

The American Indian Movement and the Politics of Nostalgia: Indigenous Representation From Wounded Knee to Standing Rock

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Founded in 1968, the American Indian Movement (AIM) is a source of a complicated nostalgia for Indigenous activists today. AIM orchestrated many direct actions that remain instructive touchstones, including the 1973 occupation at Wounded Knee. Still, the organization has also been characterized by a masculinism often found in its famous iconography. During the 2016 mobilization against the Dakota Access Pipeline (#NoDAPL), common invocations of AIM by mainstream media revealed the contrast between these moments of struggle. Analyzing this contrast through the visual record of each mobilization, the author argues that nostalgia for AIM presents an opportunity to work through the colonial imposition of heteropatriarchal norms. Current Indigenous media makers have begun the work to demonstrate emancipatory gender politics that provide an elaboration of Indigenous representations of *relationality*, thereby attesting to the connections among feminist, queer, and ecological consciousness. Foregrounding the importance of tribal specificity, the author focuses on media produced on and of Lakota tribal homelands.

Keywords: Indigenous, media, nostalgia, relationality, representation, resistance

As soon as the Standing Rock Water Protectors set up camps to block construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline in 2016, journalists began invoking the representational legacy of Wounded Knee. “The last time Native Americans gathered and the nation noticed was in 1973,” Sierra Crane-Murdoch (2016) wrote for *The New Yorker*, citing the historic 71-day standoff between federal agents and 200 Indigenous activists who had occupied the town of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota (para. 1). Orchestrated in large part by the American Indian Movement (AIM), the 1973 occupation was itself a form of memorial, undertaken at the site where, in the winter of 1890, U.S. troops killed 300 unarmed Lakota people, mainly women and children. When the North Dakota National Guard was deployed to repress the #NoDAPL encampment using military tactics, the legacies of 1890 and 1973 led many to note what the *Los Angeles Times* dubbed “echoes of Wounded Knee” (Yardley, 2016). These historical invocations were used primarily to highlight the persistence of colonial violence and the continuity of Indigenous resistance—a shared history that compelled more than 300 tribes and a slew of allied groups to travel to Standing Rock. Quickly, however, the rehearsal of this lineage compelled me to compare these moments of struggle more

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closely. I became aware of how much the 2016 mobilization differed from AIM—which was founded in 1968 and reached its apex in the mid-1970s—and found that a complicated nostalgia obscures these differences.

Each of these entangled moments of Indigenous resistance finds clear expression in the representations of Indigeneity and decolonial struggle that were dominant at the time. In this article, I compare images of AIM during the 1973 Wounded Knee occupation with images of Standing Rock during the 2016 #NoDAPL movement, drawing out their contextual significance to begin unpacking the broad social, political, and organizational shifts of the past 50 years. I analyze these shifts primarily to derive strategic lessons for present-day Indigenous activists and artists. Specifically, I propose that nostalgia for AIM, which is profoundly intimate for many Indigenous people, can become a liability when it prevents us from carefully attending to relational nuances needed by the current movements. We might see this nostalgia as producing trepidation about dishonoring AIM's legacy. How, then, might present-day Indigenous movements acknowledge the legacy and nostalgia for AIM while being honest about the current strategic limitations?

As a Lakota child, I first learned through family stories about disrupting settler logic and that it demands direct action that is fortified by intellectual and artistic intervention. AIM figured prominently in stories about the long legacy of Lakota resistance I was told growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation. My parents recounted passing through armed reservation checkpoints during the 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee (see Figure 1). My uncle reminisced about his westward journey to join the occupation of Alcatraz (1969–1971), and my family described how my aunt would sneak out of the house to attend AIM gatherings. These family stories were infused with nostalgic pride and humor. However, AIM has gradually become inseparable in my mind from the depictions of hypermasculine Indigeneity that saturate mainstream consumption.



Figure 1. "Two young members of the Oglala Sioux take their positions at a checkpoint on March 5, 1973, in Wounded Knee on a road inside the Pine Ridge Reservation, where militant members of AIM have taken over the huge reservation" (Anonymous, AP Photo, 1973).

From Hollywood stereotypes to news media portrayals, settler depictions of a patriarchal Indigeneity closely resemble AIM's famous iconography—and all of these portrayals are at odds with the lived gender relations within my family and community. To be sure, Lakota culture has absorbed many settler heteropatriarchal norms, which is why I focus my critique on mainstream media images. However, internalizing these norms results from pervasive hypermasculine depictions of Indigeneity, it is essential to reflect on what separates such images from lived relations. Especially given the many contingencies that complicate the comparison of temporally distant moments, I focus my analysis on Lakota lands and Lakota events, grounding my research in land and place I know intimately. Tribal specificity disrupts settler logic and provides important nuances to understanding Indigenous resistance movements.

