



## Psychologists in Solidarity with Tribal Nations Opposing Dakota Access Pipeline

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President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

CC: Chairman Dave Archambault II  
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe  
Building 1 North Standing Rock Avenue  
Fort Yates, ND 58530

Dear Mr. President,

The Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA) stands in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux and other tribal nations in their opposition of the Dakota Access Pipeline construction. SCRA is devoted to advancing theory, research, and social action. Its members are committed to promoting health and empowerment, and preventing problems in communities, groups, and individuals. Over 1500 people are members of SCRA, and although most live in the US, membership is worldwide. Disclaimer: The views expressed here are that of the Society for Community Research and Action, Division 27 of the American Psychological Association (APA), and do not represent the official position of APA.

In July 2016, the Army Corps of Engineers approved the plans for the Dallas-based Energy Transfer Partners to construct the Dakota Access Pipeline, a 1,172 mile underground crude oil transportation system stretching from North Dakota to Illinois. It is estimated that the pipeline will pump just under half a million barrels of fracked crude oil per day across the Missouri River, the Mississippi River, and other sources of drinking water, which will impact surrounding communities.<sup>1</sup> Although many will potentially be affected by the proposed pipeline, the Lakota Sioux and the Standing Rock Sioux Indian Reservation spanning North and South Dakota are among those most directly affected by the pipeline and have voiced strong opposition to its continued construction.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Energy Transfer (n.d.). *About the Dakota Access Pipeline*. Available from <http://www.dapipelinefacts.com>

<sup>2</sup> Plumer, B. (2016, November 4). The battle over the Dakota Pipeline explained. *Vox*. Available from <http://www.vox.com/2016/9/9/12862958/dakota-access-pipeline-fight>

As psychologists committed to racial, ethnic, and cultural justice we stand in opposition to the continued construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline so long as that pipeline infringes on the environmental health and sacred spaces of indigenous communities. The actions of the Energy Transfer Partners and the United States Army Corps of Civil Engineers to date have indeed violated the rights of these communities. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognizes the sovereignty of indigenous groups in governing their lands and people.<sup>3</sup> The Standing Rock Sioux lands were officially designated as a reservation in 1889, granting the tribal government full jurisdiction of all aspects of this area, including waterways, streams, and watercourses throughout the reservation.<sup>4</sup> Indigenous peoples on the Lakota Sioux and the Standing Rock Sioux Indian Reservation are currently engaged in strong and clear demonstrations indicating their desire for the pipeline not to cross their lands or waterways.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, construction on the Dakota Access Pipeline has violated the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie (Sioux Treaty) by disturbing burial grounds and sacred sites on the Tribe's ancestral treaty lands.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the Standing Rock Sioux have united over 200 Indigenous Nations and thousands of supporters worldwide in a campaign of nonviolent civil resistance to the pipeline and the resulting violation of their sacred sites. Even with the tribes' persistent opposition to this pipeline, the construction continues. This continued action is a clear perpetuation of systemic violence and disenfranchisement toward indigenous peoples. Moreover, the building of the Dakota Access Pipeline exemplifies the intersections of neoliberal colonialism and white supremacy, as well as representing an obvious sign of disrespect to the rights and culture of the American Indian people.

As psychologists committed to environmental, procedural, and distributive justice, we stand in solidarity with those at Standing Rock who have mounted civil resistance in protection of their land and waterways. The stretch of the pipeline intended to cross the Missouri River just upstream from the Standing Rock Reservation threatens the water supply for those living on the Indian Reservation lands, poses an environmental risk for all surrounding communities, and endangers the wildlife living on these lands.<sup>7 8</sup> Too often communities of color, those with fewer economic resources, and politically marginalized groups bear the brunt of these environmental risks. That indigenous communities are forced to accept high levels of environmental risk when others are not is a matter of grave importance and speaks to the heart of why it is so critical to support the water protectors at Standing Rock.

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution 61/295, *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, A/61/L67 and Add.1 (2007, September 13). Available from [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (n.d.). *History*. Available from <http://standingrock.org/history/>

<sup>5</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution 61/295 (2007, September 13). *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, A/61/L67. Available from [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Treaty with the Sioux — Brulé, Oglala, Miniconjou, Yanktonai, Hunkpapa, Blackfeet, Cuthead, Two Kettle, Sans Arcs, and Santee — and Arapaho. Ratified Feb. 16, 1868; proclaimed Feb. 24, 1868. In C. J. Kappler (ed.) *Indian affairs: Laws and treaties — Vol. II: Treaties*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.

