

# Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan's Recommitment to the Earth



*October 12, 2012*

*Nibokaan Cemetery*

*Isabella Reservation, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan*

## REPATRIATE:

to restore or return to the  
country of origin, allegiance,  
or citizenship

The Native American Graves  
Protection and Repatriation Act  
(NAGPRA) was passed in 1990

The Ziibiwing Cultural Society  
(Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways)  
has been working diligently on  
behalf of the Saginaw Chippewa  
Indian Tribe of Michigan since 1993  
to repatriate our ancestors and their  
associated funerary objects

The Saginaw Chippewa Indian  
Tribe of Michigan reburied

the remains of **125** ancestors  
and **219** associated funerary  
objects on **October 12, 2012**

Prior to 1901, **1** ancestral  
individual was donated to the  
Robert S. Peabody Museum  
of Archaeology in  
Andover, Massachusetts

A small delegation from the  
Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe  
drove to Andover on  
October 7-9, 2012 to retrieve  
the ancestor for reburial





124 individuals and  
their 219 associated funerary  
objects came from the  
University of Michigan

The Transfer of Possession  
document signing between the  
University of Michigan and the  
Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe  
of Michigan took place on  
**October 11, 2012 at 3pm** in the  
Kipke Campus Safety Building

The 125 ancestors were kept in  
9,360 boxes which contained  
**103,801** individual fragmented  
remains – the boxes were carefully  
emptied and the splintered remains  
were placed in cloth & cedar bundles

This process at the Ziibiwing Center took many community volunteers and hours to complete – the ancestors and associated funerary objects were prayed for & feasted in a traditional manner

Mt. Pleasant and Shepherd  
Public High Schools released  
11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade Anishinabe  
students for the day to assist  
and witness the repatriation

The newly-formed  
Saginaw Chippewa Men's Society  
assisted with the reburial



The ancestors and their associated  
funerary objects were walked  
2 miles from the Ziibiwing Center  
to the Nibokaan Cemetery on the  
Isabella Reservation for their  
**Recommitment to the  
Earth Ceremony**







The Nibokaan Cemetery was established in 1995 for the explicit purpose of reburying repatriated Native American ancestral remains and associated funerary objects



*Wibing Girls*  
SUNSHINE STATE UNIVERSITY

Honored guests included:

Dennis Banks

Paul Collins

Great Lakes Spiritual Leaders:

Eddie Benton-Banai

George Martin

Duncan Standing Rock Sr.

Alvin Windyboy



This effort was accomplished in  
collaboration with the

**12** Federally-recognized Tribes &  
**2** State Historic Tribes of Michigan;  
and the Chippewa Cree Tribe of the  
Rocky Boy's Reservation of Montana  
& Sokaogan Chippewa Community  
of Wisconsin







Prior to this repatriation, the  
ancestors were excavated,  
kept in boxes on shelves,  
used as specimens of study,  
and photographed - all in the  
name of “science”



*Nibing Guzis*  
Summer Moon Photography







More work needs to be done....

Today there are still **hundreds**  
of Anishinabe ancestors &  
their associated funerary objects  
at the University of Michigan

Nationally it is estimated that  
there are over **180,000**  
Native American ancestors  
still being held in various  
universities, museums, private  
collections, and other  
repositories



Globally the number of our  
ancestors who were boxed-up and  
shipped to other countries is

**UNKNOWN**

Since October 2012, Ziibiwing  
has repatriated, or assisted in  
the repatriation of, nearly

**350** ancestors and hundreds of  
their associated funerary objects



*Niibing Giizis*  
Summer Moon Photography

This presentation was brought to you  
by the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan's  
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Lifeways)

Photos by Marcella Hadden,  
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MEGWETCH.