Settler society often depicts Indigenous people within stereotypical confinement that diminishes their intelligence, hypersexualizes their bodies, or demands an over-the-top spiritual performance (Kilpatrick, 1999, p. xvii). In his foundational text *The White Man's Indian*, published shortly after the 1973 Wounded Knee occupation, Robert Berkhofer (1978) historicizes how the colonial psyche has generated a narrow image of the "Indian" in dominant American society. We can also see how the creation of "Indianness" is how the United States orients empire and continues to replicate the empire as a nation-state (Byrd, 2011). This stereotype of "Indianness," Berkhofer explains, is both homogenizing and heteronormative. The "Indian" within settler imagination reflects and reinforces a patriarchal settler imaginary that renders invisible Indigenous women leaders and other-than-human people—two of the primary forces that animated the resonant Standing Rock declaration of *Mni Wiconi*, "Water Is Life" (Estes, 2019). This patriarchal imaginary can be traced back to the influence of settler government and treaty systems, which introduced heteronormative leadership styles and structures.

Only by grasping this imaginary can we fully account for AIM's iconography. How else, after all, can we explain why the occupation of Wounded Knee was documented nearly exclusively in portraits of Indigenous men even though, as Donna Hightower Langston (2009) explains, the majority of participants were women. Indeed, the Oglala Lakota grandmothers were the ones who invited AIM to Wounded Knee in the first place (Johnson, 2007). This leadership was unsurprising, of course, not least given the relentless murders of Indigenous women, the countless Indigenous children who went missing, and the neglect and perpetuation of this harm by the colonial state (Brand, 1978). Some of this leadership has recently become more visible with the uplifting of documentaries like that of Two Kettle Oglala Lakota activist Madonna Thunder Hawk and, of course, in 1973, the now-classic footage of Sacheen Little Feather rejecting Marlon Brando's Oscar on his behalf at the 45th Academy Awards ceremony. Marlon Brando had spoken out against the treatment of American Indians at that time. This intervention lingers in the minds of Hollywood consumers. Yet the most famous images of AIM leave the viewer with an impression of triumphant masculinity (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. "Members of the American Indian Movement and local Oglala Sioux stand guard outside the Sacred Heart Catholic Church after taking control of the town and 11 hostages during a 71-day standoff with the FBI and U.S. Marshals" (Bettmann, 1973).

When these images recirculate today, the patriarchal colonial imagery continues to be invoked, and is why a relational Indigenous gendered analytic is needed. As a result, the enduring nostalgia for AIM within Indigenous communities is an opportunity for working through the feminist politics of how to engage critically and carefully with the past. These images are of our relatives. Present-day Indigenous artists and activists have already begun this complicated work. By reviving egalitarian Indigenous governance practices—which in some cases include matrilineal and gendered inclusion—and gradually reconciling with mainstream settler environmentalist movements, a new generation of Indigenous leaders has begun producing experimental media that conceive of and represent nonsettler leadership in the broadest possible terms. In this way, Indigenous feminisms and emancipatory gender politics are shown to correspond directly with the principle of *relationality*, which figures centrally in Lakota epistemology and much Indigenous thought. Specifically, as Quandamooka scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2016) explains, *relationality* refers to protocols that dictate human interconnectedness with the world around us (p. 17).

As an analytic, *relationality* fosters an understanding of resistance that foregrounds tribal specific worldviews and emphasizes ecological interconnection to reveal the distortions of settler law and policy frameworks. Emerging practices of Indigenous self-representation, especially the contributions of Indigenous media makers such as Ho-Chunk and Luiseno filmmaker Sky Hopinka, embrace this orientation openly. This work replaces homogenous, hypermasculine images of Indigenous resistance with storied representations of land and sovereignty, examining how we communicate our relationships to place, body, and Indigenous protocol. The new media are therefore central to the ongoing elaboration of Indigenous

feminism, a political force with a vast reach; as Melanie Yazzie and Cutcha Risling Baldy (2018) explain, “Indigenous feminism gives shape to work happening under the aegis of posthumanisms, new materialisms, queer effect, studies of the Anthropocene, and critiques of biopolitics” (p. 10). With this article, I offer a feminist meditation on AIM’s legacy that addresses the complicated and intimate process by which settler stereotypes are internalized, confronted, and rejected. In this process, I posit, it is sometimes necessary to force a break with the most immediate past—in this case, with the most recent climax of organized resistance—to find earlier animating points and to retrieve their corresponding lessons.

A Changing Image of Resistance

The contrast between images from Wounded Knee in 1973 and Standing Rock in 2016 attests to the vast social, political, and cultural transformations of the past 50 years, for which one essay can only begin to account. Even a simple observation—for instance, that the #NoDAPL camps vastly exceeded the scale of the 1973 occupation—invites analysis of the rise of neoliberalism and the emergence of the Internet age. The #NoDAPL Water Protectors relied heavily on social media, after all, which emerged long after AIM’s heyday and now allows for real-time intramovement mass communication—a beneficial resource given that today’s consolidated corporate news media routinely fail to cover Indigenous resistance, as was the case for the initial weeks at Standing Rock. The mainstream media platforms that eventually carried Standing Rock stories included VICE, CNN, Democracy Now!, and CBC’s *Unreserved*. To compare the gendered politics of representation during these historic uprisings:

From the Puget Sound fish-ins in the Northwest Coast to the occupation of Alcatraz and the first meetings of the National American Indian Youth Council, American Indians carried a heavy load across the country in the 1960s and 1970s. In this context, images of intergenerational American Indian communities and allies standing together found their way into mainstream media. A climax in this period of heightened resistance, the occupation of Wounded Knee began in response to misconduct within the federally formed Oglala Sioux tribal government, a lasting structure imposed through the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act. As with other direct actions in that period, the occupation’s organizers used Indigenous and settler media outlets to advance their cause (Johansen, 2013). In this way, the iconography of Wounded Knee became the result of a complex visual engagement involving a distorting settler media gaze and the strategic use of this gaze by Indigenous leaders.

