

Subject: FW: [External] Fwd: repatriation story for the Pinecone
Date: Wednesday, April 6, 2022 at 1:55:47 PM Eastern Daylight Time
From: Matthew S Collins

From: mtbfmtbf@gmail.com <mtbfmtbf@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 6, 2022 3:57 PM
To: Kathleen A Dougherty <doughertyka@alma.edu>
Subject: [External] Fwd: repatriation story for the Pinecone

Dear Dr. Dougherty,

In the past you requested information on the repatriation of burial remains to the Saginaw Chippewa tribe. Today I located the story that I wrote at the time for the Pinecone. It contains more details than I remembered when you asked me about it at that time. I hope that this is of use to you.

Now that the archaeology program at Alma has been eliminated, I need to obtain the records from the Pine Street and the Forest Hill Nature Area digs so that I can write up reports. I will, of course, return them when finished. Alexandra Conell will need access to the Old Main (Alma College) excavation records as she will be writing the major part of that report.

Thank you for your assistance. As I said previously, this is the only email address that I check regularly, so please use this rather than Alma.edu.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Michael J. Silverthorn <silverthorn@alma.edu>
Date: Wed, Jun 14, 2006 at 9:48 AM
Subject: repatriation story for the Pinecone
To: <mtbfmtbf@gmail.com>, <freund@alma.edu>

Mary Theresa:

Below for your review is the story on the repatriation...

Mike Silverthorn

PINECONE STORY:

Alma College repatriates human remains to Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe

Native American human remains in Alma College's possession for more than 80

years were returned to the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe June 13 and reburied during a ceremony at a tribal cemetery in Mount Pleasant.

The remains, an unidentified human skull, were removed from a burial site in Arcada Township in Gratiot County in 1920 and donated to the College. Also donated from the burial site was a pontel glass bottle that dates to approximately 1740 to 1780. Officials at that time determined that the human cranium represented the physical remains of an individual of Native American ancestry.

In accordance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, the College completed an inventory of the human remains and associated funerary objects in its possession in August 2005 and filed a notice of the completed inventory to the National Park Service. The notice was subsequently printed in the Federal Register.

Faculty anthropologist Mary Theresa Bonhage-Freund, the College's Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act coordinator, presented the remains to the Tribe. She attended the Tribal ceremony and provides the following eyewitness account:

"Two representatives of the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe, William (Willy) Johnson and Donna Hiser, came to the College to claim these remains. I presented the remains in a cedar box hand crafted by Wes Dykstra, and Willy and Donna transported them to the Ziibiwing Center in Mount Pleasant where members of the Midewiwin (Medicine Society) were preparing the reburial rites.

"This included preparing a sacred fire, tobacco and cedar. They prepared the remains out of view. About an hour later we drove to the cemetery set aside for repatriated human remains. There a holy man performed a funeral ceremony. About 20 to 25 people participated, including me and my son.

"There were prayers, teachings, ritual smudging of each individual present, offerings of tobacco in all directions. Each person was invited to place a tobacco and cedar offering (provided) in the coffin. Also, if one had a departed loved one in mind, one could place a small offering of something that person would like in the coffin to be carried by the deceased along with one's thoughts or wishes to the loved one. A piece of silver lame cloth had been placed over the repatriated cranium and bottle so they could not be seen. This was a substitute for birch bark, which was used in the past. The teaching was that this person's path to his ancestors had been interrupted and could now be continued.

“After the ceremony, the box was closed and the lid screwed into place, and after we left it would be placed in the ground and buried. We proceeded back to the Ziibiwing Center for a funeral meal, which was preceded by a prayer in the Anishinabe language.

“Before we ate, a small portion of each dish was taken and placed in the sacred fire as an offering to the spirit of the deceased.

“I was repeatedly thanked on behalf of Alma College for our cooperation and respect in the repatriation process.”