

Sealaska Heritage Institute

Protection of Sacred and Historical Sites, Human Remains and Cultural Property Policy

The Tlingit Peoples have owned and occupied Tlingit Aaní or what is now known as Southeast Alaska since time immemorial. The Haida Indians migrated from Canada to Alaska in the late 16th to early 17th centuries and the Tsimshian arrived in the late 1800s. The Southeast Alaska Indians have a special relationship to our lands and wildlife. We also recognize that our lands, wildlife, and cultural objects are endowed with spiritual dimensions. We fiercely guard and protect our cultural and intellectual property. We also maintain a special relationship to our ancestors including their human remains and internment sites.

Federal legislation, including the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, the American Indian Freedom of Religion Act among other laws and policies, recognize and seek to protect the cultural and religious values of Native Americans. The federal government also requires consultation with Native American tribes including Native Corporations that were organized under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. The State of Alaska's Historic Preservation Act acknowledges the cultural rights of its aboriginal population.

The Sealaska Heritage Institute acts on cultural and educational issues on behalf of Sealaska Corporation, a federally-recognized tribe for purposes of the above referenced legislation. In recognition of our spiritual relationship to our land and ancestors, cultural values and our special relationship with the federal government and legislative protections, SHI adopts the following standards and stipulations to guide the use of our sacred, cultural and historical sites:

1. The Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian have a special relationship to sacred, cultural and burial sites which have spiritual dimensions that must be protected. These sites must remain free from public access.
2. The Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian have special relationships to our ancestors and their human remains found within in Southeast Alaska

which must be protected and remain undisturbed in their original internment site.

3. Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian cultural values and traditional property laws require that cultural objects found within our homeland must be returned to the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian Peoples.
4. Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian Peoples shall have the opportunity to participate and share in economic opportunities associated with proposed development projects.
5. Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian Peoples including future generations shall have continued access to all areas within our aboriginal homeland to pursue our traditional activities and ceremonies.
6. Appropriate Tlingit, Haida or Tsimshian names shall be adopted and a plaque or monument shall be placed at all sites, which may be developed or used for new activities, to acknowledge the occupation and use by the ancestors of Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian Peoples.
8. Projects involving archaeological work shall include a Native archaeologist, student or intern.
9. Southeast Alaska communities and tribes should enact and implement Cultural and Historical Ordinances and Plans that incorporate the protection of sacred and historical sites, cultural property and intellectual knowledge of the aboriginal population.
10. The Sealaska Heritage Institute shall insist on full compliance with federal legislation designed to protect the cultural and religious rights of Native Americans.

Adopted this 16th day of January, 2004.

Dr. Soboleff, Chair
Sealaska Heritage Institute