The goal of my analysis is not to address the internalized debates of gendered representation that might have occurred among AIM participants. Rather, the focus of my critique is centered on the distortions of mainstream media portrayals. I cannot argue about the interiority of Lakota activists of the time. The formation of media and literary representation of AIM has been discussed by myriad scholars who demonstrate the nuances of the aesthetic and rhetoric of non-Indigenous America, nationally and internationally (Gonzalez & Cook-Lynn, 1999; Rich, 2004). Furthermore, Indigenous filmmakers have approached topics of representation, the legacy of resistance, and the importance of Wounded Knee in documentaries such as the PBS series *We Shall Remain* (Eyre & Grimber, 2009) and independent film *Reel Injun* (Diamond, 2010). Yet these literary and film examples still prove that mainstream media paint pictures of the fierce and stoic leader.

Settler reporting on American Indian resistance has historically been skewed toward militant framing of male protesters. Many images of AIM fall within this pattern, leaving the viewer with an impression of masculinity and militarism. The most famous images of Wounded Knee, specifically, are predominantly the work of White male photojournalists. According to Tim Baylor (1996), mainstream media promoted a specific image of AIM, selectively broadcasting reports about force met with force and thereby aligning the organization with militarism, which was only a small part of the story. AIM was consistently represented as a male-led organization. Narratives of Indigenous women or gender nonconforming communities were placed in the background or left out of the picture altogether as media instead circulated portraits of leaders like John Trudell, Russell Means, Leonard Peltier, and Clyde Bellecourt, often depicted in the middle of the action and usually wielding weapons.

In contrast with AIM's iconographic portraiture, the portrayals of Standing Rock in 2016 are much less uniform, most often depicting groups in moments of tension and centering on other-than-human people. Initially, the mainstream reporting of Standing Rock was minimal, so most information was shared across social media platforms. Supportive social media campaigns consistently highlighted the diversity of the camps, and most images showed women, youths, and gender nonconforming people leading direct action. In part, these patterns can be explained by the immediate conditions to which #NoDAPL was responding, which differed from those that inspired the occupation of Wounded Knee. While AIM's 1973 action was primarily a response to settler-colonial state building and the enduring subjugation wrought by the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, the Standing Rock camps emerged in immediate opposition to the oil industry.

Before the #NoDAPL mobilization, the Standing Rock Youth Council had launched a "ReZpect Our Water" campaign. Youth runners led the movement from the Standing Rock Reservation to bring attention to the Dakota Access Pipeline before the construction was near the reservation boundaries. As the ReZpect Our Water movement progressed, celebrities like Jason Momoa and Shailene Woodley began sharing and posting what eventually became a call against the Dakota Access Pipeline (#NoDAPL) and an embrace of "Mni Wiconi" (Water Is Life). A testament to the leadership that Indigenous communities now provide in the struggle to prevent climate catastrophe, at Standing Rock, the contest of sovereignties explicitly revolved around the defenses of water, land, and human remains. In this context, #NoDAPL leaders chose to emphasize the concepts of "protection" and "the sacred," and the camps did not allow weapons, unlike their AIM predecessors (see Figures 3 and 4).



Figure 3. Water Protectors block a road during the #NoDAPL mobilization. November 20, 2016 (Indigenous Rising Media, 2016).



Figure 4. Temryss Lane and others at Women's Earth & Climate Action Network lead green willow planting in the pathway of the Dakota Access Pipeline (Emily Arasim, 2016).

These immediate differences correspond with more general shifts of neoliberal capitalism and the rise of accessible Internet, which have reshaped the entire paradigm of protest action globally. It is beyond the scope of this article to analyze these shifts in detail, but it is worth offering three very broad strokes. Since AIM's early years, social movements in North America have increasingly pursued horizontal modes of organization, gradually replacing the traditional political party and revolutionary organization with looser formations. Feminist intervention, meanwhile, has led to greater prioritization of gender parity in social movement contexts. Concurrently, amid the growth of the global environmental movement, spurred on by the popularization of climate change science, Indigenous peoples worldwide have advanced the most comprehensive and inclusive strategies of ecological defense.

These general transformations have undermined masculinist organizing and mobilization practices, including the presumptuous positioning of men as movement leaders. Early Lakota and Dakota scholars addressed gendered archives but were rarely published in mainstream rhetoric or were often regulated to specific genres such as fiction or memoir (Deloria, 1988; Medicine, 1988; Zitkala-Sa, 2019). As recent scholarship affirms, Lakota disruptions of capitalism are shaped by relationships with other-than-human people (Estes, 2019). As a result of these shifts, the icons of contemporary movements are more likely to be women or gender nonconforming relatives. Just as often, mobilizations do not generate a singular or coherent iconography, as was the case at Standing Rock, of which hundreds of images circulated in real time online.

