The Importance of Inter-agency Collaboration in Historical Site Management in Urban Areas.

Angela C. Reichert
University of Montana, angela.reichert@hotmail.com
Inter-Agency Collaboration in Historical Site Management in Urban Areas
Angela Reichert, Forensic Anthropology/Arcæology, University of Montana

Introduction
On August 8th of 2016 excavators working on a water line upgrade at Rattlesnake Elementary uncovered human remains.

Despite historical knowledge of the property, jurisdictional agencies were not notified prior to the intent to dig in a burial area. This caused a delay in response time to the scene, speculative media coverage, and public disapproval of the disturbance.

Prior to neighborhood development, some burials had been moved to the current city cemetery. Most were left alone and the land was later developed into residential homes, a park, and a school. It is estimated that up to one thousand persons were buried on the Poor Farm property. Several instances of digging have uncovered burials.

Preventative measures and protocols should be put in place for future infrastructure upgrades, which would help alleviate jurisdictional issues and public relations. This would lead to quicker response times and ethical handling and protection of the remains.

The purpose of this poster is to raise the awareness of continued communication and cooperation among state agencies to better facilitate burial discoveries in the Rattlesnake Canyon and other urban areas.

Methods
• Agencies communicated to facilitate removal of burials.
• A background investigation was completed of the cemetery grounds history of Rattlesnake Canyon. (See figure 1 & 2)
• Montana Code Annotated was researched to establish jurisdictional responsibilities and procedures of the Montana Human Skeletal Remains and Burial Site Protection Act of 1991. (See figure 3)
• Typical site recovery methods employed with inclusion of construction equipment. (See figure 4)
• UM crew worked alongside Sirius Construction to excavate earth swiftly to reach additional burials.
• Interviewed various agencies to create a plan for future excavations in area.

Results
Slow start to communication, but a cooperative interagency effort, ethically removed burials.

Recovery was a time sensitive event on August 8, 9, 12, 13, and 15th.

Due to time constriction the following problems were encountered:
• Remains were removed without establishing grids or recording stratigraphy and deposits.
• Salvage recovery: unable to leave the burials undisturbed as per Montana law.
• Loss of cemetery records left crew unable to gauge orientation or location of burials.
• Media attention and public outcry.
• Uncertainty of the final disposition of the remains.

Conclusions
• The collaborative effort for the recovery at Rattlesnake Elementary was a great example of multi-agency communication and coordination.
• The project brings attention to the importance of future collaboration and coordination of local and state agencies.
• Known burials need to be marked on maps or utility plans and disseminated to appropriate agencies.
• Future in-depth mapping using GIS and GPR can be done for the Poor Farm property to discover cemetery boundaries. This will further protect burials from disturbance.
• Any future digging should be proceeded by communication with all agencies. This will prevent any delay in authorities arriving at the scene and violations of state law.

Acknowledgments
I would like to thank my mentor Dr. Ashley Kendell for her support in this project. The UM Archeology staff Donna McCrua and Mark Frisch, Keith Belcher of Missoula County Records, the Missoula County Sheriff’s Department, Dr. Kelly Dixon, and Dr. Meredith Snow.