

NOTIFICATION OF POSSIBLE CONTAMINATION

To: Tribal Representative
Re: Handling NAGPRA materials

I am contacting you on behalf of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) Program at San Francisco State University (SFSU). NAGPRA regulations (43 CFR Part 10) require us to inform you of potential health and safety risks from handling NAGPRA materials which may have chemical contamination. Hazardous chemical tests in 2000, 2009, 2014 at the SFSU NAGPRA facilities where tribal materials are stored showed arsenic, mercury, and lead in storage containers and on artifacts. No human remains were tested. The amounts of contaminants are below industrial safety levels of concern but there are still potential long-term health risks associated in contact with these chemicals.

The SFSU NAGPRA materials were housed by the Treganza Anthropology Museum for many years. It was once common practice by museums to use chemicals on collections to prevent deterioration by mold, insects, and moisture. To date, no records documenting use of chemicals at the Museum have been found. A former SFSU professor, Michael Moratto, stated that glues, polyvinyl acetate, and a solution called Glyptol, were used to mend and stabilize artifacts.

Since the tests were conducted on many surfaces, SFSU cannot say with certainty whether hazardous materials are present on specific collections which are subject to repatriation. When handling any of the SFSU NAGPRA material, we advise wearing protective gear including gloves and masks (if dusty); and to wash all clothing after handling.

San Francisco State is strongly committed to the NAGPRA process. I hope we can work together towards safely repatriating the materials listed in the Notices. We have made a great effort to investigate potential contamination as we are concerned with your health as well as ours.

Sincerely,

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