



## We Shall Remain: Wounded Knee

**Narrator:** On a cold night in February, 1973, a caravan rolled through the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. The cars were packed with 200 Indians—men and women, local Oglala Lakota and members of the urban militant group, the American Indian Movement. They headed toward the hallowed ground of Wounded Knee, the site of the last massacre of the Indian Wars.

**Carter Camp, former AIM leader, Ponca tribe:** Going into Wounded Knee that night when it was dark and scary, we were clinging to our weapons tightly. There was a full moon and we knew that a battle was gonna come. I was sitting there thinking of some of these young men that are around me, am I committing them to die?

**Madonna Thunder Hawk, former AIM member, Two Kettle Lakota:** I was ready to do whatever it takes for change. I didn't care. I had children, and for them I figured I could make a stand here.

**Joseph Trimbach, former FBI agent:** They were up to no good. I mean why would they be traveling in a caravan with all these weapons and all these Molotov cocktails if they weren't going to engage in some kind of destructive activity?

**Narrator:** By the 1970s, Native people, once masters of the continent, had become invisible, consigned to the margins of American life. Their anger and frustration would explode in Wounded Knee.

**Russell Means, former AIM leader, Oglala Lakota tribe:** We were about to be obliterated culturally. Our spiritual way of life—our entire way of life was about to be stamped out and this was a rebirth of our dignity and self-pride.

**Narrator:** For the next 71 days, Indian protesters at Wounded Knee would hold off the federal government at gunpoint. Media from around the world would give the siege day-by-day coverage. And Native Americans from across the nation would come to Wounded Knee to be part of what they hoped would be a new beginning.

**Dennis Banks, former AIM leader, Ojibwa tribe:** The message that went out is that a band of Indians could take on this government. Tecumseh had his day and Geronimo, Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse. And we had ours.

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*Slate*: Day 1

**John Chancellor, anchor (archival)**: We have tonight one of the strangest stories to come along in a long time. A group of American Indians has taken over the town of Wounded Knee in South Dakota and they have been holding it for nearly a whole day. This afternoon the FBI said the Indians are in charge of the town.

**Agnes Gildersleeve, store owner, Wounded Knee resident (archival)**: We had just finished eating our dinner and um so I looked out the window and I said “Well, for heaven’s sake, who opened the store?” And they’re carrying things out, bringing things out by the carload. And I was floored, just floored.

**Narrator**: After stripping bare the Wounded Knee Trading Post, the village’s only store, the protestors took over a local church, holding the minister and other white residents hostage. They quickly blocked all roads leading into town.

**Joseph Trimbach, former FBI agent**: Tuesday, February 27th, I received a telephone call from some news outlet. I was told that the caravan forcibly took over the village, were holding hostages, and causing destruction there. So I immediately got my agents together, and I proceeded to the main entrance to Wounded Knee.

**Jim Robideau, former AIM member, Spirit Lake Nation**: We saw a Fed car coming. And then it—then it was a—it kind of came, drove just right up kinda, not too far off. So when they come on, they got out of their car. They went looking around and as soon as they put their glasses up, we opened up on ‘em. We let them know we are here, and uh that’s far enough.

**Joseph Trimbach, former FBI agent**: I called inside Wounded Knee and I said, “Look, let’s get together and have a meeting so we can stop the potential for bloodshed here. Let’s talk about this.” As I walked up to them I see all these rifles pointed at me and it uh gives you an uneasy feeling.

**Joseph Trimbach, former FBI agent (archival)**: Yes, sir. Joseph Trimbach with the FBI.

**Russell Means, former AIM leader, Oglala Lakota tribe**: Trimbach came to that roadblock. And you could tell he’d been up all night. And he was very irritable.

**Joseph Trimbach, former FBI agent (archival)**: We have law enforcement up here that’s armed, and we have hostages here....

**Joseph Trimbach, former FBI agent**: I have no idea what’s going to happen next. They came out and gave me this list of demands.

**Narrator**: The protesters called for a federal investigation of corruption on reservations in South Dakota, and immediate Senate hearings on broken treaties with Indian nations.

**Carter Camp, former AIM leader, Ponca tribe**: We were angry about losing our land. Losing our language. Being ripped off of our ability to live as Indian people. Our parents was telling us “You

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have to walk the white man road. The Indian ways are gonna be gone. Be a Christian, you know. Go to school and learn that English but don't learn your own language. We wanted to give our lives in such a way that would bring attention to what was happening in Indian country and we were pretty sure that we were gonna have to give our lives.

**Narrator:** The protesters demanded one change close to home. Through a translator, the Lakota chief Fools Crow called for the immediate ouster of Dick Wilson, the elected head of the tribal government there on Pine Ridge.

**Lakota elder (archival):** Wilson molest the Indians. Sometimes threatening them and so forth. Before the sunset, we want him out of office and there will be no trouble.

**Joseph Trimbach, former FBI agent:** My initial reaction was, "This is something way beyond my pay grade. Someone in Washington's gonna have to handle this."

**Narrator:** The standoff was unfolding on the Pine Ridge Reservation, home to the Oglala Lakota—not far from where chiefs like Red Cloud, Sitting Bull, and Crazy Horse had once led their people into battle.

**Robert Warrior, Osage, writer:** The Lakota, who Americans call the Sioux are iconic in American history and the American imagination. These are buffalo hunters who lived in teepees, who were at the battle with, uh, with General Custer. Nearly everything about Lakota life is firmly implanted in the way that Americans think about Indians.

**Narrator:** By 1973, the Lakota way of life on the plains was largely in the past. The Oglala Sioux Tribal government ran things on Pine Ridge, and where traditional chiefs had once sought consensus, elected Chairman Dick Wilson ruled with an iron hand.

**Steve Hendricks, writer:** He was like a Chicago ward boss from the 1930's, big flour sack of a guy, wore dark glasses inside and out, was fond of drinking and uh, brought all his friends and family and cronies into office with him, effect. Gave them jobs on the federal payroll.

**James Abourezk, former senator:** On the Pine Ridge Reservation, as with most reservations, the tribal chairman and the council have a great deal of power to spread money around, to spread food around, or to withhold it. Or to favor one part of the reservation over another, which is what was happening.

**Narrator:** Wilson favored mixed-race, assimilated Indians like himself, and slighted the traditional Sioux who spoke their language, practiced their religion, and remained loyal to the traditional Oglala chiefs.

**Reporter (archival):** Do you get any help from the tribal council?

**Indian woman (archival):** No. Dick Wilson's the president here. He's the worst one I think. He's the—I don't know he gets the most of everything.

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**Paul Chaat Smith, writer, Comanche Nation:** The federal census, I think every decade through the mid to end of the 20th Century, show Pine Ridge as the poorest jurisdiction in the United States. So there's poverty and then there's reservation poverty.

**Narrator:** When traditional Oglalas challenged corruption in tribal government, Dick Wilson responded with force.

**Regina Brave, Pine Ridge resident, Oglala Lakota tribe:** He had his own army, which intimidated, uh, the full-bloods mostly, the traditional people. His GOONs started beating up the people. And no charges were ever pressed. And if they did, it got thrown out of court. He controlled the whole reservation.

**Marvin Stoldt, former BIA police officer, Oglala Lakota tribe:** Some of the officers hated to arrest any of Dick's people in spite of the fact that they did break the law. He helped me a number of times, so I felt that I owed him a loyalty. And, uh, and so I didn't support everything he did, but irregardless of what he did, I still felt that loyalty.

**Dick Wilson (archival):** There's been a lot of accusations made here lately, and one in particular that upsets me is the fact that I am using a goon squad, so to speak. They are respectable and honest citizens of Pine Ridge.

**Goon 1 (archival):** We're all sharpshooters. Tell 'em the goon squad's comin'.

**Goon 2 (archival):** Let's go and get 'em!

**Narrator:** In late 1972, traditional Oglalas came together to push for Wilson's removal.

**Jim Robideau, former AIM member, Spirit Lake Nation:** We started a Civil Rights Commission, Oglala Sioux Civil Rights Commission, and from there they got the documentation of the corruption, of the misuse of funds. They got the evidence.

**Regina Brave, Pine Ridge resident, Oglala Lakota tribe:** And eventually the Civil Rights, they had a stack about an inch and a half thick of all the testimony and violations, civil rights violations. Nobody ever got charged.

**Narrator:** Prompted by the dissidents, the tribal council held impeachment hearings in February 1973. But Wilson intimidated witnesses, strong-armed council members, and managed to survive. Many Oglalas felt they had one last, desperate option.

**Woman in car (archival):** We've always been peaceful and pretty much mind our own business, making our living and raising our family, law-abiding. Well I believe that the time has come that we have to commit violence in order to be heard. I don't want to see anybody killed or anything, but the time is gonna come when violence might have to be committed in order to wake the people up.

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*\*Slate: Day 2*

**Narrator:** By the second day of the siege, the spectacle of armed Indians holding a town—and 11 hostages—had put the U.S. government on full alert.

**Fred Briggs, News Reporter (archival):** By this morning, the entire area was blocked off by police—there were roadblocks as far away as the Nebraska state line.

**Kent Frizzell, News Reporter (archival):** On the far rise is roadblock one. We have further roadblocks around the perimeter which encompasses approximately a 15 mile area.

**Joseph Trimbach, former FBI agent:** The director said “Tell Trimbach he can have anything he wants,” which was pretty neat because that was like a blank check. So I had agents go up to Rapid City and buy every rifle that they could find in the city because we needed them, like, right now. So they came down, and now we at least had rifles for protection instead of just side arms.

**Robert Warrior, writer, Osage Nation:** The military response is overwhelming. It involves plans using the US army to put down this rebellion. Clearly there are people within the Federal Government who see a need to take it to the limit.

**Dennis Banks, former AIM leader, Ojibwa tribe:** I was awakened. There was a deep rumbling, droning noise. And we were looking around and we were surrounded by armored personnel carriers, APCs.

**Russell Means, former AIM leader, Oglala Lakota tribe:** All of a sudden we saw these two fighter jets coming, and they circled around, and from the South they just came right at us. We thought it was over. That’s napalm. Dennis Banks pulled out his pistol and he started firin’, boom-boom-boom-boom. Then they were gone. You know, it was that proverbial, uh, last act of defiance, you know. Here’s that little mouse and here comes the big, huge eagle, and the little mouse is standing there like this.

**Narrator:** On the afternoon of the second day, South Dakota senators George McGovern and James Abourezk arrived. They hoped that if they could resolve the issue of the hostages, the crisis at Wounded Knee could be ended quickly.

**Russell Means, former AIM leader, Oglala Lakota tribe:** When they came in it was very news worthy. They came in with the news media. That’s how the networks got in. And they said, ‘We wanna see the hostages.’

**James Abourezk, former senator:** The agreement I’d had with Russell Means was that if we landed at Pine Ridge he would release the hostages.

**James Abourezk, former senator (archival):** I have an indication through an intermediary that they will release part of the....

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**James Abourezk, former senator:** And I said, “Well where are the hostages? You’re supposed to release them. You agreed to release them.” So they’re standing over there. So I went over and I said, uh, “You folks, we’ve rescued you. You can leave now.”

**James Abourezk, former senator (archival):** If you wanted to leave the Wounded Knee area could you go?

**Russell Means, former AIM leader, Oglala Lakota tribe:** And we’re sitting there on pins and needles.

**Carter Camp, former AIM leader, Ponca tribe (archival):** Ask Trimbach, We had people with him and said that they can leave!

**Russell Means, former AIM leader, Oglala Lakota tribe:** And Mrs. Gildersleeve, the matriarch: “We’re not hostages, we’re gonna remain here! It’s your fault that these Indians are here! Have you listened to them? We’re not leaving because you’ll kill them if we leave!”

**Narrator:** Once they realized no one was being held hostage, the Senators hoped to persuade the protesters to stand down by offering to convene hearings on their concerns—sometime in the future.

**Russell Means, former AIM leader, Oglala Lakota tribe (archival):** We knew that a put-off, a stalling tactic, would happen once there was no threat to any other lives other than Indian lives. You’re gonna walk away from here and say ‘after awhile,’ doksha-lo! You know. And we’re not going for doksha anymore! We’re not going for later anymore, Senator. Now I told you over the phone that I bet and everyone here and down there have bet with their lives.

**James Abourezk, former senator:** AIM decided that their strategy would be to confront the government. And try to win the public relations battle. Prior to that time being a mister nice guy didn’t really work with the government; they didn’t give a damn. So that’s the reason that AIM thought this was the way to do it.

**Narrator:** 250 armed U.S. personnel now surrounded the village of Wounded Knee.

**Dennis Banks, former AIM leader, Ojibwa tribe:** I felt good. This is why AIM was alive. This is why we came to be. Stand up against the FBI. Stand up against the U.S. marshals. Stand up against GOONs, you know, tribal police, and inside we’ve got freedom. Don’t let nobody in.

**Narrator:** Since its founding in 1968 the American Indian Movement had been divisive—its militant tactics controversial even among Native people. Created in Minneapolis by young urban Indians fed up with police harassment, the group had shown a knack for generating publicity. Members had seized high-profile symbols—Plymouth Rock, the Mayflower, Mt. Rushmore—and in November 1972, had occupied and vandalized the Washington headquarters of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Weeks later, in early 1973, AIM took its campaign into the reservation border towns of South Dakota.

