



The World Archaeological Congress

Hearing Before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs on Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

**Thursday, July 28, 2005
9:30 a.m.
Room 485 Russell Senate Building**

STATEMENT OF THE WORLD ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONGRESS

The World Archaeological Congress (WAC) supports the proposed amendment to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) as offered in S.536 (Sec. 108), which provides that "Native American" refers to a member of a tribe, a people, or a culture that is or was indigenous to the United States. WAC believes that this change is consistent with the spirit of the original NAGPRA legislation and that this amendment makes good common sense. For repatriation purposes, this change will only impact inadvertent discoveries on lands recognized by the Indian Claims Commission as the aboriginal territory of existing tribes. The majority of repatriation cases do not fall under these circumstances.

WAC believes that the respectful treatment of the mortal remains of the dead is a fundamental human rights issue. In addition, we recognize and acknowledge the special significance of Indigenous ancestral remains to Indigenous peoples. The proposed amendment is consistent with the spirit of compromise that marked the original passage of NAGPRA. In addition, it reflects emerging archaeological practice wherein Indigenous concerns regarding cultural heritage are taken into account.

Background: The World Archaeological Congress (WAC) is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization and is the only elected international body of practicing archaeologists. WAC promotes interest in the past in all countries, to recognize the historical and social role and political context of archaeology, and endeavors to make archaeological studies relevant to the wider community. WAC acknowledges and recognizes Indigenous methodologies for interpreting, curating, managing and protecting Indigenous cultural heritage.

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Dorothy Lippert, Indigenous Representative to the World Archaeological Congress