

# The Indians: angry chiefs stir a dream

*Sometimes, doesn't like you!*

*Indie. Not one mention of the Onondy claim in this whole article.*

By ALTON SLAGLE  
Last of two articles

## WHAT DO THE INDIANS want?

• Mohawks want nine million acres of New York State and Vermont.

• Penobscots and Passamaquoddys want 12 million acres of Maine — and \$25 billion in damages.

• Mashpees want 11,000 acres of Massachusetts.

All over the country, the original Americans are on the warpath, hopping mad over the white man's refusal to return the land their ancestors lost, sold or traded away.

They also want their self-respect back.

Buffy Sainte-Marie, a Cree activist and folk singer, wants her fellow Indians to fight for their land and rights. "We look forward," she said, "to a future where we all may survive..."

The new Indian campaign for recognition has been violent at times — Wounded Knee is still a sore point among militants on both sides — but mostly, it is a battle of words and lawsuits.

And it is a battle that not many whites think about. Until recently, that is. When the white man arrived more than 300 years ago, he generally lived on Indian land. Sometimes, the Indians sold the land. Sometimes, the Indians gave it away. Sometimes, they abandoned it — and sometimes, they were driven from it at gunpoint.

Most of the Indians in North America (there are about 250,000 today) wound up on reservations, prisoners of despair, alcoholism and poverty. Then they learned to fight by the white man's rules.

It was through the tactics of negotiation and pressure, including occupation of part of a state park, that the Mohawks gained their new settlement of Ganienkeh at Altona, near Plattsburgh in the remote northeastern corner of New York.

It is through the same tactics that Mohawks hope to regain nine million acres in land that they say their ancestors owned — until the white man took it illegally.

Maine is, to many Indians, the most

Mohawks have claimed 14,000 acres near the St. Lawrence River, including Barnhart Island, where the State Power Authority operates the St. Lawrence Power Project.

Elsewhere upstate, Cayugas are seeking return of 62,500 acres in Cayuga and Seneca counties around the northern end of Lake Cayuga. They say that New York was not legally entitled to buy their land for farms for Revolutionary War veterans.

Cited in many of the Indian claims is one federal law, the Non-Intercourse Act of 1790, that required federal approval for any state treaty with Indians.

The Mohawk claim to nine million acres in Vermont and New York (no, Manhattan is not involved) is a prime example. Since the Mohawks are members of the six-nation Iroquois Confederacy, the case eventually will involve more than Mohawks.

"The nine million acres was sold to New York State by Chief Joseph Brandt for about \$1,500," said Tom Harris, a writer in Pittsford, N.Y., who has compiled a vast file on the subject.

The Indians contend that under the Non-Intercourse Act, New York had no more right to buy the land than Brandt had to sell. "It's kind of like the governor of New York deciding to sell Manhattan to France without bothering to check with Washington," said Harris.

Part of the Indian's new interest in land claims lies in the fact that 30% of the nation's coal, oil and natural gas, and 90% of its uranium, is on Indian reservations, protected by federal treaty. The fact is not lost on big business.

Miss Sainte-Marie accuses "big business profiteers" of seeking to grab and exploit reservation land. She cites several bills now in Congress that she

calls extremely damaging to the Indian cause.

"The real manipulators of all this legislation are a handful of big business profiteers who don't want native Americans—or anyone—exercising rights over land and resources, because they want it all," she said. "They're afraid an informed Indian and general public might successfully prevent the next great rip-off of natural resources, cutting into their profits."

Like the small group of Mohawks at Ganienkeh, who in three years of negotiations with the state after their armed takeover of a former Girl Scout camp near Utica are now legally installed on a combination of government and private land at Altona, Miss Sainte-Marie insists that Indians are not after any private land, except what they legally purchase.

"Indian people are not out to gain land from homeowners or to destroy the environment," she said. "We, like any homeowners, are out to protect what our forefathers never sold, and the 11 bills in Congress are simply attempts to legalize theft. It's clear what's going on."

The bills affect water, fishing, hunting and land rights both on and off the reservation. One, Miss Sainte-Marie said, would make non-Indians immune to criminal and civil actions for any crimes they committed on a reservation. Another, which she said would break all Indian treaties, is called "The Native American Equal Opportunity Act."

At the heart of the matter is the fact that many Indians don't want to be assimilated into the life of the white man because they would thus lose their claim to their own nationhood.

