

Brown signs bill amending Native archaeological law

SALEM – Gov. Kate Brown held a ceremonial signing on Tuesday, June 27, of Senate Bill 144, which requires all investigatory reports related to violation of state law regarding discovery of all archaeological objects (pre- and post-contact period) be submitted to the Legislative Commission on Indian Services and directs county district attorneys to notify the state Attorney General when they decide not to prosecute a person for violating cultural protection laws.



Contributed photo

Tribal Council Secretary Jon A. George and Tribal Council member Kathleen George attended a ceremonial signing by Gov. Kate Brown, center, on Tuesday, June 27, at the State Capitol in Salem for a bill that closes gaps in the state's already protective laws regarding Native cultural resources.

The amended law now requires that law enforcement also notify the Commission on Indian Services when possible contraband artifacts are seized and gives the commission authority to designate an appropriate Native Tribe and notify that Tribe of the seizure.

The amended law also requires that county district attorneys notify the state Attorney General's Office when they decide not to prosecute a possible case of possessing contraband objects and allows the Attorney General to take full charge of any investigation and prosecution.

"This bill closes gaps in the state's already protective laws applicable to cultural resources," Historic Preservation Manager Breece Edwards said. "It clearly identifies the restrictions and prohibitions of collecting 'artifacts' on public lands and allows crimes to be prosecuted at the state level when county district attorneys choose not to fulfill those obligations. This is a significant move forward in the protection of the belongings associated with the past generations of the Tribe. It has taken several years and many people working together to reach this point."

State laws do not apply to a person who unintentionally discovers an archaeological object that has been exposed by the forces of nature and retains the object, but does apply to sacred objects, human remains, funerary objects or objects of cultural patrimony. Those items are required to be returned to an appropriate Tribe for reinterment or other disposition.

Tribal Council Secretary Jon A. George, Tribal Council member Kathleen George and Edwards attended the signing ceremony. ■

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