



Standing Rock Photo Diary

Here's a link to our [slideshow](#) from Standing Rock

<http://www.thebigfieldtrip.com>

This amazing team of folks helped organize our caravan to Standing Rock. The goal: to prepare a Thanksgiving feast for the Native American water protectors who for months have been standing against the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL).



Over three dozen New Mexico farmers, ranchers, businesses, individuals, and restaurants donated everything from turkeys and grass-fed meats, to mashed potatoes, gravy, roasted veggies, pies, and cooking equipment for the Thanksgiving feast.

Local blacksmith, Sparky Sanders, spent the week leading up to our departure building a large insulated trailer box—complete with banners by artist Thomas Christopher Haag. It was a thing of beauty! We packed it to the brim before heading north.

After a twenty-one hour, white-knuckled road-trip, dragging our handmade trailer and 3,000 pounds of food over 1,000 miles, through the mountains of Colorado and the plains of Wyoming, South Dakota, and North Dakota, we finally made it to Standing Rock!

Entering Oceti Sakowin camp, we were greeted by the smell of campfires and burning sage, the icy winter air, the ancient sound of drumming, and a row of over 300 flags left by tribes the world over who have come here to stand in solidarity.



[Medic bus at Oceti Sakowin Camp]

Most of the cooking equipment we brought went to Wynonna's Soup Kettle Kitchen. You may have read about her camp kitchen recently in the [New York Times](#). She was psyched to see the big-ass wok/fryer/kettle since it will help her feed over 500 Water Protectors each day.



We unloaded the trailer, put on all the warm layers we'd brought along, and pitched our tents. (Everyone except Bella, that is. Since she won the rock, paper, scissors round, she got to sleep in the insulated trailer box, which for the next few days would be referred to as "the princess pod" before eventually being donated to the main mess hall.)

The next morning, we woke to 15° and crispy sleeping bags. After thawing out around the campfire, we spent the day dispersing donations around the camp, carrying wood, and helping sort through mountains of clothing donations.



Water Protectors keep vigil on our bank of the Missouri River, the front line, behind ropes that spell out:

"Wake up! We ♥U!"

From the hilltop on the other side of the river, armed officers stand guard behind rolls of razor wire.

On Thanksgiving morning, we awoke before dawn to the sound of snowflakes falling on our tent. A man with a bullhorn made his way through camp beckoning folks out of bed.

“Wake up! Wake up!
You’re not here on vacation!
Please join us at the shore for a sunrise river blessing.”

We dragged ourselves out of our tents, but today we would not make it down to the river. We had a feast to prepare!



Toward sunset each evening, we took our tin bowls to the Soup Kettle Kitchen, or the Oglala kitchen, or the Navajo kitchen, or one of the other makeshift eateries on camp for whatever they happened to be cooking up: split pea soup with roasted yams, bison stew with fry bread, braised kale and bacon...



The Thanksgiving Feast

Our group joined with members of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, who hosted the feast in their high school, and another caravan of folks from the East Coast who roasted turkeys over a bicycle-powered spit-fire grill.



Volunteers spent the day chopping and slicing and mixing and roasting and steaming and sautéing until, finally, the feast was ready, and busloads of Water Protectors began to arrive.





We were also joined by Jane Fonda and Shailene Woodley.

(I had no idea who the later was, but Bella had to get a selfie because apparently she was in all three Divergent movies, along with this, that, and the other thing. *Who knew?*)

The two actresses threw in enough additional funds and food that we were able to feed over 1,200 people!

Every day at Standing Rock seemed to last a week. When our time here came to a close, not one of us was ready to leave. The place is so full of energy and joy and pride and folks just getting shit done.

Like a little village where everyone has a job to do, but nobody gets paid. Everybody gets what they need, but nothing costs a dime.

Someone's always chopping wood and making food and washing dishes. There's always a prayer circle around the sacred fire. Elders impart wisdom to the next generation. Songs of prayer echo throughout the camp day and night.



The Standing Rock saga may end up having a happy ending for our Native American friends. This Sunday, the Army Corps of Engineers announced that they will not allow DAPL to drill under the Missouri River. This is a major victory for the Water Protectors, and there's been a festive air at Oceti Sakowin camp since the ruling, despite blizzard conditions.



Though it's too soon to know what the final outcome will be, we feel honored to have had the opportunity to stand with Standing Rock Sioux tribe in this struggle. We join them in praying that maybe, just maybe, for the first time in 200 years, the voices and the wisdom of the original Americans might be heard.



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