

PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

NICOLE HORSEHERDER

non-profit founder and director

“We believe that reclaimed land is part of transition. What better way to support communities and economic development than to have reclaimed lands that are usable, and reclaim waters that are usable?”

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Background Information

Nicole Horseherder grew up in Northeast Arizona, known as the Black Mesa, where residents included the Hopi and Diné Nations.ⁱ While Horseherder lived in Tuba City on the weekdays, on the weekends she lived with her grandparents in a home with no plumbing or electricity in the Black Mesa.ⁱⁱ In her youth, Nicole understood the importance of protecting important water sources and witnessed her grandparents and other elderly community members protest against federal government and corporations' orders.ⁱⁱⁱ

Horseherder's Resistance

After attending college, Nicole returned to Black Mesa, hoping to build a home like her grandparents and teach at a local community college.^{iv} Her plans changed when she learned that the Hopi and Diné communities were disproportionately exposed to air pollution and toxic chemicals from coal mining companies' electricity pipelines.^v The coal mining plants' drainage contaminated the community's underground water source.^{vi} These inequities prompted Horseherder to halt mining operations because it threatened people's water source and livelihoods in Black Mesa.^{vii} She used community elder members' organizing approaches to campaign for clean water, land, and air by creating the non-profit Tó Nizhóní Ání (Beautiful Water Speaks). The organization worked to reclaim and restore the land to the state it was in before mining started. Her community advocacy and protesting was successful, as the pipeline use was officially stopped in 2005.^{viii}

Achievements

Horseherder's advocacy was successful because it relied less on Western scientific methods and incorporated the spiritual role of Mother Earth.^{ix} Her activism efforts continue today and empower community members, especially younger generations, to fight for the protection and restoration of the water source and land.^x

vii “Black Mesa Indigenous Support! :: Big Mountain/Black Mesa Voices Speak Out Against the Water Settlement.”
<https://supportblackmesa.org/2012/06/big-mountainblack-mesa-voices-speak-against-the-water-settlement/>.

viii “Episode 19 - with Nicole Horseherder”

ix “Episode 19 - with Nicole Horseherder”

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