

1. Situating Myself: Lessons from Standing Rock

It is important to note that I am writing this paper from the position of a Settler who resides in unceded and unsurrendered WSÁNEĆ, Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations territories. I recognize myself as a Treaty 7 and Douglas Treaty person because the legitimacy of my existence on Tsuut'ina (Treaty 7), and WSÁNEĆ, Songhees and Esquimalt (Douglas Treaty) territories depends on the establishment of ongoing treaty relationships between Indigenous Nations and Settlers. Moreover, I locate myself as a Settler in order to recognize the relationship to where I live as rooted in colonialism. Hence, I am aware of my position of privilege as a beneficiary of settler colonization. It is the resentment and guilt I associate with my privilege that, in part, motivates me to decolonize my mind and encourage Settlers to embark on their own pathway towards decolonization. I am incredibly grateful and fortunate to have the opportunity to learn from Indigenous people inside and outside of the academy. This gift of knowledge has given me many responsibilities, such as acknowledging the territories I am situated on, while simultaneously honoring the peoples to which these territories belong.

Furthermore, I believe I have a responsibility to learn how to be an ally to Indigenous people. Despite election promises, the federal government of Canada has approved Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain Expansion pipeline project without the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Nations across the province of so-called British Columbia. There are many parallels to be drawn between the Kinder Morgan pipeline and the Dakota Access pipeline. As such, because of my position as a Settler, I researched this paper with an intention to learn about non-Indigenous allies. In order to address the ongoing processes of colonization occurring where I live, I hope to apply what I have learned from Standing Rock and begin transforming my solidarity into allyship.

2. Introduction

Water is life, or at least it is necessary for life; thus, contestations over water are also contestations over life itself.¹ An Ecofeminist approach to contestations over water necessitates an understanding of our treatment of each other and our treatment of the earth as inextricably connected.² Across Great Turtle Island, the oppression of Indigenous people (particularly women) through systemic and systematic colonial violence is therefore integrally connected to the degradation of water and destruction of Indigenous lands.³ One example of many to support this claim is the direct action taken by the Oceti Sakowin⁴ at Standing Rock, North Dakota. Oceti Sakowin women have lead and organized grass-roots resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), crossing over and potentially contaminating the Cannonball and Missouri rivers. As a response, the United States (U.S.) militarized police violently attacked peaceful water protectors who sought to halt DAPL construction. In an attempt to draw attention to the co-constitutive nature of violence against Indigenous women and violence against the Earth, this paper analyzes DAPL within the context of colonialism. I therefore argue that the DAPL is not only exemplary of colonization as an ongoing process, but also perpetuates violence against Indigenous women who are protecting and speaking on behalf of the water.

In order to demonstrate that DAPL is exemplary of ongoing colonization and perpetuates violence against Indigenous women, I will first give a brief historical overview of relations between the U.S and the Oceti Sakowin. Second, after developing the colonial context in which

¹ Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocidal Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387, DOI:10.1080/14623520601056240.

² Greta Gaard, "Women, Water, Energy: An Ecofeminist Approach," *Organization & Environment* 14, no. 2 (2001): 158

³ Ibid., 159.

⁴ Oceti Sakowin means Seven Council Fires. All seven major "tribal" nations associated with the Indigenous Peoples commonly known as "Sioux" comprise the Oceti Sakowin; "Oceti Sakowin," Akata Lakota Museum Cultural Center: An Outreach of St. Joseph's Indian School, <http://aktalakota.stjo.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=8309>, (Accessed November 1st, 2016)

DAPL operates, I will argue that DAPL is situated within an ongoing pattern of colonial violence. Third, I articulate voices from the frontlines and discuss the role of Oceti Sakowin women in leading the Indigenous resistance movement at Standing Rock. To conclude, I discuss Indigenous resurgence and the revitalization of Oceti Sakowin spirituality occurring at Sacred Stone Camp. This, in turn, is empowering direct action to address violence against Indigenous women and the Water.