Living away from my Lakota homelands at the time, I watched the #NoDAPL movements unfold across the screens of my laptop and mobile device. I followed Standing Rock resident Bobbi Jean Three Legs live on her Facebook profile, received updates from Dakota activist Dallas Goldtooth (when he had adequate cell service), and traced "I Stand With Standing Rock" posts as they emerged around the globe. Still, coverage on mainstream media was minimal. When they finally started appearing, the mainstream media reports about Standing Rock were striking for their distortions. It was an acute reminder that Indigenous people, like Blacks and other people of color, continue to be historicized into a rigidity of capitalist gain (Johnson, 2003, p. 5). A violent shaping of #NoDAPL crafted a specific view of Indigenous people in the way of progress and similarly reflected the way other Black and brown bodies are coded as violent in opposition to capitalist advancement. Even now, as I revisit the images of #NoDAPL, I am filled with a mix of emotions. As my community shared photos of intergenerational and female-led actions, the limited mainstream images almost exclusively depicted moments of violence.

As the Standing Rock fight intensified and garnered greater media attention, various sympathetic outlets and voices implored us to "Remember Wounded Knee," using iconic images of AIM or Lakota resistance (Caldwell, 2016; Donella, 2016). Although understandable—and educational for uninitiated supporters—these invocations appealed to nostalgia for AIM, and with it for the masculinism that is ultimately at odds with the very relational thinking that gave the #NoDAPL camps their power. While the nonnative viewer remembers a violent past, an Indigenous supporter sees relatives taking a stance of resistance. We must contend, therefore, with the work that AIM images do today.

Taxidermic Views

It is useful to recall that the phrase “settler colonialism,” popularized in 2006 by nonnative scholar Patrick Wolfe (2006), names the specific colonial process of eliminating Indigenous societies (p. 387). All images of Indigenous resistance are produced under settler colonial erasure, extraction, and structural oppression. As an imperialist strategy, settler colonialism requires that nonnative communities hold distorted ideas about Indigenous communities that are used to justify ongoing dispossession and oppression. Such is the work of upholding the nation-state itself. In the U.S. context, media play an essential role in preserving established settler distortions, often by framing Indigenous communities in opposition to modernity and by casting a stereotypical Indigenous hypermasculinity as the lone figure of Indigenous resistance.

The work of justifying violence against Indigenous people is embedded within policy and has been critiqued over the past 45 years. Berkhofer (1978) draws connections between federal Indian policy and the impact on the image of the American Indian in the American psyche. For example, “savage” is written in the U.S. Declaration of Independence (1776, para. 29). This word appears in other policies and resonates as a cognate in settler uses of words like “warrior” and “spirited,” which still dominate narratives about AIM. Through policy, the settler nation-state continues to craft the savage: through narrative and image. According to some Indigenous studies scholars (see Coulthard, 2014; Deloria, 2007; Fryberg, Markus, Oyserman, & Stone, 2008; Kilpatrick, 1999), these dynamics of power and representation have led to stereotypes of Indigenous characters in movies as well as colonial structures. According to Jacquelyn Kilpatrick (1999), American Indians are often depicted in one of three stereotypical ways: oversexualized, overtly mystical, or in a mental state described through derogatory language such as “stupid” or “dumb.” These depictions often correspond to stereotyping terminology, such as “filthy” or “noble” (Kilpatrick, 1999 p. 2). The emplacement of settler structures on the image of Indigenous people permeates many aspects of settler visuality. Although I reference analysis more than 20 years old, the critique is still valid and does not dismiss the long legacy of decolonizing media work of Indigenous studies scholars (Banks & Ruby, 2011; Crey, 2021; Ginsburg, 2018; Intahchomphoo, 2018).

Therefore, the continued pattern of media distortion and omission of Indigenous relational representation within resistance movements must be understood as elaborations of the colonial taxidermic tradition. Settler representations of Indigenous resistance are often narrow, depicting protest as exclusively reactive in lieu of a proactive stance (Hall & Open University, 1997). Resistance has to be shrouded in violence for the nonnative governance to succeed. This visual language cannot accommodate the relational character of resistance or its proactive mode of kinship. The settler construction of an image of AIM, as a male-dominated organization animated by violent protest, continues to influence how audiences and the public imagine on-the-ground occupations like that of Standing Rock. Fatima Tobing Rony (1996) explains that this tradition presents Indigenous people and communities as dying or erased or historicizes them according to narrow tropes. Taxidermic portrayals of Indigenous people arise when the image producer assumes that any “authentic” visual representation of Indigeneity must accord with the belief that Indigenous people are vanishing—an assumption that derives from the myth of the timelessness of the Western gaze. A taxidermic view of Standing Rock in a historicized setting, demonstrates the intersections of power and knowledge in representation. Furthermore, critiques of ethnographic and anthropological inquiry reimagine how the body is placed in films (MacDougall, 2006) and question past techniques by

leaning into the rise of epistemology to understand image making (Grimshaw, 2001)—challenging the reader to question what it might mean to resist society's influence of self-censorship (MacDougall, 2019). Because it rests on the logic of settler masculinism, I argue, AIM's iconography operates as taxidermic imagery today, undermining the self-knowledge of Indigenous viewers.

