

Hard-Hitting Documentary Explores Effects of Strip Mining on Navajos, Hopis

A hard-hitting documentary exploring the effects of strip mining on Navajo and Hopi Indians living on reservation lands in Arizona will be presented on KUAC-TV (channel 9 in Fairbanks) Monday at 8 p.m.

The film, "Black Coal, Red Power," is created by Shelly and Mary Louise Grossman, a husband and wife writing team who have produced other programs on ecology for public television.

In this 90-minute special program the Grossmans argue that strip mining and related power plants under construction by the Peabody Coal Company in an area called Black Mesa are severely hurting the natural economy of the Indians by destroying the ecological balance.

Although a few jobs are being created for a few Indians, benefits to them, financial or other-

wise, are negligible.

Grossman said Black Mesa serves as an example of what is happening throughout the Southwest — there are seven plants now in the planning

stages for the Four Corners area of Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and Colorado.

For the Navajos, strip mining is destroying grazing land for their sheep — their primary

source of income. Peabody has offered to move the families affected. But nearly every square foot of reservation land is already allotted for grazing.

The Hopis' problem is possible pollution of their corn fields from clay shale. Since the Hopi culture is based on corn, the tribe's economy would be destroyed.

In addition, for both tribes, a strong chemical released from smoke stacks of nearby power installations is killing plants used by Indian women to make natural dyes for their popular fabrics.

Throughout their film the Grossmans juxtapose the sinister-looking strip mining and power operations with the simplistic everyday life style of the Indians.