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Introduction: The Place of History in NAGPRA Determinations of Cultural Affiliation

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) establishes the protocols and processes for determining the affiliation of human remains and the repatriation of Native American remains to their respective tribes. In their review of NAGPRA, as applied to human remains discovered from Fort Union National Monument, New Mexico, Cathy Spude and Doug Scott suggest that the identification and repatriation process does not consider the role and place of historical documents in determining affiliation, placing too great an emphasis on physical anthropology in situations where the written record may shed light on the topics of identity and affiliation. In response to this article, three archaeologists who have dealt with the NAGPRA process in a variety of contexts, Francis McManamon, Joe Watkins, and Bill Lees, offer their thoughts on Spude and Scott, and NAGPRA.

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