



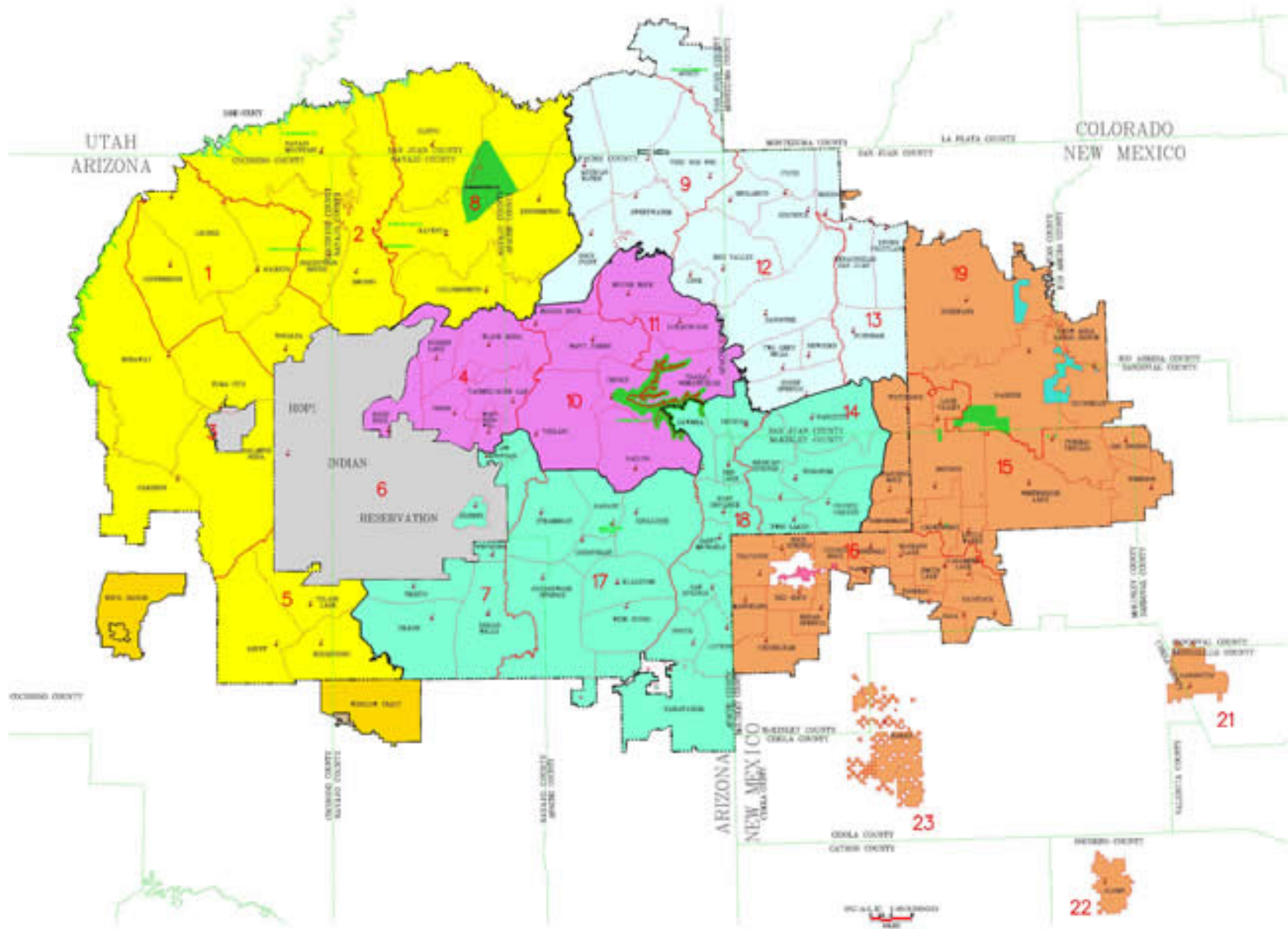
## **Basis for Navajo Nation Uranium Policy: Traditional knowledge, environmental health research, and community education**

Cora Maxx-Phillips, Executive Director  
Division of Social Services  
Office of the President  
Navajo Nation, Window Rock, AZ

