

Law Center Staff Attorney Eric Jantz shares a big-picture look at the history of this case. Eric has represented ENDAUM since he arrived at the Law Center in 2001; prior to that, he lived in Crownpoint where he worked at DNA People's Legal Services.

Flint, Baltimore, Philadelphia...Church Rock? The list of communities facing drinking water crises is ever growing, but some communities don't get mentioned in the media or the halls of power. When the Flint water crisis made national headlines, Americans were shocked that any community's drinking water could be sacrificed just to save a few bucks. But contaminated water is a fact of life for many communities impacted by this nation's fetishistic fascination with atomic power.

Uranium mining was a mainstay of New Mexico industry since the 1940s, when a bright flash at the Trinity site in southern New Mexico signaled the dawn of the atomic age and moved Robert Oppenheimer to compare the human race to Death itself. Then, in the early morning hours of July 16, 1979, America experienced its worst nuclear disaster ever: the earthen dam that held an obscene concoction of uranium milling waste burst, sending 95 million gallons of radioactive sludge down the Puerco. The waste roared through the Navajo (or "Diné" in their native language) villages of Church Rock and Gallup, eventually thinning to a trickle hundreds of miles downstream in Arizona. Soon after, the uranium market collapsed and mining companies scattered, leaving mountains of radioactive and toxic waste behind.

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with ENDAUM founders
Mitchell and Rita Capitan
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