



# Standing Rock Protests

In November 2014, Texas-based Energy Transfer planned to construct the Dakota access pipeline in North Dakota, going under the Missouri river through The Standing Rock Sioux Nation's land. The pipeline construction was planned to be finished at the end of 2016. At the start, The Standing Rock Nation began protesting the pipeline because the Missouri river was the Nation's main water resource and a oil spill would be detrimental to their lifestyle and human rights (Worland, 2016). The pipeline also would be constructed through a sacred burial ground of the Standing Rock Nations. The reservation is located in central North and South Dakota, including 10,000 residents that would be affected by the pipeline. These residents have been protesting against the pipeline since April 2016 along with Native groups and other groups of interests gradually joining. Other groups that have been protesting the pipeline include public figures and environmental organizations that believe another pipeline only adds to the cause of global warming and environmental damage (2016). The amount of protestors at the Standing Rock protest increased from a few hundred to several thousand over the year (2016).

The protester's main goal was to end the construction of the pipeline. They brought to court the legal matters that involved the pipeline, suing the Army Corps of Engineers that disregarded the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Environmental Policy act, for violating these acts (2016).

Unfortunately, the pipeline protestors were denied the claim by Judge Hames Boasberg. This denial then led to the halt of the pipeline construction by federal agencies in order to review the permitting process (Macpherson, 2016).

The Standing Rock protest started off as a peaceful protest, camping at the junction of the Cannonball and Missouri Rivers; there were also smaller camps located in other portions around southern North Dakota. The Standing Rock protest camped at river's junction from April 2016 till February 2017 which was important to put a halt to the construction. Towards the end of the protests, the camps had established semi-permanent buildings, medical tents, and outhouses (Associated Press, 2017). Although the majority of the protests at Standing Rock were peaceful, there were instances of violence that had taken place between protestors and authorities. The violence had led to arrests of the protestors, totaling over 600 by the end of the protest in February. Other violent events during the protest included the use of rubber bullets, tear gas, pepper spraying, water cannons (in the winter months), dogs being unleashed onto protestors, and many assaults that occurred between protestors and officials (Macpherson and Nicholson, 2016). The protestors also used the platform of social media to build their support, getting a worldwide spotlight on the events that happened at Standing Rock.



In February 2017, the Standing Rock protestors were given an evacuation notice to leave the site at the river junction. Officials ironically claimed that it was due to ecological hazards of extreme flooding and the human pollution that would result from it. Previous to this in January, Donald Trump signed an executive order to allow the building of Dakota access pipeline. This alternately led to the drilling underneath Lake Oahe. Protestors were given until the afternoon on February 22 to evacuate before arrests were going to be made. Although the Standing Rock protestors were reluctant to leave, they knew that their 10 month protests made a large impact on the project (2016).

The protests considerably enlightened public awareness of the violation of indigenous rights on a worldly stage. They brought the attention of the world to the United States wrong doing on the Standing Rock Nations while halting the project for possible improvements for its ecological design. The importance of this protest was to show the critical acknowledgement of the rights of indigenous peoples around the world and how their rights could not be disregarded in exchange for economic benefits. They showed that they will not let history repeat itself by being oppressed as lesser beings again. It also brought the essential use of ecological friendly power sources instead of the use of fossil fuels, showing that the time for change is in the present and not the far future. Although the Standing Rock Protest camps were evicted and closed down, their cause and willingness to fight the pipeline has only grown stronger with support.

**written by Seleste Loganhume**

### **Additional information:**

<http://time.com/4548566/dakota-access-pipeline-standing-rock-sioux/>

<https://globalnews.ca/news/3037682/standing-rock-protest-the-key-players-in-the-dakota-access-pipeline-fight/>

<https://www.usnews.com/news/north-dakota/articles/2017-02-22/a-timeline-of-the-dakota-access-oil-pipeline>