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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

August 24, 2017 -- The Red Thunder Oral History Project is a new online resource for students and educators that includes a detailed account of the origins, actions, and outcomes of an American Indian community-based organization's efforts during the 1990s to stop environmental degradation 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 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, primary source documents, essays, student projects, recommended readings & links, a comprehensive list of environmental organizations to support, and recorded interviews—transcribed for subsequent archiving and analysis—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.

### **About 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 source and multiple violations of clean water laws. Red Thunder employed a variety of strategies to reclaim the Little Rocky Mountains and prevent pollution coming from the mines.

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 first convening of this project brought together the original Red Thunder organizers, a Ft. Belknap Tribal Council member and activist from the period, relatives of activists and of spiritual adviser Robert Gopher, historians, environmental studies scholars, and religious studies scholars from the University of Michigan, the University of Montana, and Michigan State University, and their families to share memories and information about relationships with the land at Ft. Belknap, mining in the mountains there, and the 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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