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**James Abourezk, former senator:** In those days there was a tremendous amount of racism, uh, especially in the border towns around the reservations. I mean real racism where Indians are practically invisible.

**Madonna Thunder Hawk, former AIM member, Two Kettle Lakota:** There was towns you didn't drive through, you didn't go through. Especially women. You didn't walk down the street of any border town by yourself because you'd be accosted by any white man that felt like it.

**Narrator:** Just weeks before the occupation of Wounded Knee, a white man killed an Indian near Custer, South Dakota, 50 miles from Pine Ridge. When local officials charged him with manslaughter, not murder, 200 angry AIM protesters came to town.

**Russell Means, former AIM leader, Oglala Lakota tribe (archival):** You charge a white man, premeditated murder, you charge him with second-degree manslaughter! And we ain't going for it anymore. And I know this whole damn town is an armed camp.

**Dennis Banks, former AIM leader, Ojibwa tribe (archival):** Hey listen, White Man! I have had all the bullshit from your race as I can take!

**Narrator:** When police barred them from entering the courthouse, AIM members forced their way in.

**Man (archival):** Hey! Open them doors up!

**Jim Robideau, former AIM member, Spirit Lake Nation:** Just as we walked in through the door, then we were attacked by, uh, law enforcement. We were fighting and they come at me with a nightstick, so I blocked it and took it away and started using it on them.

**Edgar Bear Runner, activist, Oglala Lakota Tribe:** I was right on the steps, you know, and things were happening. We bloodied the guy; we took the helmet away. We bloodied him up. Then I ran across to help get gas in the filling station. We were filling up and making Molotov cocktails and busting the bottles on the building, and the fire started on the wall and everything.

**Narrator:** Protesters set the courthouse ablaze, and left Custer in shambles.

**Paul Chaat Smith, writer, Comanche Nation:** There was absolutely an element in AIM that considered itself a revolutionary organization who were comfortable being around guns, who absolutely loved the idea of AIM being outlaws - who just wanted to get it on.

**Narrator:** The confrontation in Custer caught the attention of the Oglala dissidents on Pine Ridge. Three weeks later, when their campaign to impeach Dick Wilson failed, they asked AIM for help.

**Robert Warrior, writer, Osage Nation:** Calling in AIM is attractive, but it's a roll of the dice. It's a roll of the dice because where AIM goes chaos often follows. So that when those traditional chiefs bring in AIM, they're doing this in full knowledge that as they go down the road they don't know exactly what's going to happen.

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**Narrator:** The Oglalas had exhausted all legal options. They believed that to put an end to Wilson's harassment and intimidation, they needed what AIM could offer.

**Robert Warrior, writer, Osage Nation:** AIM can bring bodies. They can bring people. They have the phone numbers of people at TV networks uh, who can get on airplanes and bring television cameras out. None of the established national Indian organizations can do what AIM does.

**Dennis Banks, former AIM leader, Ojibwa tribe:** The American Indian Movement's motto was 'anytime, anywhere, any place.' And that was the most important job that we could do, is to be where there was injustice and to confront it.

**Narrator:** At a crowded meeting at a community center, dissident Oglalas, five traditional chiefs, and AIM representatives finally arrived at a radical plan: together they would seize the town of Wounded Knee. They would force Dick Wilson from office, and, for the first time in nearly a century, draw national attention to Indian concerns.

**Russell Means, former AIM leader, Oglala Lakota tribe (archival):** The Oglala Nation is at a crossroads that, that can change the course of history for Indian people all across the nation. And I would like to ask that the chiefs listen very closely to what is being said here.

**Carter Camp, former AIM leader, Ponca tribe:** There was this hesitation. No one could make a decision, and no one would endorse us and then the women started to talk.

**Narrator:** Ellen Moves Camp, a founder of the Oglala Sioux Civil Rights Organization, argued in favor of occupying Wounded Knee.

**Ellen Moves Camp (archival):** This has been going on for a long time before we invited the American Indian Movement here. Because the people were scared and they are scared of Dick Wilson and all his men. I don't see why- all these people come from all over. I don't see why they can't take him and throw him out or throw him in jail or something – the way he's been terrorizing people here on the reservation. And I live in Pine Ridge at that gunpoint. But, I'm not scared of them anymore.

**Dennis Banks, former AIM leader, Ojibwa tribe:** And she was pushing. And she was pushing to spark something. And, oh, it did.

**Narrator:** Finally, Fools Crow, the oldest traditional chief present, spoke. "Go ahead and do it," he said. "Take your brothers from the American Indian Movement and go to Wounded Knee and make your stand there."



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*Slate*: Day 4

**Lou Davis, Reporter (archival)**: Today a teepee was set up in what is now called the Demilitarized Zone. Both sides are meeting there to negotiate an end to the takeover. But the progress is agonizingly slow.

**Robert Warrior, writer, Osage Nation**: There were negotiations going on almost always during the occupation, attempts on both sides to reach some sort of agreement.

**Narrator**: Government negotiators were uncompromising. They rejected demands to uphold treaty rights, and insisted that they were powerless to remove Dick Wilson, regardless of the charges against him, as he was chairman of a sovereign Indian Nation. Talks stalled completely when the protesters demanded to deal with the US Secretary of State.

**Reporter (archival)**: I understand they want Henry Kissinger out here. Do you think this is realistic? Do you think he'll come?

**Carter Camp, former AIM leader, Ponca tribe (archival)**: Why not? You know, I don't see why the North Vietnamese should take precedent over the American Indian people. You know, we've been fighting this war for 400 years. And if he can spare the time to go over there, he should be able to spare the time to come here.

**Reporter (archival)**: But it would be correct to describe the current situation as an impasse?

**Federal Agent (archival)**: If there's such a thing as an impasse on an impasse, than that's what we have.

**Narrator**: Officials from the departments of Justice and the Interior took the lead in negotiations. The attention of the White House was elsewhere—on the unfolding Watergate scandal.

**James Abourezk, former senator**: There's no question that the White House was distracted during this Wounded Knee siege. Although they sent midlevel officials out to run this siege operation, they didn't have their mind on it. Nixon had his mind on trying to survive the Watergate thing. Things might have turned out a lot differently had they not been distracted.

**Indian (archival)**: Turn that [expletive] light out!

**Narrator**: Within Wounded Knee, the days were relatively calm, while the nights exploded with gunfire.

**Indian (archival)**: Just take these unarmed men and tell 'em... Turn that [expletive] light out or I'll shoot the [expletive] out!!

**Jim Robideau, former AIM member, Spirit Lake Nation**: They were shooting machine gun fire at us, tracers coming at us at nighttime just like a war zone. We had some Vietnam vets with us, and they said, "Man, this is just like Vietnam."

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**Bill Zimmerman, pilot/activist:** There was actually a third force at Wounded Knee in addition to the Indian activists inside of Wounded Knee and the Federal Marshals and FBI agents surrounding Wounded Knee and that third force was the Goon Squad.

**Reporter (archival):** What is the mood among your people at this time?

**Dick Wilson (archival):** They're very ticked off.

**Reporter (archival):** What are they doing right now?

**Dick Wilson (archival):** Shining their guns up.

**Narrator:** As tribal chairman, Wilson wielded supreme authority on Pine Ridge. He erected his own roadblocks outside the federal perimeter. Even U.S. officials had to go through him.

**Goon (archival):** This is as far as your going.

**Wayne Colburn, US Marshall (archival):** Well, I want him to go in.

**Goon (archival):** Well, you'll have to get Wilson out here.

**Wayne Colburn, US Marshall (archival):** Well, you'll have to get him, because I'm taking them in.

**Goon (archival):** And, you're who?

**Wayne Colburn, US Marshall (archival):** I'm Wayne Colburn, Director of the US Marshall Service.

**Goon (archival):** Hmm. Well, what do you think? Should we let him in?

**Bill Zimmerman, pilot/activist:** These GOONS were armed and they frequently uh, got in between the federal lines and the Wounded Knee perimeter and shot—and in both directions—with the intent of provoking firefights because they were angry that the government didn't go in and take over Wounded Knee.

**Narrator:** Inside the village, the protestors had their own military operation, led by Indians trained by the government they now took up arms against.

**Ken Tiger, former AIM member, Seminole tribe:** There was a lot of people there that had been in Vietnam. And a lot of people had just been in the military. Some older people had come in and they had actually been in Korea. They knew how to give orders. They knew how to take orders. And they knew how to do things that they didn't have to be told twice.

**Madonna Thunder Hawk, former AIM member, Two Kettle Lakota:** I knew we were making history for our people. It didn't all happen in the 1800s. We're still fighting in the modern day. I mean that's how I felt! That, it was a continuation, and that's why I was not afraid. I was not afraid.

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**Narrator:** In the 19th century, the Lakota fought furiously to defend their territory against relentless American expansion. In 1868, embattled Lakota chiefs signed the Fort Laramie Treaty to protect more than 30 million acres of their land. But the United States soon reneged, and forced the Lakota onto small, desolate reservations.

**Carter Camp, former AIM leader, Ponca tribe:** Americans like to think that American Indian history is something in the past. I'm one generation removed from the genocide of my tribe. And every tribe in this country has a time of horror—I mean a time of absolute horror—when they were confronted by this invader. And some of it happened almost 500 years ago. But as they come across the plains, our time of horror came in the late 1800s. And we remember it very well.

**Narrator:** In the frigid winter of 1890, Chief Big Foot was leading a group of Lakota, mainly women and children, to shelter on the Pine Ridge reservation. On the morning of December 29th, they were attacked by the U.S. Army on the banks of Wounded Knee Creek.

**Charlotte Black Elk, Oglala historian, Oglala Lakota tribe:** My great grandmother is Katy War Bonnet. She was a survivor at Wounded Knee. When the shooting broke out, she and her sister, Ka-keek-sa-we, ran down into the ravine and made it to some plum bushes. And she could hear the firing and the firing and hollering and then finally it was quiet.

**Narrator:** More than 300 Lakota people lay dead. After remaining untouched in the ice and snow for three days, they were buried in a mass grave. The massacre would mark the brutal end of centuries of armed Indian resistance. For those who came nearly 100 years later, Wounded Knee was sacred land.

**Carter Camp, former AIM leader, Ponca tribe:** I walked over to a gully and I picked up some sage and I went and washed myself and I prayed to those ancestors that were there in that gully and I said “We’re back. We have returned, my relations. We-bla-huh.”

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*Slate*: Day 6

**Bill Wordham, reporter (archival)**: This is where the television crews await the hour-by-hour events in Wounded Knee. This privileged position is protected by the Indian Chiefs. Clearly the chiefs are anxious that this rebellion and its outcome receive as much publicity as possible.

**Bill Zimmerman, pilot/activist**: It would have been very simple for the federal forces to go into Wounded Knee and take over. There would have been some casualties, but probably the government would have considered them tolerable. What made it so interesting was that the Indians existed underneath a protective bubble of publicity and shame. Because everybody knew that this was the site of the last massacre of the Indian Wars and the last thing the government wanted to see, was a massacre on the same site.

**Narrator**: One week into the siege, all three television networks had stationed reporters in Wounded Knee. Polls estimated that more than 90% of Americans were following the crisis on the nightly news.

**Carter Camp, former AIM leader, Ponca tribe**: If they came and killed all of us, it would be recorded and it would be seen by the world where the 1890 massacre wasn't. And if they didn't, if they decided, you know, that that media was there so they don't want to murder all of us, well, then the media is there to tell our side of the story.

**Madonna Thunder Hawk, former AIM member, Two Kettle Lakota**: They wanted this stoic, you know, American Indian man with a gun. America's picture of "The Indian." We didn't care, as long as the word was getting out.

**Michael Her Many Horses, Oglala historian, Oglala Lakota tribe**: There was a lot of folks here, a lot of foreign press were here. And they made it out to be kind of a cowboy-Indian adventure, you know. More people wanted confrontation you know, that seemed to attract the viewers.

**Russell Means, former AIM leader, Oglala Lakota tribe (archival)**: You guys get so tight and start panicking and you get down on the press. Hell, we want 'em to film this bullshit! We can't let 'em fire first and open up with automatic weapons. We gotta get that filmed. We got .22's in our hand against APC's. So, don't be jumpin' on the press!

**Narrator**: The news out of South Dakota held Indians around the country spellbound. Some were ashamed by AIM's armed display of defiance, but many were inspired.

**Ken Tiger, former AIM member, Seminole tribe**: I left school and me and another guy left and we drove in his car from- we were in Central California and we drove up to Oakland and from Oakland we drove back to South Dakota. Up until '73, when it started, I was never involved in anything politically, dealing with, uh, either Native Americans or any other organization. I just felt like I should go up there and I did.

**Bill Wordham, reporter (archival)**: You all are not Oglala Sioux, I take it.

**Assorted voices (archival)**: I am, I'm not.

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**Indian Man #2 (archival):** Chippewa.

