



# Council of Allied Societies

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## September 2021 CoAS News and Notes:

### Message from the Chair, Steve Tomka

It is now day 15 in a marathon to finish editing a chapter for a technical report. I have been engaged with this manuscript for three years during the original petrographic research, subsequent rounds of revisions and now, hopefully the finalization of the report. I have hardly slept and have gone back and forth between being excited about the findings and also exasperated at the short time I have to make the revisions while four other deadlines loom. I mention this because it occurs to me that as archaeologists, citizen scientists, researchers of all stripes - we have in common not just the love of archaeology, of the past, and of history, but underneath it all we are driven to learn and to discover, to find answers to the hard questions, and to question the easy answers. And this trait is common to many of us, whether we are parents, co-workers, teachers, friends that hang out watching college football on Saturday, or at the local university archaeology lab volunteering our time and company, we all have a precious gift that we can impart to those around us. It is the gift of wonder, the gift of never stopping to ask questions, and the reward that it brings when an answer is revealed either in the pile of flakes from a Clovis work-station or the dozens of petrographic thin-sections I have been staring at for far too long. Our greatest gift to our children, to our colleagues, and to those we mentor is to burn in their soul the excitement of knowing, of searching for knowledge, and every now and then, if we are lucky, of finding a long-sought answer. So, I hope that you are surrounded every day by loved ones, by mentors and by folks who light that fire and keep you excited about what may be learned and discovered each and every day as we share our passion for archaeology and knowledge without borders and boundaries.

### **SEND your Society's news for inclusion into the CoAS November Newsletter!**

Belinda needs your Society News (including upcoming events, volunteer opportunities and volunteer "shout-outs") to add to the November newsletter. Please send your drafts to Belinda Riehl-Fitzsimmons - [ba@thesas.ca](mailto:ba@thesas.ca) .

## **NEW! CoAS Presentation for your Board Meeting**

CoAS officers are available to present a brief overview of CoAS member benefits for your society and its chapters at your upcoming board meetings (via Zoom.) Please email Jaye for more details.

## **CoAS Facebook Group is growing!**

Invite all of your Society members and chapters to join our Facebook group. It is a great place to post your upcoming Society activities and events.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/saacoas>

## **September 2021 Government and International Government Affairs Update**

*From Deborah L. Nichols, Ph.D., RPA, SAA President*

On August 19, I gave the following statement to the National NAGPRA Review Committee, introducing to that panel the Society's revised Statement Concerning the Treatment of Human Remains:

*Good afternoon. My name is Deborah Nichols and I am the president of the Society for American Archaeology, or SAA for short. Thank you, Madame DFO and members of the Review Committee, for the opportunity to make a public comment today.*

*For almost 70 years, the SAA has been dedicated to research about and interpretation and protection of the archaeological heritage of the Americas. With nearly 7,000 members, the SAA represents archaeologists in professional settings that include universities, museums, CRM firms, federal agencies, and tribal nations. The SAA is proud to have been part of the drafting of NAGPRA and to have supported its passage in 1990.*

*I am here today to share two recent developments that relate directly and indirectly to NAGPRA compliance. First, the SAA reaffirmed its support for NAGPRA in honor of NAGPRA's 30th anniversary in November 2020. SAA President Joe Watkins urged SAA "members to uphold NAGPRA and its regulations and to use the principles embedded within NAGPRA—tribal sovereignty, the relevance and importance of traditional knowledge, and the obligation to engage with descendant communities—as critical building blocks in pursuit of a more ethical archaeology."*

*Second, on April 28, 2021, the SAA Board of Directors approved an updated Statement Concerning the Treatment of Human Remains. This statement was developed after nine months of listening sessions, research, and membership feedback. I am submitting a copy of this new statement to the NAGPRA Review Committee for the public record. While the document deserves to be read in its entirety, as the details of the document are important, there is a fundamental ethos about the new statement that might interest the committee and those attending this meeting: The statement starts from the position that working with human remains is a privilege, not a right. It calls for archaeologists to treat human remains with dignity and respect. The new statement stresses the need for consultation, collaboration, and consent with descendant communities. It reminds archaeologists that they are responsible for upholding all applicable laws and maintaining the highest ethical*

