



Indigenous Wellness Research Institute
National Center of Excellence
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

Supported by funding from the National Institute On Minority Health and Health Disparities
of the National Institutes of Health under Award Number P60MD006909

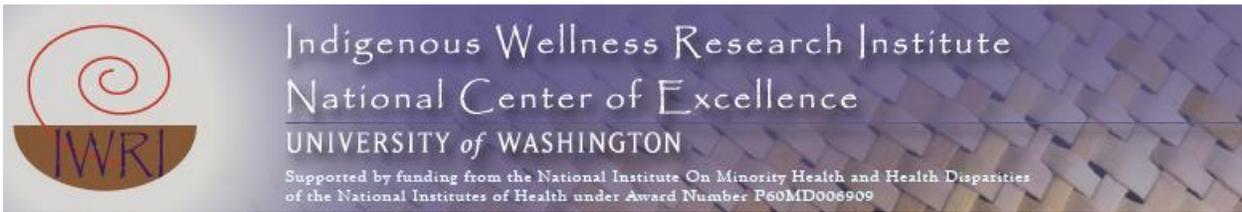
September 14, 2016

Indigenous teachings teach us that water is our first medicine. The majority of our world is made up of it and our bodies as well. The water we drink today has touched the lips of our ancestors—having risen up to the heavens only to return back to earth to nourish us in this generation. Our water, our bodies, are directly connected to the ancestors since time immemorial and as such belongs to the future generations as well. Just as we have these deep ancestral connections with water and place, our contemporary health and well-being has deep connections to water and place. The decisions made about water and land today will not only impact the wellness of our immediate communities and children, but future generations as well. Our water sources are also interconnected. Harm to one part of our water system impacts the whole global water system in profound ways. The actions we take today and how we protect our water and land now will ultimately determine the fate and wellbeing for our children's grandchildren—and many generations to come.

We – the faculty and staff of the Indigenous Wellness Research Institute at the University of Washington – stand united and we stand in solidarity today with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe as they are engaged in a legal battle to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) from infringing upon their cultural, water, and natural resources. The DAPL is a proposed 1,168 mile-long crude oil pipeline that will transport nearly 570,000 barrels of oil each day from North Dakota to Illinois. The Army Corps of Engineers had sanctioned the start of several sections of the pipeline within a half-mile of the reservation and under waters that the tribe remains dependent upon—without fully satisfying the National Historic Preservation Act, environmental statutes, and the Trust Responsibility to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. For example, the Army Corps of Engineers never fully evaluated the potential devastation that an oil spill would have on the tribe, as the law requires. Moreover, one route that was proposed near Bismarck was deemed not viable because it was too close in proximity to water that contributed to their municipal water supplies. Yet, the proposed DAPL route runs directly on land and water areas that directly affect the tribal community water supply. Moreover, the land that is proposed for the pipeline crosses into tribal sacred sites and the law requires that sacred places be protected in consultation with the Tribe; however, this mandate has not been heeded either.

As a result, we stand today in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and with all of our Indigenous brothers and sisters who have weathered this long history of sanctioning hazardous projects near and through tribal lands, waters, and cultural places, abrogating trust responsibilities, treaty rights, and proper tribal consultation processes. This must stop now.

While we commend the action by the US Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of Justice and the Department of the Interior in placing a temporary injunction to halt pipeline construction on Army Corps land 20 miles east or west of Lake Oahe as a step in the right direction, it still falls woefully short as it requests the construction company to *voluntarily* pause activities, which the company fails to heed on privately owned lands. The tribal community and witnesses have noted that the continued construction activities have damaged cultural sites that deserve due process, investigation, and protection under the law. We do appreciate that President Obama has promised formal consultations this fall with Standing Rock Sioux and other tribal nations to discuss law reform and federal trust responsibilities with respect to tribal sites, resources, and rights—this is good. However, Standing Rock and other communities cannot



wait until fall as the construction and cultural devastation continues. First, we call on Congress to support Senate Bill 2848, also known as the Water Resources Development Act, to prevent the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from giving an easement for the Dakota Access Pipeline until the agency has completed an environmental impact statement. Moreover, we call for Congress and the President to halt all construction-related activities on private land owned by Energy Transfer Partners within the 20 mile boundary until proper tribal consultation and a proper environmental study is undertaken (including impact on current burial, sacred, and cultural sites/artifacts in bulldozed areas). This is Standing Rock Sioux's right by law and federal mandate; it is the right of all of our tribal nations.

Private corporation and rights cannot and do not trump the legal and federal mandates to protect our lands and resources that our ancestors died for and our future generations depend upon. We stand in solidarity with our relatives as we are concerned that any disruption to sacred sites, any pipeline spill, no matter how minor, would seriously impact the physical health and jeopardize the well-being of the community and future generations. The land and water is sacred; it is protected by customary, tribal, and federal laws and these laws must be respected for the health and well-being of all.

Signed by Faculty of the Indigenous Wellness Research Institute, University of Washington School of Social Work on behalf of the Institute and Staff:

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