**Bill Wordham, reporter (archival):** You're Chippewa? Where are you from?

**Indian Man #2 (archival):** Minnesota.

**Bill Wordham, reporter (archival):** And what about you sir, where are you from?

**Indian Man #1 (archival):** Winnebago, Wisconsin.

**Woman #3 (archival):** Cheyenne, Oklahoma.

**Bill Wordham, reporter (archival):** And you're not necessarily all members of AIM, huh?

**Indian Man #1 (archival):** We didn't say that.

**Bill Wordham, reporter (archival):** Are you members of AIM?

**Indian Man #1 (archival):** We didn't say that either.

**Woman #1 (archival):** We're here to support our Indian people that are in Wounded Knee.

**Paul Chaat Smith, writer, Comanche Nation:** This generation of Indians in the late-60s, early 70s, who for the most part, they had been to boarding school or their parents had been to boarding school, which was explicitly about getting Indians off the reservations, to not be Indian, to not speak their language. For those Indian people, it was this moment in which you could see, on television, there was another way, there was another possibility. It was electrifying.

**Dennis Banks, former AIM leader, Ojibwa tribe:** There is one dark day in the lives of Indian children; the day when they are forcibly taken away from those who love and care for them, from those who speak their language. They are dragged, some screaming and weeping, others in silent terror, to a boarding school where they are to be remade into white kids.

**Narrator:** By the late 19th century, the Indian Wars were over. The United States seized on a ruthless strategy to assimilate Native children to a subordinate place in white-dominated society: government-run boarding schools.

**Dennis Banks, former AIM leader, Ojibwa tribe:** I was five years old. My mother was crying, and they were taking us off and my sister Audrey, who also, you know, was like a second mother to me and a very close friend as a sister and my brother, Mark, they were very sad. Within two hours or so after the buses filled up and we're down the road. This is the furthest I've ever been from my home in my life. And then of course it turns into evening and we arrive at this place.

**Walter Little Moon, Wounded Knee resident, Oglala Lokota tribe:** I ended up in a place where nothing... nothing... nothing made any sense at all. You know, it wasn't home. It wasn't uh—I didn't

# WE SHALL REMAIN

know anything about school. Nobody ever even told me anything about school. I didn't know what the education was. I remember that I wanted to go home. Period. I didn't want to be there. I just wanted to go home.

**Dennis Banks, former AIM leader, Ojibwa tribe:** We all had to strip down naked, and then they put the DDT on us. They line us up and they're cutting our hair. You have long hair, you have braids, and then that gets cut off. And I would say within a matter of an hour and a half we're standing there, all looking alike.

**Narrator:** Between the 1870s and the 1960s, over 100,000 Indian children were sent to one of the nearly 500 boarding schools scattered across the United States.

**Newsreel (archival):** Through the agencies of the government, they are being rapidly brought from their state of comparative savagery and barbarism to one of civilization.

**Children (archival):** *Singing "Ten Little Indians"*

**Dennis Banks, former AIM leader, Ojibwa tribe:** You couldn't sing any native songs or tribal songs. They just started using English, you could only, you could not use any other language. We'd whisper, 'Pass the pa-qua-shi-ga, pa-qua-shi-ga'—pass the bread over. It's like I had to be two people. I had to be Nowa Cumig, and I had to be Dennis Banks. Nowa Cumig is my real name, my Ojibwa name. Dennis Banks had to be very protective of Nowa Cumig. And so I learned who the presidents were. And I learned the math. I learned the social studies. I learned the English, and Nowa Cumig was still there.

**Walter Little Moon, Wounded Knee resident, Oglala Lokota tribe:** This is education that was promised us. That was guaranteed us through the treaties, but it wasn't. It was torture, brainwashing. They called us many different names. Savage. Dumb. I got beat for looking like an Indian, smelling like an Indian, even speaking Indian. Everything I did.

**Dennis Banks, former AIM leader, Ojibwa tribe:** Their de-Indianization program, it failed. But, the toll was devastating. It destroyed our family. It destroyed the relationship we had with our mother. I could never regain that friendship-loveship relationship that I had with my mother. It wasn't there anymore, and that's what, to this day, I keep thinking, you know, 'damn this government. What it did to me and what it did to thousands of other children across this country.'

# WE SHALL REMAIN

*Slate:* Day 8

**Ralph Erickson, Justice Department official (archival):** If the leaders at Wounded Knee are bent on violence, that is their concern, but I call upon them now to send the women and the children, both resident and non-resident out of Wounded Knee before darkness falls tomorrow.

**Regina Brave, Pine Ridge resident, Oglala Lakota tribe:** The United States government sent an ultimatum to the people in Wounded Knee that if they didn't leave on a certain day, that they were coming in, they would remove us by force.

**Dennis Banks, former AIM leader, Ojibwa tribe (archival):** We are going to reject any kind of conditions that pushes us out of the Wounded Knee area until all of the issues of the Oglala Sioux are met.

**Regina Brave, Pine Ridge resident, Oglala Lakota tribe:** I told Dennis, just burn it. At that time, we all started making preparations for making our last stand.

**Dennis Banks, former AIM leader, Ojibwa tribe:** We smudged everybody as they came up and painted them. When you go off to war if you get killed in battle then they'll, then that paint will signify that you went there with the blessings of the pipe and that you'll go to the spirit world with great honor.

**Regina Brave, Pine Ridge resident, Oglala Lakota tribe:** I had this little bitty bag, little bitty bag with little bitty fringes on it. I had one bullet in there. And I had a semi-automatic, and I only put one bullet in there. Somebody said, 'How come one bullet?' I said, 'I'm gonna wait, 'cause if I'm going, I'm gonna take somebody with me.'

**Dennis Banks, former AIM leader, Ojibwa tribe (archival):** The government just backed down on that 6 o'clock thing.

*Slate:* Day 10

**Narrator:** Two days after issuing the ultimatum, U.S. officials shifted tactics. Hoping the occupation would simply peter out, they removed roadblocks around Wounded Knee and persuaded Dick Wilson to remove his. Federal officials would keep the inflammatory tribal chairman on the sidelines for the rest of the occupation.

But when the roadblocks were lifted, new protesters and fresh supplies flooded in. On March 11th, revitalized occupation leaders made a startling announcement.

*Slate:* Day 13

**Russell Means, former AIM leader, Oglala Lakota tribe (archival):** The leadership of the Oglala Sioux here present in Wounded Knee, have declared Wounded Knee an independent country. From here further, if any spy from the United States of America is found within our borders, he will be dealt with as any spy in a time of war and be shot before a firing squad. (Cheering)

# WE SHALL REMAIN

**Narrator:** The battered hamlet of Wounded Knee was now the Independent Oglala Nation. While U.S. officials hurriedly put roadblocks back in place, the new nation asserted its sovereignty. A delegation led by Chief Fools Crow traveled to the United Nations to put the Oglalas' case before the world.

