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The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan to Repatriate Ancestral Human Remains from the University of Michigan’s Museum of Anthropological Archaeology

Mt. Pleasant, Michigan – The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan and its Ziibiwing Cultural Society (Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways) will lead a repatriation for the ancestral human remains of 20 Native American individuals and 106 associated funerary objects from the University of Michigan’s Museum of Anthropological Archaeology (UMMAA) in Ann Arbor, Mich. on November 30, 2017. The Ziibiwing Cultural Society has been working diligently on behalf of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan, and in cooperation with the Michigan Anishinaabek Cultural Preservation & Repatriation Alliance (MACPRA), to bring home ancestors and their associated funerary objects from the numerous museums, universities, and institutions across the country since the passage of the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).

NAGPRA requires museums and federal agencies to inventory and identify Native American human remains and cultural items in their collections and to consult with Federally-recognized Indian tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations regarding the return of these objects to descendants or tribes and organizations. The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan, in cooperation with the Michigan Anishinaabek Cultural Preservation & Repatriation Alliance, Chippewa-Cree of the Rocky Boy’s Reservation of Montana and the Mille Lacs Band of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, will carry out the repatriation through a National Park Service NAGPRA Repatriation Grant. Elders and representatives from the tribes will retrieve the ancestors and associated funerary objects at the University of Michigan on Thursday, November 30, 2017 and bring them to the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways in Mt. Pleasant, Mich. to begin preparations for the reburial on Friday, December 1, 2017.

“Respecting Native American history and culture is an important part of the National Park Service mission,” said Acting National Park Service Director Michael T. Reynolds. “These grants support the dedicated efforts of museum and tribal professionals to collaborate, consult, and respectfully return a significant part of our nation’s cultural heritage to Native American communities.” Section 10 of NAGPRA authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to award grants to assist in implementing provisions of the Act. The National NAGPRA Program is administered by the National Park Service.

In 1970, human remains representing, at minimum, 20 individuals were removed from the Bugai site (20SA215) in Saginaw County, Mich. Contract workers encountered human remains while excavating sand from private property near Interstate-75 in Bridgeport Township. After workers completed removing the sand, amateur archaeologists Leo Purple and Arthur Graves conducted a salvage excavation at the site from late-winter through the fall of 1970. Purple had surface-collected the site for several years prior to the excavation. Primary and secondary burials were noted at the site. The majority of the burials excavated were bundle burials, along with multiple objects. Purple and Graves divided the site collections, donating some to the UMMAA in 1976, and some to the Chippewa Nature Center (CNC) in Midland, Mich. in 1974. In 2006, the CNC donated the ancestral human remains and associated funerary objects from the Bugai site to the UMMAA.

The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan invites the interested public to join us for the *Recommitment to the Earth Ceremony* for 20 Native American individuals and 106 associated funerary objects to be held on Friday, December 1, 2017 at 12pm in the tribe's Nibokaan Ancestral Cemetery. The cemetery was established in 1995 for the explicit purpose of reburying repatriated Native American ancestral human remains and associated funerary objects. The Nibokaan Cemetery is located on the Saginaw Chippewa's Isabella Indian Reservation, behind the Tribal Campground located at 7525 East Tomah Rd., Mt. Pleasant, Mich. A *Journey Feast* to conclude the ancestral ceremonies and protocols will be held on Friday, December 1, 2017 at 1pm in the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways located at 6650 East Broadway, Mt. Pleasant, Mich.

The Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeway's in Mt. Pleasant, Mich. is the Midwest's Premier American Indian Museum. Established in 2004, the Ziibiwing Center is a distinctive treasure created to provide an enriched, diversified and culturally relevant educational experience through its award-winning Diba Jimooyung (Telling Our Story) permanent exhibit, changing exhibits, research center, Ojibwe language immersion room, gift shop, and meeting rooms. The Ziibiwing Center is a non-profit cultural center and museum belonging to the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan.

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