

THE LAURA FLANDERS SHOW

THE FUTURE OF ENERGY IS INDIGENOUS (AND IT WON'T INVOLVE PIPELINES!)

LAURA FLANDERS: Remember Standing Rock? The struggle by the Standing Rock Sioux and thousands of other Native American water protectors to stop the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline gained visibility for a movement against pipelines that's continuing across generations and many states today. What's received far less attention is what some are calling the indigenous-led road to a Green New Deal. President Biden fulfilled a campaign promise when he reversed Donald Trump on the Keystone XL, but today's guests believe that it's not just a question of this pipeline or that one, but whether we need pipelines at all that's important. This movement they say is led by indigenous people, not just because they've been the first and worst affected by fossil fuel contamination, but also because indigenous traditions show another way. Today, we're going to get a taste of what is happening at the local, regional, and national level with three guests. Taysha Martineau is a water protector and founder of Camp Migizi in Cloquet, Minnesota. Her prodding in a chance encounter led our second guest, Jason Goward to leave his job with the Enbridge Corporation, the Canadian company that's right now trying to force a pipeline across Anishinaabe territory. A little bit later, we're going to be hearing from Winona LaDuke of Honor the Earth, but first, let me introduce Judith Leblanc, citizen of Caddo tribe of Oklahoma. She directs the Native Organizers Alliance.

JUDITH LEBLANC: Well first I want to say that I'm really proud to meet Jason and Taysha, and we should start in a good way. I'm a citizen of the Caddo Nation, and I have great respect for your work. I don't even know where this feeling came from of being in a magic movement moment, but I've experienced it as an elder in many periods of history. But magic movement moments are when all things align, and there is a very broad awakening and people take action. And we are in the midst of one that has a very long trajectory. For the past 15 years, native-led movements opposing fossil fuel extractive destruction of land and water is the norm. Native-led movements are the norm. Drilling in the Arctic, Keystone XL pipeline, fracking and Chaco Canyon, stopping the coal train in Puget Sound. Yet every time we enter into one of these new movement moments with indigenous-led movement building, the media covers it like discovering Plymouth Rock, but not Laura Flanders.

LAURA FLANDERS: Thank you for that.

JUDITH LEBLANC: I want to thank you so much, Laura. 80% of native peoples are like me. We walk with a high heel on one foot and a moccasin on the other, and Standing Rock was a huge awakening of our responsibilities, our ancestral responsibilities. Can you describe when you first remember feeling that tied to place, history of place and future of place?

TAYSHA MARTINEAU: Hello everyone. My name's Taysha Martineau, and I'm a two-spirit indigenous anarchist from the Fond du Lac reservation. I have three beautiful indigenous daughters and one strong son. A few years back, I was sitting in a room with my oldest daughter, who at the time was six years old, and she turned to me and she said, "Mimaa," and so I listened because that means mother in Ojibwe, and when my daughter speaks in Anishinaabemowin, it's serious. So I took her, and I said, "What, my girl?" And she said, "There's Standing Rock in Minnesota?" And I told her, "No there's not, sweet girl." I was like, that was a once in a lifetime opportunity that we'll probably only ever see once in our lifespan of all walks of life coming together to fight for the water, to protect the same cause, you know. And she'd said to me, she's like, "Well, it needs to be. It's Line 3, and it's coming here." And I just looked at her, and I was like, "I know." And she said to me, she was like, "Then why are you just sitting here?" And it was from that moment on that I knew I had to do something, you know, and I made that promise to my daughter that I was going to stop Line 3. And so from that point on, it was kind of an everyday conversation, you know. She'd bring it up. She'd be like, "What are we doing to stop Line 3?" Like she would check in and check on me, you know. And then at one point, we went with Tanya Abbott and Winona to the 1850 Sandy Lake Memorial, and I remember standing there and they held ceremony there to remember all those ancestors, you know, who passed away in that way. And I realized that, you know, the Indian Wars never ended. Colonization has changed. You know, now they call it resource extraction. And the practice itself is very colonial, you know, and very violent, and, you know, violence upon the land is also violence upon our women. And so we decided that, you know, it was our job to do something about that.

LAURA FLANDERS: All of you, if you care to describe for people like me who don't know the land that we're talking about, why it's so precious to you, what it is that you're protecting first and foremost, what do you love about it? Taysha, want to start?

