

Taking a Stand at Standing Rock

By DAVID ARCHAMBAULT II AUG. 24, 2016

Near Cannon Ball, N.D. — It is a spectacular sight: thousands of Indians camped on the banks of the Cannonball River, on the edge of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North Dakota. Our elders of the Seven Council Fires, as the Oceti Sakowin, or Great Sioux Nation, is known, sit in deliberation and prayer, awaiting a federal court decision on whether construction of a \$3.7 billion oil pipeline from the Bakken region to Southern Illinois will be halted.

The Sioux tribes have come together to oppose this project, which was approved by the State of North Dakota and the United States Army Corps of Engineers. The nearly 1,200-mile pipeline, owned by a Texas oil company named Energy Transfer Partners, would snake across our treaty lands and through our ancestral burial grounds. Just a half-mile from our reservation boundary, the proposed route crosses the Missouri River, which provides drinking water for millions of Americans and irrigation water for thousands of acres of farming and ranching lands.

Our tribe has opposed the Dakota Access pipeline since we first learned about it in 2014. Although federal law requires the Corps of Engineers to consult with the tribe about its sovereign interests, permits for the project were approved and construction began without meaningful consultation. The Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of the Interior and the National Advisory Council on Historic Preservation supported more protection of the tribe's cultural heritage, but the Corps of Engineers and Energy Transfer Partners turned a blind eye to our rights. The first draft of the company's assessment of the planned route through our treaty and ancestral lands did not even mention our tribe.

[...]

In recent weeks, the state has militarized my reservation, with road blocks and license-plate checks, low-flying aircraft and racial profiling of Indians. The local sheriff and the pipeline company have both called our protest "unlawful," and Gov. Dalrymple has declared a state of emergency.

It's a familiar story in Indian Country. This is the third time that the Sioux Nation's lands and resources have been taken without regard for tribal interests. The Sioux peoples signed treaties in 1851 and 1868. The government broke them before the ink was dry.

When the Army Corps of Engineers dammed the Missouri River in 1958, it took our riverfront forests, fruit orchards and most fertile farmland to create Lake Oahe. Now the Corps is taking our clean water and sacred places by approving this river crossing. Whether it's gold from the Black Hills or hydropower from the Missouri or oil pipelines that threaten our ancestral inheritance, the tribes have always paid the price for America's prosperity.

[...]

Our hand continues to be open to cooperation, and our cause is just. This fight is not just for the interests of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, but also for those of our neighbors on the Missouri River: The ranchers and farmers and small towns who depend on the river have shown overwhelming support for our protest.

As American citizens, we all have a responsibility to speak for a vision of the future that is safe and productive for our grandchildren. We are a peaceful people and our tribal council is committed to nonviolence; it is our constitutional right to express our views and take this stand at the Cannonball camp.

[...]

Neighbors Say North Dakota Pipeline Protests Disrupt Lives and Livelihoods

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/14/us/north-dakota-pipeline-protests.html?mcubz=3&r=0>

ST. ANTHONY, N.D. — Jack Schaaf, 60, has been keeping away from the grassy camp where thousands of Native Americans have joined the Standing Rock Sioux tribe's fight against an oil pipeline.

Where Native Americans see the camp as a scene of prayer and peaceful protests, Mr. Schaaf and other ranchers and residents in the conservative, overwhelmingly white countryside view the protests with a mix of frustration and fear, reflecting the deep cultural divides and racial attitudes in Indian country.

"You get 2,000, 3,000 Natives together — is it safe?" Mr. Schaaf asked as he mowed the grass outside a home he and his son are building next to a cornfield, about 10 miles north of the camp.

The federal government on Friday temporarily blocked construction of a crucial section of the 1,170-mile Dakota Access pipeline, which would cross ranchers' fields and a river just north of the Standing Rock Sioux reservation. But protests have continued, and there are roughly 2,000 representatives from different tribes and environmentalists still active at the protest site.

Mr. Schaaf said he had no problem with people standing up for a cause, but he was tired of navigating a police checkpoint if he wanted to drive into Mandan for a pizza. He complained that closings at Lake Oahe had prevented him from boating. And he said the protesters had no right to march on a public highway. "I think it's totally wrong," he said. "If they want to protest, they should be in the ditch."

Not all the Standing Rock Sioux are protesting the pipeline

<http://www.cnn.com/2016/10/29/us/dakota-pipeline-standing-rock-sioux/index.html>

The Standing Rock Sioux call this reservation home, and many are not on the frontlines of this months-long, and at times violent, protest. With no end in sight, what does it mean to them? And are they even united in their support?

The answer to that last question: Not even close.

No one makes this clearer than Robert Fool Bear Sr., 54, district chairman of Cannon Ball. The town he runs, estimated population of 840, is just a few miles from the action. It's so close that, given the faceoffs with law enforcement, you have to pass through a police checkpoint to reach it.

It's about time people heard from folks like him, he says.

Fool Bear has had it with the protesters. He says that more than two years ago, when members of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe could have attended hearings to make their concerns known, they didn't care. Now, suddenly, the crowds are out of control, and he fears it's just a matter of time before someone gets seriously hurt. Go down to the camps, he says, and you won't see many Standing Rock Sioux.

"It irks me. People are here from all over the world," he says. "If they could come from other planets, I think they would."