3. Past Colonial Relations: Shaping and Informing the Present

Because Indigenous Nations have lived on their land in political communities with systems of law and governance for thousands of years, this raises questions concerning how Indigenous Nations ‘lost’ their land.⁵ In order to acquire land for European settlement and exploit resources for profit, the U.S government waged a series of wars against Indigenous Nations after declaring independence from Britain July 4, 1776.⁶ For example, a dispute concerning jurisdiction over hunting territory in so-called Powder River Country sparked the Red Cloud War, lasting from 1866 to 1868 throughout the territories of Montana and Wyoming.⁷ The Oglala Lakota leader Makhpyia-luta (Red Cloud) successfully waged war against the United States, resulting in the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie.⁸ This treaty, signed between Indigenous leaders and the U.S government, guarantees Oceti Sakowin jurisdiction over 26-million acres of their land, Paha Sapa (the sacred Black Hills), and established the Great Sioux Reservation.⁹

For the purposes of this paper, the Fort Laramie Treaty has three key parts. Further,

⁵Michael Asch, *On Being Here to Stay: Treaties and Aboriginal Rights in Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 3.

⁶ Gabriel S Estrada, *Multicultural America: A Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Carlos E. Cortés, ed, "Battle of Little Bighorn," (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, INC, 2013), <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452276274.n5>, 2

⁷ Ibid.,

⁸ Ibid.,

⁹ Lisa Roberts Seppi, *Multicultural America: A Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Carlos E. Cortés, ed, "Fort Laramie, Treaty of (1868)," (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, INC, 2013), 2 <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452276274.n3>

contemporary violations of these terms at Standing Rock, North Dakota demonstrate colonization as an ongoing process. First, it pledges peace between both sides.¹⁰ At the frontline resistance to DAPL, this term of the treaty has been violated multiple times during standoffs between police and peaceful water protectors. For example, On November 21th, 2016, police used an excessive and potentially deadly use of force against water protectors.¹¹ Water cannons in sub-zero temperatures, rubber bullets, chemical irritants and concussion grenades wounded over 180 water protectors.¹² Second, the treaty maintains that if “bad men among the whites...commit any wrong upon the person or property of the Indians, the United States will... proceed at once to cause the offender to be arrested and punished...”¹³ In regards to the situation at Standing Rock, the U.S. federal government has refused to adhere to this obligation. The Obama Administration did not take action to stop police violence and Transfer Energy Partner’s assault on Oceti Sakowin lands.¹⁴ Third, the Fort Laramie Treaty claims that Oceti Sakowin are to have unrestricted use of their territory east of the Rockies and west of the Missouri River.¹⁵ Despite this term in the treaty, Oceti Sakowin water protectors were arrested and removed from their territories in an attempt to continue DAPL construction. Third, it states that the U.S government cannot change the terms of the treaty without three-quarters of the adult male Oceti Sakowin population’s approval.¹⁶

Despite that the terms of the treaty cannot be changed without approval, the U.S. government annexed 7.7 million acres of Oceti Sakowin land eight years after ratifying the

¹⁰ Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, "Fort Laramie Treaty," TREATY WITH THE SIOUX-- BRULÉ, OGLALA, MINICONJOU, YANKTONAI, HUNKPAPA, BLACKFEET, CUTHEAD, TWO KETTLE, SANS ARCS, AND SANTEE-- AND ARAPAHO, April 29, (1868), Article 1, <http://standingrock.org/fort-laramie-treaty/>

¹¹ The Associated Press. “Standing Rock Pipeline protesters repelled by force at bridge crossing,” *CBC News*, November 21st, 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/dakota-access-clashes-sunday-night-1.3859945>

¹² Ibid.,

¹³ Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, "Fort Laramie Treaty," Article 1

¹⁴ The Associated Press. “Standing Rock Pipeline protesters repelled by force”

¹⁵ Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, "Fort Laramie Treaty," Article 2

¹⁶ Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, "Fort Laramie Treaty," Article 12

treaty.¹⁷ Furthermore, lands stolen from the Oceti Sakowin includes the sacred Paha Sapa. In 1874, George Custer led a U.S. military expedition through Paha Sapa in order to investigate mineral resources.¹⁸ Instead of upholding its treaty responsibility to stop Settler incursions, the U.S. offered to purchase Paha Sapa. Furthermore, the U.S government attempted to negotiate another treaty that would cede Paha Sapa instead of adhering to the Fort Laramie Treaty. When these new treaty negotiations failed, the U.S. launched a military campaign against the Sioux and Cheyenne, namely, the Great Sioux War.¹⁹ As a result, Congress passed a statute in 1877 that unlawfully ignored the terms of the Fort Laramie Treaty and stole Oceti Sakowin territory.²⁰

The unlawful confiscation of Oceti Sakowin territory was not subject to litigation because of U.S. "sovereign immunity."²¹ Litigation concerning the illegal seizure of Paha Sapa finally began in 1923 after Congress passed a special jurisdictional statute waiving sovereign immunity. In 1980, the Supreme Court finally determined that the U.S was "exercising its power of eminent domain under the Fifth Amendment" when it "took" Paha Sapa.²² The Supreme Court determined that the U.S governments failure to promote "just compensation" was its only wrongdoing. Therefore, the Supreme Court dismissed the fact that the U.S government ignored the Fort Laramie Treaty and, in doing so, failed to uphold its responsibilities to the Oceti Sakowin.²³

According to U.S. constitutional law, treaties are the supreme law of the land.²⁴ European invaders were compelled to negotiate treaties because Indigenous Nations were here first. As

¹⁷ Frank Pommersheim, *Broken Landscape: Indians, Indian Tribes, and the Constitution*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 75

¹⁸ Seppi, "Fort Laramie Treaty of (1868)," 2

¹⁹ *Ibid.*,

²⁰ Pommersheim, *Broken Landscape*, 75

²¹ *Ibid.*,

²² *Ibid.*,

²³ Pommersheim, *Broken Landscape*, 75

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 4

such, the only way in which the U.S. can legitimately maintain a right to claim Indigenous land is through treaty agreements.²⁵ However, as section two of this paper illuminates, the U.S. government continues to ignore the Fort Laramie Treaty. This is because the militarized power of the U.S. enables treaty obligations to be ignored. Further, it is important to note that Indigenous Nations are forced to operate within a foreign, imposed and colonial legal system. Thus, despite the fact that the U.S. constitution formally recognizes treaties, the U.S. legal system allows the U.S. government to exercise Congressional power and ignore its responsibilities towards Indigenous Nations.

4. Dakota Access Pipeline: Ongoing Colonization

Because the Supreme Court failed to uphold the treaty rights of Ogeton in the Black Hills case,²⁶ it is not surprising that the Sioux Tribe did not claim a violation of the Fort Laramie Treaty when filing an injunction to stop DAPL.²⁷ The Sioux Tribe has demonstrated an admirable effort to fight DAPL through litigation. However, its failure to win through the U.S. court system is exemplary of how Indigenous Nations face limitations when working within foreign and imposed colonial systems. This limitation is a reason why this paper focuses on the direct action Indigenous Nations and allies have taken to stop DAPL. As Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel aptly write, “institutional approaches to making meaningful change in the lives of Indigenous people have not led to what we understand as decolonization and regeneration.”²⁸

²⁵ Pommersheim, *Broken Landscape*, 2

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 75

²⁷ The Sioux Tribe argued that upon approving DAPL, U.S. Army Corps violated multiple statutes under U.S. federal law including the Clean Water Act. Further, the Sioux Tribe argued in Court that DAPL is “unlawful encroachment on its [the Sioux Nation’s] heritage.”

Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, *et al.*, v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, *et al.*, [2016] 16-1534 (JEB), https://turtletalk.files.wordpress.com/2016/09/memorandum-opinion-09_09_2016.pdf

²⁸ Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel, “Being Indigenous: Resurgences against Contemporary Colonialism,” *Government and Opposition LTD* (2005): 611-612, Accessed November 12th, 2016, http://corntassel.net/being_indigenous.pdf

The following section therefore highlights how resistance to ongoing processes of colonization is fueling the opposition to DAPL.

DAPL (owned and operated by Energy Transfer Partners) is a domestic oil pipeline route designed to move over a half-billion gallons of crude oil daily across four states.²⁹ The route crosses Fort Laramie Treaty land and runs within half a mile from the Standing Rock Reservation. According to the “motion for preliminary injunction” by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, two routes for DAPL were initially considered.³⁰ Energy Transfer Partners rejected the northern route because it “would be near and could jeopardize the drinking water of the residents in the city of Bismarck.”³¹ Instead, the oil company selected the southern route close to the border of the Standing Rock reservation. The route selected for DAPL is therefore exemplary of power relationships among and between people in various institutions of colonization. Thus, there are significant issues of racism, inequality and white privilege associated with DAPL. Namely, environmental degradation is, by design, disproportionately affecting Indigenous people.³²

Indigenous Nations in the area, then, are bearing the costs and risks associated with DAPL without any foreseeable benefit. This is expressed in the following statement made by Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Chairman Dave Archambault, “Our people will receive no benefits from this pipeline, yet we are paying the ultimate price for it with our water.”³³ Despite that the pipeline is on unceded and unsurrendered Oceti Sakowin territory, neither the U.S. government,

²⁹ Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, *et al.*, v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, *et al.*, [2016] 16-1534

³⁰ *Ibid.*,

³¹ *Ibid.*,

³² Deborah McGregor, "Honouring Our Relations: An Anishinaabe Perspective on Environmental Justice," *Speaking for Ourselves: Environmental Justice in Canada*, Ed. Julian Agyeman et al. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 27.

³³ Valerie Taliman, "Dakota Access Pipeline Standoff: Mni Wiconi, Water is Life," *Indian Country Today Media Network*, August 15th, 2016, <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2016/08/15/dakota-access-pipeline-standoff-mni-wiconi-water-life-165470>

U.S. Army Corps, nor Energy Transfer Partners obtained consent from the Sioux Tribe for the DAPL project. Construction of the pipeline destroys sacred burial grounds, historic villages and sundance sites surrounding the area.³⁴ Further, DAPL crosses the confluence of the Cannonball and Missouri rivers, which threatens to contaminate primary sources of drinking water for 10 million people.³⁵ As such, Archambault argues that Indigenous Nations in the area “will not stop asking the federal government and Army Corps to end their attacks on our water and our people.”³⁶ Thus, there are no benefits from DAPL for Indigenous Nations that could justify threatening the Water and, consequently, every life dependent upon it.

Degrading and depleting “natural resources,” such as Water, in the name of profit and economic “development” is a product of colonization. This is because colonial Western world-views conceptualize “mother nature” as a force needing to be managed and controlled.³⁷ This conception of the environment is based on a “linear model of power production, [whereby] energy is extracted, distributed, consumed, and in the process, wastes are produced.”³⁸ Because this linear model operates on a misconception that energy can be continuously extracted from the earth without giving any energy back,³⁹ it “is now showing itself to be not only inaccurate, but life threatening.”⁴⁰ Our capitalist system is exemplary of this model in practice. Capitalism, a colonial system imposed onto Indigenous peoples, necessitates exponential growth in a free-market economy. Hence, the infinite growth of a capitalist system requires stealing, exploiting and extracting resources from Indigenous lands. Because Oceti Sakowin depend on their lands

³⁴ Iyuskin American Horse, “We are protectors, not protesters: Why I’m Fighting the North Dakota pipeline,” *The Guardian*, August 18th, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/aug/18/north-dakota-pipeline-activists-bakken-oil-fields>

³⁵ Ibid.,

³⁶ Taliman, “Dakota Access Pipeline Standoff: Mni Wiconi, Water is Life,” *Indian Country Today Media Network*

³⁷ Gaard, “Women, Water, Energy: An Ecofeminist Approach,” 161.

³⁸ Ibid.,

³⁹ Ibid., 167.

⁴⁰ Gaard, “Women, Water, Energy: An Ecofeminist Approach,” 167

and waters for sustenance, defending the capitalist system and maintaining the colonial status quo is therefore favored over the lives of Indigenous people.

Over 280 Indigenous Nations from around the world joined the Oceti Sakowin's opposition to DAPL.⁴¹ Thousands of Indigenous and non-Indigenous allies travelled to Standing Rock. Furthermore, solidarity actions occurred globally to support the Oceti Sakowin. According to a prophecy from long ago, the Oceti Sakowin were to come together in order to defeat "the black snake" (i.e., DAPL).⁴² Despite that the Oceti Sakowin's non-violent resistance to "the black snake" has been met with militarized police violence, Oceti Sakowin are left with no choice but to defend themselves and protect the water.⁴³ Oceti Sakowin woman Kandi Mosset alludes to this with the following claim, "I am protecting the very essence of what I am made up of, which is mostly water... water is the first life- it is our very essence, our very being is made up of water."⁴⁴ The opposition to DAPL therefore consists of water protectors who are protecting life itself as opposed to "protestors," a label too narrow in scope to describe what the events at Standing Rock.⁴⁵

5. Oceti Sakowin Women: Leaders and Voices from the Frontlines

On the frontlines of DAPL resistance, Oceti Sakowin women are denying the narrow scope of "protester" and demonstrating profound leadership; simultaneously, these women are resisting and responding to the patriarchy imposed onto their communities. Assimilating Indigenous Peoples into the colonizers' world-view necessitates the creation of power

⁴¹ Sacred Stone Camp, "Standing Strong," Filmed [2016], Facebook Video 3:11, Posted [September 19th, 2016], <https://www.facebook.com/CampOfTheSacredStone/videos/1773941612894869/>

⁴² Ibid.,

⁴³ Taliman, "Dakota Access Pipeline Standoff."

