he helped resolve the dispute. Shortly after this event occurred, Vigil was re-elected chairman over Rainer and presided over the council for another six years.<sup>253</sup> While Vigil was often a willing inter-tribal

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<sup>251</sup> Vigil, interview, pp. 15–16, 7, 16 (side 1, tape 764), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>252</sup> Vigil, interview, p. 2 (side 2, tape 776), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>253</sup> Vigil, interview, p. 10, 10–15 (side 1, tape 764), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

delegate and Pueblo representative, then, he remained committed to Pueblo-related problems and to maintaining the sovereignty of the APC.

In 1960, the Eisenhower administration brought its drive toward Indian assimilation to Santa Fe, initiating the closure of Santa Fe Indian School (SFIS). Sending Pueblo children to SFIS “had become a time-honored custom, especially among the Pueblos north of Santa Fe.” Vigil vehemently opposed the proposal to replace the school with a new Institute of American Indian Art (IAIA). By the 1950s, half of the SFIS staff were local Indians. The school provided the Pueblo community both a place of education for its children, and “a well-established network of communication with parents and tribal officials.” The APC lay at the center of this network.<sup>254</sup> Vigil wanted Pueblo children eventually to be incorporated into the public school system, yet IAIA provided only a specialized education and was aimed at a national catchment area, leaving Pueblo (and other Indian) children in New Mexico without a local secondary school. He was not opposed to adding an art institute to SFIS, but felt there was still a real need to maintain SFIS. Vigil appreciated the vocational skills Pueblo children learned at SFIS, noting that after graduating from SFIS, “these boys can do anything, like painting, carpentry, driving tractors.” Vigil labeled SFIS a “real darn good school” and it indeed produced many university-educated Indians who rose to positions of authority within Indian Country in the twentieth century—including Vigil’s successor.<sup>255</sup>

The proposed IAIA divided both the Pueblo and non-Indian community, and Vigil found only limited support in his objections to the project. Even those who had once

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<sup>254</sup> Sally Hyer, *One House, One Voice, One Heart: Native American Education at the Santa Fe Indian School* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1990), 57, 60.

<sup>255</sup> Vigil, interview, p. 6 (side 2, tape 764), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

cooperated with him disagreed with Vigil's stance. Collier, for example, stated that despite his "affection and a high regard for Martin Vigil, reaching from 40 years ago to the present," Vigil's opposition to IAIA was "unwise."<sup>256</sup> Similarly, Charles Elkus, a California lawyer who aided the Pueblos in the 1920s as part of the AIDA, supported the IAIA. Vigil appealed to Elkus: "Indian children need to learn how to read, write and speak English . . . they don't need and don't want a fancy art school . . . We need Santa Fe Indian School. We need education."<sup>257</sup> Sally Hyer, a historian of SFIS, found that Vigil had "difficulty obtaining consensus of Pueblo governors" because "some were negotiating with county school boards for public schools on Indian lands" and others apparently backed the integration of Indian students into public schools straight away.<sup>258</sup> Vigil even appealed to Indian Commissioner Philleo Nash to no avail.<sup>259</sup> Ultimately, Vigil could not stop the tide of momentum and in the fall of 1962, SFIS was closed and the new IAIA was established in its place. SFIS students had to transfer to public schools or to Albuquerque Indian School, sixty miles away.<sup>260</sup>

Shortly afterward, at the end of 1964, Vigil lost his battle for re-election as APC chairman for the last time. Vigil had based his stewardship of the APC and Pueblo politics on cooperation. His failure to obtain a consensus among the Pueblos and others in New Mexico on retaining SFIS, he believed, led to his failure to secure reelection. "I

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<sup>256</sup> "Why Presume Idiocy?," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 10 August 1962, 4.

<sup>257</sup> Martin Vigil to Charles Elkus, 18 June 1962, folder 4, box 17, The Elkus Indian Papers, Library Special Collections, The California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, California.

<sup>258</sup> Hyer, "Remembering Santa Fe Indian School," 285.

<sup>259</sup> Vigil, interview, p. 4 (side 2, tape 764), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>260</sup> "Pueblos Against Proposed New Indian School," *Albuquerque (N.Mex.) Journal*, 14 February 1965, 21.

have been a lonely man ever since,” he remembered, “‘cause nobody backed me, just a few Indians.”<sup>261</sup>

Wilkinson astutely observes that at midcentury, tribal leaders were largely ineffective at dealing with American society. Similarly, he points out that tribal action was still largely reactive at this time. Importantly, however, “ineffective or not, Indian people did resist.”<sup>262</sup> As APC chairman, Vigil had a keen awareness of and dedication to the history and tradition of Tesuque Pueblo, the Tewa family, and the Pueblo community as a whole. Vigil appreciated that to maintain strength, the APC had to modernize. Yet he remained wary of implementing institutional changes, as he did not wish to compromise Pueblo tradition. He attempted to negotiate tradition and modernity for New Mexico’s nineteen Pueblos, while he pushed for a cautious but deliberate policy of cooperation for progress. Through all of his actions, he first and foremost protected Pueblo interests and, most importantly, he continually advocated inter-Pueblo cooperation. In the twentieth century, Indian Country relied on pragmatic leaders to direct tribal politics and negotiate with outsiders. And while Tafoya, Paisano, and Vigil did not always achieve their aims, the APC negotiated the tough conditions of the midcentury. Their combined effort meant that when Vigil left office for the last time and made way for Domingo Montoya of Sandia, he had established a template for the next generation of Pueblo leadership. Vigil negotiated and protected the Pueblos from federal termination, and further confirmed the essential role the APC played in maintaining Pueblo tradition while negotiating with the outside world.

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<sup>261</sup> Vigil, interview, p. 7 (side 2, tape 764), transcript, AIOHC, CSWR.

<sup>262</sup> Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle*, 113.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **The All Indian Pueblo Council and Self-Determination: Civil Rights, Economic Opportunity, and Educational Autonomy, 1962–1975**

On 16 October 1965, representatives of the nineteen Pueblos of New Mexico, Sen. Joseph Montoya, and Commissioner of Indian Affairs Philleo Nash gathered at Santa Domingo Pueblo, New Mexico, to witness the signing of the first written constitution of the AIPC.<sup>263</sup> The document formalized North America's oldest confederation, the political wing of the Pueblos, and indicated the future direction of the council. The constitution also articulated the continued independence of the confederate council and the solidarity between nineteen tribes who were still overcoming the destructive period of the mid-twentieth century. The AIPC's decision to sign a constitution in 1965 was indicative of the council's will to extend the self-determination of the Pueblos in the latter half of the twentieth century.

