



ASSOCIATION ON AMERICAN INDIAN AFFAIRS

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Fourth Annual Repatriation Conference— Advocating for Our Ancestors

The Association on American Indian Affairs held its Fourth Annual Repatriation Conference on November 13-15, 2018 at the Forest County Potawatomi Hotel & Casino in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Sponsored 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 Austria, Canada, Germany, Italy, Sweden, and Switzerland.



Board President of AAIA, Frank Ettawageshik, and Forest County Potawatomi Chairman Ned Daniels, Jr. receive blankets.

Titled “*Advocating for Our Ancestors*,” the 2018 Repatriation Conference was designed to share and develop best practices, strategies, and practical tools for the successful repatriation of Indigenous Ancestors, their burial belongings, and sacred and cultural patrimony. Each day, the Conference provided a diverse set of panels relevant to the day’s theme, with 16 different panels total. On Day 1, the theme was “Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act Implementation on the Ground,” which included a panel of federal agencies and museums that discussed NAGPRA



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compliance and enforcement. Day 2’s “Developing Strategies for Repatriation Where NAGPRA Does Not Apply” provided a special workshop session where conference participants presented active repatriation cases to a panel of experts who provided tailored counsel on navigating law and policy to repatriate cultural patrimony. And, on the final day, the theme “Advancing Advocacy for International Repatriation” produced a panel of international museums from Germany, Italy, Sweden, and Switzerland that discussed their respective Native American collections and engaged in dialogue with Tribal practitioners.

The Conference participants also assisted with the development of a Press Statement about how buyers and collectors should focus investment on contemporary Native artists and to stop investing in Tribal cultural and sacred patrimony and burial belongings. You can see this multi-organizational press statement at <https://www.indian-affairs.org/private-collections-and-sales.html>.

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The outcomes from the Conference will feed AAIA programs for 2019 and guide the topics for the 2019 Conference. Specifically, AAIA will be utilizing the video recordings from the Conference's panel presentations, as well as substantive toolkits that



What Tribes Need from the Federal Government to Best Protect Indigenous Cultural Heritage Panel

were developed during the Conference, and present the material as training and technical assistance on a webpage devoted to its Repatriation efforts. As AAIA turns its sights to the Fifth Annual Repatriation Conference in November 2019, which will be held at the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation's WeKoPa Resort outside of Phoenix, Arizona, the Association is excited to build off the many successes of this year's conference and tackle new subject matters as well.

"The Association 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."

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