
Press Release: The Hopi Tribe

Initial Date of Release: May 27, 1998

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Hopi Wins \$5.8 Million Dollars

Phoenix, Arizona--In a May 13, 1998 decision by Judge Bruce Van Sickle, the United States District Court of Arizona ordered the Navajo Nation to pay the Hopi Tribe 5.8 million dollars in satisfaction of the Navajo obligation to share with the Hopi taxes collected from the coal mining operations at the Black Mesa and Kayenta mines in Northern Arizona.

"In most respects, the Hopi Tribe is pleased with the Court's decision. However, we believe the calculation of taxes owed the Hopi Tribe should have been higher. Nevertheless, this decision moves the case forward to what we hope will be an eventual closing of the books on this minerals tax lawsuit which has now required more than ten years of litigation just to reach this point," states Chairman Wayne Taylor, Jr. of the Hopi Tribe.

Judge Van Sickle's order follows a 1996 decision by the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals finding that the 1994 Settlement Act between the Navajo and the Hopi provided for an equal sharing of the proceeds of the coal mining operations occurring within the former joint use area of the Hopis' 1882 Reservation.

The coal within the former joint use area is jointly owned by the Navajo Nation and the Hopi Tribe. Since the late 1970's, the Navajo Nation has imposed taxes on the operations of Peabody Coal Company, lessee of the coal resources under leases with Hopi and Navajo.

The Navajo have not shared these tax proceeds with the Hopis as required by the 1974 Settlement Act and the 1996 Decision of the Ninth Circuit. Judge Van Sickle's Decision and Order now requires these back tax payments to be made to the Hopi.



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