

AIM Founder Speaks

In conjunction with the Oddfellows Playhouse production of Robert Savina's "Wheels Over Indian Trails" at LTV Studios in Wainscott this summer, the East Hampton-based theatre company has invited Dennis Banks, a co-founder of the American Indian Movement (AIM) to talk about issues of leadership among Native American people at the Old Whalers Church in Sag Harbor on Saturday, July 17 at 8 p.m.

Also participating in Saturday's program will be East Hampton Town Councilman Robert D. Cooper, a member of the oldest documented family in East Hampton and the great-grandson of the last leader of the Montauk Native Americans, Queen Maria Fowler Pharaoh Johnson Banks. Other leaders from Long Island nations who have been invited to take part include Chief Anthony Red Jacket Miller, chairman of the Long Island Native American Task Force, and Harry Wallace of the Poospatuck nation.

Dennis Banks, an Ashinabe, was born on Leech Lake Indian Reservation in northern Minnesota. A teacher, lecturer, activist and author, he helped to found the American Indian Movement in 1968 to protect the traditional ways of Indian people and to initiate legal actions to protect the rights of Native Americans.

In 1972, AIM organized the "Trail of Broken Treaties" caravan across the United States to Washington, D.C. When government officials refused to meet with Indian delegates, caravan members seized and occupied the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In 1973, AIM spearheaded the move on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota to oust the U.S.-appointed tribal chairman. This action led to the 71-day occupation and siege of Wounded Knee, which earned the organization national and international attention. Mr. Banks was a principal negotiator and leader of the Wounded Knee forces.

Under Mr. Banks' leadership, AIM also led a protest in Custer, South Dakota, against the judicial process which found a white man innocent of murdering an Indian. Arrested and tried, along with 300 other protestors,



DENNIS BANKS

for his involvement in demonstrations at Custer and at Wounded Knee, Mr. Banks refused to serve time and went underground, later receiving amnesty in California from Governor Jerry Brown.

In 1978, Mr. Banks established the first "spiritual run" from Davis to Los Angeles and organized the "Longest Walk"—3,600 miles from Alcatraz to Washington, D.C.—to call attention to treaties broken by the government. In 1988, Mr. Banks organized the "Sacred Run," a spiritual run from New York to San Francisco and then across Japan from Hiroshima to Hokkaido.

Mr. Banks' autobiography, *Sacred Soul*, was published in Japan in 1988, where it won the Non-Fiction Book of the Year award. He remains deeply involved with Native American affairs on many levels, traveling extensively to lecture, teach and share his experiences. Mr. Banks has also appeared in a number of films, including "War Party," "The Last of the Mohicans," and "Thunderheart."

Tickets for Saturday's program at the Old Whalers Church are \$10 at the door. For further information, call the Oddfellows Playhouse offices at 324-5797.