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Interview with Sarah Young Bear-Brown

Sarika:

Since April, protesters have been at Standing Rock, North Dakota, fighting the Dakota Access Pipeline. On Monday, The Army Corps of Engineers denied a permit for the construction of a key section of the Dakota Access Pipeline, granting a major victory to the protesters and water protectors.

However, not everyone sees this as a major victory, the water protectors want the pipeline out completely.

On Monday, I spoke with Sarah Young Bear-Brown, a deaf Meskwaki woman from the Tama Settlement in Tama, Iowa. This interview was originally in American Sign Language, and Charlotte Davidson provided voiceover. During the Thanksgiving break, Sarah went to Standing Rock to support the indigenous communities fighting to protect their water.

Sarah:

Yes, it was a good experience! Truly great! Really inspiring! I'll never forget it because I saw the vast number of people congregating to support those who are protecting our water. And ... I mean we are protecting this water for our future children, for their grandchildren. We cherish water because it's essential, it's a part of our body! It's 70? 70% of our body is made of water. It's absolutely essential! We don't want our children drinking oil. No, we won't allow it. We won't! It's NOT going to happen. Absolutely not.

Sarika:

As a deaf native american woman, did you face any unique challenges or experiences at Standing Rock?

I met the other activists. From what I saw on media, it was a terrible place and then I saw for myself that it wasn't.

In reality it was completely different! People were so nice, friendly, and helpful to each other! They were willing to risk their lives - to protect (the water). It was incredible. I mean people would go that far to protect our land - our water! I am amazed at the number of things people did to ... protect our land - out of love! It was really incredible.

Sarah:

Two thousand veterans poured into Standing Rock to join the protests and offer support to the water protectors. Sarah describes her visit to Turtle Hill.

I did go to Turtle Hill where the activists and the police were stationed. So I went there - to see for myself. I mean the cops put up barbed wire on this land?! It's a sickening feeling (to see that). And I saw that and wondered how they could do that! ! They put up barbed wire! It made it look like a prison! Especially because the wire encompassed the hill and the water. I mean it...it's stupid.

Oh - but two days ago when the veterans arrived! All those veterans came pouring in - and they came to stand with us! And they did take the wire down from the wall! I was so happy to hear that because- these vets will help the water protectors! These vets - I don't have words to describe! they were a big help! We needed them to protect us too.

Sarika:

On Monday, the Army Corps of Engineers denied easement of the Dakota Access Pipeline - that is, the pipeline will be rerouted. While this is seen as a major victory in the press, Sarah felt differently.

Sarah:

Sure, I was so happy to hear this news! We won! And yes, I'm happy to know that they are rerouting the pipeline.

Like I said, we won. But remember, Donald Trump will take office. And he supports big oil. It won't be good.

I have to admit that I fear for the future. Donald won't support a stop to big oil. However my hope...my hope is that someone will stop them. I really hope that. We want to keep protecting our land, now matter what happens, even if something bad happens, we will keep protecting it no matter what . But I'm scared for our future.

From what I see, from these pictures, people say, "hold on, yes, we won however - we are still fighting. Still."

Sarika:

And so, the protest carries on.

Sarah:

Yes! As the water protectors say, we will stay at camp until they're *gone*. Out. Done. And then they will leave. Some people are living there already, and some people have

been living there since April. They've been there and some people will stay there and live there.

I don't know, I have a lot of mixed feelings about this. I just wish we could kill the black snake NOW.

Do you know why we refer to this as the "black snake"? Once upon a time, there was a man who had a vision: He said he saw a huge black snake engulfing the land. And to this day now we understand the vision - it's the oil pipeline. So they're called the black snake.

I just want to let people know that that we will keep fighting for our land - actually *protecting* - not fighting, protecting our water. We will keep going and we need all of the support and we need your prayers.

Now, going through the winter will be tougher now, continuing to live in the camp (in the tough winter). So we need all of the help and support (that we can get). Do not stop.

Sarika:

FOR KBOO NEWS, I'M SARIKA MEHTA.