

## **Petition to First Lady Michelle Obama**

We hold the First Lady in high regard for her dedication to, and advocacy for the health of America's children and teens. For this reason we bring this critical issue to your attention.

There is a crisis effecting children on several Native American Indian Reservations in South Dakota particularly the Cheyenne River, Standing Rock, and Pine Ridge Indian Reservations due to unchecked exposure to radioactive pollution from abandoned, open-pit uranium mines. The overall health and well being of these children is already dire due to overwhelming poverty and unmet health and basic needs. However, the runoff from uranium and other heavy metals permeates the water and land directly contaminating their sources of food and air. One mine alone, which pollutes the Cheyenne River and Standing Rock Reservations, is emitting 1,400 microRems of radiation per hour, or 14 microSieverts per hour which is nearly four times higher than that which the Japanese children receive of 3.8 microSieverts per hour at a school near the Fukushima nuclear plant.

Cancer rates among Native Americans in South Dakota run 30% higher than the non-Native population and average life expectancies are only age 48. The infant mortality rate runs as high as 25%. This is America's secret Chernobyl - and people are dying in the middle of the United States.

We are calling upon you, Mrs. Obama, to bring attention to this critical issue, encourage governmental action to investigate and correct these dangers expeditiously, and to advocate on behalf of these children and their families to the public, legislators and the Executive Branch through the use of your personal voice and your good offices.

Thank you.



## **Key Facts on Uranium Mining in South and North Dakota**

Beginning in the 1960's, mining companies began mining uranium in the Great Sioux Nation Treaty territory in South Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, and Nebraska. There are over one thousand mines and more than 10,000 deep drill uranium exploratory holes left abandoned, uncapped and uncontrolled in these areas. The effects of the mining has greatly affected the Standing Rock, Cheyenne River, and Pine Ridge Indian Reservations.

The form of mining uranium causes a dry sandy type residue (tailings and waste) which is contaminated with radiation. This is picked up by the winds of the prairie and spread across the land. It is breathed in by people and animals. It coats vegetation. Runoff caused by rain and snow on these mines has heavily contaminated the Cheyenne, Grand, and Morreau Rivers. Some of the villages on the Reservations still drink this radioactively contaminated water. Cattle and other animals drink from these contaminated rivers, and crops are irrigated with the water.

Directly west of the Cheyenne River and Standing Rock Reservations are 89 open pit uranium mines which have contaminated both the Grand and Morreau rivers. These run through several communities and also contain other pollutants including mercury and arsenic. One mine has radiation release levels of 1,400 microRems per hour, or 14 microSieverts per hour. The Fukushima Nuclear Plant has been emitting 3.8 microSieverts per hour - nearly four times less than what is hitting Cheyenne River Reservation or the Standing Rock Reservatioin and has been for the past 40-50 years.

**This is America's secret Chernobyl.**

For more information go to [www.defendblackhills.org](http://www.defendblackhills.org)

or

[www.culturechange.org/cms/content/view/336/1/](http://www.culturechange.org/cms/content/view/336/1/)