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Press Release - For Immediate Release

The Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute: Breaking News

Hopi Tribe Threatens to Demolish Living and Historic Navajo Homesite

Monday, May 10, Hopi Tribal Officials approached guests of the family at the Blackgoat home, a Navajo homesite located on the disputed Hopi Partition Land. Officials told the guests that they should remove personal belongings from the structures there because the Hopi Tribe intends to level the home and the hogan (traditional round structure, used for living quarters as well as for ceremonies). They also instructed the guests to move the family's livestock, as a herd of sheep still roams the hills as they have for generations.

This homesite was lived in by the late Roberta Blackgoat, an internationally known Matriarch and great grandmother who traveled the world educating the masses about the Dineh (Navajo) people's plight to remain on their land in order to practice their religion. Blackgoat passed on April 23, 2002. Her children Danny, Sheilah, Harry, and Vici still consider this place to be their home, and they visit on weekends with their children, while friends caretake the site during the week.

The Hopi Tribe has an extensive history of bulldozing Navajo homes and confiscating livestock, generally with a preliminary notice. However, on August 17, 2001, the Hopi Tribe destroyed the active Camp Anna Mae Sundance Grounds in the Big Mountain region without prior written notice. So far, no written notice has been provided regarding the intended demolition of the Blackgoat homesite. For information on "The Property Dismantling/Disposal Project," visit the website of the Hopi Tribe at http://www.hopi.nsn.us/view_article.asp?id=14&cat=1. The Relocation Act of 1974 (PL 93-531) and Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act of 1996 provide the Hopi Tribe with a legal basis for evicting Dineh residents from what was then designated by the US government as Hopi Land.

The Office of Hopi Tribal Chairman Wayne Taylor, Jr. can be contacted at 928-734-3283.

The Office of Hopi Lands Director Clayton Honyumptewa can be contacted at 928-734-3646.

The Hopi Tribal Office of Cultural Preservation can be contacted at 928-734-3613.

The following concerns require prompt public explanation:

Does the Hopi Tribe truly intend to destroy this living and historic homesite?

Does the Hopi Tribe recognize that a ceremonial hogan is in use at this homesite?

What precautions are in place to ensure that Navajo burial sites on the Hopi Partition Land will be preserved?

Does the Hopi Tribe agree that in order to practice their religion, Navajos require access to their place of origin on a daily basis?

Does the Hopi Tribe agree that the Navajo homesites on Hopi Lands are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places?

Will the Hopi Tribe follow a legal process which includes written notification of intention of destruction to the residents of this homesite? Why or why not?

What due process exists for the Blackgoat family who opposes this demolition? Have family members taken any of those steps?

What ramifications does the Hopi Tribe anticipate regarding the destruction of the home of the late Roberta Blackgoat, considering the international fame of her plight and the opposing position of her surviving family?

Does the Hopi Tribe's commitment to the preservation of culture and history extend beyond the Hopi Tribe to other Native American groups?

On March 31, 1997, Roberta Blackgoat spoke at a vigil, explaining that she and all her children were born in the place where she was currently living. "I know each tree, each plant that grows right there. And they know me. The children, grandchildren, great grandchildren need to be right there. We need them to get back to the land and live on our ancestors' land." She said that the relocatees die of "worrines," missing their traditional food and not knowing where to go to pray. About the Accommodation Agreement and Relocation, Blackgoat said, "As long as I live, I'm not going to sign." She never did sign any papers, but lived at her home until the day she died.

Writes Bahe Katenay, Navajo resident, "We especially honor one of the last great Dineh leaders and matriarch, Roberta Blackgoat. She had wanted us to stop the butchering of our Altar: Black Mesa – our Female Mountain God. She had wanted us to stop the exploitation of Earth Mother's liver, the mineral coal, and to stop the shaking and sinking of our lands from the strip mining. She had wanted us to return to the Dineh Sacred Mountain Soil Bundle Way of Sovereignty and spread the words to save indigenous cultures throughout the regions encompassed by the Dineh's Six Sacred Mountains. So, join us to lay out the foundations for a future of peace and harmony where the future generations' will journey and thrive.

"We call this genocide because we, as a traditional society that share a common outlook and culture, are targeted specifically for extermination through false litigations and tribal misrepresentations. This is genocide because we have lost several thousand valuable traditional teachers due to them being forcibly removed from their ancestral lands. And it is genocide because there are only a few of us left to preserve the little history, language, culture and land based religions that we still hold, and our efforts to do so are continuously hindered by the authorities of the state."

Note: A quick web-search for "Roberta Blackgoat" will find you hundreds of hits about her work, her life, and her memory, as well as photos.