



Preserving America's Heritage

ACHP PLAN TO SUPPORT THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

On December 16, 2010, at the second White House Tribal Nations Conference, President Obama announced the United States' support for the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Declaration). However, the Administration does not see support for the Declaration as an end in itself. In President Obama's words, "[w]hat matters far more than words—what matters far more than any resolution or declaration—are actions to match those words." Accordingly, the Administration is looking to the principles embodied in the Declaration to meaningfully address the challenges Indian tribes face.

The President's call to action is an opportunity to explore ways to more directly support the principles in the Declaration. It is also an opportunity to promote better stewardship and protection of Native historic properties and sacred places and, thus, ensure the survival of indigenous cultures.

While the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's (ACHP) work already largely supports the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, additional and deliberate actions will be taken to more overtly support the Declaration. The Section 106 review process provides Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations (NHOs) with a very important opportunity to influence federal decision making when properties of religious and cultural significance may be threatened by proposed federal actions. While federal agencies are required to consult with Indian tribes and NHOs and to take their comments into account in making decisions in the Section 106 review process, adding the principles of the Declaration to that consideration may assist federal agencies in making decisions that result in the protection of historic properties of religious and cultural significance to Indian tribes and NHOs.

Raise Awareness. One of the most important contributions the ACHP can make is to raise awareness about the Declaration in the historic preservation community. As the only independent historic preservation agency of the U.S. government, the ACHP can use its voice to raise awareness about the indigenous rights the Declaration seeks to protect in the area of cultural preservation. Doing so could lead to the preservation community including the Declaration in its own work and activities. Therefore, the ACHP will:

1. Add information about the Declaration to the ACHP's Web site. Links to related information such as the State Department page about the Declaration could be included.
2. Integrate information about the Declaration in presentations, training courses, technical publications, and speeches, where appropriate.
3. Send the Declaration and explanatory material to Federal Preservation Officers, State Historic Preservation Officers, Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, NHOs, and preservation organizations.

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

1100 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 803 • Washington, DC 20004
Phone: 202-606-8503 • Fax: 202-606-8647 • achp@achp.gov • www.achp.gov

4. Compile and distribute official Administration statements about the Declaration to the other members of the indigenous-focused interagency working groups to which the ACHP belongs. The ACHP, as a member of these groups, will also advocate for attention to the Declaration in the work of these interagency initiatives.

5. Raise the level of understanding for new ACHP members and staff about the Declaration through briefings and written materials.

6. Develop guidance regarding how the Declaration intersects with the Section 106 process with an emphasis on the treatment of pre-contact period archaeological resources. The ACHP will also reach out to the archaeological community through its member Archaeology Subcommittee to share information about the Declaration and how it intersects with the conduct of archaeology in the United States.

Incorporate the principles and aspirations of the Declaration into ACHP initiatives and programs. The ACHP will integrate the principles and aspirations of the Declaration into its work regarding tribal and Native Hawaiian historic preservation issues.

1. The ACHP's Native American Traditional Cultural Landscapes Action Plan would greatly benefit from the integration of the Declaration in the products and outcomes required under the plan. The preservation of these large-scale historic properties of religious and cultural significance to Indian tribes and NHOs is one way in which their rights to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs would be ensured as called for in the Declaration. As the ACHP carries out the Action Plan, it will include the Declaration in the development of guidance and policies regarding traditional cultural landscapes.

2. The ACHP, as a signatory to the Sacred Sites Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), will advocate for the inclusion of information about the Declaration in the training materials and other products to be developed in accordance with the MOU. Much like the ACHP's Landscapes Action Plan, the purposes and goals of the MOU are very much in accord with certain articles and the overall intent of the Declaration.

3. The ACHP will incorporate information about, and the principles within, the Declaration in future policy and program initiatives regarding the protection and preservation of historic properties of religious and cultural significance to Indian tribes and NHOs and in efforts to improve federal agency Section 106 consultation with Indian tribes and NHOs.

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