

Multimedia Primary Source Discussion Set

The American Indian Movement (AIM)

URL: https://americanarchive.org/primary_source_sets/american-indian-movement

Teaching Tips

This resource set is composed completely of excerpts from public radio programs, documentaries, and interviews, which, in particular, give voice to the thoughts, experiences, and objectives of prominent members and participants of the American Indian Movement (AIM). Primarily chronological in content, this resource set gives students information about the circumstances that gave rise to AIM and provides first-hand observations about AIM protests, objectives, challenges, and accomplishments.

Background Information

Before engaging with this resource set, students should be familiar with the following:

- the Wounded Knee massacre of 1890
- the Dawes Act and the 1924 Immigration Act
- the concept of sovereignty
- the timeline of the American Indian Movement

Essential Question

What do the voices of AIM members and their supporters contribute to our understanding of how Native Americans became a minority group within the United States and how that affected their lived experience?

General Discussion Questions

- What circumstances gave rise to and fueled AIM?
- What was the role of AIM in the late 1960s and the 1970s?
- How have these primary source clips affected your understanding of U.S and Native American history?

Classroom Activities

Ask students to engage in group work around specific topics, then come together to discuss.

- 1) Divide the class into four topic groups as outlined below. Ask each group to watch or listen to the sources assigned to their topic. They should take notes on their topic and prepare to share their findings with the whole class.

Group 1: Origins

[The State of Indians in 1968](#) (1968)

[Russell Means Radio Interview](#) (1992)

[Interview of Vernon Bellecourt, AIM Leader](#) (1973)

Group 2: Sovereignty and Cultural Identity

[The State of Indians in 1968](#) (1968)

[Survival Schools](#) (1978)

[Native American Attitudes Toward "Columbus Day"](#) (1992)

Group 3: Protest

[Radio Free Alcatraz Episode, Hosted by John Trudell](#) (1969)

[Pine Ridge Reservation Residents Discuss AIM](#) (1973)

[AIM Takeover of Fairchild Camera and Instrument Corporation](#) (1975)

Group 4: Federal Perspective and Policy

[The State of Indians in 1968](#) (1968)

[Radio Free Alcatraz Episode, Hosted by John Trudell](#) (1969)

[Pine Ridge Reservation Residents Discuss AIM](#) (1973)

- 2) Bring students back together and use the discussion questions below to organize and invite input from the four different groups.

What do you identify as primary issues that fueled the American Indian Movement (recognizing that these varied across different tribes, regions, and reservations)?

What is the significance of reservations with respect to Native Americans' experiences and rights?

What forms did AIM activism take? Which activist strategies do you think were most effective? Why?

How would you describe the federal government's approach to Native Americans and their rights and identity? Why might the federal government have adopted such an approach?