Northern Ute Sun Dancers vow to help the community by personally sacrificing themselves through fasts, prayers, and the rigor of sustained dancing, without food or water, for up to four days in the heat of mid-July. They dance from Friday at sundown to midday on Monday, with occasional rests but always without sustenance or liquids of any kind.

After a long night of dancing, all was quiet before dawn. Standing at the entrance to the Sun Dance lodge, the Ute elders and family members and I waited for the first rays of light to top the eastern rim of the Uintah Mountains, welcoming the sun and blessing the Creator for another bountiful day.

Because the intensity of the dancers' devotion inspired my research and my writing, I respectfully offer this book as my small contribution toward preserving tribal traditions.

From: Andrew Gulliford. 2000. Sacred Objects and Sacred Places: Preserving Tribal Traditions. Boulder: University Press of Colorado. ISBN: 0-87081-560-I. Total pages in book: 285.

1

Bones of Contention
The Repatriation of Native American Human Remains

The Surgeon General is anxious that our collection of Indian crania, already quite large, should be made as complete as possible.

—Madison Mills, surgeon, U.S. Army, January 13, 1868

White bones are reburied, tribal bones are studied in racist institutions. . . . The tribal dead become the academic chattel, the aboriginal bone slaves to advance archaeological technicism and the political power of institutional science.

—Gerald Vizenor, *Crossbloods*, 1976

Of all the cultural resource issues affecting Indian tribes today, none is more complicated than the return and reburial of human remains. Some tribes seek to rebury all their ancestors on tribal lands. Others are not concerned with having bones reburied but are keenly interested in claiming unidentified remains found on public land for various reasons, including the assertion of expanded territorial boundaries, the settlement of land claims disputes, and as a means to achieve tribal recognition. This chapter explores the history of the collection of Native American skeletons and explains the unintended effects of recent legislation that was passed to help return Indian remains to tribal hands.

During the nineteenth century, no Indian society was left unmolested in the race to systematically collect and classify human remains from all American aboriginal cultures. The same nineteenth-century mind-set that regarded tribal peoples as "savages" saw their human remains as worthy of scientific inquiry (but not respect). As Indians were being killed on battlefields and forced onto reservations, native bones were collected, examined, and then placed in long-term permanent storage in hundreds of private collections or in the U.S. Army Medical College in Washington, D.C.

In 1988, the American Association of Museums reported to the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs that 163 museums held 43,306 Native American skeletal remains.[1] The Smithsonian Institution alone

had 18,600 American Indian and Alaskan native remains and thousands of burial artifacts. Indian activist Susan Shown Harjo explained that Indians were "further dehumanized by being exhibited alongside mastodons and dinosaurs and other extinct creatures."[2] For most of America's native peoples, no issue has touched a more sensitive chord than these disrespectful nineteenth-century collecting practices. For that reason, the repatriation of human remains to their tribes of origin for reburial is one of the most important cultural resource issues today.

Many Indians seek to rescue their ancestors' remains from what they believe to have been dubious and prolonged scientific research. As Curtis M. Hinsley noted, "The painful and immensely complex matter of repatriation of bones and burial goods has become an issue extending beyond proprietorship per se; indeed, the debate is ultimately not over control of bones at all, but over control of narrative: the stories of peoples who went before and how those peoples (and their descendants) are to be currently represented and treated." "The heart of the matter," he added, "as always, lies in the negotiation between power and respect."[3]

As early as 1972, anthropologists and Indian people cooperated in the reburial of Narragansett remains.[4] In the late 1980s, major protests by Native Americans and the national exposure of commercial grave-robbing incidents, such as the devastation of Slack Farm in Kentucky, brought repatriation to the forefront of public discourse. In 1989, sympathy and understanding for native issues prompted Congress to pass the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) Act to create an Indian museum in the last space available on the mall in Washington, D.C. The NMAI Act helped solidify a constituency that pushed for a broad national law to redress a century of Indian grave robbing.

After years of intense wrangling and dissension among college professors, archaeologists, museum directors, and native tribes, Congress passed the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990. This act required all museums and facilities receiving federal funds to inventory human remains and associated burial goods in their collections and to notify modern tribal descendants about the institutions' findings by November 1995.[5] The burden of notification was placed on the museums, and native peoples were allowed to choose which materials, if any, they wished to consider for repatriation. The bill represented a major victory for native peoples: it is a significant piece of human rights legislation that permits the living to reassert control over their own dead.

