

# Over 75 Indigenous Women Urge Biden to Stop Climate-Wrecking Pipelines and Respect Treaty Rights

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In a joint letter Thursday, more than 75 Indigenous women [called on](#) President-elect Joe Biden to immediately demonstrate his "commitment to fulfilling the U.S. treaty obligations and ending the reign of fossil fuel extraction in our tribal territories."

The women leaders focus on the [Line 3](#), Keystone XL ([KXL](#)), and Dakota Access ([DAPL](#)) pipeline projects. Long opposed by local tribes, environmentalists, and landowners, "these three pipelines pose grave threats to Indigenous rights, cultural survival, sacred water and land, the global climate, and the public health crises within our communities, which have been greatly exacerbated by Covid-19," says the [letter](#) (pdf).

Casey Camp-Horinek of the Ponca Nation and the Women's Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN) is among the dozens of women who signed on to the letter. The message to the next president, who will be sworn in next week, comes just a day after the [historic second impeachment](#) of President Donald Trump for inciting a [siege](#) of the U.S. Capitol while Congress was certifying Biden's electoral victory.

"After witnessing the violent attempted insurrection on January 6th, 2021, and seeing 'white privilege' on full display," Camp-Horinek said of how the pro-Trump mob [was treated](#) by law enforcement, "I am acutely reminded of the drastic contrast of response that Indigenous peoples experienced at Standing Rock where we were attacked by dogs, maced, shot at with rubber bullets, strip searched, put in dog kennels when arrested, and our bodies marked with numbers for peacefully protecting our water and lands."

"I feel it necessary to call on the incoming Biden/Harris administration to stop the overall assault on Indigenous peoples and to stand by the promise to 'Build Back Better' in our Indigenous territories by taking executive action to halt the KXL, DAPL, and Line 3 pipeline projects, and acknowledge the racist policies that have allowed the continuing destruction of our homelands," she added. "We women are coming together to say that we must make the correct choices for our collective future. Now."

The letter notes the record-breaking [heat](#), [wildfires](#), and [hurricanes](#) of the past year; that the Biden administration must take seriously the climate emergency, including by [exceeding](#) the goals of the Paris agreement; and Indigenous knowledge and scientific [warnings](#) that keeping fossil fuels in the ground is a necessity.

"Massive pipeline projects such as Keystone XL, Line 3, and DAPL," the letter declares, "are not in alignment with the natural laws or with meeting these commitments."

Tara Houska, Couchiching First Nation Anishinaabe and founder of Giniw Collective, is on the frontlines [against Line 3](#). "One of Trump's first actions in office was reauthorizing oil pipelines through Native lands," she said. "The Biden administration can uphold their climate justice claims by acting to stop Line 3, stop Keystone XL, and stop Dakota Access Pipeline, now."



The three pipelines would not only "emit catastrophic amounts of carbon dioxide annually," worsening both the health of surrounding communities and the climate crisis, but also specifically [endanger](#) Indigenous women and girls.

"Already, our communities are dealing with the epidemic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) and our families are impacted without the support of federal or state agencies," the letter explains. "We still have daughters, aunties, mothers, cousins, and two-spirit relatives who have never been found and whose perpetrators have never been brought to justice. There is clear evidence that the epidemic of MMIW is directly linked to fossil fuel production."

The letter points to [studies](#) and [reporting](#) that have shown the so-called "man camps" of temporary laborers drawn to a particular area to work on fossil fuel projects "lead to increased

rates of sexual violence and sexual trafficking of Indigenous women and girls, as well as an influx of drug trafficking."

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**—Joye Braun, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and IEN**

The [raging](#) coronavirus pandemic raises additional health and safety concerns. "Indigenous Peoples across the U.S. are experiencing the devastating impact of the virus's spread due to colonial policies and practices that have led to historically underfunded healthcare programs and significant health disparities," the letter says. "Moving forward with pipeline construction of Line 3 or KXL will only exacerbate the issues Indigenous communities already endure."

"These pipelines are the outward manifestation of the rape of not only Mother Earth, but the very real rape of our people," said Joye Braun of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN). "From our bodies to the land and water we all need to survive, they must be stopped to prove this new president, indeed the new administration and electors, are serious about real climate change."

All three pipelines "are also in clear violation of our treaty rights and all are moving forward without the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) of Indigenous tribes and nations," the letter notes, referring to a right defined by a [United Nations resolution](#) allowing Indigenous Peoples to weigh in on actions impacting their communities.

Indigenous women "are the first to be impacted and have voiced a collective no consent for these pipelines to invade our tribal lands," said Kanahus Manuel of the Secwepemc and Ktunaxa Nations, Secwepemc Women Warriors, and Tiny House Warriors. "We have shown we are willing to risk our liberty and freedom and put our bodies on the line to blockade and stop construction of these dirty oil and gas projects, to ensure we have a clean future for our children."

The letter informs Biden that there are five actions he can take to uphold Indigenous sovereignty, align his administration with the goals of the Paris agreement and exceed its agenda, and keep fossil fuels in the ground:

- Fulfill your promise and rescind all permits for Keystone XL pipeline.
- Order a review of the Section 404 and 408 permits for the Line 3 pipeline.
- Shut down all DAPL operations and order the Army Corps of Engineers to complete a thorough Environment Impact Statement for DAPL.
- Issue a presidential memoranda to halt construction and operations of the Keystone XL, Line 3, and DAPL fossil fuel pipeline projects, including the construction of temporary housing for workers, also known as "man camps."
- Take executive action requiring federal agencies to engage in a process of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent of American Indian and Alaska Native Indigenous Nations, as laid out by the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

"We have been conquered, colonized, killed, dehumanized, and yet we continue forward," said signatory Christina Valdivia-Alcalá, who is Mexican Indigenous/Chicana, founder and director of Tonantzin Society, and a city councilwoman in Topeka, Kansas. "President Biden, help make right the injustice set upon our Indigenous Peoples."

As Ashley (McCray) Engle of the Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma/Oglala Lakota Nation put it: "Joe Biden, we are asking you to stand on the right side of history and humanity by putting an immediate end to the deadly pipelines destroying our Earth, our communities, and all life."

"We are asking you to honor the treaties, tribal sovereignty, and our shared commitment to being good future ancestors," said Engle, also an IEN Green New Deal organizer and Stop the Plains All American Pipeline founder. "We are counting on you to be the climate president we all need. Future generations are depending on each of us to do what's right. The time is now to do your part."