

The Fight for Native Americans' Welfare Isn't Over

DEC. 15, 2016

To the Editor:

Re "[How to Stop a Black Snake](#)," by Louise Erdrich (Sunday Review, Dec. 11):

We are gratified that the Obama administration halted construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. But like the Standing Rock Water Protectors we support, we do not believe that the fight is over. So we strongly advocate for the empowerment of the Standing Rock Sioux through continuous, meaningful consultation with tribal leaders.

Native Americans have been historically marginalized and mistreated by the United States. Many tribes experienced great loss of life, land and culture as a result of state and federal laws and actions. This mistreatment associated with historical trauma can be transmitted to subsequent generations through biological, psychological, social and environmental means.

Research has linked historical trauma to health disparities, including increased likelihood of early death because of substance abuse, unintentional injuries, assault, homicide and suicide.

The dispute over the pipeline has taught us all the importance of collaborating with tribal leaders at the outset on matters that affect their sovereignty and welfare, and of educating our country about the history, culture and values of our native peoples.

Given our skills as psychologists, we stand ready to participate in constructive problem resolution, as well as provide support for those who were and remain in harm's way — physically, psychologically and spiritually.

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ART BLUME

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The writers are presidents of the American Psychological Association and the Society of Indian Psychologists, respectively.

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