At issue has been not just the interests of science versus the interests of descendants but also, as many Indians see it, "the rights of the dead themselves, toward whom the living bear responsibility."[6] Cultural resources consultant Thomas King explained, "The living are responsible for the dead, and the dead—often seen not as being really 'dead' but as transformed, and still powerful—must be treated with respect."[7] In testimony prepared for the U.S. Senate, University of Colorado

anthropologist Deward Walker stated: "Everywhere in Native North America one encounters a great religious importance attached to the dead who are believed to have a continuing influence on the lives of their descendants and other survivors." He continued: "Given proper rituals and proper respect, [the dead] are believed to provide assistance in curing illnesses, in determining the future, in guaranteeing the outcome of risky events, and in other general ways helping make the lives of the living more secure."[8]

Scientific theories of the nineteenth century supported notions of nonwhite inferiority and denied Indians their religious beliefs and their humanity. Robert Bieder noted that in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, "critics pointed out that neither Africans nor Indians could ever advance beyond their allegedly low mental states and must either be kept in slavery or exterminated (or allowed to pass into extinction) in order to make room for progress."[9] Providing scientific "proof" of nonwhite inferiority became an international undertaking that involved linking the "science" of craniology with "the politics of colonial exploitation."[10]

Racial Hierarchies

Contemporaneous with the idea of a rigid racial hierarchy was the belief that each race had a uniquely shaped skull. In 1823, Samuel Morton, the founder of physical anthropology in America, began to teach at the Philadelphia Hospital and Pennsylvania College, where he actively solicited skulls to add to his collections. The appropriation of human specimens enabled Morton to publish his *Crania Americana* in 1839, which supposedly validated racial prejudice and determined that Caucasians had a brain capacity of 87 cubic inches whereas American Indian skulls, as judged by 147 samples, had a capacity of only 82 cubic inches.[11]

Collecting skulls continued as a hobby of gentlemen. For example, clergyman Orson S. Fowler managed a large skull library in New York City. He and others of his time advocated the ideas advanced by Austrian Joseph Gall and German Johann G. Spurzheim, who believed that cranial capacity and brain size determined intelligence: the most intelligent or civilized race—that of white men—must therefore have the largest brains. By measuring the volume of cranial capacity in skulls, Fowler, building on the work of Samuel Morton, believed he could scientifically prove the superiority of the white race. The supposed link between skull size, brain capacity, intelligence, and race led to the wholesale looting of thousands of Indian burials and a brisk "scientific" trade in human remains from the 1830s to the 1930s.

Though all sorts of human remains and cadavers were used in early medical schools, including the bodies of paupers and poor whites, collectors developed a preference for Native American skeletal material because it was easily obtainable without the moral taint and illegality associated with stealing from Caucasian graves. Indian skulls had a dollar

value, and amateur scientists or philosophers collected them and other relics much as one would collect butterflies. It is no accident that vast collections of skeletal remains, grave goods, and Indian artifacts came to repose in the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), along with elephant tusks, ostrich eggs, and reptile skins. The robbing of Indian graves became a fashionable gentleman's avocation in the pursuit of knowledge. Enthusiasts exchanged letters, field notes, and even skulls.[12]

Collecting Skeletons for the U.S. Army

The acquisition of Indian skulls for scientific study eventually became institutionalized. On May 21, 1862, Surgeon General William A. Hammond established the Army Medical Museum. He ordered all medical officers "diligently to collect, and to forward to the office of the Surgeon General, all specimens of morbid anatomy, surgical or medical, which may be regarded as valuable. . . . These objects should be accompanied by short explanatory notes." As an added inducement, the surgeon general stated, "Each specimen in the collection will have appended the name of the medical officer by whom it was prepared."[13] Two years later, when Col. John M. Chivington and his drunken troops killed Cheyenne Indians in the infamous dawn massacre at Sand Creek, Colorado, the troops also cut off their victims' heads for shipment to Washington, D.C.[14]

In January 1865, Harvard University zoologist Louis Agassiz reminded Secretary of War Edwin Stanton that he had promised to let him "have the bodies of some Indians; if any should die at this time . . . all that would be necessary . . . would be to forward the body express in a box. . . . In case the weather was not very cold . . . direct the surgeon in charge to inject through the carotids a solution of arsenate of soda." Agassiz added, "I should like one or two handsome fellows entire and the heads of two or three more."[15]

Three years later, on January 13, 1868, an additional request went out from the U.S. Army "urging upon the medical officers . . . the importance of collecting for the Army Medical Museum specimens of Indian crania and of Indian weapons and utensils, so far as they may be able to procure them."[16] Personal letters had been mailed to most of the army medical officers "stationed in the Indian country," but Madison Mills appealed to "Acting Assistant Surgeons who would doubtless collect such things if they knew they were desired." He explained that "the Surgeon General is anxious that our collection of Indian crania, already quite large, should be made as complete as possible."[17] The Army Medical College believed that "making this task obligatory might make it distasteful," but to facilitate voluntary collecting, Mills noted that "when the collection of these things involves a pecuniary outlay that cannot be met otherwise, the Surgeon General sanctions a disbursement from the Museum Fund to reimburse such outlay—to a judicious extent."[18]

