

## Process Paper

Upon learning that “Debate and Diplomacy” was this year’s theme, I reflected on the repatriation debate over the Greek Elgin Marbles that I learned about in seventh grade. This caused me to research repatriation debates that have occurred in the United States, and I discovered the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).

My research began in my local libraries, where I found very few results for NAGPRA-related materials. However, I found some, most notably *Plundered Skulls and Stolen Spirits* by Chip Colwell, which provided me with further areas to explore. This prompted me to do some basic online research, finding websites as well as primary news articles and journals that helped with the construction of my project.

Having visited the Penn Museum, I emailed their director hoping to learn more about their experience with NAGPRA, but I did not receive a reply. I also contacted the Historic Preservation Officer at the Museum of Indian Culture in Allentown, which is affiliated with the Delaware Nation, to gain a local perspective on NAGPRA. However, I was told if my project discussed the failure of NAGPRA to work with non-federally recognized tribes, the Delaware Nation could not be involved since they strongly support excluding non-federally recognized groups from the NAGPRA repatriation process. This revealed to me an ongoing debate between tribes who are recognized, and those who are not and the need for diplomacy in this area. I was then referred to Susan Bachor, an archaeologist and Historic Preservationist for the Delaware Tribe of Indians, but our conversation failed to materialize. After reading her book, *When the Shadbush Blooms*, I wrote to Carla Messinger, a member of the Pennsylvania Lenape, who provided me with her NAGPRA experience as an unrecognized tribal member. I learned from their website that the Delaware Tribe plans a reburial of repatriated remains at Pennsbury Manor

in spring 2022. I contacted Doug Miller, the site administrator of Pennsbury Manor, who introduced me to Janet Johnson, a curator at the State Museum of Pennsylvania. She provided me with her NAGPRA reflections and images of diplomatic meetings between her museum and the Delaware Nation.

Having made a website last year, I chose to create one again since I better understood the software. Additionally, it would display photographs and video content well.

My historical argument is that while the intent of NAGPRA has healed some tribes, lengthy repatriation delays and ambiguous language in the law have made it a failure. Debates are prevalent in my topic, taking place between tribes, archaeologists, and museums. Many heated debates occurred while NAGPRA was a new law, with many lawsuits being argued. Ultimately the argument involves a debate between religion and science. As NAGPRA evolved, museums and tribes recognized diplomacy as the better approach to repatriation, allowing many to rebuild their connections. NAGPRA has good intentions and a strong legacy of mandating consultations between tribes and museums, but the law's overly burdensome requirements have failed tribes seeking repatriation of remains and objects rightfully theirs.