Therefore, in crafting an image of self-determination, it is politically and epistemologically crucial to oppose homogenizing compulsion. The nation-state attempts to settle the portrayal of Indigenous resistance under markers of sovereignty and governance that dismiss environmental and tribal worldviews. Homogenized conceptions of Indigeneity derive from the strategies of empire and the settler gaze (Byrd, 2011, p. 19). After all, as Gerald Taiaiake Alfred (2009) explains, "Sovereignty is not a natural phenomenon, but a social creation," and sovereignty within the workings of the nation-state does not include tribal worldviews (p. 328). Moreover, Indigenous feminist theories of space and place demonstrate how tribal territory claims cannot be grasped within the settler logics of property and colonial ownerships (Byrd, 2011; Deer, 2015; Goeman, 2013; Razack, 2002). This incompatibility found expression in mainstream reporting about Standing Rock, for instance, when Water Protectors—Indigenous people leading the protection of other-than-human people—were always described instead as "pipeline protesters." These relentless distortions require intervention that foregrounds Indigenous conceptions of *relationality*—and this involves acknowledging that images of armed AIM members, although representing the protection of tribal sovereignty, do not meet the criteria of tribal specific relationships beyond settler ideology.

The Politics of Relationality

The nation-state is incompatible with a relative-to-relative understanding of Indigenous people with other-than-human people. The ways the ideas and images of Indigenous people have formed rely on the disembodiment of Indigenous people, recasting them as something to control and use. Relationality is a grounding concept that allows activists and scholars to push back against the Western academy and, I posit, against the production of Indigenous images that fail to center other-than-human people and other culturally specific knowledge systems (Andersen & O'Brien, 2017; Brayboy, 2003; Simpson, 2017; Smith, 1999; TallBear, 2011; Wilson, 2008). Attuning to relationality also allows for an analytical interrogation of resistance movements and the visual languages on which they rely—I believe relationality provides strategies that undermine fetishistic and consumptive tendencies.

The collapse of Indigenous people into a frame of flora and fauna, however, misinterprets relationality. The issues being confronted at Standing Rock, from a tribal perspective, center on relationality and are not necessarily about protesting possessive logic (Moreton-Robinson, 2017). Although the Water Protectors were fighting for water, they did not collapse water into an inanimate object seen only as a resource. Dakota scholar *Waziwayatan* Angela Cavender Wilson (2008) shifts how we might rethink relational perspectives and demonstrates that "we all must rethink our ways of being and interacting in this world to create sustainable, healthy, and peaceful coexistence with one another and with the natural world" (p. 13). We are not emplaced on the land as landscape but as concerning other-than-human kin.

My use of relationality also relies on the formations of stories within specific tribal perspectives. Cultural geographer Sarah Hunt (2014) posits that an Indigenous ontology comes from stories and subverts

what has been established about Indigenous ways of knowing by previous cultural studies scholars. Hunt (2014) challenges researchers to think about place-based practices within Indigenous communities to interrogate the “categories of being” (p. 30). She uses Kwakwaka’wakw stories to communicate specific examples of Kwakwaka’wakw ontology. Tribal storytelling and character development shift and unsettle the image crafting that mainstream media often portray.

Indigenous feminist scholars center the story in various forms to present dynamic research and articulate a more nuanced investigation of Indigenous culture. Cutcha Risling Baldy (2018) demonstrates that scholars are to “reclaim the historical, anthropological, and ethnographic record with a more discerning analysis to (re)write, (re)right, and (re)rite gender epistemologies and Native feminisms from a perspective that values oral narrative accounts as ‘archive’ and ‘documentary’ evidence” (p. 34). I do not imply a romanticization of tribal stories. I see Indigenous feminist interventions, especially through a critique of settler colonialism, as opportunities to “express and articulate the deepest perceptions, relationships, and attitudes of a culture” (Allen, 1992, p. 74). Indigenous storytelling, grounded in tribal specificity, offers a more nuanced articulation.

The passing down of protocol, memory, and relationship to place offers a better understanding of how the community communicates resistance to settler incursion instead of a settler framing. Within a broad visual anthropological inquiry, visual materials produced through a photographic method acknowledge that the image’s creator proactively shapes what is in the frame and can be used to access further theoretical and cultural inquiries (Bash & Taylor, 1997; Collier & Collier, 1986; Feagin & Maynard, 1997; Grimshaw, 2001; Heider, 2006; MacDougall & Castaing-Taylor, 1998). So, if a nonnative creator crafts the production of Indigenous resistance, the narrative is centered on violence rather than the connection to culture and place. Nonnative creators are influenced by a legacy of salvage anthropology and ethnographic inquiry that frames Indigenous people as vanishing. When taking Lakota culture into context, the visual structure is vital to articulating a cultural grounding in the perception of the world.

