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The Origins of Indigenism

Indigenism can be seen as a social and political movement that is based upon a global indigenous identity. Indigenous peoples are in a struggle for achieving self-determination, and a fight to achieve its goals and get past any obstacles by using political strategies as one attempt to accomplish this.

One step for Indigenous people in their fight for Indigenism and self-determination is that they made it into an international movement. Which “aspires to promote and protect the rights of the world’s “first peoples” (4). This is pressing for colonial powers; who should in some sense feel some guilt and pain for what they did to Indigenous people and deal with the legacy of colonialism. So one must also note that the term Indigenous today “is both a fragile legal concept and the indefinite, unachievable sum of the historical and personal experiences of those gathered in a room who share, at the very least, the notion that they have all been oppressed in similar ways for similar motives by similar state and corporate entities” (4). It has also “arisen out of the shared experiences of marginalized groups facing the negative impacts of resource extraction and economic modernization” (9).

In every attempt to resist the state they have taken this matter to the international level because they are not powerful enough in own state society. However in order to do this Indigenous peoples are using politics of embarrassment or also know as shame. When using this tactic they are essentially saying “look what you’ve done”. The exploitation and the idea of having state’s recognize Indigenous people, and the fact that

they should do something to make up at least a tiny bit for the suffering of Indigenous peoples by those who thought they were superior; usually justified by a number of ideologies: racism, manifest destiny, and Christianity for example. Given that race was a justification for exploitation because of the ideology of not being white meant not civilized. Since at the time of contact Indigenous peoples had the autonomy of economic, political, and cultural means. They were essentially self-efficient and supporting, culturally defined and had a ruling body. Identity was their own and basically a sense of “self” (who they were). So all state societies had to do was destroy Indigenous peoples economic autonomy to get rid of them because all the others would crumble as well, and they would no longer be able to feed themselves, etc.

Indigenous peoples have a great focus toward conscious rising at the social level which can be called the world level. This is successful by the use of media and demonstrations for example. With the use of what can be called weapons of the weak because a group made a threat to commit suicide if oil drilling took place on their land. Also the Zapatista in Chiapas give a prime example of manipulating the media when they had civilians come and that kept the military away.

The role of Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), environmental groups, and Amnesty International are all prime examples of the birth of a new civil society that is global, that people are victimized. Using the United Nations (UN) is of great importance because it brings attention by the use of the international platform.

Collective rights is the founding principal of liberal democracy, and these are people who were self-defined and rich in self-determination before a state even existed so Indigenous peoples should be recognized. So the state should recognize that history and

should allow for collective rights. All they want is for these to get recognized however the U.N. when talking about their attempts toward Indigenism doesn't refer to them as people but as either populations or Indigenous Issues. The avoidance of using the "peoples" is an attempt to have rights being individual and not collective, which becomes a major obstacle.

The process of decolonization has only gone so far so the next step should be the recognition of Indigenous people, and the relationship of a power sharing sort with the state. However the state probably will never want to give up even some power, one reason being is that it might be threatening to them. This is because Indigenous people might want to have their own state, but Indigenous people only want to be recognized as nations within nations.

States overlook the benefits of Indigenous peoples because it might benefit other people or the government. Seeing as how they would rather help others before they would even think of helping an Indigenous population. This maybe another contributing factor to why Indigenous people are resisting the state. Also because like Job (Cree) said "the white man has the money while the Indian man has the land and the white man will always have the money, but will always want the land".