

20
years

Larry J. King

Q&A

Eastern Navajo Diné Against Uranium Mining
(ENDAUM)

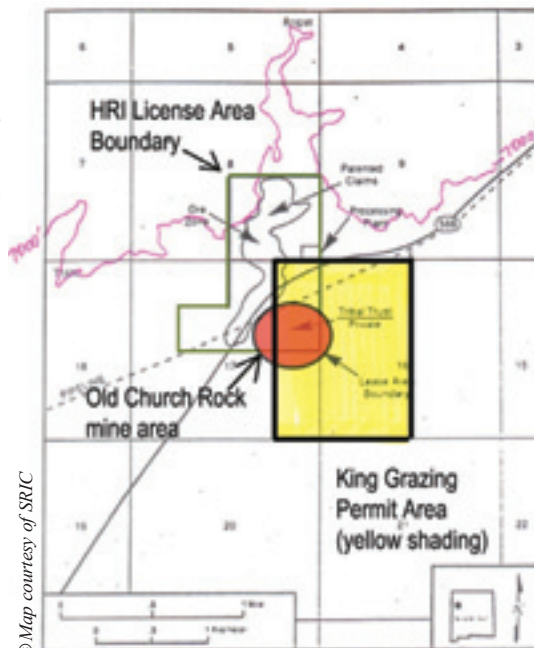
ENDAUM
member
Larry J. King
at his home in
Church Rock, NM

Larry J. King of Church Rock once worked in the mines that line the Rio Puerco between Red Water Pond Road Community and Church Rock. The United Nuclear spill of 1979—the largest accidental release of radiation in US history—surged through the land that he and his family call home. He joined ENDAUM in its early days, and has become a leader in the fight to prevent new uranium mining in Diné communities.

How did you get involved in this fight?

Back in January or February of 1997 is when I got contacted by one of the ENDAUM members, and got invited to a meeting in Crownpoint regarding HRI. Of course I didn't know what that stood for or what it was all about, but they gave me information on HRI, the company that wants to do mining behind my house here. Of course I was interested, so I went out there. And that's how I got started.

ENDAUM had their monthly meetings, so I started going to those, and got more educated on what the company was up to, what their background was, and what ISL mining is. That's when I got to know the New Mexico Environmental Law Center and Chris Shuey of Southwest Research and Information Center (SRIC). Of course it took me a while to learn who's who, and what their role was and what was happening at the time because I had never in my life been involved in something like that.



What has it meant to have the Law Center working for you?

It means a lot. Every time I hear the name, every time I see representatives from the Law Center, you know it brings me a sense of relief, a sense of security. Because I know we have people looking out for our safety, our concerns. As grassroots people – as myself – I have no knowledge in the legal maneuvers that the company always pulls, how they get their way...how they weasel themselves into indigenous communities, just to make money off the community. Once they get what they want, then they leave their mess behind for the communities to deal with.

But I'm very grateful the Law Center was able to assist us in every way that they could...and they did.

This obviously has been a long case...there have been a lot of different decisions by agencies and steps you had to take. Can you give us your thoughts on the process of having to fight this company?

When I first joined in 1997, I didn't see myself twenty years down the road, or even several years later, working on this. I thought maybe it would be resolved in three years – no more than 10 years. But twenty years later, we're still here. It's a long and hideous process. A lot of sleepless nights. A lot of worries. Every day I wake up and look to the northwest into the canyon, and just

knowing that HRI is still not doing anything up there, it's a relief. We have to keep one eye open all the time.

(continued on page 8)