**Reporter (archival)** They arrived almost an hour late. They said taxi cab drivers just wouldn't stop to pick them up. Wearing a medal given to the tribe by the United States government after the signing of the treaty of 1868, 78-year-old chief Fools Crow, through an interpreter, explained why the group came to New York.

**Chief Fools Crow (archival):** It is our last effort in this trouble. I think we have exhausted all other means of a settlement of the trouble we have at Wounded Knee.

**Narrator:** The delegation failed to get official recognition at the U.N. and returned to Wounded Knee. There, inside the borders of the Independent Oglala Nation, the chiefs and medicine men introduced Lakota culture to the protesters, many of whom had come from cities and were disconnected from Indian traditions.

**Clyde Bellecourt, former AIM leader, White Earth Nation:** One of the first things that we did when we got into Wounded Knee is we built a purification lodge, an inipi, a sweat lodge. We were all required, everybody was required to go in there and purify themselves and to pray and ask their creator for help. Everything that we did was preceded by prayer and gathering, smoking of the sacred pipe and tobacco offerings, everything.

**Paul Chaat Smith, writer, Comanche Nation:** The Indian Movement was different than other political movements of the time because it defined itself as a spiritual movement. Their trajectory in a way mirrors what a lot of the Indian world was about, which was trying to connect with traditional knowledge, culture, religion.

**Steve Hendricks, writer:** One of the things that AIM tried to do was to return "Indian-ness" to all Indians. Whether folks lived in the city, on reservations, whether they spoke the language or didn't speak the language, if you were Indian, you could sort of return to the tribe.

**Narrator:** Many of the protesters had left reservations behind, along with thousands of other Indians, as part of the federal government's Indian relocation program of the 1950s and 60s.

**James Abourezk, former senator:** The government thought one way to solve the Indian problem was to relocate Indians from the reservation to the bigger cities. They couldn't kill the Indians anymore. That was out of fashion by the 50s. Uh- so, they decided to experiment, they did a lot of experimenting with the Indians. Relocation Program was one such experiment.

**Madonna Thunder Hawk, former AIM member, Two Kettle Lakota:** It was exciting, relocation. You know, you get to go to a big city and uh help you find a job. And uh, you get to see the rest of the country. Of course you weren't forced to go on relocation, but they made it look good: "Streets paved with gold." We ended up in Cleveland, Ohio.



# WE SHALL REMAIN

**Narrator:** Over 100,000 Indians were relocated in just 15 years. The government promised to help them find schools, housing, and employment. But for many, the promise rang hollow.

**Madonna Thunder Hawk, former AIM member, Two Kettle Lakota:** They put us in a real dumpy motel. And I was just sitting there thinking, ‘I wonder what’s going on at home?’ I could just see the rolling hills and the small, small town. They’re all just moving and walking and going real fast. And nobody’s stopping to look around. That’s why we stayed in our apartments or stayed in our rooms.

**Clyde Bellecourt, former AIM leader, White Earth Nation:** If you went and uh... applied for a job, you better not tell them you’re Indian. You better tell them you’re French or something, Italian or some other nationality or you wouldn’t get the job.

**Narrator:** By the 1970s, half of all Indians lived in cities, and more than 100 tribes had ceased to legally exist. But the Relocation Program produced an unanticipated result.

**LaNada Warjack, activist, Shoshone-Bannock tribes:** It pulled us all closer together. We could always spot each other in the city. So if we’d see an Indian on the street walking down Market Street, we’d look at each other, and we’d just smile and kind of shake our head, or, you know, in acknowledgement of each other. We didn’t care what tribe anyone was. We were Indian people. We were a race.

**Narrator:** The new pan-Indian identity led to the growth of activist groups around the country. The American Indian Movement was the most radical.

**John Trudell, former AIM leader, Santee Sioux tribe:** There were a lot of Native people that were afraid to stand up. Geronimo demonstrated, man! Crazy Horse demonstrated! And for us, the baby boom generation, circumstances were right. We could raise our voice.

**Russell Means, former AIM leader, Oglala Lakota tribe:** Do you see him? That little black spot out there?

**Narrator:** Over the course of the siege, government forces would pound the village with more than 500,000 rounds of ammunition. It was inevitable that there would be casualties.

**Indian man (archival):** Where’s that car? Where’s that car?

**US Marshall over radio (archival):** The Wounded Knee apparently has a wounded party...

**Webster Poor Bear, activist, Oglala Lakota tribe (archival):** It really don’t bug me that much. I really don’t mind getting shot. We are willing to sacrifice our lives for our children so they will not have to grow up in the society we grow up in today.

**Webster Poor Bear, activist, Oglala Lakota tribe:** When Milo and myself got hit, uh, we knew that no one was, no one was going to go through this completely unscathed. There was somebody that was going to get it again.

# WE SHALL REMAIN

**Narrator:** With the White House increasingly preoccupied with Watergate, the government had allowed the occupation of Wounded Knee to drag on. But at the end of March, the Justice Department sent a new negotiator who changed tactics.

**Slate:** Day 32

**Kent Frizzell, former Department of Justice official:** Shortly after I arrived, the lifestyle was somewhat changed of the occupants of Wounded Knee. Uh, the electricity was cut off, the water line was cut.

**Narrator:** Then Frizzell cut off the protesters' most vital lifeline: he ordered reporters to leave town.

**U.S. Marshall (archival):** Hey, until we get the word y'all get back in your cars okay? Just get back in the car til we get the word. Don't touch my hand, either. Just get back in the car 'til we get the word!

**Kent Frizzell, former Department of Justice official (archival):** I frankly think that the barring of the news media has had an effect on negotiations. A positive effect from the government's point of view because....

**Kent Frizzell, former Department of Justice official:** All of a sudden, those in Wounded Knee weren't seeing themselves on top of a pony waving an AK-47 at the American personnel on the ground.

**Narrator:** Just when the siege was officially kicked off the airwaves, it got renewed publicity from an unlikely source—Hollywood.

**Sacheen Little Feather (archival):** ...he very regretfully cannot accept this very generous award....

**Narrator:** Marlon Brando refused his Oscar for Best Actor in *The Godfather*, in protest of the negative portrayal of Indians in the movies.

**Sacheen Little Feather (archival):** Excuse me.

**Narrator:** Brando sent an Apache actress named Sacheen Little Feather to represent him at the awards ceremony, watched by millions. Later, backstage, she explained Brando's absence.

**Sacheen Little Feather (archival):** I have indicated in this statement that Marlon Brando is on his way to Wounded Knee. At that time, you'll have to take me for his word.

**Narrator:** Brando never made it to Wounded Knee, but a poll taken four days after the Oscars showed his sympathies were widely shared: most Americans sided with the protesters. Within a week, the two sides reached a deal.

