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**Nature truly expresses its sense of humor through the rare happy face spider of Hawaii.**

Hidden deep within Hawaii's lush forests lives the incredibly rare "happy face" spider. This tiny species, found nowhere else on Earth, boasts cheerful, face-like patterns on its body that are entirely natural pigments, formed by its unique genetics. What's even more fascinating is that no two happy face spiders look exactly alike. Each individual showcases a distinct design, much like a living fingerprint crafted by nature itself. Scientists theorize these unique patterns might play a role in camouflage or survival within their specific habitat. It's a wonderful reminder that even the smallest creatures can hold the biggest surprises, often with a smile to match!

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**National park signs related to Native Americans, climate change to be removed**

- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2026/01/27/national-parks-signs-censorship/>

**Opinion**

**[They want to change the definition of 'water.' That's catastrophic for Nevada.](#)**

"The blinders this new definition would force on the Clean Water Act compounds risks to all ephemeral waterways and particularly enables modern sprees of mining and development in the deserts of the United States."

By Dexter Lim, Mason Voehl and Olivia Tanager

**My Museum's Reluctant Undertakers": Repatriation after the 2023 NAGPRA Rule**

By Emily R. Holtzman 17 December 2025

**Excerpted From: Emily R. Holtzman, "My Museum's Reluctant Undertakers": Repatriation after the 2023 NAGPRA Rule, 59 Columbia Journal of Law and Social**



**Problems 99 (2025) (311 Footnotes) ([Full Document](#))**

There is a holy being at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) in New York City. Her name is t'0manwas, and she came from the sky. In her seat in the Hall of the Universe, she is more often known as Willamette Meteorite, a 15.5-ton mass of iron that is the sixth-largest meteorite in the world and the largest ever found in the United States. Her people still live in present-day Oregon, and they yearn for her to return, but she cannot go home. When the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde requested t'0manwas be repatriated as a sacred object in 1999, AMNH refused, using its authority under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) to decide she is not a sacred object and therefore not entitled to NAGPRA repatriation. AMNH said t'0manwas was "a natural feature of the landscape, rather than a specific ceremonial object" and that the repatriation claim would "potentially impair [ ] the Museum's ability to share this exceptional scientific specimen with the public." AMNH also filed suit in federal court seeking a declaratory judgment that it was the rightful owner of t'0manwas, but the parties quickly negotiated a settlement agreement. T'0man0was's story highlights the

complexity of NAGPRA determinations and the inadequacies of a system that allows museums to control Indigenous access to Indigenous culture.

Across the first floor of the museum, the Red Beaver Prow hangs in the Northwest Coast Hall. It is a replica of the prow piece once beloved by the Tlingit people of Angoon, Alaska. In 1999, tribal elder Harold Jacobs visited AMNH to review cultural items affiliated with Angoon, stumbled upon the original Red Beaver Prow by chance in a storage area, and immediately recognized it as belonging to his community. By the end of the year, it was repatriated to Angoon under NAGPRA, and half the village met it at the ferry to “celebrate[ ] its return all night long.” Through repatriation, the Red Beaver Prow was “brought back to life’ and [is] now fully integrated into the framework of [Angoon’s Tlingit] culture.” The community has granted it status as one of the most important objects in their culture and as a leader of their tribe. Here, NAGPRA successfully provided AMNH and the Angoon villagers the means to mend past losses and develop a continuing collaborative relationship.

Upstairs at AMNH, on a high floor only accessible to staff, there are seemingly endless walls of cabinets, some of which hold Native American human remains. In October 2023, AMNH removed all human remains from public displays, recognizing “human remains collections were made possible by extreme imbalances of power,” and the return of human remains is “an integral part of stewardship.” AMNH made this decision of its own volition, reflecting NAGPRA’s impact on the evolution of exhibition development and museum ethics.

In the middle, on the third floor, AMNH has closed its Hall of the Eastern Woodlands and Great Plains Hall. These closures are a reaction to the Department of the Interior’s (DOI) new regulations governing NAGPRA, which DOI promulgated on December 13, 2023 (the “2023 Rule”). Any potential construction of new exhibition halls is likely to take several years and cost tens of millions of dollars, but if such halls reopen, every Native American cultural object in the museum will be displayed with the consent of its tribal community.

NAGPRA was passed to “provide for the protection of Native American graves and the repatriation of Native American remains and cultural patrimony.” It recognizes the rights of lineal descendants, Tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations to cultural property in five categories: ancestral human remains, associated and unassociated funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony. The 2023 Rule represents the most significant update to NAGPRA since its passage in 1990, reflecting reforms that Native Americans and collecting institutions have called upon DOI to implement for years. The community of NAGPRA practitioners has received the 2023 Rule’s paradigm shift positively, albeit with some concerns about how to comply and how to fund their efforts. This concern is relatively surprising given that noncompliance with the 2023 rule carries little risk of meaningful repercussions for museums or researchers. Even if a collecting institution drags its feet, ignores reporting deadlines, or makes decisions about cultural property in bad faith, the National NAGPRA Program (“National NAGPRA”) will not investigate the institution unless it receives a written allegation of noncompliance from an outside source. Given the private nature of collections management, National NAGPRA receives few complaints and even fewer that

provide enough evidence to prompt further investigation. Thus, NAGPRA, despite having a civil penalties provision, has never been robustly enforced.

This Note argues that the 2023 Rule is an essential update to NAGPRA, but it does not do enough to ensure proper enforcement and explanation of the new regulations. To push collecting institutions to devote more resources to NAGPRA and complete repatriations with greater urgency, a stronger enforcement arm, along with greater regulatory clarity and increased public attention, is required. Part I of this Note gives an overview of American museum practices that led to the passage of NAGPRA. Part II describes NAGPRA's strengths and the weaknesses that led to a call for reform. Using firsthand accounts from legal and repatriation professionals, Part III begins with a survey of the 2023 Rule, reviews several impactful reforms, and details barriers to compliance and questions that the 2023 Rule fails to address. Part IV proposes solutions to these issues, recommending DOI strengthen its enforcement of NAGPRA and exploring how greater enforcement could impact museums, federal agencies, and aggrieved parties. It also suggests National NAGPRA make certain changes to its online guidance and briefly addresses how public attention impacts NAGPRA repatriation efforts. Ultimately, this Note assesses the 2023 Rule's first year post-promulgation and demonstrates the need to hold collecting institutions to account to finally fulfill "the promise of NAGPRA."

[. . .]

In discussing the legal minutiae of NAGPRA, it can be easy to forget its significance for the social, cultural, emotional, and religious lives of Native Americans. When NAGPRA repatriations are complete, ancestors and their possessions will be put to rest, sacred items will be properly cared for, and future generations will have access to their own cultural patrimony. Museums will not be empty, and they will have forged productive, cooperative relationships with Indigenous partners. The 2023 Rule makes great strides in drawing the NAGPRA community closer to this future, but, as it exists today, it lacks both the funding and the incentives necessary to complete its task. By expanding its enforcement capacity and proactively investigating failures to comply with the 2023 Rule, National NAGPRA can push collecting institutions to make NAGPRA an institutional priority backed by sufficient financial support, leading to full and timely compliance. With NAGPRA practitioners guided by the 2023 Rule, using all the resources available to provide dignity and respect to collections, the promise of NAGPRA may yet be fulfilled.

Exec. Managing Editor, Colum. J. L. & Soc. Probs., 2025-2026. J.D. 2026, Columbia Law School.

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*Carrying the dream forward needs more than reflection" — anon*



## Reminder: Register Now for ECWS!

The 2026 Executive Council Winter Session will be held February 9–12, 2026, at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C. ECWS has long been a cornerstone event in NCAI’s efforts to strengthen government-to-government relationships between Tribal Nations and the federal government. This event provides an essential platform for Tribal leaders, members of Congress, and high-ranking officials from the administration to come together, fostering constructive dialogue and collaborative policymaking.

[View Registration and Event Information for ECWS](#)

Held concurrently with ECWS is NCAI’s **Native Youth Leadership Summit (NYLS)**. Hosted by the NCAI Youth Commission, the Summit is open to Native youth ages 14–24 and offers an immersive, hands-on leadership and advocacy training experience. Register now and view the agenda at a glance at the link below!