While the AIPC evolved throughout the twentieth century, from the 1950s to the 1970s in particular, the AIPC began assuming more responsibilities and greater control of Pueblo life, becoming the most important element of Pueblo government in Pueblo negotiations with outside organizations. The AIPC utilized its historic and evolving relationship with the federal government to battle the 1968 Indian Civil Rights Act and protect Pueblo sovereignty, to capitalize on federal War on Poverty funds, and to wrest control of Pueblo education in New Mexico away from the BIA and into Pueblo hands. In

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<sup>263</sup> At this time, the All Pueblo Council became the All Indian Pueblo Council. Sando remembers this name change occurred for practical reasons.

all its negotiations, the AIPC was keen to protect the unique traditions and customs of its peoples and it often lobbied for the Pueblos through a conviction based on their historic independence from non-Indian society.

The election of Domingo Montoya to the chairmanship of the APC in 1964 generated further ingenuity in and evolution of the council. And while Vigil had negotiated with a federal government and an Indian Office hostile to tribal authority, Montoya could count on a relatively cooperative federal government that was gradually discarding the policies of termination and providing new opportunities to Native communities. In Montoya the AIPC had a chairman who battled tirelessly to build the council into an influential and powerful institution that could effectively serve the Pueblos' interests on local, regional, and national levels.

The middle of the twentieth century "marked the all-time low" for the "tribal existence" of Native Americans.<sup>264</sup> Not only did the federal government attack the sovereignty of Indian nations, but this attack left Indian communities impoverished, ill-educated, and unhealthy. Native Americans were expected to live twenty-five less years than the average American, while unemployment on some reservations pushed 90 percent.<sup>265</sup> The situation on Pueblo homelands was not as desperate as many places in the country. By 1964, 74 percent of the Pueblos nearly twenty thousand population still lived in their Pueblos. Of the total Pueblo population in cities and on reservations, 28 percent of Pueblos were unemployed.<sup>266</sup> In the villages, unemployment ranged from 24–31 percent. Vlasich estimates that three-quarters of Pueblo workers remained farmers. Still,

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<sup>264</sup> Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle*, xii.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Vlasich, *Pueblo Indian Agriculture*, 245.

compared to wider America, the Pueblos faced a battle from birth to achieve economic and educational parity. By the end of the 1950s, the federal government was softening its approach to Native tribes. And in 1961, Congress approved Philleo Nash—an anthropologist opposed to the idea of termination—as commissioner of Indian affairs. Despite signs that federal policy was moving away from termination, however, it was not until the very end of the 1960s that Congress officially renounced the destructive policy.

Within, but not because of, this slight vacuum of Congressional policy toward Indians grew a modern tribal sovereignty movement. Historians Daniel M. Cobb and Loretta Fowler have suggested recently that Native institutions working on practical solutions at tribal, intertribal, regional, and national levels played a crucial role in revitalizing Native communities and heartlands. By the mid-1960s, Native American leaders such as Montoya had vowed to end termination, battle to uphold treaty rights, and establish tribes as sovereign nations within reservations.<sup>267</sup> Thus, while the Pueblos' story after the midcentury was in many ways unique—when compared to tribes who suffered greater cultural destruction—this story should be understood in the context of a national movement for tribal sovereignty.

As was the case with the council's chairmen so often in the twentieth century, Montoya was the most pivotal component of the APC during this period. Montoya's background as both a prominent member of Sandia Pueblo and as a citizen of U.S. society equipped him with the tools to negotiate effectively on the Pueblos behalf. Montoya was born on 5 August 1911, and was educated at Santa Fe Indian School through the eleventh grade. Like Vigil, Montoya experienced life outside his home

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<sup>267</sup> Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle*, xiii.

Pueblo and worked in the agricultural fields of South Dakota at the age of eighteen.

When Montoya returned to Sandia, he worked on his family's farm and spent some time trapping coyotes in the Sandia mountain foothills and the Rio Grande valley. He later devoted fifteen years to the United States Soil Conservation Service before he withdrew his retirement funds to set up his own farm at Sandia. He was elected chairman of the APC in February 1964.<sup>268</sup>

One of the first measures Montoya tackled as chairman was to oversee the ratification of the AIPC constitution that had been drawn up under Vigil's leadership. As the frequency of Montoya's trips to Washington, D. C., increased, he believed that he needed to prove without doubt that the APC represented all nineteen Pueblos of New Mexico. Equally, Montoya felt that the Pueblos have a "common culture," a "bond of friendship and a feeling of mutual destiny," but that in the early 1960s, they had "begun to identify concrete approaches to the solution of our [common] problems."<sup>269</sup> The constitution was the logical formalization of the AIPC and a shared Pueblo vision of the future.

After a series of drafted proposals, representatives of the nineteen Pueblos of New Mexico met at Santo Domingo Pueblo on 16 October 1965 to sign the All Indian Pueblo Council's first written constitution. The preamble states that "By virtue of our sovereign rights as Pueblo Indians and in accordance with our ancient customs and laws," the constitution aims to "promote justice and encourage the common welfare . . . foster the

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<sup>268</sup> Joe Sando, *Pueblo Profiles*, 78–89.

<sup>269</sup> Domingo Montoya to Leslie W. Dunbar [Field Foundation], 11 October 1966, folder 2, box 26, Aberle Papers, CSWR.



social and economic advancement of all the Pueblo Indians . . . preserve and protect our common interests” and “inherent rights of self-government.”<sup>270</sup>

Present at the ceremony was Commissioner Nash, who remarked that the document would enable the “oldest deliberative body in the western world . . . to take full advantage of help to be had today from the Office of Economic Opportunity.”<sup>271</sup> New Mexico senator Joseph Montoya, also present, declared “the writing and signing of a constitution is one of the supreme acts which a democratic people can perform,” and that the document represented “an extension of the long and honored history of the pueblo people.”<sup>272</sup> Later reporting on the constitution, the *New York Times* claimed that it showed that the AIPC had “stepped more boldly and successfully into the twentieth century than any other regional alliance of Indians.”<sup>273</sup> And according to Sharon O’Brien, a sociologist of tribal governments, the signing marked the AIPC’s transition into a “sophisticated administrative organization.”<sup>274</sup>

Despite the apparent success of the occasion and the assertion of AIPC power in the constitution, Pueblo sovereignty was already under threat in this period. In 1961 North Carolina’s Democratic senator Sam Ervin, a segregationist and strict constructionist, headed a new congressional committee to investigate the position of individual civil rights on Indian reservations. By 1965 he had concluded that the

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<sup>270</sup> See the full constitution in Joe Sando, *Pueblo Nations*, 264–268.

<sup>271</sup> For more on Philleo Nash, see Margaret Connell Szasz, “Philleo Nash, 1961–1966,” in *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs*, ed. Robert M. Kvasnicka and Herman J. Viola (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979).

<sup>272</sup> Ted Bulbert, “N. M. Pueblos Cement Ties,” *Albuquerque (N.Mex.) Journal*, 17 October 1965.

<sup>273</sup> “Pueblo Life Blends Past and Present,” *New York Times*, 18 December 1966.

