



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #SD-15-025

TITLE: Urging the Department of the Interior to Support Policy in Favor of In-Situ Reburial of Artifacts

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Tlingit

NCAI HEADQUARTERS
1516 P Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20005
202.466.7767
202.466.7797 fax
www.ncai.org

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 governments; and

WHEREAS, the Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) is a federally-recognized Indian Tribe consisting of members of Mohave, Chemehuevi, Hopi, and Navajo descent; and

WHEREAS, the Aha Macav or Mohave, people of Yuman descent and Patayan Pre-Historic Man of CRIT have called the deserts, mountains, and waters of Arizona, Nevada, and California that surround the current reservation lands their home since time immemorial and the Chemehuevi of CRIT lived nomadically upon the land; and

WHEREAS, the Department of the Interior (DOI) has prioritized the development of renewable energy projects, many of which are sited on federal lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM); and

WHEREAS, the NCAI previously adopted Resolution #LNK-12-036, opposing DOI's policy of fast-tracking solar energy projects within the ancestral territory homelands of CRIT, as well as other Yuman Tribes; and

WHEREAS, despite warnings by CRIT and other tribes, utility-scale renewable energy projects have been sited and constructed in areas known to contain sensitive cultural and tribal resources such as sacred trails and landscapes, artifacts such as manos and metates, and desert plants and animals which are intertwined with our traditional cultural and spiritual beliefs and values; and

WHEREAS, in connection with the Genesis Solar Energy Project located outside of Blythe, California, approximately 3,000 sacred objects were unearthed and removed from the project site, including manos, metates, and pendants, many of which were carelessly destroyed or damaged by giant earthmoving equipment; and

WHEREAS, it is the policy of DOI to require collection and curation of artifacts for data recovery purposes, including artifacts discovered during construction of utility-scale renewable energy projects; and

WHEREAS, removal of artifacts from the ground is contrary to Mohave cultural and religious practices, and the removal of artifacts erases the tribal footprint on the land, therefore causing severe cultural and spiritual harm to Indian people; and

WHEREAS, DOI's curation policy is insensitive to the history of Indian people in the United States because it promotes the mentality and practice of putting Native American cultures on display; and

WHEREAS, DOI's rigid application of regulations to artifacts unearthed during construction of utility-scale renewable energy projects is misguided due to the rigidity of NEPA federal law because it contends that every artifact should be preserved in perpetuity at museum and research facilities, an infeasible contention; and

WHEREAS, CRIT has repeatedly attempted to engage DOI to allow reburial of all unearthed artifacts near the location where they were disturbed, discovered or unearthed, and has faced resistance on the part of the federal government.

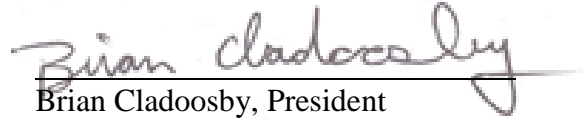
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) calls upon the Department of Interior to conduct meaningful consultation with tribes affected by DOI unearthing artifacts from energy development on tribal lands; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that DOI must allow affected Indian tribes to rebury unearthed artifacts near the location where they were disturbed, discovered or unearthed during the construction of renewable energy projects and other developments on public lands; and

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

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2015 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Town and Country Resort, San Diego, CA, October 18-23, 2015, with a quorum present.


Brian Cladoosby, President**ATTEST:**
Aaron Payment, Recording Secretary