



# Historic & Cultural Preservation

After nearly two centuries of failed policies to assimilate Native people, the era of tribal self-determination has advanced cultural preservation and revitalization efforts. While the preservation of cultural identities and practices in partnership with federal agencies is still a relatively new concept for Native peoples, federal policies enacted over the past 20 to 30 years have increased tribal management of these programs and services. However, continued funding is crucial to support efforts for the preservation of cultural practices and historic sites, and advancing tribal self-determination.

## Key Recommendations

### Department of the Interior

#### Interior – Environment Appropriations Bill

##### **Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)**

- *Provide \$4 million for Section 10 of NAGPRA and create a line item for grants to fund work that would lead to cleared determinations of culturally-unidentifiable remains.*

The NAGPRA Section 10 program authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to award funds to tribes, Native Hawaiian Organizations, and museums for repatriation of cultural items and human remains. However, a majority of Section 10 funds have consistently been used to cover NAGPRA administrative costs under the National Park Service. This practice has essentially diverted crucial funds designed to assist tribes in repatriation efforts. Establishment of a tribal priority under Section 10 would ensure grant funding is awarded to tribes, and the creation of a separate line item to fund work with culturally-unidentifiable remains would support tribal repatriation efforts. The National Park Service should restore funding for grants and staff in the NAGPRA program.

- *Provide a 10 percent increase for investigations into the failure of museums or other institutions to comply with NAGPRA, and create a line item for investigations of complaints brought by tribes against museums or other institutions.*

The lack of investigation into the large number of complaints brought by tribes regarding the failure of museum compliance with NAGPRA has been an ongoing challenge for tribes. Providing a 10 percent funding increase for these investigations and a tribal specific line item will assist the Department of the Interior’s efforts to address violations of NAGPRA in a timely manner, which is essential to the successful implementation of NAGPRA.

## Department of the Interior

### Interior – Environment Appropriations Bill

#### Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Program

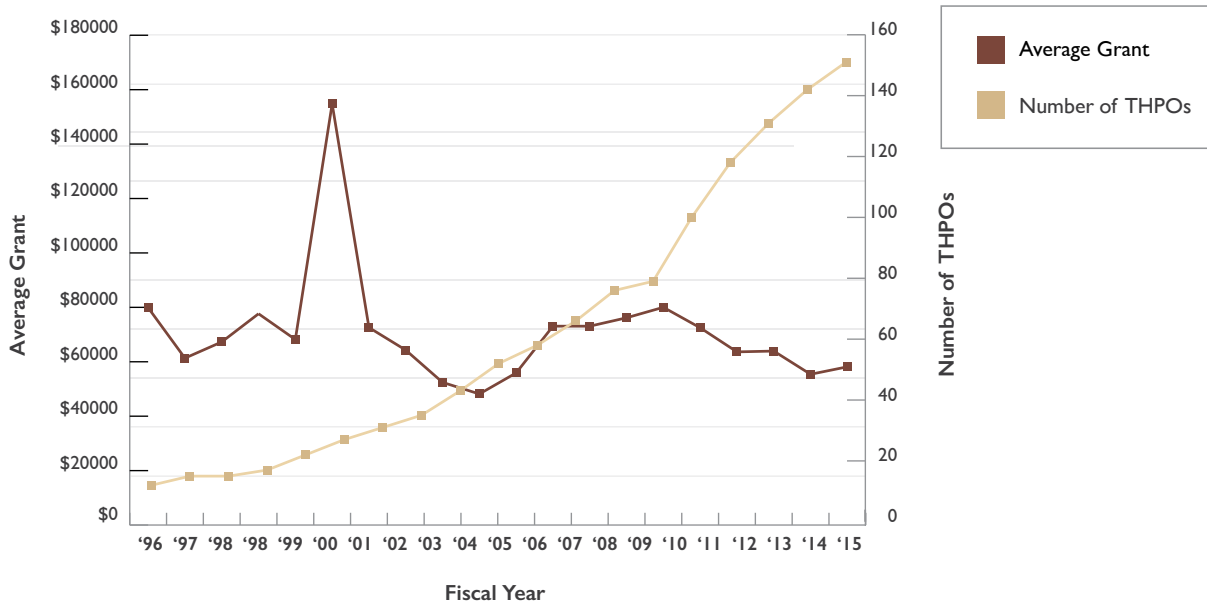
- *Provide \$15 million for the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Program.*

The Tribal Historic Preservation Office program was created in 1992. The program is operated by the National Park Service and funding for Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) is provided through the Historic Preservation Fund. THPOs are essential to record and preserve cultural practices of their respective tribes and are active in capturing oral histories, preserving and revitalizing Native languages, and seeking the return of Native American ancestral and sacred objects. THPOs also have a critical federal-tribal role in the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), which requires government-to-government consultation regarding sacred places and objects.

The Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2015 authorized \$56.4 million for the Historic Preservation Fund. Authorizing \$15 million specifically for THPOs will ensure that grants from the Historic Preservation Fund keep pace with the cultural preservation needs of the country’s 566 federally-recognized tribes. As illustrated in the figure below, the average grant funds awarded have not kept pace with the increasing number of and need for Tribal Historic Preservation Officers.

FIGURE 12

### THPO History: Average Grant (left) and Number of THPOs (right)



Source: Prepared by the National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers