



The Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology

February 27, 2012

Mr. John Fahey, Chairman and CEO
Tim T. Kelly, President
Gilbert M. Grosvenor, Chairman, National Geographic Education Foundation
Board of Trustees

To the National Geographic Society:

For shame! 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 your upcoming series, "Diggers," 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 that you claim as your focus of interest. One would expect the National Geographic Society, one of our most important advocates for conservation, stewardship, research, and education, to understand that 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. Your educational and research programs and your funding of important scholarly research suggest that you recognize that we come to a better understanding about who we are today when we respect and learn from one another. This series, however, encourages the destruction of the past and the loss of context—the critical information contained within archaeological sites—as a form of entertainment. Further, your choice in programming represents a complete failure with regard to your mission statement; by airing this program, National Geographic encourages individuals to profit from the looting of a heritage that belongs to us all, regardless of ethnicity, race, class, minority status, religion, age, or wealth. Your thoughtless promotion of "Diggers" 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. We urge you to act responsibly and to cancel this program immediately.

Sincerely,

Dr. Karen Metheny
Chair, Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology