

Respect Our Water: The Letters

Instructions: The following letters were written by native youth activists in protest of the Dakota Access Pipeline. The letters have a very specific goal—to encourage people to oppose the project. With your group, read the letters that you have been assigned. Native people in the United States have a long history of speaking out when they feel that their rights have been threatened or violated by the U.S. government. It is important to understand these protests as one of many examples of native communities engaging in activism.

As you read your assigned letters, underline each reason that the activist provides for opposing the pipeline. The letters below can be found in their original form at <http://respectourwater.com/category/the-letters/>.

Letter 1: Tariq Brownotter and the Oceti Sakowin Youth, July 23, 2016

Dear President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama,

It has been two years already since I met you during your visit to Standing Rock. When you were here, you sat and listened to what we had to say. You made us feel like we mattered, we didn't feel invisible anymore.

I am writing this letter to you because I am concerned about the wellbeing of my people. The Army Corps of Engineers just issued a construction permit allowing Dakota Access LLC to build a massive pipeline through our Missouri River. This pipeline will transport 570,000 barrels of crude oil through our water every day. In 2012-2013 alone, there were 300 oil pipeline breaks in the state of North Dakota. When the Dakota Access Pipeline breaks, it will not only contaminate our water but it will also destroy our sacred land and threaten our individual, societal and community's health.

A few months ago, the youth from my Tribe started speaking out against the Dakota Access Pipeline. We created a petition to raise awareness about the potential damages this pipeline could do to our people, and our Respect Our Water campaign now has over One Hundred and Forty Thousand (140,000) supporters, both across the country and around the world. Our campaign has been successful. Sadly, it was not enough to dissuade the Army Corps of Engineers from issuing the construction permit.

Throughout history, our people have used messenger runners to deliver valuable information between tribes. In the spirit of our ancestors we have started a Relay Race to bring our message to Washington DC. Thirty of us, from the Oceti Sakowin Youth (Standing Rock Sioux Tribe), will be running almost 2000 miles over three weeks to raise further awareness about the pipeline and to deliver our 140,000 petition signatures to the headquarter of the Army Corps of Engineers. Our final stop will be at your doorstep, Mr. President. We hope you can join us and listen to what we have to say.

As the native children of this country, we are asking you to stand with us on August 6, 2016 at Lafayette Square and help us fight the Dakota Access Pipeline. Enough has been taken away from our people. We want to thrive and we want a bright future. One that embraces our cultural heritage and our deep communion with our lands. By helping us fight for our water and for our ancestral lands, you confirm our common humanity and dignity. This is what we ask for.

After your visit to Standing Rock you said you felt we were like your own children. Mr. President and First Lady we have no doubt you meant every word you said and we know you have not forgotten us. We hope that your schedule allows you to greet us and show your support upon our arrival in Washington DC.

Thank you very much,

Tariq and the Oceti Sakowin Youth

Name: _____

Letter 2: Tariq Brownotter, April 18, 2016

Dear Assistant Secretary Darcy & The Army Corps of Engineers,

My Name is Tariq Brownotter, I am 16 years old I live in Bullhead, SD. I am currently a junior at McLaughlin Public High School. I am an enrolled member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe.

I enjoy playing basketball. It's my go to hobby, whether it maybe a intense state game, a local tournament or just running game's at open gym. After I'm all done playing there's one thing that I always need, Water! Water is so important to us, it's one of our basic necessities. It's not just one of those things we can replace with something else. When or if we lose that amount of water it's not just us losing out on it, it's also future generations to come who will be affected. Our grandchildren and great grandchildren shouldn't have to suffer because of this. In the future they shouldn't have to pay an arm and a leg for water or be denied water because it would be so scarce. We need to think of our generations to come. The supporters of the pipeline really need to thin[k] this through and think of their families. With this letter I really hope it will open the eyes of those who are in support of the pipeline.

Please carefully consider my thoughts and concerns as they are the concerns of a Native American teen who is a non-supporter of the pipeline from one of the reservation you could potentially poison. With that being said I thank you kindly for taking the time to listen to what I have to say.

