

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **LARGE LAND BASED TRIBES SUPPORT ADOPTION OF DECLARATION BY UNITED NATIONS**

During a meeting on October 24, 2006, the Council of Large Land Based Tribes passed a resolution by consensus supporting the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and requesting the United Nations to adopt the same.

Navajo Nation Council Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan (Iyanbito/Pinedale) presented the resolution for consideration along with Legislative Branch chief of staff Leonard Gorman and Hogback Council delegate Ervin Keeswood.

Present at the meeting were representatives from several tribes, including the Crow Tribe, the Blackfeet Tribe, Northern Arapaho and Rocky Mountain.

Speaker Morgan, who is the vice president of CLLBT, said that the Navajo Nation has been advocating for the passage of a strong Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for more than a decade and that the Declaration was passed by the Human Rights Council of the United Nations in June 2006.

Gorman further explained the history of how the United Nations declared an International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples in 1994 with the intent of adopting a declaration on their rights by the end of the decade. The working group of the Commission on Human Rights held 11 sessions between 1995 and 2006, during which the Navajo Nation participated.

Keeswood was present during the CLLBT meeting because he and Rock Point Council delegate Rex Lee Jim took the lead within the Navajo Nation in advocating on behalf of indigenous peoples for the passage of the declaration.

The draft as passed by the 47-member Human Rights Council includes 23 preambular paragraphs and 46 articles outlining the rights of indigenous peoples. It was passed by a vote of 30 in favor, 2 against, 12 abstaining and 3 not voting. The United States is not part of the Human Rights Council.

“It’s very important for us to encourage the United States to *not* vote against the document,” Gorman said. He noted that the General Assembly is currently in session and it is possible the document may come up for consideration very soon.

Speaker Morgan further emphasized to the members present that it is very important that they continue to educate others on the declaration.

Some members remarked that they had heard about how the Navajo Nation was taking the lead among the indigenous peoples of the world in advocating for the document. The document is especially important to CLLBT members because it speaks to issues with land, territories and resources in particular.

During the October 25<sup>th</sup> meeting, members of CLLBT also discussed the proposed “Indian Trust Reform Act of 2006,” Section 1813 Rights of Way Study of the 2005 Energy Policy Act, the 2006 Health Care Improvement Act and problems with funding that could be arising for larger tribes concerning Bureau of Indian Affairs roads.

CLLBT members are concerned with many national issues because their issues differ from the issues of tribes with smaller land bases. According to its website, “The Council is an organization of sovereign Indian Tribes and Nations formed to advocate for the needs of the Tribal Nations with a large land base (over 100,000 acres) and population.”