



The widows, who are traditional women, were left to raise their families without husbands and breadwinners. As a result they became dependent on welfare and relied on the young men who remained in the community to help supply them with their traditional foods. The women are struggling and the village is seeing the first generation of young men in the history of the Dene grow up without the guidance and teachings of their grandfathers, fathers and uncles. This unfulfilled tradition threatens the cultural and spiritual survival of the only community on the Great Bear Lake.

A personal statement from a widow, Dorothy Joe, has a different take on the same problem. She says, "No amount of money is worth a life. We lost our loved ones. They're gone forever. We'll never see them again. Money doesn't talk; it does not have feelings such as love. It cannot talk to you and hug you. Our children will never know how it feels to be hugged by their fathers."

Another community experience, the Navajo Nation is already dealing with contamination from previous uranium mines and the high rates of cancer, heart disease and birth defects. Clean-up efforts are taking years, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is evaluating more than 500 sites in the western part of the Navajo Nation. (*Indian country dated 5/16/11*)

Also, a recent publicity about a pit in Cameron, Ariz., spurred the EPA to assess the site. Lee Greer, a biologist from La Sierra University in Riverside, Calif., participated in a conference call about the assessment's results. In July, Greer presented results from the Cameron pit to the Geological Society of America, reporting radiation levels higher than the agency's Geiger counters could measure. Geologists questioned why the mine was not marked high priority, since the uranium had reached the surface, subjecting people and animals to contaminated airborne dust and drinking water. Uranium exposure causes increased risk of lung and bone cancers and kidney damage. (*source: Serving the Nations, Celebrating the People; Abandoned Mines an Overwhelming Problem dated December 3, 2010*)



As it is known, radon builds up in the mines and its decay products (called "radon daughters") lodge in the lung, delivering large amounts of radiation to the surrounding tissue. The U.S. government did little to prevent exposure despite a simple remedy: ventilation. The Navajo miners knew nothing of all this and they and other miners were prevented from gaining too much knowledge by the complicity of the government and mining companies in choosing not to tell the miners. (ACHRE, 1995; Eichstaedt, 1994; Moure-Eraso, 1999)

Legal Acts

- **Section 35(1) of the *Constitution Act, 1982* recognizes and affirms existing Aboriginal and treaty rights**
- **The Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) has ruled that the Crown is legally obliged to consult with First Nations about actions which might infringe Aboriginal rights**
- **This includes the impacts of a long-term deep geological repository for used nuclear fuel within or near First Nations lands and traditional territories**

At the heart of this issue is a system of indigenous beliefs and culture, which regards them as inseparable from the land, the waters and the animals. Environmental assessment panels have often listened to the submissions of aboriginal people in the area who have expressed deep concerns for the toxicity of uranium mines. The impact of mining on their ancestral lands where they are the traditional custodians disregards their spiritual and cultural beliefs.

The impacts of mining include contamination of soil, groundwater, surface water by chemicals and as well erosion to name a few. Besides creating environmental damage, the contamination resulting from leakage of chemicals also affect the health of the local population. How safe can it be – it can never be safe as described the as yet unsolved dilemma of high-level radioactive waste management: "The problem is how to keep radioactive waste in storage until



it decays after hundreds of thousands of years. It is very difficult to satisfy these requirements for the simple reason that there is no practical experience with such a long term project. Moreover permanently guarded storage requires a society with unprecedented stability.

We, the Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee Association, at this critical time of intensifying nuclear threats to Mother Earth and all life, demand a ban on uranium mining in Eeyou Istchee. We have to honor our future generations, as they're not going to have a life if we don't preserve and protect the land and water, today.

Given the above, we demand that you abstain from defending the interests of large mining companies and focus on ensuring that peoples are fully guaranteed the rule of law and respect of their human rights, which governments have ratified in various international conventions. (UN Conference) Until this happens, we will continue in resistance to these destructive developments that violate the lives of our people and future generations.

Furthermore, for the reasons outlined above, we urge you to reject all exploration permits on uranium mining in Eeyou Istchee. In solidarity with the people of Eeyou Istchee, we request that you and your government put in place and urge to immediately ban uranium mining and that you will share our concern over the considerable risks that this poses to Eeyou Istchee land and waters.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully

President, Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee Association