TAYSHA MARTINEAU: When I think about, you know, the traditional territories that I'm protecting, I think about all of the ancestors who came before me, I think about those who starved to death in the winter of 1850 so that the treaties that were signed were signed so that people like me could stand here today. I believe, you know, for my children it's my duty to continue, you know, protecting these lands, to be a good steward of these lands so that my children and my grandchildren and their children after them can continue to hunt these lands, you know, fish these lakes and rice these rivers, and, you know, continue to live amongst one another in a good way.

JASON GOWARD: I have the same feelings as Taysha. We have the wild rice, which is unique to the Great Lakes area, you know, quite a bit. And it is the whole reason that we traveled here from the East Coast.

LAURA FLANDERS: Let me ask you how you came to know Taysha.

JASON GOWARD: She lives two miles down the road from me, and I've always known of her actions, but it started out a while ago. She had a group that actually protected and tried to find multiple missing women and children and the pipeline she was saying exploited that, so that's how I came to know her was in the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women Movement.

LAURA FLANDERS: You were working for Enbridge when an encounter with her changed the course of your life. Taysha, can you talk about what you did, how you felt, because I think this speaks a lot to how do we talk to people and help them shift their position or make a new decision in their lives.

TAYSHA MARTINEAU: Usually, you know, I could be seen, you know, yelling at pipeline workers, yelling at police, but when I stormed onto that easement, and I looked up, you know, the first set of eyes I seen were a familiar pair that, you know, I knew and I loved, and we always talk about sex trafficking when it comes to the pipelines. We talk about how it increases drug and sex trafficking. But a conversation that isn't had enough is labor trafficking and how these companies exploit and target indigenous people who are living in poverty, you know, who have children that they need to support, and you know, all of these ways that they get indigenous people to work for these companies so that they can check it off on a list, and say, "Oh, like we've consulted with the tribe. We're hiring this many workers." You know, my friend that I know and love was just a number to them. And it just broke my heart because, you know, I know Jason, I've seen him about in the community, and I know that he had a good heart. I know that he cares deeply for his community. I've watched him, you know, for years take care of, you know, people who are struggling to get sober or people who are homeless, literally giving them a roof over their head. And I hollered out to him that he didn't need to be afraid because he kind of had this look on his face like, oh no, you know, and I told him, you know, "I know you're out here for your children. You know, if you need help with your children, you know, I would bring you wild rice. I would bring you venison." When we interacted in that moment, it felt as if time stood still. All of the workers and all of the protesters were just watching.

JASON GOWARD: Like she said, it was heartbreaking 'cause I was kind of in a bind. I have to, you know, send the money to my child support to my son who lives like a hundred miles away, you know, send him birthday gifts, and different things like that, and I depended on this temporary job actually to sustain a lot of those resources to my child. But then I realized he's going to want to come back to this reservation. He's going to want to fish these lakes. He's going to want rice these lakes. He's going to want to hunt here. What do I do if I, you know, that short-term money for a couple years is outweighed by the destruction of this pipeline coming directly from corner to corner of our reservation. Two years of income from when he was a kid compared to, you know, 30 years of food and medicine and natural resources that — sustainable

natural resources — that he can gather himself when he gets older. So I had to make the right decision and leave Enbridge.

JUDITH LEBLANC: So often when we've experienced these kinds of troubles on our lands, the mainstream media portrays it as that we're victims. But what is new and developing in Indian country that is so beautiful is that we're the source of solutions. Could you tell us a little bit about the camp that you've established and how you're nurturing and developing emergent power to change the conditions in the community in which you live? Because jobs are an issue. How we live, how we take care of one another is an issue.

TAYSHA MARTINEAU: My activism against the pipeline actually started with forms of mutual aid, forms of loving and supporting the indigenous community because that's what we as indigenous people are meant to do. You know, the village would care for the warriors and the warriors will care for the village. And so Jason has been actively helping us do that, making sure that people are able to get to ceremony, making sure that, you know, people know where to gather these medicines, how to do so, especially when the pandemic hit, you know. I kind of seen a shift during the pandemic. You know, people were back on the lakes, they were offering tobacco, they were gathering their own medicines. When Enbridge started digging, one of the first spots they hit is an area where I had sat in ribbons, skirts, and braids learning to reclaim a language that they took from my grandmother. You know, they dug up all the dirt, and they dumped it on top of that spot, you know, where I had learned to pray, where I learned to reconnect and warm my roots that I had lost. And for me that was the last straw, you know. It was almost as if someone walking into their church and seeing pieces of their grandmother laid on the altar, you know, and we know it was intentional because Enbridge knew how important that spot was to many of us who are trying to decolonize, trying to reclaim everything that they had taken from our grandmothers. And so at that point, I decided that we were going to start a camp. The first bell tent went up on the 10th of January, and we've been there ever since. At Camp Migizi, which means eagle in Ojibwe, you know, we're going to ask you to heal. Protect the Sacred goes deeper than just protesting pipelines. Protect the sacred means, you know, like standing up for indigenous communities, loving and supporting one another, and being brave enough to heal, being brave enough to recognize that we carry a lot of trauma and scars from colonialism, and being willing to work on them.

LAURA FLANDERS: So Jason, let me bring you in on that because I hear the word bravery and I think about how brave you were to make the move that you did. What did you bring in the way of information in your capacity also as whistleblower? What did you learn about Enbridge and its practices and its promises that you felt you needed to share, that perhaps people still don't know?

JASON GOWARD: A lot of the work that was being done was unsafe for the workers like me. And there actually have been some Enbridge workers that have passed away on the pipeline because of unsafe practices. Also, I noticed there were these mats that were being hauled in. They were from out of the area. So they have a lot of invasive species, and they weren't even washing them off, cleaning them off. And then I noticed 7 out of 50 workers tested positive for COVID-19. And then there was a huge explosion of COVID-19 cases on the reservation shortly after that.

LAURA FLANDERS: Talk a little yourself about the context in which stories like this are playing out. And just, what is the question when it comes to pipelines? I'm hearing it's not about improving pipelines, but getting out of the pipeline mindset altogether.

JUDITH LEBLANC: So I would say that we have a moral and an inherent right to protect Mother Earth, but we also have a legal right. And one of the key solutions that we have a cracked door opening to is prior informed consent. And that is the international standard for nation and nation relationships as developed by the United Nations. We want the Biden administration to ensure that nations, native nations, have prior informed consent so that we have the information that Jason experienced. So often they say, "Oh, we're going to create jobs," but those jobs are often unsafe conditions, and also at this moment in history, are super-spreader events.

LAURA FLANDERS: So is there action at the DC level? I mean, Deb Haaland has used the terms prior informed consent in legislation, in policy. What difference is being made there? And then, you know, how do we bridge from the local to the national?

JUDITH LEBLANC: The fact that she was appointed and confirmed as the first Native Secretary of the Department of the Interior is an amazing event. After hundreds of years, there's an Indian person who understands what it is to be a single parent, who understands working with tribes, for tribes, and understands the protection of Mother Earth. But Deb Haaland's appointment is not a destination. It just creates conditions on the ground for us, for Taysha and Jason and others to organize the movement to ensure that prior informed consent becomes the law of the land. And, you know, we know that energy needs exist, but there are alternatives. And at this point in time, many, many indigenous but also people from the scientific world are saying we have to start building, creating, and using alternative forms of energy now. That's what we need to press the Biden administration on. Yes, stop the pipelines, protect sacred sites and water, but lean into capitalizing and funding alternative forms of energy so that we can totally remove fossil fuel as the source of energy.

LAURA FLANDERS: I'm going to get a chance to talk to Winona LaDuke in just a bit, and she talks about a just transition being a transition from a fossil fuel economy. That is the exception to the rule, that that is the alternative, has been the alternative. Let's declare it a failed alternative

and return to practices that preceded and could follow this little fossil hiccup. What would a just transition mean to you, Jason? What would be required, what's involved, and can you see it around you in the sprouting now?

JASON GOWARD: Yes, I can see it with hemp plastics rather than fossil fuel plastics. Also see like more, you know, just the basic three R's: reduce, reuse, recycle. Also see it as, you know, utilizing less, having less, minimalizing. But also need people that are radical that need to just kind of quit their jobs, quit their Enbridge jobs, you know, quit their jobs that are colonial in mindset, you know.

LAURA FLANDERS: Taysha, to you, just transition, what would it look like? What does it look like? Can you see it?

TAYSHA MARTINEAU: I believe that, you know, a just transition isn't only about stepping away from fossil fuels. I absolutely love, support, and adore the work that Winona does, you know, and she's a prime example of how do we get there? And, you know, we need strong indigenous women on the front lines everywhere. You know, every table where decisions are being made I want an Nokomis or a Ninoshan sitting at that table. We need woman leadership. We need to step away from the toxic patriarchal colonialism that is the now and move towards where our women are leading us.

JUDITH LEBLANC: I think the future is indigenous because from an indigenous framework, we understand that we are all in relationship to one another, to the natural world. Many people are thinking about that because of COVID. And I also believe that because we have the understanding of the present, the present is where the past and the future come together. What we do now matters. That's what just transition is, maximizing what we do now to prepare for seven generations ahead.

