

# Messaging of the Stop Line 3 Protests

A look at water protectors' visual voices that carry the weight of the world to the world

By John Kim

## Stop Line 3 in art and posters

I DON'T RECALL if I was directly involved in painting any of the Stop Line 3 posters, but I was a part of a number of arts activities during the movement. Looking at the signs now, my strongest remembrances aren't the protests

for which they were created, but details I discover in the ephemera of the objects: hurried brushstrokes, imperfectly laid print, the miscellany of materials (duck-taped cardboard, recycled pieces of plywood, donated t-shirts). They tell a story of what happened on the local scale in the sharing of the warmth of community during cold Minnesota winter nights. These activities happened during periods of downtime, the in-between moments in hurried preparation for public actions. Such times are crucial to the life of the movement, for the formation of community and solidarity happen in these quiet, anticipatory moments. In this sense, these posters document for me community-in-formation and solidarity-making that prepare to burst onto a scene as action.

## Where is the Planetary?

I write this while attending a conference about the Anthropocene entitled, "Where is the Planetary?" hosted by the House of the World's Cultures\* (HKW) in Berlin. HKW has been leading efforts for the adoption of the Anthropocene, the proposed geological epoch that addresses how humans have radically altered Earth systems, warranting a new periodization. In making a



conceptual framework the disparate human impacts on Earth systems from climate change to radioactive fallout, mining to monocultural agriculture. In settings like HKW, it has also centered productive debates about its origins, including colonialism, capitalism, slavery, and technical rationality.

Such debates can be a rallying point for directed action. This is to say that the Anthropocene can also support forms of activism and resistance to the planetary changes we are witnessing and help to contextualize future ones as well. For example, a number of conference attendees from around the world compared notes about the rapid expansion of copper, nickel, lithium, and

\*The Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW). The House of the World's Cultures is Germany's national center for the presentation and discussion of international contemporary arts, with a special focus on non-European cultures and societies.

case for the Anthropocene, researchers have collected evidence of a variety of modern human impacts that would survive the geological record of deep time, including mass species extinction, the increasing atmospheric concentration of carbon, the engineering of ecosystems, and more.

In contrast to the local experiences I wrote about, the Anthropocene focuses on geological time-frames and the planetary scale of such changes. It is commonly seen as an intellectual framework for research, and as such, the idea can be a bit of an abstraction to activists who are preoccupied with local action. However, its theorization has aspired to much more. The Anthropocene allows us to connect under a general



other mines to supply raw materials for electric vehicles. This echoes organizing efforts underway against proposed nickel and copper mining in proximity to the same Northern Minnesota Native communities that earlier resisted the Line 3 oil pipeline. The Anthropocene offers a framework for acknowledging the variety of disturbances happening simultaneously on a global scale and threatening the possibility for all life to thrive on the planet.

## An Anthropocene for Action

Gatherings, like the one at the House of the World's Cultures, connect transnational actors where the sharing of insights and planning can occur. This is a necessary countervailing force to an intensification of efforts to sever nations from planetary forms of solidarity and action. The United States' wavering commitment to the Paris Climate Accords is a clear example of this. A less obvious one is the expansion of repressive forces in the US battling popular opposition to infrastructure (such as the Line 3 oil pipeline) with laws that escalate the punishment for protest activity. On the local level, such measures are intended to deter activists from participating in protests, but it is also a part of this



The photographs come from the Welcome Water Protectors Center at the Great River, 2022. Permission for use was provided by participants. Individuals are credited when they are known.

nationalist turn that severs the US from its responsibility for planetary action on climate catastrophe.

This situation isn't unique to the United States. As countries around the world increasingly elect populist governments, there is an inward focus on national interests. This portends difficult times ahead for global movements. As suggested here, a corrective to this problem is the strengthening of transnational civil society and action. As a platform for organizing planetarily—the scale at which such activities need to occur—an Anthropocene for action creates opportunities for global community-in-formation and solidarity-making.

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# Witnessing the Movement

By Keri Pickett

A CANADIAN CORPORATION has changed the way the waters flow in Minnesota. During Line 3 construction, the Enbridge Energy corporation created multiple aquifer breaches and at least one of them continues to flow more than a year after the completion of the pipeline. The struggle to stop Enbridge Energy from messing up the water in Northern Minnesota goes back to 2013 with the announcement of the Sandpiper pipeline, a fracked-oil pipeline which was defeated in the fall of 2016. The Line 3 pipeline (now called Line 93 following its completion) was announced in 2015, igniting overwhelming tribal and public opposition in the regulatory agency

reviews, in the courts, and on the streets. When the Line 3 construction started in late November of 2020 the Indigenous community opposition was immediate. Native women, water protectors, and their many allies set up camps along the 330 miles of pipe going through traditional Anishinaabe and Dakota territory, making their voices heard. During the year the pipeline was installed, many police and state Department of Natural Resources officers in Minnesota were paid with an escrow account set up by the Enbridge corporation. This incentivized the militarization against



Jingle Dress dancers walk to the Great River Road to protest Line 3 drilling under the Mississippi River, January 9, 2020.

Above: Treaty People Gathering at the headwaters of the Mississippi River, 2021.



Water protectors occupy the Mississippi River on headwaters as Enbridge draws water during a drought, July 29, 2020.

the water protector movement and has criminalized those who believe that water is a precious resource to be protected for future generations. Over a thousand criminal charges later, we in Minnesota are still stuck with Enbridge's mistakes and, considering the corporation's track record of spills and leaks, people are still in opposition to Enbridge and are fighting to drop the charges against water protectors. We can no longer invest in fossil fuel's extreme energy extraction model. The planet needs to use less fossil fuel and transition to a "just economy." Indigenous people are leading the way, standing up for their treaty rights, which are the Supreme Law of the Land, and the



Hundreds gather at an Enbridge crossing site on Hwy 169, January 9, 2020.

land given to the Enbridge corporation for Line 3 falls in the treaty lands set aside to hunt, gather, and practice treaty rights. After witnessing all the destruction by Line 3, I believe it is time to pass the stewardship of the state-held lands to the tribes. Water is

life. For more information about what happened in Line 3 last year, go to [www.stopline3.org](http://www.stopline3.org) and please get involved with opposition to Enbridge's Line 5 pipeline.

*Keri Pickett photographed the images on these pages. She is an award-winning filmmaker, photographer, author, and artist.*



## HONOR THE EARTH

*Honor the Earth* was established by Winona LaDuke and Indigo Girls Amy Ray and Emily Saliers in 1993. In the nearly 30 years of operation, they have re-granted over \$2 million to over 200 Native American communities.

**OUR MISSION** is to create awareness and support for Native environmental issues and to develop needed financial and political resources for the survival of sustainable Native communities. Honor the Earth develops these resources by using music, the arts, the media, and Indigenous wisdom to ask people to recognize our joint dependency on the Earth and be a voice for those not heard.

As a unique national Native initiative, Honor the Earth works to a) raise public awareness and b) raise and direct funds to grassroots Native environmental groups. We are the only Native organization that provides both financial support and organizing support to Native environmental initiatives. This model is based on strategic analysis of what is needed to forge change in Indian country, and it is based deep in our communities, histories, and long-term struggles to protect the Earth.

### Background

We believe a sustainable world is predicated on transforming economic, social, and political relationships that have been based on systems of conquest toward systems based on just relationships with each other and with the natural world. As our mission states, we are committed to restoring a paradigm that recognizes our collective humanity and our joint dependence on the Earth.

We have seen the rise of a highly inefficient American industrial society on our lands. The largest mining companies in the world began in the heart of Anishinaabe territory—the Keweenaw Peninsula and the Mesabi Iron Range—and then traveled the world.

The society which has been created is highly extractive and highly inefficient, where today material resources and water become wasted and toxic, and we waste 60% or more of the energy between the point of origin and point of consumption. This highly destructive economy has reached material limits and is now resorting to extreme extraction. Whether the removal of 500 mountaintops in Appalachia (largely for foreign coal contracts), extreme mining proposals in the Great Lakes region, or fracking and tar sands extraction, we are clearly on a scorched path.

# We Need to Tell Our Own Stories

By Winona LaDuke

COLONIALISM MESSES UP things. That's how it goes. In fact, as Shawnee scholar Steven Newcomb once pointed out to me, the word "colonialism" has at its root the same word as "colon." In other words, it means to digest—colonialism is the digestion of one people by another—in military, social, political, economic, and food-system terms.

Welcome to 520 AC. After Colonization. We are now a terribly dependent people, or peoples. By and large, we have ceased to farm our own foods and lands, all a part of a logical consequence of theft, genocide, allotment, boarding schools, land alienation, and the lack of access to basic capital for even small-scale farming—as evidenced in the Keeps Eagle lawsuit. We are net importers of food, and it's costly. And even some of our largest tribal food enterprises—like the Navajo Agricultural Products Industry—produce food, not for Navajos, but for markets elsewhere, as does Gila River. Thousands of acres of our tribal lands are leased out to non-Indian producers who ship across the world. And, in the meantime, we're not looking good. On the White Earth reservation alone, a full third of the population has diabetes.

### So what's the solution?

This is the happy part. It turns out that our ancestors had it right, and my father had it right. My father used to say to me, "Winona, I don't want to hear your philosophy, if you can't grow corn..." Now that's an interesting thing to say to your child. Well, I thought about it, and thought about it some more. And then, I decided to grow corn. And, of course, along the way, I became an economist who wanted to look at the systems which support sovereignty and self determination, like our economic systems.

### A few important concepts

First, protect your ecosystem. In our case on the White Earth reservation, we protected wild rice from getting genetically engineered by the University of Minnesota. Our tribal chairmen said, "When we signed those treaties, and secured protection for our wild rice, we weren't talking about getting some rice in a bag...We meant a lake. We have a right to the land, water, and air that our food came from and that needs to be protected by sovereign nations."

Then, there's the economics. By producing food, you lose some of the need to purchase it, which reduces the instability of your dollar in a time of climate change and rising oil prices. A small garden plot (I like those raised beds) might put up \$750 worth of food. This is a good thing, if you want to eat.

Then, you get a local economy, if you work it right. One of my favorite Amish families makes around \$10,000 a year on their three acres of gardens. Our organizations and families probably make around \$1,000 for our Farm to School Programs here on the reservation and those big extended family houses. Not bad.

That is why you need a tribal food policy. From soil, or lake, to table, or seed to plate, tribes need to take jurisdiction over production, genetic integrity, processing, purchasing, and composting—if we want to be cyclical about it. Now consider this: If we moved from industrialized agriculture to relocalized organic agriculture, we could sequester about one-quarter of the carbon moving into the air, which is destroying our glaciers, oceans, forests, and lands.



Winona LaDuke

Photograph: Sarah LittleRedFeather