SHIRLEY CHISHOLM
12TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

DISTRICT OFFICE:
RESTORATION PLAZA
1360 FULTON STREET
SUITE 400
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11216
(212) 330-7588

WASHINGTON OFFICE
2182 RAYBURN BUILDING
(202) 225-6231

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

COMMITTEE ON RULES
SECRETARY
DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

MR. WESLEY McD. HOLDER
DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE

REPLY TO:
[ ] WASHINGTON OFFICE
[ ] BROOKLYN OFFICE

July 23, 1981

Chief R. Max Peterson
U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
12th and Independence S.W.
Post Office Box 2417
Washington, D.C. 20013

Dear Chief Peterson:

On April 4, 1981, several members of the Lakota community (Sioux) established the Yellow Thunder Camp on National Forest land located in the Black Hills outside of Rapid City, South Dakota. On April 22, the camp filed a special use application for the construction of 83 permanent underground structures to be used for religious, educational and residential purposes. They have cited the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty, Article 6 of the U.S. Constitution, an 1897 federal statute allowing those living in the vicinity of National Forest lands to establish and maintain schools and churches, and the 1978 Indian Freedom of Religion Act which guarantees Native peoples access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonies and traditional rites.

We understand that the structures to be built would be in harmony with the environment, utilizing solar energy and other non-fossil fuels, and constructed primarily from local natural materials. We understand that this action is peaceful and that the inhabitants of the camp have complied with all Forest Service regulations. Moreover, there appears to be a great deal of community support for the Yellow Thunder Camp. On July 8, 1981, the Black Hills National Forest Service held a public meeting to hear comments on the camp's application. Those expressing opinions were overwhelmingly in favor of the application.