



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, DC 20240

NOV 01 2019

Dear Tribal Leader:

Native American cultural items have been appearing, and continue to appear, at auctions overseas. The theft and trafficking of Native American cultural items is unacceptable, and yet the limited scope of existing federal laws pose challenges to addressing the issue. To begin to identify potential solutions, I invite you to discuss whether and how amending the U.S. legal framework governing the export, theft, and trafficking of Native American cultural items would facilitate the repatriation of these items.

We at Interior, in collaboration with an interagency working group, which includes representatives from the Departments of State, Justice, and Homeland Security, have drafted a summary of legal options, which can be found at <https://www.bia.gov/as-ia/raca/regulations-and-other-documents-in-development>. This draft summary addresses a recommendation in the August 2018 Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report to Congress entitled *Native American Cultural Property: Additional Agency Actions Needed to Assist Tribes with Repatriating Items from Overseas Auctions*, and is offered at the link above for your input. I invite you to a listening session and consultation to discuss this draft summary and any other ideas you may have for other legal options to address this issue, at the following dates and locations:

DATE	TIME	Location Information
Tuesday, November 12, 2019 (listening session)	5:15 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. MST	We-Ko-Pa Resort and Conference Center Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation 10438 N Fort McDowell Road Fountain Hills, Arizona 85264
Tuesday, January 14, 2020 (Tribal consultation)	2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. EST	Teleconference Call in number: 1-800-857-9804 Participant passcode: 9420567

If you would like to submit written input on whether and how the U.S. legal framework governing the export, theft and trafficking of Native American cultural items should be amended, please submit your comments by email to [consultation@bia.gov](mailto:consultation@bia.gov) by midnight Eastern Time on February 14, 2020.

If you have any questions, please contact Ashley Fry at 202-208-5808 or [ashley.fry@bia.gov](mailto:ashley.fry@bia.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tara Sweeney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "S".

Tara Sweeney  
Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs