



NATHPO

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TRIBAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICERS

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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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NATHPO SUPPORTS INTERIOR DEPARTMENT'S EFFORTS TO STOP ILLEGAL LOOTING AND TRAFFICKING OF NATIVE AMERICAN SITES AND OBJECTS

WASHINGTON-June 11, 2009 - The National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (NATHPO) lauds the Federal government's efforts to help preserve and protect American Indian history and culture, as demonstrated by yesterday's announcement that two dozen individuals have been arrested for the illegal trafficking of American Indian objects in the four corners area of the United States. During the press conference, Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar and Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Larry Echohawk announced the crackdown on federal crimes committed on federal and tribal lands, per the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).

As stated in the Interior Department's press release, "An unprecedented two-year undercover operation led by agents from Interior's Bureau of Land Management and the FBI today began rounding up what prosecutors call a ring of archaeological grave robbers who looted pristine sites in the southwest, desecrated ancient American Indian burials and stole priceless artifacts, selling them to dealers and collectors who were associated with the network."

"Looting and trafficking is a serious threat to tribal communities as a whole," stated Reno Franklin, NATHPO chairman. "Some of our most sacred items - which were never meant to be disturbed let alone be sold - are being trafficked throughout the world for the selfish and exclusive financial gain of a few. Hopefully these arrests will alter the market for our objects and help our communities maintain a proper level of respect for our ancestors and ways of life."

Over the past four years, NATHPO has assisted Native communities preserve and protect their cultural resources by promoting the use of existing law enforcement tools and resources. In July 2006, NATHPO convened, "Protecting Tribal Cultural Resources" in Santa Fe, New Mexico, which included education and training sessions for tribal and federal government officials, as well as sessions illustrating effective partnerships of federal, tribal, and state officials. A variety of law enforcement resources may be found on the NATHPO website, link to "Law Enforcement" that includes:

- * Brochure on "How to Respond to Looting and Damage to Archaeological Sites."
- * Contact information for local federal law enforcement in those states located along the Lewis

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NATHPO is a not-for-profit membership association of tribal governments that are committed to preserving, rejuvenating, and improving the status of tribal cultures and cultural practices by supporting Native languages, arts, dances, music, oral traditions, cultural properties, tribal museums, tribal cultural centers, and tribal libraries.

& Clark National Historic Trail.

* Online database of state laws and codes for burial and archaeological site protection.

If you suspect looting or trafficking in your local community, call your local tribal police and/or call 1-800-637-9152 to connect to the Interior Department's law enforcement hotline that is headed up by the Bureau of Land Management (also includes information and dispatch for lands now managed by the National Park Service, Fish & Wildlife, and Bureau of Indian Affairs).

For a compilation of news stories on this topic, please go to the NATHPO website - <http://www.nathpo.org> - click on News Archives, "NAGPRA."

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Because this is an electronic version of the press release, here are the links for the news stories (to be posted on NATHPO website):

Federal Agents Bust Ring of Antiquity Thieves Looting American Indian Sites for Priceless Treasures

Department of the Interior Press Release (6/10/09)

http://www.doi.gov/news/09_News_Releases/061009a.html

23 People Are Arrested or Sought in the Looting of Indian Artifacts (6/11/09)

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/11/us/11utah.html?_r=1

Looters move artifacts and destroy their value (6/11/09)

http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_12565349

Artifact thefts targeted by federal officials (6/10/09)

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/705309695/Artifact-thefts-targeted-by-federal-officials.html>

24 charged in crackdown on Native American artifact looting (6/11/09)

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-artifacts11-2009jun11,0,7158558.story>

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