

## Chasing out the Specter of Man Camps...

The Fort Berthold Reservation, home to the Three Affiliated Tribes of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nations, is located in western “North Dakota”, and, in recent years, has experienced an exponentially increasing level of violence against Native women. North Dakota’s Uniform Crime Report shows that violent crime has increased 7.2 percent, while 243 reported rapes occurred in 2012 – an increase from 207 in 2011. According to the Bismark Tribune, Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem stated that 12 of the state’s top oil-producing counties accounted for much of that crime. The cause for this is the camps of thousands of male workers who have come to their territory to profit from the Bakken oil boom – settling into what are commonly called “man camps”, and more than doubling the population with an influx of non-Indian oil workers. According to The Atlantic:

*“In 2012, the tribal police department reported more murders, fatal accidents, sexual assaults, domestic disputes, drug busts, gun threats, and human trafficking cases than in any year before. The surrounding counties offer similar reports. But there is one essential difference between Fort Berthold and the rest of North Dakota: The reservation’s population has more than doubled with an influx of non-Indian oil workers—over whom the tribe has little legal control.”<sup>1</sup>*

If President Obama approves the Keystone XL Pipeline project, TransCanada will bring in thousands of transient workers to rural South Dakota as well. The mostly male employees will be housed in man camps exactly like those that are causing the devastation in communities like Fort Berthold, and in First Nations communities where the tar sands oil is extracted. Organizers such as Faith Spotted Eagle and the Brave Heart Society of the Ihanktonwan Dakota, The White Buffalo Calf Society, Ihanktowan (Yankton Sioux) Treaty Council, and Lisa Brunner (White Earth Ojibwe) Program Specialist for the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center are preparing communities to fight against the man camps before the workers show up.

In early August, the Ihanktowan Treaty Council hosted the recent Protect the Sacred Conference (*“Protect the Women and Families from the KXL [Keystone Pipeline system] Violence! Say no to Man Camps in Oceti Sakowin Territory!”*) at the Fort Randall Casino in Pickstown, South Dakota. Native women and families will be directly impacted by three main camps, which are proposed to house 1,000 workers each and would be located in Harding (less than 30 miles from the Rosebud reservation, less than 50 miles from the Yankton reservation, and located in Zeibach County – where 71 percent of the population is Native). Native women, who are already 2.5 times more likely to be sexually assaulted, are especially vulnerable as

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/02/on-indian-land-criminals-can-get-away-with-almost-anything/273391/>

the 1978 Supreme Court case *Oilphant v. Suquamish* stripped tribes of the right to prosecute non-Natives who perpetrate crimes on the reservation. Which is to say, that even though the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and Tribal Law and Order Act (which were passed in 2012) would allow tribes to prosecute non-Native perpetrators of sex crimes, the part of the VAWA that provides tribes with provisional jurisdiction over nonmembers won't go into effect until 2015.

With these camps ready to appear overnight at President Obama's acceptance of the KXL proposal, and which will follow the development of the Sandpiper Pipeline through Northern Minnesota and the White Earth reservation, tribal law enforcement remains without jurisdiction in remote areas that are already underserved by police and medical services. Participants at Protect the Sacred shared an understanding of these issues as symptoms of a patriarchal, settler society – contextualized within a 500-year resistance to colonization on Turtle Island. Extractive industries such as oil fracking, tar sands oil extraction, and coal mining are examples of predator economics at their worst. Lisa Brunner explained:

*“They treat Mother Earth like they treat women... They think they can own us, buy us, sell us, trade us, rent us, poison us, rape us, destroy us, use us as entertainment and kill us. I'm happy to see that we are talking about the level of violence that is occurring against Mother Earth because it equates to us [women]. What happens to her happens to us... We are the creators of life. We carry that water that creates life just as Mother Earth carries the water that maintains our life. So I'm happy to see our men standing here but remind you that when you stand for one, you must stand for the other.”<sup>2</sup>*

All the devastation that these man camps would bring to Native communities in the United States directly reflect the injustices visited upon our Aboriginal and First Nations sisters across the border. The Native Women's Association of Canada (who's funding was cut in 2010) documented 582 missing and murdered Aboriginal women in between the 1960's and today. The spectre of these man camps needs to be chased out, and Honor the Earth support the calls of our sisters from the Plains, and from leaders from our own community of White Earth to stop the Keystone XL Pipeline, and to stop these man camps.

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<sup>2</sup> Pember, Mary Annette. *Brave Heart Women Fight to Ban Man Camps Which Bring Rape and Abuse*. Indian Country Today, 28 August, 2013.  
[http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2013/08/28/brave-heart-women-fight-ban-man-camps-which-bring-rape-and-abuse-151070?fb\\_action\\_ids=10151593708067666&fb\\_action\\_types=og.likes&fb\\_source=other\\_multiline&action\\_object\\_map=%7B%2210151593708067666%22%3A1407454252805922%7D&action\\_type\\_map=%7B%2210151593708067666%22%3A%22og.likes%22%7D&action\\_ref\\_map=%5B%5D](http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2013/08/28/brave-heart-women-fight-ban-man-camps-which-bring-rape-and-abuse-151070?fb_action_ids=10151593708067666&fb_action_types=og.likes&fb_source=other_multiline&action_object_map=%7B%2210151593708067666%22%3A1407454252805922%7D&action_type_map=%7B%2210151593708067666%22%3A%22og.likes%22%7D&action_ref_map=%5B%5D)