Applied Anthropology Laboratories News Release

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Applied Anthropology Laboratories Receives NAGPRA Grant from National Park Service

The Applied Anthropology Laboratories (AAL) in the Department of Anthropology has been granted $52,019 under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) by the National Park Service. These FY2013 Documentation & Consultation grant funds will be used to assist Ball State University in documenting human remains and associated funerary objects sensitive cultural objects in the Department of Anthropology’s collections in consultation with tribal communities.

NAGPRA, enacted in 1990, requires federally-funded museums and federal agencies to inventory and identify human remains and cultural objects that have been acquired prior to 1990. Principal investigators Dr. S. Homes Hogue, Dr. Cailín Murray, and Christine Keller and students from the Department of Anthropology are actively working to document and rehouse these collections as well as consult with tribes connected to the collections with the goal of reuniting them with their ancestors and sacred cultural objects.

“We very much appreciate the funding that allows us to work with Native American tribes to identify (and eventually repatriate) the Native American human remains and cultural items in our collection,” said Christine Keller, co-principal investigator for the grant.

The AAL is currently consulting with Native American tribes that have regional connections to locations in which the human remains and cultural objects originated. These connections are made by examining geographic and biological evidence as well as historical context and oral histories.

Students gain a unique opportunity to be engaged with current issues in Anthropology. “Consulting with representatives of Native American tribes for NAGPRA has helped me better understand the concerns and perspectives of Native American people regarding the treatment of human
remains and has offered me the opportunity for building cooperative relationships for future research with descendant communities,” said Oliver Firestone, graduate student in the Department of Anthropology.

The Applied Anthropology Laboratories (AAL) is one of several Centers and Institutes at Ball State University that focus on providing innovative and interdisciplinary research activities that expand beyond the borders of our campus. As an outreach branch of the Department of Anthropology that focuses on providing enrichment opportunities for students pursuing careers in anthropology and archaeology, the AAL seeks cultural resource management contracts in the public and private sector as well as conducting grant-related academic research and public education in archaeology providing students with career experience.