

**State Historic Preservation Office/
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Human Remains Discovery Protocol
(October 2016)**

In the event that human remains are encountered during construction or archaeological investigations, the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) recommends that the following protocol is implemented:

- Human remains must be treated with the utmost dignity and respect at all times. Should human remains or *suspected* human remains be encountered, work in the general area of the discovery will stop immediately and the location will be secured and protected from damage and disturbance.
- If skeletal remains are identified and the archaeologist is not able to conclusively determine whether they are human, the remains and any associated materials must be left in place. A qualified forensic anthropologist, bioarchaeologist or physical anthropologist will assess the remains *in situ* to help determine if they are human.
- No skeletal remains or associated materials will be collected or removed until appropriate consultation has taken place and a plan of action has been developed.
- The SHPO, the appropriate Indian Nations, the involved state and federal agencies, the coroner, and local law enforcement will be notified immediately. Requirements of the coroner and local law enforcement will be adhered to. A qualified forensic anthropologist, bioarchaeologist or physical anthropologist will assess the remains *in situ* to help determine if the remains are Native American or non-Native American.
- If human remains are determined to be Native American, they will be left in place and protected from further disturbance until a plan for their avoidance or removal can be generated. Please note that avoidance is the preferred option of the SHPO and the Indian Nations. The involved agency will consult SHPO and the appropriate Indian Nations to develop a plan of action that is consistent with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) guidance. Photographs of Native American human remains and associated funerary objects should not be taken without consulting with the involved Indian Nations.
- If human remains are determined to be non-Native American, the remains will be left in place and protected from further disturbance until a plan for their avoidance or removal can be generated. Please note that avoidance is the preferred option of the SHPO. Consultation with the SHPO and other appropriate parties will be required to determine a plan of action.
- To protect human remains from possible damage, the SHPO recommends that burial information not be released to the public.