

Statement offered to media on Aug. 30, 2020 regarding repatriation request by Miakan-Garza Band

The University of Texas at Austin's Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL) maintains that repatriating remains to affiliated tribes and indigenous groups is the right thing to do and that it must be done with sensitivity to legal and cultural issues. TARL supports the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), has faithfully repatriated remains under its guidance in the past and will continue to do so in the future. The law requires that certain standards be met, and, in this case, the known facts do not offer grounds for the requested repatriation. The Miakan-Garza Band notes on their website they are "one of the over two-hundred bands that resided in Texas and northeastern Mexico when the Spaniards first arrived." The remains in question, having been found in a region where many tribes spent time, have no culturally identifiable information that ties them to the band. Two federally recognized tribes, the Caddo Nation and the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, objected to repatriating the remains to the Miakan-Garza Band, with the Caddo expressing "a significant interest in human remains, associated and unassociated ... found within these areas." Without specific information connecting the remains to the Miakan-Garza Band, TARL cannot provide them the remains, particularly over the objections of other tribes.

These are complex issues, and we respect the deep concern all parties have for how to handle these remains. We take the care of them very seriously and are always open to receiving new information that informs our approach.

Note: This statement is provided as a matter of record. After this statement was issued, University of Texas at Austin President Jay Hartzell announced on Sept. 25, 2020 that the university would in fact seek a recommendation from the NAGPRA Review Committee that will enable the university to offer the remains properly for reburial.