

Returning Them to the Earth by Shannon Martin, Director – Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways

In June 2008, Ziibiwing staff met with Dr. Gary Shapiro, Dean for the College of Humanities and Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Dr. William Pretzer, Director of the Museum of Cultural and Natural History, regarding the culturally unidentifiable ancestors and associated funerary objects Central Michigan University (CMU) has in their possession.

Dean Shapiro began the meeting by stating that as a Presidentially-appointed representative for CMU, he expressed that the university would like to begin the process for disposition of the culturally unidentifiable human remains and associated funerary objects within the university museum's collection.

This overture of good faith and respect from CMU to honor the "spirit" of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in returning culturally unidentifiable human remains (CUHR) and associated funerary objects (AFO) to the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan was celebrated by many Tribes throughout Indian Country.

American Indian people had a victory! However, CMU's decision was, and still is, considered controversial by many peer institutions.

Many institutions continue to use NAGPRA as a barrier rather than a bridge of ancestral reconciliation for Tribal peoples. The University of Michigan and UC-Berkeley are the most notorious for maintaining a position of not returning CUHR and AFO to Tribes based on their institutions' convoluted theories of historic Tribal occupation, warfare, and migration. Instead of consulting with Tribes to make affiliation determinations, these institutions prefer to cast shadows of doubt – "smoke & mirrors" if you will, while easily dismissing the preponderance of evidence submitted by Tribal peoples.

Notably, CMU moved to begin the process for ancestral disposition long before the new NAGPRA regulations were passed on May 14, 2010 which tipped the scales in favor of Tribes. For this, all of those who were involved at CMU in making this positive decision must be commended.

The sites from which the ancestors were extracted from include the Frazer-Tyra Site (#20SA9) representing a minimum number of 124 individuals and 372 associated funerary objects; the Indian Mound Park Site (#20IB1) representing a minimum number of 18 individuals and 5 associated funerary objects; and the Point Lookout Site (#20AC18) representing a minimum number of 2 individuals and 11 associated funerary objects. The excavations of the Frazer-Tyra Site (#20SA9), Indian Mound Park Site (#20IB1), and Point Lookout Site (#20AC18) took place from 1968-1970. CMU's Museum of Cultural and Natural History posted a Notice of Inventory Completion in the Federal Register on July 26, 2010.

The "Walk Them Home & Returning to the Earth" ceremonies for the ancestors will take place on November 4 & 5.

On Thursday, November 4 at 9am, all people are encouraged to participate in a "Walk Them Home" procession from the CMU campus to the Tribe's Nibokaan Ancestral Cemetery. Opening remarks will be given by CMU and Tribal leaders, including Dennis Banks, Co-Founder of the American Indian Movement, who will offer words of faith and encouragement. Lunch will be served for all "Walk Them Home" participants upon arrival at the Nibokaan. Shuttle service will run between "the Hill" and the campus starting point.

On Friday, November 5 at 12pm, all people are welcome to witness the "Returning to the Earth" ceremony for the ancestors and their associated funerary objects at the Nibokaan Ancestral Cemetery. At this time, we will also be reburying 3 culturally affiliated ancestors and 12 associated funerary objects from the Saginaw River Valley, Bay County, Bay City site who have been at the Grand Rapids Public Museum since 1917. The ceremony will be officiated by Curtis Hopkins, with the assistance from other invited Anishinabe spiritual leaders. The Ziibiwing Center will host a Spirit Feast beginning at 6pm to conclude the ancestral protocols. All are welcome to bring a dish to pass.

CMU will host a "NAGPRA Repatriation Roundtable" on November 3 from 5-6:30pm at the Park Library Auditorium. The roundtable will feature, Special Guest Speaker, Dennis Banks, Co-Founder of the American Indian Movement; who will be joined by Councilwoman Charmaine Benz (Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan), Dr. Sonya Atalay (Indiana University & NAGPRA Review Committee Member), Dr. Beverley Smith (University of Michigan – Flint) & Dr. Tracy Brown (CMU). The roundtable will be moderated by Curator William Johnson (Ziibiwing Center).

For more information about these activities, contact the Ziibiwing Center at (989) 775-4750 or visit www.sagchip.org/ziibiwing.

