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RED THUNDER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT IS NOW ONLINE

A model for American Indian community grassroots activism in response to environmental injustice debuts as a new online resource for students and educators

Sept. 7, 2017 -- The [Red Thunder Oral History Project](http://www.redthunderoralhistoryproject.org) is a new online resource for students and educators. The Project provides a detailed account of the origins, actions, and outcomes of an American Indian community-based organization's effective efforts during the 1990s to stop environmental degradation. Such degradation occurred in the historical context of mining and land loss on the Ft. Belknap Indian reservation in north-central Montana. This site documents a model of local grassroots activism in response to environmental injustice to enter this sequence of events into the historical narratives of US environmental history, Native American studies, and Montana history.

"The diverse collaborators on this project are honored to share the voices and events of a little-known indigenous-led, multi-racial environmental campaign that changed the course of mining in the sacred Little Rocky Mountains, and indeed, the state of Montana in the 1990s. It was always the primary aim of **Joe W. Azure**, President of Red Thunder Inc., for the information gathered here to benefit youth education. We hope that students, teachers, and members of the public will find these assembled recordings, documents, essays, and analyses useful for the classroom and for informed discussion of current environmental issues in Native communities and beyond," said Tiya Miles, lead project collaborator and Mary Henrietta Graham Distinguished University Professor, University of Michigan.

The Red Thunder Oral History Project is a collection of videos, photos, maps, essays, student projects, primary source documents, and recommended readings. Other information includes a comprehensive list of environmental organizations to support, and transcribed interviews with as many knowledgeable or informed individuals as we could identify and recruit for participation, all framed by and interpreted within existing documentary records pertaining to mining in the Little Rocky Mountains. Site Link: www.redthunderoralhistoryproject.org



View of the mine



Close-up view of the mine

About the Red Thunder Oral History Project

In 1990, a grassroots organization called Red Thunder, Incorporated (Red Thunder), began a legal campaign against the Pegasus mining company for the contamination of their local water and multiple violations of clean water laws. Red Thunder employed a variety of strategies to preserve the Little Rocky Mountains and prevent mine-related pollution from contaminating the Ft. Belknap reservation.



The Red Thunder Oral History Project was born out of a collaboration between Red Thunder activists and researchers at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in November of 2013. The project was formally launched in the Big Warm community at Ft. Belknap in Montana in July of 2016. The project launch brought together the original Red Thunder organizers, a Ft. Belknap Tribal Council member and activist from the period, relatives of activists and of the late spiritual adviser **Robert Gopher**. Additionally, historians, anthropologists, and environmental studies scholars from the University of Michigan, the University of Montana, and Michigan State University (and their families) convened to preserve memories and information about Red Thunder's relationships with the land and its fight against mining.

The Red Thunder Oral History Project was made possible by the Office for Research (MCubed Program); Department of American Culture; Department of Psychology; Native American Studies Program; and College of Literature, Science and the Arts, all at the University of Michigan; and by the MacArthur Foundation.

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