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**PUEBLO OF ACOMA**  
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June 12, 2006

Mr. John L. Nau, III, Chairman  
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation  
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Suite 809  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Chairman Nau:

The Pueblo of Acoma is hereby responding to your letter dated March 10, 2006 in regards to the Draft Policy Statement Regarding Treatment of Burial Sites, Human Remains and Funerary Objects. Our NAGPRA Coordinator Ms. Roni Polk has reviewed the Draft Policy Statement prepared by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) Archeology Task Force and has provided recommendations to the Pueblo of Acoma. Based on her recommendations, I am forwarding to you comments from the Pueblo of Acoma.

In the Preamble it is stated, "this policy applies to treatment of all burial sites, human remains, and funerary objects in the context of compliance with Section 106." **This implies the policy applies to all ethnic groups in addition to federally recognized tribes.**

Principle 5: "When human remains or funerary objects must be disinterred, they should be removed carefully, respectfully and in a manner developed in consultation." **These objects should be adequately conserved and stored. No analyses will be performed on them during this time.**

Principle 6: "In reaching a decision, the Federal agency official must comply with applicable Federal, State, or local law." **Officials must also comply with tribal law.** Define exactly what is meant by "appropriate documentation. Is this documentation only written documentation or does it also include traditional oral means of conveying pertinent information?"

Principle 8: "Federal agencies should proceed following a hierarchy that acknowledges the rights of lineal descendants, Indian tribes, Native Hawai'ian Organizations and other descendant communities." Define exactly which other descendant communities these are. Will this be ethnically determined and in what manner? What will happen if more than one ethnic group

claims cultural affiliation depending on different criteria? For example, Caucasian human remains found among Native American human remains. What about African-Americans or Chinese Americans human remains and funerary objects?

The Pueblo of Acoma offers the following comments on the attachment mailed to our tribal office on September 9, 2005.

Under “SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: **II. Explanatory Notes on the Draft Policy Goals of Policy Statement** – this policy offers leadership in resolving how to treat burial sites, human remains, and funerary objects in a respectful and sensitive manner *while acknowledging the public interest in the past.*” Define what the public interest in the past entails? Intrusive analyses or display of human remains, funerary objects, and religious or traditional objects is objectionable to the Pueblo of Acoma.

“Under this policy, treatment options may range from immediate repatriation or reburial upon removal from the ground to *detailed scientific study*. This policy does not endorse any specific treatment, and *does not take a position against scientific study of human remains, when it is determined to be appropriate after consultation and consideration of other legal authorities that may prescribe a specific outcome.*” Pueblo of Acoma does take a position against scientific study of human remains under any circumstances. Define who other legal authorities are.

“Consulting under Section 106 *should discuss and define what constitutes dignity and respect.*” Have previous comments from tribal officials defined what “dignity and respect” means to them? What were their comments on this issue?

**Principle 3: “Federal agencies are responsible for early and meaningful consultation throughout the Section 106 process.** Consulting parties include...*individuals and organizations with a demonstrated interest in the undertaking due to the nature of their legal or economic relation to the undertaking.*” What is the timeline for early consultation? Define legal or economic relation. Specifically, why is economic relation important to Section 106 as written in the law?

Principle 5: “When human remains or funerary objects must be disinterred, they should be removed carefully, respectfully and in a manner developed in consultation. **Questions to be addressed in the consultation process may include but not be limited to:** *What kinds of ceremonies (if any) should be performed? What kinds of field analyses, if any, should be performed? Should the remains be photographed in situ? Should the remains be cleaned?*”

In previous consultations regarding these questions, the Pueblo of Acoma has rejected each of these options. Our ceremonies are not described to people outside our tribe. Field analyses, photographs, and cleaning are disrespectful to the people whose remains are being disinterred. Any writing, such as catalog numbers, should not be put onto human remains or funerary objects.

Please copy and forward any future correspondence to Ms. Polk, NAGPRA Coordinator at the Acoma Historic Preservation Office. For your information, Ms. Polk and Dr. Julia King are already acquainted through the Society for Historical Archaeology.

The Acoma Historic Preservation Office appreciates your notification to us and hope that you will continue to keep us apprised of future consultations on the ACHP policies affecting federally recognized Indian Tribes.

If you should have any questions or require additional information, please contact Ms. Polk, NAGPRA Coordinator at (505) 552-6604, extension 270.

Sincerely,

**PUEBLO OF ACOMA**

  
Jason Johnson  
Governor

cc: Roni Polk, NAGPRA Coordinator  
ATO Files