Twitter Thread by Arielle Zionts



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THREAD about Camp Mniluzahan, one of the most unique Indigenous-run, volunteer-run, and consensual+ mutual-aid based projects I know of.

#LandBack

1/x

> For nearly three months, Camp Mniluzahan has been providing shelter, warm meals and a sense of community for Rapid City\u2019s homeless population. https://t.co/gL6u3XuSWz
>
> — Rapid City Journal (@RCJournal) January 9, 2021

After an impromptu creation on forested tribal land just west of Rapid City, the camp has become highly organized with:

➡■ Large, warm army tents
➡■ A food pantry+mess hall
➡■ Meal train+transportation systems
➡■ Downtown drop site for local+mailed in donations

2/x

The camp does not have structured leadership, strict admission policies, and steps that residents must take to continue receiving services like some nonprofits do. The goal is to keep people alive and safe, treat residents with dignity and avoid criminalization.

3/x

The camp is not a charity or nonprofit. It centers around Lakota values, communal decision making and mutual aid. Volunteers serve as advocates, offering assistance to homeless people who want it, but not forcing anything on them.

4/x

The camp is on land that used to belong to the massive Rapid City Indian Boarding School property. It’s one of two parcels that the Department of Interior entrusted to the Oglala, Rosebud + Cheyenne River Sioux tribes in 2017. The sovereign land

is right outside Rapid City.

5/x

Sunny Red Bear on helping homeless ppl: “Advocates do not force anything upon anyone but they just say, here's my arsenal of resources, take what you need, let me know how I can help you ... We hold a safe, welcoming space for them to figure out what it is they want.”

6/x

Camp volunteers say some residents have become sober at the camp. They’ve connected residents who want to work on addiction issues, finding permanent housing, etc. to resources in Rapid City.

7/x.

The camp says it formed because there are gaps in services for homeless people in Rapid City. They say they have nothing against the existing services and regularly connect residents with them.

8/x

Many of the residents became homeless after experiencing trauma and losing love 4 themselves+from others, said volunteer Hermus Bettelyoun.

“We’re just trying to give that back to them, show that love+compassion, giving them some place (to live) + showing that ppl do care.” 9/x

.@DarkMark on the camp’s connection to #LandBack, the movement to return land to Indigenous ppl: “The very fact that one of the things that we’re doing w/ our land is to take care of our most vulnerable population kind of shows you the priority+trajectory of that movement.”
10/x

The camp is Lakota-led but there are residents and volunteers of all backgrounds. 11/x

Hermus Bettelyoun on the vibe at the forested camp: “It’s real peaceful, it's so beautiful, all you hear is the wind ... You hear laughter and joking. It’s something that really warms you up.”

12/x