Thus, in the same year that army representatives sought to negotiate the significant Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, another branch of the military actively encouraged the robbing of Indian graves. A military secretary sent handwritten copies of the surgeon general's letter to the Department of the Missouri at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; to the Department of the Platte at Omaha, Nebraska; to the Department of Dakota at Fort Snelling, Minnesota; and to the Department of New Mexico at Santa Fe. At some frontier posts, collecting Indian skulls became a cottage industry, and the Plains Indian Wars included battlefield decapitations.

Collectors also looted ancient and prehistoric burials. Warren K. Moorehead shipped hundreds of Indian remains to Chicago for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, an unabashed celebration of the triumph of American civilization. Many of these bones and artifacts became the property of the Field Museum of Natural History. Nineteenth-century competition for collections pitted the Peabody Museum of Harvard University against the Smithsonian Institution, and several institutions contended for control of burial mounds. The sharpest competition erupted between the Field Museum and New York City's American Museum of Natural History over access to Northwest Coast skeletons and artifacts, which had become highly profitable for collectors—skulls were fetching $5 each and complete skeletons $20 apiece.[19]

Franz Boas, the father of cultural anthropology and an advocate of cultural relativity, apparently did not see the contradiction between his high regard for native Northwest cultures and his disregard for their beliefs about the dead. To help pay for his fieldwork, he sought to collect and sell Indian skulls. After admitting that "it is most unpleasant work to steal bones from a grave," he went on to state, "but what is the use, someone has to do it."[20] Boas wrote to the Smithsonian to explore their willingness to buy skulls. When word came back in the affirmative, he collected 100 complete skeletons and 200 crania and kept acquiring human remains until he had 179 samples from Northwest Coast Salish and Kwakiutl Tribes. These eventually came to reside at the Field Museum. He sold another large collection in Berlin. Turf wars ensued as museums staked their claims to American geographic regions and Indian cultures whose human remains and artifacts became scientific "trophies."[21]

In 1891, the Peabody Museum at Harvard University hired Boas to organize the Northwest Coast exhibit for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where he came into direct competition with George A. Dorsey, the curator of anthropology at the Field Museum. Traveling by train to the Northwest, Dorsey stopped off in Browning, Montana, to raid remains of the Blackfeet, who had suffered and died on Ghost Ridge during the starvation winter of 1883–1884. Almost one-fourth of the Blackfeet Tribe weakened and died in the bitter cold that winter, and Dorsey came along seven years later to loot the shallow graves, seeking

specimens for shipment to Chicago. Thirty-five skeletons eventually arrived at the Field Museum.[22]

In 1896, Arctic explorer Robert E. Peary took living specimens to New York City's American Museum of Natural History for scientific measurements performed by Aleš Hrdlička, a colleague of Boas's. According to Douglas Preston, when four of the six Eskimos from Greenland developed tuberculosis and died, this was considered "a splendid, unparalleled opportunity to add postmortem data to their Eskimo file." In fact, "Hrdlička directed that all four be macerated, boiled, and reduced to skeletons at the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University." As a final gesture, "he then installed the skeletons in the museum's collections where he could study them at leisure."[23]

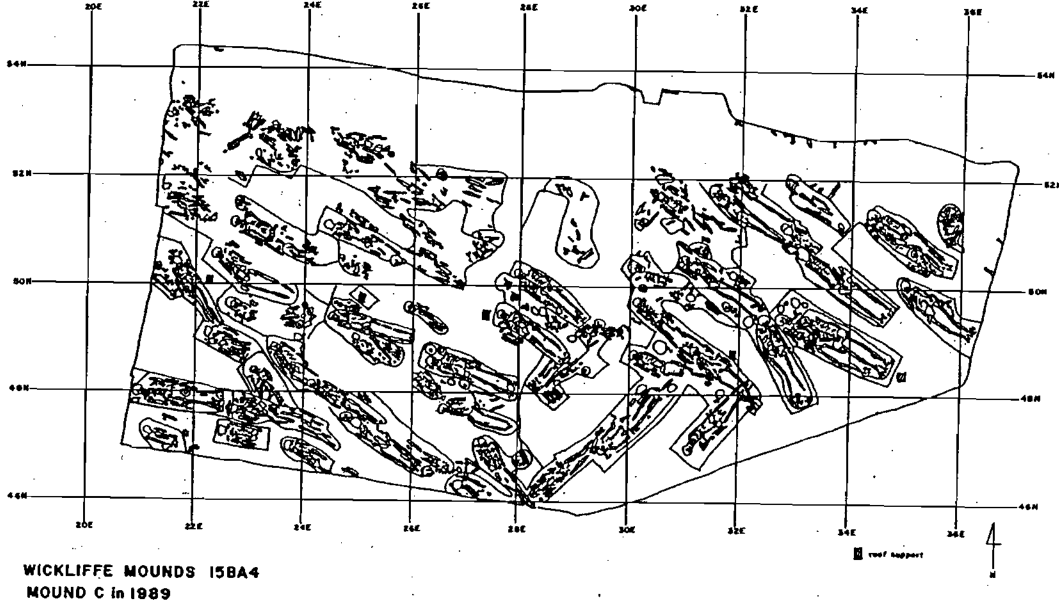
Two years later, in 1898, the Army Medical Museum donated over 2,000 crania, and most of the skulls and skeletons remained in storage in the National Museum of Natural History of the Smithsonian Institution. Looting continued unabated. Between 1931 and 1936, Aleš Hrdlička of the Smithsonian's Department of Anthropology traveled to the Larsen Bay Village of Kodiak Island, Alaska, and, aided by a white cannery worker and other field staff, exhumed and carried away 800 dead bodies and over 1,000 burial offerings.[24]

