

Defending their cultures, tribes are battling over planned coal mine

By Los Angeles Times, adapted by Newsela staff on 08.11.15

Word Count **560**



Courtney Little Nest gives her baby sister, Kadrean Iron, a ride on her horse on a warm summer night at Crow Agency in Montana on June 25. People living on the Crow reservation learn to ride horses as young as 5 years old. Photo: Barbara Davidson/Los Angeles Times/TNS

CROW AGENCY, Mont. — The Crow Tribe and the Lummi Nation live nearly a thousand miles apart. They hardly ever see each other. Still, they are stuck in a big fight.

The Crow tribe has a huge reservation in Montana. Their land is full of coal, which is used to make electricity. Crow leaders made a deal to build a coal mine on their land. They plan to dig up the coal and sell it.

The Crow want to sell their coal to Asia. They plan to send it there by train, then by boat. Trains would carry their coal to a shipping station in Washington state. Then it would be loaded onto a boat headed for Asia.

The Lummi are upset about the Crow plan. They say the new shipping station would be built on top of their families' graves.

Lummi Say Station Would Harm Fishing Location

Lummi leaders also say the new station would hurt their fishing area. The Lummi have depended on fishing for thousands of years. Now they are asking other tribes to help them stop the Crow.

The Crow say the new mine is their only hope. Many members need to find work. Crow leaders say the mine will give people jobs for many years to come.

The mine would even help people who do not work there. It would pay every person in the Crow tribe as much as \$5,000 extra each year. There are more than 13,000 people in the tribe.

The Lummi say their tribe needs help, too. They are worried about the new station hurting their fishing area.

Is Coal Or Water More Important?

“Everyone says it’s Lummi against Crow,” said Johnny Felix. He is member of the Lummi tribal government and is also a fisherman. “It’s not. It’s not a tribe against a tribe. It’s a resource against a resource. That’s our resource — out there in the water. And their resource is coal.”

In 1855, the Lummi made a deal with the United States government. Several other tribes in the area were also involved. The deal was called the Treaty of Point Elliott. It said the Lummi must always be able to use their usual fishing areas.

Earlier this year, experts were looking at the Crow tribe's plans for the mine. The Lummi used the Treaty of Point Elliot to make them stop working on the plans. The Crow leaders were very angry.

Others Are Telling Lummi What To Do, Crow Say

Darrin Old Coyote is the Crow leader. He says the Lummi are letting other people make up their minds for them. They are telling the Lummi that using coal hurts the planet. It causes the earth to get warmer.

Old Coyote visited the Lummi several times and even went fishing with Felix. He invited the Lummi to come to Montana but says they did not come. “They don’t want to understand where we’re coming from,” said Old Coyote.

Many years ago, two other stations were built on Lummi land. They went up in the same port where the Crow station might go. Now the Lummi are sorry they did not fight harder to keep the stations from being built.

“That’s what I’ve never understood,” Felix said. “Why did our leaders in the past let that happen? But now is a different time and I’m saying no — no to everything.”

Quiz

- 1 Based on the section "Lummi Say Station Would Harm Fishing Location," how would the mine project help the Crow?
- (A) It would help the Crow give their tribal members electricity for their homes.
 - (B) It would allow the Crow's tribal members travel to Asia by train and boat.
 - (C) It would provide jobs and money to members of the Crow tribe who have had trouble getting work.
 - (D) It would allow the Crow to sell electricity to the tribes in Washington state.
- 2 How are the Lummi trying to stop the Crow from building a new station in their fishing area?
- (A) They are using the Treaty of Point Elliot to keep the Crow away from their fishing areas.
 - (B) They are letting other people decide for them.
 - (C) They are building two of their own stations in the same area.
 - (D) They are refusing to visit the Crow in Montana to come to an agreement.
- 3 Read the following sentence from the section "Lummi Say Station Would Harm Fishing Location".

The Lummi have depended on fishing for thousands of years.

What does the phrase "depended on" mean?

- (A) needed it to survive
- (B) shared it with others
- (C) believed in it
- (D) been taught about it

4 Read the following sentence from the section "Is Coal Or Water More Important?"

It's a resource against a resource. That's our resource — out there in the water. And their resource is coal.

Which of the following BEST explains the meaning of the word "resource" in the sentence above?

- (A) a tool to protect
- (B) something to use or sell
- (C) a place to live
- (D) a traditional way to live

Answer Key

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