# WE SHALL REMAIN

*Slate*: Day 38

**Reporter (archival)**: The siege of Wounded Knee, South Dakota ended today.

**Reporter (archival)**: Representatives of the Indians and US Interior Department officials formally signed the pact this afternoon inside the embattled village.

**Narrator**: Government officials promised to investigate corruption on Pine Ridge, and to immediately convene a White House meeting and Congressional hearings on treaty rights. For their part, the protesters agreed to lay down their arms.

**Carter Camp, former AIM leader, Ponca tribe**: You know, the first thing Indians do is break out a drum. You know so they started banging a drum and singing victory songs and everyone was hooping and cheering. That was a time when we really thought we won, and not only that, we thought that we had survived.

**Kent Frizzell, former Department of Justice official**: I talked to Chief Fools Crow, an elder and a full blood. I offered him a ride on my helicopter if he could get this young Indian lad to let me ride his pony. He thought it was a wonderful gesture and I did the same as I galloped off on that pony bareback.

**Narrator**: Chief Bad Cob, medicine man Leonard Crow Dog, and Russell Means rushed to Washington for a meeting at the White House. But the deal quickly collapsed over the critical detail of what was to happen first—the White House meeting or the disarming of the protesters.

**Kent Frizzell, former Department of Justice official**: The White House will not negotiate while guns are pointed at Federal officials in Wounded Knee! That is our position! I believe it offers the only hope for a peaceful solution. And I for one am prepared to stand by the agreement until hell freezes over!

**Russell Means, former AIM leader, Oglala Lakota tribe**: We give up our arms? Hello? That is so stupid, it's beyond belief that they would even- they would even say that to the press. What? These stupid Indians are gonna go to negotiate after they lay down their arms? What? Nobody does that in the entire world in history.

**Narrator**: After the agreement unraveled, Russell Means was arrested. He would spend the rest of the occupation in jail.

**Kent Frizzell, former Department of Justice official (archival)**: The fun and games so far as I'm concerned are over. A United States Marshal has been seriously wounded.

**Reporter (archival)**: Many of the some 300 persons in Wounded Knee are sick with bad colds. Doctors here report at least 15 persons here have pneumonia.

**Reporter (archival)**: The garbage is piling up. The food is running short. One meal a day is now the rule and that's not much of a meal.

# WE SHALL REMAIN

**Madonna Thunder Hawk, former AIM member, Two Kettle Lakota:** One time, one of the guys came in and he had a sack on his shoulders. And it was, I don't know, maybe a 50-pound bag of what they fed calves. So we just- that's what we ate. We made pancakes out of it and whatever. We just treated it like flour.

**Dennis Banks, former AIM leader, Ojibwa tribe (archival):** We had been rationing ourselves to one meal a day, one full meal a day. We are cutting that effective today, to one half meal a day.

**Bill Zimmerman, pilot/activist:** At the time, I was minding my own business in Boston, following the Wounded Knee story in the news like everybody else. One day, somebody walked into my office that I knew within the Boston anti-war movement. They had heard that I was a pilot and they needed somebody to go in there who could fly over the federal blockade and bring them some food.

**Dennis Banks, former AIM leader, Ojibwa tribe (archival):** If there's any plane comes by here today, we don't want anybody taking any- taking any pot-shots at them because they will be making a food drop to us today. (Cheering)

*Slate:* Day 50

**Bill Zimmerman, pilot/activist:** We operated out of Rapid City, South Dakota, at three o'clock in the morning. We were over Wounded Knee about 40 seconds, made the drop and we were gone. And 2,000 pounds of food landed in the village.

**Beau Little Sky, activist, Oglala Lakota tribe:** At first we thought we were bein' attacked. We thought they were gassing us, you know, because what it was, it was the flour exploding and creating, uh, a big cloud. You know, then all of a sudden, you know, we said, "Oh, hey, this is food," you know? So we're all out there gathering the food and the FBI opens up on us.

**Narrator:** The night before, a man named Frank Clearwater and his pregnant wife had arrived in the village. Clearwater said they had hitchhiked all the way from North Carolina.

**Jim Robideau, former AIM member, Spirit Lake Nation:** When he came in, he had his own gun. He had a kind of a big long-barreled shotgun. It looked like he came out of the hills, too, you know. He said he was Cherokee, you know. Yeah, he looked like one of those mountain men.

**Kevin McKiernan, journalist:** They had ready-made cigarettes, which was a very big deal because we were all smoking in those days. And and we were smoking cherry bark and things from the ground. And here was a ready-made cigarette. And so I remember Frank Clearwater lit it up and we passed it around in a circle like a form of communion.

**Narrator:** When bullets began to fly on the day of the food drop, Frank Clearwater took refuge with other protesters in a church. As they hugged the floor in an effort to stay out of harm's way, a bullet tore through the plasterboard wall and struck Clearwater in the head. He had been in Wounded Knee for less than 24 hours.

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**Carter Camp, former AIM leader, Ponca tribe:** A brother named Strawberry had his hand on the back of his head and was holding his skull... and I put my hand on his skull, tried to hold his brains in... and we took him, took him in the clinic and they couldn't save him.

**Narrator:** The first death intensified the government's determination to bring the siege to an end. In mid-April, a unit was put on alert at an Army base in Colorado. According to plans leaked to the press, the government was prepared to move into Wounded Knee with armored helicopters and tear gas.

**Kent Frizzell, former Department of Justice official:** The White House, the Department of Justice, were concerned with the confrontation going on all during the month of May into the summer. The college campuses, I was told, would be emptying out and all the adventure seekers would be infiltrating Wounded Knee. I was given a 10-day deadline.

**Narrator:** Officials were destabilizing the occupation using covert tactics.

**Kent Frizzell, former Department of Justice official (archival):** I have some information that I think that you'll be interested in. And it's based on a source that we have utilized in the past and has furnished us information in the past within Wounded Knee. Now very frankly, I cannot identify him for obvious purposes.

**Robert Warrior, writer, Osage Nation:** There were almost surely spies within Wounded Knee. The US government had infiltrated the American Indian Movement like it had infiltrated every political organization in the US during that time.

**Steve Hendricks, writer:** AIM knew that they had spies in their midst and that was part of the FBI's game. Not just to have the spies to get information on what AIM was doing, but to get AIM guessing as to who those spies were. To get them paranoid, and pointing fingers at one another.

**Dennis Banks, former AIM leader, Ojibwa tribe (archival):** What is that? What did you point at me?

**Robert Warrior, writer, Osage Nation:** One effect of that paranoia inside Wounded Knee is that there are purported cases of people who disappeared and who were thought to have been killed mainly because people didn't know who they were and who assumed that they were spies.

**Kent Frizzell, former Department of Justice official:** I got daily reports. I got informer reports. This information came to me through the tribal government and through the FBI.

**Narrator:** On April 26th, Wounded Knee sustained the heaviest barrage of gunfire since the start of the siege.

**Narrator:** When the shooting subsided, Buddy Lamont, a 31 year-old Oglala from Pine Ridge, came out to investigate. Lamont was a Vietnam veteran who'd been in Wounded Knee since the beginning.

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**Beau Little Sky, activist, Oglala Lakota tribe:** Everybody started getting up and goin' back to- about their normal routines, and Buddy came and got up and walked over to the trenches where we were at. A sniper at a good thousand yards hit him squarely in the heart, and he wasn't even aimin' the gun. He had his back turned, you know, and his, uh, weapon was on his shoulder, you know. To me, that was murder.

**Narrator:** Negotiators agreed to a ceasefire so that Lamont's family could bury him at Wounded Knee. On May 6th, Buddy Lamont was laid to rest next to the victims of the 1890 massacre.

**Dennis Banks, former AIM leader, Ojibwa tribe:** They asked me if I would, uh, say a prayer for him, which I did. It said, '2,000 people came and one remained.'

**Robert Warrior, writer, Osage Nation:** Buddy Lamont's death becomes, really the, the final blow to a lot of people inside Wounded Knee, especially the Oglalas from Pine Ridge. He was somebody that everybody knew, everybody knew his Mom and he was there for all the right reasons, fighting for something that he cared about. And for Buddy Lamont to die was more of a tragedy than most people could bear.

**Narrator:** Fools Crow and the other Oglala leaders had had enough. Despite AIM's objections, they insisted on bringing the occupation to an end.

**Narrator:** On May 8, 1973, after 71 days, the siege of Wounded Knee was over. In final talks with the government, AIM leaders agreed to disarm and submit to arrest. But many of the protesters were already making other plans.

**Jim Robideau, former AIM member, Spirit Lake Nation:** We asked the medicine man, we said we want to get out of here. We don't want to leave no weapons here. So, he says we'll have a ceremony tonight and we'll pray. So we prayed all night long.

**Richard Whitman, activist, Euchee and Pawnee tribes:** We sang the American Indian Movement song. An honor song. A memorial song.

**Dennis Banks, former AIM leader, Ojibwa tribe:** *Singing AIM song*

**Jim Robideau, former AIM member, Spirit Lake Nation:** So, it started getting cloudy and then that evening, it started raining. Wind. Rain. So they couldn't shoot the flares.

**Arlene Means, activist, Oglala Lakota tribe:** Lots of people walked out. The spirits had a lot to do with it. The one that brought us out was the owl. And every time he'd hoot in a direction and then we'd go that way and they did it right under the marshal's noses.

**Narrator:** As the protesters fled Wounded Knee, a triumphant Dick Wilson toured the remains of the town.

**Reporter (archival):** Dick, are you surprised by what you're seeing?

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**Dick Wilson (archival):** I expected this.

**Reporter (archival):** Why?

**Dick Wilson (archival):** They're hoodlums. Clowns. This is the way they live.

**Narrator:** Not only was Dick Wilson still firmly in charge, he would exact revenge on his opponents as the federal government looked the other way.

**Dick Wilson (archival):** The Oglalas don't like what happened and if the FBI don't get 'em, the Oglalas will. We have our own way of punishing people that way.

**Reporter (archival):** Shooting on the reservation?

**Dick Wilson (archival):** You said it. We'll take care of 'em.

**Steve Hendricks, writer:** After Wounded Knee was a period of time that the dissidents called 'The Reign of Terror.' It was a time when Dick Wilson truly unleashed his forces on the folks who had supported Wounded Knee.

**Narrator:** In the three years following the siege, two FBI agents and more than 60 AIM supporters were killed, giving Pine Ridge the highest per capita murder rate in the country. As the reservation spiraled into violence, the government went after AIM in the courts.

**Steve Hendricks, writer:** One thing that Wounded Knee gave the federal government an excuse to do was to try to litigate the American Indian Movement out of existence.

**James A. Haley, Congressman (archival):** You and your bunch of hoodlums take over down there, you destroy people's property....

**Narrator:** Within months, more than 500 indictments were brought against AIM members, most on minor charges that were later dismissed.

**Steve Hendricks, writer:** They succeeded in tying up AIM in court, and AIM at this point, with all those resources going into court, lost its way.

**Narrator:** AIM fell into disarray and violent infighting, and would never again have the impact it had in 1973. But the hopes inspired by the siege would echo in the decades to come. Despite the chaos that followed in its wake, Wounded Knee would prove to be a turning point in the history of Native people.

**Madonna Thunder Hawk, former AIM member, Two Kettle Lakota:** We needed to let the rest of the world know what was going on. Two states over, they had no idea about Indian people. We were just invisible. We were the ones that kicked the doors open on the Indian issue and let the world see.

# WE SHALL REMAIN

**Robert Warrior, writer, Osage Nation:** The good that came out of Wounded Knee was the entry into American Indian political life of people who had not been there before, who had not had a real voice. People learned they could tackle problems, create opportunities. And I think that coming out of Wounded Knee, people knew they could make a difference.

**Ken Tiger, former AIM member, Seminole tribe:** There was a lot of sense of ‘we’re important and we can do something within our own people, our own tribe, our own homes.’ I didn’t go back to what I was doing before. I felt maybe I can do something to help, not only my people, but other people, too.

**Narrator:** Native activism would spur the revitalization of Native cultures. In the years following the siege at Wounded Knee, Indians would create tribal schools and cultural institutions charged with preserving Indian traditions—and passing them on.

**Paul Chaat Smith, writer, Comanche Nation:** In the late 60s and early 70s, these were still emerging ideas about reconnecting with traditional culture, language, religion that was starting to happen. But this became the majority sentiment in the space of just a handful of years. It was really about identity. It was about affirming we’re still here, we want to be here, and we want to be here on our own terms.

**John Trudell, former AIM leader, Santee Sioux tribe:** Whatever went on in the 60s and 70s, it’s an extension, it’s a continuation. It was no different than what King Phillip was about, or Crazy Horse was about. And whatever means and manner we could, since the Europeans arrived here, we’ve had to fight for our survival.

**Charlotte Black Elk, Oglala historian, Oglala Lakota tribe:** What the 1973 occupation did was people started saying ‘Hey, we’re Indians. It’s okay to be Indian. We are Indian, we really should be who we are.’ The struggle that we have in the 21st Century is to remain ourselves. Every one of us has to do our part to remain Lakota, to remain Indian and to teach our children, to teach our grandchildren and make sure that there will be children sitting in sweat lodge, standing at the sun dance in a thousand years.