As with most such "collections," the bones were kept in storage and were not open to public view. But while scientists beginning the field of physical anthropology studied human remains in laboratory settings, skeletons also became tourist attractions. Scientists sought to confirm ideas about race and intelligence using Indian skeletons; tourists just wanted to gawk. Across the United States, ancient Indian burial sites fell into the hands of petty promoters who saw the rise of automobile tourism in the 1920s and the morbid fascination with death as means to make a dollar.

Displaying Ancient Skeletons for Tourists

During the 1930s in Wickliffe, Kentucky, near the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, amateur archaeologists excavated an ancient prehistoric burial ground of the Mississippian people and operated it as one of the largest and best-known open burial displays in the nation. Promoter Fain King labeled the site "King Mounds" and popularized it as an "ancient buried city," complete with "tombs, temples, altars, jewels, dwellings, and tools."[25] The deceased had been carefully interred, but beginning in the 1930s, lurid advertising, sensationalist interpretation, and disdain for archaeological or museum expertise characterized King Mounds, which featured over 150 Indian skeletons exposed atop earth daises under a tin roof, with grave goods scattered about. Fain King charged admission to ogling tourists and in turn sold them purloined Indian artifacts.[26]

A similar tourist site near Salina, Kansas, displayed the shellacked bones of Pawnee Indians who had died 600 years earlier. Four miles



Native Americans prefer that photographs of their ancestral dead not be published or exhibited. Line drawings, however, are permissible. This is a drawing of ancient Mississippian human remains previously exposed at the Wickliffe Mounds Research Center of Murray State University in Kentucky. The remains are no longer displayed. Courtesy, Kit Wesler, director, Wickliffe Mounds.

outside of Salina, the Price brothers' "Indian Burial Pits" could be viewed for $3.50 per person. The bones had been dug up in 1936 by an amateur archaeologist. "We took care of the bones," proprietor Howard Price said. "Every year we varnished them so they wouldn't deteriorate."[27] Amateurs in the Mimbres Valley of New Mexico also "dug" Indian ruins in the 1930s and had "skeleton picnics" in their frantic pursuit of prehistoric ceramic pottery. As they searched for Mimbres classic black-on-white burial bowls, these pothunters routinely discarded Indian bones and scattered them across the landscape.[28]

In Illinois, the state park system lent its imprimatur to public displays of Indian human remains by making Dickson Mounds a state park, regularly visited by 80,000 tourists and school groups who came to stare at exposed Indian dead.[29] Excavated in 1927 near Lewistown, Illinois, the mounds featured the open burial site of 237 people who had occupied the Illinois River valley between 800 and 1,000 years earlier. Purchased by the state in 1945, Dickson Mounds Museum became a popular tourist attraction.

But by the late 1980s, the question of the rights of science and physical anthropology versus the rights of the dead and their descendants became a critical issue, pitting the discipline of physical anthropology against the deep religious convictions of Native Americans. In the face of Indian demands for repatriation, museum boards of directors and curators of anthropology argued that museums had a "proprietary right" to maintain the items in their collections. Local citizens also

