

# Leadership in Cinema



Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program

## WE SHALL REMAIN – EPISODE 5: WOUNDED KNEE

(Inspired by real life events)

Submitted by: Pam McDonald ..... E-mail: [pmcdonal@blm.gov](mailto:pmcdonal@blm.gov)  
Phone: 208-387-5318  
Studio: American Experience (PBS) ..... Released: 2009  
Directors: Stanley Nelson  
Genre: Documentary ..... Audience Rating: Not rated  
Runtime: 80 minutes

### Materials

[Leading in the Wildland Fire Service](#), Wildland Fire Leadership Values and Principles, notepads, and writing utensils.

### Objectives

The objective of this lesson is for students to watch We Shall Remain – Episode 5: Wounded Knee and discuss what makes an effective leader, how media and politics can positively and negatively affect public opinion, and the importance of being students of fire through lessons learned.

### Basic Plot

Episode 5: Wounded Knee is the fifth documentary in a five-part mini-series devoted to Native history and the leaders that shaped American history. Episode 5 focuses on the use of the media and other means of influencing public opinion, female leadership, civil disobedience, and the continued struggle between Native Americans and the Federal government.

## Facilitator Notes

Discussion of the events at Wounded Knee (1973) can spur lively debate. Facilitators should encourage debate that promotes leadership development and abides by the values and principles of the wildland fire service.

**Disclaimer:** Information and references provided within this lesson plan are intended for the sole purpose of sharing knowledge to improve leadership and organizational learning throughout the wildland fire community. No endorsement of any contributor or their opinions is given or implied and is presented to begin respectful discussion.

## Facilitation Tips

1. Organize a group of students to participate in the We Shall Remain – Episode 5: Wounded Knee discussion.
2. Have students watch individually or as a group We Shall Remain – Episode 5: Wounded Knee.
3. Conduct a guided discussion (handout and possible comments provided). Have students discuss their findings and how they will apply leadership lessons learned to their role in wildland fire suppression. Facilitate discussion in groups that have difficulty.

[Leading in the Wildland Fire Service](#) is an integral publication in the Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program. Every wildland fire leader should possess his/her personal copy of this publication which can be order through the Publication Management System.

**Note:** The discussion questions are only a guide. Facilitators have latitude to select questions that meet timeframes and local objectives or develop questions of their own.

## References

Facilitators are encouraged to review the links below in order to obtain information that may be helpful during group/classroom discussions and for continued leadership development.

## Wounded Knee Resources

- Abourezk, James G. "[Wounded Knee 1973 Series](#)." University of South Dakota.
- Churchill, Ward. "[The Bloody Wake of Alcatraz: Political Repression of the American Indian Movement during the 1970s](#)." UCLA American Indian Studies Center.
- Scott, Sonya. "[An Examination of the Causes of Wounded Knee 1973: A Case of Intra-tribal Conflict or Response to Federal Policies toward Indians?](#)" *Historia*. Volume 17, 2008.

## Russell Means Resources

- Giago, Tim. "[What do Greenpeace and Russell Means Have in Common?](#)" Huffington Post. July 12, 2009.
- [Russell Means website](#)

- Hyperlinks have been included to facilitate the use of the [Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program website](#). Encourage students of leadership to visit the [website](#).

