



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

APR 19 2022

Dear Tribal Leader:

The Department of the Interior and the Department of State, in coordination with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, and in conjunction with the White House Council on Native American Affairs, will hold two virtual Tribal listening sessions to help shape a pilot program on the topic of international repatriation of Native American cultural heritage items and human remains.

The Tribal listening sessions will be held via Zoom on the following dates and times:

Monday, May 9th

1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time

[May 9th Zoom Registration](#)

Tuesday, May 10th

3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time

[May 10th Zoom Registration](#)

After Tribal consultations and listening sessions on international repatriation in 2016, 2019, and 2020, Tribes made it clear that there is a need for increased engagement with international institutions regarding the return of Native American cultural heritage items and human remains from abroad. Based on the comments we received from Tribes as a result of these sessions, and in an effort to support Tribes' international repatriation efforts, a Federal pilot program for the exchange of ideas was developed to help address this issue. This pilot program will consist of a series of dialogue sessions on international repatriation between museum leaders from western Europe and Indian Country. We envision these initial dialogue sessions to be a starting point for future dialogues and engagement.

The dialogue sessions will bring together Tribal cultural heritage experts and representatives, Tribal museums, foreign institutions, and U.S. Government museums and agencies to promote the development of positive relationships among the foreign museums and Tribes and facilitate the return of heritage items. The in-person dialogue sessions are expected to begin in late October 2022, and we estimate that the international museum participants will be able to visit at least three geographical locations in the United States over an approximate three-week period.

We would like your input on the following topics relevant to the dialogue sessions:

1. Which international institutions with significant Native American collections, or experience with repatriation to Tribes, could add value to the dialogue sessions?
2. Which geographical locations should the international representatives visit during the pilot program dialogue sessions and for future dialogue sessions?
3. What goals should be set for the dialogue sessions (discussion of best practices, exchange of ideas regarding collections management, development of collaborative opportunities, etc.)? Please provide a priority ranking for these goals and context for each goal's importance.
4. What do Tribes see as the best way for the federal government to facilitate dialogue sessions with international institutions?

In addition to joining one of the Tribal engagement sessions listed above, please submit any written comments to consultation@bia.gov by 11:59 p.m. ET on Friday, May 25, 2022.

If you have questions, or need additional information, please contact Mr. Joaquin Gallegos, Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs, at joaquin_gallegos@ios.doi.gov or Ms. Ashley Fry, Department of State’s Cultural Heritage Center, at (202) 492-1947 or FryAD@state.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bryan Newland". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

Bryan Newland
Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs