

# Native American

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## RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

**Required Daily Observances.** A devout practitioner may desire to pray by holding his personal pipe. Lighting and smoking the pipe are ordinarily not permitted in housing units – these are limited to the Chapel or outdoor worship area. The practice of smudging with smoke, used for ritual cleansing or purification, is also not permitted in the housing units; it is limited to the chapel or outdoor worship area.

**Required Weekly Observances.** Sweat lodge ceremonies are generally conducted weekly in a correctional setting. If the Native American population is large, two separate ceremonies may be conducted weekly to accommodate all participants. Talking circles, other educational opportunities, or ceremonial song/drum practices are allowed weekly as time and space permit.

While Native Americans of some tribes or bands in the community may be nude when they participate in the ceremony, nudity is NEVER authorized in the correctional setting. Inmates and visitors participating in sweat ceremonies are required to wear appropriate outerwear – sweatpants or shorts. Local policy should clearly delineate the modesty and security requirements.

When institution counts are necessary during the sweat, participants should be respectfully notified by the staff member responsible for supervising the ceremony. The participants may be given a few moments to finish the round and open the door for the count. At that point participants will exit the lodge for the count. Staff should not cross the area between the fire and the lodge but should walk around the fire or behind the lodge when a ceremony is in progress.

### Required Occasional Observances

- Annual Spiritual Gathering (Pow-wow). Depending on the security level of the institution, the Pow-wow may include visitors from the inmates' official visiting lists. If visitors are allowed to participate, the Pow-wow will ordinarily be held in the Visiting Room.
- Depending on local tribal traditions, seasonal equinoxes and solstices are observed, usually at the next scheduled sweat lodge ceremony.

### Religious Holy Days

**American Indian Days, September 24-25.** These holy days, established by the Federal Government, are days free from work. Since there are so many different tribes, and

each tribe observes holy days that have religious significance for its members, it is difficult to find common ground in establishing holy days.

Some tribes, for example, often ask to memorialize the “trail of tears” in late December or the Battle at Little Big Horn, June 25. To encourage specific needs in the institution, it is recommended that opportunities to sweat in mourning may be accommodated. However, these should not be days of work proscription.

Because of the wide variety of tribal beliefs in the inmate population, it is difficult to be more specific. As requests are made of the chaplains, they are encouraged to contact the Regional Chaplaincy Administrator for further assistance.

## **RELIGIOUS ITEMS**

### **Personal Religious Items**

- Medicine bag (worn around neck).
- Spiritual bundle containing:
  - ▶ Prayer pipe.
  - ▶ Feather.
  - ▶ Small amounts of sacred herbs (identified locally).
  - ▶ Small stones.
  - ▶ Seashell.
- Beaded necklace.
- Religious medallion and chain.
- Ribbon shirts.
- Headbands.
- Medicine wheel.

**Security note:** Ribbon shirts and beaded necklaces may be worn during Pow-wows only.

### **Security note: Medicine bag inspection**

- A staff member may direct an inmate to open a medicine bag for visual inspection.
- Ordinarily, the bag and contents will not be handled by staff.
- If questions arise, the chaplain should be contacted.

## Congregate Religious Items

- Sweat lodge, fire pit, and altar in the outside worship area.
- Set of antlers.
- Ceremonial pipe.
- Ceremonial drum.
- Water drum.
- Flute.
- Eagle bone whistle.
- Herbs – typically sage, cedar, sweet grass, and corn pollen, or additional local variations.
  - Animal skull, usually buffalo or bear.
  - Tobacco or Kinnikinnick.
  - Ceremonial staff.

**Security note: Tobacco and Kinnikinnick and Designated Areas for Religious Use of Tobacco.** Institutions are smoke-free. Tobacco used for tobacco ties or pipe ceremonies will need to be closely regulated by the Chaplaincy Services Department to ensure that it is used for religious reasons only.

Rituals involving tobacco may only be accommodated in areas specifically designated by the Warden. Only the amount of tobacco necessary to meet the obligations of the ritual should be issued.

**Searches.** A medicine bundle is sacred; the preservation of its spiritual value can be ensured only if it is handled by its owner or by the person entrusted with its care.

