a first-rate community organizer who rallied the local community to work together to achieve its objectives. In Oklahoma, under her direction, community volunteers constructed a new rural water system and over two dozen homes for low income families (Mankiller 234). In contrast to Means, who believed the attention of the national news media was needed to draw support and resources to the Native American movement, Mankiller proved that Indian communities could be improved without becoming a national spectacle.

The goals set by Wilma Mankiller during her time as chief also illustrate the differences between her style of leadership and that of Russell Means. Means and his followers pursued extremely ideological goals that demanded significant action on behalf of the federal government. In addition, Means was unwilling to compromise, and during the Wounded Knee occupation he stated that either the United States government agreed to the activists' demands or else "wipe out the old people, women, children, and men" of Wounded Knee "by shooting and attacking " them (Smith and Warrior 203). In contrast, Mankiller's more specific and practical goals, such as improved housing conditions and literacy rates, could be achieved by relying upon the labor of community volunteers and becoming familiar with the process of obtaining federal grant monies (Mankiller 233-235).

Lastly, Mankiller's attitude toward adversity and political opponents was less aggressive than that of Russell Means. After a close encounter with death, Mankiller adopted "a Cherokee approach to life," which emphasized positive thinking and making the best out of any situation (Mankiller 226). Therefore, when faced with sexist political criticism, Mankiller refused to engage in political mud-slinging; rather she built her campaign around the positive qualities she had to offer the Cherokee nation and her experience with grassroots organizations (Mankiller 243). Instead of emphasizing the positive aspects of his position, Russell Means frequently engaged in public name-calling with his opponents (Smith and Warrior 191). Whereas Mankiller had taken pride in building an optimistic and forward-looking campaign, Means focused upon drawing attention to the harm caused by the federal government in the past without providing any clear plan for the future. In the end, neither Means' aggressive tactics nor his continued focus on the past produced favorable consequences

for the American Indian Movement (Smith and Warrior 276).

Conclusion

The success of Wilma Mankiller was the result of her ability to learn from the mistakes of Indian leaders who came before her, such as Russell Means. While his passion for Indian reform won Means the support of many Indians, lack of organization and a propensity for violence also earned AIM an unpopular reputation. In contrast, although the radical actions of AIM inspired Wilma Mankiller to leave her troubled marriage and return to her homeland, she realized that violence and public spectacle were often ineffective; therefore, she opted for a more pacifist approached that allowed her to gain the support of both the Indian community and the national public.

References

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