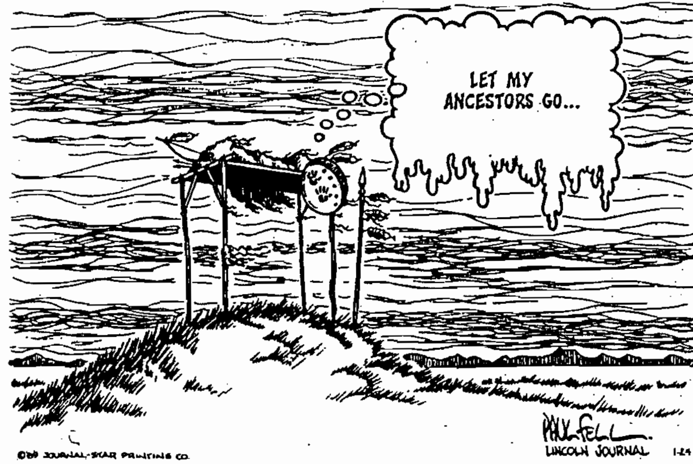
defended their right to visit exposed Indian burials.[30] For Native Americans, legal redress came slowly.

Lawsuits and Resolutions to Protect Their Ancestors

Beginning with the 1888 lawsuit filed by the Cowichan Tribe in the Northwest against James Hutton, who had been "collecting" for Franz Boas, Indians decried the desecration, looting, and robbery of their ancestors.[31] But native protests remained scattered and ineffective throughout the first half of the twentieth century and the years of forced Americanization, during which Indian agents and missionaries insisted that tribal members join the mainstream culture. Later came the urban resettlement of Indians after World War II and tribal "termination," or the ending of official tribal status for specifically targeted Indian groups that were rich in natural resources. With the impact of the tribal sovereignty movement and Indian self-determination in the 1970s, the issue of caring for human remains gathered momentum. By the mid-1980s, American Indians, Alaska natives, and Native Hawaiians sought the return of their ancestral remains through lawsuits and eloquent pleas to legislators and museum board members.

In June 1986, the Skokomish Tribe of Shelton, Washington, passed Resolution No. 86-37, which stated that "the necessary time for holding these human remains for scientific inquiry has expired" and "the practice of keeping Native American skeletons for further study is in conflict with our tribe's cultural and moral beliefs, and is in total disregard to the rights, dignity, and respect that all human beings in the United States of America enjoy under the Constitution."[32] The tribal council demanded the immediate return of Skokomish-Twana Indian remains by the Smithsonian Institution. Other tribes, including the Pawnee Indians of Oklahoma and Kodiak Island natives from Alaska, also asked for the return of their ancestors' remains.

On May 29, 1987, the Larsen Bay Tribal Council in Alaska passed a resolution seeking the return of human remains because "we honor and respect our ancestors and their traditional ways, which enrich our personal and spiritual lives today as they will strengthen the lives of our children and our children's children in years to come." The resolution stated: "The skeletal remains, burial objects, and artifacts held by the Smithsonian Institution belong to us, the Native people of Larsen Bay and Uyak Bay, who have the traditional right and spiritual responsibility to reinter our ancestors' remains, burial objects, and other artifacts."[33] Legal expenses for the Quikertarmiut would exceed $100,000 before the case was closed, but as Gordon Pullar explained, "the repatriation issue was closely related to efforts to promote a strong identity and self-esteem among youth through cultural revitalization on Kodiak Island." Scientists and villagers had "a fundamental difference in world views," he observed. "Indigenous people and western science have very different ways of seeing time, family, and the universe." Ancient skeletal remains



One of the significant legal contests that established precedence for the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 occurred in Nebraska when Pawnee demanded their ancestors be reinterred, against the wishes of the Nebraska State Historical Society. After the society refused to honor tribal traditions, public opinion rallied on behalf of the tribe, and the cultural conflict has since been resolved. Courtesy, Paul Fell for the *Nebraska Journal-Star*; original in the possession of Walter Echo-Hawk, Native American Rights Foundation, Boulder, Colorado.

are "resources" for scientists, but they are relatives for living tribal peoples. Pullar expressed an important element of native belief when he wrote, "We must respect our ancestors as they are still with us."[34]

Controversy and the Smithsonian

In 1987, in the middle of this controversy, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution Robert McCormick Adams asked the U.S. Senate to support a National Museum of the American Indian authorization bill, which would create a national Indian museum. But he said he was not willing to repatriate the human remains of "individuals who cannot be directly identified."[35] Attorney Walter Echo-Hawk of the Native American Rights Foundation in Boulder, Colorado, favored a new Indian museum but complained of "the deplorable fact that the Smithsonian is America's largest Indian graveyard in possession of almost 19,000 dead Indian bodies."[36] In Senate testimony, Echo-Hawk said, "It is therefore critical, as a matter of moral consistency, that the founding principles of the proposed museum, as well as its enabling legislation, cause the Museum to be built as 'a living memorial' to the Nation's First Citizens—and not be built upon a foundation of tens of thousands of dead bodies and over the sensibilities of the nearest living next of kin."[37]