Any required examination of such bundles or objects, or any religious or spiritual articles, shall normally be done by having the owner display them for visual inspection by the officer. Where owner display is not feasible, the chaplain should be called to inspect or manipulate the contents for inspection. Religious articles are not to be mishandled, thrown, placed on the floor, brought into the bathroom, or placed on the toilet or basin.

**Visits by Native American Spiritual Leaders.** Native American spiritual leaders should receive the same courtesy and access to inmates afforded to ordained clergy. When Native American spiritual leaders visit the institution, they will generally have a number of sacred religious items with them, such as a medicine bundle, small drum, or antlers. These should ordinarily not be handled by staff. The sanctity of the religious articles is honored in the same way one honors sacred objects in any house of worship. It is

recommended they be visually inspected. Botanicals may be tested. To expedite entrance procedures, chaplains are encouraged to request in writing approval from the captain to allow the chaplain to visually inspect sacred items. Advance notice of inspection procedures will be given to the spiritual leader.

**Security note: Inspection of sacred bundle of medicine man or elder.** Chaplains are encouraged to request approval from the captain ahead of time for the chaplain to visually inspect sacred items carried by an elder in the front lobby of the institution. Security concerns will dictate whether the items need to be x-rayed.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP**

**Requirements.** Requirements for membership vary greatly with each tribe. Local religious authorities or tribal elders should be consulted.

**Total Membership.** Unknown.

## **MEDICAL PROHIBITIONS**

None. Occasionally an inmate may request a visit from a medicine man asking for prayer, healing, or counsel in a medical crisis.

## **DIETARY STANDARDS**

None. Occasionally an individual may desire to fast for a specific purpose. If the spiritual fast continues for an extended period, the chaplain should be consulted. Since these are private fasts, no special meal accommodations need to be made.

## **BURIAL RITUALS**

Local practices vary widely. Local authorities should be consulted.

Mourning the death of a relative or friend is often an issue in the institution. Again, local practices vary, but some common practices are: cutting the hair (sometimes sending it home), fasting, smudging, displaying ashes on the face, and wearing black headwear exclusively. Mourning may last up to a year.

If the hair is cut, it should not remain in the inmate's possession in the housing unit. Hair is a serious security concern. It may be immediately mailed home or retained in the Chapel until the next sweat lodge ceremony, where it will be burned.

## **SACRED WRITINGS**

Few sacred writings exist. Usually religious traditions are passed on orally through stories, songs, and ceremonies.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

**Location of Headquarters.** Each tribe has its own tribal council. For Federally recognized tribes, the Bureau of Indian Affairs has a complete listing on its website.

## **HISTORY**

The generally held belief concerning the origin of Native American people is that they migrated from northeast Asia to the Americas over a long period. The regions in which they settled determined, to a large degree, whether tribes became primarily hunters or developed horticultural societies. Since almost nothing was written down, much speculation remains concerning the origins of the different tribes. There are 556 different tribes currently recognized by the Federal Government, and many others that have not received official recognition.

The religious beliefs of Native Americans were expressed in many ways. Due to the diversity of the Native American tribes, a concise belief system cannot be developed. Religious beliefs are almost exclusively transmitted from elder to elder as an oral tradition rather than in writing. Some common ideas: The religions tend to be closely related to nature and the natural world. The natural world is imbued with supernatural meaning, and natural objects have living spirits. Ceremonial rituals ensure that communal and individual prosperity continues.

When Europeans settled in America, much Native American religious practice was prohibited, and Christianity was offered as an alternative, often by force. It was not until the American Religious Freedom Joint Resolution, enacted on August 11, 1978, that Native American beliefs were protected by law.

A blending took place between Christianity and some Native belief systems. The Native American Church is an example of this blending; it has incorporated elements of both Christian and Native American beliefs. The separation of religion and culture was also introduced, a division unknown in Native spirituality. Since many New Age movements are nature-based, Native American beliefs have been incorporated in those spiritual expressions.

# THEOLOGY

**Introduction.** Native American cultures are, by nature, organic and dynamic. Identity and pride are rooted in established spiritual traditions and principles. There is no clear distinction between spiritual and cultural life. Spirituality is practiced 24 hours of every day. Native Americans do not have celebrations, they have ceremonies that are the primary vehicles of religious expression. A ceremonial leader or elder ensures the authenticity of the observances. Teachings are passed on orally by recognized elders who lead the ceremonies according to their personal experience. A direct experience of the Creator is sought during individual and group rituals. Native Americans experience spirituality through symbols, while most European Americans use symbols to express spirituality. Symbols and sacred objects are fundamental realities for Native Americans.

