



International Indian Treaty Council
Consejo Internacional de Tratados Indios

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IITC Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**INTERNATIONAL INDIAN TREATY COUNCIL TO HOST INDIGENOUS PEOPLES THANKSGIVING
SUNRISE GATHERING COMMEMORATING THE
50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1969 ALCATRAZ OCCUPATION**

Alcatraz Island, San Francisco, CA: On the morning of Thursday, November 28th, 2019 the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) will host the 41st Annual Indigenous Peoples Thanksgiving Sunrise Gathering at Alcatraz Island, Ohlone Territory. This year's gathering will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Alcatraz occupation. It will honor the veterans of that historic event for Indigenous Peoples, which was organized by a group of Indian students and young people calling themselves "Indians of All Tribes". It began on November 20th, 1969, and lasted 19 months, sparking international attention and an Indigenous Peoples movement for rights and justice which continues to this day.

IITC's Executive Director Andrea Carmen, Yaqui Nation emphasizes the importance of these annual sunrise gatherings. *"It's very important that we continue to carry out these gatherings twice a year on this sacred and historic place to tell the truth about our histories, share our cultures and commemorate and give thanks to all those who have gone before us and who left us these ways, no matter what they had to sacrifice. We also give thanks for the lives of our children and future generations and recommit ourselves to do whatever is needed to protect Mother Earth and our ways of life so that they can survive and thrive."*

Morning Star Gali, Pit River Nation and IITC's California Community and Tribal Liaison Coordinator affirms the special significance of this year's gathering: *"We are gathering together tomorrow morning in prayer, thanksgiving and solidarity, sharing our resilient cultures and honoring the original occupiers who stood up and paved the way for us by asserting sovereignty and Self-determination for all Indigenous Peoples. 50 years later, we continue their commitment to defend the rights of Indigenous Peoples in the spirit of unity, resistance and healing."*

During the original occupation a group of young people and their families stayed on the island for 19 months in defiance of the Coast Guard and Federal government. Their actions called attention to the historic and ongoing repression of Indigenous Peoples in the United States,

*Working for the Rights and Recognition of Indigenous Peoples
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including massacres, Treaty violations, assimilation, termination, removal of Indigenous children to Boarding Schools and forced relocation. The occupation gave rise to an international Indigenous movement which includes work at the United Nations on urgent concerns such as human rights, environmental protection and climate change and inspired international solidarity campaigns to support critical struggles to halt criminalization and assassinations of Indigenous human and environmental rights defenders, destruction of sacred sites, border violence, land appropriations and missing and murdered Indigenous women. In the Words of Akwesasne Mohawk occupation leader Richard Oakes: *“Alcatraz is not an island. It’s an idea.”*

The November 28th Sunrise gathering will begin at 5 AM with an Ohlone welcome and California Indian traditional dance groups from the Lone Band of Miwok and Round Valley Pomo. The program will include speakers and singers from California and across the continent and will include presentations by original Alcatraz occupiers and their families.

Boats will leave for the Sunrise Gathering from Alcatraz Cruises, Pier 33, starting at 4:15 AM. A limited amount of tickets will be available for purchase at the dock beginning at 3:00 AM on November 28th. For those unable to participate in person, the program will be aired live on KPFA, 94.1, or online at kpfa.org. All events are handicap accessible and offered free of charge, although tickets are required to take the ferry. The event is open to the community and the public. For more info: <https://www.iitc.org>.

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The IITC is an organization of Indigenous Peoples from North, Central, South America, the Arctic, Caribbean and Pacific working for the sovereignty and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples and the recognition and protection of Indigenous rights, Treaties, traditional cultures and sacred lands. Founded on the Standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota in June 1974, the IITC became the first Indigenous Peoples’ organization to be recognized as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) with Consultative Status to the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 1977. In 2011, IITC was the first to be upgraded to General Consultation Status in recognition of its active participation in a wide range of international bodies and processes in order to advance, defend and recognize the rights of Indigenous Peoples. IITC’s office in San Francisco is located at 2940 16th St. Ste 305 in San Francisco, phone number (415) 641-4482, email to iitc@treatycouncil.org.