

# Kennewick man

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The highly controversial treatment and care of the human skeletal remains that have come to be referred to as the " Kennewick Man" or the " Ancient One", disinterred; July, 28, 1996, poses a multiplex of conflict. The remains were removed from a location below the surface of Lake Wallula, a section of the Columbia River pooled behind McNary Dam in Kennewick, Washington State, during a water sports event, July 29th. Being informed of the discovery of the remains, the U. S Army Corps of Engineers preceded to x-ray and CAT-scan the remains. On July 30th a local newspaper in Eastern Washington publishes a story of the discovery.

The first public news leads representatives of local Native American communities to contact officials about the discovery. One bone fragment was sent to the University of California, Riverside, to be dated by a destructive test on August 5th. Early analysis reports upon the now irreparably damaged bone fragment dated the skeletal remains to be approximately 8, 400 years old. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, the agency responsible for the land where the remains were recovered took official possession On September 2nd. A group of five Native American tribes claim the human remains under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).

The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers agrees to the tribal claim(s) and publishes an official " Notice of Intent to Repatriate" statement as required by Federal NAGPRA law. This degree of cooperation is unprecedented and very much embraced amongst the Native peoples perusing the reburial and respectful treatment of the remains. On October the 16th eight anthropologists file suit for the possession of the remains in the U. S. Magistrate Court of Portland, Oregon, to prevent the U.

S. Army Corps of Engineers from repatriating the remains to the tribes. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers defers possession of “ Kennewick Man” to the U. S. department of the interior.

On September 3rd a federal judge orders “ Kennewick Man” moved to the Burke Museum at the University of Washington. The remains thereby transferred to the Thomas Burke Memorial Washington State Museum, at the University of Washington in Seattle, where they would be cared for until a final decision of possession or repatriation would be reached. A team of federally selected anthropologists present their preliminary findings based on non-destructive examinations of the remains, carried out at the Thomas Burke Memorial Washington State Museum, February 27th, 1999. A federal report links Kennewick Man to Asian peoples and not to any of the tribes claiming an ancestral link to the human being whose remains lay in question. Radiocarbon dating identifies the “ Kennewick Man” remains as being approximately 9, 300 years old. The Department of the Interior rules that the bones should be repatriated to the tribes who claimed them as belonging to an ancestor. The remains are perhaps the oldest exhumed Native of North America, providing scientifically valued information that may aid in the evolutionary sciences.

The repertoire of evolutionary sciences concludes that the remains are particularly important for the research of North American migration from northern Europe and Asia, commonly known as the Bering land bridge theory. U. S. Magistrate, John Jelderks in the state of Portland rules on August 30th, 2002 that the skeletal remains should be turned over to a team of scientists for study, blocking the return to a coalition of Native American tribes

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advocating the reburial of the remains. Four Northwest Native bands that claim “ Kennewick man” as their ancestor file notice that they will appeal in suit; the ruling rejecting their request to bury the remains. The federal Judge presiding over the 9th U. S.

Circuit Court of Appeals upholds the ruling passed by Judge John Jelderks. The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals denies the request for a rehearing. While awaiting instructions from the legal possessor, the Army Corps of Engineers, the museum will provide a “ secure” and “ respectful” repository for the human remains for as long as required. The Burke Museum presently maintains possession of the remains, as there is the hypothetical necessity for further study which must entail rigorous testing and analysis to preside over a decade. The legal possessor of the remains has thereby vacated the matter leaving the Museum to sustain unlawful possession of the remains as well as the legal and social coup that coincides. The University of Washington, Seattle is a renowned institution with an extensive research facility placed at the disposal in conjunction with the Burke memorial museum. The imperative scientific “ necessity” for further research of the remains has placed the museum as an institution in the wake of a highly controversial set of issues.

The university has the initiative to perpetuate the sciences conducive to the study of anthropology, providing educational biases. The requests made on the behalf of the Native communities has a true claim to the respectful treatment of said human remains that is directly conflicting with the claims the scientific community has proclaimed. The definitions of respectful treatment are disputant amongst the two groups and continue to place the

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Burke Museum in the middle ground of a severe conflict. The university and the museum have taken the situation as an opportunity to educate the public to a degree, launching a section on the museum's web site that chronicles the displacement of " Kennewick Man". Ideological separations between Native American belief structures and scientific initiatives are intrinsic within both sides of the debate. The respectful treatment of human remains is defined through the sciences at this time with little account for the native community and their wishes. The Museum is primarily the caretaker of the remains adherent to the courts' ruling, placing the institution in a precarious scenario pitting Native American human rights up against the sciences of anthropology.

Some commentators and reporters have described the legal controversy swirling around the Kennewick remains in rather super-heated rhetoric pitting the interests of " science" against those of traditional Native Americans. This characterization ignores the detailed, intensive, and wide-ranging scientific investigation of the Kennewick remains undertaken to determine the facts relevant to the questions in the case and report them. " - National Parks Service: U. S. Dept. of the Interior 10/13/2008