Apparently, the #NoDAPL protest, which started as “something that was beautiful,” has devolved into a morass “where it’s ugly, where people are fabricating lies and doing whatever they can, and they’re driven by the wrong thing.” And that “wrong thing” is money, at least according to David Archambault II, chairman of the Standing Rock Reservation, who is credited with bringing the #NoDAPL protest groups together.

“What purpose does it have to have this camp down there?” Archambault asked in a recent interview with the University of Oregon’s *Daily Emerald.* “There are donations coming, so the purpose is the very same purpose for this pipeline; it’s money.”

And apparently, this permanent protest settlement is literally becoming a dump. “There’s a lot of empty tents all over and a lot of trash, and if we don’t clean up when the flood waters rise all that stuff is going to be in the river,” Archambault said, without a hint of irony. “So we’re going to, at some time, get down there and clean up.”

The “protestors” are also putting a lot of pressure on Standing Rock’s limited resources.

“Now because people choose to stay at the camp, we have to make sure that they’re out of harm’s way,” Archambault said, “And so when the storms happen, we’re going to have a shelter here in Cannon Ball, and people are going to come. And they’re going to expect food, and they’re going to expect heat, and they’re going to expect blankets. So we provide that because it’s an emergency shelter. And then when the danger is gone, they stay there. They don’t leave. And the community says, ‘We want our gymnasium back.’”

Archambault said he is also very concerned about crime. “They don’t want any authority down there,” he said. “I just don’t want anyone to get hurt. I don’t want anyone to die. I don’t want any kids to get abused. I don’t want any elders to get abused. I don’t want any rapes to happen.”

Archambault appears clearly disillusioned at the outcome of the protest. “When we came together,” he said, “tribal nations came together, and we prayed together, and we shared our songs, we shared our ceremonies. And it was a good strong feeling, but nobody wants to let that go. Nobody wants to move on. … They think it is the greatest thing. But when you ask me ‘what’s the status,’ the things that I hear if I go down there, I don’t hear the good things anymore.

“We’re bringing that dysfunction into something that was beautiful. … And we’re not learning. We’re hanging on to something that’s not there anymore.”

And it appears that this dysfunction will be around indefinitely. Last week the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe unanimously passed a resolution calling for the camps to be dismantled, but some of the protesters are staying put. According to Olive Bias, a Cherokee from Colorado who has been at the camps since September, “Some will [leave]. Others won’t. It’s pretty inevitable.”

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