November 7, 2007



# Navajo Nation and Navajo Country



# Traditional Indigenous Knowledge

## Chief Seattle, 1854

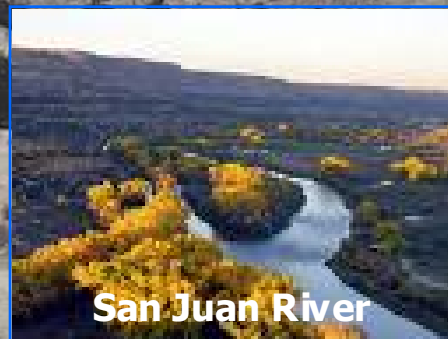


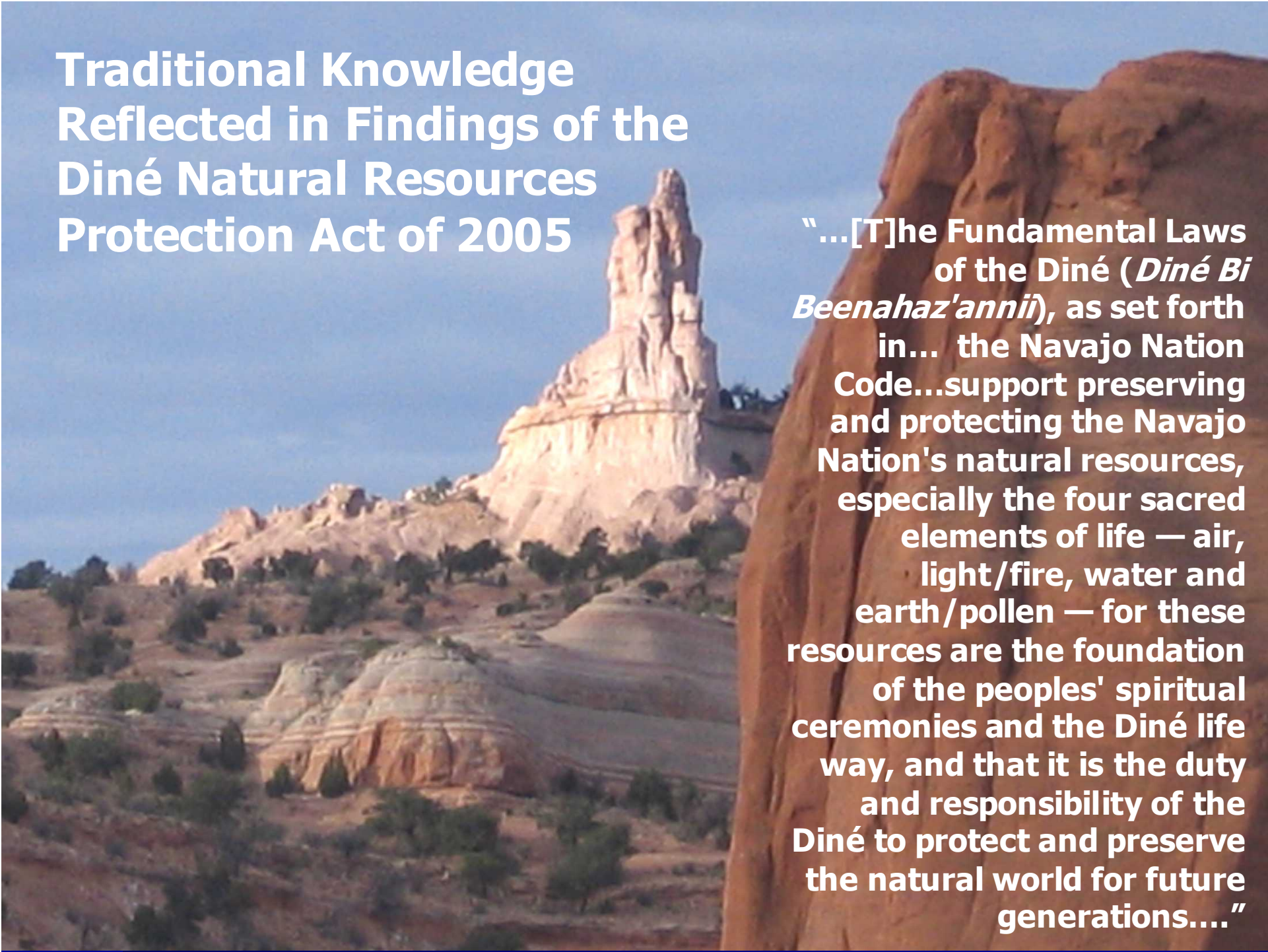
"This we know: The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life: he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself."

