A Review of *Native Activism in Cold War America* and *A Lawyer in Indian Country*

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A Lawyer in Indian Country and *Native Activism in Cold War America* are two books that shed light on a subject that may not receive as much attention as it is due. The topic that both authors seek to bring to life is the struggle for sovereignty among Native American tribes. In *Native Activism in Cold War America,* Daniel M. Cobb places Native American activism in the context of the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. When most people think about the Civil Rights movement, images of Martin Luther King Jr., sit-ins, and the march on Washington D.C. may come to mind. However, what many people do not know is that Native activists also demonstrated to call attention to the issues that they were fighting for. In some cases they were even side-by-side with African-American and Latino activists. Cobb not only describes Native Americans' struggles against the United States government during the 1960s, but he also analyzes a transition of power among their leadership. As he vividly chronicles, the National Congress of American Indians lost ground to the National Indian Youth Council in a battle between "old-fashioned" forms of activism and the street-level, direct activism preferred by a younger generation. Though Cobb's book is scholarly, he makes it an easy read by providing a rich back-story and bringing life to the various names on the pages. *A Lawyer in Indian Country*, on the other hand, is from the start a narrative read. Ziontz interweaves a personal narrative with a history of Native American activism. Although Ziontz and Cobb cover roughly the same time period (Ziontz's story extends through the 1980s), Ziontz examines the successes and failures of achieving tribal sovereignty largely in the context of state and federal court decisions. In an autobiographical journey across Indian country, he encounters several tribes that need his legal help to assert their sovereign rights. For each tribe, he provides interesting details -- a brief history or perhaps a short biography of one of the respected tribal members. In this way Ziontz makes it clear that his book is not a documentation of his life; it is actually a biography of each Indian tribe that he has had the fortunate opportunity to work with to fight for something that he believes in—tribal sovereignty.

Cobb begins *Native Activism in Cold War America* by introducing the reader to the various players involved in the post-WWII Indian rights movement. D'Arcy

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McNickle, former Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) employee turned leader of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), reoccurs throughout the book as a defining leader for the movement. Where McNickle is presented as a hero of sorts, Stewart Udall, who was the Secretary of Interior (1961-1969), is the villain, creating obstacles for Native American activists every step of the way. McNickle and NCAI believed activism meant going directly to the government and lobbying for tribal sovereignty in a very planned and composed way. In the beginning, the NCAI petitioned the government, held town hall meetings, and sought to get legislation passed that would provide tribal governments with more resources and powers. The achieve this goal, the NCAI employed a clever "inside out" strategy similar to that used by developing nations vying for benefits from both the United States and Russia during the Cold War. Vine Deloria Jr., another leading member of the NCAI, coordinated this strategy, which pitted the BIA against the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). Deloria said that the key was to "praise one agency while kicking…another" (Cobb 126). The OEO was priding itself on its grand support from Indians, so it continued to bend to their wishes. The BIA, on the other hand, was being viewed as the enemy and scrambled to find a way to please the NCAI so they would become favored by Native Americans. By using this technique, the NCAI was able to have the upper hand for once in Indian affairs. Through the OEO, tribes won grants for Community Action programs; these were programs that would give tribes autonomy to manage their own programs such as Head Start, Legal Services, or Neighborhood Youth Corps without asking the BIA for permission first (Cobb 126). Using this tactic, the number of tribal Community Action programs rose to more than sixty across the country—a definite accomplishment for Native Americans, who sought greater powers and roles for their tribal governments.

However, the tactics that the NCAI employed were time-consuming, and change was slow to come. The National Indian Youth Council (NIYC), a group comprised of Indian youth who attended the Workshop on American Indian Affairs (begun in the 1950s and supported by the NCAI), was getting frustrating with their elders' slow pace. A rift occurred between the NIYC and the NCAI after the Vietnam War escalated, causing the War on Poverty to be shoved aside on the agenda. The NIYC believed in using direct action to strengthen tribal sovereignty. Mel Thom, the president of NIYC, headed the Committee of 100, which subsequently led to the creation of the Poor People Campaign of 1968, drawing Indians from all areas of the country to meet at Washington D.C. and present their charges against the United States government to members of President Johnson's cabinet. Taking their cues from the black youth who were active in the Civil Rights movement, the NIYC also coordinated fish-ins, a sit-in in the middle of Washington D.C. that lasted several weeks, and even a protest at the Supreme Court. This form of direct action is what they believed the elders were missing. However zealous the NIYC was in taking control of the fight for Indian