Indigenous-made media are even more integral to the saturation of the documentation of resistance movements beyond 1968. The nostalgia Indigenous viewers recognize in an Indigenous media maker reflects a tribal specific worldview and an Indigenous intellectual tradition. Indigenous studies and tribal specific research continue to challenge the injustices when an imperial capitalist framework is deployed to separate tribal people from their understandings of land, water, and other-than-human relatives (Estes, 2019; Gilio-Whitaker, 2019). By confronting the ahistorical perspective of the American Indian male protester, research is open to including the necessity of queer and Two-Spirit critiques.

As a descendant of activists who were a part of an extensive breadth of 1968 movements, I see the benefit of understanding resistance from a Lakota lens. Estes (2019) of the Kul Wicasa Lakota people demonstrates that Lakota and Dakota resistance is embedded in our worldview. Estes’s use of the Buffalo Calf Woman as a guiding feminist praxis lays the critical foundation in the current discussion of Lakota culture. Estes centers Lakota histories embedded in cultural stories to demonstrate a long legacy of resistance to settler logics. Moments created by AIM beyond the 1960s benefit from a gender analysis because of a tribal specific viewpoint. I can speak only as a Lakota self-identifying woman. I pick up where Estes begins and turn toward a feminist critique that is weaved together with Indigeneity.

Lakota relationally, which often stems from storytelling and oral narration, transforms the representation of Indigenous resistance away from the deficit of historicizing and homogenizing. Zitkala-Sa and Ella C. Deloria, throughout their careers, provided material in their work that can be revisited to understand what relationality and justice should look like for Lakota/Dakota communities, especially within and against the confines of settler logics. Zitkala-Sa (2019) writes in her poem *The Indian's Awakening* that a "harmonious kinship made all things fair," and although she is referring to the changing dynamic in the lives of American Indians, I understand her poem to be a reminder of harmonious kinship before European settlement (p. 184). A harmonious kinship can be demonstrated through protocols embedded in the idea of "being a good relative," as discussed by Ella C. Deloria (1988) in her novel *Waterlily* (p. 17) and again in her ethnography *Speaking of Indians* (Deloria & Deloria, 1998, p. 17). Furthermore, from a Dakota perspective, for an innovative way to rethink relationships, especially with land and water, as demonstrated in *What Does Justice Look Like?*, the author, Waziyatawin (2008), argues that, "We all must rethink our ways of being and interacting in this world to create sustainable, healthy, and peaceful coexistence with one another and with the natural world" (p. 13). The kinship Waziyatawin, Zitkala-Sa, and Deloria articulate is not a representative connection, rather a more extensive protocol of responsibility. Currently, all three strategize for harmony that is not understood in a U.S. context. But dealing with settler law and policy is often an obstacle for Indigenous communities.

Dislocation Blues

In 2017, shortly after the Standing Rock camps were forcibly evicted, Sky Hopinka (Ho-Chunk/Luiseno) produced a short experimental documentary, *Dislocation Blues* (Hopinka, 2017). The first shot is of a dark room and an open laptop. On the screen is a young Native person, Cleo, wearing headphones and looking contemplative, and you quickly realize that you are watching an interview happening over a videoconference (Figure 5). As Cleo speaks, a jump cut reveals smoke hovering over the Oceti Sakowin Camp and a hilltop camera view. As the interview begins, Cleo's disembodied voice states "That gender anxiety I had was more about roles, it was more about how I fit into traditional roles" (Hopinka, 2017, 00:01:02).



Figure 5. Still image of "Cleo" from *Dislocation Blues* (Hopinka, 2017, 00:00:09).

In the film, we come back to Cleo, and they share, "I guess I stopped worrying about me" (Hopinka, 2017, 00:01:22). Their statement, like the contemplative space they create on the screen within a screen, indicates the ways embodied knowledge establishes a pathway to understanding how societies operated at the camp (Nichols, 2001). As a young Two-Spirit Water Protector, Cleo represents a different connection to the community that is often left out of the AIM narrative and the more significant 1960s resistance movements. As demonstrated earlier in the essay, mainstream media focused on male-dominated AIM visibility.

I wanted to introduce and highlight the gender nonconforming character as a reflection of the materiality of the Indigenous worldview being set up through Hopinka's film. Throughout the rest of the documentary, we hear the disembodied voices of Cleo Keahna (Anishinaabe) and Terry Running Wild (Lakota). They share their experiences of life at the Standing Rock camps and their hopes for a different future. The viewer is exposed to long shots of snow-covered roads, beautiful horizons, and scenes within scenes that focus on the landscape rather than militaristic violence. The Standing Rock occupation was an environmental justice movement and a broader call to respect and understand tribal sovereignty and land. Indigenous people were no longer just the "warrior" on screen.

