

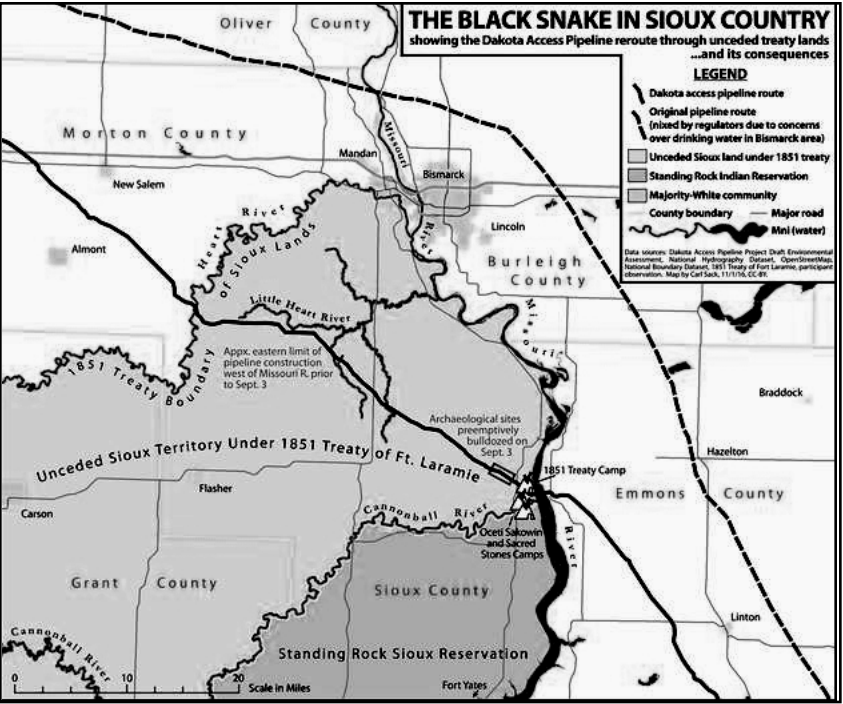
# FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND NATIVE RESISTANCE

## Why We All Need to Stand With Standing Rock and Oppose the Dakota Access Pipe Line (DAPL)!

BY: JOHN E. PECK, *Executive Director, Family Farm Defenders*

Over the Thanksgiving (or as some might say Thanks-taking) holiday I travelled to Standing Rock, ND to learn more about the latest indigenous struggle against the fossil fuel industrial complex and how Family Farm Defenders can best support this resistance. Thanks to the generosity of Equinox Community Farm near Waunakee, WI several hundred pounds of organic produce was also delivered to one of the communal kitchens within the Oceti Sakowin protest camp situated at the confluence of the Cannonball and Missouri Rivers. Coordinating this particular kitchen that weekend were Brian Yazzee, a Lakota activist from Sioux Chef in Minneapolis, and Dan Cornelius, an Oneida activist from Wisconsin who works with the Intertribal Agricultural Council.

By late Nov. Oceti Sakowin Protest Camp had grown to almost 10,000 people, placing it among the largest “cities” in North Dakota. Many people first heard about the fight against the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) back in April when young tribal activists set up the protest camp in the direct path of the drill rigs hellbent for the Missouri River, but the Standing Rock Tribe has been formally opposed to this latest land grab ever since they found out it was to be rerouted around Bismarck and through their homeland back in 2014. The “front line” was now lined with concrete barriers, burned out vehicles, and razor wire along a flood plain and over sacred hills which the Sioux have long claimed as their territory under the 1854 Fort Laramie Treaty. At night police



Map: Carl Sack - UW Madison Geography Grad Student

lights lit up the scene like a Panopticon- a circular prison with cells arranged around a central well from which prisoners can be observed at all times.

