



# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## Indigenous Rising: Solutions to the Climate Crisis

The purpose of this discussion guide is to facilitate thoughtful discussion around the topics introduced in this Indigenous Forum presentation video. The discussion guide can be adapted for use in the classroom as well as salon-style gatherings.

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This video is a presentation of the 2016 Indigenous Forum, organized by the Bioneers Indigeneity Program and featured annually at the Bioneers Conference. Indigeneity is a Native-led Program within Bioneers/ Collective Heritage Institute that promotes indigenous knowledge and approaches to solve the earth's most pressing environmental and social issues through respectful dialogue. Since 1990, Bioneers has acted as a fertile hub of social and scientific innovators with practical and visionary solutions for the world's most pressing environmental and social challenges.



# INFORMATION PAGE

## Indigenous Rising: Solutions to the Climate Crisis A 2016 Bioneers Indigenous Forum Presentation

### VIDEO DESCRIPTION

Frontline Native American activists from Standing Rock and the Alberta Tar Sands movements speak out about Indigenous efforts to protect water, air and other natural resources for all people. Speakers include:

**Dallas Goldtooth** (Dakota/Diné), Indigenous Environmental Network; **Kandi Mossett** (Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikawa) Indigenous Environmental Network; **Clayton Thomas-Muller** (Mathais Columb Cree Nation), 350.org; **Eriel Deranger** (Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation), Indigenous Climate Action; and, **Tara Houska** (Anishinaabe-Couchiching First Nation), Honor the Earth.



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Tara Houska, Kandi Mossett, and Dallas Goldtooth call for people to join the movement to oppose the Dakota Access Pipeline

### KEYWORDS

**DAPL** – The acronym for the Dakota Access Pipeline, also called the Bakken Pipeline, is a proposed 1,172 mile-long underground pipeline intended to carry fracked oil from North Dakota to Illinois. It crosses under the Mississippi river several times, and threatens to contaminate land and water.

**OCETI SAKOWIN OYATE** – meaning seven council fires also referred to in colonizer's language as the Great Sioux Nation or Sioux peoples. The seven councils of the Nakota, Lakota and Dakota peoples are the Mdewakanton, Wahpekute, Sisitonwan, wahpetonwan, Ihanktonwan, Ihantktowana, and Tetonwan.

**SELF-DETERMINATION** – The ability of a tribe to govern themselves, or make their own decisions about policy and procedures affecting tribal members. Also see the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975.

**TAR SANDS** – Also called "oil sands" refer to the lands made up of clay, sand water, and bitumen that are mined and fracked to obtain fossil fuels. Fossil fuel extraction in the Tar Sands contributes significantly to global warming, and causes considerable environmental damage and pollution, affecting the health and well-being of the people, plants and animals living on and around these ecosystems.

**TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY** – The inherent authority of federally recognized Native American tribes in the United States to govern themselves.

**UN DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES** – Also called UNDRIP, is an internationally recognized document that states the basic human rights of Indigenous peoples around the world.

### LINKS

[bioneers.org/indigenousrising](http://bioneers.org/indigenousrising) | [ienearth.org](http://ienearth.org) | [honorearth.org](http://honorearth.org) | [350.org](http://350.org)  
[un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](http://un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf)



# INTRODUCTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## WHAT IS INDIGENOUS RISING?

Indigenous Rising is a growing movement to defend Indigenous rights, protect the planet, and look to Indigenous values to promote a more just and sustainable future. A spearheaded by the Indigenous Environmental Network, the Indigenous Rising movement encompasses the suite of direct and indirect protest actions led by Indigenous peoples against environmental threats. Acknowledging Indigenous and human rights is an integral part of this movement.

## WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE?

Climate change refers to the human-caused shift in long term weather patterns, that also impacts extreme weather, such as droughts, snow storms, hurricanes and heat waves, which have been increasing in frequency since humans began burning fossil fuels for power. Burning fossil fuels, like oil and gas, releases excess carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) into the atmosphere, which creates a heat trapping blanket around the planet. Climate change can be addressed by stopping fossil fuel extraction through drilling, frackking and other practices and replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways does drilling and frackking for oil affect Indigenous peoples?
2. Why are Indigenous Peoples at the frontlines of climate change and action?
3. Why did the Standing Rock protest against the Dakota Access Pipeline capture the public's attention?
4. How can people address climate change and fossil fuel extraction in their own communities? On a broader scale?