Secretary Adams admitted that skeletons in the Smithsonian's collection had been acquired under unscrupulous circumstances: "Some officers were excessive in their zeal to collect, robbing fresh graves or forwarding battlefield finds and the remains of Indians who died while Army prisoners."[38] Yet, as an archaeologist himself, he argued for "the claims of science" and stated that the Smithsonian's collection existed

"to enable scientists to learn about human adaptations and biology by studying living and past populations."[39] It is revealing to note that although native peoples represent less than 1 percent of today's American population and were an equally small demographic percentage a century ago, they represented 54.4 percent of the Smithsonian's collection of 34,000 human specimens; blacks represented 5.1 percent of the collections and whites 20 percent. Clearly, collecting specimens of Indian human anatomy was a racial and racist preference far in excess of any statistical Indian representation in the American population.

In 1988, the year after Adams's testimony, the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested the return of their honored dead, including three known individuals: Smoke, Black Feet, and Two Face. Severt Young Bear, an Oglala Sioux, explained that "Lakota view the spirit of a person as being entirely different from the Christian view. In Lakota, after death we take care of the spirit." He added, "If you disturb that spirit it starts wandering. The spirit of my grandfather Smoke is still walking back and forth from his [burial] hill to Washington."[40]

Thanks to the legal clout of the Native American Rights Fund, the state of Kansas and the Kansas State Historical Society agreed to close the "Indian Burial Pit" near Salina by virtue of a February 1989 agreement known as the Treaty of Smoky Hill. Additional arguments for repatriation came with the publication of Douglas Preston's article

"Skeletons in Our Museums' Closets" in the February 1989 issue of *Harper's Magazine*. Preston wrote, "To many Native Americans, the collecting of their ancestors' bones and bodies by museums is a source of pain and humiliation—the last stage of a conquest that had already robbed them of their lands and destroyed their way of life."[41]

Protecting Unmarked Graves

In March 1989, *National Geographic* published "Who Owns Our Past?" accompanied by stark photographs of wholesale commercial looting and grave robbing at the Slack Farm site in Kentucky, where 800 to 1,200 prehistoric bodies had been dug up over a two-year period in the mid-1980s for a $10,000 treasure hunters' fee.[42] If skulls could not be sold for candleholders or ashtrays, the looters smashed them. Despite these outrages, the grave robbers could only be charged with a misdemeanor offense because Kentucky lacked a burial statute protecting unmarked graves on private property. However, public opinion began to shift, and in May 1989, the Native American Rights Fund successfully represented the Winnebago and Pawnee Tribes in securing passage of the Unmarked Burial Sites and Skeletal Remains Protection Act in Nebraska.[43] At that time, over twenty states already had burial protection statutes for unmarked graves.[44] Local pothunters, a term used for thieves who dig up Indian graves in search of burial goods, expressed their antagonism to the law.

The author of the Colorado burial bill received an unmarked package at his legislative office containing a box of bones, a skull, and a complete, 1,000-year-old Anasazi skeleton wrapped in a Cortez, Colorado, newspaper; an attached typed note read, "This is none of your business."[45] In New Mexico, pothunters, knowing the new state law would take effect at midnight on a given day, worked around the clock with a small bulldozer to excavate the Croteau site in the Mimbres Valley.

NAGPRA protects burials on public lands, but each state must pass its own laws to protect unmarked burials on private land. Weeks before passage of the New Mexico Burial Bill, which protects unmarked graves, pothunters bulldozed an ancient Mimbres village site in the Mimbres Valley, adjacent to the Gila National Forest. Using a bulldozer to uncover Indian burials and rare pottery seems ludicrous, but pothunters worked on the Croteau site until midnight of the day before the law went into effect. Photo by author, 1989.

In their haste, the looters destroyed bones, bowls, and burial artifacts dug from the site, a Mimbres Indian village adjoining the Gila National Forest.[46]

Returning Human Remains

By the late 1980s, a few universities and museums acquiesced to public pressure, realizing it was past time to relinquish their collections of human remains. The Museum of New Mexico in Santa Fe drafted its own repatriation policy for the return of tribal human remains and grave goods, as did the Arizona State Museum in Tucson. In 1989, Stanford University agreed to return 550 Indian bodies to the Ohlone-Costanoan Tribe of California for reburial because the remains came from the tribe's historic areas.[47] When one anthropologist argued that "the proper owner of these remains is the scientific community," Rayna Green of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History countered that most Indian remains "have no scientific value [because] a mere fraction of remains has ever been studied, period."[48] She explained, "These are human remains, not study specimens. There should not be endless research to benefit scholars without a compelling reason."[49] Most skeletal remains are now studied for biochemical and genetic analysis to trace the evolution of diseases and changes in diet, but they are then reburied.[50]