[Register for NYLS](#)

The State of Indian Nations (SOIN) is delivered by the President of the National Congress of American Indians and serves as a formal address to Congress, the Administration, and the nation. This year’s SOIN will be held on **Monday, February 9, at 10:00 a.m. ET** at the **Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C.**

## 12th Annual Wiring the Rez: Innovation Across Indian Country

[Learn More and Register](#)

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**Ashurbanipal** (flourished 7th century bce) was the last of the great kings of [Assyria](#) (reigned 668 to 627 bce), who assembled in [Nineveh](#) the first systematically organized library in [Mesopotamia](#) and the [ancient Middle East](#).

## FactFusion: Space & Science

A settlement older than the pyramids has just been confirmed in North America.

Near the North Saskatchewan River, close to Sturgeon Lake, researchers uncovered evidence of an Indigenous village dating back roughly 11,000 years. This was not a short-term hunting stop but a long-established community, with carefully arranged fire pits, stone tools, and remains of the extinct *Bison antiquus* showing long-term planning, food systems, and deep environmental knowledge shortly after the last ice age.

What makes this discovery especially significant is how closely it aligns with Indigenous oral traditions. Cree knowledge holders have long described this region as an important cultural and trade center passed down through generations of storytelling. The archaeological evidence now confirms that these histories were not symbolic or exaggerated, but accurate records of lived reality. The findings directly challenge outdated academic models that framed early Indigenous societies as constantly nomadic and lacking permanent settlements.

The discovery, led by the *Âsowanânihk* Council in collaboration with researchers from the Universities of Saskatchewan and Calgary, is now sparking urgent calls for protection. Parts of the site are under threat from modern development, raising concerns about the loss of irreplaceable heritage. For Indigenous communities, this is not just a scientific breakthrough, but a moment of recognition — proof that their knowledge preserved truth long before it was acknowledged by institutions.

Credit: *Âsowanânihk* Council in collaboration with researchers from the Universities of Saskatchewan and Calgary





## [Know Your Planet](#)

Near Sturgeon Lake First Nation, archaeologists have uncovered one of the oldest known Indigenous settlements on the North American continent. The site, known as Âsowanânihk, has produced radiocarbon dates between 10,700 and 11,000 years old, placing it deep in the period just after the last Ice Age, thousands of years before the Egyptian pyramids were built.

The name Âsowanânihk means “a place to cross” in the Cree language, a reflection of both geography and memory. Long before maps or borders, this location mattered. It connected people, animals, water, and movement across the landscape.

The site came to light in 2023 when eroding riverbanks exposed stone tools, hearths, and fire-blackened earth. Amateur archaeologist Dave Rondeau recognized the significance and alerted researchers, beginning excavations that would quietly rewrite regional history.

What makes the discovery remarkable is its permanence. These were not fleeting camps. Large hearths, repeated tool-making debris, and layered occupation zones suggest people returned here again and again over generations. This challenges the long-standing assumption that early Indigenous groups in the region were purely nomadic.

Excavations also revealed remains of *Bison antiquus*, a massive Ice Age species now extinct, showing that the inhabitants were skilled hunters adapting to dramatic environmental change. Charcoal analysis indicates controlled fire use nearly 11,000 years ago, evidence of deliberate land management long before agriculture emerged elsewhere in the world.

For Indigenous communities, the discovery confirms what oral histories have always carried, that people have lived, adapted, and stewarded this land since time immemorial. Science is not uncovering a new story here, it is finally catching up to an old one.

This settlement was not waiting to be discovered.

It was waiting to be recognized.

Follow Know Your Planet for real discoveries where ancient presence reshapes what we think we know about human history. Follow Know Your Planet for the hidden origins behind things we use every day, especially the words we speak without thinking.

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**For centuries, linguists noticed something strange.** Words for family, numbers, tools, and the sky echoed across languages spoken thousands of miles apart. English, Spanish, Greek, Hindi, Farsi, and hundreds more all seemed to point back to a single vanished tongue. But who spoke it, and where, remained one of history's most heated debates.

In the early 2020s, large-scale DNA studies finally added flesh to the linguistic skeleton. By analyzing ancient genomes from across Eurasia, researchers traced the earliest Indo-European speakers to a small population living about 6,400 years ago on the Pontic-Caspian Steppe, between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea.

