

White Mesa Concerned Community

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White Mesa Ute Community Members Lead 4 ½ Mile Spiritual Walk and Protest at Energy Fuels' Uranium Mill in Southern Utah

White Mesa Ute Community, Utah – About 100 White Mesa Ute Community members and supporters held a spiritual walk and protest of the Energy Fuels' Uranium Mill on May 19, 2018.

The uranium mill, the last such facility in the nation, is located immediately next to the White Mesa Ute Community of the Ute Mountain Tribe – and just south of Blanding, Utah.

White Mesa Ute Community members and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe are fighting to protect their health, water, air, land, culture, and sacred sites from the nearby mill, which was built literally on top of and next to hundreds of ancient culturally significant and sacred sites.

Tribal members and supporters rallied and prayed in front of the White Mesa Community Center, and then set off for the 4.5 mile walk up Highway 191, holding signs and waving banners to passersby who were overwhelmingly supportive.

Upon reaching the road leading to the mill, the crowd gathered in front of the Energy Fuels sign. Ute songs and the sound of the drums celebrated the successful event, and participants vowed to organize more actions against the mill. The tribe, community members and allies are now focusing on opposing planned “alternative feed” shipments of radioactive and toxic materials to the so-called uranium mill. The facility emits radioactive and toxic contaminants into the air, land and groundwater.

“When the mill's running, it smells like chemicals at my house. The trucks that come and go from the mill are dangerous, especially for my kids and other kids in White Mesa who ride the school bus by the mill. The mill was built on top of burial grounds and it contaminates the bones of our ancestors.—Yolanda Badback, White Mesa Concerned Community

“I am worried about my kids and my grandkids and their future in White Mesa. When I think about the mill, I just feel like I have to fight. I have to stand up for my family and our community in White Mesa.” – Thelma Whiskers, White Mesa Concerned Community

“If a crisis happened at the mill, they would contact Blanding, not us. We're five miles south of the mill and the wind usually blows south. They don't care about us; all they care about is money. If there was a crisis, where would we go? My only place is White Mesa.” –Ephraim Dutchie, White Mesa Concerned Community.

“Greenaction stands in solidarity with the White Mesa Utes and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe in this struggle to protect the peoples' health, environment and sacred sites from the uranium mill's operations,” said Bradley Angel, Executive Director of Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice. “The government's continued rubber stamping of permits for this polluter is a violation of human rights, and is racism pure and simple. The struggle for justice continues!”