In Minnesota, the state legislature appropriated $90,000 over three years to study skeletons at a cost of $500 to $1,000 each prior to the University of Minnesota's relinquishing of 150 human remains to the Devil's Lake Sioux. Another 1,000 remains excavated from diverse Indian burial mounds were also studied and reburied.[51] In 1989, Seattle University returned 150 boxes of bones to Indian tribes in Washington State, and Omaha Indians received artifacts and human remains both from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and from Harvard University's Peabody Museum.[52]

Then, in August 1989 at a special meeting between Indian tribes and Smithsonian representatives, including Secretary Robert Adams, an agreement was reached for the return of human remains and burial artifacts from the Smithsonian itself, provided they could be linked with "reasonable certainty" to present-day tribes.[53] By that date, twenty-two states had passed laws against disturbing unmarked Indian grave sites. In November 1989, President George Bush signed into law the National Museum of the American Indian Act, which established a new Indian museum as part of the Smithsonian Institution complex and mandated that the Smithsonian return human remains and associated and unassociated funerary objects to culturally affiliated Indian tribes.[54] Tribal members considered the Smithsonian concession a major victory for Indian rights, including the right of the dead to remain buried. Under Secretary Adams's direction, the Smithsonian organized a repatriation office to begin the long and complicated task of returning human remains and grave goods.[55]

Civil Rights for the Dead

Finally, in October 1990, President Bush signed into law the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, providing sanctity for unmarked graves on public land and the return of human remains and associated grave goods to their tribes of origin from any museum receiving federal funds.[56] A century after the theft of Blackfeet bones, Curly Bear Wagner, then cultural coordinator for the Blackfeet Tribe, and John "Buster" Yellow Kidney, a spiritual leader of the tribe, traveled to the Field Museum in Chicago to arrange for their ancestors' reburial. In 1991, Yellow Kidney commented that "returning remains to their rightful place has stirred a hot bed of political controversy both on and off the reservation," adding that "tribes are experiencing infighting and squabbling among themselves."[57] Some tribal members want human remains to return home so that the dead can rest in peace. Others fear that the dead may harass the living or that human remains might have been mixed up and the wrong bones might be returned. Tribal members do not want to accidentally bury on tribal soil the bones of their historic enemies.

Curly Bear Wagner stated firmly, "We believe the return will have a huge bearing on the future of our people. We feel their spirit is still roaming around. Elders feel this is the reason why the drugs and alcohol and all this misbehaving is going on." He concluded, "There are people who aren't at rest yet."[58] Earlier, the Blackfeet had sought the return of human remains from the Smithsonian Institution. Scientific research on the skeletal remains had proven to be an asset because positive genetic links could be made between living Blackfeet and human remains in the collection. An excellent example of cooperation between the Smithsonian and Indians involved the return to the Blackfeet of fifteen skulls stolen in 1892 and sent to the Army Medical College. Secretary Adams noted that the skulls had been collected "in an inappropriate manner," but he also added that the Blackfeet wanted positive identifications because "in 1892 there were open hostilities between themselves and many of their Indian neighbors, and to bury Blackfeet remains next to those of enemies would result in an undesirable mixing of spirits."[59] The identified remains have since been returned and reburied in Montana, and a monument has been erected on the Blackfeet Reservation.

To the surprise of some, scientists have found that Indians are also interested in their ancestry and prehistoric past. In such cases, excavated or discovered human remains can be removed for scientific study and analyzed, provided that no destructive techniques are used on the bones, and then they can be returned for reburial within a reasonable time of a year or two. Indians generally do not oppose legitimate scientific research; they oppose the unnecessary warehousing of their dead. One case study of a successful scientific investigation that concluded with a reburial involved an 8,000-year-old man.

The 8,000-Year-Old Shaman

In 1992, the bones of an 8,000-year-old shaman, or medicine man, were found by cavers in the White River National Forest of Colorado. The body lay in a mountain cave some 10,000 feet above sea level. Distinguished archaeologist Patty Jo Watson from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, helped to study this remarkable find, and Bill Kight, U.S. Forest Service (USFS) archaeologist, and Kenny Frost, then the Ute Indian liaison for the White River National Forest, coordinated the removal and reburial.

