

MNI WICONI

Water is life. A simple statement.

This mantra forms the Standing Rock camps into one.

If you have been listening to the news you know about the dogs, the pepper spray, the arrests.



Digging deeper, you might have encountered stories about everything from fear in local ranchers to the awesome entrance of tribe after tribe arriving to support Standing Rock. Or you might have seen Amy Goodman or Lawrence O'Donnell on MSNBC stating what has never been publicly acknowledged about the history of the original peoples of this continent.

What is happening? It's organic and spirit is birthing awareness daily. About the time you feel hope gushing, the reality of the situation hits home. Today Standing Rock announced the rancher owning the burial sites just sold to the pipeline company, Energy Transport Partners.

I find myself circling and waking up at 2 A.M. Underneath it all I am profoundly touched by my experience of the tribal cultures. I have been witnessing the rising traditions of honoring elders, women and children now for ten years. Here in very alive present time, the culture is responding to demonstrate right now a way of being human. Every meal the crowd is reminded the Elders are first in line, then the children, then the women. (I had to get over being led to the food line by a young indian to be first....wwhhhaatttt?)

In the central area of the big camp an unusual tipi catches your eye. It is two tipis stretched out like an accordion. This is the Elders gathering spot. Just down the gate entrance hill is the sacred fire which has not gone out since the camp's beginning. Here each new tribe is sung and drummed into camp and all day long there is an open mic. If you are lucky, you may have been at a powwow, a sundance or ceremony with a native MC. The humor bathes you in well being all day long. At their guidance, an elder will be reporting the latest news and response by the camp, or experts on law and treaties may share, or a musician may take the mic to sing from their heart. As evening approaches drumming turns to traditional dancing. All around the fire people sit and drink in just Being in this space. Among the largely native crowd are white and black twenty somethings, media, white elders and environmentalists.



During the days since our return, I have been shaking down images, and sorting. Being silent and listening to my dream world. I know I have witnessed powerful roles of the Elders in a particular society. The Standing Rock tribe did not know this was going to happen. And I can imagine, as the numbers swelled, their gathering agenda.....how they must have had to pray, and listen beyond their own minds to feel what was happening and respond. They created 10 (not sure if they have been tweaked) principles to guide the camp. They insisted that everyone entering the camp must have training in the expectations and abide by them. They have held a young justifiably angry contingency of Native youth to these guidelines. They have included them in council and called them out when they chose to disregard the Elders council. Absolutely no alcohol, drugs or weapons of any kind are allowed. After an event of spray painting bulldozers, they maintained NO desecration of any property. In a fight for the long run, they are very clear not one negative incident will help. They are called upon to find a way to be in prayer and ceremony every hour of every day and to prepare everyone on the journey to be trained in non violent direct action. They are called to be in faith that prayer and spirit will lead the way. I can only say I long to be part of this eldering and ask myself how to bring that into being in my world. Yes, I want to go back. Yes, I want to support. More than all of that, I realize we need 100,000 Sacred Stone Camps. Our native wise ones are calling out to all of us: enough is enough.



We are all facing genocide in the face of Big Oil and corporations of old consciousness. In my home state of Nebraska, in spite of a vote of NO by local farmers and ranchers, fracking

companies from Colorado are dumping constant truckloads of their contaminated water into wells under the Ogallala aquifer which is the largest underground aquifer in the US. How do we take a stand? I ride my bike these days and wear a blue arm band saying " Water is life, MNI WICONI. " I making sure I am not invested in supporters of oil.