# Traditional Diné Knowledge

In Navajo culture and the Diné spiritual way, the air, water and the land are sacred, because they give and sustain life and are gifts from the Great Spirit. There is a need to carry on these traditions.

*Tsoodzil* — Turquoise Mountain, or Mt. Taylor, the southern of the four sacred mountains of the Diné



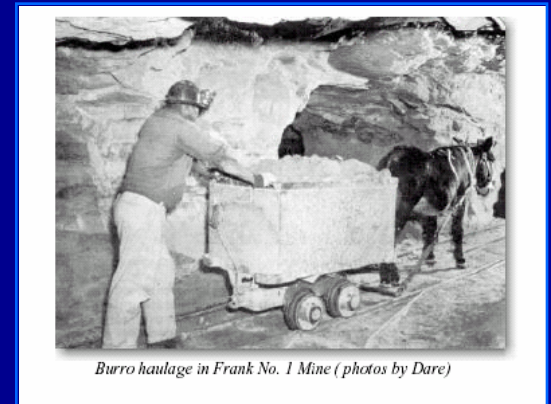


# Traditional Knowledge Reflected in Findings of the Diné Natural Resources Protection Act of 2005

**“...[T]he Fundamental Laws of the Diné (*Diné Bi Beenahaz'annii*), as set forth in... the Navajo Nation Code...support preserving and protecting the Navajo Nation's natural resources, especially the four sacred elements of life — air, light/fire, water and earth/pollen — for these resources are the foundation of the peoples' spiritual ceremonies and the Diné life way, and that it is the duty and responsibility of the Diné to protect and preserve the natural world for future generations....”**

# Legacy of Environmental Health Concerns

The blasting, drilling and digging for uranium over the last half century was done with little regard for human life and the environment. The careless mining activities left many scars that still exist today, constant reminders of sacred mountains reduced to rubble, burial sites destroyed, the sacred rivers contaminated. Offerings were made at these sacred sites. This will take generations to clean up.



*Burro haulage in Frank No. 1 Mine (photos by Dare)*

1976 – first study showing excess lung cancer risk among Navajo miners

1990 – Radiation Exposure Compensation Act, amended 2000

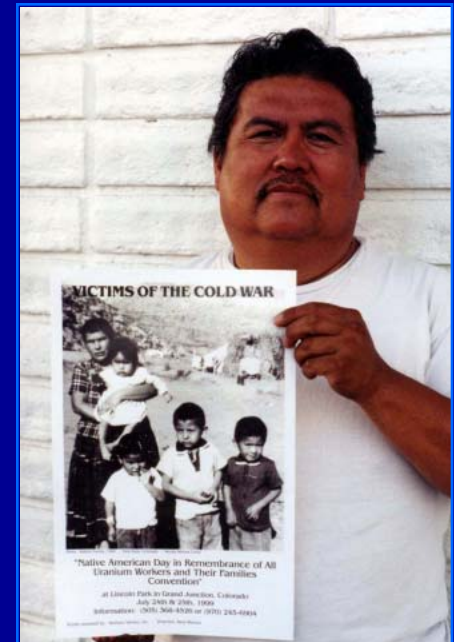


# Findings from the Diné Natural Resources Protection Act on the impacts of uranium mining

**“The Navajo Nation Council finds that the mining and processing of uranium ore...in Navajo Indian Country since the mid-1940s has [resulted in]...permanent disposal of mining and processing wastes, lands left unproductive and unusable because they are the sites of hundreds of abandoned uranium mines,...surface water and ground water left unpotable by mining,...operations, livestock that could not be marketed because they were believed to have been contaminated..., Navajo workers who lost...years [of] gainful economic activity as a result of their mining-induced illnesses and deaths, and the families of Navajo uranium workers whose livelihoods...were diminished...because of the illnesses and premature deaths of the workers.”**

# Community-based research responds to community exposures

Spurred by the lack of health studies, several Navajo communities impacted by uranium taken have undertaken their own environmental investigations.





