

Ecological Relations and Indigenous Food Sovereignty in Standing Rock

[Abstract]

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Food sovereignty, the ability of communities and nations to determine their own food systems, is based on ecological relations between humans and our habitat. This article examines how human ecological relations with plants and animals contribute to the food sovereignty of indigenous communities in the Standing Rock Nation of the northern Great Plains. During the past one hundred and fifty years, the policies of the United States federal government have deliberately undermined these relations, including eradication of primary food sources, forced sedenterization on reservations, illegal land seizures, and compulsory reeducation of children at residential schools. The loss of food sovereignty has directly impacted the health of Standing Rock communities. Tribal government agencies, academic institutions, and nonprofit organizations in Standing Rock are working to enhance food sovereignty by revitalizing relations with plants and animals used to prepare healthy traditional foods. Interviews with elders and other participants in these activities reveal that tradition and sustainability are important dimensions of indigenous food sovereignty.

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