The 250,000 traditional Indians of North America are behind many of the land claims. Proud, independent and in-



Oscar Bear Runner at Wounded Knee: Can moderate Indians keep radicals from leading the fight?



crea-  
ways  
the  
the  
/ bloc  
incl  
who  
of b  
and  
one,  
a gr  
ed  
equ  
sepa  
Am  
ley,  
Elec  
the  
and  
Ind  
J  
ing  
ous  
they  
tion  
Row  
mili  
civil  
tuni  
had  
no.  
it,  
abl  
The  
Me  
tro  
acti  
in t  
adm  
rec  
big  
sai  
par  
cor  
der  
lev  
me  
dir  
lut  
I t  
the

# Indians: chiefs team

*Recent photo*

Dennis Banks of the American Indian Movement, in custody on arson and looting charges stemming from protest demonstrations.



have claimed 14,000 acres of the Lawrence River, including a 100-acre island, where the State Power Authority operates the St. Lawrence Project.

are upstate, Cayugas are a 62,500-acre parcel in Cayuga and Seneca counties around the head of Lake Cayuga. They say New York was not legally entitled to the land for farms for Revolutionary veterans.

many of the Indian claims are under the Non-Intercourse Act, that required federal approval for any state treaty with Indians.

Mohawk claim to nine million acres in Vermont and New York (no one is not involved) is a prime issue since the Mohawks are members of the six-nation Iroquois Confederacy, whose eventual will involve the Mohawks.

nine million acres was sold to the State by Chief Joseph Brandt for \$1,500," said Tom Harris, a Pittsford, N.Y., who has compiled a file on the subject.

Indians contend that under the 1842 Purchase Act, New York had no right to buy the land than Brandt. "It's kind of like the governor of New York deciding to sell Manhattan without bothering to get Washington's approval," said Harris.

the Indian's new interest in the land lies in the fact that 30% of the state's coal, oil and natural gas, and its uranium, is on Indian land, protected by federal law. The fact is not lost on big busi-

nessmen. Marie accuses "big business" of seeking to grab and hoard reservation land. She cites a bill now in Congress that she

considers extremely damaging to the Indian cause.

"The real manipulators of all this legislation are a handful of big business profiteers who don't want native Americans—or anyone—exercising rights over land and resources, because they want it all," she said. "They're afraid an informed Indian and general public might successfully prevent the next great rip-off of natural resources, cutting into their profits."

Like the small group of Mohawks at Ganienkeh, who in three years of negotiations with the state after their armed takeover of a former Girl Scout camp near Utica are now legally installed on a combination of government and private land at Altona. Miss Sainte-Marie insists that Indians are not allowed to purchase any private land, except what they legally purchase.

"Indian people are not out to gain land from homeowners or to destroy the environment," she said. "We, like any homeowners, are out to protect what our forefathers never sold, and the 11 bills in Congress are simply attempts to legalize theft. It's quite clear what's going on."

The bills affect water, fishing, hunting and land rights both on and off the reservation. One, Miss Sainte-Marie said, would make non-Indians immune to criminal and civil actions for any crimes they committed on a reservation. Another, which she said would break all Indian treaties, is called "The Native American Equal Opportunity Act."

At the heart of the matter is the fact that many Indians don't want to be assimilated into the life of the white man because they would thus lose their claim to their own nationhood.

The 250,000 traditional Indians of North America are behind many of the land claims. Proud, independent and in-

creasingly savvy about the white man's ways and laws, they want to return to the traditions of their ancestors—and the land of their ancestors.

And they want to preserve their own blood lines. It's hard for many whites, including some members of congress who have introduced the current crop of Indian legislation, to understand this.

"You get people who are committed and caught up in this idea of one for one, we're all equal, and then you find a group of people who have never looked at themselves as anything but equal—or better—and they want to be separate," said Howard Rowley of the American Arbitration Association. Rowley, an official of Rochester Gas and Electric, handled negotiations between the state and the Moss Lake Mohawks, and has been active in a variety of Indian disputes across the country.

Rowley remains optimistic concerning negotiated settlements of the various land claims. "I'm absolutely certain they're negotiable, just like the occupation with the Mohawks was negotiable," Rowley said. But he warns that militants may one day force the issue.

"It's like saying would we have had civil rights legislation with equal opportunity hiring and all those things if we hadn't had cities burn in the '60s? I say no. We would have had some form of it, perhaps, but if people are comfortable they're going to stay that way. They don't want to see any changes."

**R**OWLEY IS ANXIOUS to see moderates wage the broader fight, rather than radicals and extremists such as Russell Means and Dennis Banks of the controversial American Indian Movement.

"I think we can look for political actions on the part of the Indian people in the upcoming months," he said.

Rowley is critical of the Carter administration for not taking more direct action on the Indian claims.

"Traditional Indians are leading a big charge to unite all Indians," Rowley said, "and if they're successful, or even partly successful, it's going to create considerable problems. All the President has to do is deal with the top-level people and I think he or his immediate subordinates will have to deal directly with these people... I'm absolutely convinced it could be done and

Bar Runner  
ded Knee:  
berate Indi-  
p radicals  
ading the  
gh?