# Briefing on Uranium Research Requested by Navajo Nation President and Chair of Navajo Nation Human Research Review Committee

- Navajo Nation supported need for proposed research on uranium and health to inform
  - clean-up decisions
  - responses to industry pressure to open new mines in Navajo Country

Status Report – Uranium Research Initiative through UNM, ENHB, SRIC & CPSU  
Lewis, February 2005

## **Briefing on Status of Uranium Research: Uranium Exposures and Population Health on the Navajo Nation**

*Prepared by Dr. Johnnye Lewis, Director, Community Environmental Health Program  
UNM Health Sciences Center College of Pharmacy; PI, DINEH Project – A Partnership between UNM/CEHP,  
Eastern Navajo Health Board, SRIC, and CPSU to Build Capacity and Address Environmental Health  
Concerns in 20 Chapters of the Eastern Navajo Nation.*

### **Format of this Report**

In the interest of providing a broad overview of this complex topic, this briefing will be organized around a series of presentations developed by the DINEH coalition over the past 8 years, with brief introductions providing a perspective for the information contained in each presentation. We feel this will be the most efficient means of providing an overview for President Shirley on the breadth of the issue, where the gaps in our understanding are, what we have planned to fill those holes, and what our dreams for the future are.

We understand that this document will not provide in-depth information, and would like to suggest a personal briefing through presentations of the team and others involved in research in this area to answer questions raised through review of these presentations. However, we think this format will be an efficient way for the President to incorporate into his busy schedule review of sufficient information to understand the issues.

This synthesis has been prepared by Dr. Lewis of UNM/CEHP. Those involved in the presentations include the following members of the DINEH coalition consisting of the following organizations and individuals:

Eastern Navajo Health Board and the Environmental Health Committee  
Thomas Manning, Principal Investigator  
Bess Sesschillie, Jerry Ellwood, LaLora Charles, Project Staff

Church Rock Chapter  
Ed Carlisle, CRUMP Project Coordinator  
Gerald Brown, Crump Project Staff

# Citizen Action

We must protect the future generations. To pursue this goal, the Navajo Nation enacted the Diné Natural Resources Protection Act. We hope this will put an end to a deadly legacy by making uranium mining and processing illegal in Navajo Country.



# Community education to address uranium impacts



- Grass-roots unity meeting at Shiprock HS, July 2003
- Resources Committee selects options for addressing proposed new mining, Sept. 2004
- Navajo Nation Council adopts DNRPA, April 19, 2005
- Navajo Nation President signs DNRPA into law, April 29, 2005

# Promoting DNRPA, 2005



...in Congress

**IS URANIUM MINING PICKING UP WHERE THE CAVALRY LEFT OFF?** **HOMELAND**  
FOUR PORTRAITS OF NATIVE ACTION

Attend the screening of the new award-winning documentary, **HOMELAND**, at the Native Cinema Showcase on August 21<sup>st</sup>, with a special panel discussion afterward.

For tickets and more information visit: [www.katabdin.org](http://www.katabdin.org)  
Katabdin Productions  
National Outreach Campaign with Active Voice

"With the renewed interest in nuclear power and the price of uranium rising, time may be running out for our community."  
—Rita Capitan, Navajo

**IN ATTENDANCE**  
Featured activists: Michael and Rita Capitan, and award-winning filmmaker Roberto Grossman.

**TICKETS**  
Sunday, August 21st, 8:00PM  
Center for Contemporary Arts,  
Santa Fe, NM  
Tickets: \$15.00  
Available online at [www.katabdin.org](http://www.katabdin.org)

**OUTREACH PARTNERS**  
Eastern Navajo Ombudsman  
Uranium Mining  
Southwest Research and Information Center  
New Mexico Environmental Law Center  
New Mexico Environmental Network

**...nationally**

August 21st at 8PM, CCA Santa Fe



...internationally

# Navajo Nation Hosts Indigenous World Uranium Summit, December 2006



Nov. 30 - Dec. 2, 2006



