March 7, 2012

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

Dear Mr. Kay:

The American Anthropological Association (AAA) and its more than 11,000 members worldwide join other professional organizations and concerned citizens in urging you to withdraw support or modify the contents of the new “reality” television series entitled “American Digger,” which will premiere on Spike TV March 20, 2012. This program wrongly represents archaeology as a treasure-seeking adventure, in which our collective heritage is dug up and sold for monetary gain.

Founded in 1902, the AAA is the world’s largest professional organization of anthropologists and others interested in promoting the science of anthropological disciplines. The AAA represents all specialties within anthropology, including archaeology. Archaeology is a scientific discipline involving the systematic examination and careful study of evidence relevant to human lives and lifestyles in the past. It is conducted by highly trained professionals who follow a strict code of ethics in order to preserve and interpret knowledge of the past for the benefit of all peoples.

AAA members are deeply concerned about this television program’s message that it is okay to loot and destroy archaeological sites for monetary gain. The program will undermine critical public support for the protection, preservation, and interpretation of the archaeological record. Archaeological sites and artifacts, like historic monuments and documents, are an integral and irreplaceable part of our cultural heritage.

In the US, the Antiquities Act of 1906, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 each provide protection to archaeological sites on federal property. Many states have stricter laws that apply to private property. Although it is legal to excavate on private land in some states, the removal of indigenous artifacts for sale is highly unethical, and the removal or disturbance of indigenous human remains in the US is forbidden by law. Other countries have even stricter laws protecting their cultural patrimony, even on private land, due to accelerated threats to archaeological sites and remains. We suggest
you consider the possibility that members of the public, having viewed this program, may
go out and dig into archaeological sites on federal lands, not knowing this is a felony.

We encourage you to consult with the appropriate archaeologists in the various State
Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO) for advice on the legality and ethics of the exploits
shown on this program, and preferably, hire a consultant who is a Registered Professional
Archaeologist (RPA), before broadcasting any of the programs in this series.

The content of “American Digger” is contrary to the ethics of archaeological practice. The
AAA further encourages you to promote television programs and series that enlighten the
public concerning the value and ethics of professional archaeology and the scientific
study of the past, or withdraw your support of this “reality” television series.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Leith Mullings
President