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ASSOCIATION ON AMERICAN INDIAN AFFAIRS HOLDS FOURTH ANNUAL REPATRIATION CONFERENCE AT FOREST COUNTY POTAWATOMI

WASHINGTON, D.C., NOVEMBER 20, 2018, 4:00 P.M. E.S.T. – The Association on American Indian Affairs (AAIA) held its Fourth Annual Repatriation Conference themed “Advocating for Our Ancestors” on November 13-15 at the Forest County Potawatomi Tribe’s Hotel & Casino in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Sponsored and hosted by the Forest County Band of Potawatomi Indians, the event convened 160 guests representing Tribal Nations, museums, federal agencies and foreign institutions from countries including Germany, Italy, Sweden, and Switzerland.

Ned Daniels, Jr., Chairman of the Forest County Band of Potawatomi Indians, opened the conference on November 13, proclaiming to guests, “You are the revitalization of our people. While you are here, you are in ceremony. None of you are here by accident. Be here with an open mind, ready to take this back to your people.”

The Repatriation Conference is designed to share best practices, strategies, and practical tools for the successful repatriation of Indigenous Ancestors, their burial belongings, and sacred and cultural patrimony. The Conference provided panels regarding the Native America Graves Protection Act (NAGPRA) and included a panel of federal agencies and museum that discussed NAGPRA compliance and enforcement. Repatriation strategies that fall outside of NAGPRA domestically and internationally were also presented. During a special workshop, conference participants were invited to present an active repatriation case to a panel of experts who provided tailored counsel on navigating law and policy to repatriate cultural patrimony. In another session, a panel of international institutions joined the conference in-person and virtually to discuss their respective collections and engage in dialogue with Tribal practitioners.

“The AAIA Repatriation Conference creates a strong community of practitioners, institutions and agencies who can support one another in bringing our Ancestors and their belongings home,” AAIA Executive Director Shannon Keller O’Loughlin (Choctaw Nation) commented. “This community works diligently to fortify Tribal law and policy, strengthen NAGPRA, and defend tribal sovereignty in the context of repatriation and beyond.”

“The Association on American Indian Affairs has been advocating for Indian Country for almost one hundred years,” said AAIA President Frank Ettawageshik (Little Traverse Band of Odawa Indians). “Our repatriation work is of paramount importance, as we see cultural patrimony not as objects, but as living ancestors who guide our direction as Indigenous peoples today. Claiming our ancestors and ensuring their safe return is an assertion of our Tribal sovereignty and an investment in cultural preservation.”

The Association on American Indian Affairs is the oldest non-profit serving
Indian Country and is a 501(c)(3) organization.

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