

This paper examines the history of two Native water rights settlements in Arizona to clarify their ethnohistorical and theoretical implications. It traces cross-cultural interactions and negotiations concerning Native water rights among the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, federal authorities, and other non-Native parties. These parties debated over the extent to which the two Native communities were entitled to water when the Salt River Project under the local water authority called the Salt River Valley Water Users' Association, attempted to adjudicate water rights for the Native peoples in the first half of the twentieth century. In the second half of the twentieth century, various parties again engaged in fierce political debates over the necessity of constructing Orme Dam as part of the Central Arizona Project at the cost of removing the Fort McDowell Yavapai community and flooding their reservation land. Dealing with these problems, Native leaders of these two communities advanced their political campaigning and negotiation skills to keep their land and livelihood, and their efforts eventually led to the passage of the two successive water rights settlements in 1988 and 1990. This paper treats the history of these settlements as the product of culturally hybrid policymaking practices that resembled Native peace treaties rather than racially designated "white" policy that aimed to extinguish Native title.