Dr. George Tinker, faculty member at the Iliff School of Theology in Aurora, Colorado, writes:

“The particular gift of Native American peoples is an immediate awareness and experience of the sacredness and interdependence of all Creation. Native American cultures are rooted in the Earth which has always been the foundation of Indian religious experience. Native Americans still experience the world as sacred and still sense their own interrelatedness with all in the world. This is their Native spirituality. Native People still believe that their spiritual insights may contribute much to the understanding, theologies, health and well-being of others in the world.

Native American peoples already know about God as the Creator and all of Creation as sacred and good, which can generate a genuinely healing and life-giving response. Moreover, from a Native American perspective, the affirmation of God's act of Creation and the sacredness of all that has been created necessarily results in relationships marked first of all by justice and ultimately in relationships of harmony and balance that are a true experience of peace.

The Indian understanding of a universal harmony is well known. Indians understand themselves as part of Nature and neither apart from it nor somehow possessing over it a special privilege to use it. The harmony with Nature is the beginning of all Native American spirituality. Hence, life as a gift is more than just my life or even human life in general, but every rock and every tree and every stream is part of life and has life itself. And all these things participate, along with human beings, in a spiritual harmony.

Perhaps the most precious gift that Native Americans have to share with other

peoples is our perspective on the interrelatedness of all of creation and our deep sense of relationship to the land in particular. We are all relatives: from buffaloes and eagles to trees and rocks, mountains and lakes.

Just as there is no category of the inanimate, there can be no conception of anything in the created world that does not share in the sacredness infused in God's act of creation.”

**Creator.** While spiritual reality and power are to be found in all nature, Native Americans nevertheless believe in a Supreme Being, often referred to as the Great Spirit, Great Mystery, Creator, etc. This Supreme Being is seen as always caring and willing to listen.

**Nature.** Native Americans possess a deep and abiding respect for all things in nature: animal, plant, and mineral life. Hence, it is necessary to conduct ceremonies outdoors or directly in contact with the earth. Since all nature shares the same life, all nature is related.

**Reverence.** The pipe and eagle feather are highly revered by Indians and should ordinarily be handled in the prison setting only by the inmate pipe holder, a spiritual leader, or a designated prison official. Respect for these items is inherent for a Native American. He/she believes that the sacred must not be mocked or misused because this blasphemes life itself. Items that Native Americans associate with their spirituality should be approached with sensitivity by prison staff.

**Spiritual/Cultural.** Native American cultural and spiritual beliefs and practices are inseparable. Thus, such practices as the wearing of long hair, headbands, and certain items of traditional clothing and the practice of certain arts (e.g., beadwork and leathercraft) are as much statements of spirituality as they are expressions of culture. In time of mourning, a Native American may cut his/her hair and request that it be sent home or buried outside the institution. These and other spiritual practices affirm identity with a people, geography, and the Great Spirit. Ted Means, Director of Heart of the Earth Prison Program, states:

“Our whole lifestyle as a people comes from a spiritual base. All our social gatherings have a spiritual base. We must be able to come together, to have our own space, like the Sweat Lodge, which we feel is ours even in prison. We also need specific time for a pipe ceremony and other gatherings.”

**Spiritual Leadership.** Spiritual leadership varies from tribe to tribe. Sometimes leadership is elected or inherited, but more often it is the result of a personal calling or

vision combined with the exercise of wisdom and good judgment that produce respect. For the Native American, respect is the true foundation of genuine leadership, temporal and spiritual. There is no religious hierarchy whereby one is “ordained” by the group or another individual as a spiritual leader.

Native American religion is very much an individual matter. Each person is directly responsible to the Creator for his/her thoughts. Elders and spiritual leaders guide, teach, counsel, and lead ceremonies, but never dictate belief or doctrine. Spiritual leaders are ordinarily provided for Native American inmates by contractors or volunteers.

**Natural Objects.** Natural objects such as stones, shells, feathers, plants, animal bones, claws, and teeth have major roles in Indian spiritual practice because they are reminders of certain important principles or qualities. They serve as reservoirs of spiritual power. The specific objects chosen by the Native American to express his/her religion will vary according to personal tradition or vision.

Native Americans prohibit women from handling the pipe, or nearing the Sweat Lodge and other sacred objects during menstruation, because they believe that menstruation-related energy overpowers the power of the sacred object. Should these prohibitions be violated, a separate ceremony must be held to restore the power of the objects. Female staff should make every effort to respect this belief, and absent themselves from these areas during these times, unless security requires otherwise. Security, however, should not be compromised in sacred areas due to the absence of male staff.

Traditionally, many Native Americans carry, wear, and maintain the medicine bag. The medicine bag may contain such natural objects as stones, animal parts, herbs, or seeds and kernels of maize, corn, or other vegetables. Native Americans believe that each natural object possesses a spirit. As part of one's medicine bag, the spirits of these objects become part of the wearer. The medicine bag becomes the wearer's invocation to the Creator to continually be with and watch over him/her. It represents an extremely personal relationship between the Creator and the wearer; care should be taken that the spiritual significance of the medicine bag not be violated.

**Herbs.** The daily burning of sweet grass, sage, cedar, or other indigenous herbs is a widespread practice for those deeply involved in Native spirituality. Personal possession of small quantities of certain herbs by Indian inmates is usually permitted. The bitterness of the sage smoke reminds the Native American of the hard, difficult times the Creator has led them through, and the sweet grass smoke evokes the good times the Creator has given. As herbs are burned, the smoke purifies the body so nothing unclean participates in the ceremony. The sacred plants (sweet grass, sage, cedar, tobacco, and corn pollen) are used in group ceremonies. Tobacco is used as an offering and in

prayer. Sage, sweet grass, and cedar are used in cleansing, blessing, and purification. In smoking the Sacred Pipe, the herb is either tobacco or Kinnikinnick (a blend of tobacco, barks, and roots). Native Americans believe tobacco should never be wasted because it was given by the Creator for offerings. Ordinarily, ceremonial (congregate) smoking is limited to the Chapel area, sweat lodge site in the outside worship area, or another area designated by the chaplain.

**Tobacco Ties.** Tobacco ties are small colored pieces of cloth containing tobacco and symbolizing prayers. Native Americans often tie them to the lodge pole by the altar in front of the sweat lodge or carry them. They are burned during lodge ceremonies to carry prayers to the Creator and are similar to devotional items used in other faiths.

Since institutions are smoke-free environments, tobacco used for tobacco ties or pipe ceremonies will need to be closely regulated by Chaplaincy Services to ensure it is used for religious reasons only, and is issued in the amount necessary to meet the requirements of the ritual. Whenever possible, non-smoking tobacco should be used.

**The Sacred (Ceremonial) Pipe.** The Sacred Pipe is the cornerstone of the spiritual teachings of most tribes. A high degree of reverence is given the Sacred Pipe as central to traditional belief and practice. When bowl and stem are joined, the pipe should be accorded the same respect one would give the most sacred items and writings of their own faith tradition. The pipe and bowl should never be joined together without the intent to smoke it as part of the offering of prayers. Pipes are used for both private and group prayers.

The Sacred Pipe and bundle include a pipe bowl and a stem of wood, and may include other sacred objects such as feathers, ribbons, bones, teeth, fur, beads, sage, tobacco, sweet grass, Kinnikinnick, corn, and other items. They are kept in a suitable wrap such as an animal skin or cloth. Proper care of and respect for the pipe is essential. Prison staff should be made aware of the high spiritual significance of the Sacred Pipe and the reverence in which it is held. It should be visually rather than manually inspected.

The pipe may be secured in the Chapel or locked in the sweat lodge area. Native American inmates who are pipe carriers may be allowed to have a personal pipe for private prayers in their areas, although smoking is limited to the designated area of the Chapel or outdoor worship area.

If, after visual inspection, it is suspected that the pipe is used to conceal contraband, staff may confiscate it. Due to the sensitivity surrounding the Sacred Pipe, care should be taken to provide justification for any lengthy inspection or confiscation. The chaplain should be involved in all inspection procedures related to the pipe.

