



# INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES

On Space Exploration



**NAVAJONATION**  
WASHINGTON OFFICE



# Navajo Perspectives

**Disclaimer:** The Navajo Nation represents a large community with differing opinions and beliefs.

### **JANUARY 6 1998**

NASA'S Lunar Prospector carried a portion of cremains of Eugene Shoemaker to the Moon

### **JANUARY 10 1998**

President Albert Hale objects: "To send something like that over there is sacrilege."

### **JANUARY 15 1998**

NASA issues apology and promises consultation

### **JULY 31 1999**

Lunar Prospector ends mission with deliberate lunar crash



# **TIMELINE**

## of Objections to Lunar Burials

### **DECEMBER 21 2023**

President Buu Nygren requests consultation with USDOT and NASA after learning the payload contains cremains

### **JANUARY 3 2024**

Request for Consultation was not acknowledged. Follow Up sent to White House, USDOT, and NASA requesting delay of launch

### **JANUARY 4 2024**

"The placement of human remains on the moon is desecration of this celestial body revered by our people" and COLT issues letter of support calling for consultation

### **JANUARY 5 2024**

Meeting with USDOT, FAA, NASA & White House. Acknowledged missed consultation, but launch will proceed

### **JANUARY 8 2024**

Peregrine Mission One launches, but faces problems separating from Vulcan Rocket

### **JANUARY 8 2024**

Peregrine Mission One is redirected to Earth's atmosphere where it burned up over Pacific Ocean

## TIMELINE OF OBJECTIONS TO LUNAR BURIALS

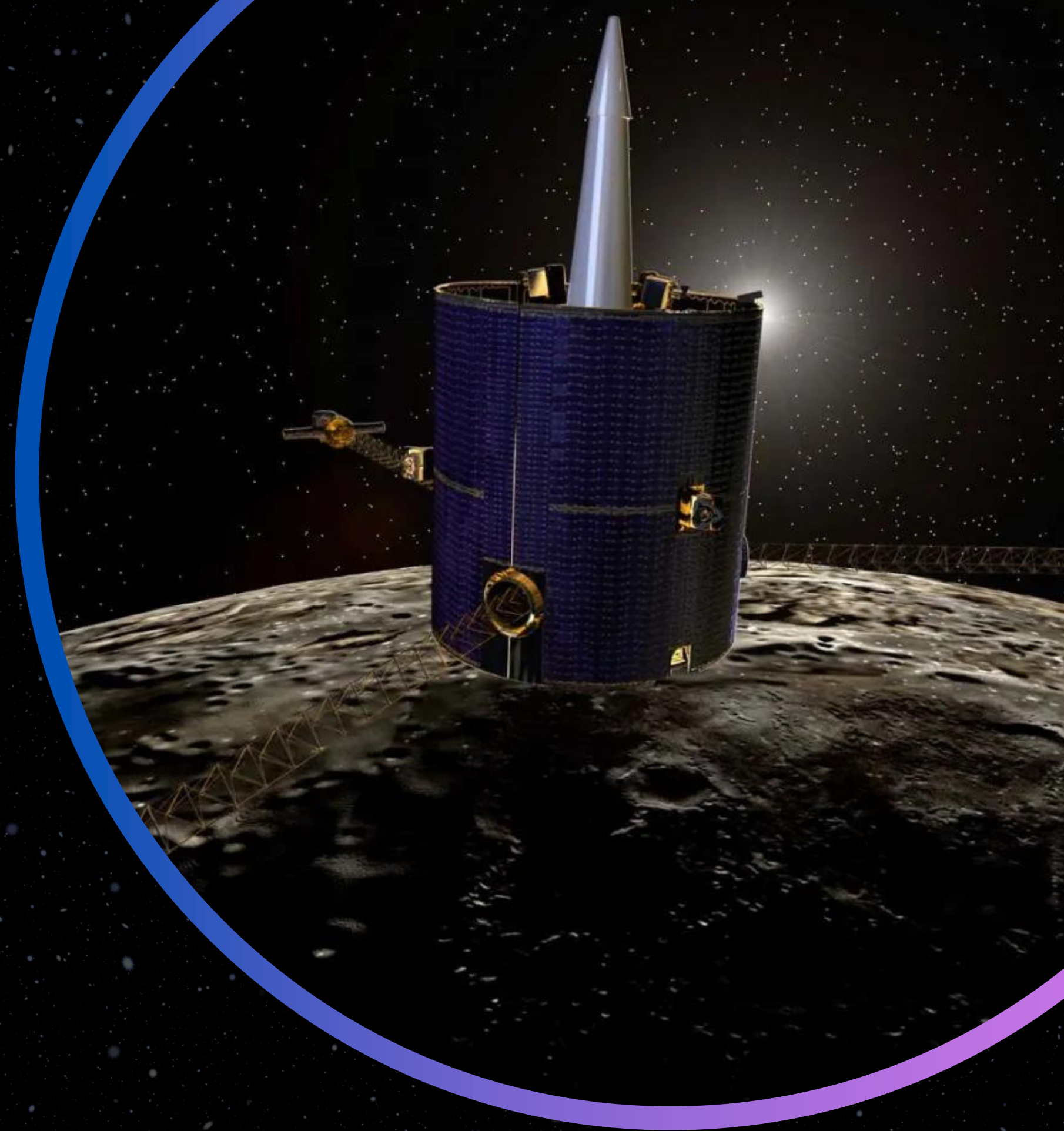
---

# NASA'S Lunar Prospector

On **January 7, 1998**, NASA launched the Lunar Prospector, which carried a portion of the cremated remains of Eugene Shoemaker to the Moon

