

DAKOTA ACCESS PIPELINE UNIT: RESOURCE SET 5: INTRODUCTION**LESSON 5: #NODAPL INTRODUCTION**

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Left: "Buffalo Hunt with Bows and Lances" painting by George Catlin, 1832-33.¹

Right: Protestors and activists at the Sacred Stone Camp, 2016. ²

The Dakota Sioux people first came into contact with White fur traders in the late 1600's. As the United States expanded its territory, White people continued to travel through Dakota lands, and the U.S. government began to make and break treaties.

By 1862, many Dakota Sioux were living on reservations. Their crops had failed, and the government had stopped sending the payments that were promised in the treaties. In response to their starvation and mistreatment, several Dakota tribes began attacking the White settlers and soldiers in their region. Many Dakota men were imprisoned and executed after the battles.

In 1868, the U.S. Government signed a treaty with the Lakota, Dakota, and Arapaho nations. This treaty created the Great Sioux Reservation. Meanwhile, White settlers in the North and South Dakota territories wanted to claim statehood for the land they had taken from the Sioux. When those territories became states, the U.S. government continued to reduce the size of the Great Sioux Reservation. Five smaller reservations were established, including the Standing Rock reservation. ³

¹ <https://americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/buffalo>

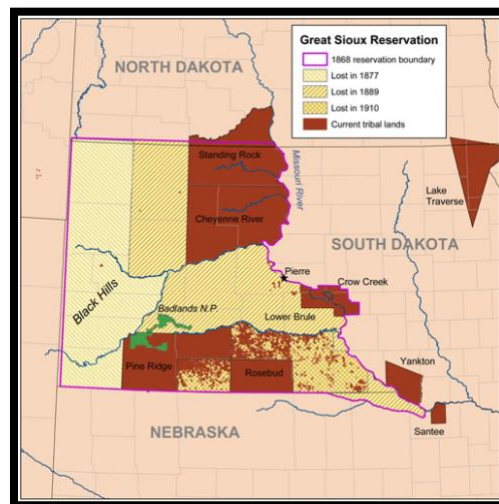
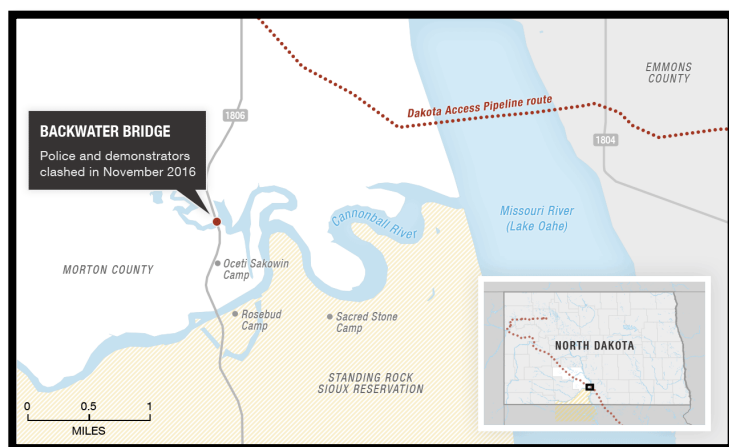
² <https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a12181154/still-fighting-at-standing-rock/>

³ Hyde, George E. (1984). *Red Cloud's Folk: A History of the Oglala Sioux Indians*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press; Michno, Gregory (2006). "[The Indian Trail of Broken Treaties](https://www.standingrock.org/content/history)"; <https://www.standingrock.org/content/history>

Dakota Access Pipeline

In January 2016, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers introduced a plan to build an oil pipeline underneath the Missouri River. The oil pipeline would cross through ancestral Dakota lands, less than one mile from the current border of the Standing Rock Reservation. Many Standing Rock residents protested the plan, but the U.S. Army allowed it to proceed. A company called Energy Transfer owns the pipeline, and they began construction in the spring of 2016.⁴

American Indian activists were opposed to the pipeline because it could spill oil into their water sources and soil. A small group of American Indian activists started the Sacred Stone Camp on the Standing Rock reservation. The activists monitored the construction crews and raised awareness about the pipeline on social media. They used the hashtag #NODAPL, and it became popular. Many people debated the pipeline protest on Twitter. More activists arrived at the camp. The movement continued to grow.⁵



Right: A map showing the reduction of the Great Sioux Reservation over time.