<sup>274</sup> Sharon O’Brien, *American Indian Tribal Governments*, The Civilization of the American Indian series, no. 192 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 179.

inconsistent and unspecified nature of the rights of Indians and non-Indians under tribal governments required federal attention and regulation. On 22 June 1965, hearings in Congress opened on the Ervin bills, which threatened to restrict tribal sovereignty all over Indian Country. The AIPC, spearheaded by Montoya, led the defense of Pueblo sovereignty in Washington, D. C., over the next few years. The AIPC was ultimately unsuccessful in blocking the legislation, which passed in 1968, but the council won some key concessions that protected many aspects of Pueblo tradition.<sup>275</sup>

The core of Ervin's measures were the sweeping proposals of bill S. 961. The legislation stated that "any Indian tribe in exercising its powers of local self-government shall be subject to the same limitations and restraints as those which are imposed on the Government of the United States by the United States Constitution."<sup>276</sup> In the United States, the 1960s were, in many ways, characterized by a continual struggle by ethnic minorities in the Civil Rights movement to attain equality. Ervin and many officials in the federal government failed to comprehend that Native people did not necessarily want equality. To many tribes, sovereignty was the ultimate goal; securing it required battling Congress and the state and federal courts.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> For the most detailed account of the 1968 Indian Civil Rights Act or Indian Bill of Rights, see John R. Wunder, ed., *The Indian Bill of Rights, 1968*, Native Americans and the Law: Contemporary and Historical Perspectives on American Indian Rights, Freedoms, and Sovereignty series, ed. John R. Wunder (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996).

<sup>276</sup> U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights, *Constitutional Rights of the American Indian: Hearings on S. 961, S. 962 and Related Bills*, 89th Cong., 1st sess., 1965, p. 5.

<sup>277</sup> For a recent broad examination of sovereignty during this period, see Charles Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle*, 241–268; and Vine Deloria Jr. and Clifford Lytle, *The Nations Within*, 232–243.

Ervin's proposals had the potential to strip all tribal governments of their sovereign rights and posed practical questions about how tribes could afford to extend the Bill of Rights to their people. Most importantly for the AIPC were the federal stipulations for tribes to establish a jury system and provide legal counsel to all defendants. At the opening hearing, chairman Montoya of the AIPC and Executive Director Vine Deloria Jr. of the NCAI, protested most fervently against the Ervin bills. Montoya believed that "if enacted into law, the legislation would bar the effective administration of the tribal government." On 22 June 1965, the AIPC passed a resolution that rejected five of the eight bills put forward by Ervin. The AIPC protest represented by far the greatest opposition to the measures heard in Congress. Significantly, Montoya declared that "traditional means of tribal justice should be continued," and obviously saw the proposals as an infringement on the power of each Pueblo to govern its own people and regulate their customs.<sup>278</sup> Following on Montoya, Deloria Jr. echoed many of his sentiments but did not oppose as many measures: the NCAI approved of many of the measures as they would modify Public Law 280.

When the amended Ervin bill returned in 1968, AIPC opposition to S. 961 had forced the senator to embrace a crucial change that accommodated Pueblo tradition. Ervin deleted the establishment clause of the first amendment from the Indian Bill of Rights. Native governments would be free to promote their tribal religion. According to legal historian John Wunder, this alteration was a direct response to the AIPC's appeal for their right to theocratic independence.<sup>279</sup> Despite considerable changes to Ervin's proposals, tribes would still be obliged to provide legal counsel to all defendants and

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<sup>278</sup> U.S. House, *Rights of Members of Indian Tribes: Hearings*, 1968, p. 190.

<sup>279</sup> Wunder, "The Indian Bill of Rights," in *The Indian Bill of Rights, 1968*, Wunder, 16.

introduce a system of trial by jury. During the hearings in March 1968, most tribes were apparently satisfied by Ervin's revisions; only the Pueblos continued to object to the act.<sup>280</sup> Their unique history informed Pueblo resistance to the Ervin measures. The Pueblos had generally dodged intrusions into their political structure under U.S. rule. The Indian Bill of Rights of 1968 may not have been interpreted as particularly threatening legislation to many tribes, especially when compared to the termination policies of the 1940s and 1950s. For the Pueblos, who had avoided the destructive impact of termination, the Ervin measures were an unprecedented trespass on traditional Pueblo sovereignty, which was unique in North America.

Reminiscent of APC action in 1922, the council organized an all-Pueblo delegation to fight Senator Ervin's proposals. The Congressional hearings in March 1968 were dominated by speeches from Pueblo representatives. No less than thirteen Pueblo leaders were present in Washington (nine of them speaking), and Montoya was the first witness to be heard. He declared, "As you can well understand by the attendance of the Pueblo leaders present in this room, we consider these bills to be one of the . . . most important measures confronting Indian people for the past several years." Under an AIPC resolution passed on 23 March 1968, he argued that the Pueblos were in a unique historical position in North America, and requested that all Pueblos be excluded from the provisions of Title I and Title II of the Ervin bills. Montoya stated that the "traditional [Pueblo] way of life did not break down and disappear like that of most tribal groups." The AIPC considered the measures of the Ervin bills "highly objectionable," because they "tend to eliminate our traditional ways of attaining the basic objectives of justice and

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<sup>280</sup> The Pueblo delegation represented the only Native witnesses in these hearings. See U.S. House, *Rights of Members of Indian Tribes: Hearings*, 1968.

equality.” Montoya explained that Pueblo social structures already affirmed the spirit of freedom in the Bill of Rights but believed that the practical implications of the proposed legislation had the potential to destroy the Pueblo way of life.<sup>281</sup>

The Ervin Bill was nonetheless signed into law a month later in April 1968. The AIPC, however, remained defiant: “No federal agency is going to tell the Pueblos exactly how their governments should be organized. This is a matter each Pueblo must decide for itself.” The council lobbied its U.S. senators, Joseph Montoya and Clinton P. Anderson, for a bill that would exclude them from the objectionable measures of the Civil Rights Act.<sup>282</sup> Senator Anderson told the AIPC to “keep on with what you are doing.” He would “seek an amendment to the bill exempting Indian pueblos from the portions affecting Indians.”<sup>283</sup> Subsequently, Montoya and Anderson introduced bill S. 211 (and S. 2173) in Congress. Because of the Pueblo-specific nature of Anderson and Montoya’s proposed amendments, Ervin and his committee held the hearings in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on 11 April 1969 to hear further Pueblo testimony. This time the Pueblos were joined by prominent Mescalero Apache leader Wendell Chino, who was connected closely to Pueblo leadership at this time. The Jicarilla Apache and Navajo tribes also submitted written statements that supported the Pueblo position. Indeed the APC’s influence on these tribes transformed their opinions on the matter from general agreement to opposition.

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<sup>281</sup> Statement of Domingo Montoya, U.S. House, *Rights of Members of Indian Tribes: Hearings*, 1968, pp. 35–37.

<sup>282</sup> Summary of AIPC Meeting, 13, 14 September 1968, folder 23, box 25, Aberle Papers, CSWR.

<sup>283</sup> “Pueblos Reassured in Rights Action,” *Albuquerque (N.Mex.) Journal*, 19 April 1968.

