

MEDIA RELEASE

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SCIENTISTS SUPPORT INDIGENOUS RIGHTS TO CULTURAL HERITAGE

The World Archaeological Congress notes its strong support for the rights of Indigenous peoples with regard to Indigenous cultural heritage. In accordance with its Code of Ethics, the Vermillion Accord, and the Tamaki-Makau-rau Accord, WAC actively supports Indigenous communities in their efforts to make and negotiate repatriation claims.

The World Archaeological Congress affirms the important role that repatriation plays for Indigenous communities in carrying out their cultural responsibilities.

Dorothy Lippert, the Indigenous representative on the WAC Executive, notes "The World Archaeological Congress was founded on the idea that good archaeology involves social justice and that repatriation is one way in which this concept is put into action."

In support of the rights and responsibilities of Indigenous communities, WAC calls for a global moratorium on the testing and sampling of contested human remains that were obtained without consent of the community.

If permission has previously been given for testing, WAC calls for the results of testing to be shared with the Indigenous source communities. "WAC is simply noting the importance of working with Indigenous communities when studying human remains," said Dorothy Lippert, "Research produced with the permission and cooperation of communities is significantly richer and more interesting."

The World Archaeological Congress urges institutions and governments to engage openly and honestly in repatriation negotiations with Indigenous communities and notes the need for these institutions and governments to take financial responsibility for reburial costs to communities. Institutions must prioritise contested human remains when compiling inventories.

The World Archaeological Congress calls on all holding institutions to ensure that information about their collection is readily available and that access to archives for further research is readily available on request. The World Archaeological Congress supports and endorses the use of oral traditions (as intangible cultural heritage) as a viable tool for providing a primary context for repatriation.

The World Archaeological Congress will operationalize these concepts by holding an Inter-Congress on repatriation to be organized by Indigenous peoples.

Presentations and publications at World Archaeological Congress meetings will be aligned with the WAC Code of Ethics, the Vermillion Accord and the Tamaki-

Makau-rau Accord to ensure that Indigenous communities have given consent for the presentation of the information involved.

Professor Claire Smith, President of the World Archaeological Congress, notes "These measures will ensure that information provided under the aegis of the World Archaeological Congress will be respectful and collaborative in nature and will not harm the cultural heritage of Indigenous people."

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Professor Claire Smith
Mobile: 0872 698 353 (Ireland)
Email: claire.smith@flinders.edu.au

Dr Dorothy Lippert
Indigenous representative on Executive
Email: DorothyTLippert@gmail.com

BACKGROUND:

The World Archaeological Congress (WAC) is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization and is the only elected international body of practising archaeologists. WAC holds an international congress every four years to promote the exchange of the results of archaeological research; professional training and public education for disadvantaged nations, groups and communities; the empowerment and betterment of Indigenous groups and First Nations peoples; and the conservation of archaeological sites.

The World Archaeological Congress, by statute, has an Indigenous Council made up of Indigenous members. The current Indigenous Council has representatives from Australia, New Zealand, North America and South America.

The Sixth World Archaeological Congress (WAC-6) was held from 29th June—4th July at the University College Dublin. This was the first World Archaeological Congress to be held in Ireland. It was attended by over 1,800 archaeologists, native peoples and international scholars from 74 nations. Motions from the Plenary session of the Congress were considered by subsequent meetings of the World Archaeological Congress Council and Executive.

The Congress Patron for WAC-6 was President Mary McAleese. Previous Congress Patrons include Harriet Mayor Fulbright, Prince Charles and Nelson Mandela.