Thank You,

"Pilámáyayé"

Letter 3: Anna Lee Rain YellowHammer, April 18, 2016

Dear Assistant Secretary Darcy & The Army Corps of Engineers,

My name is Anna Lee Rain YellowHammer. I'm 13 years old and I am an enrolled member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. I lived all my life in Fort Yates, North Dakota. I play basketball for Standing Rock Middle School and I am also on the Student Council.

I am writing this letter to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline. My great grandparents are originally from Cannon Ball, North Dakota where the pipeline will cross the Missouri River. They lived along the Missouri River all their life. They raised gardens, chickens and horses. I want to be the voice for my great grandparents and my community and ask you to stop the building of the Dakota Access pipeline. If the pipeline breaks the oil will spill on the ground and into the water. Grass, crops, trees and animals will not be able to grow and live because of the oil. People will not be able to drink from the river or use the water. The time and the cost to clean up oil spills will take years and probably millions of dollars. Water to Native American people is the first medicine. Mni Wiconi: water is life.

SAY NO TO THE DAKOTA ACCESS PIPELINE AND SIGN OUR PETITION.

Anna Lee Rain YellowHammer

Standing Rock Middle School

Letter 4: Anastasia White Mountain, April 18, 2016

Dear Assistant Secretary Darcy & The Army Corps of Engineers,

I am a youth from the teen center of the Boys and Girls Club on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. My name is Anastasia White Mountain and I'm 16 years old. I'm from Bismarck, ND originally from Eagle Butte, SD and live in McLaughlin, SD.

I have a heart for running and playing basketball. In the summer I dance at the powwows and participate in community activities.

I am writing this letter from preventing the XL pipeline from being build.

It's important by helping people grow food and most important for the people and animals. You need it for everything. In general people need it to survive.

A lot of thing could go wrong. Like, if farmers don't have water, they aren't going to be able to grow crops. People won't be getting food. Everything would change.

I would say don't do it. If the pipeline breaks you can't do anything about it. Your soils no good and your water would be no good. You're just making more problems for our community.

That hopefully this pipeline will not be built for the safety of this community. Our water isn't the best, we don't need it to be worse.

Anastasia White Mountain

Letter 5: Tomi Levering, April 18, 2016

Dear Jo-Ellen Darcy & The Army Corps of Engineers,

Hello my name is Tomi. I am from Kenel, South Dakota, but I go to Solen High School. I am writing this letter because I am protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline. I live in Cannonball.

If you are thinking of putting this pipeline down, then you are endangering a very large amount animals and even humans. What will happen if there is a large crack in the pipe and a very big amount of oil spills out? The answer is, there will be too much oil that spilled that it can get in the water and animals will die. Do you think that putting down a pipeline that can break and make all sorts of animals suffer is the best idea?

Our water is very important to all of us, even the people that are building the Dakota Access Pipeline. I hope that you will take this letter to mind. I seriously hope that you are now thinking of NOT putting down the pipeline.

Sincerely,

Tomi Levering

Solen School Student

Name: _____

Letter 6: Lanelle Plenty Chief, April 1, 2016

Dear Assistant Secretary Darcy & The Army Corps of Engineers,

Hello, my name is Lanelle Plenty Chief I am 4'9 and I'm 13 years old. I was born in Dunseith and moved to Cannon Ball North Dakota. My favorite color is blue and white. I cannot listen to sad stories without crying. I'm a female and I am protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline because it could kill the environment.

Water is important to me and everyone else. The animals could die because of oil spills. We need our water and animals to help us live. I want to protect our water from the pipeline, before it's too late. It could kill Mother Nature if we don't have water. Please don't make the pipe line.

I would like to say to the DAP builders that they don't need it because if it breaks we will not have water any more. I need the water so please don't build the DAP. It's not too late to change your mind, think of the animals. I hope this letter will change your mind to keep the animals alive so don't make the DAP. PROTEST the DAP.

Sincerely,

Lanelle plenty chief

Solen middle school student

Letter 7: Brashel, March 30, 2016

Dear Jo-Ellen Darcy & The Army Corps of Engineers,

My name is Brashel. I live in Cannon Ball, ND. I have lived in Cannon Ball my whole life. My hobbies are hanging out with my friends and family. I'm writing the letter because I am against the Dakota Access Pipeline.

I am going against the Dakota Access Pipeline because I do not want our water to be dirty. Water is a very important resource. It is important because we use it every day in our lives. If we don't have water it will affect us all.

I would not like the workers or people who are building the pipeline to build it. The oil might leak and cause our water to be dirty. We won't be able to drink the water. I hope this helps people think about not putting the pipeline on our reservation.

Sincerely,

Brashel

Solen School Student

Name: _____

Letter 8: Elliott Reid Thunder Hawk, March 30, 2016

Dear Jo-Ellen Darcy & The Army Corps of Engineers,

My name [is] Elliott Reid Thunder Hawk. I am fourteen years old and I live on the Standing Rock Reservation. The special thing about me is that every Monday and Thursday I watch WWE because I like wrestling and I like basketball. The reason why I like these things because they are entertaining to do and watch. I'm writing this letter because I care about our land we, all Indians, need this land to stay healthy.

Water is so important to me because I need it, we need it, all of us need it and so do you. What might happen if the pipeline breaks? It will affect our reservation, rivers, land will be destroyed they will do nothing to repair it.

I would like the people that build the pipeline to do their best. You guys can't let it break because we all care about our reservation. This letter will cause agreement because a lot of us don't want to let the pipeline oil spill. We don't want the pipeline to break.

Sincerely

Elliott Reid Thunder Hawk

Solen school student

Letter 9: Naomi Alberts, March 31, 2016

Dear Jo-Ellen Darcy & The Army Corps of Engineers,

Hi, my name is Naomi Alberts, aka Nomi, and I am 13 years old. I am from Fort Totten, ND and now I live in Cannon Ball, ND. I like to play sports and listen to music. I am writing this letter because I am against the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Water is important to me because I use it for sports, I need it for my workouts and for my gym classes. If I don't have water, I might die.

I won't like when (if you have an oil spill) I have dirty water to drink. I want it clean. There will be toxic oils in the water that we drink if that pipeline is built.

Sincerely,

Naomi Alberts

Solen School Student

Name: _____

Letter 10: Astacia Kay, March 31, 2016

Dear Jo-Ellen Darcy & The Army Corps of Engineers,

My name is Astacia, I'm 13 years old and I live in CannonBall ND. I am writing this letter to protest against the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Water is very important to me because it's what I need to live, now if they build this pipeline it could mess up our water. We wouldn't have any water to drink, or to bathe in. It would also hurt the environment and the animals.

This idea about building a Pipeline isn't very smart. The Pipeline could possibly break and spill toxic oils in the water we drink! This whole thing is just a very bad idea. But, I hope you take this letter to consideration and not build the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Sincerely,

Astacia Kay

Solen School Student

Letter 11: Daniel A. Martin, March 31, 2016

Dear Jo-Ellen Darcy & The Army Corps of Engineers,

My name is Daniel Martin I'm in eighth grade. I'm 15 years old. My family lives near Cannon Ball, North Dakota. I'm a young, strong man. I love playing basketball. I'm writing this letter to protest the pipe line because most of my family lives in Cannon Ball. I am protesting the Dakota access pipeline.

Water is really important to me and my family because I have three horses and two dogs that need lots of water to drink. Just think of all the fish and animals you're going to kill. Almost everything needs water. Like you and I need to drink water. And we swim and fish in the water.

If I could talk to the people that want to build the pipe line, I would tell them they are putting millions of lives at stake for just for a stupid reason. I hope that this letter will help make people see what they are doing.

Sincerely,

Daniel A. Martin

Solen School Student