

## Joining Standing Rock

WELCOME to Standing Rock. Thank you for coming to be part of this powerful moment in history. The fight to stop the pipeline is part of our global struggle for liberation, to protect our planet from extractive capitalism, and to heal the devastation of oppression on all our lives. We are winning, and we still have a long way to go. We need everybody. That includes you. This is an indigenous led struggle, on indigenous lands, rooted in centuries of resistance and the specific cultural strengths of the Native peoples gathered here. This means it will look and feel different from non-Native activism.

This is a tool to help you join camp as powerful allies, with deep respect for its sacredness and for indigenous sovereignty and leadership, so that your contribution is as effective as possible. **Our job as allies is to SHOW UP, figure out how we can HELP, and GIVE more than we take. Here's how:**

### We follow Indigenous Leadership AT ALL TIMES:

- We support this fight in whatever way its leaders decide is most useful. We come prepared to work and not expect anything in return. Every person who comes to camp must try to bring more resource than they use.
- Ceremony and prayer are the bedrock of Indigenous peoples' connection to land and water and are central in protecting them. Actions are ceremony and along with meetings, usually begin with prayer. Show respect. Take off your hat and be quiet during prayer. Stand if you are able. Notice how others honor prayer and follow their example.
- Observe and follow: Don't push your own ideas about what kinds of action should be taken; what is most radical; what the time frame should be. Indigenous leaders have been resisting settler colonialism for a long time and have good, culturally grounded reasons for their decisions.
- Make sure any direct action you join has been approved by Indigenous leaders. There may be attempts by agents or self-declared leaders to provoke confrontations.

### We Conserve and Share Resources

- Use resources sparingly. Don't waste food, water, or wood. Be as self-sufficient as possible.
- Stay as clean as you can without using too much water. Wash your hands, or use sanitizer. Take sponge baths.
- If you can charge cell phones or batteries tell the volunteer coordinator and share with anyone who needs it.

### We Work

- Wake up early and be ready for the day.
- Listen, observe, and offer to help with projects. Don't wait to be asked. While you need to follow the guidance of Native people about priorities, there is plenty of work to do.
- Care for the space. Pick up any trash the wind might be blowing around.
- You may be asked to do something in a different way. It's more important to do as you are asked than to understand all the reasons for the request. There may be time to ask questions later, or you may learn by just listening and watching. Be open to doing things in a new way.

### We Communicate Mindfully

- Many campfires are places of prayer. Speak quietly, and don't bring discussions of violence, police repression or other disturbing topics up at prayer sites.
- Do not spread rumors or information you aren't certain about. Don't contribute to any tensions between individuals or groups.
- Keep in mind that there are infiltrators in camp. Don't gossip. If someone tries to persuade you to take action not called for by Indigenous leadership at the camp, check with an elder or other leader.

### We understand this moment in the context of settler colonialism

- Settler colonialism is a process of "destroying to replace." A colonizing power exports resources and people, *and* seizes and settles on land, exercising violent control over the original inhabitants. Indigenous versions of governance, land management, cultural practices, etc. are destroyed through conquest, disease, land theft, and cultural genocide, and are replaced with the settler versions of those things. Settler colonialism is not an *event* that we can neatly box into the past, but rather a persistent *form of violence* that impacts every aspect of life in settler states. Settler colonialism is still happening.
- Indigenous history in the Americas is one of uninterrupted resistance to colonization, from 1492 to today. You may be unaware of this history, or not recognize the forms it takes in indigenous cultures. Be curious.

- We do this work as ourselves. We bring all of who we are and where we come from. This includes gender identity, race, class, sexual orientation, age, body/mind ability, culture and place of origin. We all have inherited historical relationships to sort out in order to become more powerful, effective and whole.
  - As white allies we must figure out how to shift out of European cultural modes, unlearn and interrupt settler colonial patterns and develop anti-racist awareness and skills.
  - As Non-Native People of Color we have many different historical relationships to settler colonialism and Indigenous struggles, and may have unconsciously internalized settler attitudes toward this land and indigenous people. Native leaders and scholars have asked us to recognize that although we are targeted by white supremacy, we also participate in settler colonization, and are settlers in relationship to Indigenous people.

### **We DECENTER settler worldviews/ practices and RECENTER Indigenous worldviews/practices and leadership**

- Whiteness and Christian dominance, which are the basis of US settler identity, are built on perfectionism, superiority, purity, competition, individualism, binaries, and suppressed emotion. This impacts how we do our ally work, how we approach the tasks of dismantling oppression, and how we treat each other and ourselves. It's hard work to recognize and abandon these familiar attitudes that don't serve us, but it's the only way forward. Harshness only reinforces settler culture. Practice compassion and humility with yourself and others.
- Practice noticing and regulating how much space, energy, attention, and resources you take up. When you are with indigenous people, listen more than you speak. Let indigenous people speak first. When you feel the urge to speak, check with yourself about how important it is to the group effort?
- If you have questions about how things are done, try to observe and follow by example. If necessary, find times to ask outside of meetings. Keep in mind that Native leaders have an enormous amount to do and think about. Practice being ok with not knowing everything you want to know.
- For 500 years, white people have been exploiting, betraying and destroying Native people, culture and resources. You may feel the impact of this legacy as distance, coolness, cautiousness, or distrust. **Do not take it personally.** You have been invited here and your presence matters. While you are expected to keep indigenous people in the center, it's not your job to make up for all the past devastation by yourself. But you *do* have the opportunity to start creating a new legacy. This will be built through practice, with many mistakes. Go easy on yourself when you trip, and practice getting up quickly when you fall.

### **We understand cultural appropriation and make every effort to not perpetuate it.**

- Being in this sacred space can be life altering, especially if you are not grounded in your own spirituality, ritual, healing traditions, ancestors, or connection with the earth. If you feel the pull to take on indigenous peoples' spirituality, customs, and lifeways, know that it's been a central feature of colonial oppression for non-Natives to help themselves to Native culture without building the necessary relationships, asking permission, or supporting indigenous survival. Although it can *feel* like respect or honor this dynamic is inseparable from genocide and colonialism. Remember, you are not here to 'access' Indigenous culture or knowledge; you are here to support a struggle for Indigenous peoples' lifeways, and to protect water, land, and all of our futures.
- Own your history. European settlers came bearing the traumas of violence, lost connection with the land, and severe repression of their spiritual traditions. Becoming settlers deepened that loss. Being around indigenous people who still have those connections can bring up feelings of longing for white people, or the illusion of having found "home" in Native culture. It's important to face our own historical losses, and draw on our own roots, rather than trying to claim the cultures that Native people have fought so hard to preserve. If you feel this pull, make space to grieve lost connections and knowledge. Learn about your own ancestral traditions, and develop a spiritual practice rooted in them. Native people, non-Native white people and non-Native people of color are all healing from different aspects of colonialism. Seek out people who share your experiences and histories with whom to connect and find healing.
- **Never attend a ceremony without being expressly invited.**
- You must register at the media tent to use a camera in camp, and you **MUST** ask permission to take photos or video of *anyone* at the camp. Be very careful in how you represent Native people in images. Make sure to connect with the people you want to photograph. Think about the story you are telling. Avoid portraying Native people in stereotypical and objectifying ways. Never photograph ceremony unless you are specifically told it's okay.
- Impact is more important than intention. It is up to you to show that you know you are a guest and not an owner of indigenous traditions.