

North Dakota says no Indian artifacts found at pipeline site

September 27 2016, by James Macpherson

A North Dakota state inspection of an oil pipeline site has found no sign of the Native American artifacts or human remains that an American Indian Tribe says are present, the state's chief archaeologist said in a draft memo.

The Standing Rock Sioux tribe had cited the potential for burial grounds and other artifacts as a major reason to lead protests that have stymied completion of the project.

Chief Archaeologist Paul Picha said in the memo first published Monday by conservative blogger Rob Port that seven state archeologists inspected the 1.3-mile section along the route of the \$3.8 billion Dakota Access pipeline in southern North Dakota. The memo said only some animal teeth and bone fragments were found during the survey last week.

Historical Society spokeswoman Kim Jondahl confirmed the contents of the memo but said it was "a first draft of an internal summary." She declined to say how the draft differed from later versions.

In early September, Standing Rock Sioux officials said crews bulldozed several sites of "significant cultural and historic value" on private land, which Dallas-based pipeline builder Energy Transfer Partners denies. It led to a clash between protesters and private [security guards](#) hired by the pipeline company. Law enforcement officials said four security guards and two guard dogs received medical treatment, while a tribal spokesman countered that six people were bitten by guard dogs and at

least 30 people were pepper-sprayed.

The Morton County Sheriff's Department is heading up the probe of the Sept. 3 incident at the construction site near the Standing Rock Indian Reservation.

In an incident on Sunday, Morton County Sheriff Kyle Kirchmeier says about 200 people confronted about 30 security guards at a construction site. The sheriff says all but three security guards left the [construction site](#). The sheriff says [law enforcement](#) officers witnessed one of the security guards being carried by protesters for about 100 yards. The guard was treated for minor injuries by paramedics. No arrests were made.

Picha did not return telephone calls Monday about the memo. The state Historical Society and the Morton County Sheriff's Department declined to release the memo, saying it was part of an ongoing investigation by law enforcement.

The clash between security guards and protesters on Sept. 3 came one day after the tribe filed court papers saying it found burials, rock piles called cairns and other sites of historic significance to Native Americans along the pipeline's path.

Tribal preservation officer Tim Mentz said in court documents that the tribe was only recently allowed to survey private land, which is now owned by the pipeline company.

Standing Rock Sioux tribal members could not immediately be reached for comment Monday.

But Standing Rock Sioux Chairman David Archambault II has said previously that construction crews removed topsoil across an area about

150 feet wide stretching for 2 miles.

"This demolition is devastating," Archambault said. "These grounds are the resting places of our ancestors. The ancient cairns and stone prayer rings there cannot be replaced. In one day, our sacred land has been turned into hollow ground."

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