

The Declaration of Continuing Independence, June 1974

DECLARATION OF CONTINUING INDEPENDENCE

BY THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL INDIAN TREATY COUNCIL

AT STANDING ROCK INDIAN COUNTRY

JUNE 1974

A long time ago my father told me what his father told him. There was once a Lakota Holy man called Drinks Water, who visioned what was to be; and this was long before the coming of the Wasicus. He visioned that the four-legged were going back into the earth and that a strange race had woven a spider's web all around the Lakotas. And he said, "When this happens, you shall live in barren lands, and there beside those gray houses you shall starve." They say he went back to Mother Earth soon after he saw this vision and it was sorrow that killed him.

Black Elk, Oglala Sioux Holy Man

PREAMBLE

The United States of America has continually violated the independent Native Peoples of this continent by Executive action, Legislative fiat and Judicial decision. By its actions, the U.S. has denied all Native people their International Treaty rights, Treaty lands and basic human rights of freedom and sovereignty. This same U.S. Government, which fought to throw off the yoke of oppression and gain its own independence, has now reversed its role and become the oppressor of sovereign Native people.

Might does not make right. Sovereign people of varying cultures have the absolute right to live in harmony with Mother Earth so long as they do not infringe upon this same right of other peoples. The denial of this right to any sovereign people, such as the Native American Indian Nations, must be challenged by *truth* and *action*. World concern must focus on all colonial governments to the end that sovereign people everywhere shall live as they choose; in peace with dignity and freedom.

The International Indian Treaty Conference hereby adopts this Declaration of Continuing Independence of the Sovereign Native American Indian Nations. In the course of these human events, we call upon the people of the world to support this struggle for our sovereign rights and our treaty rights. We pledge our assistance to all other sovereign people who seek their own independence.

DECLARATION

The First International Treaty Council of the Western Hemisphere was formed on the land of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe on June 8-16, 1974. The delegates, meeting under the guidance of the Great Spirit, represented 97 Indian tribes and Nations from across North and South America.

We, the sovereign Native Peoples recognize that all lands belonging to the various Native Nations now situated within the boundaries of the U.S. are clearly defined by the sacred treaties solemnly entered into between the Native Nations and the government of the United States of America.

We, the sovereign Native Peoples, charge the United States of gross violations of our International Treaties. Two of the thousands of violations that can be cited are the “wrongfully taking” of the Black Hills from the Great Sioux Nation in 1877, this sacred land belonging to the Great Sioux Nation under the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. The second violation was the forced march of the Cherokee people from their ancestral lands in the state of Georgia to the then “Indian Territory” of Oklahoma after the Supreme Court of the United States ruled the Cherokee treaty rights inviolate. The treaty violation, known as the “Trail of Tears,” brought death to two-thirds of the Cherokee Nation during the forced march.

The Council further realizes that securing United States recognition of treaties signed with Native Nations requires a committed and unified struggle, using every available legal and political resource. Treaties between sovereign nations explicitly entail agreements with represent “the supreme law of the land” binding each party to an inviolate international relationship.

We acknowledge the historical fact that the struggle for Independence of the Peoples of our sacred Mother Earth have always been over sovereignty of land. These historical freedom efforts have always involved the highest human sacrifice.

We recognize that all Native Nations wish to avoid violence, but we also recognize that the United States government has always used force and violence to deny Native Nations basic human and treaty rights.

We adopt this Declaration of Continuing Independence, recognizing that struggle lies ahead – a struggle certain to be won – and that the human and treaty rights of all Native Nations will be honored. In this understanding the International Indian Treaty Council declares:

The United State Government in its Constitution, Article VI, recognizes treaties as part of the Supreme Law of the United States. We will peacefully pursue all legal and political avenues to demand United States recognition of its own Constitution in this regard, and thus to honor its own treaties with Native Nations.

We will seek the support of all world communities in the struggle for the continuing independence of Native Nations.

We the representatives of sovereign Native Nations united in forming a council to be known at the International Indian Treaty Council to implement these declarations.

The International Indian Treaty Council will establish offices in Washington, D.C. and New York City to approach the international forces necessary to obtain the recognition of our treaties. These offices will establish an initial system of communications among Native nations to disseminate information, getting a general consensus of concerning issues, developments and any legislative attempt affecting Native Nations by the United States of America.

The International Indian Treaty Council recognizes the sovereignty of all Native Nations and will stand in unity to support our Native and international brothers and sisters in their respective and collective struggles concerning international treaties and agreements violated by the United States and other governments.

All treaties between the Sovereign Native Nations and the United States Government must be interpreted according to the traditional and spiritual ways of the signatory Native Nations.

We declare our recognition of the Provisional Government of the Independent Oglala Nation, established by the Traditional Chiefs and Headmen under the provisions of the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty with the Great Sioux Nation at Wounded Knee, March 11, 1973.

We condemn the United States of America for its gross violation of the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty in militarily surrounding, killing and starving the citizens of the Independent Oglala Nation into exile.

We demand the United States of America recognize the sovereignty of the Independent Oglala Nation and immediately stop all present and future criminal prosecutions of sovereign Native Peoples. We call upon the conscionable nations of the world to join us in charging and prosecuting the United States of America for its genocidal practices against the sovereign Native Nations; most recently illustrated by Wounded Knee 1973 and the continued refusal to sign the United Nations 1948 Treaty on Genocide.

We reject all executive orders, legislative acts and judicial decisions of the United States related to Native Nations since 1871, when the United States unilaterally suspended treaty-making relations with the Native Nations. This includes, but is not limited to, the Major Crimes Act, the General Allotment Act, the Citizenship Act of 1924, the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, the Indian Claims Commission Act, Public Law 280 and the Termination Act. All treaties made between Native Nations and the United States made prior to 1871 shall be recognized without further need of interpretation.

We hereby ally ourselves with the colonized Puerto Rican People in their struggle for Independence from the same United States of America.

We recognize that there is only one color of Mankind in the world who are not represented in the United Nations; that is the indigenous Redman of the Western Hemisphere. We recognize this lack of representation in the United Nations comes from the genocidal policies of the colonial power of the United States.

The International Indian Treaty Council established by this conference is directed to make the application to the United Nations for recognition and membership of the sovereign Native Nations. We pledge our support to any similar application by an aboriginal people.

This conference directs the Treaty Council to open negotiations with the government of the United States through its Department of State. We seek these negotiations in order to establish diplomatic relations with the United States. When these diplomatic relations have been established, the first order of business shall be to deal with U.S. violations of treaties with Native Indian Nations, and violations of the rights of those Native Indian Nations who have refused to sign treaties with the United States.

We, the People of the International Indian Treaty Council, following the guidance of our elders through instructions from the Great Spirit, and out of respect for our sacred Mother Earth, all her children, and those yet unborn, offer our lives for our International Treaty Rights.

Principios Rectores de CITI

Al llevar a cabo la misión y objetivos de CITI, en todos los aspectos del trabajo y en las acciones de liderazgo, el personal y los representantes de CITI se guiarán por los siguientes principios:

1. CITI reflejará y apoyará los valores inherentes de las culturas indígenas tradicionales. Eso incluye el respeto por toda la vida como un ser sagrado y por nuestra Madre Tierra, la sabiduría de nuestros ancianos y el poder de nuestras enseñanzas tradicionales y prácticas espirituales.
2. CITI reconoce que si bien tenemos mucho en común, cada cultura indígena es única y cada lucha refleja diversas condiciones históricas, por lo cual, de acuerdo con los principios de libre determinación, CITI respeta el derecho de cada nación, comunidad y organización miembro a definir y procurar los objetivos y estrategias más idóneos para su situación, historia y cultura específica.
3. CITI respeta y procura la participación tanto de hombres como de mujeres en cada aspecto y nivel de las organizaciones.
4. CITI seguirá procurando los consejos de nuestros ancianos tradicionales y líderes espirituales, haciendo un esfuerzo para lograr una mayor participación y para desarrollar el liderazgo de la juventud indígena.
5. CITI cree que los Pueblos Indígenas deberán hablar y representarse a sí mismo ante la comunidad del mundo.
6. CITI cree en el consenso como un proceso para fortalecer la unidad en base a la comprensión mutua y compromiso compartido, por lo cual aplicará dicho proceso en sus procedimientos, siempre que sea posible.
7. CITI espera que sus representantes, personal y líderes demostrarán el nivel más alto de respeto y cortesía en sus interacciones entre sí, resolviendo cualquier dificultad o desacuerdo que pueda surgir de acuerdo con los procedimientos internos acordados.
8. CITI espera que su personal, los integrantes de su Junta Directiva y representantes actúen acorde con los principios antes mencionados y con el nivel más alto de responsabilidad, diplomacia y normas éticas, y que siempre priorizarán los intereses de CITI y de los Pueblos que éste representa en toda ocasión al tener la representación de CITI

Source: International Indian Treaty Council website, <http://www.iitc.org/about-iitc/the-declaration-of-continuing-independence-june-1974/>