At this hearing, Montoya restated his concerns that the 1968 Indian Civil Rights Act would “destroy the traditions . . . greatly weaken our governments,” and “impose financial burdens” on the Pueblos.<sup>284</sup> When questioned directly by Senator Ervin, Montoya was increasingly adamant that the Pueblos deserved exclusion because of their historic political autonomy: “What happens to our sovereign rights, then? As you remember, people, any community anywhere, cannot live for hundreds of years under any system if the system is wrong for the people or for the community.”<sup>285</sup> Legal historian Donald Burnett observed that the Pueblos were “obstinate . . . when faced with the possibility of change imposed from the outside.”<sup>286</sup> Led by the AIPC, the nineteen Pueblos put up an extremely robust defense of their historic sovereignty, arguing that their threatened traditions, now under federal threat, gave legitimacy to their governments and to the political and social organization of their communities.

This Pueblo defiance compelled Ervin to introduce two amendments to the Indian Bill of Rights, though he refused to exclude the Pueblos from the act altogether. To the dismay of the AIPC, these amendments were never ratified by the senate, all but ending the AIPC’s defense of Pueblo sovereignty in this instance. The show of inter-Pueblo unity led by the AIPC during this period, however, undoubtedly legitimized the work of the council as an organized and powerful political institution. Individual Pueblos were rallied to defend their interests, Senators Anderson and Montoya fought for the Pueblo cause and

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<sup>284</sup> U.S. Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights, *Amendments to the Indian Bill of Rights: Hearings on Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1968*, 91st Cong., 1st sess., 1969, p. 7.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid, p. 16.

<sup>286</sup> Donald L. Burnett Jr., “An Historical Analysis of the 1968 ‘Indian Civil Rights’ Act,” in *The Indian Bill of Rights*, Wunder, 69.

formed good relationships with the AIPC, and the federal government in Washington, D. C., continually praised the AIPC for its well-orchestrated campaign.

In the 1970s the federal government interpreted the impact of the Indian Civil Rights Act on tribal sovereignty. Juliana Martinez of Santa Clara Pueblo bought a suit against her governor and Pueblo council, alleging that the Pueblo's (gendered) membership ordinance went against the equal protection provision of the Civil Rights Act. In 1978, the U.S. Supreme Court heard *Santa Clara Pueblo v. Martinez*, and held in favor of the Pueblo. The court concluded that, despite the Indian Civil Rights Act's attempt to regulate tribal sovereignty, the Federal government should not interfere with the Pueblo's "tribal autonomy and self-government." In his analysis of the case, Vieno Lindstrom states that the APC's criticism of the Indian Civil Rights Act helped the court decide in favor of tribal power. In many ways, *Martinez* strengthened the ability of Pueblo councils to govern their own affairs and thus limited the potentially intrusive elements of the Indian Civil Rights Act.<sup>287</sup>

The political wrangling around the 1968 Indian Civil Rights Act only constituted a small volume of the total energies of the AIPC during this period however. While defending Pueblo sovereignty, the AIPC also attempted to achieve economic self-sufficiency and to improve the economic situation of all nineteen Pueblos. When Montoya was elected chairman in 1964, the AIPC had neither a central office nor any means of income. Montoya almost immediately remedied this situation by permanently moving the council to the central and urban location of Albuquerque. The AIPC had no

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<sup>287</sup> Vieno Lindstrom, "Constitutional Law: Santa Clara Pueblo v. Martinez; Tribal Membership and the Indian Civil Rights Act," *American Indian Law Review* 6 (no. 1, 1978): 209. See *Santa Clara Pueblo v. Martinez*, 436 U.S. 49 (1978).

office, telephone, chair, or any infrastructure when this move occurred. So the BIA temporarily housed the council in the Southern Pueblos Agency building in Albuquerque. Once the AIPC had established its new central location, Montoya applied for funds from the Field Foundation to support the operations of the council for a year. The foundation, providing funds to organizations that promoted civil rights and social change, granted the AIPC nearly \$25,000 in 1965 and the council received this support for the next few years. This money initially allowed the AIPC to pay its chairman \$8,000 a year for his services, hire a secretary, maintain a telephone line, and subsidize travel costs.<sup>288</sup> Previously, AIPC chairmen had not been paid for their services and this change marked a shift in the efficiency of the organization.

The Field Foundation money was crucial to facilitating the growth of the AIPC, but this money only supported the council itself, not the Pueblo people. After 1964, the AIPC was able to apply for new federal funds made available under President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty programs. Johnson's social policies of the 1960s aimed to curtail the economic decline of minorities and revitalize impoverished communities. Although they were not intended exclusively for Native communities, the newly established Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and Economic Development Administration (EDA) in particular, provided significant funds to tribes in the name of economic development over the next decade. These offices handed funds directly to tribes to administer on their own terms, sidestepping the paternalistic impulses and administrative red tape of the BIA. Cobb writes, "For the first time since the United

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<sup>288</sup> Domingo Montoya to Leslie W. Dunbar (Field Foundation), 11 October 1966, folder 2, box 26, Aberle Papers, CSWR.



States colonized Native America, tribal governments administered programs for their own communities.”<sup>289</sup>

Cobb explains that the War on Poverty became a “critical component of a new political dynamic in Indian Country,” and prompted a “nationalistic movement for tribal self-determination.”<sup>290</sup> Historian and Native education specialist Margaret Connell-Szasz has pointed to the significance of tribal leaders during this same period. Tribal leaders became familiar with constructing a “convincing case for the needs of their people” and learned “where the sources of political power lay, and they began to go directly to these sources.”<sup>291</sup> Using the opportunities made available by the War on Poverty, Montoya began utilizing the Pueblos’ historic and continually evolving relationship with the nation’s capitol to increase Pueblo self-determination.

The OEO administered various Head Start, Job Corps, VISTA, and Community Action Programs (CAP) within various impoverished Indian and, predominantly, non-Indian communities. Each aimed to promote and invigorate economic development at the local level in a variety of ways. The AIPC and individual Pueblo governments implemented Head Start programs, directed at pre-school children, in a number of Pueblos. These were praised by Montoya for reversing trends and “breaking the tragic cycle of ever-receding goals by our Indian students.”<sup>292</sup> The AIPC also employed Sophie Aberle to oversee a Computer Assisted Instruction program in Isleta Pueblo from 1970 onwards, receiving \$300,000 from the OEO in 1974 alone. An Indian CAP was

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<sup>289</sup> Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America*, 126.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid, 124.

<sup>291</sup> Margaret Connell-Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 3d ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 168.

