



**Testimony of the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe  
Chairwoman Carolyn A. Lubenau  
Before the U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies  
March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Introduction**

Good morning Mr. Chairman, Madam Ranking Member and distinguished Subcommittee members, thank you for the opportunity to testify here today, it is truly an honor and privilege.

My name is Carolyn Lubenau and I am the elected Chairwoman of the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe. We are the original inhabitants of Washington's Salish Sea, which is referred to as Puget Sound. We lived along the rivers, on the prairies above the rivers, along the lakes and streams, drawing our food and spiritual strength from the bounty that was set before us. We are one of the signatories to the Point Elliot Treaty of 1855. We are known as the "Fierce Fighters" and "People of the Moon". At the time of signing the Treaty, we were the largest Tribe in Washington Territory and today we are under 650 tribal members.

Last year I gave testimony to this Subcommittee about the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe's most sacred place – Snoqualmie Falls. I'm here to update you on the continued threats and devastation happening in this sacred area. Snoqualmie Falls is where my people draw our strength, our faith, our healing, and our hopes from. A place that has existed since time immemorial, where my Tribe has gathered in times of celebration, in times of sharing, and in times of grief. Our Sacred Snoqualmie Falls, where I was taken as a child with my Great-Grandmother, my Grandmother, my Uncles and Aunties, and where my mother taught me how to pray.

**Snoqualmie Indian Tribe Creation Story**

Any time we talk about the Falls we need to remember that this is the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe's place of creation. Our creation story tells how the first man and woman were created by Moon the Transformer. Moon the Transformer was the son of one of two Sisters who was married to a star. It was Moon the Transformer who created our Sacred Snoqualmie Falls. The mists rising from the powerful cascading waters were created so our prayers could be carried by the mists up to the Creator. The Falls and the area around the Falls have always been used as ceremonial grounds and the surrounding areas are our burial sites where souls are returned to the Creator and reside forever in our memories. The spirit of the Snoqualmie Falls is there to strengthen, heal and renew us. The Falls are the center of who we are as a people.



## **Background**

Snoqualmie Falls is a 268 foot waterfall located 30 miles east of Seattle. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a Traditional Cultural Property (TCP). My Tribe holds the Falls sacred and we continue in an ongoing effort to protect the Falls and the surrounding area from the destruction that further development would cause to our sacred site and the practice of our religion.

My Great-Grandmother would tell us of her childhood and going to the Falls. She would describe the way the earth shook with the power of the Falls, where the mists were so heavy she thought they could carry her to the stars above with their power. Over the years, that power and those mists have been reduced to a mere shadow of what they were in her day. The earth no longer shakes there, the mists are just a light veil, they have been restrained and their power harnessed for the sole purpose of producing an insignificant amount of electrical power.

The development of the Snoqualmie Falls began in 1898 when the Puget Sound Power & Light Company built a hydroelectric generating plant at the Falls. In order to make this plant, the company blasted the fall of the Falls and excavated an underground cavern. In 1957 they built yet another power plant below the Falls. This development has reduced the massive, awe-inspiring flow from my Grandmother's days to a mere trickle. Today, our sacred site is suffering from devastation and desecration, and in imminent danger of further development.

## **Tokul Roundabout Project**

One year ago I testified here, before this Subcommittee, to ask Congress and the members of this committee for their assistance in ensuring the federal government carry out its Trust responsibility by helping the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe to protect Snoqualmie Falls. At that time we were trying to halt the construction of the Tokul Roundabout, a project that the City of Snoqualmie misrepresented as a "safety project."

The Tribe fought this project for years and consulted under Section 106 with the Army Corp of Engineers, who determined that the project would have an "Adverse Effect" on my Tribe. Despite this determination, and after an extremely poor and unsatisfactory consultation effort by the Army Corps with my Tribe, the Army Corps determined that the Section 106 consultation was complete, and they issued the Nationwide Permit for the project, allowing the City of Snoqualmie to proceed. My experience with the Corps has shown me they are completely insensitive to Native American history, culture and religion.

The City of Snoqualmie broke ground on the Tokul Roundabout this past July. Since then, my Tribe has watched the sacred ground be disturbed and ripped apart as construction crews have injured the land, creating an enormous physical and spiritual wound.



During construction, equipment and crews unearthed a 9000-year-old ancient projectile point. Following the discovery, my Tribe was initially denied access to the site for weeks by the City of Snoqualmie. Despite this discovery, the destruction of our sacred land continued, and now the large roundabout will be open to traffic later this spring.

### **Future Development**

Prior to the approval of the permit for the roundabout, the City of Snoqualmie Mayor Matt Larson firmly denied that this project was intended to pave the way for future development. However, since the issuance of the permit from the Army Corps, he has publically stated on multiple occasions that the roundabout is the City's first step as a part of a long-term plan to bring more development to the area. There are plans to bulldoze, pave over, and develop these ancient burial grounds near Snoqualmie Falls into yet another commercial and residential subdivision with a hotel, convention center, and nearly 200 homes. These development plans threaten my Tribe's use of the Falls for cultural and spiritual needs and are deeply disrespectful of the sacred Falls that form the very core of who we are as a people.

My Tribe believes that once people know the facts about this project they will speak out against it. We have continued the work passed down to us by our ancestors to protect Snoqualmie Falls by educating the public about the irresponsible development that has been proposed for this sacred land. We have gained thousands of supporters who agree that this project should not go forward. People all across Washington State and beyond agree that the bulldozing of sacred Snoqualmie Indian burial lands has to stop.

The City of Snoqualmie has twice scheduled public hearings to solicit comment on the project. Both times, just days before the hearings, the City has cancelled those opportunities for the Tribe and members of the community to voice their strong opposition to the project. My Tribe supports responsible development; however developing on a sacred site is incomprehensible and irresponsible.

### **Preservation of the Snoqualmie Falls**

I am here today to ask Congress and the members of this Committee for their assistance in ensuring the federal government carry out its Trust responsibility. The religious and cultural practices of my Tribe are at stake. The Falls are the birthplace of our creation story and the bones of our ancestors are buried on that sacred land. It is our most sacred duty, honor and responsibility to protect them and the Snoqualmie Falls.

My request to you today is that you partner with us in preserving the Snoqualmie Falls and the area around the Falls by helping us to protect the land from further development. We will do everything in our power to fight this development and protect our Sacred Snoqualmie Falls.



Snoqualmie Falls is one of the greatest gifts from Moon the Transformer, created to enrich our spirits and fill us with hope. We invite you to experience this marvelous gift and for you to come to the Falls to feel the healing mists. You will experience a place of immense power, beauty and grandeur, a place as sacred and moving as any site on earth. A place that must be protected. Thank you for this opportunity to share such an important part of myself and my Tribe with you.