These people were not city builders. They were mobile pastoralists and farmers, moving with herds across open grasslands. Archaeology links them to early steppe cultures that used wagons, practiced animal husbandry, and buried their dead beneath earthen mounds. Their mobility mattered. As their descendants migrated west into Europe and east into Central and South Asia, their language traveled with them, adapting, splitting, and evolving.

DNA shows these migrations were not just cultural. Steppe ancestry appears suddenly in ancient skeletons from regions thousands of kilometers apart, matching the timing when Indo-European languages begin to diverge. Linguistic clues align with the genetics, shared words for wheels, horses, and livestock reflect a world already shaped by pastoral life and early transport.

What makes this story remarkable is scale. A few thousand people, speaking a language never written down, ended up shaping how nearly half of humanity speaks today. Their words survived where their names did not.

Language, it turns out, can outlive nations, empires, and even memory.



## Stanford Scientists Reveal Oldest Map of the Night Sky, Previously Lost to Time



Photo: Jacqueline Ramseyer Orrell/SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory

A piece of thousand-year-old parchment is finally giving up its secrets.

In a major breakthrough this week, researchers at the SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory in Menlo Park used X-ray beams to uncover a long-lost map of the universe — the latest in a decadelong effort to recover the work of Hipparchus, the second-century B.C. mathematician, known as the father of astronomy.

The ancient astronomer's star coordinates, which represent the oldest-known attempt to catalog the entire night sky, were thought to be lost for good.

**Why this matters:** While multispectral imaging had previously revealed some fragments of the medieval manuscript, the X-ray fluorescence technology at SLAC allows for much higher resolution. And beyond the excitement of the hunt, the findings carry significant weight for the history of science. According to lead scholar on the experiment, Victor Gysembergh, historians debated for years whether the Roman astronomer Ptolemy had plagiarized Hipparchus' star catalog.

[Read More](#)

*Too many great photos:*

## **Protests and people power across Australia – Invasion Day 2026**

### **Presidential Executive Orders**

**[Addressing State and Local Failures to Rebuild Los Angeles After Wildfire Disasters](#)**

**[January 27, 2026](#)**

**[Continuance of the Federal Emergency Management Agency Review Council](#)**

**[January 23, 2026](#)**

**[Stopping Wall Street from Competing with Main Street Homebuyers](#)** **[January 20, 2026](#)**

**[Proclamation: National Day of Patriotic Devotion, 2026](#)**

**[January 20, 2026](#)**

> **Caring for grandchildren** may protect against cognitive decline, according to a six-year study of 2,887 grandparents; grandparents who provided child care scored higher on memory and verbal fluency tests ([More](#))

**[Young people vote "peace" as Oxford Children's Word of 2025.](#)**

Ecologists say we should be [eating invasive species](#).

Horse and bald eagle form unlikely friendship in [Budweiser Super Bowl ad](#). (w/video)

### **Scholarships Available for AAM 2026**

Want to join us in Philadelphia but can't afford the costs? If you're a museum professional or US-based student who's never attended an Annual Meeting, our scholarship program can get you complimentary registration, a travel and lodging offset stipend, and more. Apply by **February 6** with a short essay and a copy of your resume; notifications arrive by March 6.

[Apply now](#)

Expanding a wildly popular television universe is always a risk, but the newly released trailer for [Marshals](#) makes one thing immediately clear: this [Yellowstone spinoff](#) is doing it right.

“*Marshals*” to premiere Sunday, March 1, 2026, airing Sundays at 9/8c on CBS and streaming on [Paramount+](#) the following day.

### **Tatanka Means to play Miles Kittle**

Tatanka Means is the son of actor and activist Russell Means. His credits include Killers of the Flower [Moon](#), Wind River: The Next Chapter, and Horizon: An American Saga - Chap.1 and 2.

In addition to Grimes, the show is bringing back Gil Birmingham (Thomas Rainwater) and Mo Brings Plenty.

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**Facebook · National Congress of American Indians**

*As communities continue “wiring the rez,” online enterprises are becoming powerful drivers of economic self-determination, but also bringing ...*

### **[Tribal Digital Sovereignty: How Native Communities Are ...](#)**

[Ford Foundation](#)    <https://www.fordfoundation.org> > Stories

Nov 12, 2025 — Learn how Tribal *Digital Sovereignty* empowers Native Nations to gain self-determination over their data and *tech infrastructure* to shape a ...

### **[Tribal nations put sovereignty at the center of future with AI](#)**

[ASU Law](#)    <https://law.asu.edu> > [newsroom](#) > [tribal-nations-put-sov...](#)

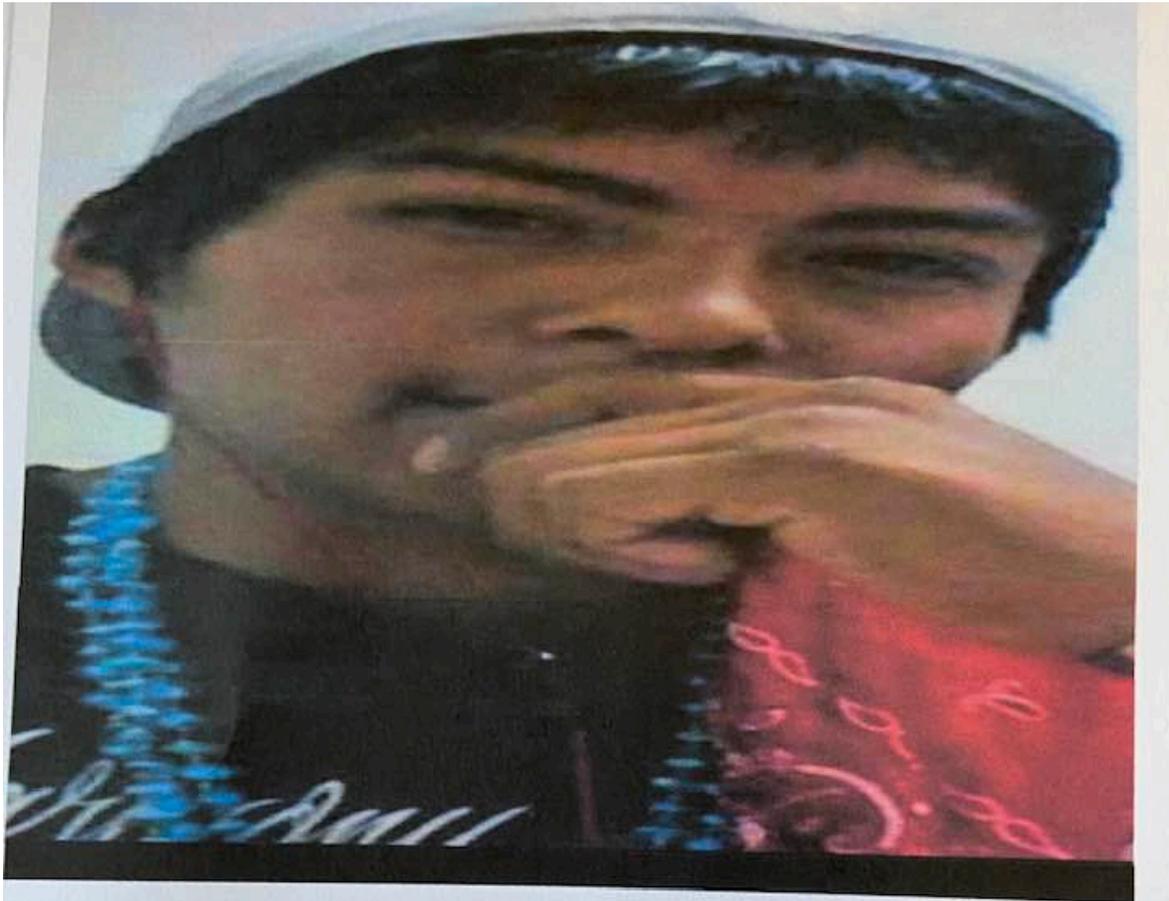
Sep 19, 2025 — Tribal nations *put sovereignty* at the center of future *with AI*. ASU *Law* event explores how Native *communities* can incorporate AI *in* an effort to ...

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Oct 1, 2025 — Many Tribes have repeatedly expressed interest *in* participating *in* and benefiting from the *digital* economy, making this a pivotal time

### **[The Future of AI Runs Through Indian Country - Payne Institute](#)**

[Payne Institute for Public Policy](https://payneinstitute.mines.edu)

<https://payneinstitute.mines.edu> > [the-future-of-ai-runs-th...](#)



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