

Good Afternoon,

The Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) has collaborated with the University of North Dakota (UND) and President Armacost on issues related to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), specifically concerning the remains of our Indigenous relatives and cultural items. We view this collaboration as a partnership driven by meaningful consultation with Tribal Nations. I believe that UND is committed to addressing the historical injustices faced by Tribal Nations. Today, these issues are governed by federal laws like NAGPRA, and UND has made it clear that its goal is to develop sound policies and foster strong relationships to effectively implement these laws. We all acknowledge that this work is extensive and ongoing.

We also recognize that engaging with NAGPRA can be challenging. One of my colleagues referred to it as "immensely meaningful but sorrowful work." Since its enactment, NAGPRA has profoundly impacted our tribal communities and inspired the establishment of our Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate THPO program. NAGPRA encompasses every aspect of Tribal history, culture, and preservation. It represents action. There are few opportunities to positively address historical trauma; while we cannot change the past, we can, in this new era and through innovative partnerships, acknowledge our history and lay a foundation of mutual respect for the future. Together, we can support scholarship that honors the unique cultural identities and perspectives of Tribal Nations for generations to come.

I would like to express my gratitude to President Armacost of the University of North Dakota, Bill Peterson of the North Dakota Historical Society, and especially my friend and colleague Representative Collette Brown for bringing this important effort to my attention. As the SWO Tribal Archivist working alongside the SWO THPO and managing the tribe's NAGPRA responsibilities, I wholeheartedly support HB1603 as amended and encourage your favorable vote.

Sincerely,

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