

MoMA

Sky Hopinka's *Dislocation Blues*

Watch an exclusive two-week screening of a video about art's relation to collective protest and history.

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Sky Hopinka's *Dislocation Blues* (2017) follows two people during the 2016–17 Dakota Access Pipeline protests, which were organized in opposition to an underground oil pipeline at Standing Rock, home to the Lakota and Dakota nations. The pipeline was a direct threat to water access, ancient burial grounds, and other cultural sites of historic importance—a current-day continuation of US settler colonialism and imperialist expansion. Cleo Keahna, a young artist from Wisconsin, opens the film by describing his experience as a trans person there. He remembers that he “stopped thinking about my body,” by which he not only means his gender identity but also the moment when protesters became so enmeshed in the collective that everyone began having the same dreams.



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Tanya Leighton



Sky Hopinka. *Dislocation Blues*. 2017

Terry Running Wild, the film's other narrator, is a father who tells us he came for his one-year-old daughter. His sense of kin extends beyond blood or race, describing a non-Native person in the camp as a member of one big family. "Here, to me, that white guy there's the Indian." This open political identification happens against the backdrop of the US government's punishing state violence. He is being surveilled by law enforcement. We continually see and hear National Guard helicopters, the same forces who would destroy the camp.

The constant whir of the helicopters is just one of the daily sounds that punctuates the narrative. Drums at a pow wow. Singing at a protest. Fireworks. Honking cars. Screaming. Bobby Darin's plaintive song "Not For Me" brackets the film. The second time it's heard, Hopinka's friend Nicole Wallace sings over the recording: "Ballads are being sung, but not for me." Whose lives are not deemed valuable enough to be mourned? Whose lives will never be considered in an official calculus of loss?

At the end of the film, the camera pulls back; we realize we've been watching a projection from inside a sound stage. In revealing the apparatus of filmmaking, Hopinka shows us how all forms of representation are situated. They have material consequences and can ally themselves with freedom fighting in unexpected ways.