A more than 25-year-old debate on whether Europeans were in Colorado before Christopher Columbus’s 15th Century arrival in America is surfacing again, this time at CU-Boulder.

Tonight, researcher Phil Leonard and documentarian Scott Monahan will present a lecture titled “Pre-Columbian Celts… in Colorado?” on the CU-Boulder campus to attempt to prove to students and faculty that Celts, an ancient European tribe that spanned the breadth of continental Europe, were in Colorado before Columbus’ arrival in America. They say Colorado history books may need to be re-written to reflect the possibility.

“We’re continuing to find a great deal of evidence and have updated old evidence,” Leonard told the Colorado Daily Monday. “We really need this taken on by professionals and carried on from there.”

But professionals, who Leonard defined loosely as academic anthropologists and archaeologists, tend to refute claims that sites in Colorado contain Gàidheal, an ancient form of Celtic writing found in ancient Ireland and Scotland. Some at CU-Boulder think Leonard and Monahan’s theory is a waste of time for them and their students.

“It’s not supported by any kind of scientific evidence and I think the community is owed that,” CU anthropologist and doctoral student Mark Mitchell said Monday. “Debate and controversy are important, but it needs to be done in the context of the intellectual tradition the university is trying to uphold.”

Modern archaeology and anthropology states that Native Americans made the Colorado markings. Mitchell said asserting the markings were made by Europeans and not the natives who claim them is also politicizing the issue.

“There are no professional archaeologists who would take this claim seriously,” CU anthropology professor Doug Bamforth agreed.