Upon learning of the human cremains included in the cargo, Navajo Nation President Albert Hale voiced his objections

NASA apologized for not consulting with tribes, and promised to do so in the future before allowing human cremains to be carried



## TIMELINE OF OBJECTIONS TO LUNAR BURIALS

---

# Peregrine Mission One

**January 2024**, the Vulcan Centaur rocket was launched, carrying the Peregrine Mission One Moon lander with a payload that included human cremains

Several weeks before the launch was scheduled to occur, Navajo President Buu Nygren sent a letter to the White House and NASA

Despite Navajo Objections, there was no consultation



# Why Object?



To honor the Sacred



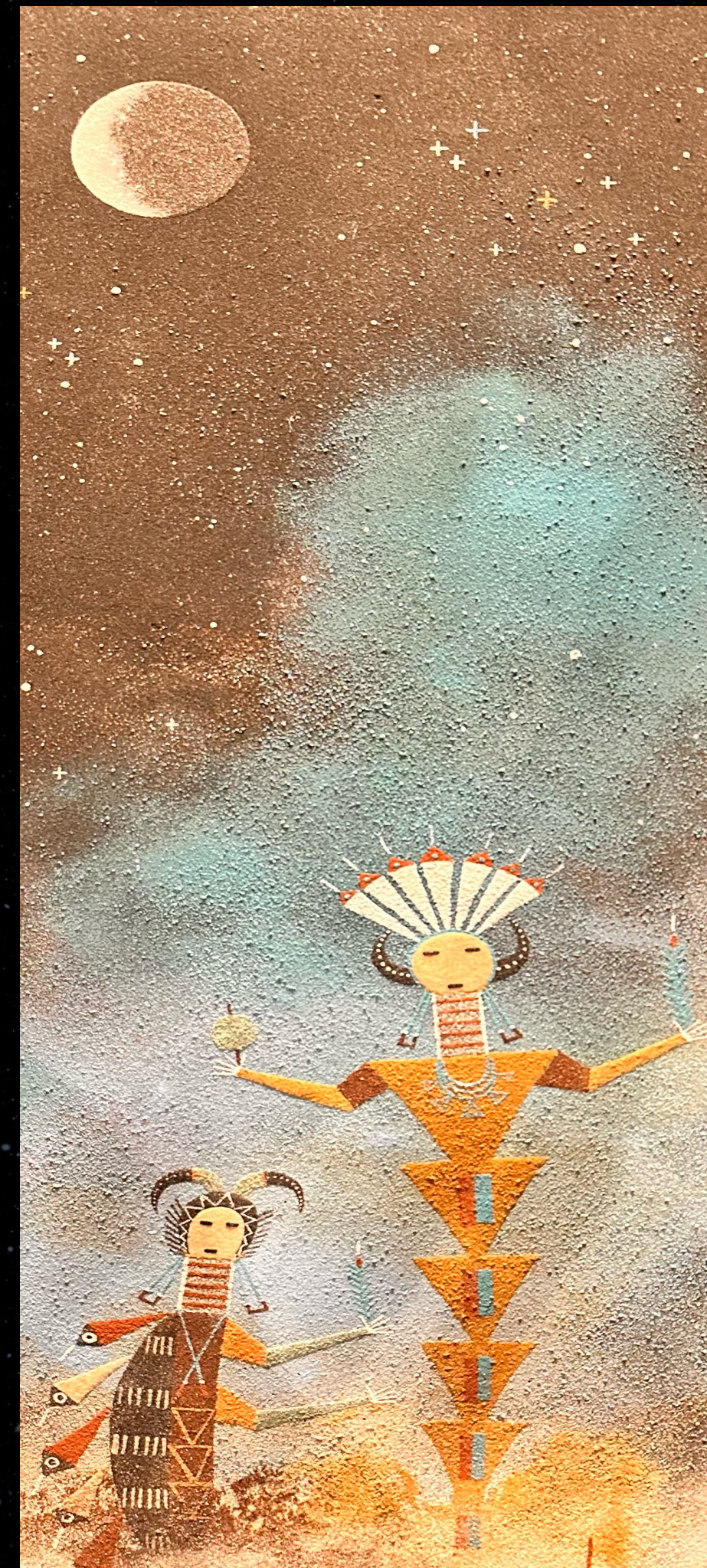
To honor our  
Families and Ancestors

# Origin of the Moon

---

Journey through to the Fourth World

First Man and First Woman made  
the Sun and Moon to protect us



# The Moon is Sacred

---

Deity  
Protector  
Guide

Focus of Ceremony and Prayer

Hozhooji : Blessing Way

Tł'eeji : Night Way

Nahat'ooji : Shooting Way







# Honoring Our Families

Grandfather was a *hataatii*

Joined the Marines

Enemy-Way Ceremony



# Death and Mourning Beliefs

---

## Ch'j̄dii

What the dead leave behind

Quick Burial, Return to Nature

Erase the Footprints, No Visits



# Changing the View from Space

---



# Beyond Disrespect

---

Would you slaughter a pig in a synagogue or mosque?