Left: A map of the DAPL route and the protest camps.⁶

Many of leaders of Sacred Stone camp were young people in their teens and twenties. One young activist, Bobbi Jean Three Legs, organized a 500-mile run to raise awareness about the protest. Bobbi Jean and her fellow activists planned a route that passed through many reservations. At each reservation, more people joined the run. The

⁴ Renshaw, Jarrett (April 19, 2017). ["East Coast refiner shuns Bakken delivery as Dakota Access Pipeline starts."](https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/02/22/514988040/key-moments-in-the-dakota-access-pipeline-fight) Reuters; <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/02/22/514988040/key-moments-in-the-dakota-access-pipeline-fight>.

⁵ Smith, J. M., & Van Ierland, T. (2018). Framing Controversy on Social Media: #NoDAPL and the Debate About the Dakota Access Pipeline on Twitter. *IEEE Transactions On Professional Communication*, 61(3), 226 - 241.

⁶ <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/02/22/514988040/key-moments-in-the-dakota-access-pipeline-fight>

runners finally arrived at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers office in Nebraska, and they delivered an official petition against the DAPL construction.⁷

Protestors at the Sacred Stone camp continued to fight the pipeline construction, and they also used the protest to bring attention to other issues affecting American Indian communities. In January 2017, President Donald Trump signed two executive orders that gave Energy Transfer permission to build the pipeline.⁸ Construction was completed in summer 2017. The NODAPL protestors went to court several times to try to shut down the pipeline. A U.S. District Judge denied their requests, and oil continues to flow through the pipeline today.

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In 2020, after debates surrounding the pipeline's operation continued, a U.S. District Judge ruled that the pipeline's environmental impact had not been fully studied and that the pipeline had to be shut down until such a review was completed.⁹ Even with the pipeline currently not in operation, the NODAPL protestors still have not stopped fighting to permanently shut down the pipeline.¹⁰ Their bravery and resilience has inspired people across the U.S. to become more involved in protests about American Indian rights and the environment.¹¹

In January 2021, a ruling was issued by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. The court ruled that the Dakota Access Pipeline was operating illegally. The court issued an order for an environmental review of the pipeline's environmental and social impact. Despite this review, in April 2021, the Biden Administration stated that the Dakota Access Pipeline will remain in place.¹²

⁷ <https://blog.nativehope.org/the-voice-of-a-generation-bobbi-jean-three-legs-part-1>

⁸ Jones, Athena; Diamond, Jeremy; Krieg, Gregory (January 24, 2017). *"Trump advances controversial oil pipelines with executive action."* CNN.

⁹ Fortin, Jacey; Friedman, Lisa (July 6, 2020). *"Dakota Access Pipeline to Shut Down Pending Review, Federal Judge Rules."* The New York Times.

¹⁰ <https://insideclimatenews.org/news/25032020/dakota-access-pipeline-under-review-federal-court>

¹¹ Steinman, E. (2019). Why Was Standing Rock and the #NoDAPL Campaign So Historic? Factors Affecting American Indian Participation in Social Movement Collaborations and Coalitions. *Ethnic & Racial Studies*, 42(7), 1070 - 1090.

¹² Daughtry, Liz (April 9, 2021). Sierra Club Statement on Biden Administration's Inaction on the Dakota Access Pipeline <https://www.sierraclub.org/press-releases/2021/04/sierra-club-statement-biden-administration-s-inaction-dakota-access-pipeline>