<sup>292</sup> Speech by Domingo Montoya, Education Conference, Hilton Hotel, Albuquerque, New Mexico, January 19, 20 1968, folder 2, box 26, Aberle Papers, CSWR.

administered through the University of New Mexico. It was designed “to provide technical assistance for Indians in their efforts to better their social and economic condition.”<sup>293</sup>

The AIPC also frequently faced frustration when dealing with the OEO. In 1965 the council’s bid to secure funds for establishing an Arts and Crafts Guild was rejected by the OEO. Similarly, its attempts to lure industries onto Pueblo lands were often thwarted. In 1966 the OEO denied the AIPC funds for a Pueblo Indian Industrial Development and Marketing Demonstration Project. Montoya frequently encouraged industry to come onto Pueblo lands, taking a trip to New York City in March 1968 to address an industrial trade show organized by the EDA, OEO, and NCAI.<sup>294</sup> Montoya believed that in order to facilitate the economic development of Pueblo communities, curb Pueblo migration to cities, and maintain cultural continuity, local employment opportunities were needed for Pueblo workers, “to find productive jobs without totally abandoning their traditional ways of life.”<sup>295</sup> Montoya did negotiate an industrial contract on Pueblo lands, but he did so in his capacity as president of Sandia Indian Industries, Inc., in 1973. However, the funding for this project came from the Small Business Administration (SBA), which was not connected with War on Poverty programs.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> Report of the Chairman, 31 October 1968, folder 2, box 26, Aberle Papers, CSWR. For further information on Community Action Programs, see Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America*.

<sup>294</sup> Thomas Clarkin, *Federal Indian Policy in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, 1961–1969* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 136. For Montoya’s speech in New York, see Talk by Domingo Montoya, Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York City, 8 March 1968, folder of speeches by Domingo Montoya, box 6, AIPC Papers-IPCC.

<sup>295</sup> Report of the Chairman, 31 October 1968, folder 2, box 26, Aberle Papers, CSWR.

<sup>296</sup> “Rhyme, Reason and the SBA,” *Albuquerque (N.Mex.) Journal*, 26 October 1973. For further details on the limitations of industry on Native reservations during this period, see David L. Vinje, “Cultural Values and Economic Development on Reservations,” in

The AIPC could also negotiate with a second federal administrative body under the War on Poverty in the 1960s. In 1965 Congress passed the Public Works and Economic Development Act establishing the Economic Development Administration under the secretary of commerce. The aim of the EDA was “primarily to fund public works projects” in impoverished communities.<sup>297</sup> Unlike the OEO, the EDA had the mandate to distribute grants for Public Works and Development Facilities—or infrastructure crucial to economic development. Senator Joseph Montoya, good friend of the AIPC, was one of only a few congressmen supportive of the Public Works and Economic Development Act when it was drawn up in Congress. Montoya singled out the Indian communities of New Mexico as potential beneficiaries from the EDA, stating that “Acoma, Isleta, Laguna, Jemez, Jicarilla, Mescalero, Ramah, Santo Domingo, Zuni, Santa Clara, and Navajo” communities would benefit from its passing.<sup>298</sup>

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, federal cooperation, the support of Senator Montoya, and EDA funds combined to create a home and base for the AIPC’s economic and community development. Despite having its 1965 proposal for an Arts and Crafts Guild rejected by the OEO, the AIPC still aspired to establish a home for practical Pueblo training and a place to sell Pueblo goods. By the 1960s, the BIA-run Albuquerque Indian School (AIS) had fallen into a state of disrepair, and the BIA initiated plans for the eventual dissolution of the institution. As early as 1966 Montoya lobbied Secretary of the Interior Stuart Udall, and Commissioner of Indian Affairs Robert L. Bennett (Oneida) to

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*American Indian Policy in the Twentieth Century*, ed., Deloria Jr.

<sup>297</sup> Amy Glasmeier and Lawrence Wood, “Policy Debates Analysis of US Economic Development Administration Expenditure Patterns over 30 Years,” *Regional Studies* 39 (December 2005): 1263.

<sup>298</sup> Joseph Montoya, quoted in Clarkin, *Federal Indian Policy in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations*, 134.

sign the land over to the council.<sup>299</sup> And in June 1969, the BIA began what would become a pattern in the 1970s when it relinquished around 11.6 acres of AIS land to the AIPC. The land was “no longer needed for federal Indian School purposes,” and the BIA assigned the land to the nineteen Pueblos for a “school or other public purposes.”<sup>300</sup> The AIPC took the unprecedented step of directly contacting President Richard M. Nixon to thank him for giving the Pueblos a “spot of land to call our own . . . to form [a] more cohesive organization which can work for the good of all the nineteen Indian Pueblo communities in New Mexico.”<sup>301</sup>

The AIPC drew up proposals to utilize the land, located near the heart of downtown Albuquerque, for a modern all-Pueblo cultural center and immediately applied for EDA funds under the provisions for a Grant for Public Works and Development Facility. To enable the successful transfer of funds, tax free, the AIPC quickly acted to form a nonprofit organization under the state of New Mexico. At a meeting four days after the council was handed the Indian school land, the AIPC unanimously voted to form the “All-Indian Pueblo Council, Inc.,” to receive and administer the EDA funds.<sup>302</sup> On 30 June 1969, the AIPC signed the necessary Articles of Incorporation and the AIPC, Inc.,

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<sup>299</sup> Domingo Montoya to Robert Bennett, 13 May 1966, folder 1, box 13, Aberle Papers, CSWR.

<sup>300</sup> Quitclaim Deed, 17 June 1969, folder 25, box 146, Joseph M. Montoya Papers, 1913–1977, MSS 386, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque [hereafter Montoya Papers, CSWR].

<sup>301</sup> Domingo Montoya to President Richard M. Nixon, 31 July 1968, folder 1, box 13, Aberle Papers, CSWR.

<sup>302</sup> All Indian Pueblo Council Meeting #6, 21 June 1969, folder 23, box 25, Aberle Papers, CSWR.

was established. The purpose of the organization was to “centralize [AIPC] efforts to advance [the] educational, economic, and social position of all the Pueblo Indians.”<sup>303</sup>

The AIPC simultaneously submitted proposals to the EDA for a Pueblo Cultural Center. It was hoped that the cultural center would act as a “central showplace for [Pueblo] culture and history,” via a museum, information center, arts and crafts workshops, sales rooms and outdoor theater.<sup>304</sup> Equally important was the hope that the cultural center would provide “an opportunity for potential Indian leaders to acquire the skill and experience needed to develop business enterprises on their own reservations.”<sup>305</sup> The hopes for the IPCC were ambitious. Not only would the nineteen Pueblos have an inter-Pueblo home, but their unity evident in the facility would provide economic support to the tens of thousands of Pueblo people in New Mexico.

The battle to secure this facility was far from straightforward. Over two years after initial plans were submitted, the council had to overcome a zoning restriction attached to all EDA grants. Bernalillo County, the location of the proposed IPCC, was not zoned as a community eligible for EDA funds. After a great deal of negotiation on the part of Senator Montoya, the EDA re-designated the AIPC’s 11.6 acres ‘Restricted Indian Land’ to fulfill the relevant EDA requirements. Further problems arose when the AIPC’s ambitious plans for a traditional Pueblo-style building and business center increased construction costs to \$2.4 million.<sup>306</sup> Perhaps more importantly, some members of the

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<sup>303</sup> Articles of Incorporation of the AIPC Inc., 30 June 1969, folder 24, box 146, Montoya Papers, CSWR.