**Feathers.** Birds and feathers are sacred to Native Americans, but the eagle is regarded in a special way, representing power, strength, healing, and loyalty. Eagle feathers are considered sacred and cannot be purchased by Native Americans for personal possession, but can only be awarded or given by another.

Since eagles are an endangered species, feathers can be obtained only through forms *50 CFR 13 and 22* issued by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service. To receive eagle feathers, a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) registration number is required. It is against the law for inmates whose official religious preference is Native American, but who do not have a BIA registration number, to apply for, receive, and keep eagle feathers. Feathers are usually kept wrapped in a piece of leather or other suitable material.

**Security note:** Animal claws and talons hold a sacred significance for many Native Americans. However, their potential for use as weapons makes them inappropriate for possession in a correctional setting.

**Sacred Circles, Sacred Colors, and Seven Directions.** The symbol of the circle is sacred to all Indians. Native Americans rarely sit in rows as others do in religious services. Prayers are always offered and ceremonies are usually conducted in the shape of a circle, which represents the limits of the people and of the nation. More than this, the circle represents the sacred hoop of the whole world, demonstrating the unity of all creation and meaning. Entrance into and exit from the sweat lodge is made in a clockwise and counterclockwise manner.

Significant decision-making meetings are also conducted in circles called Talking Circles, where participants attempt to reach consensus through discussion and prayer. The sacred pipe is often passed during these deliberations. The four horizontal directions are significant:

- East (yellow) is usually the location of the spirit of enlightenment, guidance, and direction.
- South (black) is usually the place of the spirit of growth, particularly after winter.
- West (red) is usually the doorway one goes through when leaving this world and returning to the spirit world.
- North (white) is usually the location of the spirit of healing and reconciliation. These spirit helpers are always present and within the circle.

The circle and four directions are often brought together in what is called the medicine wheel.

In addition, three other directions have significance:

- Up, for Grandfather Sky.
- Down, for Mother Earth.
- Inward, for the individual's heart.

**Headband.** The headband for the Native American has significance, in varying degrees, in all traditions. The headband completes and symbolizes the circle for the wearer. It is believed to maintain oneness with order, conveying clear and respectful thinking. Significantly, some tribes do not wear headbands during times of war and battle because these are times of disorder. The headband may be worn everyday or on special occasions such as the Pipe, Blessing, Healing, Sweat Lodge, and other ceremonies to invoke the spirits for a good blessing. It can be blessed by a Medicine Man or spiritual advisor with prayers and songs. Generally, headbands have universal colors, each symbolizing something specific (i.e., Blue – Sky or Deity; Red – Power or Strength; Green – Mother Earth; White – Purity; Yellow – Corn Pollen Road; Black – Darkness or Infinity). Where security warrants, the inmate's name and number may be stenciled on each headband.

**Drum.** The drum is seen as the heartbeat of both the earth and the Native American Nation. It brings Native peoples together in a sacred circle and reunites all in spirit and purpose. The drum is believed to reconnect Native Americans with the earth; through it, the Native American sends forth prayers. There is one drum used for healing sweats, and a larger drum used in ceremonies.

**Rattles.** In healing ceremonies, rattles are shaken to call the spirit of life, which takes care of human beings. They are also used during the sweat lodge ceremony, when the elder invites the spirits of the four directions to come in and help the participants who are seeking a spiritual and physical cleansing to start a new life.

**Pow-wow (Spiritual Gathering).** The Pow-wow is a day of traditional dancing, speaking, and praying in word, song, and music for all that lives. The gathering of inmates (often with guests from the outside, who may be dressed in ceremonial/liturgical garb) symbolizes a renewal of unity in the spirit. A feast of traditional, familiar foods (such as fry bread, corn pemmican, and buffalo meat) is central. The spiritual advisor(s) establish the order of events. All elements in the Pow-wow constitute a prayer.

“Give-aways,” gifts often made by the inmates for the guests, may be authorized. These should be inspected prior to the ceremony. Guests are not authorized to bring “give-aways” to the ceremony for distribution. No “give-aways” may come back into the institution.