# VIDEO GUIDE

This guide provides a roadmap to various ideas, keywords and concepts to support video navigation.

Idea, Keyword or Concept	Time Stamp
What is Indigenous Rising?	00:30
Why are Indigenous peoples at the frontline of climate action?	2:05
Why do Indigenous women play such an important role in the fight to protect our natural resources?	4:45
How Eriel Deranger became an Indigenous activist	9:00
Effects of fracking on the Northern Alberta Tar Sands	10:30
What is the prophecy of the black snake?	14:15
How the protest camp at Standing Rock captured the world's attention	16:00
Standing Rock symbolizes the foundation of the US through colonization	17:30
How the extractive industry affects Indigenous peoples	21:50
DAPL illegally bulldozed sacred burial and ceremonial sites	22:45
The historic place of the #noDAPL movement and Indigenous Rising	23:40





# TRANSCRIPT

## Indigenous Rising: Solutions to the Climate Crisis A 2016 *Bioneers Indigenous Forum Presentation*

### Q1. WHAT IS INDIGENOUS RISING

**DALLAS** – It's a project that IEN, Indigenous Environmental Network, put forth as a way to kind of classify all this mobilization and action that's happening across the map of resistance, of indigenous resistance, not necessarily just against fossil fuel but against all forms of extractive development that's happening on or adjacent across indigenous territories.

And, you know, to capture that in the most direct sense of us, it's Indigenous people rising and enacting their sovereign right and their self-determination, the right for them to self-determine what happens to their territories, to their bodies, to the air, to their languages, to their songs. It's all that holistic approach of us responding to a system that's predicated upon our oppression.

And so, you know, there's—So it's a project of IEN, but it's also just a general concept that's out there, that resonates throughout across indigeneity, or across the diaspora of Indigenous peoples, of this is a critical moment we find ourselves on this planet, not just in the sense for addressing climate change, but also a sense for social justice, a sense of just overall justice for all species. And Indigenous peoples tend to be and rightfully are on the frontline of those fights and those struggles. And that's encapsulated by this idea of us rising together.

And I think that Kandi had spoken to earlier is that it's not just upon us though, you know. It's an effort for[?] each and one of us to connect with, and there's a call to action for all allies to support Indigenous peoples and frontline communities and their struggle and their effort, but then also to reconnect and renew your relationship to Mother Earth and relationship to one another, one—to each other. That's the call to action is that we need to do it together and rise together. So that's what it is.

### Q2. WHY ARE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AT THE FRONTLINE OF CLIMATE ACTION?

**TARA** – All of our different traditions and cultural knowledge and traditional knowledge is all tied in some way or another to the land and to the water. And so, you know, our communities and just understanding of our relationship to the planet is one that is now becoming very, very apparent. Because native people still work with the land and still have a very, very close connection to the land, and need it for so many different aspects of culture, like, you know, with my own culture, Anishinaabe people, wild rice is the most central piece to our identity. It's a sacred plant. And so if there's a pipeline that's threatening to go through it and wipe that out, you're going to know immediately. You're going to know that the water is sick. You're going to know that the river is sick, that the animals and the plants are not doing well.

And, yeah, it's tied to capitalism. Of course it is. I mean, it's something where we're looking at. I mean, you know, you're in like, for instance, this fighting Dakota Access, you're in a situation where the police and the governor and the National Guard and all these different federal folks are all looking you down and arming themselves against Indigenous people that are praying for the land and for the water, and they're doing that because they're defending capitalism and they're defending profits, and they're prioritizing profits over human beings.

And so I think that, you know, the reason why we see Indigenous people become at the forefront of this is because they always have been. They've always been there and always been knowing what the planet needs, and being protectors, and all those different things that require the perpetuation and survival of our



own people. And now it's everyone. Now everyone's realizing, Hey, you know what? We only have so much drinking water. The planet's not going to just all of a sudden create new water. I mean, freshwater is a finite resource and we're using it to extract, we're using it to frack, we're using it for all these awful projects that are killing the planet.

And so I think people are seeing this beautiful encampment at Standing Rock. They're seeing these different efforts towards just transition – small-scale solar, wind. They're seeing that native people are also modern people, that, yeah, I mean, we're living in a modern era, but we're also still very, very tied to the Earth. So I think that that will continue, and we've got a whole lot of allies now that have shown up out in Standing Rock, which has been really, really powerful. And together we're so, so much stronger.

### **Q3. WHY DO INDIGENOUS WOMEN PLAY SUCH A PROMINENT ROLE IN THE FIGHT TO PROTECT NATURE?**

**KANDI** - I am not an activist. I am not an environmentalist. I don't know what it is about human beings wanting to label and box everything. There's no boxes, you know, that we're circular people. And so I always tell people that when they're like, "Well, what are you?" I'm like, "my name is Kandi. I'm pretty sure I'm a human being, and I just grew up in this little tiny town in North Dakota," you know. I was playing in the hills and just kind of being, you know, growing up in the water, and I had that vision that one day I'd have kids and they'd be able to be in the water too. And now I do have a daughter. She's 3, Aiyana. I miss her. But she's at home with dad, so it's good. Dad gets to see how it is. But... he's like, "Dang. It's kind of hard."

So, she can't play in the water now. I won't let her play in that water. And water is the first life. And it's no coincidence that as women, when we carry our babies, we carry them in water. They're there and they're just swimming around in there, and it's really hard because you never give up hope. That's one thing. I'm never going to give up hope. That's why I had her is because I have hope and I have faith that we are going to change the story. Yeah.

And so it's trying to reframe the story and trying to have people understand it from a different perspective, that it's not just a Native issue, it's not just an activist issue. It's all life. Life cannot exist without water, because we are the essence of it.

And so, when they talk about us being protesters, that's why we push back and say we are not protesters, we are protectors of all life. And Indigenous Environmental Network has been around since 1990, and I've been working with IEN since 2007, and what I've seen is women on the frontlines, women up and coming, and having their organizations. And I don't know if it's because our men, their warrior status was like ripped away from them because of colonization, and the men kind of got forced to doing things that they weren't—They just took their identities.

But then also I don't know if it's because we are the keepers of the water in my culture. The women are the keepers of the water, and the men are the keepers of the fire. But I think it's a combination of both. And so the women are like going to rise up, and we're seeing it. It was prophesized that it now is the time of women, and to bring that balance back to humanity because we're out of balance. We're all out of whack here, you know.

Men are great. We need men. But we need a balance of power. And it has to be women that are going to rise up and, you know, say, "Come on, men, we can help you," in our nice, womanly, strong womanly way. We're going to pick our men up and we're going to walk side by side with each other.

**ERIEL** – I feel like these stories of how you became an activist, my answer's always like, "I was born." And I think this story is very similar. I mean, as an Indigenous person in the Americas, when you are born, your very existence is a form of resistance. The very fact we are alive is a testament to the resiliency of our people to withstand over 500 years of oppression and colonization, and attempts of assimilation of our people and our cultures and our identities.



And so, I was born. I was born into this, and I was lucky. I was privileged to be born into a family of political activists. My mother was eight and a half months pregnant with me, and my parents were living in our traditional territory, and they were occupying the land to protest against proposals to develop uranium. And they were forcibly removed by armed security of the company, which was the Eldorado Uranium Company, in 1979, and forced off of our territory. And then I was born. And that is truly where that comes from.

And my mom did what she did as a mother to ensure that her children knew what their territory was, where we've come from, and who we are as an Indigenous person. And that same vein of strength that my mom instilled in me, which is to protect the land at all costs, is what drives my own work.

And I was about 22, and I hadn't been in my traditional territory because my parents divorced. It was messy, and I was living in a different part of the country, and I went back because my cousin, who is also a woman, my cousin called and she was crying, and she said, "We need your help." She's like, "They're destroying everything. You have to come home."

And so I went. And I saw the land. And I saw how destroyed it had become. It had turned into a wasteland, and those river systems and those forests and those ecosystems that I knew as a child, the places where my dad taught me how to track animals, and places where I would collect water to drink straight from the river systems were gone. And immediately I felt like my daughter will never see those things. My daughter will never know those things.

