



Impact and Service: University of Montana Repatriation and Stewardship Team Hires and Activities as of *February 1, 2026*

Report submitted by co-PIs: Courtney Little Axe and Kelly Dixon

I. Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) Research Assistant (RA) Hires and Activities

1. Blackfeet (Ampskapi Piikani)

Mikalen Running Fisher, PhD Program, UM Department of Anthropology – mentoring new student hires; practicing compliance with new NAGPRA regulations; overseeing/supervising group projects; learning safety protocols and mitigation measures for collections care; establishing the first database for Blackfeet collections (based on the database created for Tribes by the UM Team).

2. Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's Reservation (Ojibwe/Anishinaabe and Nêhiyaw)

Jennifer Wilkinson, MA [and then PhD] Program, UM Department of Anthropology – learning about the new NAGPRA regulations; assisting with NAGPRA cases; engaging with Rocky Boy's THPO to gain knowledge and skills required to assist with Rocky Boy's culture and heritage.

3. Confederated Salish (Séliš), Kalispell (Qlispé), and Kootenai (Ksanka) TBA – UM Team filling in temporarily until hire is completed

4. Crow (Apsáalooke)

Jacob Brien, MA Program (Linguistics), UM Department of Anthropology – bringing NAGPRA Technician experience and Apsáalooke traditional knowledge to the UM team; consulting with Crow THPO on archaeological cases with repatriation potential.

5. Fort Belknap (Assiniboine/Nakoda and Gros Ventre/Aaniiih)

Danielle Plumage, BA Program (Linguistics), UM Department of Anthropology - learning about the new NAGPRA regulations; assisting with NAGPRA cases (e.g., working on inventory completion draft for the Federal Register); engaging with Fort Belknap THPO.

6. Fort Peck (Assiniboine/Nakoda, Dakota, and Lakota)

G.E. Mebust, BA Program, UM Department of Anthropology (double major in Mathematics, applying to MA Program at UM Anth) – assisting Fort Peck projects (e.g., statistical analysis of repatriation impacts on communities); learning how to draft NAGPRA compliance documents as requested by the Fort Peck THPO; presenting overviews of statewide repatriation efforts to K-12 audiences.

7. Little Shell Chippewa (**Ojibwe/Anishinaabe and Métis**)

Benji Headswift, MA Program, UM Department of Anthropology – learning about establishing relationships for protocols; learning about the new NAGPRA regulations and associated legal processes.

8. Northern Cheyenne (**Tsétsêhéstâhese and Só'taeo'o**)

Mikaylia Yellowrobe, BA Program, UM Department of Anthropology – working with Northern Cheyenne THPO to schedule a consultation visit(s) at UM, as well as specialized GIS and NAGPRA training events; liaising with UMACF and NAGPRA Team to compile consultation records; preparing training sessions for new team members working with archaeological records to assist with federal agencies like the Bureau of Land Management.

II. Support Team Hires and Activities

Dr. Nikki Manning, UM Anthro Alum - developing cultural affiliation documentation; managing database systems to generate repatriation inventories; facilitating and supporting transparent and respectful relationships and relationship-based repatriation processes with Indigenous nations; and guiding institutions through culturally responsive compliance practices.

Lisa Hunt, PhD Program, UM Department of Anthropology - mentoring new student hires; practicing compliance with new NAGPRA regulations; overseeing/supervising group projects; providing access to/experience with the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) statewide antiquities database to assist with cultural affiliation determinations; researching archival and archaeological records to assist with repatriation processes; quality control of cultural affiliation database content (in preparation for sharing with Indigenous nations).

Elizabeth Matilda Abena Mantebeah, PhD Program, UM Department of Anthropology – volunteering to assist with international repatriation issues, including awareness of global intangible heritage concepts; assisting with outreach projects.

Lucas Boyden, BA Program, UM Department of Anthropology (applying to MA Program at UM Anth) – collaborating with an archaeologist to understand bison [faunal] analysis in collections such as those from buffalo/bison jumps to support UM's ongoing inventory and consultation process; learning the new NAGPRA regulations, as well as honoring the

existing Programmatic Agreement UM has with Indigenous nations; assisting with outreach re: statewide repatriation efforts.

Grace Denison, BA Program, UM Department of Anthropology (applying to MA Program at UM Anth) - learning the new NAGPRA regulations; assisting with outreach re: statewide repatriation efforts.

Dean Nicolai, PhD Program, UM Department of Anthropology – volunteer mentor – assisting with Tribal Historic Preservation issues.

Zena Tang, BA Program, UM Media Arts – serving as digital media specialist to assist with outreach, database content, website development, and event planning.

NOTE: This work supports statewide [and beyond] repatriation efforts and the needs of regional Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, while providing students (undergrads and grads) with engaging, real-world, hands-on, experiences that uphold the principles of Montana Indian Education for All (IEFA) and MCA 2-15-142 to help prepare them for the challenges of working in heritage fields in today's world. Students are encouraged to put their existing coursework and experiences into practice via courses such as Practicum, Internship, Field Experience, and Field School, as well as MA and PhD Research, Thesis, and Dissertation credits.