

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – September 2, 2021

## **UTE INDIAN TRIBE TAKES ACTION TO ASSUME HISTORIC AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION AUTHORITY OVER RESERVATION LANDS**

The Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation entered into a historic agreement with the National Park Service and the U.S. Department of the Interior to establish a Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) for the benefit of the Tribe and its members.

The THPO certification will allow the Tribe's Cultural Rights and Protection Department (CRPD) to exercise cultural and historic preservation authorities that were previously exercised by the State of Utah's Historic Preservation Office. Specifically, the Tribe's THPO will receive federal funding to assist with historic preservation efforts and will have federal authority to assume duties from the state, including:

- Advise and assist federal and state agencies and local governments in carrying out their historic preservation responsibilities.
- Consult with federal agencies on federal decisions that may affect tribal historic properties.
- Work with the Secretary of the Interior, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and other federal and state agencies, local governments, organizations, and individuals to ensure that tribal historic properties are taken into consideration at all levels of planning and development.
- Identify and nominate properties to the National Register of Historic Places and administer applications for listing in the National Register.
- Prepare and implement a historic preservation plan for the Tribe.
- Provide public information, education, training, and technical assistance in historic preservation.
- Survey and inventory tribal historic properties.

To date, the CRPD has done a tremendous job in providing many of these historic and cultural preservation duties. Obtaining a THPO designation will further strengthen the Tribe's jurisdiction and allow the CRPD to require outside entities to adhere to the Tribe's THPO program plan or risk violation of tribal and Federal law. Further, the THPO will be recognized by the national preservation community as the official point of contact for reviewing federal undertakings on tribal land.

According to Business Committee Chairman Shaun Chapoose, "The Ute Indian Tribe recognizes the immense importance of protecting and preserving its culturally significant resources both on and off the reservation. As an extension of the Tribe's sovereignty, we will utilize our Tribal Historic Preservation Office certification to ensure our cultural resources are protected for generations to come."

Few Tribes across the United States have received the authorization to operate their own THPO programs. Establishing a THPO is a landmark achievement, and it will reinforce the Ute Indian Tribe's

sovereignty, particularly for matters involving the protection of the Tribe's historic and cultural resources.

**About the Ute Indian Tribe** The Ute Indian Tribe resides on the Uintah and Ouray Reservation in northeastern Utah. Three bands of Utes comprise the Ute Indian Tribe: the Whiteriver Band, the Uncompahgre Band, and the Uintah Band. The Tribe has a membership of more than three thousand individuals, with over half living on the Uintah and Ouray Reservation. The Ute Indian Tribe operates its own Tribal government and oversees significant oil and gas deposits on its 4.5-million-acre Reservation. The Tribal Business Committee is the governing council of the Tribe.