

Fred S. Vallo, Sr., Governor
Robert MoQuino, 1st Lt. Governor
Kurt Riley, 2nd Lt. Governor
Jonathan Sims, Tribal Secretary
Christopher J. Garcia, Tribal Interpreter



25 Pinsbaari Drive
P. O. Box 309
Acoma, NM 87034
Telephone: (505)552-6604
Fax: (505)552-7204

PUEBLO OF ACOMA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

**PUBLIC STATEMENT REGARDING PETER NABOKOV
AND "THE ORIGIN MYTH OF ACOMA PUEBLO"**

The Pueblo of Acoma strongly objects to the use and publication of *The Origin Myth of Acoma Pueblo* by Dr. Peter Nabokov. The Pueblo of Acoma ("Pueblo" or "Acoma") views the publication of its origin story as a continued theft and an exploitation of the Pueblo's cultural property, showing disrespect for the Pueblo and its people. At no time has the Pueblo of Acoma given Dr. Peter Nabokov, the Hunt Family, or the United States permission to publicize and disseminate Acoma's origin story and aspects of the Pueblo's religious way of life.

The origin story of the Pueblo of Acoma is sacred in its telling and dissemination. It is the core of Acoma's identity. The story and the knowledge it holds is bestowed upon entrusted Pueblo of Acoma members as a ceremonial gift, given only through the appropriate setting and context. Dr. Nabokov's publication disregards this and publicly reveals this entrusted knowledge for profit and personal gain. While the Pueblo disputes much of the truth about the contents of Dr. Nabokov's publication; more importantly, the Pueblo objects to the usurping of the Pueblo's right to control its own sensitive information and identity.

With no regard for the Pueblo of Acoma, our values, and our community, Dr. Nabokov takes it upon himself to republish an account Mr. Edward Proctor Hunt gave to the United States Bureau of Ethnology. This original divulgence by Mr. Hunt was a violation of Pueblo of Acoma law. At no time did Mr. Hunt have permission from the Pueblo of Acoma to share this information regarding its origin story and associated religious practices. Although Mr. Hunt's account has been republished before; this does not imply that the Pueblo of Acoma gave its permission for any publication. Rather, subsequent republications, including that of Dr. Nabokov's, are indicative of the *lack of permission* sought by non-Acoma authors, lack of notice to the Pueblo of such publications, and/or the inability of the Pueblo to pursue legal action against known publications. For example, when Mr. Hunt's version was first published by the United States' Bureau of Ethnology, federal law did not allow Indian tribes to sue the United States to stop publication without a

specific act of Congress; a very costly proposition. Simply, Dr. Nabokov's publication is added to the long list of transgressions suffered by the Pueblo of Acoma at the hands of wayward ethnologists, anthropologists, and archaeologists who view Acoma as no better than a specimen for them to examine and report. Acoma, its culture, its religion, and its People are much more than that.

Contrary to popular misconceptions, the Pueblo of Acoma has approved disclosures of sensitive information by scholars in the past. Work using sensitive information from the Pueblo of Acoma by professionals including Dr. Ward Allan Minge, Dr. Alfred Dittert, Dr. Florence Hawley Ellis, Dr. Kurt Anschuetz, and others are examples of proper and respectful approaches by professionals. Each of these individuals approached the Pueblo of Acoma, came before Tribal leadership, and published information learned from the Pueblo with the Pueblo's permission, oversight, and blessing. As partners, these professionals understood and respected the wishes and concerns of the Pueblo; honoring the history, culture, knowledge, and religious way of life of the Acoma People.