

# PRESS RELEASE

## ORGANIZATION CONTACT

Valerie J. Grussing, Ph.D.  
NATHPO, Executive Director  
Valerie@nathpo.org  
202-628-8476

## PRESS CONTACT

Julie T. Nelson  
Julie@nathpo.org  
919-602-8157



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
OF TRIBAL HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION OFFICERS

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

### **NATHPO Announces Suzan Shown Harjo (Cheyenne & Hodulgee Muscogee) will Keynote the First Annual Sacred Sites Summit**

Washington, D.C., September 20, 2021 – National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (NATHPO), a national non-profit 501(c)(3) membership organization, founded in 1998, of tribal preservation leaders protecting culturally important places that perpetuate Native identity, resilience, and cultural endurance, **is delighted to announce Suzan Shown Harjo (Cheyenne & Hodulgee Muscogee) will keynote its First Annual NATHPO Sacred Sites Summit – Virtual Event** to be held September 22 & 23, 2021.

NATHPO is committed to providing solutions-focused programming in support of Tribal historic preservation. With the unique opportunities being opened by the current social and political climate for Indigenous Peoples, the organization recognized the need to offer a space for Native voices, legislators, agency leadership and staff, and industry to come together in understanding the current legal and policy framework and ways to strengthen protection of Tribal sacred sites. The Sacred Sites Summit is the result. Lending her esteemed voice to the summit, **Suzan Shown Harjo will be offering comments on “What Must Be: Indigenous Peoples’ Rights to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent & Religious Freedom”** to help establish the foundation for real progress on sacred site protection.

“Suzan Shown Harjo is an incredible voice and advocate for Native Peoples, says Dr. Valerie Grussing, NATHPO Executive Director, “Her body of work is profound, and we are deeply honored and humbled that she has agreed to be a part of this historic Sacred Sites summit.”

**About Suzan Shown Harjo** – Suzan Shown Harjo (Cheyenne & Hodulgee Muscogee) is a writer, curator and policy advocate, who has developed landmark laws and led myriad campaigns for Native and Indigenous Peoples’ rights; to protect cultural, historic and sacred places; and to recover over one million acres of land.

Born in El Reno, Oklahoma in Cheyenne Treaty territory, Ms. Harjo was raised by grandparents there and on Muscogee farmland between Okmulgee and Beggs on Muscogee (Creek) Nation Treaty land, and by her aunt and uncle in Oklahoma City, as well as by her military parents in Oahu, Hawaii and Napoli, Italia; as an adult, she has lived in New York City, Santa Fe and Washington, DC. A grandmother and a Cheyenne citizen of the Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes, her Tsistsistas (Cheyenne) name is Vooheheva’e, Morning Star Woman; and she is Wind Clan, Nuyakv Ground, and her Mvskoke name is Fuswv Cv’mpé, Sweet Bird.

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In **awarding her a 2014 Presidential Medal of Freedom**, the United States' highest civilian honor, **President Barack Obama said she has “fought all her life for human, civil, and treaty rights of Native peoples...her tireless efforts have protected Native culture, returned Native lands, and improved Native lives. With bold resolve, Suzan Shown Harjo pushes us to always seek justice in our time.”** Calling her “one of the most effective advocates for Native American rights,” the President said, “through her work in government and as the head of the National Congress of American Indians and the Morning Star Institute, she has helped preserve a million acres of Indian lands, helped develop laws preserving tribal sovereignty. She has repatriated sacred cultural items to tribes, while expanding museums that celebrate Native life. Because of Suzan, more young Native Americans are growing up with pride in their heritage, and with faith in their future. **And she has taught all of us that Native values make America stronger.”**

**About the Sacred Sites Summit** – The virtual Sacred Sites Summit agenda is comprised of two days, each with multiple sessions progressing through four aspects of protecting sacred sites. First, connecting to place through virtual experiences with the land and those who hold it sacred. Second, what is the state of current sacred sites protection in the U.S.? What is the existing legal and policy framework and what are the gaps from the Tribal perspective? Third, what should be in place to close the gaps? What solutions would truly address the issues and protect the places that define us? Fourth, action by defining recommendations and deliberate, measurable steps forward for preservation and reconciliation.

**For more information about the First Annual NATHPO Sacred Sites Summit** – Those interested in more information about NATHPO can visit the website at <https://www.nathpo.org/>. For more information on the First Annual NATHPO Sacred Sites Summit, including how to register and sponsorship opportunities, go to the summit registration page at <https://www.nathpo.org/sacred-sites-summit/>.

***Who we are** – NATHPO is a 501(c)(3) non-profit membership association of tribal preservation leaders protecting culturally important places that perpetuate Native identity, resilience, and cultural endurance. Connections to cultural heritage sustain the health and vitality of Native peoples. We provide guidance to preservation officials, elected representatives, and the public about national historic preservation legislation, policies, and regulations. We promote tribal sovereignty, develop partnerships, and advocate for Tribes in governmental activities on preservation issues. For more information visit our website at [www.nathpo.org](http://www.nathpo.org).*

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