



NEWS RELEASE

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NHSC President Meets with Minnesota Historical Society on Digital Repatriation of Tribal Materials

New Town, N.D. – Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College President, Dr. Twyla Baker along with several representatives of the Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation Interpretive Center recently met with members of the Minnesota Historical Society for the digital repatriation of cultural materials. These materials are part of the work of Gilbert Wilson, who recorded and published ethnographic information on the Hidatsa and Mandan people in the early 1900's. The digital repatriation event held in St. Paul, MN is the culmination of work begun in 2017, when Dr. Baker, staff and faculty from NHS College, and elders from MHA Nation visited the Minnesota Historical Society to study the Wilson collections and to begin conversations about partnerships.

Repatriation, or the return of culturally significant items to their places and people of origin, is extremely important to Tribal Nations in the U.S. and is gaining traction across the country. NHS College in partnership with the Minnesota State Historical Society, negotiated a 'digital' repatriation, which is comprised of archival-quality scans of hundreds of photos, journals, prints, and documents contained in the Gilbert Wilson collection, which NHS plans to make available to the Interpretive Center, Tribal departments, students, faculty, and the public back on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation in northwest North Dakota. The Wilson materials will help to educate Tribal members about the traditions, historic events, stories, and knowledge of the Hidatsa people and will serve as a catalyst for further research. Wilson's studies on the Hidatsa included many of their skills and traditions such as how they trapped eagles, how they built earth lodges, and their agricultural and economic histories. Most notable among Wilson's work was the relationship established with Buffalo Bird Woman as he recorded her story along with memories of her life in the Missouri River bottomlands.

President Baker stated, "There was so much joy, and a wonderful spirit around the return of the materials, and so much excitement for the future for our Tribal people who wish to know more about themselves and their ancestors. It's gratifying that NHS College is a conduit that can make that happen for generations of MHA Nation Tribal members. This work is at the heart of our mission as the institution of higher education for our Tribal Nation. The personal ties, however, were likely the most impactful for me as the granddaughter and great-granddaughter

of individuals whose images and words appear in the materials. I want generations of our young people to be able to see themselves and connect as fundamentally and spiritually as I did when they see the collection. Accessibility to these materials is crucial for that to happen, and being able to make the items available digitally to a larger audience of MHA Tribal members is such a big step. My hope is that we always continue to nurture a good relationship between our institutions as we move the needle towards justice and healing for everyone involved.”

NHSC offers in-demand certificate programs and associate degrees as well as three bachelor’s degrees. The college offers high-quality cultural, academic, and vocational education. NHSC provides encouragement and support to facilitate successful college careers.

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