

OJIBWAY WARRIORS' SOCIETY
in occupied Anicinabe Park
Kenora, Ontario
August 1974



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During the occupation of Anicinabe Park, Kenora, the following two interviews were conducted by a member of the Better Read Graphics Collective. The first interview is with Louis Cameron, one of the leaders of the occupation. The second is with an Ojibway warrior from Manitoba.

We hope these interviews provide some understanding of why the native people were forced to arm themselves in self-defense. Since the time of the interviews in early August, 1974, there has been another armed occupation, a blockade at Cache Creek, British Columbia. Following this, in order to mobilize nation-wide support to increase pressure on the federal government, a Native Peoples' Caravan was organized. The Caravan left from Vancouver, bound for the opening of Parliament on September 30th.

The Manifesto, reproduced at the end of the booklet, was read in front of the Parliament Buildings during the demonstration of 400 Indians and Metis marking the end of their long journey. But instead of meeting with the leaders of the Native Peoples' Caravan, the government responded by attacking the demonstrators, critically injuring an Indian woman. This was the first time the RCMP Riot Squad had ever been used, and its unprovoked brutality brought angry responses from native groups across Canada and charges of government racism from churches, unions and the press.

While the Cabinet still refused to meet with the Caravan, mounting pressure forced an historic concession: An agreement to grant the Native Indian Brotherhood direct access to the Cabinet because of the seriousness of the problems affecting native peoples. In the meantime the Caravan occupied a vacant government building on Victoria Island in the Ottawa River and established a Native Peoples' Embassy.

The government is continuing its policy of refusing to deal with militant Indian organizations while supporting conservative organizations which are more easily controlled through funding. It seems to be the government's hope that the rebelliousness of young native people will pass with time.

However, the militancy shown in the armed occupations is only the most visible part of a mass movement of native peoples. From British Columbia to Nova Scotia (where the Indians have laid claim to the entire province), Indians, Metis and Inuit are demanding respect for their hereditary and aboriginal rights and compensation for the destruction of their economies and communities.

Economic and social violence by government and business has impoverished native communities across the continent. Unless this violence ends and native peoples are allowed to regain their lands and rebuild self-reliant nations, they will have no choice but drastic measures in defense of their right to national survival.



This is the transcript of an interview with Louis Cameron, leader of the Ojibway Warriors' Society, held Thursday, August 8th, 1974, in occupied Anicinabe Park, Kenora, Ontario. Louis is a treaty Indian from the neighbouring White Dog Reserve.

Q: Louis, would you like to describe the living conditions of Indians in the area?

Louis: Right. A long time ago, going back hundreds of years, the people of this area, Lake of the Woods, trapped a lot of game, fished and hunted. They had their own thing, there was no outside control. They controlled the land and controlled their own society. A hundred years ago our people were free. They had plenty of game, plenty of fish, a lot of meat from hunting.

But through this area came the trappers of the Hudson's Bay Company, and the voyageurs and the British movements to the west coming in from the south going to the prairies. There was a connection along the river systems from the Great Lakes to the mountains up in Thunder Bay through there to the Lake of the Woods. And immigrants and other people started getting here. Our people took them and helped them out and played a large part in the whole development of this area.

They built houses and helped them set up their machinery — they were really participants in the production activity that was going on here. At that time there was still an abundance of fish and game and the land was still providing for our people at the same time as our people helped these Europeans. So for a period of time, for about fifty to a hundred years, the initial contact meant that our people benefitted economically.

Then came a larger group of people in the second phase — the invasion — when the troops are coming through here to fight with Riel and Crowfoot and at the same time they're

building the railroads. This is when they started taking the land away from the people.

Q: This is in the late 1800's?

Louis: This was in the late 1870's to early 1900's. And our people started realizing that this was a threat. Because it was with this second phase that they set up Indian Affairs and the RCMP moved in and they started making laws — the Indian Act and the signing of the treaties. You see they couldn't go through here to go to the west. The Ojibway people didn't sign treaties. And when the west was getting threatened with genocide, our people knew that this passage here was vital to the west. And I guess the European military people realized that too, so they surrounded our people and started putting them in different reservations. And then they started segregating them from the activities with which they had been previously involved. They segregated them in different reserves and started the band system — the Department of Indian Affairs band system and Indian Act.

Now we can look at it best by looking up at James Bay and Northern Québec where the people still have their land and still have control of the land and live off the land and they still fish and they still hunt. Now the reason why I'm saying this is that this is the kind of thing that they will encounter and the same kind of thing that we are going through now.

You see, they made us sign treaties under force of arms and under force of starvation while our people were isolated in these reservations. Missionaries and armies kept our people under lock and key in concentration camps. They used to travel from lake to lake and their religious ceremonies were held in one part of the Lake of the Woods — Sand Point. The vital points that were used for the movement of the people were restricted from the people by the army and used particularly to serve the interests of the businesses.

Now the second phase of the business that came in was the

tourist business. And our people were slowly getting pushed out — pushed into the reserves.

So what we have now is that our people have nothing. You know we have no jobs — 95 per cent of our people — of the 7,000 Indian people in Northwestern Ontario — have no jobs. 95 per cent of the people of the 23 reserves in the immediate area of Lake of the Woods. There is no base of economy on any of those reserves. Some of them have semi-economic outfits like sawmills, and tanning factories, sewing factories — things very preliminary. They don't really serve the practical needs of the people. You know this is 1974. We need something to thrive on — something we can depend on and our kids can grow on.

On this present economy we have no hopes. Our young people cannot stay on the reserves — they're pushed out, really starved out of there. Young people have to go out of the reservations for dental care, medical care, for education. They have to leave their communities and relatives — their mothers and fathers and grandmothers — their whole tribal structure that survived even after all this oppression.

After hundreds of years of oppression there is a thriving tribal structure of relations. So now they're starved out, they've got to go out. There's nothing on those reservations now and never was anything.

Q: The government says that it would like to integrate Indians into the economy. Do you think this policy is successful? Could it be successful?

Louis: No, not at this point. Now that they've broken up our families and are trying to break up our tribes through this method of putting nothing in one place and something in another. And this is no way for our people who haven't been exposed to technology in this area or any form of communications. . . . You know we haven't gone through the Industrial Revolution, we're still in the stage where people are still tribal and directly connected to the land and people

still have direct connections with each other.

The government is trying to put our people in an economy which separates the individual himself into two separate beings and separates groups, separates society and confuses and divides and controls. Our people, who are still directly connected to the land and still have direct communications with each other — very horizontal type of social relations — we cannot go into capitalist society and start ripping each other off.

The government does not understand this, particularly that this is not the only economic structure available in the world. The only time that the government, or state, would integrate Indian people into participation is to have them integrate socially. But you can't participate socially if you can't participate economically. And what the government is trying to do now — to integrate our people socially is impossible. First of all we've got to get economic integration, and then social things would develop.

Q: Do you think that many of the problems of native people, such as a high rate of mental illness, alcoholism, crime and suicide, come from trying to live schizophrenically in two societies?

Louis: Well, a lot of the violence is a result of the oppression from the Department of Indian Affairs, methods of division and control over Indian people. And the businessmen's co-operation with the town police and the federal police is deep down really isolating Indian people. And what I mean by businessmen is the people who plan the business and really profit from the economy of the area. All these things — with the education system, the churches — are pushing our people. You know, everybody knows, that people have to be free to express human freedom. They have to laugh, they have to yell and they have to be free to move around. But when you push people into a group like that a lot of that expression turns inside. It's what you call internal aggression.

And as a result of that Indians live a dangerous style of life. They fight each other, they drink a lot. And the tendency of suicide is higher.

This is the crime, the injustice that is being committed by the government and by the businesses around the country. They are taking one segment of society and pushing it violently inwards. Now we have to live that style of life which is detrimental to human beings. So we, the Ojibway Warriors' Society, believe the only way is to bring that internal aggression outwards. It must go out, we must break out through the same way we got in. We got in by violence, we must go out by confrontation.

This is what the activities of the Ojibway Warriors' Society is about.

Q: How do you feel that the violence or confrontation tactics you are using differ from the violence of the government?

Louis: First of all, our war is a just war, a people's war. We are fighting oppression, we are fighting profiteers, fighting private interests. The people are justified — they've been killed in the hundreds in the last ten years.

Q: How have they been killed?

Louis: As a result of the force of that whole oppression pushing that expression inwards on the Indian people. As a direct result of that they drown, die of fire — little kids and whole families die of fire, and they freeze, or sometimes they shoot each other — or we shoot each other, I should say. And when you have nothing on a reserve, the houses they live in are being given by Indian Affairs as a token. These houses are death traps, they burn people.

Sometimes they go home along the railroad tracks because they have no car and no money to buy a train ticket. They're drunk and they've got to walk a long way along the railroad

tracks. Sometimes they freeze and sometimes they get run over by a train.

The kind of legislation on the reserves is detrimental to the free government and responsible leadership of and for the people. The people have no laws that determine their own community. This is why our struggle is a just struggle.

Whether you call it violent or not, our struggle is progressive — it fights for our people. It fights for human rights. We are fighting for brothers and sisters we have lost, for land we have lost. We're fighting in unity with a lot of other people across the country who want the same things.

We want free government, we want self-determination, we want our own land back, our own nations, our own governments. The treaties have been signed and they've been violated — they just use them for manipulation purposes.

When we signed the treaties, the treaties were a different kind of law — an aboriginal law, a hereditary law. It's a moral law, a sacred law. They don't understand that. They think that they can take one government, and transfer it to another government, and therefore they can breach the contract because they have a transfer of leadership.

We've had constantly the same people. We've been Indian people, knowing this land a long time, and just because they're changing governments, just because they've got borders or different things they're making on the outside, just because maybe they kill each other on the outside, does not determine the birthright of these treaties.

So this violence, committed from the outside, from the foreigners, the invaders, is a crime and unjust, cruel and inhuman. They come and attack us here, like they attacked at Wounded Knee and attacked Alcatraz — and Alcatraz was taken over. The same kind of attack is made by the RCMP and OPP when they invade a reserve even when they are not asked. They go into a reserve as if they had a right, and they have no right to go on a reservation, no policeman has a right to go on the reservation.

Q: Many older Indians, besides the government, say that you should be trying legal means of change if you have a legitimate grievance. Have you tried legal methods before?

Louis: Legal methods have been used across the country — for example by the black people with the civil rights movement. We believe that we're standing on the same ground as Louis Riel — the same ground that Crowfoot was standing on and Chief Red Sky of Lake of the Woods. And what they are fighting for is what we are fighting for, the same thing, a human right. We want our kids to live longer, we want our older people to live longer. We have a death rate of 35 years old — that's how far the majority of our people go. We want their lives to continue — we respect life and it should continue to its fullest. We're standing on the same ground as our leaders of the past — we're standing on the same ground.

You cannot go into the whiteman's courts and fight for your rights. There you're standing with whitemen, and you're standing with foreigners — you're playing into their kind of game where they control everything. So this is not a civil right or a legal right. What we are fighting for when we take up arms is for a human right.

Q: Do you think that the legal struggles have been useless?

Louis: About the courts, now for example in this area there was an Indian woman who was raped, she was brutalized, kicked around and assaulted by three white people from this town and the town courts decided that these people be let off. So they got away with rape. And there is another case where the government permits private business — the Dryden Paper Mill — to flood two whole river systems in Northern Ontario, the Wabagoon River system and the English River system and the lakes that surround them. There's two communities, Whitedog Reservation and Grassy Narrows Reservation — I'm from Whitedog. They totally wiped out



Louis Cameron

our fishing rights.

We cannot fish any more because the fish is dangerous to eat with mercury pollution. It's fatal. We cannot drink the water from there because if we drink too much water over a period of five years you'd lose your eyesight, you'd lose a lot of physical and biological things, and you'd start to die because of the water.

Our people are not even permitted to take this to court. It's an outright crime against two communities. And we've been waiting a long time for this to take place in court. Whether provincial courts or federal courts or to bring it to international court. Where a thousand people's lives are jeopardized we cannot accept the courts' methods because they take a long, slow process and by the time they make a decision there will be a lot of our people who will have passed on from the poison they drink and eat.

So when we talk about the courts we look again at James Bay, the Nelson River project, the Frazer River. Where our people are fighting up in the Northwest Territories they are fighting for land claims; in Alberta they are trying to get their oil rights so that they can go back to their people. For a lot of these things all that they get through the court system is concessions.

You know the court will never decide on behalf of the Indian people of this country; it will not decide for the independence of the Indian people of this country. So the Warriors Society from its birth, does not recognize the Canadian law – the way it's set up now in relation to their economy – because that's where the laws come from.

We can't go into their courts and say: "We come here to say that you have killed our people, that you've raped our people because you're destroying our land, you're destroying our people – people's homes." They won't decide on behalf of Indian people – their decision is predetermined by their set of laws and they cannot understand our position when we speak of sovereignty and independence. So we cannot go through the Canadian court system for a particular case like

that. In this world maybe there is a place – the United Nations. In international law these kinds of settlements are taken. But immediately we have to fight for human rights. We have to regain the spirit that we've learned from the land – the direct connection with the land.

We have to continue to fight for our human rights in a very basic and practical struggle and not throw it into the courts. For example, you can see what the courts are doing in Wounded Knee. There's Indian leadership – great people, great men and women, who did something for their people. And first of all there's three hundred people who got murdered in Wounded Knee.

And these men, these great men, Russell Means and Dennis Banks, they're charged as criminals because they spoke out on behalf of their people. They spoke of freedom, they spoke of dignity and pride and life, and now they're considered as criminals by the courts of the United States of America. These people, they're not criminals, they're courageous Indian people, courageous human beings. And all Indian people have to confront the system. Like the United States government, the United States laws, we have to face the Canadian courts, we have to face the Canadian laws, we have to face the Canadian police.

We have to get into that human revolution which is right and go back to the land, and get back our free land. We've got to get our economy in a way that will serve our people equally.

We want our kids to be happy, we want our wives to be happy, we want our grandmothers, our grandfathers to be happy.

Q: Louis, you were one of the founders of the Ojibway Warriors Society. Could you talk about why you started the Warriors Society, what it stands for?

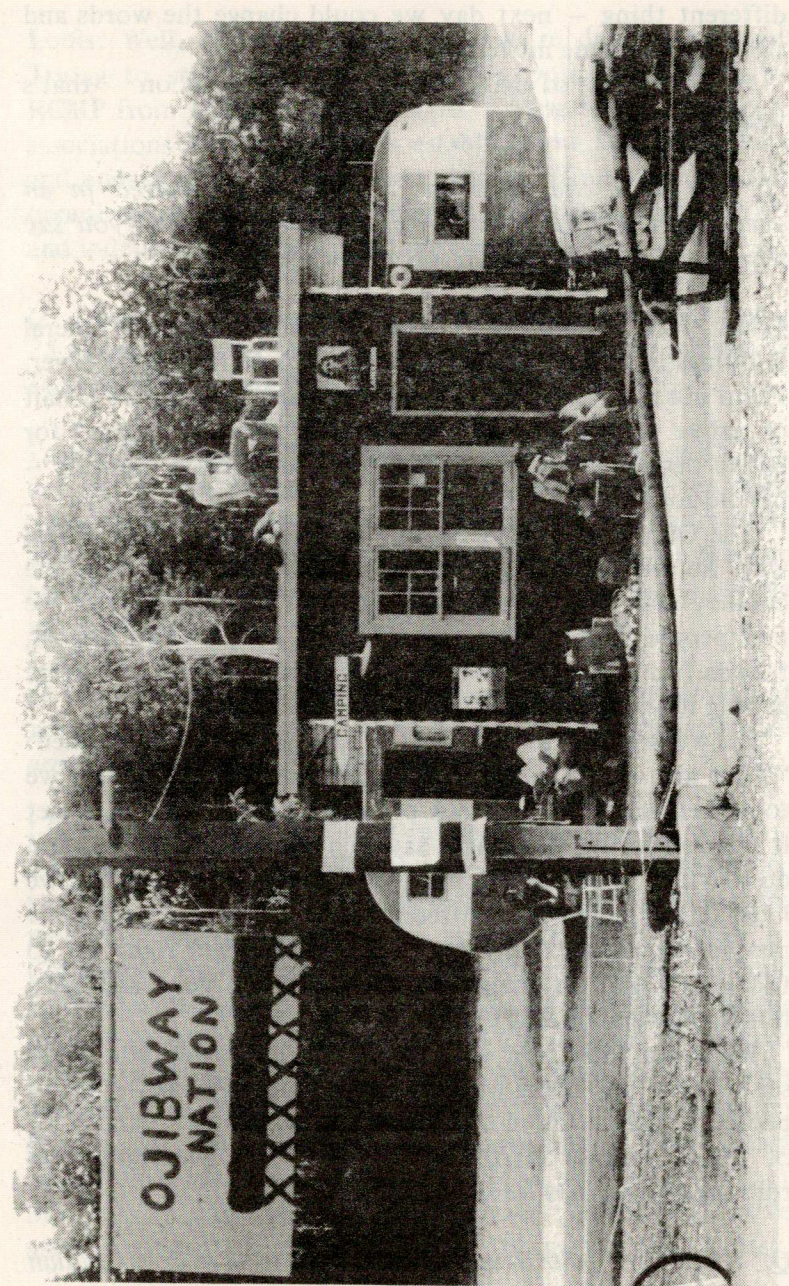
Louis: First of all why we started it. It began by itself; a lot of women and a lot of men started expressing that: "Where

else can we go?" We've tried to look for jobs, we've tried to go to school and get some education. Our chiefs have said that they've gone to Ottawa a hundred times. You know we've tried a lot of things and still look at our communities – the Indian communities are really sad – the Indian people are fighting each other. So these people have a lot of frustrations, a lot of anger and they are seeking justice. We looked around and the only organization that we saw that had the kind of feeling that served the people is the feeling that is connected with AIM, the American Indian Movement. We saw that some Indian people really had been putting their dreams, their hopes, their frustrations together – and it's a human movement.

In Kenora, in Northwestern Ontario they put us down if we say that we believe in AIM. So for the purpose of our own people here we titled the movement – which is the same movement as the American Indian Movement across the continent – in this area we just put a title on it of the Ojibway Warriors' Society. It serve the people, it puts the aims and aspirations of our people together, especially the feeling of being Indian people. It started from this.

Throughout the reservations and in town they're always asking us: "What organization are you from? You are people who are fighting the pigs all the time in the courts and on the streets at all hours, you come to the reservations and sing pow-wows, talk about freedom. What organization do you represent?" And finally, our people said we're the Ojibway Warriors' Society. So we called it by that name. Two years ago we did that.

Myself, it doesn't matter what title you put on it, it's the movement that's important. The Indian people are getting it on – they're realizing that they have some dreams. But a lot of their dreams have been false dreams, given to them by the propaganda of this country. We have to give up all that, because we cannot go that way. We must get it on in our own Indian way. So that's why we've organized our people into the Ojibway Warriors' Society. But tomorrow we'll call it a



different thing — next day we could change the words and still have the same movement.

It's a society of dedicated people getting it on — that's what it is.

Q: Last year the Warriors' Society was involved in an occupation of the Indian Affairs Building. Could you say why you did this and what was the result?

Louis: Well we went to Ottawa and took over the federal buildings but there was no genuine purpose for the takeover. From our point of view it didn't generate anything on behalf of native people. The objectives of the takeover weren't for native people. I think it was a series of private interests — people got misled.

The Ojibway Warriors' Society wanted to get it on in a real way. So we went to AIM conferences, we went across the country and met people from different political groups. We met people from different countries — people from Angola, friends from Algeria and South America — friends who were getting it on in their own country.

So we wanted to go back to the truth, and we asked: "What are we really doing for our own people?" When we took over Indian Affairs our primary purpose was just to get it on. Politically, you might say that we have to do this and do that and exhaust all things and then take that step. But we look at our people in a different way. When we consider our people it's right back from a thousand years right up to today. It's not just things that happened ten years ago but a human movement that we're concerned about.

When we took over Indian Affairs, right away you could see it come on. There were a lot of people sleeping — a lot of people running around asking "What's going on?" And a lot of Indian politics started coming out. But everybody was running around in different directions.

Q: What were your demands when you took over the Indian Affairs Building?

Louis: Well, the same things that we're demanding now. Trying to stop the pigs — the town police, the OPP, the RCMP from brutalizing our people. Trying to stop the hotel associations and the business establishment from exploiting and endangering the lives of our people. We asked for better organization, for better recognition of Indian people as free and independent. This is what we asked for.

Q: I was told that you had a peaceful occupation that lasted 25 hours. Can you tell me if any of your demands were met? Did the government make any promises it did keep?

Louis: No, those things continue. Even today, with this armed takeover of the land here, we know that only ten miles away some policeman over there is kicking our people around, some court is putting our people in jail for lifetime sentences because of the political conditions that our people are living under.

Q: Was the failure of the three governments to meet any of your demands from last year a factor in you deciding on an armed occupation this year?

Louis: Yes, it is. It's a direct result of the takeover. A lot of our own people were dissatisfied — nobody was listening to us. We met with the Attorney-General's representatives, we met the Solicitor-General, we met with the Chamber of Commerce trying to get a change for our people — some justice for our people. We talked and met in different places with these officials. We tried to meet Leo Dernier, John Reid — the local politicians here — and we asked to meet with Trudeau. The Prime Minister, he don't care what's going on in this part of the country, and he doesn't know what's going on in this part of the country. We've asked for cabinet ministers to come down to this part of the country, we've asked for Senators to come down to this part of the country,

and nobody will get involved because they know that they cannot do anything – it's our people that are being killed and they know it, our people are dying and they know it. They don't want to come down because they can't do anything. It's our responsibility and we have to take that responsibility. If anyone is going to do anything for our people we are going to do it – Indian people themselves will do it for Indian people.

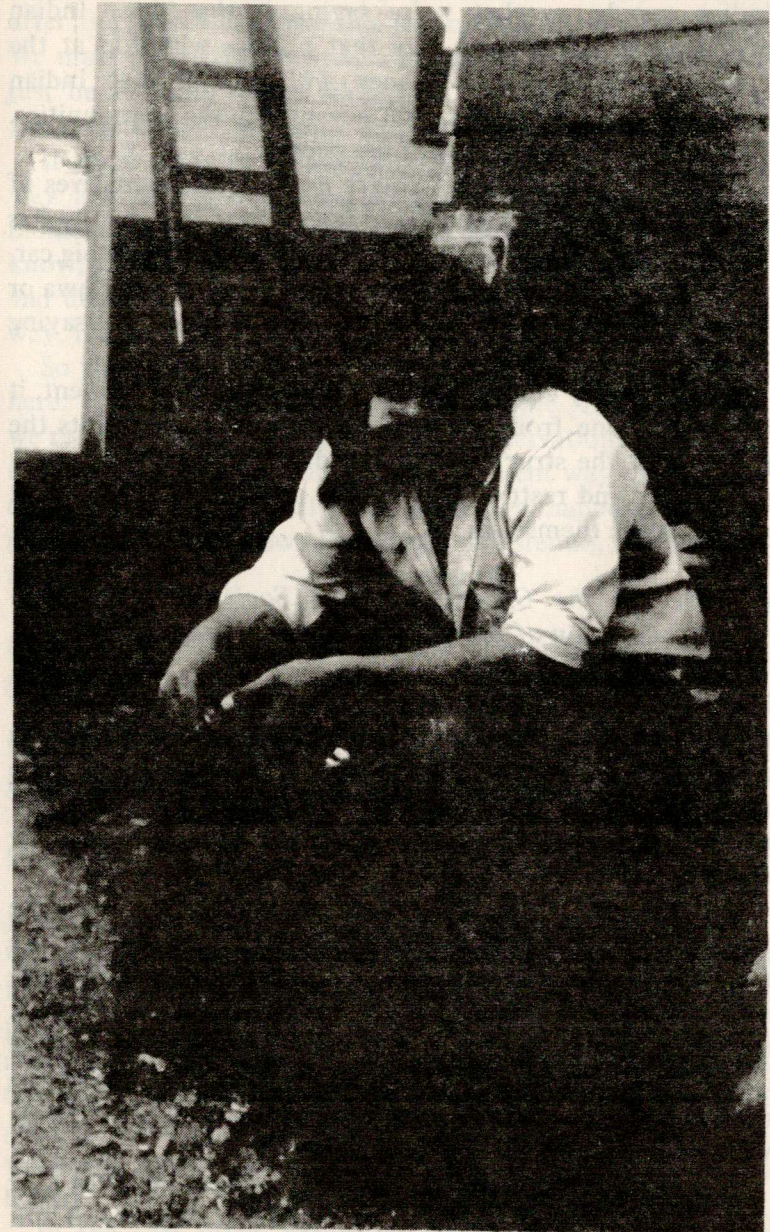
If life is to continue for Indian people, life must depend on free land. And our people must take guns and free that land. That's our right, our traditional right to serve our own people first of all. By law, and by administration of government we cannot go to Ottawa because they wouldn't even listen to us. You know, it is very critical and dangerous for the Canadian government to continue to try to talk people out of things, to try to negotiate people out of things and at the same time refusing to recognize them.

They are constantly giving Indian organizations hundreds of thousands of dollars, millions of dollars to Indian organizations across the country. But when it really comes down to it all the nations in Canada – the tribal nations – never benefit from any of that millions of dollars going to Indian organizations.

Q: Why don't they benefit from it? Do you think that the Indian organizations are corrupt? Are they not doing anything?

Louis: You can't say that they are corrupt or actively trying to keep the money for themselves. In the first place the Indian organizations, just like the government, don't know what they are doing, but they know that something is going on because they're getting lots of money. And they're doing something that seems to benefit them for their own private interest. So they don't like to see anything changed.

And what we're saying is that from our people's side – we call ourselves the little people, hundreds and thousands of



Warrior from Manitoba

Indian people — what we're saying is that those Indian organizations are making sure that politics will stop at the organizational level and money will stop at that Indian organizational level, and it will never reach the communities. They're not representatives of the people.

The people are saying: "You're not the representatives of us because you are making \$25,000 a year. My family has worked 50 years and where's my house, where's my big car, where do I get to take a jet to the Bahamas, or to Ottawa or Montreal or Vancouver?" Thousands of our people are saying that.

If there is any communication with another government, it has to be done from a local level that truly represents the people. But the structure of the Indian organizations is only prohibiting and restricting any kind of political involvement of the people themselves.

Q: Why did the Ojibway Warriors Society decide on an armed occupation of Anicinabe Park in Kenora?

Louis: This summer we planned a conference where all our people who were interested could come down to a meeting and sit down and talk about the critical problems we have and try to solve them some way. We planned a four day conference with ceremonies on behalf of our people and by our own people.

In these four days we called for discussion on the last take over of Indian Affairs. We talked about Wounded Knee, we talked about March 1965, in Kenora — we talked about these sorts of things, about serving our people and getting it on. At the same time we looked at the Kenora situation and how we can combat the kind of violence our people face and the reservation conditions. As well there were many other things we channelled into that four day conference.

There was pretty close to a thousand people there for four days. It's the first time we've ever had a conference of this nature in this part of the country. There were a lot of people

who discussed things seriously. And we came to the decision after the fourth day that this just cannot go on another day. We must do it right now. If we don't do anything now, we'll just be as guilty as the white man, we'll be just as guilty as the government if we don't do anything for our people.

If we're going to do anything, we might as well go all the way and not just monkey around in the courts. Let's not monkey around trying to ask for government funds. You know, let's do it — let's go all the way. We're fighting for life and death. It's a life and death struggle — we must do it that way, it's the only way we'll be free.

So this came from the suggestions of the people that were here. It was a decision made by the people. The action that we're getting from our people on the reservations now is that they're doing a lot of thinking in a different way. A new kind of thinking, a new kind of movement is happening on the reservations right now. Everybody is listening to the radio and the T.V.

Q: Do you think you have a lot of support among your people?

Louis: Well, I don't know how to say a lot — but we have a great amount of support from among our people.

Q: How is this shown?

Louis: They've come down here ever since we've been here. We've occupied this place for the last 16 days now, and there has been a steady group of 150 people here but a lot of people travel in and travel out. In sixteen days we've had about 2,000 people here already. They come and talk. We've had old people here and women and everybody. We have general meetings with them. A lot of people come on the weekends and sit down and talk. We also get phone calls and letters.

In the first place, before we came here we had support

from the people because we are from the people. We came from the reservations. I give my own support to this and I'm giving my brother's opinion from my reservation, my cousin's, my totem, my clan, my chief. This is where I come in. And the people here, they are from the reservations around here. It's not a separate thing that they support. The people are with us all the time. It's not a question of if we are supported or not in this part of the country. Our people have been with us since we started. In my lifetime this is the kind of work we've always done.

A lot of people have made drastic changes — they used to drink a lot and all of a sudden they quit. A lot of people just busting the bottle — people just making a complete changeover. This is the kind of support that I think is most important, rather than just saying: "Yeah, we're for you." And I think that the kind of support we want in the communities is these drastic changes. Individuals and whole families have stopped fighting each other and begun helping each other. That's the kind of support that is shown to us here.

Q: What kind of demands are you making?

Louis: I just came from negotiating — a preliminary talk on negotiations. We realize that we're going to have to make new demands. We're in a position now where our demands are changing constantly, particularly the local demands.

Let it be known that we seek to abolish the Indian Affairs Department, we seek to abolish the Indian Act, we demand that the brothers from Wounded Knee who face criminal charges have their charges dropped, we demand that police brutality in this area stop, we demand that the court judges get fired, that the racists employees of Indian Affairs in this area get fired and taken away, we are demanding that we get representation in municipal council because hundreds of our people come to town.

When a decision is made in Kenora, we want our people to

say yes or no in that decision. This is one of the primary demands that we are presenting to the town. That, for example, the land that we are sitting on now, that this land will forever belong to Indian people, to be used by Indian people for Indian people. In this area we've got to liberate some land so there will be no Indians Affairs and no police on it. This land we want to remain governed by our people. This is the Ojibway Nation. This is the first part of the Ojibway Nation that has been liberated in a long time. We've liberated this for our people here and for our people who have died.

We demand that this land forever be given to the Indian people. Originally this land belonged to our people and it must be returned. And when they won't give us this land back through the courts then we will take other means.

Q: Some of your demands are pretty far-reaching, like abolishing the Department of Indian Affairs. What do you think are the chances of winning any or all of your demands?

Louis: Well, first of all, you know that we have a list of demands that you would consider impossible — a list of demands that a lot of people wouldn't comprehend. We have to have a complete changeover in the Canadian government, we have to have a complete changeover in the Canadian law system and various departments of the federal and provincial governments — there has to be a lot of drastic changes in those establishments. These are the kinds of demands we are putting forward. . . .

If we are going to get killed here, I want to know that I've asked for everything, I want to die right. I'm not just going to ask for a piece of bread and then get shot without even getting it. When we jeopardize our lives here, and many of our people get shot, it's not impossible for us to ask for the ultimate changes in this country.

Q: Do you feel that you're gaining support? That you can actually force some concessions out of the federal, provincial and municipal governments?

Louis: Well, as I say, superficially they'll give us some concessions. There's no doubt about that. This country is based on negotiations – a lot of talk, a lot of manipulations and trickery. And they'll give handouts, this and that. And we'll get small demands out of this.

Q: What has been the effect of the occupation of the park on the white community?

Louis: I think that they realize that a lot of people out here don't like getting pushed around, that all the stories they've read about Indian people, that all the things they've learned in school and from the white businessmen concerning Indian people is wrong – I think that they have to start looking at things from our side, or forever be our enemies. I think we've given the white community of Kenora a choice on where they want to stand. A lot of those people aren't being permitted to stay in the middle – we're chasing them off the fence.

[Harvey Major on P.A.: "I have some news. Nixon's resigned!" (Cheers, car horns honking.) "And Jean Cretien's been fired!" (Applause, laughter, and more horns.)]

Q: Do you think the negotiations have been achieving very much?

Louis: All the provincial people, the federal people, the town people, have been saying that there are no negotiations without you putting down your guns first. We're saying, "No! We're not going to negotiate with anybody. We're going to keep our guns and if there's going to be any negotiating done it's going to be done on our terms, and under our

conditions. That is, we keep our guns, we keep our land.

But beside that there are these talks, these semi-negotiations. . . . We were negotiating, but all they've tried to do is disarm us, to try to take away our guns. We've agreed to two cease-fires already, and you know it hasn't done us any good. It's doing them a lot of good – they think they're getting a foot in the door, by trying to soften us up in these preliminary meetings. We're saying, 'we won't put down our guns,' and they're saying, 'We must put down our guns before we negotiate.'

They're unofficial, disguised negotiations, they don't decide anything. But they seem to decide everything on their own behalf, like, previously they seem to have decided that this place was already evacuated and that everybody was going to leave because of these preliminary talks. So these unofficial talks have some benefit for them, and if they had their chance they would tell the press again that everything is over.

This time at the meeting we said that the press would be closed off, because we don't want them to use that tactic again. . . .

They're threatening us with these preliminary talks. They say that there's going to be a public uprising, that the whole town is going to come marching over here with guns, that the whole police force is going to come over here, that law and order is going to come here and raid and storm us, that they have no choice, that it's out of their control.

Q: Under what conditions will you lay down your guns?

Louis: I don't think that this is a possibility at all. Hopefully the conditions will be that from now on Indian people will be armed no matter where they are.

Q: Would you lay down your guns if the police layed down their guns?

Louis: (Laughs) All the police in Canada and the army would have to be disarmed before we disarmed too. It's not just to ask Indian people at this point in time, at this stage, to put down their guns. It's very unjust because it's all they have left.

Q: Are you asking white people for support? What type of support would you like from other groups?

Louis: Already a lot of non-Indian organizations have phoned us up to give their whole-hearted support. We've appreciated that so far and it's materialized in action being taken with the town council and government. This is very positive. We've seen one demonstration put up in Toronto by non-Indian people. This is appreciated by all Indians across the country.

We know that Indian people must unite with other organizations across the country with the same theories, the same philosophies and the same objectives of Indian people. I know that the Indian people are playing a leading role in establishing the change that is necessary to benefit a lot of people. The kind of support now has to be a little bit more support. We're asking that white people mobilize a little more and direct their protests towards the federal government to advocate intervention by the federal government into this armed takeover.

Q: One of the Globe and Mail reporters who was here called you a thug. All you were interested in was playing with guns and with a violent shootout. Do you want a shootout? If there is violence, where do you think it will come from?

Louis: All this time we have guns for the purpose of protecting our people, from the vigilantes and from the police.

Q: Have there been any shots fired at you?

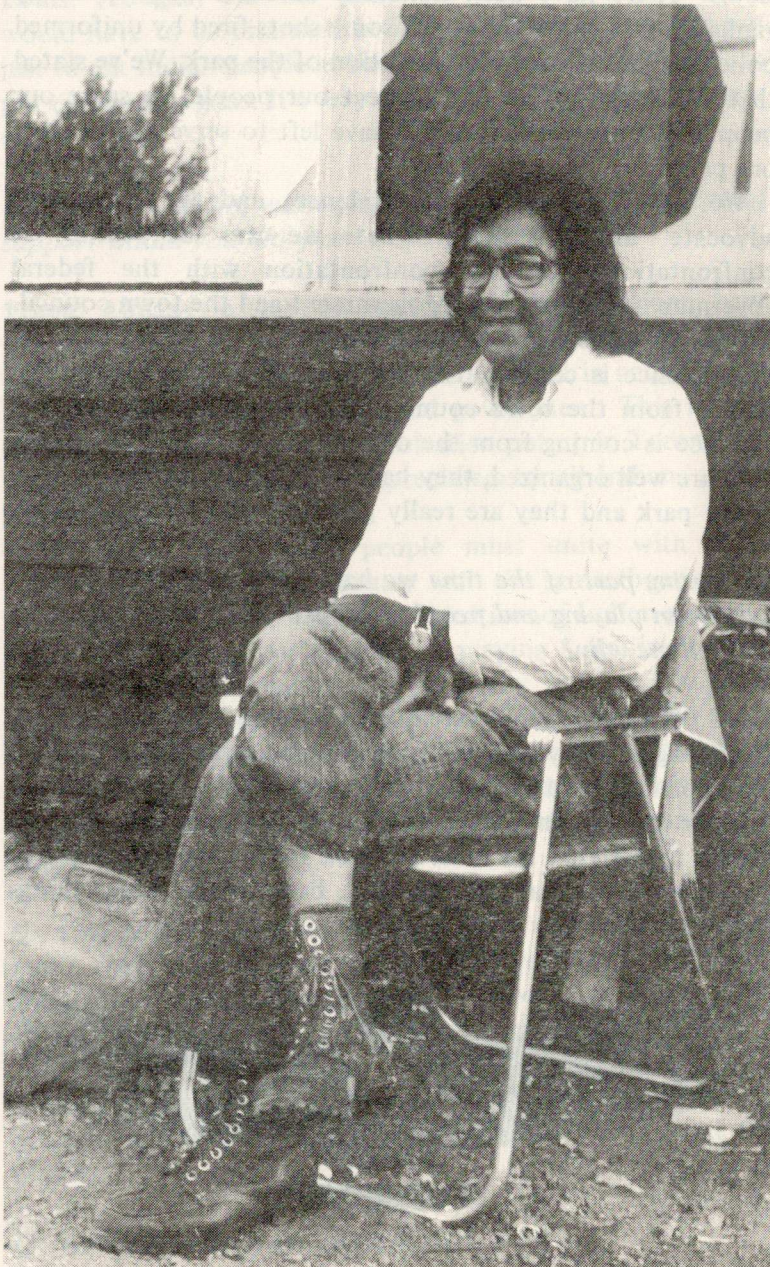
Louis: There have been hundreds of shots fired at us by vigilantes and there have been some shots fired by uniformed police officers firing in the direction of the park. We've stated that we took up guns to protect our people, to serve our people. It's the only tool we have left to serve and protect our people.

We didn't advocate any violence, and we never will advocate any violence. What we are advocating is confrontation — direct confrontation with the federal government, the provincial government and the town council. All along we've been willing to negotiate in good faith. All the violence is coming from the outside — threats from the police, from the town council, from the vigilantes. All that violence is coming from the outside — not here. The people here are well organized, they have their own government here in the park and they are really getting it on as a community.

Q: During part of the time we have been talking, the drums have been playing and people singing in the background. Can you tell me why?

Louis: We have sacred ceremonies here all the time. We have sweatlodges, every sunrise there is a pipe ceremony where we burn tobacco, and in the evening we have the drums. Part of it is for having fun and part of it is for being serious. It's one of the things that we must go back to. We must go back to our own people, back to our land, back to the sacred things that we believe in.





Harvey Major, American Indian Movement representative

The following interview was made in the park on August 7th, 1974, with a young Ojibway. He works in a summer camp for Indian children in Manitoba. He quit his job when he heard about the occupation and came down with co-workers to join the Ojibway Warriors in the park.

Q: Why did you come down to join the occupation?

Warrior: Well this park used to belong to Indians but was illegally sold to the town of Kenora in the 1950's. Since then it's been used as a recreation park. We're trying to get it back as one of the first things. There will be more happening across Canada. I guess it's part of being a believer in your ancestors.

Q: What do you mean by believing in your ancestors? What does being an Indian mean to you?

Warrior: What counts is not being a militant – that doesn't count – you've got to be in the spirit of the land and the creator.

Q: Do you think that Indian people then see the land as being very important.

Warrior: Yeah, it's like in James Bay. You've heard of James Bay, eh? The big American companies are trying to flood out six thousand square miles of land and are trying to move the people out of there. But the people live by that land – live for their land. They use the animals for furs and food. They want to flood the land so that they can make a dam or something, to make more power and electricity that they can use for themselves. And they're going to put the Indians someplace else.

Q: What do you think of white man's society?

Warrior: Ah, it's screwed up. They fight each other too much.

Q: How will things be different in the new Indian society?

Warrior: We'll be the true owners of the land. We'll build our own schools and communities.

Q: Do you think that the lives of Indians are getting a lot worse or getting a lot better?

Warrior: That's why this is happening – because Kenora has the highest death rate annually – people die so much. This is the worst place for native people. Mysterious deaths, alcohol poisoning and so on.

Q: Why do you think there is such a high rate of alcohol poisoning among Indians?

Warrior: Poverty, I guess. People get bored and they can't do anything exciting – they're just stuck on the reservations. So they come downtown to drink. And white people are prejudiced around Kenora – they don't like Indian people.

Q: What's housing like for Indians?

Warrior: It's terrible. Some houses you see that Indians live in should be condemned, not to be rented out to anyone else. Most houses that are condemned or look like they should be condemned you see Indians living in. Very seldom do you see white guys living in houses like that.

Q: Why do Indian people live in them?

Warrior: They have no other choice. The government looks for their houses for them and tells them that's the house they have to live in. They have to live there or they don't live in

anything.

Q: They can't afford other houses?

Warrior: Well, is you're on welfare you can't afford it.

Q: You aren't working now, eh?

Warrior: No.

Q: Why?

Warrior: You have to have a good education for the jobs.

Q: What education do you have?

Warrior: Well, I got a grade 10 education. I dropped out of school. Well the school was good back in Alberta – I used to live there – but when I got back to Manitoba it was all vocational and special classes so I quit when I was 16.

Q: You didn't like the school?

Warrior: No. The work was too easy. You kept doing the same thing over and over.

Q: Do you think there's much racism in Manitoba.

Warrior: If you stay in the right part of town it's O.K. You know everybody and go round with them.

Q: Why is it that all Indians aren't out making a lot of money?

Warrior: If you want a good job and want to make a lot of money most times you have to go way up north. Then you have to worry about your family while you're up there.

People don't feel right leaving their family behind them to go up north.

Q: Why do you think an armed occupation is necessary?

Warrior: That's the only way. People listen now, with the papers. There's got to be action. People get tired of listening to the government with its negotiations and signing papers and treaties.

Q: Do you think that the legal way goes too slowly? Why have you decided to push things a little faster by an armed action that could mean that a lot of people get hurt?

Warrior: It's not only us that we worry about. We don't look at ourselves only, we look at the rest of the people in North America — the Indians. We have to look at them first before we look at ourselves. Our children will be born and our grandchildren will be born — and they'll have a better world to live in.

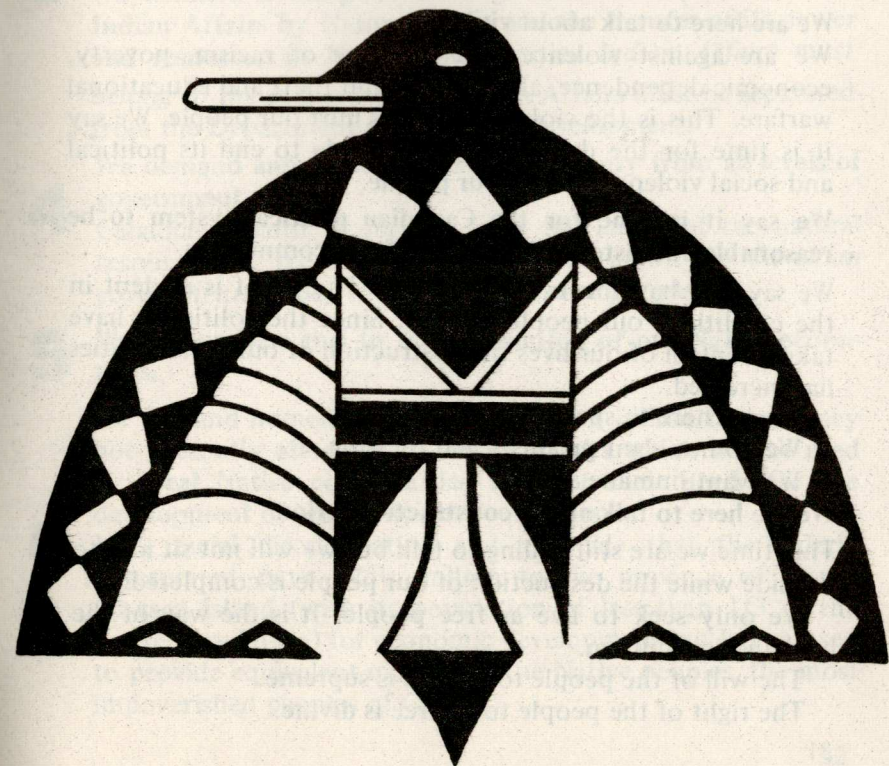


MANIFESTO



**To the people of Canada and
the Government of Canada**

From the Native Peoples' Caravan



We the Native Peoples have banded together to come to Ottawa seeking justice.

We the Native Peoples are here to talk about justice. We are here to talk about equality and human rights. We are here to talk about the right of all people to live as free people.

For many years we have received promises instead of human rights. Promises instead of justice. We are here to say the people cannot live on promises.

Our people lived in freedom and harmony with our mother earth thousands of years before the coming of the Europeans and their values. Our people had strong families, our people had education, our people had control of their lives, our people had the religion of giving and respect for all of our mother earth's creations.

Today our people exist in the midst of the Canadian extension of European competitive values. Today our people have alcoholism. Today our people have no education. Today our people have no work. Today our people have no housing. Today our people have no respect.

We are here to talk about violence.

We are against violence. The violence of racism, poverty, economic dependence, alcoholism, land theft and educational warfare. This is the violence that has hurt our people. We say it is time for the democracy of Canada to end its political and social violence against our people.

We say it is time for the Canadian political system to be reasonable and listen to the voice of our community.

We say you have been unreasonable. The proof is evident in the conditions our people exist in. Since the politicians have taken control of our lives the destruction of our communities has increased.

We are here to speak of solutions.

We do not want promises and rhetoric.

We want humane action.

We are here to talk about constructive action.

This time we are still willing to talk but we will not sit idly to the side while the destruction of our people is completed.

We only seek to live as free people. It is the way of the land and its children.

The will of the people to be free is supreme.

The right of the people to be free is divine.

The demands of the Native Peoples' Caravan

1 The hereditary and treaty rights of all Native People's in Canada, including Indian, Metis, Non-Status and Inuit, must be recognized and respected in the constitution of Canada.

It is the continuing violation of our hereditary rights that has resulted in the destruction of the self-reliance of the Native peoples. We are no longer content to be the most impoverished peoples of Canada.

2 We demand the repeal of the present Indian Act and the creation by Native People of new legislation recognizing our right to self-determination and sovereignty over our lands.

The Department of Indian Affairs operates to serve business and government interests – not the interests of the Indian people.

3 We demand a complete investigation of the Department of Indian Affairs by Native People and the transfer of its power and resources to Native communities. *Indian Affairs must belong to the Indian people.* Indian Affairs must be separated from the Department of Northern Development.

4 We demand annual payments in perpetuity from all levels of government.

Canadian wealth is derived from the land and the natural resources of the land. *The time has come for Canadian governments to pay their debts to Native peoples.*

5 We demand an end to the destruction of our Native economies.

We demand immediate payment of \$2.5 billion from money not presently allocated to Indian Affairs which will be used by local Native communities to meet their needs for the development of self-sufficient economies.

6 It is racial discrimination and genocide that the federal government pays \$750 million to the province of Prince Edward Island (with its population of less than 1/3 of the native population) for economic development but has refused to provide equivalent money for the Native peoples, the most impoverished peoples of Canada.

7 We demand that the standard of housing in Native communities be immediately raised to the Canadian average. \$800 million of money not presently allocated to Indian Affairs must be made available to local Native communities for housing needs this year.

8 We demand health care facilities and services which are adequate to raise the life expectancy of Native people to the Canadian average within five years.

If underdeveloped countries such as China and Cuba are capable of raising their standards of health care dramatically over short periods of time, it is genocidal that a rich country like Canada continues to ignore the desperate health needs of the Native people.

9 We demand an end to Federal cutbacks on Native education and an expansion of community controlled Native education. The education system must be made to serve Native people rather than Native peoples being made to serve an educational system designed to destroy native cultures.

Violence and oppression will only be ended when both the hereditary and human rights of the Native peoples are truly upheld.

10 We demand that \$500 million be made available of money not presently allocated to Indian Affairs to Native communities for legal defence.

Native people must no longer fill the prisons and mental wards of Canada. **RACIST JUSTICE MUST END.**



Additional Copies of this pamphlet may be obtained from:

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