**Standing Rock Lives on in Pennsylvania:**

**Protecting our Land, Water and Communities**

From the jungles of the Amazon to the tar sands of Alberta, indigenous people of the Americas are standing up to the fossil fuel empire in defense of Mother Earth. In many languages they are saying, “Respect your Mother. Protect your children.” These are the common sense principles for the survival of our species. Yet the majority of our industrialized society fails to live by them. On Turtle Island, the native name for North America, the descendants of settlers have never taken full responsibility for the stewardship of the land we colonized and now call our homeland – the land that native people stewarded with devotion for thousands of years.

Today, as we near the final hour of catastrophic climate change, there are signs of hope that some of our communities are awakening to a new relationship with Earth, and with indigenous people. At the Standing Rock encampment in North Dakota, I was among thousands of non-native allies who joined Native American water protectors fighting an advancing oil pipeline in the fall of 2016. I came in service to express my commitment to indigenous rights and gratitude for the Lakota’s brave defense of our common Mother. For many months, numerous multicultural, intergenerational groups of supporters traveled to Standing Rock, where they experienced native values of respect, reciprocity and reverence for the Earth. Throughout the encampment, banners and t-shirts worn by native teenagers exclaimed, “Defend the Sacred.” Though the pipeline in North Dakota prevailed, the spirit of Standing Rock lives on, calling us to continue the struggle, to act with courage to protect our places throughout the continent for the generations to come.

When I discovered Lancaster Against Pipelines (LAP) on a spring day in 2017, I cried for joy to find the same values I had experienced at Standing Rock - sharing, cooperation, and love-based, non-violent action to protect the water, land and communities of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. My daughter and I attended a gathering at The Stand, a structure built in the path of a 42inch fracked gas pipeline that LAP opposes – one that would tear through woodlands, rich farmland, and creeks, while perpetuating reliance on climate-destroying fossil fuels. At the Stand, I joined the struggle to “Defend the Sacred” in my home state and beyond.

During the summer I made several trips to The Stand, sometimes bringing friends from Philadelphia, to learn about the struggle to stop the Atlantic Sunrise Pipeline. Williams Partners, the pipeline company, based in Oklahoma, is benefiting from an abuse of eminent domain in which private land in the path of their pipeline is being condemned, not to benefit the public as eminent domain was intended, but rather to increase corporate profits, while bringing desecration and risk to the community.

On one of those trips, I participated in civil disobedience training provided by Greenpeace. Since then, LAP has organized five actions to block the progression of the pipeline, including on October 9th, when the group formed a 16-vehicle blockade to prevent workers from accessing the drill site. A week later, members gathered around an excavator on property owned by the Adorers of the Blood of Christ, an order of Catholic nuns that built a chapel in the path of the pipeline on property which Williams obtained by eminent domain. That day at the construction site, 23 people were arrested and charged with defiant trespassing, in the name of protecting their land.  In total, 45 people have been arrested since pipeline construction began.

On Saturday, March 10, I’ll be joining the defenders in civil disobedience. Will you come with me? There will be options to risk arrest or simply to witness and support the action risk-free. The event will end with a celebration at the chapel on the farmland of the Adorers, who are continuing their freedom-to-practice-religion lawsuit. They explain, “*Our faith impels us to stand up when the beliefs we hold sacred are compromised and our land is exploited by the misuse of power.”*

For some of the defenders, this is the land their families have loved and have cared for since they arrived as settlers in the 18th century. For others, it is the land they have chosen as their home and have taken responsibility to protect. It’s also the land that produces much of the fresh food for the farmstands and markets in Philadelphia. As stewards of this homeland, it’s our responsibility to fight, too.

Like Standing Rock, there is little chance of stopping a pipeline backed by powerful corporations and politicians, when all legal means have been exhausted. Nevertheless, it’s imperative that we resist. Our voice and action are needed to demand justice from eminent domain, bring a transition to renewable energy, and force political change in Harrisburg and Washington, so that we can at last take responsibility for true stewardship of the land that gives us life – the land, dare I say, that we love.

**Defend the Sacred!**

This family-friendly event begins at 9:30 on Saturday, March 10, at Trinity Reformed UCC, [450 W. Main Street, Mountville, PA](https://maps.google.com/?q=450+W.+Main+Street,+Mountville,+PA&entry=gmail&source=g), where there will be a brief rally with coffee and donuts. Bring a bag lunch. Participants will leave cars and board a bus to the action site, and from there to the chapel for the closing celebration. Transportation back to the cars will be provided. If you are interested in coming, please email me at info@judywicks.com, for further details and for carpooling options.

If you cannot come on March 10, please consider donating or volunteering at [www.wearelancastercounty.org](http://www.wearelancastercounty.org/).

**Lancaster Against Pipelines**

**WE STAND WITH THE LAND**

 **PREAMBLE:**

We, as **local communities**, have an **inherent right**—and **duty**—to [1] **protect the land, water, and air** that give us life,

and [2] **ensure the health and safety of our residents**.

**For four years, we’ve opposed Williams’s plans** to run a dangerous, fracked gas, export pipeline through the heart of our communities, using every legal means available to us. **Yet our system of government, at all levels, has failed to protect us**.

**TOGETHER:**

**• We defy a system of government** that tells us we can’t protect ourselves from industrial harms because corporations have been given more “rights” than we who live here.

**• We defy the gas industry’s plans** to subject our families, communities, and natural environment to catastrophic danger for their own corporate profit.

**• We defy FERC’s conclusion** that the Atlantic Sunrise Project would have “less-than-significant” impacts on our land, water, and communities.

**TOGETHER:**

• We pledge to protect our **water**.

• We pledge to protect our **preserved farms**.

• We pledge to protect our **forests** and precious **wildlife**.

• We pledge to protect our **sacred Native American heritage** and culture.

• We pledge to protect our **Amish neighbors** who’ve been targeted and harassed.

• We pledge to protect the **future of our children**, who must live with the consequences of the actions—or inaction—we take today.

**WITH THIS PLEDGE:**

We vow to protect our communities through **nonviolent Civil Disobedience**if FERC gives Williams Gas Company permission to poison our water, clear-cut our forests, steal our farms, bulldoze our Native heritage, and put our families at risk. Along with our financial and material resources, we pledge to put our bodies between the land we love and those seeking to destroy it.