The “Black Snake” Pipe Line, as it is known among its opponents, would stretch 1,172-miles from North Dakota, through South Dakota and Iowa to a terminus near Patoka, IL. The Bakken Oil Fields themselves cover 170,000 square miles from southern Saskatchewan to northern Saskatchewan, and are estimated to contain 7.4 billion barrels of oil. Sadly, DAPL is just one tentacle of a much larger monstrosity that has spawned frac sand mines, exploding rail cars, pipeline spills, and filthy refineries from Tomah, WI to Lac-Megantic, Quebec from Kalamazoo, MI to Whiting, IN. Indigenous rights, food sovereignty, clean water - essential for

humanity’s survival on this planet - have all been put on the altar for sacrifice to short term profit. Many of the rural communities and native reservations now being threatened by the “Black Snake” don’t even have access to piped water or an electric grid themselves.

**Cooperative Economy Full Swing**  
In stark contrast to the world of corporate capitalism, a cooperative economy was in full swing at Oceti Sakowin. No money was required or expected - everything was donated and shared in the spirit of mutual aid and solidarity. A water truck would periodically travel around the camp so people could fill their containers. Kitchens doubled as communal sleeping quarters in the evening for those who did not have their own tepee or tent.

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*Standing Rock Camp Protest Camp - Late November 2016 - 10,000 People Came to Support!*

Solar PV units and stationary bikes enabled people to recharge their cell phones. Children rode bare-back on horses between the various “neighborhoods,” while there was a continuous stream of orientations, workshops, trainings, and updates, as well as ceremonial events and traditional prayers around the sacred fires.

**A formal eviction notice was issued to the camp** by the Army Corps on Nov. 27th. But within a week the Corps admitted it had no enforcement power. An entire semi-load of logs donated by the Menominee was being split up into firewood, while winterization efforts were in full swing across the camp. A team of volunteer carpenters from Denver, CO built a Hogan to house fifty people within a matter of hours. Since that balmy weekend, blizzards have blanketed Oceti Sakowin and the number of protesters has dwindled, yet the remaining water protectors plan to stay for as long as it takes. The Army Corps may not have its own “army,” but the Morton County Sheriff and ND State Police certainly do. In a state facing a billion dollar budget deficit over \$20 million in taxpayer money has already been spent trying to enforce

the eminent domain claims of Energy Transfer Partners and its CEO, Kelsey Warren. For folks from Standing Rock, who have long lived in one of the poorest counties in the country, to squander such vast sums on an armed eviction campaign is certainly ironic but hardly surprising.

**When ND’s Governor, Jack Dalrymple, declared a “State Emergency”** on Aug. 19th he was able to request law enforcement help from elsewhere. According to Alexander Sammon’s Dec. 4th article in Mother Jones, this twisted perversion of the “good neighbor” intent behind the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, passed by Congress back in 1996 in response to Hurricane Andrew, lured officers from 40 jurisdictions in 10 different states into the conflict. One of the few other times that EMAC has been evoked in this manner was to crack down on the Black Lives Matter protest to Freddie Gray’s death in Baltimore back in April 2015. Thankfully, grassroots pressure has already convinced several police units to withdraw their personnel from Standing Rock.

Nearly 600 People Arrested  
The toll of the fossil fuel violence is nonetheless heavy. Nearly 600 people have now been arrested, including five more just two days after Christmas, with many more brutalized by rubber bullets, tear gas, sound weapons, and even water hoses in below freezing conditions. The images of private security dogs attacking peaceful protesters and detainees being held in retrofitted dog kennels hearken back to centuries of racism and colonialism many had hoped we were beyond. One 21 year old protester from New York, Sophia Wilensky, nearly had her arm blown off by a police concussion grenade on Nov. 20th, and is now undergoing multiple operations at a Minneapolis hospital. An ambulance was delayed for hours trying to reach her due to police road blocks on the main public road to Standing Rock.

**Of course, the “Black Snake” has few qualms about consuming its own.** In the last decade an estimated 74 workers have died in the Bakken Oil Fields - on average about one fatality every two months - making it the most dangerous place to work in the U.S.

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