

To the universe and
the earth, and



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

To the Navajo, the earth and their sacred lands are a part of their identity.

It is at the very core of who they are. They believe the earth and all it offers to humans, should be a give and take. They believe in keeping a balance and they do so through many rituals, one being chantways, where over the course of several days, ritualized singing and chanting takes place. Everything they do, is centered around the universe, its creation and respecting that. Even their hogans and tipis, are religious and sacred, having specific ways to build such structures. The hogans represent four sacred mountains that surround the Navajo's homeland. The roof represents Father Sky and the floor is Mother Earth.

The building of a tipi is also sacred and must be built to specific standards, as they see it as an image of the universe. All of these sacred rituals were taught to the Navajo people by their ancestors, the Holy People. These rituals help keep order and balance in the universe and are where the Navajo religious practices stem from. Some other rituals they have, that restore balance in the universe are rites of renewal and the Sun Dance. The rites of renewal tend to be seasonal, so that they are designed around periods of such things like planting and harvesting. The Sun Dance is an annual ritual, centered around an axis mundi, which creates a sacred space for the ritual. Native Americans from all over have taken part in the Sun Dance, for many centuries and still do to this day.

Their history has proven time and time again, that they cherish the universe and the earth, and do all that they can to protect it and keep things balanced. When the Native Americans at the protest against the Dakota

Access Pipeline, commonly referred to as DAPL, say they are “Protectors, not protestors” history has proven that to be true. Of course, they want to protect the water and their sacred lands from the pipeline. Oil pipelines leak all of the time causing destruction to lands and waters, so it’s not a matter of if it will leak, but when.

The Native Americans are trying to protect Mother Earth and its most valuable resource. Not only are they being protectors of the water, but also protectors of their religious rights. In 1978, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act gave Native Americans the right to practice their beliefs.

With the pipeline being planned to go right through their sacred lands, where many of their ancestors lay, the US government is encroaching on those religious rights. We’ve taken enough from the Native Americans. Let them be the protectors they are meant to be and let’s learn from them.