



## OFFICE OF NAVAJO NATION HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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### **NNHRC Pleased With the Addition of Mount Taylor to New Mexico State Register**

**Santa Fe, N.M.** – The Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission was thrilled when the Cultural Properties Review Committee (CPRC) accepted the nomination of Mount Taylor to the New Mexico State Register of Historic Properties as a Traditional Cultural Property (TCP), at the New Mexico State Capitol, House Chambers, in Santa Fe, N.M., today.

NNHRC Chairperson Duane H. Yazzie was thankful for the decision.

“The decision demonstrates that this prestigious committee of the New Mexico State Legislature is judicious in its deliberations,” Yazzie said. “The pleas of the five tribes for the protection of the spirit and sanctity of the mountain has been heard and respected.”

The CPRC invited public comment on the possible designation of Mt. Taylor as a TCP at the State Capitol on May 15, where Mr. Yazzie, on behalf of the NNHRC, presented the CPRC with a prepared statement expressing the NNHRC’s support for the nomination of Mount Taylor to the State Register of Cultural Properties.

“A positive consideration by the committee of the Mount Taylor TCP designation will be a significant contribution to the continuum of life on this earth, as it will be consistent with the original intent,” Yazzie said.

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Mount Taylor, known to the Diné as Tsoo Dził, is one of four mountains held sacred by the Diné and has many concerned for its protection from commercial interests such as uranium ore mining and economic development.

The Navajo Nation was one of five tribes submitting statements to the CPRC, explaining the cultural and historical significance of Mount Taylor.

The Navajo Nation written statement cites Mount Taylor is the home of many Holy People (deities) who control forces of nature and is a place where humans with proper ceremonial training can visit to enlist the help of these deities. It is a storehouse where humans with proper ceremonial training can collect plants, animals, minerals, and soil for traditional food, medicine, and ceremonial bundles.

The NNHRC has advocated for Diné and Indigenous Peoples rights in international forums with the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of American States (OAS) and looks to standards of international law, in addition to Diné principles, to preserve indigenous human rights.

Within the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, article 26, section 3 cites that States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories and resources. Such recognition shall be conducted with due respect to the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous peoples concerned.

As a member of the OAS since its inception in 1948, the United States (U.S.) has adopted the OAS Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, where in the preamble it states since culture is the highest social and historical expression of that spiritual development, it is the duty of man to preserve, practice and foster culture by every means within his power.

The NNHRC acknowledges the tremendous strides the U.S. is taking in advancing the recognition of indigenous people's human rights at an international level; however, the NNHRC believes the U.S. needs to filter that same recognition of human rights through the states and local governments for the advancement of local indigenous nations and tribes.

Recently, the US voted in a unanimous decision to revoke the 1962 OAS suspension of Cuba, thereby supporting what's stated in the charter of the

OAS which states the spiritual unit of the continent is based on respect for the cultural values of the American countries and requires their close cooperation for the high purposes of civilization and that all human beings, without distinction as to race, sex, nationality, creed, or social condition, have a right to material well-being and to their spiritual development, under circumstances of liberty, dignity, equality of opportunity, and economic security.

Mount Taylor is in part, at the core of Dine religious beliefs, culture, ceremonies and traditions and has always been of paramount importance to the Dine way of life. The NNHRC expects to help gain the recognition that will lead to the protection of Mount Taylor from undesired development and/or abuse.

The OAS Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a pending document yet to be completed, ratified and implemented by American states, however, currently cites in article 25 that States, in conjunction and concurrence with indigenous peoples, shall adopt the necessary measures to protect sacred sites and to aggressively defend and protect those sites against all other interests, whether political, economic or recreational. States shall accord spiritual beliefs and sacred sites the same respect and protection shown any other citizens' beliefs and religions in those states.

Both the UN declaration and OAS declaration are significant in that they provide a framework for achieving reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

The NNHRC is elated with the permanent listing of Mount Taylor on the State Register and will continue to advocate for Dine sacred sites.

For more information about the NNHRC visit their website at [www.nnhrc.navajo.org](http://www.nnhrc.navajo.org) or call (928) 871-7436.

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