



The Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology

February 27, 2012

Kevin Kay
President, Spike TV
1633 Broadway
New York, New York 10019

Dear Mr. Kay:

On behalf of the Executive Board of the Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology, and on behalf of all of our members, I wish to express in the strongest terms possible our opposition to Spike TV's program, "American Digger," and we urge you to cancel this program before it causes irreparable damage to our archaeological heritage. This type of programming encourages looting and profiteering from the plundering of archaeological sites. Your decision to air the series is irresponsible, unethical, and demonstrates a complete lack of respect for the heritage of families and communities across the country. The value of archaeology is not monetary but lies in its ability to increase our understanding of the past, to teach us about past daily life. The cultural heritage that Spike TV and Ric Savage are exploiting belongs to us collectively, and we are all responsible for its preservation. It is critical that you understand that archaeology has the potential to tell us about the lifeways of all Americans, regardless of ethnicity, race, class, minority status, religion, age, or wealth, and in learning about all of these people, we come to a better understanding about who we are today. Your program, however, encourages the destruction of the past and the loss of context—the critical information contained within archaeological sites. Worse, this is done as a form of entertainment and for the monetary benefit of Ric Savage and your company. Your thoughtless promotion of "American Digger" not only encourages relic hunters and unscrupulous individuals to exploit our collective past, but sends the message to your viewers that it is okay to dig up archaeological sites for profit; the loss and destruction of sites that will follow is unthinkable.

The archaeological community is ready to advise and assist you in creating programming that explains the process of archaeological research and invites viewers to engage with the past in a thoughtful and productive manner. "American Digger" does not do either. We urge you to act responsibly and to cancel this program immediately.

Sincerely,

Dr. Karen Metheny
Chair, Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology