

Student Kouncil of Inter-Tribal Nations
Presents our

21ST ANNUAL POW-WOW



In Cooperation with San Francisco State University
MARCH 26, 1994

THE STUDENT COUNCIL OF INTER-TRIBAL NATIONS. 25 YEARS REMEMBERED

By Michele Maas, Councilperson

Twenty-five years ago a group of American Indian students at San Francisco State University united to form the Student Council of American Natives. The purpose of S.K.A.N. would be the formation of a union in which the students could support each other in the ongoing war of oppression and genocide against American Indian people, both on the reservations and in urban areas.

The students were the warriors of a new era. This new generation of warriors would have a new battlefield. Their battles would be fought in the institutions created by the oppressor. These students knew that to fight on this new battlefield they would need to arm themselves with an education. The war was the same war many of their ancestors had given their lives for. These students, by their actions proved the sincere commitment they had for the rights of all American Indian people.

The sixties were a time of civil unrest. On campuses and streets across this land people were protesting for civil rights. The Third World Liberation Front, who led the 1968 student strikes, helped Richard Oakes and Al Miller unite the Indian students on the SFSU campus with the formation of S.C.A.N.

Some of the first members of S.C.A.N. were Richard Oakes, (Mohawk), Allen Miller, (Seminole), Ron Lickers, (Seneca), Mickey Gemmil (Pit River Tribe), and Gerald Sam, (Round Valley). The club's first faculty advisors were Dr. Jim Hirabayashi (who would eventually be the first dean of Ethnic Studies) and Dr. Luis Kemnitzer, an Anthropology professor.

The newly formed organization would be instrumental in two major coups for American Indian people, the creation of a new department - the American Indian Studies Department, and the 1969 invasion of Alcatraz in the San Francisco Bay. Both of these events had an enormous impact on the rights of Native Americans.

With the creation of an American Indian Studies Department, Indians and non Indians would be able to increase their awareness of Indian traditions, culture and the role of the American Indian throughout history. Many Indians who had given up on the education system would return to school to take subjects relevant to Indian life.

Laying the groundwork for the new department was a monumental task and required a tremendous amount of courage and dedication. The students of S.C.A.N. had their work cut out for them. Many worked night and day to create the American Indian Studies Department.

One such student, and also the first president of S.C.A.N. was Richard Oakes. Along with the responsibilities of a wife and children, Richard also had his regular class work load to complete. Somehow he was able to find time to write letters to contact people throughout the Indian community and the education community to help find the personnel to staff the department.

In 1969 the world was awakened to the realization that American Indians were still around and continuing the struggle for the U.S. government to make good on several treaties they had with Indians across this land.

On November 9, 1969, Richard Oakes and the Student Council of American Natives and other Indians including 11 men and 3 women, participated in an "overnight" invasion of the



island Alcatraz. The group left peacefully the following day. Eleven days later, on the 20th of November 1969 the group would return. This time the students would be joined by many and their numbers would be increased tremendously. Eighty-nine men women and children were participants in the 2nd invasion. This invasion would last over 2 years. They formed a council, created a security force, a medical clinic and school. The world watched as American Indians in a new century resisted the U.S. government. The invasion lasted until 6/29/71. The Indians had drawn attention to the plight of Indian people across this country.

The Student Council of American Natives would always be remembered as playing a prominent role in the Alcatraz occupation.

As time moved on the founders of S.C.A.N. moved on. New students, getting an education at SFSU would join S.C.A.N. and carry on where their predecessors had left off.

In 1973 the students of S.C.A.N. organized their first Pow-Wow. This tradition is still carried on today by the present students in the organization and has become an event that the Bay Area Indian community and the university look forward to each year.

In 1977 the Student Council of American Natives underwent a name change. The name was changed to the Student Council of Inter-Tribal Nations.

Over the years S.K.I.N.S. has continued to bring Indian political issues to public attention as well as encourage the continuation and perpetuation of Indian culture and traditions by presenting, hosting, and sponsoring a variety of events.


Aside from the annual Pow-Wow, such activities have included a video taping project in 1978, documenting the struggle of the Pit River Nation; a benefit for the Longest Walk, to bring awareness to the general public of the "plight of Indians in the U.S." and to raise funds for those who participated in the Walk; a film festival on the SFSU campus which featured the films, "More than Bows and Arrows" a documentary of the history of the American Indian; and "Shut em Down" a film on the nuclear industry's effect on Mother Earth; and numerous celebrations and rallies.

The Student Council of Inter-Tribal Nations has also been instrumental in bringing Native American leaders, scholars and entertainers to the SFSU campus to publicize the struggles of all American Indians.

S.K.I.N.S. has also been involved in the recruitment and retention of Indian students. In the club's early years, Richard Oakes sent letters to prospective students in the Indian community informing them of enrollment, the Educational Opportunity Program (E.O.P.) and financial aide programs. S.K.I.N.S. would continue these efforts by holding open house on campus and inviting community members. Later, a special position was created. Former S.K.I.N.S. member Emily Chavez was hired to recruit Native Americans to SFSU. Today, S.K.I.N.S. works with Emily Chavez each year by sponsoring "Native American Student Day".

The S.K.I.N.S. organization has tried various ways of recruiting members. The Buckley Act prevents students from going through the registration office to find the names of American Indian Students. One year the students planned to pitch a teepee on campus to inform the students of the S.K.I.N.S. organization.

(continued on page 3)



On June 17, 1744, the commissioners from Maryland and Virginia negotiated a treaty with the Indians of the Six Nations at Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The Indians were invited to send boys to William and Mary College. The next day they declined the offer as follows.

WE KNOW THAT YOU HIGHLY ESTEEM THE KIND OF LEARNING taught in those colleges, and that the maintenance of our young men, while with you, would be very expensive to you. We are convinced, that you mean to do us good by your proposal: and we thank you heartily. But you, who are wise must know that different Nations have different conceptions of things and you will therefore not take amiss, if our ideas of this kind of Education happen not to be the same as yours. We have had some experience of it. Several of our young People were formerly brought up at the colleges of the Northern Provinces: They were instructed in all your Sciences; but, when they came back to us, they were bad runners, ignorant of every means of living in the woods... neither fit for Hunters, Warriors, nor Counselors, They were totally good for nothing.

We are, however, not the less oblig'd by your kind offer, tho' we decline accepting it; and, to show our grateful sense of it, if the gentlemen of Virginia will send us a Dozen of their Sons, we will take care of their Education, instruct them in all we know, and make Men of them.

(continued from page 2)

There were also plans to have a Sweat Lodge on the Tiburon campus property for the American Indian Students. This plan was abandoned however, when community elders and leaders voiced concerns about it.

The S.K.I.N.S. organization has survived the last 25 years with the dedication of its members and with the help of the faculty of the American Indian Studies Department and the Dean of Ethnic Studies.

Any organization can only be as good or as bad as what its membership makes it. Currently, S.K.I.N.S. has a group of students with a sincere commitment to continue the struggle.

The organization has changed the structure of leadership from one which had a president, vice-president and secretary, to what we perceive as a more traditional form of government. We have formed a council which is made of six members, three men and three women. The council is responsible for the operations of the group. The group also has two faculty advisors who serve as a bridge between the student group and the university administration.

As The Student Council of Inter-Tribal Nations begins preparations of our 26th year as an organization, and our 21st annual Pow-Wow celebration, we are thankful to Richard Oakes and those students who first united on the SFSU campus. Their hard work and dedication created a foundation for future Indian students who attend San Francisco State University to continue the struggle of the American Indian.

May we extend our sincere thanks and gratitude for supporting the Student Council of Inter-Tribal Nations.

*Respectfully,
The Student Council, 1994*

- Alan Mandell, Pyramid Lake Paiute
- Natalie Gutierrez, Apache/Yaqui
- Magda Caranza, Maya (acting Council)
- Steve Beltran, Pyramid Lake Paiute
- Joe Chaske, Cayuga/Lakota
- Michele Maas, Chippewa
- Benayshe Titus, Shoshone/Chippewa, (on leave)

*Ohiyesa, or Charles Eastman, a Santee Dakota physician and author, was in 1858 near Redwood Falls, Minnesota. Four years later, after the Minnesota Massacre in 1862, he fled with his uncle to Canada where he lived the Nomadic life of the Sioux until he was 15. In 1887 he graduated from Dartmouth College and three years later received a degree in Medicine from Boston University. He served 3 years as a government physician to the Pine Ridge Agency, South Dakota, during the ghost dance disturbances, and afterwards turned to private practice. About this time he began to write and lecture; his first book, *Indian Boyhood*, appraised in 1902. Ohiyesa is perhaps the most famous of American Indian authors. He died in 1939.*

I KNOW OUR PEOPLE POSSESSED REMARKABLE POWERS OF concentration and abstraction, and I sometimes fancy that such nearness to nature as I have described keeps the Spirit sensitive to impressions not commonly felt, and in touch with unseen powers. Some of us seemed to have a peculiar intuition for the locality of a grave, which they explained by saying that they had received a communication from the spirit departed. My own grandmother was one of these, and as far back as I can remember, when camping in a strange country, my brother and I would search for and find human bones at the spot she had indicated to us an ancient burial place or spot where a lone warrior had fallen. Of course, the outward signs of burial had been long since obliterated.

TO ALL MY RELATIONS

Thank you Great Grandfather, Great Grandmother Creator and wonderful Mother Earth for the beautiful day for all the things green and growing for the blowing wind and all it touches for another moment to experience these wonderful things.

Please bless my beloved friends and family and all those who support me openly and silently and bless my enemies from them I learn acceptance and the boundaries of my Ethics. I pray that they too will find their way to you Great Grandfather, Great Grandmother Creator and wonderful Mother Earth.

A moment of Silence for those who have gone before me
(may I listen for your wisdom)

A moment of Silence for those who share the challenge
(may we reach them with the message of love protection)

A special prayer of thanks to my guardian spirits who keep me safe and protected, a special prayer for Ben, Ann, Amy, Ben and Patty who share heart. May they know my love and feel my love surround them each time I think of them.

And lastly I pray for myself, I give thanks for my current health and pray for continued health and better health for energy and strength to serve my community with my very best to enlighten and to be enlightened to be just and fair, to speak the truth, to respect the wisdom of others for knowledge, to make the best decisions for the love of my family and community for the power to continue.

I pray that your wisdom will come to me so that I may be as you, a guiding light to all my relations.

A HO!
Love Tom

Tom is a HIV positive Native American. He has worked in both urban and reservation communities. He requested anonymity because his HIV status and his sexuality are not known in the community where he is currently employed and he would like to protect his privacy.

