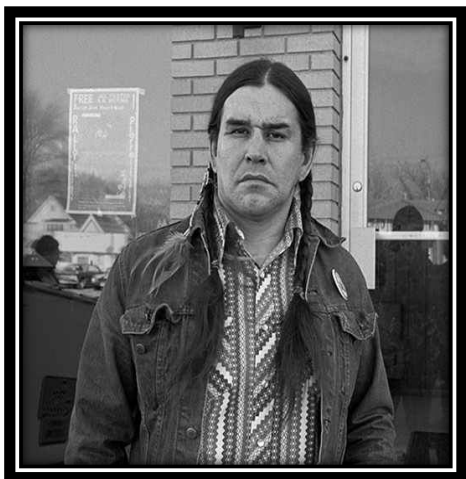


PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

CLYDE BELLECOURT

organizer, innovator, activist

"We are the landlords of the country, it is the end of the month, the rent is due, and AIM is going to collect"



PICTURE BY LASSE HEJLL, 1974

Background Information

Born: May 8, 1936

Original Name: Nee-gon-we-way-we-dun; which means "Thunder Before the Storm"

Clyde Bellecourt is an Ojibwe civil rights organizer, known for co-founding the American Indian Movement (AIM) in 1968. He was born on the White Earth Indian Reservation in northern Minnesota. Growing up, Bellecourt attended a reservation mission school, and then later moved to Minneapolis.

Bellecourt's Resistance

Bellecourt helped found the American Indian Movement (AIM) in 1968 with Dennis Banks and George Mitchell of the Leech Lake Reservation. AIM was founded to raise awareness about the challenges Native Americans faced in Minneapolis. They also work to discuss solutions to issues such as police harassment, discrimination in the workplace, poor housing and unemploymentⁱ.

Bellecourt was also involved with the organizing of the Trail of Broken Treaties March on Washington, D.C., in 1972 to demand new laws to remove the corrupt Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). In a 20-point proposal, they advocated for establishing a Federal Indian Commission, so they could report Native American relations directly to the president. Bellecourt was involved in several other protests over the years, including the occupation of the town of Wounded Kneeⁱⁱ. He also founded the Heart of the Earth School in 1972, to serve the Native American population in Minneapolis. Bellecourt's activism was part of the larger Civil Rights Era of the 1960's and 1970's, and his goal was to achieve civil rights for Native Americans.

Achievements

Bellecourt continues to have a leadership role in AIM. He is also a leader of the National Coalition on Racism in Sports and the Media. He remains dedicated to the fight for Native American justice.

Essential Questions

1. Clyde Bellecourt participated in a several protests and marches. How else can a person be an activist?

2. Bellecourt has fought tirelessly for Native American rights, but he also went to prison for crimes such as burglary and selling drugs? Do his bad choices diminish his good actions? Why or Why not?

3. Bellecourt’s Heart of the Earth school was designed in response to the needs of the Native community in Minneapolis. How does your school respond to the needs of your community?

4. ***“We are the landlords of the country, it is the end of the month, the rent is due, and AIM is going to collect”***
 - a. What do you think he means by being the ‘landlords of the country’ and how do you think AIM is intending to ‘collect’? What other groups are “due rent” in America and how can America pay the bill?

ⁱ “Civil Rights, Sovereign Rights.” Indivisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas. Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, 2019. Retrieved from https://americanindian.si.edu/exhibitions/indivisible/civil_rights.html. Accessed 29 October 2019.

ⁱⁱ Davis, Davis (2013). Survival Schools: The American Indian Movement and Community Education in the Twin Cities. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Accessed 29 October 2019.