<sup>304</sup> Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, n.d., folder 25, box 146, Montoya Papers, CSWR.

<sup>305</sup> Grant Application Support Document to Economic Development Administration, n.d., folder 7, box 12, Aberle Papers, CSWR.

<sup>306</sup> Economic Development Administration Report Regarding the Proposed Pueblo Cultural Center, 30 November 1971, folder 25, box 146, Montoya Papers, CSWR.

Denver office of the EDA were not convinced that all nineteen Pueblos supported the project, and funds were withheld until the EDA was satisfied that the AIPC had the full support of all nineteen Pueblos. The AIPC scaled back plans for the IPCC, and Senator Montoya pushed the EDA to endorse the revisions. In June 1972, the EDA approved a grant of \$1,640,000 for the IPCC—the cost of the entire facility.<sup>307</sup>

Despite further delays, construction of the IPCC went ahead and on 28 August 1976, seven years after it was initially proposed, the AIPC invited Senator Montoya to open the newly completed center. Montoya declared that the IPCC would be “another piece in the growing economic development of the Indian Pueblos . . . a beacon for the future as well as a place for reverence for the past.”<sup>308</sup> The EDA had become infamous for the political and bureaucratic squabbling that accompanied its grants. Even Domingo Montoya commented that AIPC enthusiasm for the EDA lagged as “everything became mired in the traditional bureaucratic red tape,” unlike the seemingly fluid funding from the OEO.<sup>309</sup> But the Pueblos benefited enormously from the hard work of the AIPC and Senator Montoya in negotiating the convoluted restrictions of EDA funds. Senator Montoya in particular became a close friend of the AIPC during this time and continually backed its initiatives. His cooperation with the AIPC and his position on the Senate appropriations committee were vital to the success of the IPCC project.

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<sup>307</sup> Robert Podesta to Joseph Montoya, 23 June 1972, folder 28, box 146, Montoya Papers, CSWR.

<sup>308</sup> Speech, Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, 28 Aug 1976, folder 1, box 78, Montoya Papers, CSWR.

<sup>309</sup> Statement of Domingo Montoya, Chairman of the All-Indian Pueblo Council, New Mexico, before Senate Subcommittee on Indian Policy, 5 March 1968, folder of speeches by Domingo Montoya, box 6, AIPC Papers-IPCC.

The EDA spent only \$150 million on Indian projects between 1966 and 1975, making the AIPC's grant of \$1,640,000 all the more remarkable.<sup>310</sup> The EDA's grant built a permanent home for the AIPC on its very own, semi-sovereign, 11.6 acres of all-Pueblo land in central Albuquerque and facilitated a new era of economic development for Pueblo people and businesses.

During the time the AIPC was striving to establish itself economically, it was also working to improve the educational circumstances of the Pueblo people. Since the 1870s, the BIA had managed federal Indian education. In the 1960s and 1970s, the AIPC began to wrestle gradually from the BIA its control of Pueblo education. Significantly, the AIPC did not overtly reject BIA assistance and was actually keen to maintain a close relationship with the bureau. In so doing, the AIPC used the BIA to establish its own local forums of power. By 1968, for instance, the AIPC had coordinated Advisory School Boards at each of the twelve BIA schools on Pueblo lands, "greatly increase[ing] the participation of Pueblo members in making the decisions that affect their children."<sup>311</sup> And in 1965, the BIA proposed the construction of a new \$13 million Indian-only high school to replace the deteriorating Albuquerque Indian School. The AIPC was quick to realize the potential for the Pueblo community in such a project, and after negotiations with the Commissioner of Indian Affairs Philileo Nash, the AIPC amended a plan to the proposals that a substantial section of the school be designated as a "much needed post-

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<sup>310</sup> Alan Sorkin, "The Economic Basis of Indian Life," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 436 (March 1978): 9.

<sup>311</sup> Report of the Chairman, 31 October 1968, folder 2, box 26, Aberle Papers, CSWR.

high school vocational and technical education” facility for “Indian youth in the Southwest.”<sup>312</sup>

Domingo Montoya was adamant that a technical vocational facility was necessary because Pueblo students were neglected in public schools and consequently missed out on the opportunity to attend institutions of higher education.<sup>313</sup> Montoya damningly suggested that public schools “thwart [Pueblo] desires without giving us anything in return,” claiming that because of the compensation public schools received for enrolling Indian students, they were only “interested in money.” Further, Montoya argued that public schools essentially segregated Indian students “in fact,” if not intentionally.<sup>314</sup> The president of the New Mexico Federation of Teachers, Thord C. Nilson, agreed with Montoya, stating that there was a “tragic de facto segregation of a great majority of Indian pupils” and that a technical vocational facility was necessary “to meet [the] special needs” of Indian pupils let down by public schools.<sup>315</sup> Once the AIPC’s plan for a post-high school technical facility was announced, the project gained the support of many sections of Indian and non-Indian Albuquerque society. The previous BIA plan to replace AIS directly had been hugely unpopular among residents of the Albuquerque community. In particular, opponents wanted to end the institutional segregation of Indian students.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> Philleo Nash to Sen. Joseph Montoya, 19 March 1965, folder 14, box 104, Montoya Papers, CSWR.

<sup>313</sup> “Pueblo Council Leader Opposes School Substitute,” *Albuquerque (N.Mex.) Journal*, 23 February 1966, 6.

<sup>314</sup> Note by Domingo Montoya re: Albuquerque Indian School, n.d., folder 6, box 12, Aberle Papers, CSWR. For more on Indians in Public Schools, see Connell-Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, chap. 14.

<sup>315</sup> Thord C. Nilson to Sen. Joseph Montoya, 26 February 1966, folder 15, box 104, Montoya Papers, CSWR.

<sup>316</sup> See the many letters of opposition and then support for the school in folder 15, box 104, Montoya Papers, CSWR.



The council hoped to re-establish a degree of Pueblo control over its students' education through its negotiations with the BIA. Because of the AIPC's revisions, plans quickly evolved calling for the creation of a separate and brand new higher-education institution administered by the BIA but, crucially, governed by a coalition of New Mexican Indian interests, including the Pueblos. Senators Montoya and Anderson lobbied Congress on behalf of New Mexico's Native communities and the Senate appropriated \$13 million for the project in 1966.

During the late 1960s, Native communities throughout the United States began pushing for native-controlled higher-education institutions. According to Connell-Szasz, tribal colleges are "committed to the communities they serve" and are "responsive to local needs."<sup>317</sup> This sensitivity to the local community is partly due to organizations such as the AIPC, which planned innovatively for the needs of the local Indian community while they cooperated with outside organizations such as the BIA. In 1971, the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) was established on Albuquerque's west mesa, on lands that had once served as the AIS dairy farm. Three years earlier, the Navajos opened the first tribal college in the United States in Arizona.<sup>318</sup> Crucially for the AIPC, their negotiations with the BIA in the planning of SIPI brought a degree of Pueblo control over Indian youth and allowed the council to establish itself as a body with political influence in the Albuquerque area.

