



**International Indian Treaty Council**  
***Consejo Internacional de Tratados Indios***

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## **INTERNATIONAL INDIAN TREATY COUNCIL TO HOST INDIGENOUS PEOPLES THANKSGIVING SUNRISE GATHERING ON ALCATRAZ ISLAND**



*Round Valley Pomo Dancers, Alcatraz Sunrise gathering October 11, 2021*

*Yelamu, Ohlone Territory (San Francisco, CA):* In the early morning of Thursday, November 25, 2021 the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) will host its 43rd Annual Indigenous Peoples Thanksgiving Sunrise Gathering on Alcatraz Island, Ohlone Territory.

Affirming truth in history, the IITC remembers the 700 Pequot men, women and children that were massacred by Dutch and British mercenaries in 1637, which was celebrated the next day in a proclamation by the governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony as a "day of Thanksgiving". IITC also remembers that the first prisoners in what would become Alcatraz Federal prison were California Indians who resisted colonization by missionaries including Junipero Serra, as well as Hopis who refused to allow their children to be forcibly removed to boarding schools.

IITC's Executive Director Andrea Carmen, Yaqui Nation, affirms that "It's important to remember the brutal history of genocide that Indigenous Peoples have suffered. It's also important that we gather together to give thanks for our lives, the survival and resiliency of our cultures and the spirit of resistance passed down to us by our ancestors. Because of their courage and sacrifice, we still have these sacred ways that continue to give us strength to be who we are".

The event will also commemorate the 52nd anniversary of the Alcatraz occupation 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 the national and international Indigenous Peoples movement for rights and justice which continues to this day.

The original occupiers were considered to be criminals and the occupation ended with their arrest and removal by armed federal marshals on June 11th, 1971. History has come to reflect a different perspective. The occupation is highlighted as a key historical event in the daily tours of Alcatraz. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors issued a proclamation in 2009 recognizing the importance of this event in San Francisco's history. Most recently, on November 20th, 2021 US Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, Laguna Pueblo, attended an event held on the island to honor the original occupiers, and offered a statement affirming the importance of this act of defiance in bringing the historic injustices carried out against American Indians to light.

Akwesasne Mohawk occupation leader Richard Oakes, who led the occupation stated at the time that "Alcatraz is not an island. It's an idea." IITC affirms that after 52 years, that idea continues to grow stronger.

IITC Board member Lenny Foster, Dine Nation, who participated in the original 1969 occupation as a young college student, emphasized the importance of these annual sunrise gatherings. "I extend my best wishes, love and solidarity to all those who will gather on this day. It's very important that we continue to carry out these sunrise gatherings 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."

Morning Star Gali, Pit River Nation and IITC's California Community and Tribal Liaison 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. 52 years later, we continue their commitment to defend the rights of Indigenous Peoples in the spirit of unity, resistance and healing."

The November 25th Sunrise gathering will begin on the parade ground on the Island at 5:30 AM with an Ohlone welcome and the Round Valley Pomo dancers. The program will include speakers, drummers, dancers and singers from across California, the continent, and the world.

Boats will leave for the Sunrise Gathering from Pier 33 in San Francisco, starting at 4:15 AM. A limited number of tickets will be available for purchase at the dock beginning at 3:00 AM. For those unable to participate in person, the program will be aired live on KPFA, 94.1 FM, or online at [kpfa.org](http://kpfa.org). It will also be livestreamed on the IITC Facebook page. The event will be ADA accessible and shuttles will be available for those that need them on the island. The event is open to the community and the public.

Media contacts for this event will be Morning Star Gali, [morningstar@treatycouncil.org](mailto:morningstar@treatycouncil.org), (916) 996-6580 and Andrea Carmen, [andrea@treatycouncil.org](mailto:andrea@treatycouncil.org), (520) 273-6003. For more information log on to IITC's web page: <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 San Francisco office is located in the Ft. Mason Arts and Cultural Center, telephone (415) 641-4482, email to [iitc@treatycouncil.org](mailto:iitc@treatycouncil.org).*