**Fasting.** Fasting is a special form of prayer guided by an elder, who provides the ceremonial setting and conditions. Fasting involves total renunciation of food and water for a period of days, determined by the one who is fasting. Health conditions must be evaluated before commencement of the fast. The chaplain should be consulted and continue as an advisor during any extended spiritual fast by a Native American inmate.

**Sacred Sweat Lodge Ceremony.** Equal to the Sacred Pipe as a cornerstone of Native American traditions is the purification ceremony of the sweat lodge. Many lodge rituals are for communal prayer; others are for personal healing. To enter the sweat lodge is to return to the womb of Mother Earth for purification, strength, guidance, and physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual healing. Rocks, wood, fire, and water are used in the process. Participants also offer their suffering and prayers for one who is sick, one who needs help, and for all of creation. Prayers are spoken, chanted, and sung for the interrelatedness of all life. There are typically four periods of prayer called “rounds” or “doors.” Each period ends with a prayer or shout as the door flap is thrown open and the cool breath of the Creator welcomes all into new life.

The lodge itself is usually a dome-shaped structure of willow or other saplings indigenous to the area, lashed together with twine or bark. The structure is then covered with a tarpaulin, blankets, or canvas to make it light-proof. As a receptacle for the rocks, a small pit is dug in the center of the lodge. The doorway may face east or west according to tribal practices of the participants.

Outside the lodge, a small earthen mound is built as a sacred altar, using dirt from the pit inside. Prayer symbols, a lodge pole, and rocks arranged in a medicine wheel are placed on the altar. Beyond the altar is the fire pit for heating the rocks. A rake and scoop are needed to carry the rocks into the lodge. Rocks are brought in at the beginning of the rounds or doors, often using antlers to move them from the scoop to the pile. Water is sprinkled on the hot rocks, producing steam and heat. Some western tribal rituals call for a dry sweat, where water is not used to create steam.

Everything about the sweat lodge is ceremonial and sacred, from the construction of the lodge, altar, and fire pit, to the use of fire and the disposal of the ashes. To preserve the sanctity of the lodge, altar, and fire pit, it is appropriate to place a soft barrier around this area.

### **Security note: Sacred Space**

- Since the sacred path from the fire pit to the lodge door must always be respected as sacred, it would be appropriate to set it off with low hedges, stone formations, plants, or other natural barriers that prevent inadvertent violations.
- Separate fences should not be constructed to create various “rooms” for other faith groups, because the concepts of space neutrality and shared space are central to effective management of the Chapel program.

The Sacred Pipe is often smoked during the second round after the purification of the first round. A “door man” or “fire keeper” brings in rocks and coordinates rounds with the sweat leader. At the end of the ceremony, participants are rinsed off with cold water from a shower, hose, or bucket. The duration of the ceremony from the **time of the lighting of the fire to the final rinse should not exceed four hours**. Sweats should ordinarily be scheduled during a time that will **accommodate the institution schedule and not necessitate out-counts**.

When counts are necessary during the sweat, participants should be respectfully notified by the supervising staff member. When appropriate, participants may be given a few moments to finish the round and open the door for the count. At that point participants exit the lodge for count. Staff should not cross the area between the fire and the lodge; walk around the fire or behind the lodge when a ceremony is in progress.

While Native Americans of some tribes or bands in the community may be nude during the ceremony, nudity is never authorized in the correctional setting. Inmates and visitors participating in sweat ceremonies are required to wear appropriate outerwear – t-shirts, sweatpants, or shorts. Local policy should clearly delineate modesty and security requirements.

Since the lodge is outdoors, it is recommended that the area be surrounded by fencing that provides a degree of privacy and respect without jeopardizing security. Wood for the fire is provided by institutional resources. Participation in the sweat lodge is not usually limited to those of Indian ancestry. An understanding of Native American traditions, as well as religious preference, will be considered in authorizing participation in the sweat lodge.

### **Security note: Religious Accommodation and Health**

- To address health concerns related to MRSA (*staphylococcus aureus*), inmates should wear clean shorts and shirts during the ceremony, shower afterwards, and again put on clean clothes. Blankets and towels used during the ceremony should be routinely cleaned.
- Chaplains should routinely provide “safety talks” to sweat lodge participants, advising them about medical considerations when using the lodge.