⁴⁴ Fusion, "Dakota Access Pipeline: Protectors not Protesters," Youtube Video 2:27, Posted [September 8th, 2016], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8Uwo6ZAEG4>

⁴⁵ Ibid.,

imbalances between Indigenous men and women.⁴⁶ Recall from section 2 of this paper that changing the terms of the Fort Laramie Treaty did not require the vote of Oceti Sakowin women. In treaties, the U.S. government would refuse to recognize and respect the decision-making authority of Indigenous women. This, in turn, is exemplary of systemic and systematic violence against Indigenous women. Namely, through the colonizers' imposition of patriarchal modes of relating and systems of governance, Indigenous women are excluded from decision-making processes in their communities. As Makere Stewart-Harawira aptly writes,

“As Christianity and capitalism spread throughout the world, recognition of the sacred and political roles of Indigenous women was one of the greatest casualties. Yet many Indigenous women have continued to exercise significant political and spiritual leadership.”⁴⁷

Many Oceti Sakowin women are drawing from matriarchal Tribal structures and assuming roles as spiritual leaders.⁴⁸ From the frontlines of Standing Rock, Jasilea Rose Charger from Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe states that resistance to DAPL is not a “war of negativity but the war of spirituality. We're trying to overcome this obstacle in a non-violent way instead of fighting with violence, instead of fighting with fire, we're fighting with prayer.”⁴⁹ Thus, these women ground their strategies to stop DAPL and protect the water in spirituality and prayer. This section therefore discusses how and why Oceti Sakowin women lead the frontline resistance against DAPL.

⁴⁶ Denise K. Henning, "Yes My Daughters, We Are Cherokee Women," *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, Ed. Joyce Green, (Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2007), 189

⁴⁷ Makere Stewart-Harawira, "Practicing Indigenous Feminism: Resistance to Imperialism," *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, Ed. Joyce Green, (Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2007), 133.

⁴⁸ Sam Levin, "At Standing Rock, women lead fight in face of Mace, arrests and strip searches," *The Guardian*, November 4th, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/04/dakota-access-pipeline-protest-standing-rock-women-police-abuse>

⁴⁹ Sacred Stone Camp, "Standing Strong," Filmed [2016], Facebook Video 3:11, Posted [September 19th, 2016], <https://www.facebook.com/CampOfTheSacredStone/videos/1773941612894869/>

For many water protectors, the movement at Standing Rock is a fight against colonization's ongoing legacy of misogyny, racism and violence.⁵⁰ In North Dakota, there are large numbers of non-native men relocating to shantytowns near reservations. These living quarters are known as "man camps."⁵¹ As outlined in the colonists' histories of discovering gold and oil in the region, frontier dynamics are similar to the description of "man camps."⁵² Thus, since the 2008 oil boom, there is a case to be made that increasing crime committed against Indigenous people in North Dakota is correlated with "man camps."⁵³ As Sarah Deer argues,

"The crime that Native women are experiencing as a result of the exploding fracking business has parallels with the harm being done to the planet- the land and water are being poisoned as the hearts and spirits of Native women break. Thus another generation [of Indigenous women] experiences displacement and abuse."⁵⁴

DAPL therefore perpetuates and facilitates violence against Indigenous women. As a response, Oceti Sakowin women are resisting a multitude of colonial violence's perpetuated against their bodies, minds, spirits, Lands and Waters.⁵⁵

In *Honouring Our Relations: An Anishinaabe Perspective on Environmental Justice*, Deborah McGregor articulates that an Indigenous approach to environmental justice is about justice for all beings of Creation.⁵⁶ Alluding to this claim made by McGregor, Oceti Sakowin woman Kandi Mosset states, "I am protecting that [the Water] for my future generations [on behalf of] all those that can't speak for themselves- not just the babies, but everything that flies in the sky, all those that swim in the waters, [and] the four-legged's. Somebody has to speak on

⁵⁰ Levin, "At Standing Rock, women lead fight"

⁵¹ Sarah Deer, *The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 78

⁵² Ibid.,

⁵³ Ibid.,

⁵⁴ Ibid.,

⁵⁵ Ibid.,

⁵⁶ McGregor, "Honouring Our Relations," 27

their behalf because they don't have a voice.”⁵⁷ Therefore, from an Indigenous perspective, desecrating the Water is not wrong simply because it threatens human existence. As McGregor maintains, human and non-human aspects of Creation have roles and responsibilities to fulfill that must be respected.⁵⁸ Thus, McGregor argues, “We do not have the right to interfere with water's duties to the rest of Creation.”⁵⁹

Indigenous epistemologies hold that water is the life-blood of Mother Earth.⁶⁰ As such, McGregor maintains, “just as water is a giver of life, women, also life givers, have a special relationship and responsibility to water. The recognition of women's role in creating life along with water means that women and water have a special bond.”⁶¹ Mossett speaks to this bond in the following statement, “It is no coincidence that when we're pregnant we carry our babies in water, and the understanding is that water is the first life- it's our very essence, our very being is made up of water. It flows through us, and it flows from the rivers to the sky back down in that circular way.”⁶² An understanding of the cycle and natural order of things therefore necessitates an appreciation and respect for Water as a living and life-giving entity.⁶³ As such, although Indigenous cultures are unique and diverse, most Nations consider Indigenous women as the keepers of the Water.

In leading the movement to stop DAPL, Oceti Sakowin women are therefore exercising their responsibility to protect the Water. Kandi Mossett claims that, “Women are the ones going and breaking down fences and running in front of bulldozers. Women are the ones locking arms

⁵⁷ Fusion, “Dakota Access Pipeline: Protectors not Protesters”

⁵⁸ McGregor, “Honouring Our Relations,” 32-33.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 38

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*,

⁶¹ *Ibid.*,

⁶² Fusion, “Dakota Access Pipeline: Protectors not Protesters”

⁶³ *Ibid.*,

with babies on their backs going in because it's that desperate, it's that urgent to protect life.”⁶⁴ Exemplary of this urgency, young women leading the Standing Rock youth council have faced physical violence in the form of mace, teargas and rubber bullets during increasingly tense standoffs with police.⁶⁵ Despite the violence Indigenous women are facing and the constant threat of arrest, Elder women held prayer circles directly on land where DAPL construction is planned.⁶⁶ Thus, as Mossett aptly claims from the frontlines of the DAPL resistance, “We're all, as women, going to keep on holding that line pushing forward, and hold the line for water and for life.”⁶⁷

6. Conclusion

After U.S. Army Corps of Engineers approved the DAPL route proposal, members of Standing Rock Lakota and other Oceti Sakowin Tribes began working to stop DAPL on the ground. This, in turn, resulted in the establishment of the Sacred Stone Camp in April 2016 in order to block the path of DAPL. In a video on the Sacred Stone Camp's Facebook page, Chief Arvol Looking Horse of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe states, "And now today we are sharing the best that we can here at this camp where there are many tribes and many nations coming because a lot of people are looking for their spirituality. That's why we are in this situation right now because people are spiritually disconnected." Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred refers to this as a “spiritual revolution,” which is a necessary condition for Indigenous self-determination and decolonization.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Fusion, “Dakota Access Pipeline: Protectors not Protesters”

⁶⁵ Levin, “At Standing Rock, women lead fight”

⁶⁶ Ibid.,

⁶⁷ Fusion, “Dakota Access Pipeline: Protectors not Protesters”

⁶⁸ Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2005), 32

The beauty of the movement at Standing Rock is that it is led by women attempting to engage as many people as possible to protect water. Simultaneously, these women are raising awareness of the spiritual and cultural significance of water.⁶⁹ As I have argued in this paper, the degradation of water and the destruction of Indigenous lands is integrally connected to the oppression of Indigenous people (particularly women) through systemic and systematic colonial violence.⁷⁰ To support this claim, I analyzed the situation at Standing Rock, North Dakota. Hence, in order to draw attention to the co-constitutive nature of violence against Indigenous women and violence against the Earth, this paper analyzed DAPL within the context of colonialism. I therefore argued that the DAPL is exemplary of colonization as an ongoing process, and perpetuates violence against Indigenous women who are protecting and speaking on behalf of the water.

⁶⁹ McGregor, "Honouring Our Relations," 39

⁷⁰ Gaard, "Women, Water, Energy: An Ecofeminist Approach," 159.

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