

**LOGLINE**

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CRYING EARTH RISE UP is portrait of the human cost of uranium mining and its impact on sacred water.

**SHORT SYNOPSIS**

CRYING EARTH RISE UP tells the story of two Lakota women who work to expose the human cost of uranium mining and its impact on sacred water.

Debra White Plume is a grandmother and tireless leader in the fight to protect her people's water and land from corporate polluters. Debra is the lead plaintiff in a case challenging uranium mining on Lakota treaty territory.

Elisha Yellow Thunder intimately understands the dangers of contaminated water. A young mother and a geology student, she unknowingly drank water with high levels of radiation while pregnant with her first daughter, whose severe medical anomalies are life-threatening.

Crying Earth Rise Up documents the growing movement of Native and non-native people of the Great Plains in their battle to stop the expansion of uranium mining.

**SYNOPSIS**

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A nearby mining operation is extracting uranium ore from deep in the ground by tapping the aquifer that supplies drinking water to rural communities from South Dakota to Texas.

Crying Earth Rise Up follows Debra White Plume as she rallies her community against the exploitation of natural resources by corporate interests, becoming the lead plaintiff in a lawsuit challenging the uranium industry.

Before the case is heard, a new permit to expand mining operations is filed by an organic rancher (backed by a foreign mining concern) who cites the need for "clean" energy solutions.

Debra and her Lakota allies are joined by a group of ranchers and townspeople who fear dependency on an industry controlled by powerful outside interests, which may or may not be able to keep the ground water clean.

But the promise of a much-needed infusion of economic opportunity to the region is seductive, despite the risks, and public opinion could go either way.

**LONG SYNOPSIS** *Up* tells the story of Debra White Plume and Elisha Yellow Thunder's parallel search for answers to the question: Why are there high levels of radiation in our drinking water and how can we protect our families and community against this threat? White Plume, a Lakota elder, views nearby uranium mining operations as one source of water contamination and as an encroachment on the water rights of the Lakota Nation. She takes action as the lead plaintiff in a case challenging uranium mining on tribal land, and as an organizer working to motivate her community to protect treaty territory from exploitation of their natural resources by corporate interests.

Yellow Thunder takes action by seeking answers in the earth itself. During her pregnancy, she unknowingly drank contaminated water and her daughter, Laila, was born with severe medical anomalies. Laila and family await a kidney transplant. When Yellow Thunder can take time away from caring for Laila, she maps ore outcroppings on the Pine Ridge Reservation in search of uranium and the origins of the contamination. Meanwhile, supporting characters--community members from the mining town of Crawford, NE, Lakota health and environmental agencies, an organic rancher and project manager of a proposed uranium mine, lawyers involved in White Plume's case, natural resources officials, a nuclear energy expert, farmers and ranchers--grapple with the prospect of license renewal at the Crow Butte mine in Nebraska and the proposed expansion of mining operations to three additional mines in northwest Nebraska and western South Dakota.

Observational footage, ruggedly beautiful Great Plains vistas, sit-down interviews, illustrations, and animated graphics combine to address the controversy surrounding the existing and proposed uranium mining operations over the High Plains/Ogallala aquifer. Native actress Tantoo Cardinal narrates the film, supporting its structure, ensuring clarity and acting as a reliable guide for the audience through the story.

The film addresses the direct relationship between water and life itself, and the tragic irony that what is sacred may also be poisoning--even as nuclear power companies insist on the environmental safety of their industry's practices and townspeople point to the mine's essential role in fueling the local economy. Through characters who oppose and support the expansion of uranium mining over the High Plains/Ogallala aquifer (the largest fresh water underground source in North America), audiences engage with the important and timely issue of preserving and protecting the land and water.

Native communities are commonly involved in debates about land use and environmental stewardship, particularly in the west, because of the historical exploitation of natural resources found on treaty land, Native religious beliefs that bind the people to nature, the Native philosophy of "seven generations" that mirrors the concept of sustainable ecological practices, etc. *Crying Earth Rise Up* acknowledges the centrality of Native involvement in opposing the particular practice of uranium mining and suggests Native communities' wider spread contribution to a variety of other

conversations related to environmental protection (although not always noted by mainstream media, e.g. the recent blocking of the TransCanada Keystone XL Pipeline).