

# #NATIVE READS

GREAT BOOKS from INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

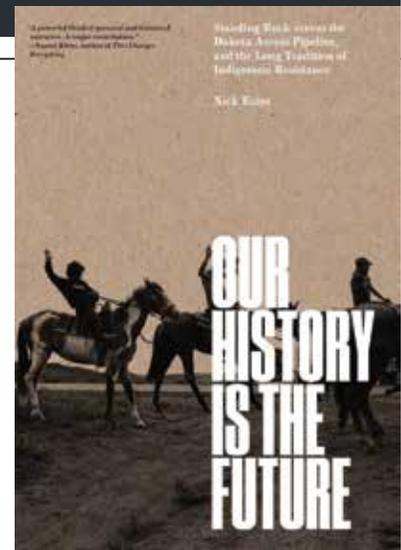
## Our History is the Future

Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline,  
and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance

by NICK ESTES

### Author Biography

Nick Estes is a citizen of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe. He is an assistant professor in the American Studies department at the University of New Mexico. In 2014, he co-founded The Red Nation, an Indigenous resistance organization. During 2017 and 2018, Estes was the American Democracy Fellow at the Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History at Harvard University. His research engages colonialism and global Indigenous histories, with a focus on decolonization, oral history, U.S. imperialism, environmental justice, anti-capitalism and the Oceti Sakowin.



### Book Summary

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's firm opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), an underground conduit that cuts across the Missouri River twice, as it transports 450,000 barrels of crude oil a day from North Dakota to Illinois, thrust the river into public discourse in 2016. However, as Estes points out, Mnisose/The Missouri River has been a source of contention between tribal and federal governments for more than 200 years, beginning with the Lewis and Clark Expedition in the 19th century, followed by the Pick-Sloan Missouri River Basin Project in the 20th century and, most recently, the #NoDAPL Movement in the 21st century.

In *Our History is the Future*, Estes closely examines this latest example of settler colonialism and the many people and events that prepared the Oceti Sakowin to lead this new movement of Indigenous resistance. Estes' award-winning book traces two years of Indigenous resistance to capitalism and settler colonialism.

**"Standing Rock was not a moment. It was a movement and it's part of the long intellectual and political tradition of our people,"** says Estes.

In the aptly titled *Our History is the Future*, Estes honors this tradition and promotes the intergenerational transfer of Indigenous knowledge by acknowledging the many Dakota, Lakota and Nakota storytellers, writers and scholars who preceded him. In fact, he cites every single writer who appears in the Oak Lake Writers' Society's list of recommended reading. The Society commends Estes' tribally-centered book for celebrating the knowledge and wisdom of his ancestors, and also empowering a new generation of tribal youth to advocate for their people and communities.

# Discussion Guide

This discussion guide was created by Oak Lake Writers' Society member Sarah Hernandez (*Sicangu Lakota*).

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- 1** The Prologue of ***Our History is the Future*** provides an overview of Oceti Sakowin culture, history and politics. How have the Oceti Sakowin been impacted by settler colonialism? How have Oceti Sakowin culture and traditions empowered Dakota, Lakota and Nakota people to resist colonialism?
- 2** In this book, Nick Estes examines several treaties, including the Treaty of Mendota, Treaty of Traverse des Sioux, and Fort Laramie Treaties of 1851 and 1868. Discuss these treaties and their impact on the Oceti Sakowin as a sovereign nation. How do these treaties continue to impact Dakota, Lakota and Nakota people today?
- 3** Describe the Oceti Sakowin's relationship with Mnisose/The Missouri River. How did the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the Pick-Sloan project and the Dakota Access Pipeline alter Dakota, Lakota and Nakota people's relationship with the river? Furthermore, how did these three events impact Oceti Sakowin's culture, language, health and environment?
- 4** In ***Our History is the Future***, Estes focuses on several Indigenous people and organizations that sparked resistance against settler colonialism, including AIM, NCAI, SAI and numerous Dakota, Lakota and Nakota leaders and activists. How did previous acts of resistance and rebellion prepare the Oceti Sakowin for the #NoDAPL movement?
- 5** How did the Dakota Access Pipeline (re)unite the Oceti Sakowin? Why did so many other Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and communities rally behind the #NoDAPL movement? Discuss the benefits, challenges and lessons learned from this important social movement.
- 6** Discuss the links between colonization and climate change. How has the theft of Indigenous land and water impacted the environment? What role do Indigenous people play in combating climate change? Why are Indigenous people well-equipped to help lead these efforts?
- 7** Consider the following statement on Page 28: "On the High Plains, land is a matter of race, class and colonialism." What is racial capitalism? How are race and class linked to the colonial system?
- 8** How did settler colonialism disrupt the roles that Indigenous women and Two-Spirit people traditionally played in tribal society? How does settler colonialism continue to impact these two groups today? According to Estes, why is it important to restore women and Two-Spirit people to these traditional roles?
- 9** Discuss the parallels between the Oceti Sakowin and Palestine. Why is it important to consider Palestine in discussions of Indigenous oppression and resistance? How are their struggles similar? How are they different?
- 10** Examine the structure of ***Our History is the Future***. Why did Estes decide to explore the #NoDAPL movement alongside other anti-colonial, anti-capitalist struggles? What was the most surprising fact that you learned from this book? What was its moment of greatest impact?