

## STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NATIVE AMERICAN CHURCHES CONCERNING THE PROLIFERATION OF ORGANIZATIONS APPROPRIATING THE “NATIVE AMERICAN CHURCH” NAME WITH NO TIES TO THE INDIGENOUS WORSHIP OF THE HOLY SACRAMENT PEYOTE

There is a growing trend in the United States, of organizations adopting the name “Native American Church” as a means of trying to obtain the protection of federal law which was established by the government to recognize and protect the legitimate indigenous religions that have prospered on the North American continent since long before European settlers arrived.

In the case of the Peyote Religion, archaeological and ethnographic evidence demonstrates its presence in North America for more than 10,000 years. However, organizations and individuals claiming protection under the umbrella of these organizations want to capitalize on this ancient practice despite having no connection to it whatsoever.

Some of these illegitimate organizations, comprised of non-Native people, are now claiming that marijuana, ayahuasca and other substances are part of Native American Church theology and practice. Nothing could be further from the truth. We, the National Council of Native American Churches are now stepping forward to advise the public that we do not condone the activities of these illegitimate organizations.

The National Council of Native American Churches consists of legitimate, indigenous member organizations that include the Native American Church of North America, the Azzee’ Bee Nahaga of Dine Nation, the Native American Church of the State of Oklahoma the Native American Church of the State of South Dakota, and invited Leaders of the Consejo Regional Wixarika of Mexico. We member organizations of the National Council speak for all of our chapters and the individual members of the chapters on this matter of national importance.

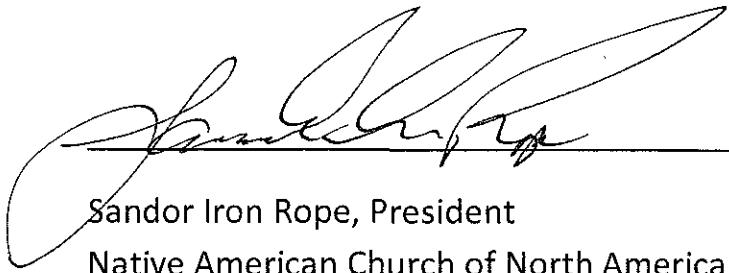
Federal laws protecting legitimate, indigenous Native American Churches have a long and purposeful history. Back in our history, there was a time when our spiritual beliefs were outlawed. People were jailed, put in insane asylums and killed for participating in the Sun Dance and other ceremonies. This, too, includes taking peyote as our sacrament. Federal laws enacted first in the late 1970s were intended to protect our right to practice our religion. We oppose the attempts of non-Natives to come in and misuse government protection of traditional Native American religion to conduct illegal activity that has nothing to do with our traditional ways.

We do not recognize, condone, or allow the use of marijuana, or any other substance other than peyote, in any of our religious services. To the contrary, the only plant that serves as a sacrament is peyote, and without peyote, our ceremonies cannot take place. We reject and condemn any claim by these illegitimate organizations that marijuana or any other plant serves or has ever served as a sacrament in addition to peyote in indigenous Native American Church ceremonies.


To the extent that the claims of any of these organizations rest on allegations or inferences of an affiliation with traditional Native American Church organizations or with any legitimate chapter of the Native American Church, such claims should be rejected. The mere use of the term Native American Church does not entitle any of these illicit organizations to any legal protection under federal law.

We know who we are, and we know where we come from. We know the atrocities visited upon us. We reject the attempts to grasp onto our indigenous ways and deceive the public by claiming them as their own for their own personal enjoyment or for profit.

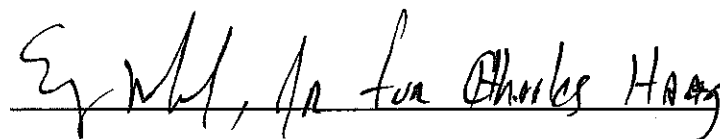
DATED this 13<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2016

  
Sandor Iron Rope, President  
Native American Church of North America

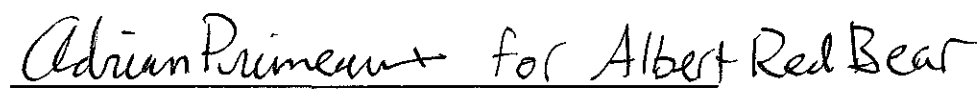
DATED this 13<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2016

  
Steven Benally, President  
Azsee' Bee Nahaga of Dine Nation

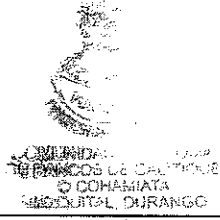
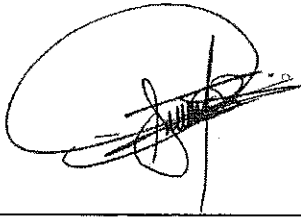
DATED this 13<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2016

  
Charles Haag, President  
Native American Church of the State of Oklahoma

DATED this 13<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2016

  
Albert Red Bear, Jr., President  
Native American Church of the State of South Dakota Native

DATED this 13<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2016



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Santos De La Cruz Carrillo,  
Consejo Regional Wixarika Mexico