



Office of the Governor

Doug Burgum
GOVERNOR



NEWS: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Burgum, Davis issue statements on University of North Dakota repatriating indigenous remains, artifacts

VIEW THIS RELEASE ONLINE: governor.ND.gov

BISMARCK, N.D. (AUG. 31, 2022) – Gov. Doug Burgum and North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission Executive Director Nathan Davis released the following statements today regarding the University of North Dakota’s efforts to repatriate Native American remains and artifacts to their tribes of origin.

“We are heartbroken by the deeply insensitive treatment of these indigenous ancestral remains and artifacts and extend our deepest apologies to the sovereign tribal nations in North Dakota and beyond,” Burgum said. “This dark chapter, while extremely hurtful, also presents an opportunity to enhance our understanding and respect for indigenous cultures and to become a model for the nation by conducting this process with the utmost deference to the wishes, customs and traditions of tribal nations. We appreciate the deeply thoughtful, respectful approach being taken by UND and President Armacost, including their decision to reach out immediately to tribal representatives. We pledge to work with our tribal partners with understanding and mutual respect and assist wherever possible as UND and the North Dakota University System move toward ensured compliance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act ([NAGPRA](#)).”

“As terrible as this news has been, and as insensitive and inexcusable the treatment of our ancestors has been historically in the name of science, I would like to commend and thank President Armacost and his team, including Native American faculty and staff, who have been leading these efforts,” Davis said. “Sometimes as a leader the best thing that you can do is listen to those around you. The efforts to ensure that our people were not an afterthought is something that spoke volumes to me. While there is no way we can ever forget what has happened to our ancestors, we can honor them by making sure they return home to rest. We have a unique opportunity to honor them by changing the way that repatriation is done, as we all know that this work sadly isn’t over.”

Click [here](#) to visit UND's repatriation information page and read Armacost's statement to the campus community.

— # # # —

CONTACT:

Mike Nowatzki
mnowatzki@nd.gov
701.328.2424

Mike Kennedy
mikekennedy@nd.gov
701.328.2937

*600 E Boulevard Ave.
Bismarck ND 58505-0001
PHONE: 701.328.2200*