



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #TUL-13-007

TITLE: Authorizing a Joint Initiative for the Protection of Sacred Places

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WHEREAS, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal Nations; and

WHEREAS, NCAI has long been concerned with the protection of sacred places from encroachment and/or barriers to access for ceremonial and other cultural practices by citizens of Native nations; and

WHEREAS, on December 4, 2012, the United States Departments of Defense, the Interior, Agriculture, Energy, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation entered into a Memorandum of Understanding, "Regarding Interagency Coordination and Collaboration for the Protection of Indian Sacred Sites" (MOU), and developed a corresponding Action Plan, purportedly, "to improve the protection of and tribal access to Indian sacred sites through enhanced and improved intertribal coordination and collaboration;" and

WHEREAS, development and implementation of federal and state governmental efforts to provide better protection of, and access to, sacred places will be enhanced by representation of tribal interests in the above-mentioned MOU process and with the relevant agencies and departments; and

WHEREAS, participation in such efforts to provide more effective protection of, and access to, sacred places fits within the already expressed goals, policies and opinions of the NCAI, as expressed in previous resolutions concerning sacred places, including those numbered #PHX-08-069C, *NCAI Policy Statement on Sacred Places*, and #ABQ-10-065, *Calling for Legislation to Provide a Right of Action to Protect Native Peoples' Sacred Places*; and

WHEREAS, the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) frequently serves as counsel to NCAI on various matters, including sacred places, and The Morning Star Institute has a long history of working with NCAI on issues involving sacred places, including on development of the proposed bill to amend the American Indian Religious Freedom Act to ensure that federal laws protecting the free exercise of religion include protection of traditional Native American Sacred Places where ceremonies, commemorations, observances or worship are conducted or occur, and to provide a right of action to protect Native American sacred places; and

WHEREAS, NCAI desires that NARF, The Morning Star Institute, and tribal governments and organizations undertake a joint initiative to share responsibility to plan, coordinate, convene, conduct and report on meetings with those who are implementing the federal MOU on sacred places, and to follow up on NCAI Resolutions #PHX-08-069C and #ABQ-10-065, to ensure that federal and state efforts to provide better protection of and access to sacred places continues with adequate representation of tribal interests.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that NCAI hereby authorizes a joint initiative with NARF, The Morning Star Institute, and tribal governments and organizations to assist, represent and share responsibilities to monitor policy and legislative issues that impact sacred places, to advocate for changes in law and policy that improve protection for sacred places, to work cooperatively with federal agencies to develop and implement policies and practices to provide and improve protection for sacred places, and to convene presentations, workshops, and roundtables designed to improve and advance protection of sacred places, in cooperation with relevant tribal, federal and private interests; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this joint initiative shall be guided by NCAI Resolution #PHX 08-069C, *NCAI Policy Statement on Sacred Places*, and NCAI Resolution #ABQ 10-065, *Calling for Legislation to Provide a Right of Action to Protect Native Peoples' Sacred Places*; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by a subsequent resolution of an NCAI Convention.

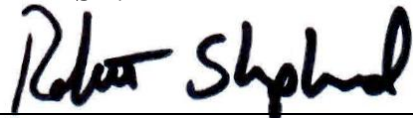
CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2013 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Cox Business Center from October 13–18, 2013 in Tulsa, Oklahoma with a quorum present.



President

ATTEST:



Recording Secretary