

2021-J1710

Senate Resolution No. 1710

BY: Senator KENNEDY

MOURNING the death of Clyde Bellecourt, renowned Native American civil rights leader, distinguished citizen and devoted member of his community

WHEREAS, There are certain outstanding members of our community who, through their selfless commitment and dedication, have served to better the quality of life in our community and have had a measurable positive impact on the lives of its residents; Clyde Bellecourt was one such individual; and

WHEREAS, It is with profound sorrow and deep regret that this Legislative Body records the passing of Clyde Bellecourt, noting the significance of his purposeful life and accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, Clyde Bellecourt, founder of the American Indian Movement who led protests in the 1970s at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, and in Washington over broken treaty obligations, and who later pressured sports teams to expunge their Native American nicknames, died on Tuesday, January 11, 2022, at the age of 85; and

WHEREAS, Born on May 8, 1936, on the White Earth Indian Reservation in northwestern Minnesota, Clyde Howard Bellecourt was the seventh of 12 children born to Charles and Angeline Bellecourt; he attended a Roman Catholic mission school on the reservation until he was a teenager; and

WHEREAS, Overcoming much adversity, Clyde Bellecourt co-founded the American Indian Movement (AIM) in 1968, along with Dennis Banks, Russell Means, George Mitchell, Charles Deegan and others, to help advocate for tribal sovereignty and better housing and opportunities for Native

Americans in Minnesota and across the United States; and

WHEREAS, Clyde Bellecourt, who later worked for a utility company, was chosen as the movement's first chairman and helped launch the Trail of Broken Treaties, a long march from the West Coast to Washington in 1972; and

WHEREAS, A true asset to society, Clyde Bellecourt began the bilingual and bicultural Heart of the Earth Survival School in 1972, before establishing the Peacemaker Center for Indian youth; the American Indian Movement Patrol, to provide security for the Minneapolis Indian community; a Legal Rights Center; the Native American Community Clinic; Women of Nations Eagle's Nest Shelter; the International Indian Treaty Council; and the American Indian Opportunities Industrialization Center, a program to move welfare recipients to full-time jobs; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, he helped create the National Coalition on Racism in Sports and the Media, which urged professional, amateur and school teams to abandon nicknames like Redskins, Indians and Braves, which he saw as demeaning stereotypes; and

WHEREAS, Subsequently, in recent years, both the Washington Redskins of the National Football League and Major League Baseball's Cleveland Indians dropped their old names; and

WHEREAS, In 2016, Clyde Bellecourt published an autobiography, *Thunder Before the Storm*, in which he wrote of his own healing and the transformation of the American Indian Movement from violent confrontation to constructive engagement; and

WHEREAS, With his fierce dedication, monumental presence and selfless leadership, Clyde Bellecourt truly embodied the spirit of the American Indian Movement and the spirit of resistance, as well as the strength and the resolve its people have held for more than 530 years; and

WHEREAS, In addition to his beloved wife, Peggy Sue (Holmes)

Bellecourt, Clyde Bellecourt is survived by four children, Susan, Tonya, Little Crow and Little Wolf; and a host of grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Clyde Bellecourt's fight for justice and fairness leaves behind a powerful legacy that will continue to inspire people across our state and nation for generations to come; his insight and strength will forever serve as a beacon of love, light and hope to the countless lives he touched; he will be deeply missed and truly merits the grateful tribute of this Legislative Body; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Clyde Bellecourt, and to express its deepest condolences to his family; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Clyde Bellecourt.