<sup>7</sup> CNN Library (2016, February 16). Oil Spill Fast Facts. CNN. Available from <http://www.cnn.com/2013/07/13/world/oil-spills-fast-facts/index.html>

<sup>8</sup> Tribune Wire Reports (2015, May 22). Federal data: As oil production soars, so do pipeline leaks. Available from <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-oil-pipeline-leaks-20150522-story.html>

As psychologists committed to human rights and social justice we stand in solidarity with the water protectors at Standing Rock Reservation in calling for the humane treatment of those mounting a peaceful resistance to the pipeline construction. Recent media reports have indicated that individuals mobilizing to protect the water and land at Standing Rock have been attacked with dogs,<sup>9</sup> assaulted with pepper spray and rubber bullets,<sup>10</sup> restrained in dog kennels,<sup>11</sup> and been subjected to other human rights abuses.<sup>12</sup> This kind of violence further dehumanizes and humiliates historically and systemically disenfranchised Indigenous communities, groups who deal daily with current and historical forms of colonialism and white supremacy. We affirm the right of all peoples to peacefully oppose injustice without fear or threat of physical harm. We strongly oppose the militarization of law enforcement and the use of violence against peaceful demonstrations. Further, reports of police targeting members of the media for arrest and violence<sup>13</sup> are also disturbing as this violates fundamental principles of democracy, specifically the first amendment, and attempts to restrict the ability of a free press to expose that which is unethical.

Along with Chairman David Archambault II,<sup>14</sup> we commend the United States Army Corps of Engineers' decision to deny the easement request to extend the pipeline across Lake Oahe in favor of evaluating alternate routes. In support of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, the rights of indigenous peoples, the protection of our natural resources, and the first amendment to the constitution of the United States, the Society for Community Research and Action makes the following requests:

- Continue to uphold and strongly enforce the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' decision to prevent pipeline construction across Lake Oahe;
- Request that the Morton County Sheriff's office drop all charges against water protectors immediately and insist that they cease the use of force and intimidation (including, but not limited to, the use of tear gas, pepper spray, rubber bullets, and automatic weapons) against peaceful protesters and journalists;
- Direct the Department of Justice to initiate a full investigation into the reports of human rights violations that have occurred and send personnel to observe law enforcement actions and ensure that water protectors' human rights are upheld.

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<sup>9</sup> Democracy Now (2016, September 6). Full access report: Dakota Access Pipeline Co. attacks Native Americans with dogs and pepper spray. *Democracy Now*. Available from [http://www.democracynow.org/2016/9/6/full\\_exclusive\\_report\\_dakota\\_access\\_pipeline](http://www.democracynow.org/2016/9/6/full_exclusive_report_dakota_access_pipeline)

<sup>10</sup> Sottile, C. (2016, November 2). Police fire rubber bullets as pipeline protesters try to protect sacred land. *NBC News*. Available from <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/dakota-pipeline-protests/police-fire-rubber-bullets-pipeline-protesters-seek-protect-burial-site-n677051>

<sup>11</sup> Hawkins, D. (2016, November 1). Dakota Access protesters accuse police of putting them in 'dog kennels,' marking them with numbers. *Washington Post*. Available from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/11/01/dakota-access-protesters-accuse-police-of-putting-them-in-dog-kennels-marking-them-with-numbers/>

<sup>12</sup> Levin, S. (2016, October 30). Dakota Access Pipeline: Native Americans allege cruel treatment. *The Guardian*. Available from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/oct/29/dakota-access-pipeline-native-american-protesters>

<sup>13</sup> Kolodny, L. (2016, October 15). Multi-media journalists face jail time after reporting on North Dakota pipeline protest. *Tech Crunch*. Available from <https://techcrunch.com/2016/10/15/multi-media-journalists-face-jail-time-for-reporting-on-north-dakota-pipeline-protest/>

<sup>14</sup> Stand with Standing Rock (December 4, 2016). Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's statement on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers decision to not grant easement. *Stand with Standing Rock*. Available from <http://standwithstandingrock.net/standing-rock-sioux-tribes-statement-u-s-army-corps-engineers-decision-not-grant-easement/>

Sincerely,

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