Addressing the Uranium Legacy

7th Annual Red Water Pond Road Community Uranium Tailings Spill Commemoration

On July 18th, we were honored to be a part of the annual commemoration that the Red Water Pond Road Community hosted to raise awareness around the uranium legacy in their area.

About 100 people joined us at their annual commemoration ranging from community members, staff from the United States Environmental Protection Agency, and elected officials. We walked to the historical spill site to hear about the history of the 1979 Church Rock Tailings Spill. We returned to Red Water Pond Road and heard stories of peoples experience in addressing the social, economic and health impacts of uranium mining and milling in McKinley County.

It was a powerful day! Please plan to join us next year!

We have been working with this community for the last two years to raise awareness about the health impacts of this legacy and assist with exploring adequate housing options during the upcoming cleanup process.

News & Notes

Vision Statement

Our vision is all people in McKinley County will live in a safe, healthy, and prosperous environment that honors health in all policies and leaves a legacy of responsible leadership grounded in equity.
Expanding Our Work

Over the last year, we have strengthened our relationship with the Red Water Pond Road Community and other organizational partners addressing the devastation around the uranium legacy in the Northwest region. We are working closely with the Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment, Conservation Voters of New Mexico Education Fund, and New Mexico Environmental Law Center to move forward our health impact assessment and raise awareness about the health consequences of the uranium legacy.

We partnered with the Red Nation and local community members to address the racist violence against natives in Gallup. This effort arose from the significant amount of individuals passing away from unnatural causes who are primarily considered homeless. Structural violence is a critical issue to address and one of the leading root causes of poor health outcomes in McKinley County and the Northwest Region.

We have initiated the Rainbow Naatsiilid Program, which focuses on increasing awareness and visibility about the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning community. This program offers educational trainings, workshops for community members, and honors the work of local leaders advocating for the LGBTQ community. We have partnered with various organizations in the area and appreciated the funding support from the Gallup Indian Medical Center, Health Promotion Department – Domestic Violence Prevention Initiative this year.

We also hosted Gallup Pride this year, which was attended by over 100 people from the surrounding area.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Participated in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Environmental Justice Training in Houston.
- Completed Looking Within: A Health Impact Assessment on Uranium Mining.
- Actively planned and engaged in the Northwest Health Council Gathering and Statewide Health Equity Gathering.
- Co-sponsored a Uranium Workers’ Day at the Roundhouse during the legislative session as part of our educational policy advocacy day.
- Organized a second educational policy day that was a Message and Advocacy training in Gallup.
- Participated in Reclaiming Feminism Action-Oriented Relationship Building Small Group Gathering.

True Colors Benefit Show

Dr. Jennifer Nez Denetdale has been a strong ally and advocate for the Native lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community. The evening was filled with amazing local performers with over 100 people in attendance.

We plan to continue this annual event in the coming years to raise awareness and appreciate individuals working diligently with the LGBTQ community.
Health Impact Assessment

In April 2015, we completed Looking Within: A Health Impact Assessment on Uranium Mining. We appreciate the collaboration of partners to make this report possible.

Here are a few key findings from our HIA:

- Suggested higher levels of lung cancer, kidney disease and other chronic conditions for occupational and non-occupational people.
- High likelihood that more residents will move to temporary housing during cleanup activities.
- Lack of trust with decision-makers due to the long history of dishonesty by the U.S. government and from feelings of injustice.
- Navajo people want to achieve balance and harmony between humans and nature, and uranium mining would be disrupting the balance.

On the Horizon

McKinley Community PLACE MATTERS has been active within our county and region for over two years. During the course of these years, we have decided to become a nonprofit organization to continue advancing health equity in our region.

We are delighted to have our Board of Directors from the local area and deeply committed to elevating the voices and building the capacity of community members in educating decision-makers about equitable policies.

Please join us in welcoming the following Board of Directors:

Talia Boyd – Chair
Emerson Toledo – Vice-Chair
Anna Rondon – Secretary/Treasurer

Given this exciting new development, Jordon Johnson will be taking on the role of Executive Director. As we expand the organization, we anticipate building a solid staff of team members working to address the health inequities in our region and advocate for effective policy changes.

A Special Thank You

We would like to extend our gratitude to the following foundations and partners for their support in our work:

New Mexico Health Equity Partnership, Santa Fe Community Foundation
W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Con Alma Health Foundation through support provided by the Convergence Partnership of Tides Foundation
Western Action Mining Network
Gallup Indian Medical Center, Health Promotion Department

All the people who provide donations that directly supported building the Red Water Pond Road Community Hogan.

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