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# On the Frontlines

Two Interviews with #NODAPL Warriors



throwaway, people cleaning out their closets; we get a lot of stuff that's not useful, especially with this climate. The point that we're facing essentially, for folks to understand that they're stepping into what feels like a warzone, and to really ask themselves if they're prepared for that, and if they're not then there's ways they can support from afar. There's fundraisers they can contribute to, they can try to help indigenous folks to come out here. For every ally that comes out there, you should be bringing an indigenous person to come out and be a part of this. Everyone does have their place in this, if they want a place in this, there is a place. It doesn't always have to be here, it doesn't always have to be on the frontline.

*1312 Press has transcribed and printed the following interviews from the November 8th, 2016 IGDCast, posted to [itsgoingdown.org](http://itsgoingdown.org)...*

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IGD had the opportunity in the past few days to travel up to Standing Rock and speak with a few folks about the current struggle against the Dakota Access Pipeline or DAPL, where indigenous people and those allied with them have been encamped since April with the intention of blocking the pipeline from crossing the Missouri River. The Missouri river is the longest river in the so-called United States and is part of a watershed that provides water to the largest swath of land of any water shed in the country. To say that protecting this water is vital is an understatement. The threats posed by DAPL are the same those posed recently by the Keystone XL pipeline, or any pipeline really. The current route proposed by DAPL would cross the Ogallala Aquifer as well as the Missouri River in two spots. What we know about pipelines is that they inevitably rupture and the risk of contamination to the drinking water of millions of people is an unacceptable risk.

In the last week there has been a ramping up of tactics deemed necessary to block the pipeline. On Thursday, October 27th there was the most intense conflict that had been seen to date, with police and military vehicles burned, barricades erected and burnt and intense levels of repression from the police brought in against those blockading this pipeline from completion. Hundreds of people have been arrested and injured. As time goes on the charges faced by participants at Standing Rock have become more severe upon arrest. Red Fawn Fallis, an indigenous woman and water protector who had been at Standing Rock for months, was arrested brutally and is currently facing attempted murder charges.

It was with this ramping up of conflict in mind that we headed out to speak with folks on site. What follows are interviews with two folks, one person from the Red Warrior Camp and one person from

the IP3, Indigenous People's Power Project Camp. The IP3 camp has been providing direct action trainings since September, having trained nearly 1000 people since then. Since establishing their camp and trainings there has been a clear increase in direct actions, such as lock downs to equipment.

In these interviews you'll hear the background noises of the camp, sometimes the work at hand and sometimes songs and drums in the distance. These sounds are constant across the camp, as the people there are in constant ceremony as well as preparation for the coming winter. You'll also hear a buzzing type sound in the background, which is especially present during the talk with Red Warrior Camp. That sound is the surveillance aircraft that flies over the camp 24 hours a day now, often flying quite low and throughout the night.

The situation at Standing Rock will continue and many people up there made clear in numerous conversations that they won't stop fighting this pipeline, nor any more to come. Without further ado, thank you to IP3 & Red Warrior folks for taking the time to talk with me and share their voices with It's Going Down!

We want encourage folks to check out the social media updates from Red Warrior Camp for more information, you can find them on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. For more info about IP3 you can head over to their website, [ip3action.org](http://ip3action.org).

Fundraising efforts are still in full effect. As winter approaches and the black snake comes ever closer to boaring its way beneath the Missouri, the funds raised are vital to continue this fight. Please be sure to check out Red Warrior Camp's Gofundme page.

Finally, we want to encourage people to take very seriously the call to action. If you cannot make it to North Dakota, you can do more than just make donations. You can take to action in the streets, on the railways, at the banks and corporations that are funding DAPL. The fight isn't just on the prairie and if this battle is lost it won't just be the Lakota people who suffer the consequences. This is a fight

about walking in prayer all day, and trying to do things in a good way, and making sure that your actions come from a place where you're going to honor your ancestors and honor all of the sacrifices that they made. So there's not a particular thing that I can speak of or give a step-by-step of how to do anything, I don't think that's what you're asking. But I do think that that's unknown to a lot of people, even for folks who are removed from their culture and their tradition, so for folks to find those ways and to honor the ways that are being shown to us by elders and carrying those traditions so it's definitely not just an activity in the day. I think that's the difference of when we go out and do actions.

**IGD:** I think there are a lot of people who are interested in what's happening here, interested in coming, especially as things get closer to a time where a lot of people have off from work, like around Thanksgiving and the holiday time. What are some things that people who are thinking of coming here should know before they come?

