ABSTRACT

TITLE:	The Hopi Tribe and Peabody Energy: A History of Water Usage and Cultural Loss on Tribal Lands, 1966-2010
AUTHOR(S):	Gulliford, Dr. Andrew; Pierce, Erin; Paul, Dr. Ellen
PRESENTED AT:	2016 Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities Symposium, Fort Lewis College

ABSTRACT: The largest coal deposit in the United States, Black Mesa, rests upon the border of the Navajo and Hopi reservations in northwest Arizona. Peabody Energy gained permits to mine coal in 1966 and the subsequent mining operation shaped the history of the Southwest. The coal powered many western cities and was profitable for Peabody Energy. The Hopi reservation was not only home to the largest coal mine, its 650,000 acres are situated above the N-Aquifer. It is arguable that water is the most sacred essence to Hopi culture. Their beliefs are deeply spiritual and rooted in respect for the earth and balance. Water is not only crucial in this area for survival, but also their spiritual ceremonies. Therefore, water is a cultural resource to the Hopi. Access to this natural resource was gained through deceptive politics and exploitation of two indigenous populations. Peabody Energy needed a way to transport the coal from remote northwest Arizona to the Mohave Generating Station, 273 miles away. The company created a slurry pipeline; the coal was crushed into small pieces, mixed with underground water, and pushed through the pipeline to the Mohave Generating Station. The water used for this slurry line came from the N-Aquifer, the only water resource in the region. Peabody Energy pumped an average of 3.3 million gallons of water a day for 35 years from this aquifer. The health of the aquifer and surrounding springs are showing declines upwards of 25 percent. Peabody Energy's extensive use of the aquifer devastated the Hopi tribe's sacred water resource, and thus is a cultural injustice.