



Watchlist: 'How the U.S. poisoned the Navajo Nation'

By Kamiah Koch

Social media/digital journalist

During World War II and the subsequent Cold War with the Soviet Union, the United States was building up its domestic nuclear arsenal. To do so required the radioactive substance uranium. The American Southwest experienced a boom in uranium mining starting in the 1940s and at the center of that boom sat the Navajo Nation.

Vox published a 12-minute video in 2020 examining the toxic history of uranium mining in Church Rock, N.M., and the health effects Native people of the area experience today.

The Tribal people welcomed mining at the time because they saw job opportunities and potential for economic growth to their region.

However, the U.S. was not fairly compensating the Navajo Nation for the land it leased for mining, did not warn Native mine workers of the well-known health hazards that come with working in uranium mines and the private company that was hired did nothing when cracking appeared on a dam holding millions of gallons of radioactive sludge produced from the mines.

In 1979, the dam broke and spilled its contents into the Rio Puerco creek bed, a water source for the people and livestock of the area.

This was the largest radioactive spill in the country's history.

Little warning was given to Navajo Nation residents to avoid the water and no cleanup plan was devised. Vox interviewed the few remaining residents of the area and they listed off the decline in their peoples' health.

"They just came in, tore up the place and left the contamination behind, and they really don't want to do anything about it," Edith Hood, a former mine worker, said in the video.

She takes the Vox camera crew just a few steps from where they interviewed her to show them the giant pile of uranium mining waste stacked up behind her house.

In more recent years, Hood and community members took action to get cleanup in motion. The Environmental Protection Agency and the mining company agreed to a proposed cleanup plan for the mines, while no plan was proposed for cleaning the contaminated waterway. Instead, the EPA wants the people of the area to move from the Navajo Reservation to Gallup, N.M., and adjust to a new way of life.

To watch "How the U.S. poisoned the Navajo Nation," go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETPogv1zq08&t=5s or visit the *Smoke Signals* YouTube channel to find the video listed under our "Watchlist" playlist.

Mineral Spring Poultry joins U-Haul network

WILLAMINA – Mineral Spring Poultry, 25500 Yamhill River Road just east of Fort Hill, has joined the U-Haul network and is offering trucks, trailers, towing equipment, moving supplies and in-store pickup for boxes.

Business hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Mineral Spring can be reached at 971-309-5079 or by visiting www.uhaul.com and searching for rental locations near Willamina. Owned by Nels Youngberg, Mineral Spring Poultry joined U-Haul's national network of more than 20,000 dealers in North America. When a customer rents from a U-Haul dealer, they are creating supplemental income and are supporting an independent small business in the community. ■

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Fee assistance available

Enrolled Tribal members can request assistance with test fees (i.e. GRE, SAT, LSAT, ACT) and admissions application fees.

Contact Higher Education for more information at 1-800-422-0232, ext. 2275. ■



Cultural Landscapes Project
Cultural Resources Department

The Cultural Resources Department is seeking Grand Ronde members who hunt, fish, gather traditional foods and use the Willamette River dams/reservoirs and their surrounding areas for these and other purposes.

We are interested in conducting interviews with interested members. We will be able to provide an honorarium for your assistance.

If you are interested, please contact Greg Archuleta or Chris Rempel at 503-879-1887 or by email at greg.archuleta@grandronde.org or chris.rempel@grandronde.org.

Dams and Surrounding Interest Areas:

Big Cliff - Detroit - Foster - Green Peter - Dexter - Lookout Point - Fall Creek - Hills Creek - Dorena - Cottage Grove - Fern Ridge

YOUR VOICE MATTERS | VOTE

Tribal Council members represent YOU, the member! I encourage all eligible members to participate in the annual election process.

Whether elected or not, one of my goals is to see an increase in tribal member participation and engagement, and that starts with your vote.

In order to receive a ballot in the mail, you must have a **Signature Verification Form (SVF)** on file with the Election Board. Please submit one if you have not done so and participate in this year's Tribal Council elections. Ballots mail out on July 28th!

Visit my website below or find me on Facebook to learn more about issues that are important to me.

~Michael Cherry



Learn more about me and find a link to download the SVF on my website, michaelcherry.co

Michael Cherry
for Tribal Council

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