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<sup>317</sup> Connell-Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 238.

<sup>318</sup> This college was Navajo Community College, now Diné College, in Tsaile, Arizona. For a full discussion of the role of tribal colleges, see Norman T. Oppelt, *The Tribally Controlled Indian Colleges: The Beginning of Self-Determination in American Indian Education* (Tsaile: Navajo Community College Press, 1990).

Whether the AIPC was ultimately successful in regaining a semblance of control over Pueblo education through SIPI, however, is rather unclear. Almost immediately, and in the context of similar protests across America in the 1970s, SIPI became a “hotbed of student discontent.”<sup>319</sup> Native educators were apparently not consulted on course curriculum and the BIA essentially controlled the direction of the college. Campus unrest culminated in 1975, when forty students from SIPI joined twenty-five members of AIM to occupy sections of the college in an attempt to assert Native control over the institution. Apparently indignant, and feeling challenged by an outside organization “speaking on behalf of the AIPC,” then chairman Delphin Lovato of Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo told AIM to “stay the hell out of here.”<sup>320</sup> The AIPC’s experience with SIPI was an early venture in establishing Pueblo influence over the education of its children, but the enterprise was by no means a success. Despite upheaval at SIPI, however, the council gained invaluable experience in planning with the BIA and preparing for further control of Pueblo education.

One of the cornerstones of the AIPC’s education committee policies during the 1960s and 1970s was its emphasis on the importance of higher education for Pueblo people. In 1969, the council took control of the BIA’s Pueblo scholarship program. Higher-education enrollment numbers subsequently “began to skyrocket.” By the end of 1974, around six hundred Pueblo students were receiving AIPC scholarships.<sup>321</sup> Once more, the AIPC was able to prize a degree of control away from the BIA and establish greater influence over the education of Pueblo children.

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<sup>319</sup> Sando, *Pueblo Indians*, 113.

<sup>320</sup> Thomas Martinez, “Indian Leader Scores AIM Role in Takeover,” *Albuquerque (N.Mex.) Journal*, 18 April 1975, 1.

<sup>321</sup> Joe Sando, *Pueblo Indians*, 114.

In 1975, recognizing the changing tide of Indian self-determination, Congress passed the American Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act. This act opened up to Native communities an array of new opportunities. The legislation enabled tribes to apply for federal funds to administer tribal programs on reservations. Significantly, the Self-Determination Act, along with other 1970s legislation for American Indians, marked the final end of termination and began to reinvigorate the tribal structures.<sup>322</sup> Taking advantage of the new legislation, the AIPC took further steps to control Pueblo education by successfully contracting the running of Albuquerque Indian School in 1977. Using Public Law 93-638 of the self-determination act, the AIPC became the “first tribal organization to take on direct responsibility and control of a Bureau [of Indian Affairs] school.”<sup>323</sup> And, in 1981, when the Albuquerque Indian School was eventually decommissioned, the AIPC moved the school to Santa Fe, New Mexico, and reestablished Santa Fe Indian School at the expense of the IAIA.<sup>324</sup>

By the early twenty-first century, the AIPC-administered SFIS was a model of success in New Mexico and admired across Indian Country. In 2005 the AIPC unveiled the school’s new \$50 million building complex to its seven hundred students. The graduation rate is nearly 100 percent and 80 percent of graduates go on to higher education. In 1976 Chairman Del Lovato placed Joseph Abeyta of Santa Clara Pueblo in

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<sup>322</sup> The significant federal legislation of the 1970s includes the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, 1975; the Indian Child Welfare Act, 1978; the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act, 1978; and the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, 1978.

<sup>323</sup> James Riding In, “The Contracting of Albuquerque Indian School,” *The Indian Historian* 11 (December 1978): 20; and “AIPC Contracts,” *New Mexico’s 19 Pueblo News*, August 1976.

<sup>324</sup> For a full history of SFIS see Hyer, *One House, One Voice, One Heart*; and Hyer, “Remembering Santa Fe Indian School.”

charge of the school. Abeyta continued to lead the school into the new millennium. In 2000, President William J. Clinton transferred the SFIS land to the AIPC, giving the council another area of sovereign, all-Pueblo land in an urban area.<sup>325</sup> The AIPC's struggles to influence Pueblo education were not always successful, but in the 1960s and 1970s the council gradually displaced the BIA as the chief administrator of Pueblo education and increased tribal control of the education of their children.

By 1971, Domingo Montoya had served the maximum term of six years allowed any AIPC chairman, and Benny Atencio (Santo Domingo) was elected as his replacement. In the mid 1970s, chairman Del Lovato reorganized the AIPC. The council had grown into "an enterprise with over two hundred employees and a budget of \$6 million."<sup>326</sup> So Lovato reorganized the council to focus on lobbying at the state level, to take advantage of its growing regional influence. The council then began publishing a newspaper and broadcasting a Pueblo radio station as part of the plans of its new communications committee.<sup>327</sup>

In the mid to late twentieth century, then, the AIPC acted as an inter-Pueblo vehicle that provided New Mexico's nineteen Pueblos with a vociferous voice during a tumultuous but occasionally optimistic period of time. Despite many setbacks, such as the ultimate passage of the 1968 Indian Bill of Rights, the Pueblos were able to reassert control over their childrens' education and extend their economic self-sufficiency through the AIPC. By mobilizing politically via the AIPC, inter-Pueblo unity protected elements

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<sup>325</sup> David Roybal, "Indian School and Its Leader Provide Hope," *Albuquerque (N.Mex.) Journal*, 2 October 2005.

<sup>326</sup> O'Brien, *American Indian Tribal Governments*, 179.

<sup>327</sup> See a fuller discussion of the AIPC's communications policies in Richard M. Wheelock, "Indian Self-Determination: Implications for Tribal Communication Policies," (Ph.D diss., University of New Mexico, 1995).

of Pueblo sovereignty and thus maintained a degree of continuity of tradition. The AIPC understood the Indian Civil Rights Act as an attack on the Pueblos' right to self-government within nineteen small communities in New Mexico. The AIPC then took full advantage of the changing federal commitment to tribes by transferring economic opportunities into institutions that helped the Pueblos increase their sovereign rights. Further, the AIPC became the first Indian institution to use the Self-determination Act to administer a school and thus begin controlling Pueblo education. The importance of Indians educating their own is noted by Della Warrior (Otoe-Missouria), who states that the "survival of our communities and of our respective cultures" depends on the "control of the education of our young people."<sup>328</sup>

"The Indian revival of the second half of the twentieth century," writes Wilkinson, "deserves to be recognized as a major episode in American history."<sup>329</sup> Native American leaders such as Vigil and Montoya helped the Pueblos to survive the menacing atmosphere of the mid-century and then flourish during the 1960s and 1970s. As demonstrated here, the movement for modern tribal sovereignty was not particularly eye-catching. The AIPC had few high profile moments on which to hinge their fight to increase their sovereignty. Instead, the AIPC relied on their constitution, which itself was based on decades of activism, as a practical guideline to articulate their plight and to change its course. Despite fighting in the political darkness, Native American institutions such as the AIPC achieved great success in the mid-to-late twentieth century in protecting tribal cultures and increasing their ability to negotiate for themselves. This success is

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<sup>328</sup> Della C. Warrior, "Conclusion: Education, Art, and Activism," in *Beyond Red Power*, Cobb and Fowler, 301.

