



## Standing with Standing Rock, Dakota

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In an epic struggle the first nation peoples are standing up. They are standing up against short term interests destructive of the environment, against the extractive industries so dominant in power and so dangerous to the planet's climate. They stand for non-violence, spiritually centred reverence for the natural world, they defend the sacred sites of their peoples, they defend clean water un-contaminated by oil spills or fracking chemicals. They call themselves the 'water protectors' recognising that 'water is life'. They stand for us all, though we may not recognise it.

This was in 2016. Along the camp at Oceti Sakowin wave the colourful flags of some 300 tribes who have come from across the Americas, from Argentina to Alaska ; they bring with them their traditional dress, ceremonial pipes and drums, horses, and prayer ceremonies to join the Sioux in the largest gathering of Native Americans in recorded history. The sacred fire, Brother fire, burns continuously at the centre of the camp. Why, you might ask ?

This is Standing Rock, Dakota. This is a protest, or rather an act of protection of fresh water, 'Mni Wiconi', it stands against the re-routing of the Dakota Access oil pipeline close to the reservation of the Sioux (recognised for indigenous use in 1851 in the Treaty of Laramie). To prove the point on December 5th there was an oil spill of 170,000 gallons at Belfield just up the road from the Oceti Sakowin camp. The water protectors recognise that this multimillion \$ project, if it succeeds, will lock us into years of further fossil fuel extraction and the consequent emissions so disastrous for the planet.

We see here the militarized energy industry in action. The great and peaceful gathering which had been joined by all sorts of people from every walk of life, was met with police in full riot gear, violence, tear gas, water cannon in freezing temperatures, and attack dogs ; people arrested, stripped, bones broken by batons, hundreds were injured and incarcerated. But people have been supported too with rallies, donations prayers and protests and more practically with many coming to help clean, cook, bring supplies and install solar panels. Judy Wicks was one of them, she writes 'there was a sense of abundance, an almost magical flow of energy that I can only imagine as the power of love and an indomitable feeling of hope in the collective resolve if this native led, multicultural, intergenerational movement. 'There was forgiveness too, a listening and learning, a kindness which even included the police officers.

Just after the news that President Obama had refused the easement while asking for a proper environmental impact assessment for the continuation of the oil pipeline, 2,500 veterans of US foreign wars arrived. There had been jubilation in the camp as the pipeline construction was at least temporarily halted. The veterans knelt to ask pardon. Before the tribal spiritual ; leaders they said :- 'Many of us, me particularly are from units that have hurt you over many years. We came. We fought you. We took your

land. We signed treaties that we broke. We stole minerals from your sacred hills. We have come to say that we are sorry. We are at your service and we beg for your forgiveness.' This was granted. Leonard Crow Dog responded 'we do not own the land, the land owns us'. We all need to remember this.

Then a whiteout hit the territory with temperatures plunging to 50 degrees below zero. Those unaccustomed to the rigours of the Dakota winter were asked to leave the camp leaving a group of about 600 to hold the space. They know it is not the end of the story. The new administration including Trump, has strong links to those investing in the pipeline. Those who have held the 'back snake' at bay till now will continue to do so. The Black snake ? There is a thousand year old Lakota prophecy that tells of how a black snake would arise from the deep and move across the land bringing destruction and great sorrow. The Sioux believe that it arrived in the form of the Dakota access Pipeline. The prophecy continues. If the black snake is not defeated it will be the end of the world. 'The only thing that keeps me going is prayer' confessed David Archambault, tribal leader and key figure as chairman of the Indian reservation. We can join him in prayer.

There are many other pipelines proposed which would pass through tribal homelands. Oceti Sakowin is an inspiration to us all who care for our earth and its many peoples. May we stand with them in their and our continuing struggle. 'Don't operate out of fear, operate out of hope.'they say. Thank you first nation people.

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Voir en ligne : [Standing-Rock-Sioux-Tribe on Facebook](#)

<https://www.assumpta.org/Standing-with-Standing-Rock-Dakota>