## We Shall Remain - Episode 5: Wounded Knee

### Guided Discussion – Possible Answers

1. Consider the following quote from page 6 of [Leading in the Wildland Fire Service](#) “Fire leaders bring order to chaos, improve our people’s lives, and strengthen our organizations.” There seemed to be a whole lot of chaos on the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1973. What factors played a part in creating such an environment?
  - Answers will vary, but may include those written by Sonya Scott in “An Examination of the Causes of Wounded Knee 1973: A Case of Intra-tribal Conflict or Response to Federal Policies Toward Indians?” (Historia, Volume 17, 2008.)
    - Reservation politics
    - Federal policies
    - Race and ethnicity as defined in both Indian and Euro-American terms
    - Supra-tribal consciousness emerging in a civil rights climate
    - Charges of injustice against Indians
    - Numerous co-existing struggles
      - Richard Wilson and Russell Means
      - AIM/Russell Means and the federal government
      - National interests (access to energy resources)
      - Indian interests
2. Leaders are often distracted by issues unrelated to the mission at hand. What issues may have distracted Federal government leaders from hearing protestor calls for a federal investigation of corruption on South Dakota reservations as well as hearings on broken treaties? Avoid the temptation to debate whether or not these issues actually occurred or distracted leaders. What issues distract the wildland fire leader from his/her mission of wildland fire suppression?
  - Answers will vary, but may include:
    - “Why not? You know, I don’t see why the North Vietnamese should take precedent over the American Indian people. You know, we’ve been fighting this war for 400 years. And if he can spare the time to go over there, he should be able to spare the time to come here.” (24:59-25:13)
    - “There’s no question that the White House was distracted during this Wounded Knee siege. Although they sent midlevel officials out to run this siege operation, they didn’t have their mind on it. Nixon had his mind on trying to survive the Watergate thing. Things might have turned out a lot differently had they not been distracted.” (25:35-26:01)
    - “With the White House increasingly preoccupied with Watergate, the government had allowed the occupation of Wounded Knee to drag on. But at the end of March, the Justice Department sent a new negotiator who changed tactics.” (52:28-52:48)

- Answers will vary, but may include:
    - Jurisdictional lines blur or overlap
    - Political pressure
    - Media requests
    - Major fire event (fatality, burnover, etc.)
    - Personal considerations (family, stress, skill level)
3. Put yourself in the position of one of the five traditional Oglala chiefs during the occupation. What is the situation? What are your options?
- Answers will vary, but may include
    - “Calling in AIM is attractive, but it’s a roll of the dice. It’s a roll of the dice because where AIM goes chaos often follows. So that when those traditional chiefs bring in AIM, they’re doing this in full knowledge that as they go down the road they don’t know exactly what’s going to happen.” (20:51-21:11)
    - “The Oglalas had exhausted all legal options. They believed that to put an end to Wilson’s harassment and intimidation, they needed what AIM could offer.” (21:11-21:22)
    - “At a crowded meeting at a community center, dissident Oglalas, five traditional chiefs, and AIM representatives finally arrived at a radical plan: together they would seize the town of Wounded Knee. They would force Dick Wilson from office, and, for the first time in nearly a century, draw national attention to Indian concerns.” (22:00-22:20)
    - “Fools Crow and the other Oglala leaders had had enough. Despite AIM’s objections, they insisted on bringing the occupation to an end.” (1:06:31-1:06:42)
4. Leaders on all sides of the conflict were passionate and often aggressive about their causes. Is aggressiveness in a leader good or bad? Respectfully discuss in your groups a personal experience where overly-aggressive behavior undermined organizational effectiveness. If your group lacks personal experiences, debate whether AIM’s, Dick Wilson’s, or federal government official leadership styles were too aggressive. Discuss how this topic relates to “Art of Leadership” found in *Leading in the Wildland Fire Service*, page 9.
- Answers will vary.
    - Aggressiveness in a leader can be a strength and a weakness. (Quotes from “Aggressive Leadership: When Does Strength Become Weakness?” by Robert L. Turknnett and James L. Anderson)
    - Strength – “when associated with a drive for results, a willingness to take risks, and the pursuit of new business”
    - Weakness – “when it erodes interpersonal relationships”
    - “By 1973, the Lakota way of life on the plains was largely in the past. The Oglala Sioux Tribal government ran things on Pine Ridge, and where traditional chiefs had once sought consensus, elected Chairman Dick Wilson ruled with an iron hand.” (8:23-8:46)

- “When traditional Oglalas challenged corruption in tribal government, Dick Wilson responded with force.” (9:33-9:42)
  - “The military response is overwhelming. It involves plans using the US army to put down this rebellion. Clearly there are people within the Federal government who see a need to take it to the limit.” (13:15-13:44)
  - “Since its founding in 1968 the American Indian Movement had been divisive—its militant tactics controversial even among Native people.” (17:23-18:15)
  - “There was absolutely an element in AIM that considered itself a revolutionary organization who were comfortable being around guns, who absolutely loved the idea of AIM being outlaws - who just wanted to get it on.” (20:18-20:35)
  - *Leading in the Wildland Fire Service* – “Art of Leadership”
    - “Leaders deeply affect people and organizations, both positively and negatively.”
    - “Ultimately, the art of leadership requires successfully balancing many factors in the real world, based on the situation at hand, to achieve a successful outcome.”
5. Read “Situational Communication” on pages 51 and 52 of *Leading in the Wildland Fire Service*. How did leaders within this conflict use media? How effective was the use of this tactic?
- Leaders on both sides of the conflict fought much of the battle in the courts of public opinion via the media. The tactic proved both good and bad depending on what which side of the conflict you were on and whether more pressing media events (Watergate) overshadowed the coverage—negative for protestors, positive for the government.
    - “AIM can bring bodies. They can bring people. They have the phone numbers of people at TV networks uh, who can get on airplanes and bring television cameras out. None of the established national Indian organizations can do what AIM does.” (21:22-21:41)
    - “This is where the television crews await the hour-by-hour events in Wounded Knee. This privileged position is protected by the Indian Chiefs. Clearly the chiefs are anxious that this rebellion and its outcome receive as much publicity as possible.” (31:49-32:09)
    - “One week into the siege, all three television networks had stationed reporters in Wounded Knee. Polls estimated that more than 90% of Americans were following the crisis on the nightly news.” (32:40-32:55)
    - “If they came and killed all of us, it would be recorded and it would be seen by the world where the 1890 massacre wasn’t. And if they didn’t, if they decided, you know, that that media was there so they don’t want to murder all of us, well, then the media is there to tell our side of the story.” (32:55-33:15)

- “I frankly think that the barring of the news media has had an effect on negotiations. A positive effect from the government’s point of view because....” (53:28-53:40)
  - “Marlon Brando refused his Oscar for Best Actor in *The Godfather*, in protest of the negative portrayal of Indians in the movies.” (53:55-55:03)
6. The Wounded Knee conflict of 1973 seems to follow the common mantra that “history repeats itself.” Wildland fire has historical events of its own that are destined to happen again. Discuss in your groups events from our history that may provide lessons learned for present wildland fire leaders.
- Answers will vary, but may include:
    - Refer to the vignettes referenced throughout *Leading in the Wildland Fire Service*.
    - Various tragedy fires such as Mann Gulch, Rattlesnake, Inaja, Loop, and South Canyon
      - Encourage students to participate in Leadership Challenge #3 found on page 2 of their handout.
7. What leadership role did women play in the Wounded Knee conflict of 1973?
- Answers will vary, but may include:
    - Women played a vital part in the conflict. Traditional male tribal leaders had difficulty in deciding whether to follow AIM’s radical plan. The women who had traditionally been quiet had enough and began to speak up, asking for radical action.
      - “I [Madonna Thunder Hawk] was ready to do whatever it takes for change. I didn’t care. I had children, and for them I figured I could make a stand here.” (1:06-1:17)
      - “We’ve always been peaceful and pretty much mind our own business, making our living and raising our family, law-abiding. Well I believe that the time has come that we have to commit violence in order to be heard. I don’t want to see anybody killed or anything, but the time is gonna come when violence might have to be committed in order to wake the people up.” (11:42-12:16)
      - “There was this hesitation. No one could make a decision, and no one would endorse us and then the women started to talk.” (22:46-22:56)
      - “But I’m not scared of them anymore.” (Ellen Moves Camp, 23:06-23:35)
      - “And she [Ellen Moves Camp] was pushing. And she was pushing to spark something. And, oh, it did.” (23:35-23:44)
      - “I [Madonna Thunder Hawk] knew we were making history for our people. It didn’t all happen in the 1800s. We’re still fighting in the modern day. I mean that’s how I felt! That, it was a continuation, and that’s why I was not afraid. I was not afraid.” (28:28-28:50)