<sup>329</sup> Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle*, xiv.

particularly remarkable considering how relatively few people the APC represented, on a national level. In 1911, the AIPC wrote, “We have organized into a federation of tribes and have had there [sic] meetings which have resulted in a great good to us all. We study our condition from every point of view and we believe we have inaugurated a new upward movement which all New Mexico, white and Indian, will feel.”<sup>330</sup> Some sixty years later, the AIPC could feel some satisfaction that their movement for sovereignty had, indeed, been felt across New Mexico.

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<sup>330</sup> U.S. Senate, *Survey of the Conditions of the Indians in the United States: Hearings*, 1931, part 19, p. 9997.

## CONCLUSION

Today, the AIPC continues to represent the nineteen Pueblos of New Mexico, and beyond. The organization has added considerably to its responsibilities to the Pueblo people, further widening its scope of operations. In April 2006, the AIPC's new, for-profit wing, The Indian Pueblos Federal Development Corporation, completed the construction of the Pueblo Center Business Complex on the old AIS land adjacent to the IPCC. In an ironic twist, the AIPC-owned building now hosts some Albuquerque offices of the BIA, reversing the historic roles of tenant and landlord.<sup>331</sup> The AIPC has also recently been mired in controversy over their decision to destroy the old buildings at Santa Fe Indian School in July 2008. Responding to critics who resented the decision to tear down such a historically rich structure, an SFIS spokesman said merely that the school was exercising its "sovereign authority."<sup>332</sup> And on 19 November 2009, the AIPC welcomed a new Pueblo into its organization: Ysleta del Sur Pueblo of El Paso, Texas. The people of Ysleta del Sur had previously left the northern Rio Grande Valley during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, when displaced Tiguas retreated south with the Spanish. By re-embracing the Ysleta de Sur, the AIPC was in many ways completing a political confederation that existed over three hundred and fifty years ago.

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<sup>331</sup> "Albuquerque Indian School Only a Memory," *News From Indian Country*, n.d. 2004; "Hundreds Gather at Former BIA Albuquerque Indian School Site for Lujan Indian Affairs Building Dedication, NIPTC Opening," U.S. Department of the Interior Press Release, 27 April 2006: [www.doi.gov/bia/press/06releases/LujanBldg&NIPTCOpeningMA.doc](http://www.doi.gov/bia/press/06releases/LujanBldg&NIPTCOpeningMA.doc), accessed February 2009.

<sup>332</sup> "Santa Fe Indian School Demolition Goes On, With Little Explanation," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 30 July 2008, 1.

“Today if you go to visit a tribal headquarters,” writes Della Warrior, “you will see Indian people running their own governments in control of nearly all the services these provide. But it was not always that way.”<sup>333</sup> When the AIPC began fighting against incursions onto their land in the 1910s, the very existence of a Pueblo land base was under threat and the Pueblos relied heavily on the Indian Office to maintain their economic and educational survival. Over the next sixty years, the AIPC fought a variety of battles on behalf of its Pueblo constituents in order to protect the continued sovereignty of the Pueblos to govern themselves. In the process, the AIPC began negotiating a place for the Pueblos to control aspects of their life. And while neither Pueblo nor American society remained static during this time, the Pueblo people increasingly charged the AIPC with participating actively in American political society, so that traditional elements of Pueblo life could continue.

The AIPC understood its many twentieth-century battles as threats to the historic sovereignty of the Pueblos. When planning on a course of action to approach land and water battles; threats to the validity of the AIPC; federally imposed policies including assimilation, the IRA, termination, and self-determination; through to economic development and educational independence, the AIPC’s first priority was protecting and extending the Pueblos’ right to govern themselves.

The story of the AIPC during this period is important because it helps us understand the wider narrative of the movement for tribal sovereignty in the twentieth century. Many histories have focused on the pan-Indian nature of Native American stories in the twentieth century. And while the AIPC is itself an inter-Pueblo

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<sup>333</sup> Warrior, “Conclusion,” in *Beyond Red Power*, Cobb and Fowler, 292



organization, the aims of the council were tribal in nature. The AIPC thus illustrates how Indian institutions at this time did not necessarily abandon their tribal structure, and the Pueblos first and foremost considered themselves tribal Indians. The AIPC's resistance to assimilation, integration, and termination, then, was an assertion of the Pueblos' right to represent themselves as sovereign, historic entities. Certainly the movement for tribal sovereignty that occurred throughout Indian Country had relied on inter-tribal cooperation. But the fact the AIPC was a part of this movement shows that inter-tribal cooperation did not mean surrendering a tribal identity.<sup>334</sup>

For the AIPC, their insistence on protecting their sovereign rights was based on their historic independence apart from American society. Yet AIPC leaders realized that in order to ensure the Pueblos could run their own affairs independently from the federal government, the AIPC had to negotiate for the Pueblos a space to function within America. Refusing to enter into dialogue with federal and state governments was simply not an option. Instead, mastering political negotiations and networks within Indian affairs and wider political circles proved the most effective use of AIPC energies. The AIPC often embraced non-Indian cooperation, as was the case with Collier. They also shunned those people and organizations they considered hostile to Pueblo sovereignty. Making these pragmatic choices within political networks increasingly allowed the AIPC to protect the Pueblos, until they were in a position to appropriate power once held by federally based institutions, and begin acting as a source of tribal power.

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<sup>334</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of inter-tribalism in the twentieth century, see Kent Blansett, "A Journey to Freedom: The Life of Richard Oakes, 1942–1972" (PhD diss., University of New Mexico, 2011).

Despite the importance of co-opting non-Indian interests in the twentieth century, the AIPC's biggest concern, and its greatest strength, was maintaining and strengthening the unity of the Pueblos themselves. Certainly the Pueblos have historically engaged in long-terms conflicts between one another. In the twentieth century, however, the need to work in unison to fend off the threats of modern America necessitated that the Pueblos work together to find practical solutions to problems common to all. Within this time frame, the Pueblos were not always united on every issue within and between Pueblos. Yet the continued existence of the AIPC demonstrates that the Pueblos realized they must hold a sentiment of unity in order to protect the culture they held most dearly. The twentieth century story of the AIPC illuminates the continued tribal functioning of the Pueblos, their pragmatic approach in negotiations with outsiders, and their long-term fight to protect their historic sovereignty.

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