**RW:** Well first of all, this isn't a place for tourists. It's not a place for visitors. It's for people to come in and engage. It's for people to come in and really work, this is work. This isn't a vacation at all. I've been here for three months and I've worked harder than I ever have every day. It takes so much to keep things going. For folks to come here and not be a burden. Coming here to just take photos, to just say they were here, do their facebook check-in and post their selfies, it's extremely distracting when folks are coming here with the best intentions or selfish intentions. So for folks who that isn't what they see for their time here, to come and be as self-sufficient as possible, to connect with the folks they want to support directly, who they see are putting in work. Ask individual people what's needed to sustain things, it's such a huge camp and the direct support is extremely helpful whether it's some of the elders needing stoves for their teepees or us needing tactical gear, they confiscate our radios, our binoculars, shoot down drones, all that stuff has to be replaced. So if there's folks that are communicating with camps, particularly to get very specific lists, that are quality over quantity. We get a lot of

fire in them to get out there, and that's all that their place is. So there's a place for the elders, they talk and they advise, they come together, just like there's a place for the warriors, they come together and share ideas and share experiences, become stronger with all these different minds and spirits coming in to it. Just like there's a place for the children to remind us what we're doing this for. There are all these different camps that come from different territories. There's all these different allies that come from wherever they're coming from, and it's always madness with all these people here, to try to keep something functioning and running.

But with the good intentions and a lot of these skills that people are bringing, there's a lot of collaboration, a lot of last minute collaboration on the frontline, or in camp where you see people that need help and you follow the advisement of people and it feels right at that time, so there's definitely a really strong network here that has been forming and if folks are just plugging in, it's going to continue to grow for future struggles. This isn't by any means the last one. There's pipelines that are being approved left and right, so it's a good learning experience and a good foundation for everything that's to come, it's just being built by everyone that led the way for us. All of the people that were raised here in struggle and resistance are here because of that.

**IGD:** One thing that gets mentioned a lot is that the basis of people here at Standing Rock is not only elder council, but also people talk a lot about this being a moment that's lead in prayer, and I think maybe a lot of people that are not familiar with Indigenous prayer practice or Indigenous perspective, and perhaps more familiar with a Judeo-Christian idea of what prayer means, that can be a confusing thing for them to hear. So how would you describe that idea of this being a prayerful movement?

**RW:** There's so many different tribes, there's so many different nations, there's so many different ways of praying, of giving these offerings and asking for this guidance, and it's not just a thing you do. It's not just, you wake up and pray then brush your teeth. It's

against capital, against the pipeline and it's world. Fuck the pipeline!

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**IGD:** So if you just want to introduce yourself...

**Andrew Ironshell:** My name is Andrew Ironshell, I am an Eastern Band Cherokee.

**IGD:** Thank you, and then the name of your camp over here?

**AI:** This is IP3, Indian People's Power Project.

**IGD:** And do you want to tell me about the camp and what you guys have been doing out here?

**AI:** Here at this particular camp we're really focused on training. So we're trying to hopefully train everybody that comes through the gate. We've trained over 800 people in the time that we've been here so far, from youth to elders, non-violent direct action. Media, you know how do you frame the conversation about protecting sacred water. For many people, they're not familiar, you know they're passionate about the issue "Water-Is-Life" but really what does that mean and what does it entail when you look at the big picture? Really it's a planet-wide conversation that really needs to be happening and this is an epicenter for that conversation to happen, here at Standing Rock.

**IGD:** How long as IP3 been here at Standing Rock?

**AI:** We have been here since July or August, around that timeframe. We've had several people come and go, which is good. People stay as long as they can and support as much as they can and there's been a steady stream, like for every police officer that the other side has brought in from somewhere else, at least 10-20 people have come in new to the camp and been through a lot of the training we provide here.

**IGD:** With the last couple weeks in mind as things have kind of intensified on the front lines, what are your thoughts and reflections on those intense actions that have happened in the last few weeks?

**AI:** I'm sure the video and the news media, you know they sensationalize a lot of what we see on facebook and what's put out there in mainstream media. But at the end of the day it's the power of prayer that's really why we are winning this war. And these are small battles that you see on TV, and the violent act of Morton County against prayerful people, that's really powerful for the world to see. But look under that, where does that resilience come from? The human spirit is coming alive at Standing Rock because of the issue around water and around sacred sites and the injustices that historically have happened here are all in play at this time from this place. And really this is maybe more powerful than what happened at Wounded Knee in 1973, which I live just up the road from. You know I have family that were there in '73, and then for some of them that have lived this long to see two types of revolution in their lifetime is just phenomenal. When often times we never have any in your lifespan. But for people like my dad who's 87, people like Chief Leonard Crowdog who is my uncle and who I grew up around in this movement, to see something just come together and led by young people like the ones in this camp, it really sets a good place in my heart about what's happening and what's going to happen for the next seven generations.

**IGD:** It's definitely beautiful and exceptionally inspiring to people.

**AI:** It is, especially if you understand where these youth come from. You know we had 25 suicides in one year, just recently. This is suicide-prevention, this is life, and for many of our young people at home they long to come here. Many of them can't be here so they're showing support in other ways. But they're really feeling that sense of hope in themselves even if they can't get here, because of what young people are doing here. And I think that's more powerful than anything that's been said in the media. Because they don't understand the underlying current of this power.

dedicated to stopping this from happening. And now there's just guns pointed directly at us, whereas before there was the threat, until we crossed a certain line. But now they're here, they're here at our home.

**IGD:** And you had mentioned before already that the drill pad is built, it's set up, a lot of people have seen drone footage that people had taken in the last few days, and it really could be any day at this point that they bore through the ground and go under the water. So with that in mind, where do you see perhaps the next few weeks going, or the coming days?

**RW:** I mean, there's a lot of people that have pledged, vowed, done ceremony, taken these very serious oaths to protect this water, to give their lives for this water. They are not backing down. The government isn't backing down, the corporations are not going to back down, this is what they live off of, off of destruction and profit. There's just very serious commitment here, so that will play out in an ever-escalating way. I don't see this being resolved unless they call off drilling. A re-route isn't a victory here, so we'll see. It's a thing I can't predict. I understand there's a lot of energy, a lot of warrior spirits here that are fully dedicated to keeping that from happening.

**IGD:** There are many different camps here, and a lot of different intentions or perspectives on tactic, or approaches to this particular struggle, and so how do you see those different camps collaborating? I think a lot of people that aren't here, that haven't been able to come up here, look at it as one unit, but there's actually many different units and different moving pieces going on up here. Could you speak to that at all?

**RW:** Yeah, you know, everyone has their place. All these different approaches have their place, just like in a camp or in a home, you have to keep your home clean. You have to make sure everyone's fed, you have to make sure that the spiritual sides of things are being honored and taken care of, that there's prayer leading all of this, always. And then you have your folks on the frontline who have that

higher-level of conflict than had been seen up until that point. With those kinds of rising tensions, obviously things here look different than they had before, so with that in mind how would you describe the current situation out here?

**RW:** We're in an extremely militarized battlefield. It feels like folks trying to get to the other side and trying to escape from this, or trying to prevent this horrible drill from going into the land. I think the intention is to be demoralizing with the amount of surveillance that's happening, just constant airplane, helicopter and drone surveillance. And now there's the United States military and national guard, local police enforcement, just watching us at all times from this hillside. Closer to the point of conflict, closer to where the drill-pad is, they have every intention of going under the Missouri river and compromising drinking water for millions of people.

So I think this country has known for a really long time of the brutality of police officers, and of the military when it comes to defending corporate interest and monetary profit and this is just another example. It's just another situation where people who are even within the laws of this country, doing civil disobedience, because we understand that the United States is an illegally occupying colonized force that has always had unjust laws, whether it was slavery, or being allowed to beat your wife and children...all the weird shit that's been allowed to fly in this country. People recognize them as being unjust laws so they go out against them and just the reflexive language from law enforcement is that they're always going to be out there doing their job, defending the rule of law regardless of any ethical or moral basis that's founded in what's correct and what our role is as human beings on this Earth. That's none of their concern.

So we see that, we expected it, and there is an outcry from Native peoples all over, from allies all over that are watching this and that are horrified, because yeah a lot people still are waking up. There's a lot of blind trust in law enforcement and government to do what's right for us, but it's a profoundly corrupted and brutal institution. So we're just coping with that and folks here are still completely

**IGD:** I live in Denver, and in Denver this has been exceptionally invigorating for Native youth there who are organizing in big ways around it.

**AI:** And it's not just a Native American issue, it's a human issue. It's a planet-wide issue. And I think as people can peel back the mainstream media's narrative, and really see what's happening here, I would invite more people to come and to join us on the front lines. At the camp, it's very safe. It's not like Wounded Knee in 1890, we have no Gatling guns right at the doorstep, but they're definitely here. But the camp is safe so I would say come, and support us in that way. Settle down for a few days, as long as you can, and just support the young people and the elders in this community, the Standing Rock Nation here. They've really opened their heart to the people for this to happen. And we need to acknowledge them as well.

**IGD:** So we know that the pipeline, they've built the drill-path to go under the water, and with that in mind how do you see the next few weeks playing out? What are your hopes?

**AI:** I actually believe that in the next 3-4 weeks that it may be resolved. President Obama is really looking to alternatives to the pathway that it's currently on. I think that there's a lot of litigation that may be happening around, is the pipeline even in the right place? You know I think the engineers were a little bit quick to build, and I heard rumor that the process of where this is supposed to go is off track. It's out of line from the original route that they were going to take, maybe to decrease destruction cost, help with their timeline, you know they kind of screwed up. So I think it's a good moment to really bring that out and to the light, and to let people know that they're haphazardly building this pipeline just because there's people in the way and that's not just bad for the environment, but it's a bad precedent for industry and when we talk about 'Well let's rebuild infrastructure,' well they can't even build a pipeline right. How are they going to build the rest of America right?



**IGD:** One last question; there are many different camps here, different approaches, different intentions, that are all kind of coming together around shared goals and shared visions. So how do you feel that that collaboration is happening, and in what ways are you seeing that?

**AI:** Just the fact that people have to come together to stay warm, to feed each other, for this communal environment to be successful, takes humbling ourselves. Surrendering to the spirits and letting them lead us, and for many that's maybe hard to do, but learn from the elders of the Lakota that are here, and of the other Nations that are here, because they live their life in prayer. They understand that it was prayer that brought us this far. 500 years ago we were under the same fight. Why we're still here is because of that prayerful thought and that prayerful action. I guess it's not always pretty, prayer is not always pretty just like you know the lessons in life are not always beautiful and rainbows and unicorns. There's a certain amount of sacrifice and blood and sweat and tears that we as human beings have to experience in the life's time to be true human beings. This is a place that really brings that out, because you have armed militia around us, really wanting to snuff us out. The same feeling that our ancestors felt, what we're feeling. And now it's not just Native people, but every American should be feeling the pain of this camp, 'cause they're all under the gun. Regardless if they want to acknowledge it or not. Even the Morton County Officers are slaves to the system, and they don't even realize that. And maybe the ones that do are the ones that walked off the other day, in their own civil disobedience against their own system.

**IGD:** And you saw Morton County Officers walk off?

**AI:** I have three children here, they're young adults, and they were on the front lines. They saw officers turn away, walk off of their line, crying because people were telling them "Would you do this for your children? This is why we're here in this water, knee-deep, getting hypothermia on behalf of our children and our generations. Wouldn't you do that for your mother, your grandmother?" Maybe

the ones that know prayer walked off that line.

**IGD:** One clarifying question that would be helpful for people that are unfamiliar with when you or other Lakota people here talk about this being a prayerful type of action, and when you talk about prayer, it's very different than what I think a lot of people who've grown up in Judeo-Christian environments think of as prayer. So could you explain a little bit more of what you mean by that?

**IGD:** I think in Indigenous perspective, that the word prayer and the word action go together, that's just not an idle event that happens every Sunday so that I can feel good about myself. That it's really a walk of life, and that walk of life if you're walking in prayer, does mean a walk of action because in that prayerful thought you will help your mother, you will help your father, you will help your neighbor. And that's really the underlying root of all indigenous thought around prayer and around well-being. But that's also a value system that other denominations have, but not everybody lives it, not everybody walks it 7 days a week, and I think that's happening here in this camp.

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**IGD:** Can you introduce yourself, and then talk a little bit about the Red Warrior Camp, how long you all have been here...

**Red Warrior:** Okay so, I'm a member of Red Warrior, I've been here for the better part of three months, and I was called here, I answered a call to come and defend water from some of the Oglala matriarchs, which is a very similar story I think to a lot of folks here in this camp, in particular there's others in the camp that have elders and different families that have been involved in resistance for generations and decades and since the beginning of time in protecting and defending land and water here.

**IGD:** So a little more than a week ago, last Thursday, there was the camp that had been set up on the treaty land, and then there was a