SCIT & CMU NAGPRA Reburial

Agenda

Mt. Pleasant, MI

*Thursday,
November 4, 2010*

- 6:30am-9am** Shuttle service available (departing from "the Hill" SCIT Campground on Tomah Road)
- 7:30am-8am** Lighting of the sacred fire at sunrise (Ancestral Lodge at the Nibokaan Cemetery)
- 7:30am-8:15am** Sunrise Ceremony at CMU Museum of Cultural & Natural History, 103 Rowe Hall on Bellows.
- 8:15am-9am** Official Program at CMU Special Olympics Building parking lot, S. Mission & Bellows. Guest Speakers to include: Chief Dennis Kequom, Dennis Banks, CMU Provost Gary Shapiro, CMU Vice President Kathy Wilbur, and other dignitaries.
- 9am-9:30am** Begin walk (4.6 miles), starting at the Special Olympics Building, cross at Mission & Bellows, after everyone has crossed group will go East on Bellows, North on Crapo, right on East Broadway, right on South Leaton Road, left on Tomah Road to the Nibokaan Cemetery.
- 12:30pm** Walk completed
- 12:30-1:30pm** Soup, sandwiches & refreshments for lunch
- 1:30-9pm** Ancestral Team to work privately

*Friday,
November 5, 2010*

- 7:30am-9am** Open to All: Sunrise Ceremony in Ancestral Lodge before reburial preparations commence & reburial protocols begin. (Women are encouraged to wear long skirts for all ancestral protocols.)
- 9am-11:45am** Volunteer work crews: set-up, feast preparations, etc.
- 12:00-3pm** Returning to the Earth (Ancestral Reburial) Protocols, Travel Song & Giveaway (remarks by CMU President George E. Ross)
- 6-8pm** Celebration & Spirit Feast
- 7:30-8pm** Closing of the sacred fire

* We have made arrangements for you to park at the Nibokaan Cemetery. Leave your bag chair in your vehicle so when you arrive back at the cemetery you will have a nice place to sit while enjoying the lunch. You will be bussed to CMU to begin your walk. Tribal vans will be available for those that wish to rest/ride during the walk. Don't forget to bring your personal water bottle and refreshments for the walk! Parking at the Special Olympics building is by parking pass only (Elders, handicap, etc.)

CMU Pre-Activity at the Park Library Auditorium (250 East Preston St.)

Wednesday, November 3, 2010

- 5pm** NAGPRA Repatriation Roundtable featuring Special Guest Speaker, Dennis Banks, Co-Founder of the American Indian Movement; who will be joined by Councilwoman Charmaine Benz (Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan), Dr. Sonya Atalay (Indiana University & NAGPRA Review Committee Member), Dr. Beverley Smith (University of Michigan – Flint) & Dr. Tracy Brown (CMU). Roundtable to be moderated by Curator William Johnson (Ziibiwing Center).

In honor and *respect* Nov. 3 to 5

Native American ancestral remains repatriation observance

Central Michigan University and the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe invite you to join them in a public observance of the repatriation of ancestral remains.

The university's Museum of Cultural and Natural History will return the remains of 144 Saginaw Chippewa tribal ancestors and associated funerary objects to the tribe for proper burial.

To increase awareness and deepen people's understanding of the Tribe's rich culture, you are invited and encouraged to attend these events and ceremonies:

For more information
Contact Native American Programs
Office at 989-774-2508 or
nap@cmich.edu
or Zibiwing Center
at 989-775-4750.

For ADA accommodations, call 989-774-2508 at least one week in advance. CMU is an AA/EO institution (see cmich.edu/aaeo).



Repatriation Roundtable Discussion

Wednesday, November 3

5 to 6:30 p.m.

Park Library Auditorium

Dennis Banks, co-founder of the American Indian Movement, and others who work at the national level to address Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act issues will discuss the repatriation of Native American remains from CMU's museum. Co-sponsored by Native American Programs Office, CHSBS, and the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe.

"Walk Them Home"

Thursday, November 4

9 a.m.

The public is invited to join a procession to walk the Native American remains from Central Michigan University's campus to the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe's Nibokaan Ancestral Cemetery. The walk will originate at the Special Olympics Michigan building and will include opening remarks from CMU, tribal leaders, and Dennis Banks, co-founder of the American Indian Movement.

Lunch will be served for all "Walk Them Home" participants upon arrival at the Nibokaan. Shuttle service will be available to return participants to the campus starting point.

"Returning to the Earth"

Friday, November 5

Noon

The public is invited to attend the "Returning to the Earth" ceremony for the ancestors and their associated funerary objects at the Nibokaan Ancestral Cemetery. The ceremony will be officiated by Curtis Hopkins, with the assistance from other invited Anishinabe spiritual leaders.

Spirit Feast

Friday, November 5

6 p.m.

Zibiwing Center

The Zibiwing Center will host a Spirit Feast to conclude the ancestral protocols. All are welcome to bring a dish to pass.