*standards when working with human remains. In short, the updated statement provides a professional and ethical framework that is necessary for the successful implementation of NAGPRA.*

*Thank you for your time and dedication to the important work of repatriation.*

Following the statement, I fielded a couple of questions from the committee. Chairman Armand Minthorn asked if the SAA was ready to comment on the provision in the draft proposed changes to the NAGPRA regulations regarding geographic affiliation. I responded that the tribal consultation period on the draft changes was continuing, and that the SAA would wait for the formal comment period to begin before any position would be taken. I also reiterated that the SAA shared the goal of having tribal communities' ancestors repatriated. Committee member Frank McManamon noted his appreciation of the SAA taking an early approach to the process of updating the NAGPRA regulations with the dissemination of our new position. I responded that the statement is the result of a collective effort led by the members of our Repatriation and Native American Relations committees.

The SAA will remain fully engaged in the issue of the NAGPRA regulatory changes as it progresses.

***From David Lindsay, Manager, SAA Government Affairs***

On Tuesday, August 24, the House followed the Senate's lead and passed the \$3.5 trillion budget framework following extensive negotiation between Speaker Pelosi and a group of Democratic centrists who wanted a date certain for approval of a "hard infrastructure" measure.

With both chambers having approved the reconciliation legislation, congressional Democrats can now move both the massive "soft infrastructure" and "hard infrastructure" packages later this fall, and approve the former without needing Republican support. Right now it looks as if the House will vote on whether or not to accept the Senate's version of the "hard infrastructure" bill by September 27. Unlike its House counterpart, H.R. 3684 (see below), the Senate bill does not contain language to double the authorized annual funding level for the Historic Preservation Fund to \$300 million. It is not clear as of this writing whether the House Democratic leadership will insist on the House-passed bill, or simply accede to the Senate's position.

As for appropriations, it is now nearly certain that there will be one huge "omnibus" funding bill in the fall that will comprise most or all of the 12 annual spending measures, including that of Interior and Environment, which contains most of the accounts that fund cultural resources preservation.

**The SAA Seeks to Expand the Reach of Global Advocacy for Archaeology**

*David Lindsay - Manager, Government Affairs*

As you know, there is a world of archaeology out there, and the SAA wants to help protect it! The Committee on International Government Affairs is undertaking a new initiative to better help the Society identify issues concerning non-U.S. archaeology and develop more effective responses.

Over the years, we have relied on an informal network of international personal contacts to help us address many global archaeological policy matters. These include, but are not limited to, legislation proposed in the U.S. Senate that would have damaged international collegiality in archaeology; ex-President Trump's threat to bomb Iranian cultural sites; the Universities of Sheffield and Western Australia's moves to close their archaeology and anthropology programs; and the fallout from the mining destruction of the Juukan Gorge sites in Western Australia.

This contact network has served us well. But now we are seeking to solidify and expand it by regularizing communication and collaboration with other organizations of archaeologists. The result, we hope, will be twofold: first, greater coverage of the issues, especially in places that traditionally have gone underrepresented in international cultural resources dialogue; and second, more effective involvement, not just in the sense of timeliness but also in terms of sensitivity to local and regional social and political realities.

The fact of the matter is that when it comes to the treatment of archaeological materials in any given country, the issues are often very complicated, and international involvement can be a double-edged sword, sometimes causing more harm than good. There will be times when a public statement from the SAA could provide a major boost to positive action. In other situations, a more international voice, or a position supported by more than just a single U.S.-based society, would carry more weight. By regularly speaking and collaborating with archaeologists more immediately involved in an issue arising outside the United States, we will be better informed about what we might do. Taking these factors into account will ensure the best possible reception for our message and involvement.

We are looking forward to completing the formation of this new network in the weeks ahead, and in ensuring that the SAA remains a leader in the protection of the archaeological record.

## **New CoAS/SAA Mailing Address**

SAA/Council of Allied Societies

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