

# DP IB Environmental Systems & Societies (ESS): HL

## 11.4 Environmental & Social Justice Movements

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## Environmental & Social Justice Movements

# Intersection of Environmental & Social Justice Movements

- Environmental movements have historically focused on conservation, ecosystem preservation and protection of natural resources
  - Examples include the formation and actions of organisations such as **Greenpeace** and **Extinction Rebellion**, as well as the establishment of national parks and wildlife reserves
- Social justice movements have aimed to address systemic injustices and discrimination against marginalised groups
  - Examples include the civil rights movement and feminist movements
- Environmental and social justice movements have emerged from quite separate and distinct histories but are increasingly aligning to pursue **common goals** of **fairness** and **equity** in society
- These movements seek to address issues of inequality, exploitation and discrimination, **both within human societies and towards the environment**
  - A good example of this was the Standing Rock protests



### Case Study

The Standing Rock protests, also known as the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), began in 2016 as a peaceful resistance movement against the construction of an oil pipeline near the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in North Dakota, USA

#### Background

The DAPL, proposed by Energy Transfer Partners, was planned to transport crude oil from North Dakota to Illinois, crossing through sacred tribal lands and potentially endangering the region's water supply, including the Missouri River, which serves as a vital water source for the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe

#### Indigenous rights

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, along with other Indigenous tribes and activists, opposed the pipeline's construction due to concerns about environmental degradation, threats to cultural sites (the pipeline's route directly threatened sacred burial grounds), and the rights of the tribe to govern their own land

### Environmental justice

Environmental activists joined forces with Indigenous groups, recognising the pipeline's broader environmental implications, such as the risk of oil spills and contribution to climate change

These protests highlighted the intersection of environmental justice and Indigenous rights, emphasising the disproportionately large impact of environmental degradation on Indigenous communities and the need to respect Indigenous sovereignty and land rights

### Protests and solidarity

The protests gained international attention, drawing thousands of supporters, including environmentalists, Indigenous leaders, celebrities and activists from various backgrounds

Demonstrators engaged in nonviolent resistance, including prayer gatherings, marches, and acts of civil disobedience, to challenge the pipeline's construction and raise awareness about Indigenous rights and environmental justice issues

### Legal battles and outcomes

Despite ongoing opposition, debates and legal challenges, the pipeline became operational in 2017

However, the protests led to broader conversations about Indigenous rights, environmental activism and the need for more sustainable energy solutions

## Parallels between environmental and social exploitation

- There is a parallel between the exploitation of **nature** and the exploitation of certain **social groups**
  - Just as marginalised communities face **discrimination**, nature has been treated as **inferior** and subjected to exploitation for human gain
- Issues of sexism, racism, and equity **intersect** with concerns for future generations and environmental sustainability
  - For example, marginalised communities often experience the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change to a greater extent than the rest of society

## Common goals of environmental and social justice

- Both environmental and social justice movements advocate for **fair** and **just societies**
- They both challenge the common themes and narratives of humans having **superiority over nature** and the marginalisation of certain social groups
- Examples include:
  - Access to clean air, water and land for all communities
  - Mitigation of climate change and adaptation strategies that prioritise vulnerable populations

- Recognition of Indigenous rights and traditional ecological knowledge in environmental decision-making

