



THE UNIVERSITY of  
NEW MEXICO

**MAXWELL MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY**

September 16, 2017

Mr. Danial Smith, Chief  
Tlowitsis Nation  
1345 Bute Crescent  
Campbell River, BC V9H 1G6  
CANADA

Dear Chief Smith:

In 1941 Frank Hibben, a professor of anthropology at the University of New Mexico, unlawfully removed the chief's pole that belongs to your family and that was located in the village of Kalugwis on Turnour Island, British Columbia. He then shipped the pole to the university, which failed to carry out due diligence regarding its ownership or the circumstances of its removal. For more than half a century afterwards, no one at the university except Hibben knew about the circumstances under which the pole was acquired. With a few half-hearted exceptions, the pole was left to deteriorate, no research about the pole was undertaken, and no attempt was made to present its context and meaning to the public. In hindsight we appreciate that from the beginning the pole was treated as a trophy, which was mostly ignored once its novelty wore off.

We regard the treatment of the pole between 1941 and the recent past to be a shameful episode in anthropology's history. On behalf of the Department of Anthropology and the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology, we apologize to you, to the Smith family as a whole, and to the Tlowitsis Nation for the inexcusable actions of the past. We will work with you to ensure that the harms of the past are redressed to the extent that is possible, including by caring for and interpreting the Smith Family's pole according to the family's wishes. We will do what we can to ensure that a suitable replacement pole is carved and raised at a site selected by the Tlowitsis Nation.

Again, we offer our apologies for the wrongs done to the family and the Nation.

Sincerely,

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