

Native Americans #14

Native American Rights Fund

Newsletter Aug. 2016

[www.narf.org](http://www.narf.org)

Can you imagine what your life would be like without clean water? Or no water at all during times of the year? You turn the faucet at the kitchen sink and nothing comes out. You cannot take a shower. You cannot even flush your toilet, or if water comes out, it is not really recognizable as water. This is life for suffering people in third-world countries like Haiti and the Sudan... and it's what's faced by some Native Americans across this country. Yes, the fight for water takes place right now and right here in the USA, where clean, abundant running water is available to virtually every single person.

From Oregon's Klamath Tribe and California's Tule River Tribe, to the Kickapoo in Kansas, across the Western and Midwestern US, many of our native brothers and sisters have been fighting for more than 30 years to secure the water that belongs to them. The US Supreme Court in 1908 said that Indian tribes are entitled to sufficient water to make their reservations livable homelands. But in state after state, non-Indian groups developed most (if not all) of the water and left the tribes literally high and dry. For decades the federal government did nothing to protect the tribal interests. In fact, the government provided huge subsidies to develop the water for use by others, to the exclusion of the tribes. That sadly continues to this day in too many places.

That's why NARF (Native American Rights Fund) must fight to protect the rights of tribes and their people! Every day their staff devotes all their efforts to defend and promote the legal rights of Native Americans on issues essential to their tribal sovereignty, their natural resources and their human rights. As the oldest and largest nonprofit NARF organization in the country, NARF stands firm to end the suffering for all those who are unable to fight alone. Cases take years to resolve. Laws take decades to enact and implementation and enforcement of court decrees and laws is a lifelong effort. It's an expensive proposition, as you can imagine. When something as basic to human life, something as sacred to our Tribes as water is under threat, then we are called to do all we can- no matter the cost.

Think about this: Countless tribes face an array of health and developmental risks as a result of environmental problems including surface and groundwater contamination, illegal dumping, hazardous waste disposal, air pollution, mining wastes and habitat destruction. Over the past quarter century, the US government has spent billions of dollars on programs and institutions to protect human health and the natural environment. Yet, tribes have been systematically denied the resources to develop even the most fundamental environmental policies and programs for the protection of their air, water, lands and their people. Protecting and preserving the natural resources and lands, and the inherent rights of tribal peoples to access and use them, is one of the top priorities for NARF today. NARF will continue to fight for water for the Kickapoo, the Tule, and the Klamath and countless other tribes across our country. They will not stop until justice is done and the people of these reservations have the water that is rightfully, legally, and morally theirs.