

A sacred site under siege

ILTF helps land recovery efforts at Bear Butte



>>> Meet ILTF's Board of Directors



Jeannie Benally (Navajo Nation) has spent most of her life educating her people in the areas of farming, ranching, and 4H youth development – all important pursuits that are tied to the land. “Land is essential for our livelihood,” she said. “It gives us our identity to maintain our culture.” Benally has been an Extension Educator and Agent for the University of Arizona Shiprock Cooperative, and worked with the Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture. She has a Master’s degree in Agricultural Extension and Education and a Bachelor’s degree in Animal Science.

“Serving on the ILTF board gives me the opportunity to be apprised of diverse land issues impacting Indian Country,” said Benally, who joined the board in 2015. “The work of ILTF is extremely important because of the programming it provides in the areas of land recovery and ownership.”

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Image courtesy of Timothy J Durham

ILTF is helping to protect sacred site Bear Butte

Native peoples residing in the Black Hills of South Dakota can trace their origins back thousands of years through their oral tradition, and the sacred site Bear Butte is a constant in these origin stories. The Black Hills, including Bear Butte, were reserved for the exclusive occupation and use of Indian people by the Fort Laramie Treaties of 1851 and 1868, but the land was illegally taken by the United States a few years later. In 1961, Bear Butte was designated as a state park but much of the immediate surrounding area was left in private ownership. Located near Sturgis, S.D., this cultural and holy site has been under siege in recent years by encroaching commercial development fueled by the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally.

The Cheyenne and Lakota tribes and people have been struggling to acquire private properties in the area so that religious ceremonies held on Bear Butte can be conducted without disruption from other land uses. The Bear Butte Land Recovery Fund helps support the tribes in these acquisitions. In 2016, the Fund assisted five tribes in the purchase at auction of 270 acres at a cost of \$1.3 million. More than 20 bidders participated in the auction, including business entities that planned to use the land immediately at the base of this sacred site for a giant adult entertainment facility. Thanks to your support, the immediate Bear Butte area is now more protected but much remains to be purchased.

Please contribute to the Bear Butte Land Recovery Fund at iltf.org/donation.

<<< *The sacred site Bear Butte has been under siege in recent years by encroaching commercial development*

ILTF launches dynamic new website

The Internet has changed a lot in the past 15 years and so has ILTF's website. This spring, the new iltf.org was launched. Bigger, bolder and brighter than before, the new site has been designed to make it easier to locate the resources users are looking for on Indian land and related subjects. The site offers a wide variety of information on ILTF programs, publications, grants and initiatives that are helping Native nations recover their lands, along with helpful links to other important resources.

Please visit the new iltf.org to learn more.