## **RESOURCES**

**Fish and Wildlife Service.** Application for eagle feathers and parts can be made to the Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Eagle Repository. There are seven regions in the country. The web site is: [www.r6.fws.gov/eagle](http://www.r6.fws.gov/eagle), or type National Eagle Repository in a search engine.

## **ATTACHMENT 1: AMERICAN INDIAN RELIGIOUS FREEDOM JOINT RESOLUTION**

### ***American Indian Religious Freedom Joint Resolution***

**Public Law 95-341, dated August 11, 1978**

Whereas the freedom of religion for all people is an inherent right, fundamental to the democratic structure of the United States and is guaranteed by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution:

Whereas the United States has traditionally rejected the concept of a government denying individuals the right to practice their religion and, as a result, has benefitted from a rich variety of religious heritages in this country:

Whereas the religious practices of the American Indian (as well as Native Alaskan and Hawaiian) are an integral part of their culture, tradition and heritage, such practices forming the basis of Indian identity and value systems:

Whereas the traditional American Indian religions, as an integral part of Indian life, are indispensable and irreplaceable:

Whereas the lack of a clear, comprehensive, and consistent Federal policy has often resulted in the abridgment of religious freedom for traditional American Indians:

Whereas such religious infringements result from the lack of knowledge or the insensitive and inflexible enforcement of Federal policies and regulations premised on a

variety of laws:

Whereas such laws were designed for such worthwhile purposes as conservation and preservation of natural species and resources but were never intended to relate to Indian religious practices and, therefore, were passed without consideration of their effect on traditional American Indian religions:

Whereas such laws and policies often deny American Indians access to sacred sites required in the religions, including cemeteries:

Whereas such laws at times prohibit the use and possession of sacred objects necessary to the exercise of religious rites and ceremonies:

Whereas traditional American Indian ceremonies have been intruded upon, interfered with, and in a few instances banned: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,* That henceforth it shall be the policy of the United States to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise the traditional religions of the American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, and Native Hawaiians, including but not limited to access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonial and traditional rites.

Sec. 2. The President shall direct the various Federal departments, agencies, and other instrumentalities responsible for administering relevant laws to evaluate their policies and procedures in consultation with native traditional religious leaders in order to determine appropriate changes necessary to protect and preserve Native American religious cultural rights and practices. Twelve months after approval of this resolution, the President shall report back to the Congress the results of his evaluation, including any changes which were made in administrative policies and procedures, and any recommendations he may have for legislative action.

## **ATTACHMENT 2: SWEAT LODGE**

This schematic provides suggested dimensions for the sweat lodge, altar, and fire pit in the outside worship area.

**Frequency.** In Bureau institutions the sweat lodge is typically used once each week, but may be operated more frequently as the program requirements of the Chaplaincy Department and institution allow. The ceremonial ritual should not exceed 4 hours. The chaplain may request approval for additional use of the Sweat Lodge where individuals

express special needs. Inmates may often request to observe national holidays, deaths, and the seasonal equinox or solstice with a sweat lodge ceremony.

**Construction.** The dimensions of the Sweat Lodge will depend on the average number of people expected to use it. An ordinary lodge will be about 7-12 feet in diameter and 4-5 feet high. About 26 to 40 willow branches, 12-14 feet in length, or other saplings are needed to construct the lodge.

**Rocks.** Lava rocks are preferred. Sandstone has a tendency to crack and create hazardous sparks. The number of rocks is determined by their size and density and the size of the lodge being heated, as well as the time they are expected to retain heat (i.e., the length of the round or door).

**Wood.** Wood that is clean (nails removed and safe for burning) will be on hand prior to the beginning of each ceremony. Chemically treated wood is hazardous. Adequate amounts of wood will be needed to heat the rocks, but inmates are encouraged to exercise reasonable judgement and respect for the wood, as they determine the time and amount of wood necessary to heat the rocks. Smaller rocks heat faster, preserving wood.

**Tools and Ceremonial Items.** A shovel, rake, dipper, bucket, water, and canvas will be needed, as well as sage, sweet grass, Sacred Pipe, tobacco, cedar, forked sticks for the altar, and other “medicine” items described in other sections of this booklet. These should be stored in a locked secure area when not in use. Some items may require shadow board accountability, depending on the mission of the institution and the tool classification.