The experimental film demonstrates the shift in U.S. heteronormative perspectives of resistance and how visual communication can impact our understanding of activist movements. The film addresses how memory influences shared experiences of settler colonial resistance and offers a new perspective of environmental protest visually connected to land, humanity, and imagination. The nostalgia on screen evokes a sense of connection to kinship, reflecting a deep relationality unlike a heteropatriarchal rendering by mainstream iconography. Operating against narratives of myth and stereotype, Hopinka also provides a

critical understanding of relationality through digital platforms by offering a visual representation of activism that is not embedded in a colonial viewpoint.

Seeing Cleo on a screen within a screen further demonstrates a relationship with technology that communicates Indigenous network sovereignty. Looking at the materiality of the digital screen within Hopinka's film forces the viewer to step into a digital landscape that evokes conversations about Indigenous worldview (Duarte, 2017). As Cleo contemplates, we, as the viewer, consider the scene. The laptop with its image stays open, and we wait for narration the same way we waited for news of Standing Rock back in 2016. Hopinka plays on our nostalgic view of Standing Rock to understand the anticipation that kept us logging in and, in the same way, keeps us logging in to remember the fires of 1968. *Dislocation Blues* critically engages gendered leadership and relational significance of land, body, and community.

As a viewer, I was struck by the way Hopinka used digital platforms and evoked digital viewership through the use of laptops, multiscreens, and overlays of footage. Hopinka's use of the laptop echoes the hundreds of people who would log on to Facebook at the peak of the Standing Rock occupation to watch live feeds and updates. Our laptops and phones became the way we received information about the camps and the way we attempted to speak back to the violence on screen. Most of the camp information was shared through social media and multifocal narratives outside of mainstream media. Facebook, Twitter, and other digital platforms were used daily to share personal reports and reflections of the Standing Rock resistance movement. Indigeneity through the Standing Rock occupation became an ideal example of social, political, and environmental protest that was read digitally across multifocal spaces (Durate, 2017). We were able to see ourselves reflected in the #NoDAPL movement because we were the ones sharing and posting images of our community.

Cleo's presence on the screen also establishes the performative and subjective nature of the film. And throughout, we never see an image of Terry; instead, his voice carries his narrative. As a performative documentation mode, the story is grounded to individuals and relationships as the film expands to embrace a social configuration of emotional engagement (Nichols, 2001). In the beginning, the intersection of gender within Cleo's narrative disrupts the heteronormative aspect portrayed by other media outlets when referencing "protesters." Gender as performance, in this instance, embraces the many subjective and emotional responses that are expressions of the camp experience.

The gender nonconforming character allows for a radical reimagining of Indigenous resistance and the future of political movements. I consider Cleo's voice and presence on screen as a clear demonstration of a self-reflexive archive that delves deeper into relationality. As a queer Indigenous critique of the archive, Cleo's presence represents a relationship with the land, ancestors, community, and the protest that disrupts neoliberal capitalist gain. As a new archive is formulated around engagement with the land, and the presence of queer Indigenous communities, it draws in different notions of relationship with place, community, culture, and other-than-human relatives. Hopinka's crafting of a queer image is not based on a stereotype but on a relationship to resistance that challenges prior notions of a stagnant Indigenous visual landscape.

My analysis of Hopinka's work builds from a nostalgic grounding of media-led crafting of Indigenous activism that relies on a historicized view of heteronormative masculinity that reflects a settler society.

However, Hopinka's artistic documentation of Indigenous activism challenges taxidermic views (Rony, 1996) and provides a gendered narrative that destabilizes a mainstream-media-formed image of pan-Indianism on screen. The legacy of Indigenous representation and activism challenges nostalgia through Indigenous-led media making, and redefines how the stories of resistance are told, shared, and consumed. Against the taxidermic tradition, Hopinka's film allows Indigenous people to grow and change on the screen.

A second interviewee is introduced as a disembodied male voice named Terry. From my cultural references, I understand the accent of the disembodied voice of the second interviewee, Terry, to be from a reservation community. The tone reminds me of the rural tribal landscape. I can clearly see the figure this voice might belong to, which could easily fit into the 1968 trope of an AIM activist. Hopinka's choice to not have Terry's image on screen again challenges the expectation of a White gaze. Whether this was conscious or not, Hopinka fuels our nostalgic imagining. In juxtaposition to the first interview, I find the lack of image appropriate to present this voice without a body. Terry's voice cuts over the landscape and narrates his experience.

The many elements of the film allow for space, time, and context to be explored from varying disciplines. Since we never see Terry, we can only imagine what he looks like, and ironically he states, "All media and all representation, all of . . . our . . . even as a basis our country's infrastructure is completely catering to a White world's rules" (Hopinka, 2017, 00:06:28). Hopinka later described in an interview with Vdrome's Carly Whitefield (2018) that *Dislocation Blues* was an opportunity to hold himself accountable and to provide "a place for Cleo and Terry to do the same, without the burden of representation falling on any of our shoulders, as is often the case for anyone that's historically been Othered" (para. 3). The characters refer to an infrastructure of representation that has built a nostalgic view of AIM and other activist moments from 1968. The archival methods employed previously to document the movements are grounded in what Terry articulates in the film as "White world's rules" (Hopinka, 2017, 00:06:39). Hopinka's film does the opposite. Cleo and Terry's voices are not isolated, and Hopinka forces us to see what Indigenous narratives are like, outside a White gaze.