And what was left of the territory, I was like, "I'm stopping this project. I'm going to do whatever I can to stop it." And at first I was not a—A lot of people didn't like me, even in my own community, because of the fact that they felt like I was a threat to this—to their jobs, to the economy, because they felt that they didn't have any other choice, that they were stuck in the tar sands economy, that it was there and it was never going to go anywhere, and they hadn't had an economy since the fur trade collapsed in the '60s, and that if I threatened that, then they would lose everything that they had. Even the chief who was kind of like, "I don't know what to do because our people are dying but we have all these contracts with these companies to be their janitors and their caterers," and, "Ah, we can't say anything because we'll lose those contracts." I just said, "Listen, let's play good cop, bad cop. You be the good guy, and I'll be like the crazy member out in the street." And I said, "I want to work with the community."

And the first times I went out there, I had people say, "You can't, you can't go out there." And I was like, "Well, you can't stop me, though." And now you fast forward to this year at our membership meetings, and everyone was like, "We've got to stop the tar sands expansion. We need renewable energy. What is the government doing?"

And my children have gotten to be in the territory, and they've gotten to go to those places. And it's dangerous, though. It's a dangerous thing to go back to my community and to drink the water and to eat the food. And every time I do, I know that I'm risking, because the contamination levels are so bad in our water systems, in our ecosystems, in what the government refers to as country food, like the moose and the bison and the caribou and the fish and the waterfowl. And I want my children to be able to have all of those things, I just don't want them to have a track of land because that's what the government wants to do is be like, "Oh, we'll just section it off and put a little box around this, and here you go, and you'll be happy." And, "oh, that's not enough? Well, we'll give you some money." Our people don't want money, and we don't want to have ownership of the land. We want to have clean water and clean air. We want to be able to eat the foods that we've always eaten. We want our children to be able to have those things.

And I think that as a mother, I don't know what else I would do. I'm not an activist. I'm not an environmentalist. I'm just living. Like people always ask me what I do, and I literally go, I don't know how to explain what I do. I just live and I'm just trying to make sure my kids have a future. And I think that that's what we're all doing here.

**DALLAS** - The black snake, as I see it – and it's a concept. It's a narrative. It's a story we tell of the snake that is destructive, that its purpose, its instruction was to bring sickness and destruction to the communities, to



cast a shadow upon our hearts and our spirit of negativity, of dysfunction, and unhealthiness. And that the pipeline that we see with Dakota Access, just like the proposed Keystone XL, is a manifestation of that black snake that is hell bent on sowing destruction and disease through our lands, but also doing so at its origins and all the way down to the point of refinement, to the communities that have to deal with it on the other end; that the black snake is the manifestation of the sickness of society; that that black snake is the manifestation of the sickness of capitalism, and of the system that is hell bent on the destruction of those that are dependent on the land, that have a spiritual relationship to the spirit of Mother Earth.

And so when we talk about rising up against the black snake, it's rising up against that sickness of capitalism, the sickness of that actual physical pipeline, and igniting the fires and utilizing the spiritual essence of water to fuel our movement.

**KANDI** - When the camp started in April, there was like 13 people there. And in fact, when the 48-hour notice went out in August, there was probably about 200 people there. And it wasn't until people saw us on Facebook live and Instagram and Twitter and Native social media, people getting arrested just for standing there, that people started noticing. There was women standing up against militarized police is what it became.

For some reason, this country is obsessed with that kind of conflict, and it wasn't until they started seeing all these images coming out that we were like, "come here and help us," that you started seeing more and more. I mean, when did CNN and MSNBC and all these big network outlets start paying attention? When Amy Goodman from Democracy Now! came and they saw us getting sprayed in the face with mace and getting bitten by dogs, and seeing conflict.

And this all started in prayer and ceremony. People that went into ceremony were told it would be peaceful. So we have been going and we've been praying, and we have been met with violence. And I think it's people seeing me standing there with my 3-year-old daughter looking at a man in full riot gear that are just outraged and shocked. But it's crazy because it's calling attention to what this country – the United States of America – was founded on. Yes. We were here.

And I grew up on a reservation and learned about how Christopher Columbus discovered America. They made us sing that little song, 1492, sailing the ocean blue. I'm like, "Wait a minute, wait, wait, wait. Where were we?" "We're not covering that right now, Kandi, shhh, you talk too much."

And that is what is happening with this movement. This country is being forced to take a hard look at what we're actually founded upon. I think that—I think it's really, really, really critical that we push back.

I mean, look at Australia. They have a sorry day all the time for the Aboriginal people. Every year they do sorry day and they say they're sorry. And, you know, people are like, Okay, thanks for saying you're sorry. Canada said sorry, you know, that this happened in boarding schools. The US hasn't even said that! They haven't said we're sorry for coming and raping and pillaging and destroying. In fact, what they're saying is, "this is good for you. This is going to bring you jobs," and that is the critical analysis.

We need to take a step back and say, this isn't about immigration. This isn't about who's here now, because everybody that came here that wasn't born here is an immigrant. Nobody gets to say who can or cannot be here. And the reason I bring that up is because we don't talk about those kinds of things in this country.

We're talking about the US right now. What about all of our brothers and sisters in South America right now that are dealing with these very same issues, that have even more oil. They need to be brought to the table. We all need to be uplifted as Indigenous peoples, because we are in the struggle together. And that's what I wanted to say.

**TARA** - I knew the Camp of the Sacred Stone had started back in April, was monitoring the progress of this pipeline, and then LaDonna Allard actually went on Facebook and did just kind of like this public plea asking people to come, because it had gotten so much further. And I think a lot of us didn't really know that weren't tied to that specific fight just how far it had gotten, and it did get to this point of conflict, and it was when the



Facebook and Instagram and Snapchat and all those things were showing this incredible armed conflict with people praying and drumming and singing, and being surrounded by cops in riot gear. I mean, it's a crazy thing to see.

And it turned into this kind of incredible moment for Indigenous people, this gathering of nations. Hundreds and hundreds of nations came from all over the world to lend their support and stand with Standing Rock. I think that a lot of folks came for the same reasons that so many of us just got in our cars and just drove. I mean, I got in my car and just drove from Washington, DC, because we all knew what it feels like, you know. We know what it feels like to see this massive oil industry and what they can do to our communities.

And the stories are the same no matter where you go around the world with Indigenous people. It's always this extractive project contaminated our drinking water; this industry is preventing us from exercising our rights to hunt and fish; our traditional foods are dying; our children are sick; our elders are sick; we have cancer clusters. It's the same stories again and again and again in different languages.

And so I think Standing Rock has become for Indigenous people this moment where they're all standing together because they all know what happens when something like this is allowed to happen to them and to their communities.

You're out there and you're standing with, you know—you're down to just—The camp has gotten smaller. It's getting cold. That's a reality. And when you're standing out there in a North Dakota field with no cell service and looking at—you're with your little group of people that are unarmed, they're praying. We offered them water the last time we went out there. I mean, this is a very peaceful group, but you're looking at people holding rifles, holding assault rifles. There's helicopters overhead. There was the incident of unleashing dogs on Native American men, women and children who were defending sacred sites. I mean, that's a very scary situation. And it's one that I think has inspired so many people to do exactly what Dallas said, which is what is our relationship to fossil fuels. Are we going to prioritize industry over human beings? Are we going to prioritize this profiting beast over the future and over our children and over the survival of the planet? I mean, is that really what we're going to do? Is that our legacy that we're going to leave?

And I think all of us are saying no, that we're not going to let that happen. We are willing to stand out there; we're willing to lock our bodies to machines and break a fence and run down in front of it to stop it. I mean, thinking about just how malicious Dakota Access has been in this fight. One example to me that resonates is the tribe tried to file their supplemental brief. They tried to say, here is all these sacred sites that were not included, that were not considered. The company's response the following day – they filed it at 5 p.m. on a Friday – the company the following day skipped over 20 miles to go to that site and bulldoze it. That is what happened.

And the people—The incident with the dogs and the mace, that was because people at camp heard about that happening. They never guessed they were going to skip all that and go there, and they did. I mean, it's...The treatment of Indigenous peoples is hurtful, and it needs to change. And I think we're at a time now where we can, where we can change it, because we are changing it, because this conversation is reaching the narrative.

**CLAYTON** - Here we have a chance to stop a 500,000-barrel-per-day pipeline that is 60% completed and stop it in its tracks. That is historic. That's going to be monumental, because it's going to show, really, that the power to change is us, that's it's people power. It's solid organizing, social mobilization. That's what's bringing effective, lasting change. And we have to continue down that path.

So that's why I feel like this is such a critical moment. That's why I think that I'm really excited for the path that we're going. And I'm excited that we're beyond activism where we're doing organizing. It's a process of we. That each and every one of us is contributing to this effort.