

UUSRF Sends a Delegation to Standing Rock:

On Nov. 16, 5 members of UUSRF travelled about 450 miles to the Standing Rock Sioux encampment in North Dakota. Mari Waters, Marge Larayne, Marion Ferrelly and Dick and Sue Beckham drove three small cars chuck full of “stuff” meant to support the Sioux Nation in its effort to protect the water of the Missouri River (**Lake Oahe** as the Sioux have called it for centuries) and Sioux sacred grounds. The delegation also collected about \$2000 in cash and gift certificates contributed by members and friends of UUSRF. Most of that was delivered through the Sioux preferred route Pay Pal. Some, however, sent gift certificates to the Sioux People to use as needed (AND they need it now; the Feds have ordered them to move their encampment several miles –But that’s another, sadder story).

This story is fine indeed. We telephoned the Sioux encampment Headquarters and were assigned an official “guide”: “Germaine” We were also told that the most convenient place to stay was the Prairie Knights Casino near the Cannon Ball River. Germaine agreed to meet us on arrival -- and about a couple hours after contact (people living in Encampments are on “Indian Time”), she came with two young female assistants. We talked into the night and arranged to meet in the morning to deliver our gifts and see the Encampment.

The Encampment (housing a reputed 9-10,000 souls) was splendid with all types of housing from manufactured tents to motorized campers to tipis to yurts. Each of the various “bands” of the Sioux and other Nations displayed a representative flag. The Encampment has 19 kitchens, many, many porta potties and washing stations, a LARGE corral for the horses, dogs aplenty, and great conviviality. Their biggest problem **last** week was that local farmers would not sell them hay for their horses. Now, of course, the Feds have told them that they will have to move the whole thing by Dec. 5.

We were handsomely welcomed. Most of our donations were cold weather gear (down sleeping bags, parkas, wool blankets, hats) The most popular items were the Hudson Bay Blanket that went to the leading elder woman, the Oilskin Drover Coat that Germaine claimed for herself (she wasn’t very tall –and the coat was the unusual one meant for a short woman!) and the large bags of horse feed that Marion brought.

Prairie Knights Casino near Standing Rock and the Cannon Ball River was a fine place to stay : while it is still a casino, its major revenue clearly comes from those whose business near the River is contact with the Encampment. The management recognized us and others as supporters of the Sioux and went out of their way to serve us. Germaine’s mission was to represent the encampment to visitors. Once she had shown us around, before we had finished eating and packing up, she and her telephone were cosseted in a corner of the Buffet restaurant working with others who would bring gifts and support.