8. Discuss how the following quote from LaNada Warjack could be one describing the wildland fire community. “We didn’t care what tribe anyone was. We were Indian people. We were a race.” (50:10-50:40)
  - Answers will vary, but may include
    - Wildland fire suppression is mainly an interagency effort that moves about the world suppressing wildfire and assisting with other national/international events. Each firefighter represents a specific agency, but when dispatched to an incident becomes one with representatives of other agencies to complete the mission. Uniforms are traded for Nomex uniting the many as one.

# DUTY

**Be proficient in your job, both technically & as a leader.**

- Take charge when in charge.
- Adhere to professional standard operating procedures.
- Develop a plan to accomplish given objectives.

**Make sound & timely decisions.**

- Maintain situation awareness in order to anticipate needed actions.
- Develop contingencies & consider consequences.
- Improvise within the commander's intent to handle a rapidly changing environment.

**Ensure that tasks are understood, supervised, accomplished.**

- Issue clear instructions.
- Observe & assess actions in progress without micro-managing.
- Use positive feedback to modify duties, tasks & assignments when appropriate.

**Develop your subordinates for the future.**

- Clearly state expectations.
- Delegate tasks that you are not required to do personally.
- Consider individual skill levels & developmental needs when assigning tasks.

**Know your subordinates and look out for their well-being.**

- Put the safety of your subordinates above all other objectives.
- Take care of your subordinate's needs.
- Resolve conflicts between individuals on the team.

**Keep your subordinates informed.**

- Provide accurate & timely briefings.
- Give the reason (intent) for assignments & tasks.
- Make yourself available to answer questions at appropriate times.

**Build the team.**

- Conduct frequent debriefings with the team to identify lessons learned.
- Recognize accomplishments & reward them appropriately.
- Apply disciplinary measures equally.

**Employ your subordinates in accordance with their capabilities.**

- Observe human behavior as well as fire behavior.
- Provide early warning to subordinates of tasks they will be responsible for.
- Consider team experience, fatigue & physical limitations when accepting assignments.

**Know yourself and seek improvement.**

- Know the strengths/weaknesses in your character & skill level.
- Ask questions of peers & supervisors.
- Actively listen to feedback from subordinates.

**Seek responsibility and accept responsibility for your actions.**

- Accept full responsibility for & correct poor team performance.
- Credit subordinates for good performance.
- Keep your superiors informed of your actions.

**Set the example.**

- Share the hazards & hardships with your subordinates.
- Don't show discouragement when facing setbacks.
- Choose the difficult right over the easy wrong.

# RESPECT

# INTEGRITY

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### Leadership Challenges

More times than not, leaders are individuals who have such command presence that one knows they are in a leadership position. However, a majority of our leaders are those quiet, unsung men and women who participate in the daily operations of fighting fire. Russell Means was an outspoken and often controversial leader. What kind of leader are you?

#### ***Leadership Challenge 1:***

Learn more about yourself and your leadership style through informal (online) or formal assessment processes. Informal assessments include, but are not limited to:

- Personality profiles
- Leadership style assessments

#### ***Leadership Challenge 2:***

Leaders are readers. Expand your knowledge of the quiet reader by obtaining a copy and reading *Leading Quietly* by Joseph L. Badaracco, Jr.

#### ***Leadership Challenge 3:***

Watch the 2004 Annual Fireline Safety Refresher *The Numbers Tell the Story* which touches on lessons learned and policies and procedures that came out of historical wildland fires.

#### ***Leadership Challenge 4:***

Facilitate a leadership style evaluation exercise simulating the effects of various leadership styles (e.g., heavy-handed/authoritarian, democratic, or laissez-fair) on productivity, attitude, and overall motivation.