

Sípnuuk Digital Library, Archives and Museum

KARUK TRIBE

Cultural Information ~ Traditional Knowledge ~ Intellectual Property

POLICY STATEMENT

SITUATION

U.S. Copyright Laws privilege western intellectual property systems and function as an enforcement tool for ongoing colonial rule over our documented traditional Karuk knowledge. Karuk cultural heritage documentation is currently and has historically been subject to United States Copyright laws, which has resulted in legacies of legal dispossession of these records from the Karuk Tribe and Karuk People. Non-Karuk institutions and individuals claim legal ownership and/or possession of the vast majority of documented Karuk cultural materials, actively or passively maintaining these legacies that leave the Karuk Tribe and Karuk People without legal rights to control the circulation of, access to, and control over documented knowledge.

GOALS

We will restore Karuk People as the rightful authorities over our cultural materials and traditional knowledge. We will reclaim what is rightfully ours. While we will continue to encourage efforts to improve Karuk access to our cultural materials that are legally owned or possessed by non-Karuk entities and individuals, gaining access alone is NOT enough. We aim to regain our rightful place as the central decision maker for controlling the access to, and use of, our cultural materials and knowledge. We seek to gain legal rights to our cultural heritage materials that are currently in non-Karuk ownership. We also seek to manage these materials according to our traditional cultural protocols, extending these protocols to apply to all people who wish to access and use our cultural heritage materials and knowledge.

STRATEGIES

We will build our capacity to retain, reclaim, and effectively manage our cultural information and proprietary traditional knowledge in accordance with applicable Karuk Tribal policies and protocols, and consistent with the beliefs and values expressed by the Karuk People.

INFRASTRUCTURE

We will actively develop, acquire, and sustain dedicated facilities, equipment, and human resources necessary to support:

- (1.) ***Oral History Program*** – for documentation of cultural practices not currently recorded.
- (2.) ***Karuk Tribal Libraries***– for public access circulation of culturally relevant materials, for life-long learning, for community programs and gatherings.
- (3.) ***Sípnuuk Digital Library, Archives and Museum*** – for controlled access of (Digital) primary and secondary sources, and for long-term digital preservation.
- (4.) ***People’s Center Library, Archives and Museum*** – for controlled access of (Analog) primary sources, and for long-term preservation and storage.

HUMAN RESOURCES

We will sustain paid employment positions primarily for Native staff, preferably Karuk, to manage these four functional branches of Karuk cultural information management. We will support ongoing professional development of our staff, providing opportunities for higher wages as more professional skills are developed.

We will increase ownership of documented Karuk traditional knowledge and cultural materials by the Karuk Tribe and/or Karuk People.

DOCUMENTATION

We will record and/or otherwise document our own cultural practices, on our own terms, as we deem appropriate.

REPATRIATION

We will establish terms and expectations for institutions and individuals to repatriate Karuk cultural heritage materials to the Karuk Tribe, and communicate these terms and expectations to universities, colleges, independent researchers, other organizations and/or institutions not explicitly authorized by the Karuk Tribe to manage our cultural information. *Establishment of these terms and expectations shall be guided by, and founded upon, the canons of inherent sovereignty vested in the Karuk People, consistent with the principles set forth in the U.N. Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).*

We will educate the public about how we would and would not like them to access and utilize our cultural heritage materials.

- (1.) We will directly support clear communication of the responsibilities and obligations imposed upon researchers concerning appropriate methods and practices to ethically document Karuk knowledge and maintain continuity with the Karuk community
- (2.) We will take action to clearly communicate to people who encounter Karuk cultural materials how to use the materials properly and respectfully, providing for a range of perspectives from Karuk People, as well as any official positions published by the Karuk Tribe.

We will proactively work to affect policy, such that negative impacts of U.S. laws on indigenous knowledge systems are recognized and ended.

Approved by the Karuk Tribal Council on March 10, 2016.