

# COVERING CAMP OCETI SAKOWIN & NATIVE DAPL PROTESTERS



The Native American Journalists Association serves and empowers Native journalists through programs and actions designed to enrich journalism and promote Native cultures. NAJA is composed of working journalists and media professionals, and does not advocate a stance on specific issues. We advocate for the principles of fair and accurate journalism especially when those principles act to ensure clear, in-depth reporting on Indigenous communities. This guide recommends best practices to reporters and media outlets when covering the Dakota Access Pipeline protests in North Dakota, as well as associated actions nationally.

1

**RESPECT** all subjects, sources and spaces. Journalists should adhere to the Society of Professional Journalists code of ethics and treat members of the public as human beings deserving of respect, but should also take into account that many places in the camps, as well as around Indian Country, are places of cultural, religious and ceremonial importance and should not be photographed or recorded without permission. Many individuals at the camp have chosen to make the area their home as protest actions continue and must be afforded due privacy. Avoid being intrusive and always ask permission to take photos of Indigenous people, their sacred spaces, homes and families.

2

**REFER** to individuals and tribes by their proper names. Accurate terminology and words avoid confusion and increase credibility. For example the headline “Tribe to Continue Fight After Court Refuses to Halt Dakota Access Pipeline” generalizes the subject of the lede to the point of inaccuracy. While there are thousands of people from hundreds of different tribal nations, it is important to recognize tribal individuality by properly identifying tribal membership and affiliations in both headlines and text. Failing to accurately identify tribal nations or their citizens leads to stereotyping and negates the existence, diversity and aspirations of the United States’ 567 federally recognized tribes.

3

**PROVIDE** audiences with diverse voices. Many individuals at the camp have stated that there are no leaders at the camp, however, media outlets continue to gravitate toward the same individuals for comment and to be featured. While a lack of “leadership” can be frustrating for journalists, it is not an excuse to forgo diligent sourcing and take shortcuts to the same individuals who have already appeared in other reports. Indigenous communities function in distinct ways when it comes to leadership roles, and it’s equally important for reporters to consider the motives of potential sources at camp or other supporting actions around the country actively requesting media attention.

4

**GO BEYOND** the camp to provide context. It is your obligation to serve the public by exploring the issue and providing fresh, essential information, not to reduce the story at Standing Rock to spot news. There are numerous stories and angles associated with the DAPL conflict and many of those angles are relevant to tribal nations in your state or region. The Standing Rock protest is a unique, Indigenous gathering. Do not oversimplify the complex issues that culminated in its formation by focusing on the camp and daily activities. It is good reporting to help readers understand that the social and legal environment that created these camps are not unique to the Standing Rock Sioux.



If your media outlet or organization has questions about this guide or would like to host a NAJA representative to facilitate a newsroom discussion on these points, please contact us at [naja.com](http://naja.com)