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SACRED STONE CAMP CLOSED, PROTESTERS LEAVE



PHOTO BY TOM STROMME - BISMARCK TRIBUNE

BY CAROLINE GRUESKIN - MARCH 1, 2017 - Bismarck Tribune

The original pipeline protest camp on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation closed Wednesday, as the Bureau of Indian Affairs encouraged people to go home rather than be found trespassing.

The final campers left the Sacred Stone camp after days of hurried cleanup that followed a warning from the BIA that the campers were trespassing on land majority-owned in trust for the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe.

Federal law enforcement officers put up a hard checkpoint at 11 a.m. at which time no one was allowed back into the camp, according to BIA spokeswoman Nedra Darling. After that, they did a walk-through and told the last 20 people they had to go, which most did. She said there were "no incidents at all."

Two people who did not want to leave were arrested without resistance for misdemeanor criminal trespass, and turned over to the Sioux County Sheriff, Darling said. A third, Native American person was also arrested by BIA officers on

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unknown charges.

On Thursday, representatives from the tribal environmental and preservation agencies will assess the closed camp for further cleanup, she said.

The Rev. John Floberg, an episcopal priest on Standing Rock, who was in the camp over the past few days, said most people left after notice from the BIA, because they wanted to go on their own terms.

"People saw Oceti go up in flames and they were determined that not happen at Sacred Stone," Floberg said. "They knew what the boundary was, and they respected the boundary that was set."

About 150 people left during the day Tuesday, and the final 25 left on Wednesday, he said. Most people moved out of the area with the help of some weekend fundraising for bus tickets and gas cards. Some went to the powwow grounds in Eagle Butte, S.D., where the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe has invited people to stay.

"The people at Sacred Stone worked exceedingly hard to do as much as they possibly could in breaking down that camp, preserving property, preserving the land, preserving as best they could relations on Standing Rock," he said.

Over the past several days, campers took down the yurts and some other structures, Floberg said. Other donations and teepees are left there.

The protesters' move came after the BIA handed out a final notice of trespass to campers remaining at Sacred Stone on Monday. They were first alerted they were trespassing on Feb. 15. According to the BIA, the federal government owns a two-thirds share of the land in trust for the tribe, giving the tribe authority over how the land is used.

The camp was founded in April in opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline. For the first several months, it had the support of the tribe. In recent months, founder Ladonna Allard, who owns a minority share in the land, spoke of making the quasi-village a permanent "eco-camp to teach people to live on Earth again" and offer some services to the town of Cannon Ball.

But many residents in Cannon Ball did not want that. Frustrated with the closure of the Backwater Bridge, use of the local gym and alcohol and drug use in the area, the district passed a resolution in January asking the protesters to leave. The tribe adopted that resolution and asked the BIA for help getting the protesters to leave.

Allard did not respond to a phone and text message for comment on Wednesday.

Cannon Ball District Chairman Robert Fool Bear said his community was happy to hear the camp was closed. He expects the Seventh Generation/Blackhoop camp, which received a final trespass notice Wednesday, will meet a similar fate soon.

"We just need to get back to doing what we were doing prior to all of this," Fool Bear said.

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REMEMBER THE PAST
ARE CONDEMNED TO
REPEAT IT.

GEORGE SANTAYANA
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