

**STATEMENT  
OF  
SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUE  
CHAIRMAN  
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
BEFORE THE  
JULY 17, 2002  
HEARING  
ON THE  
PROTECTION OF NATIVE AMERICAN  
SACRED PLACES**

The Committee on Indian Affairs meets today for the second in a series of hearings on Native American Sacred Places.

Long before Europeans landed on the shores of America, the native people of this nation revered and protected the lands and natural resources that they knew as their homeland.

Their cathedrals had the skies as their ceilings and the mountains and the trees as their walls.

The sun and the moon and all of the natural elements were respected as the manifestations of a creator who watched over all the beings of the world.

With the advent of European settlement and westward expansion, the places that Native Americans held as sacred became vulnerable to desecration and destruction.

In contemporary times, the government of the United States has slowly but surely begun to understand that these sacred places must be protected and preserved.

Through these hearings, we hope to identify where the best protection practices are taking place and where we need to focus our attention if we are to see improvement.

Like other Americans, among the places that Native Americans hold sacred are the grave sites of their dear departed loved ones.

Because of the tragic record of the desecration and destruction of Native American grave sites, the Congress enacted a law in 1990 to provide for the protection of graves.

This law is an Indian law.

It is codified, as are all other laws enacted for the benefit of the native people of the United States, in Title 25 of the United States Code.

It is intended to provide for the protection of Native American

graves.

Today, the Committee will receive testimony on some of the land management activities of the Department of Interior and the impact of those activities on the federal policy which supports the protection of Native American Sacred Places.