

BIA archeologists need help to preserve Native artifacts

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WASHINGTON — The Bureau of Indian Affairs sponsored archeological surveys on 72,000 acres of Indian land in 1986 and conducted 500 investigations into actions that might have affected important Native American historical and archeological areas, according to a report issued this summer.

But despite some success in protecting Indian cultural resources, BIA archeologists are calling on the general public to help them preserve the artifacts of past generations.

"We want to increase public awareness about the problem of protecting historical sites from vandals and unauthorized excavations," according to BIA archeologist Don Sutherland. "It's a crime and something that threatens our national heritage."

As an example of the scope of cultural resources Sutherland hopes to preserve, it's estimated there are 1.5 million sites on the Navajo Reservation alone that have historical and archeological significance. That's just one reservation. There are approximately 300 nationwide, and the artifacts on Indian lands range from simple campsites to entire villages.

Two of the most important laws preserving these sites are the National Historic Preservation Act and the Archeological Resources Protection Act.

Under the Historic Preservation Act, the BIA consults with state and tribal historians as well as the national Advisory Council on Historic Preservation before approving construction such as roads and housing on Indian lands. The consultation ensures that historical sites are considered before approving an action that might destroy artifacts.

The BIA also is concerned with enforcing the Archeological Resources Protection Act, which prohibits removal and excavation of artifacts without a permit. Persons found guilty of violating the act can be prosecuted with criminal and civil penalties.

Although several tribes have their own programs, fewer than 20 BIA archeologists work to preserve precious

remnants of the Native American past. That's why BIA archeologists are trying to increase awareness that by removing or vandalizing archeological sites, people also are stealing a proud past.

One way the BIA is increasing awareness is through a public-private campaign called *Take Pride in America*, which encourages groups and individuals to help preserve natural and cultural resources in the United States.

The campaign encourages citizens to get involved with public and Indian lands through speeches and articles, educational field trips, cleanup and "adopt-a" projects, as well as through self-policing and "hotline" programs.

Those who want more information on *Take Pride in America* may write the campaign at Box 1339, Jessup, Md. 20799; or call the BIA archeology branch at 202-343-4959 in Washington, D.C.