

## **Remembering Fermi Two's 1993 Christmas Day Accident: A catalyst for our organization and a movement of resistance.**

Thirty years ago on Christmas Day, 1993, Fermi Two had a catastrophic accident. Metal blades from a turbine broke loose and launched fragments which ripped through the metal casing surrounding the turbine and tore through piping of two nearby cooling water systems. The reactor and turbine automatically shut down and the turbine had literally shook itself apart. One piece of the turbine was found 75 feet from the place it broke off from. The fire suppression system in the turbine building also kicked on due to the released steam and a small fire, hydrogen was suspected to have played a part. An estimated 500,000 gallons of water flooded the basements of the turbine and radwaste buildings. Another 531,840 gallons of radioactively contaminated water unsuitable for re-use in the plant filled the Condensate Storage Tank. DTE would move to dump in total [1.5 million gallons of radioactive wastewater into Lake Erie](#) the following year. They were also forced to take the plant offline for almost two more years.

For the next two years a mess followed. Local citizens, environmental groups, regional state governments and the Canadian government had concerns. DTE would keep attempting to run the plant to its fullest extent and would not get it back online until December 1995, hundreds of millions of dollars and almost a whole 2 years later. It would still not be fully functional until the turbines were replaced. The lack of accountability, stakeholder engagement and transparency created a need for constant watchdogging by the public. How else were we gonna know what was going on?

At the time there were no groups focused solely on the going-ons with DTE and Fermi Two. This accident brought the attention of smaller local groups and bigger national folks like Greenpeace. The lack of transparency required a laser focus which would consist of tracking Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) documents and media output to see if they were consistent. Tracking files was only the start. There was a need for public pressure and engagement to make sure the truth was known. [Citizens' Resistance At Fermi Two \(CRAFT\)](#) was formed by this need for continuous engagement and watchdogging.

By 1995, as the plant was going back online and the water had been dumped into Lake Erie, CRAFT was in formation and had already begun our work. DTE is a shareholder and investor owned utility that serves the purpose of making money for its investors before making changes for its ratepayers. We submitted a stockholders resolution suggesting DTE close Fermi 2 on the account that it was a financial drain and cost three

times as much to run in a year than it does to buy the same amount of energy from the grid. We were also attacking the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit at that time too.

This wasn't the beginning of the fight against nuclear power and injustices that come along with it. There is already a history of resistance as long as there has been the operations of the nuclear industry. Nuclear energy is not clean or carbon-free. The nuclear fuel chain is responsible for carbon emissions during mining, milling, enriching, construction, transportation, and decommissioning. Nuclear energy generates pollution with well-documented negative health impacts in nearby communities, including cancer, and creates the risk of a nuclear disaster in Michigan on the scale of Chernobyl or Fukushima. Uranium mines, nuclear waste dumps, toxic incinerators, atomic reactors, and other such facilities typically are located where there is cheap land, cheap facilities, and little organized opposition. Too often, this has been in Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and low-wealth communities who have felt powerless to oppose corporate giants.

Thirty years ago we resisted nukes and advocated for solutions that weren't so popular; such as community solar/energy, community say/control over energy systems, these things show more promise and people show more interest today. This is a case for CRAFT and our work, a case for resistance and continuation of CRAFT formation so that we can continue to be committed to this and environmental justice. Those who fail to learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them. We are here to unpack the truths of the industry using Fermi Two and our experience as an example of the lessons of history regarding not repeating them. Long after the radioactive nightmare of nuclear power operations cease at the Fermi complex there will be a need for generations of resistance to ensure protections from radioactivity and dangerous materials on site.

CRAFT looks back on our 30 years since the Christmas Day accident as a catalyst of our formation. We look back with gratitude for the experiences and relationships we have had and are building within the realm of the fight. We look forward to growing our reach, influence and relationships while holding down an environmental justice space that serves the future we all thrive in. When it comes to the future of Michigan we must think of the safety and future of the Great Lakes in every move we make. Our contributions to its maintenance, renewal, and living safety are priceless. **We must craft a future full of renewable and alternative energies free from radioactive waste.**

Wado, Migwetch and Thank You  
CRAFT Core Team