Dislocation Blues evokes a complicated sense of nostalgia. Hopinka reminds us of the long legacy of Indigenous activism without relying on historical tropes. Nostalgia can be argued to be a construction of the past that engages individual and collective memories (Menke, 2017). The nostalgia that Hopinka references stems from the characters' understandings of their places within the movement as opposed to a forced representation of their savagery. The nostalgia Terry and Cleo feel is not for a skewed image of themselves but for a sense of comradeship and interconnectedness as Water Protectors. The sense of collective memory and nostalgia builds on what has been presented in other media spaces, and what Hopinka is choosing to share with the viewer are moments of singing, prayer, random Water Protectors yelling "Mni Wiconi," and so forth. The moments show the energy that is directed toward those who were at the camps while drawing out relationality that is not reflective of the violence of heteropatriarchy.

Dislocation Blues offers a fragmented and imperfect introspective narrative of the Standing Rock Oceti Sakowin Camp. I look critically at the gendered leadership, relational significance, and other-than-human relationships of land and community by providing an analysis of the film. Sky Hopinka's experimental film demonstrates the shift in Western heteronormative perspectives of opposition and how

visual communication can impact our understanding of activist movements. *Dislocation Blues* evokes a sense of nostalgic activism without relying on historical tropes while also addressing the way memory influences shared experiences of resistance spaces. Hopinka provides a key understanding of relationality through digital platforms by creating a visual representation of activism that operates outside the heteronormative space.

My focus on Sky Hopinka's experimental work draws into focus less mainstream approaches to documenting moments of Indigenous resistance. A quick Internet search provides a laundry list of media commentary, novels, academic articles, and syllabi that direct the audience to alternative conversations about the occupation. There have been several Standing Rock documentaries that share integral stories of the standoff. The 2017 documentary *Awake, A Dream From Standing Rock*, codirected in 2017 by Josh Fox, James Spione, and Myron Dewey (Paiute-Shoshone), highlights the amazing footage captured by Dewey during the occupation. Other pieces produced for mainstream media in 2017 include *Standing Rock: People and Pride* by First Nations filmmakers Kim Wheeler and Rosanna Deerchild (2017, produced for CBC's *Unreserved*) and two episodes, Part I and Part II, from Viceland's *RISE* directed by nonnative filmmaker and director Michelle Latimer (2017a, 2017b), hosted by Sarain Fox (Anishinaabekwe). However, Hopinka states that his documentation began as a visceral response to the numerous film crews at the camp (as cited in Whitefield, 2018, para. 2). The resulting experimental film was made for and with members of the camp without the burden of representation.

Conclusion

Recently, a colleague of mine shared a photo of their father standing guard at the occupation of Wounded Knee 1973 (Figure 6). The photo was shared through social media with exclamations of honor and pride. We understand a complicated nostalgia—the politics of feeling immense pride while also attending to the trauma inherited by settler-colonial constructs. Tribal specific theories are needed to interrogate documentary and ethnographic films, especially when mainstream media continue to be influenced by settler logic. Settler media continue to have a heavy hand in creating a specific historicized version of Indigenous people that cannot shift or change. With Indigenous creators like Hopinka, we continue to contribute to an archive that centers relationality and other-than-human kin.



Figure 6. "An Indian sentry stands watch, protected by a derelict auto and sandbags, holding a hunting rifle. The Indians, though poorly armed and outnumbered on April 17, 1973, in Wounded Knee, South Dakota, the United States" (Winter, 1973).

We need self-reflexive tribal voices in the stories of Indigenous resistance. A self-reflexive relational analysis shifts the deficit model of narratives based on heteronormativity unlike the myriad materials produced about Wounded Knee 1890 (Greene, 2014) or Wounded Knee 1973 that demonstrate rhetorical analysis (Sanchez & Stuckey, 2000) or provide a spatial analysis (D'Arcus, 2003), cultural analysis (Ortiz, 1980), or political analyses (Johnson, 2007). A self-reflexive analysis offers a more nuanced transformation of the different nostalgia moments, including reflecting our relationships to other-than-human people and resistance moments that do not center on heteropatriarchy. We should be able to narrate and craft the image of our relationships with culture, self, and place.

By presenting an Indigenous narrative that disrupts conventional stories of protest and subverts settler stereotypes of Indigenous people, artists like Hopinka (2017) show us how to approach this urgent work. *Dislocation Blues* (Hopinka, 2017) presents Indigenous people as an ever-changing and moving community in opposition to taxidermic images of Indigenous resistance. By representing a relational connection to the land and place articulated through tribal specific theories, Hopinka's film teaches us "how to productively imagine an alternative future to the one offered up by dominant culture narratives" (Raheja, 2017, p. 241). The afterlife of AIM lingers in the dominant portrayal of violent protesters every time a new

protest movement is on us. But as Cleo tells us in *Dislocation Blues*, we stop worrying about ourselves within a settler-colonial logic and start relating to other-than-human people instead. We live in the afterlife of 1968.

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