

3.A.4.

International Indian Treaty Council

From “Decolonization, Liberation, and the International Community” (1977)

Founded in a 1974 gathering at the Standing Rock Reservation, the International Indigenous Treaty Council formed to provide a platform for Indigenous people to advocate for themselves within the United Nations. This article, first published in the *Treaty Council News*, identifies the significance of international work for the daily life of Indigenous people.

When the Treaty Council was founded at Standing Rock in June 1974 by five thousand Indian people from all over the continent, we did not know exactly what we were getting into or where it might lead us. Many of us thought that seeking recognition by the United Nations was our goal, but not knowing what that would [be] or even it was possible. Some have become disillusioned that we have not moved faster than we have. Most are just confused about what the process is and what it means to our day-to-day struggles and lives.

Decolonization, or a better term, liberation, is a slow, painstaking process. What the colonialists accomplished over the past four centuries cannot be overcome easily. We, the native peoples of the Americas, are in the weakest position, as the first colonized. We live, as Russell Means said at the Geneva Conference, in the belly of the monster. The tools of US colonialism toward Indians in the US are subtle and difficult to resist. The most advanced methods are used to pacify Indian people, at the same time that genocide continues.

The US uses newspapers, TV, and the educational system to convince people in America that the US is the most humane country in the world.

How then do we proceed? The main purpose of the Treaty Council organization and its work is to organize international support. To do this, it is of primary importance that we be unified, that we work through the organization, that we take the initiative to relate our work to the organization’s work. A large part of the process is one of learning—and teaching: learning the steps other liberation movements have taken and teaching the international community about our own situation, so that they may know how best to give us support and publicize our struggles.

When we began this work we saw it as a first stage of development to gain recognition of our sovereign nations in the world community. Perhaps we have underestimated the importance and value of our present work in overemphasizing the larger goal. As an NGO, an international organization, we relate to hundreds of other international organizations.

It is more important that we organize world opinion now than that we get recognition by the United Nations. The former colonies which have been able

to achieve liberation and get UN recognition have done so only after decades of all-out war. Some, like the Puerto Rican [independence] movement, are in about the same position as ourselves, though they began to approach the international community nearly twenty years ago.

These comments are not meant to discourage people in the continuing work to be done. Rather it is to bring a sober and serious recognition of the difficulties. We are face to face with the most powerful and organized colonial power that has ever existed and which still dominates the world economically. Though the US is losing power politically, it still has tremendous resources at its command to control much of the world. We must take great care in our work. We will make mistakes, but we can learn not to fall into the traps that the US sets or respond to the propaganda it creates to divide and destroy our movement. The US tries to use everything to its advantage. It has political and social scientists, biologists, ethnologists, legal experts, and every imaginable kind of technological data and equipment at its fingertips to inform it of the moves to take. We must, like other liberation movements, outsmart that mechanical brainpower, and we can. But we must think and plan very carefully and cautiously, and we must be organized, build the organization to carry on a consistent and unified mission in the world community.

We must make our position very clear to the world community, and we must inform ourselves of the international situation and the way in which the colonialists work if we are to resist, grow, and eventually triumph in the liberation of Indian people from bondage. Internally, among ourselves, in our own communities there are many issues to be discussed—our worldview, religions, social systems, how we relate outside our communities to other Indian people and to non-Indian people. In the international community we must speak with one voice, clearly, and not bring our internal differences to the world to resolve. Only we can do that. We must find those common grounds, and they are many, to present to the world as *Indian* people—one people. When we go to the world community we must speak for all Indian people, not for any one tribe or even many, but as one people with a common oppression. Only then will we be heard and will our support grow, so we may be freer to carry on our many and varied struggles throughout the hemisphere.

3.A.5.

National Resistance Committee

From “Resistance Statements” (1980)

In 1979, President Jimmy Carter renewed Selective Service registration for young men eighteen and over, and draft resistance gained renewed importance. Large numbers of people protested or refused to register, with reasons for opposition ranging from committed pacifism to critiques of US im-