Would you build a shopping center in Arlington Cemetery?

Would you set up a landfill in the Grand Canyon?



Sacking of the Temple in Jerusalem, 70 A.D.

**Protect Keopuka Ohana**

**Quapaw Nation**

**Coalition of Large Tribes**

Spokane Tribe of Indians

Shoshone-Bannock Tribes

Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe

Navajo Nation

Rosebud Sioux Tribe

Oglala Sioux Tribe

Ute Indian Tribe

Blackfeet Nation

Eastern Shoshone Tribe

Fort Belknap

Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikana Nations

Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Tribes

**Other  
Indigenous  
Communities**



# INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES

On Lunar Governance



**NAVAJONATION**  
WASHINGTON OFFICE

# Sovereignty and Political Classification of Native American Tribes

What is Tribal Sovereignty?  
*Worcester v. Georgia*

Legal Precedents Affirming  
Political Status of Tribes  
*Treaties*  
*Trust Relationship*

Articles of a Treaty and Agreement  
made and entered into at Fort Sumner New  
Mexico on the first day of June 1868, by  
and between the United States represented  
by its Commissioner Lieutenant General  
W. D. Sherman and Colonel Samuel J.  
Daphaw of the one part, and the Navajo  
Nation or tribe of Indians represented by  
their Chiefs and Head men duly authorized  
and empowered to act for the whole people  
of said Nation or tribe (the names of said  
Chiefs and Head men being hereto subscribed)  
of the other part, witness:—

## Article 1

From this day forward all war between  
the parties to this agreement shall for  
ever cease. The Government of the  
United States desires peace, and its honor  
is hereby pledged to keep it. The Indians  
desire peace and they now pledge their  
honor to keep it.

If bad men among the whites or



# Commercialization of Space

The impact of private companies on  
space exploration

Risk of prioritizing commercial  
interests over cultural considerations

Poor regulation in space, but well-  
regulated in other international areas

International Waters  
Antarctica

# Legal Frameworks and the Need for Consultation

---



American Indian Religious Freedom Act

Executive Order 13175

UNDRIP

Outer Space Treaty

# Legal Frameworks and the Need for Consultation

---

## American Indian Religious Freedom Act

**Sec. 2:** The President shall direct that various Federal departments, agencies, and other instrumentalities responsible for the administering relevant laws to evaluate their policies and procedures in consultation with Native traditional religious leaders in order to determine appropriate changes necessary to protect and preserve Native American religious cultural rights and practices.

# Legal Frameworks and the Need for Consultation

---

## Executive Order 13175

**Sec. 2. (c)** The United States recognizes the right of Indian tribes to self-government and supports tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

**Sec. 3. (c)** When undertaking to formulate and implement policies that have tribal implications, agencies shall: (2) where possible, defer to Indian tribes to establish standards; and (3) . . . consult with tribal officials as to the need for Federal standards. . . .

**Sec. 5. (a)** Each agency shall have an accountable process to ensure meaningful and timely input by tribal officials in the development of regulatory policies that have tribal implications.

# Legal Frameworks and the Need for Consultation

---

## Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

**Article 19:** States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.

# Legal Frameworks and the Need for Consultation

---

## Outer Space Treaty

The exploration and use of outer space shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all countries and shall be the province of all mankind;

Outer space is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means;

States shall be responsible for national space activities whether carried out by governmental or non-governmental entities;

States shall be liable for damage caused by their space objects; and

States shall avoid harmful contamination of space and celestial bodies.

# Navajo Nation Policy for the Protection of Jishchaa'

Gravesites, Human Remains, and Funerary Items

**Diné traditional and spiritual values shall be observed in dealing with human remains, and associated funerary items, burials, and/or the relocation and transfer of gravesites**

(A) All individuals involved in burial issues must be warned that handling human remains or funerary items, direct exposure to gravesites, or discussion of burial issues may affect their overall health in the immediate future or sometime during their lifetime.

# Improving Policy and Practice

## CONSIDER

Consider the moral and ethical consequences of your actions

Just because something isn't illegal, doesn't mean you should do it

## CONSULTATION

Need for genuine consultation and "free, prior, and informed consent"

## INCLUSION

Inclusion of indigenous representatives in advisory roles

## ADJUSTMENTS

Policy adjustments to prevent desecration of sacred celestial bodies



# Conclusion

---

**The Navajo Nation's position is clear:**  
the Moon should not be subject to desecration

The Moon and Space are appropriate subjects for international law and regulation

Indigenous communities need to be included in the decision-making process.

# Questions