LAURA FLANDERS: I thank you all so much. Judith LeBlanc from NDN and the Native Organizers Alliance. Taysha Martineau, thank you so much for everything that you're doing. Jason Goward, so glad to have you in the movement. So glad you're with us today. I'm going to have a chance to talk with Winona LaDuke right after this.

Now we go to the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota where Winona LaDuke gives us the beginner's guide to pipelines.

WINONA LADUKE: Enbridge is marching ahead on a pipeline that 68 thousand people or 95% of the people of Minnesota testified against. The 5% that testified it were seats filled by Enbridge's staff and employees, right? They bussed in people and blocked us through the process. But you know, everybody knows nobody likes this pipeline, right? And Enbridge has

spent hundreds of millions of dollars trying to buy consent. But I'll tell you what, money does not buy you love. Money does not buy you love. And what they are going to face is tens of thousands of people who look like me, and a lot of them older. There was like eight old ladies from Maine that got arrested last week. They call themselves the Golden Girls. They were 75 years old, you know. When it was 10 below, they arrested seven people in a piano one day, you know. We're going to keep getting people arrested, and that's a sad thing, but you got to get arrested to protect your water. But you know what? It's water or oil, and I'm going for water.

LAURA FLANDERS: 8th Fire Solar is producing renewable power that LaDuke believes will help make the people of the White Earth Reservation energy sovereign.

WINONA LADUKE: 8th Fire Solar's what it's called. 8th Fire Solar, and we build solar thermal panels. We manufacture them on the reservation. Why? Because you could reduce 20% of your heating bill with a south facing solar panel. And some people say, "Well, why don't you go for solar electricity?" You could do that too, but why would I go get electricity to make heat? Why would I go get electricity to make heat when I could just make heat? So tribes are ready. You know, we're rolling up our sleeves, and you know, our organization, Honor the Earth, and our sister organization, Akiing, is working on a lot of these just transitions as we call it, you know, diminishing manufacturing messes like bottle washing factories. Try that one. Try that. What if we didn't crush every glass bottle after a single use? Hmm. That's what they do in other countries. They don't crush them. They don't require the energy to remake them. What you need to do is wash your dang bottles, New York. You know, so that's how you rebuild it, and you get all kinds of jobs after that kind of economy. And then you quit outsourcing your jobs to overseas. Oh, that's right. We used to have a textile industry in this country until the 1990s. That's when we offshored it all. So I want to rebuild the textile economy, and I want to rebuild that with hemp. I want to rebuild it with hemp. Now, I've been growing hemp for five years. I'm on my sixth year. I'm a fiber hemp grower. And I call it the New Green Revolution. They say that on a worldwide scale, indigenous people represent about 4% of the world's population, but we live with 75% of the world's biodiversity. That's where we live. There's 500 federally recognized tribes, and I live on White Earth Reservation in Northern Minnesota where, you know, it is all around us a land that is full of wild things. You know, I live with bears and wolves and beavers and butterflies and frogs. You know, I live with all them guys. All the fish, they all live with us. And so if you want to save the world, you got to save the wild places. You can't just replant it in a tree plantation. It's not a forest. You know, and the thing is that, you know, on a worldwide scale, the two places that are the most lungs for the planet are the Amazon rainforest and the Boreal forest in the north. I live in the Boreal forest, and that forest in the north is the lungs. You know, it is all trees, and it's getting fractionated, not just by pipelines, but by mining corporations and logging corporations. And so of these battles that indigenous people have are battles to protect like everything that is our life, everything that is about us, but it's also fundamentally going to save you. That's why you

need to be on our side, you know? So you know, we're here, and we're going to keep fighting and you should join us.

LAURA FLANDERS: I don't know about you, but I have a fairly hard time getting my head around the idea of seven generations. My grandmother lived to a hundred, so in my family, that puts us back well over 200 years. That's long before the American War of Independence. One effect of thinking about that huge span of time is to make me feel fairly insignificant, but the whole point of the Iroquois Confederacy's call for us to think about our impact seven generations hence is to remember that what we do now makes a difference. So how to make sense of it? On the one hand, at the very simple level, I look at a tree near where I live. It's at least that old, and I'm pretty glad some fool didn't cut it down all those years back. That's one way. Another is to think about quantum theory. Now there's a 20th century phenomenon. Quantum theory teaches us the two contrasting things can exist at the very same time in the very same place and both be true. So I think I'm going to work on getting my head around that. For "The Laura Flanders Show," I'm Laura. Till the next time, stay kind, stay curious, and thanks for joining us.

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