

Native American protests help stall North Dakota pipeline construction

By Los Angeles Times 09.06.16

ALONG THE CANNONBALL RIVER, N.D. — Hundreds of years ago, Native Americans built homes here where the Cannonball and Missouri rivers meet. Called the Mandan people, they used the thick earth to guard against brutal winters and blazing summer heat.

Now, Native Americans from many tribes are living here again. They sleep in teepees and nylon tents, and ride horses and drive pickup trucks. They string banners between trees and, when they can get a signal, they post messages with hashtags such as ReZpectOurWater, NoDakotaAccess and NODAPL. For weeks, they have been arriving from different parts of the U.S. where the government put their ancestors. They are protesting what they say is one offense too many in their long and brutal history with white settlers and the U.S. government.

The project they are protesting is called the Dakota Access oil pipeline. It could carry more than 400,000 barrels of oil a day from the Bakken region of western North Dakota across South Dakota and Iowa.

The 1,100-mile pipeline, which is estimated to cost \$3.7 billion, is nearly halfway finished. But construction on a section just north of the Standing Rock Sioux reservation has been stopped under orders from the local sheriff. Kyle Kirchmeier said the protesters are creating safety issues, and nearly 30 of them have been arrested already.

An Intrusion On Tribal Lands

Yet the protesters say they are creating something very different. They say they are resisting pipelines and rail lines that would transport fuels across or near tribal reservations. These pipelines and train tracks could pollute the air, water and land.

"Every time there's a project of this magnitude, so the nation can benefit, there's a cost," Dave Archambault said. He is the chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, who was also arrested. "That cost is born by tribal nations."

Archambault and other native leaders have been surprised by the support they have received. This spring, a handful of native activists organized a prayer camp along the river. Since then, it has drawn international environmental groups. Even some Hollywood celebrities, including Shailene Woodley, have joined them.

The Standing Rock Sioux have asked a judge to stop construction on the pipeline and cancel its permits. The tribe claims that the Army Corps of Engineers, which permitted the pipeline, violated the National Historic Preservation Act. They also say the pipeline would damage ancestral sites of the Standing Rock Sioux and put the tribe's water supply at risk. The Army Corps is a government department in charge of public projects like dams, flood prevention, bridges and pipelines.

On Thursday, nearly three dozen environmental groups wrote to President Barack Obama. They said the Army Corps wrongly gave permission to let the pipeline go ahead. Obama visited the Standing Rock Sioux reservation in 2014, with Michelle Obama.

ENVIRONMENTALIST

The Corps of Engineers argued in court in Washington last week that the pipeline was properly approved. Energy Transfer Partners, the Texas company building it, says the pipeline will make the U.S. less dependent on oil from foreign countries. The company also said that a pipeline is a safer way of transporting the oil than by train.

Resistance To Pipeline Grows

Others are resisting the pipeline as well. Farmers in Iowa are concerned about soil damage, and property owners are worried that their land will be taken and used for the pipeline. But their objections don't compare to what is happening between the rivers.

Nantinki Young is a member of the Rosebud Sioux tribe from South Dakota and runs the cook shack here. Winona, who did not give her last name, is a Penobscot Native American. She left Maine on Monday and drove 2,100 miles to join the protest. Her role is to put together a recycling program for the hundreds of new residents of the protest camp.

And then there is Clyde Bellecourt, who is Ojibwe. He came from Minnesota, and helped start the American Indian Movement. In 1973, he was involved in a standoff between Native Americans and the government at Wounded Knee, South Dakota. Wounded Knee was also the site of a massacre of Indians by the U.S. Army in 1890.

He is 80 now, and he likes what he sees at the camp. "My life is almost over, but there's fresh energy here," he said. "Save the children — that's what this is all about."

No Plans To Leave Yet

Protesters have vowed to stay at least until the judge decides — and possibly much longer. Observers from the human rights group Amnesty International have arrived.

Members of the Standing Rock Sioux formed Spirit Resistance Radio to broadcast updates. An art market opened to sell handmade crafts. There also was talk, although not completely seriously, about opening a school that would teach children at the camp site in native languages. People are practicing protesting the pipelines in case construction starts again.

Jasilyn Charger, 20, is among a group of native young people who ran together from North Dakota to Washington to protest the pipeline. She remembers the early days of the protest, when just a handful of people prayed by the river.

"When we started this, people thought we were crazy," she said. "But look at where we are today."

Name: _____

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Reasons for the Protests	Facts about the Pipeline Conflict (dates, events, etc.)
<p>Other facts or notes:</p>	

Explain in your own words what this article is about.
