

Transactive Discussion: Dakota Pipeline

Please read the following prompt and quotes. In small groups, discuss the questions below.

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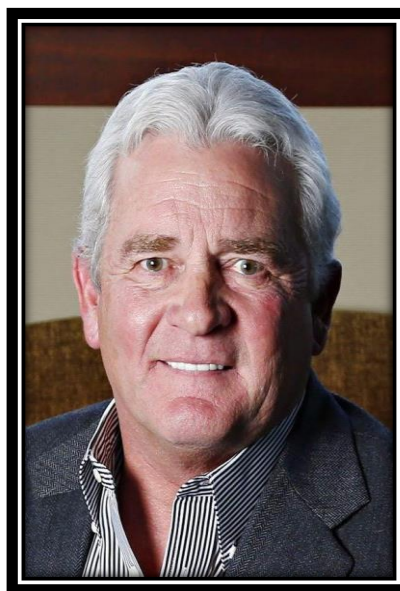
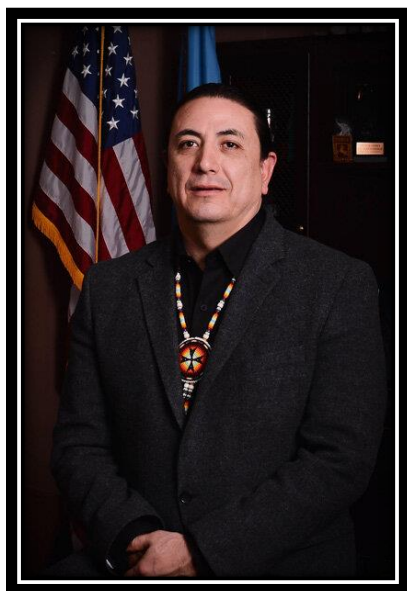
The Dakota Access Pipeline (or Bakken Pipeline) is a 1,172-mile-long underground pipeline that extends through four states (North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, and Illinois). Construction on the oil pipeline started in 2014, and by 2017, the pipeline was operational. Numerous groups, namely American Indians, have protested the pipeline due to concerns about the environmental, societal, and religious impact it would create given its route. (An alternative route was originally suggested. However, this route was denied due to its proximity to water sources, residential areas, and waterways.) The route runs directly through sacred Native American grounds and gravesites. The pipeline also runs underneath waterways less than one mile upstream from their drinking water, which posed a serious health threat to thousands.

Protestors across the nation signed petitions urging the federal government to formally assess the risk of the pipeline. Protestors also tied themselves to bulldozers and sat in the middle of the construction path for months to delay construction despite being met by guard dogs, imprisonment, and fire hoses in freezing temperatures. The Obama Administration ordered a formal impact assessment, but the Trump Administration overruled this via executive order. President Trump ordered pipeline construction to continue and ended the formal assessment.

Many argue that the pipeline's routing through Native American sacred lands combined with the history of pipeline oil leaks in the U.S. and lack of a formal risk assessment exemplifies environmental and institutional racism. Opponents of the pipeline point to the danger it brings to the people of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and millions further downstream and how it disregards 19th century treaties between American Indians and the U.S. government.¹ Proponents of the pipeline argue that it is safer than a train or truck, more cost-efficient, and helps the economy with job creations. In July 2020, a U.S. District Court judge ordered the pipeline to shut down until an environmental review was completed. While this is good news, there is still a possibility for the pipeline to operate.



¹ <https://www.procon.org/headline.php?headlineID=005331#14>



“What’s happened is our treaty rights are violated, our human rights are violated. Our legal law—the laws are being violated. Federal laws are being violated. And this is just a complete disregard for the environment, for what keeps people safe. And it’s just unfortunate, sad.”

-David Archambault II, Former Tribal Chairman of the Standing Rock Native American Reservation

“This pipeline is being built to safety standards that far exceed what the government requires us to do. And I just think the likelihood of a spill into Lake Oahe is just extremely remote... This has been such a disruption to that state. This is not a peaceful protest. So, if they want to stick around and continue to do what they're doing, great, but we're building the pipeline.”

-Kelcy Warren, CEO of Energy Transfer [the company behind the pipeline]

Discussion Questions

1. Given what you have read, including the quotes above, which perspective on this topic do you align with more, and why?
2. Using answers from Question #1, can you integrate the two perspectives or find a compromise between the two positions?
 - a. If not, why?
 - b. If so, what would the solution look like?