



NAY'DINI'AA NA'
(CHICKALOON VILLAGE)
TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

**Chickaloon Village presents its case against Coal Mining to
United Nations Expert on the Human Right to Water**

For Immediate Release

Gary Harrison,
Traditional Chief

Doug Wade,
Chairman/Elder

Ricky Harrison,
Vice-Chairman

Penny Westing,
Secretary

Albert Harrison,
Treasurer/Elder

Burt Shaginoff,
Elder Member

Jesse Lanman,
Elder Member

Larry Wade,
Elder Member

Jennifer Harrison,
Executive Director

February 22, 2011: Chickaloon Native Village, a federally-recognized Athabascan Indian Tribal government in Alaska, filed a communication to the United Nations Independent Expert on the human right to water and sanitation in conjunction with her first official visit to the United States, which began today.

Chickaloon Village's submission asserts that the new open-pit coal strip mine in its traditional territory proposed by the Usibelli Corporation would contaminate local drinking water sources as well as rivers, streams and groundwater that support salmon, moose and other animals and plants vital for subsistence, religious and cultural practices. The US Federal Government and the State of Alaska have, to date, not responded to Chickaloon's firmly-stated opposition to the mine.

The visit to the US by the Independent Expert, Mrs. Catarina de Albuquerque, a Portuguese human rights expert appointed by the UN Human Rights Council, includes stops in Washington DC, Boston Massachusetts and Northern California, where she will meet with the Winnemem Wintu and other Indigenous representatives. Her US visit will end on March 2, 2011.

During her visit she will meet with the US State Department and relevant Federal agencies as well organizations, communities and experts to receive information regarding the human right to water and sanitation and the federal and state policies and practices that affect this right. She is expected to make recommendations to the US government at the conclusion of her visit.

The right to water for Chickaloon and other Indigenous Peoples is not limited to access to safe drinking water and sanitation. It is closely linked to a range of other rights including Self-determination, subsistence, health, land and resources, cultural and religious practice and free, prior and informed consent. International standards including the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognize Indigenous Peoples' right to determine their own priorities for development and to exercise free, prior and informed consent regarding activities which may affect their traditional lands and resources,

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including water.

Coal mining in and around Chickaloon in the early 1900's had devastating impacts, including contaminating rivers and decimating traditional food sources such as moose and salmon. The tribes' long years of effort to restore its culture, subsistence, language, health and ecosystems, including its waterways, will be severely undercut if not nullified by the proposed new mining.

Explaining the reasons behind Chickaloon's filing, Traditional Chief Gary Harrison stated: "International standards like the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognize our inherent sacred right to protect our water and keep it clean for the animals, fish and future generations of our Nation. Our right to water is the same as our right to life. We can't sit back and allow our human right to water to be violated again".

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