Detailed analysis and radiocarbon dating confirmed that the man was between thirty-five and forty when he died after squeezing through a low, narrow passage into the high mountain cave. Casts, X rays, and photographs of the remains were taken for further scientific research. Then, after a special cave gate was installed for security, the research team respectfully returned the bones to the cave in a cedar box.[60] Southern Ute Indian Kenny Frost blessed the remains and personally took them back to the site where they had been found. In a special repatriation ceremony he conducted at the cave entrance, Frost smudged all the participants with the sweet scent of burning sage as a blessing to put the shaman's spirit to rest and to keep the living safe from harm. Nature also cooperated. Though it was summer, snow fell and cleansed the site.[61]

In 1989, an even older skeleton, one of the oldest nearly complete skeletons ever found in North America, was uncovered in a gravel pit at Buhl, Idaho. The bones were protected thanks to Idaho's 1984 Graves Protection Act, which required that the state archaeologist be notified of the find. Members of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribal Council agreed to a physical description and radiocarbon analysis, and although carbon dating took three years, tests finally determined the female skeleton was 10,765 years old. Significant to scientists because of its age, the skeleton, nicknamed "Buhla," was also important to local Indian elders. Because of the lengthy period in which the bones were out of the ground (three years), tribal elders claimed that recent deaths on the reservation had been caused by the woman's roving spirit. The tribal council required that the remains be reburied immediately in a spot known only to Indians.[62] Scientists regretted the reburial, but they had not developed a comfortable, trusting relationship with the Shoshone-Bannock and therefore had little choice but to acquiesce to the Indians' wishes.[63]

Science Versus Indian Beliefs

Anthropology Professor Emeritus Clement Meighan of the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) complained that Shoshone Indians had reburied "one of the two or three major finds in the New World." Because the skeleton "was around 5,000-years-old before the pyramids of Egypt were built," he argued that "repatriation is a loaded and improper term because it implies that you're giving something back

to people who own it. They don't own it, and never did."[64] Meighan also contended that "fifty years from now, people will look back on this situation and wonder how we could have been so short-sighted as to consign a research area to the jurisdiction of political and religious restrictions." He added, "Condemnation will come to those who gave away for destruction irreplaceable museum materials, many of which had been cherished for over a hundred years and had been acquired and maintained at great cost."[65]

Meighan represents a small group of archaeologists opposed to any and all reburials. Most mainstream anthropologists now seek accommodation with Indian tribes through collaborative efforts. In his essay "Do the Right Thing," Randall H. McGuire concluded, "We can no longer practice archaeology without consulting and involving the people that we study. . . . Their demands for repatriation show us that they do have interests in the past, that these interests are different from our own, and that these interests are now supported by the force of law."[66] For all these reasons, reburial can be a highly emotional issue, providing catharsis for historically tragic events. As Walter Echo-Hawk of the Native American Rights Foundation put it, "All we're asking for is a little common decency. . . . We're not asking for anything but to bury our dead."[67]

Returning to the Earth

One excellent example of this paradigm shift in anthropological practice is the repatriation of the human remains of 1,000 individuals to Kodiak Island, off the coast of Alaska. On October 5, 1991—half a century after scientist Aleš Hardlička had excavated those remains for the Smithsonian—a human chain of Kodiak Islanders and friends lifted boxes containing the remains into a common grave. Village residents, guests, and children participated in the reburial, as did three priests of the Russian Orthodox Church, which has served as the primary religion for Kodiak Islanders for the past 200 years. Like other Alaskan natives, Gordon Pullar experienced a "sense of relief," and he has optimistically predicted that in the future, "far from stifling research, a scientific system that recognizes both the western and indigenous world views will produce new and exciting information that will benefit all of humankind."[68]

Two years later, on October 16, 1993, the Northern Cheyenne reburied seventeen skeletal remains of ancestors who had fled north from Indian Territory in Oklahoma under Chief Dull Knife. The 1993 reburial by the four warrior societies, the Crazy Dogs, the Elkhorn Scrapers, the Kit Foxes, and the Bowstrings, was an emotional event attended by 200 people and led by James Black Wolf. Into a box containing the skull of a girl who died between the ages of nine and eleven, a grateful Cheyenne woman placed pink beaded earrings as a gift from the living to the dead.[69]

The Southern Cheyenne had a similar experience as they buried human remains collected by the U.S. Army after the Sand Creek Massacre of 1864. On July 10, 1993, eighteen ancestors were buried in the Concho, Oklahoma, cemetery after more than 125 years in the Army Medical Museum and the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History. Earlier in Washington, D.C., Southern Cheyenne leaders Moses Starr Jr., Nathan Hart, and Lucien Twins had placed human remains in blankets packed with cedar chips and spoken the words *Naevahoo' ohtseme*, which in Cheyenne means, "We are going back home."[70]

The Blackfeet, Southern Cheyenne, and Northern Cheyenne repatriation stories are only a few of the successful efforts of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History's Repatriation Office, which returned 1,491 individuals from the Physical Anthropology Division between 1984 and May 1995. Case officers handle formal repatriation requests and schedule meetings with tribal officials and interested parties. Human remains have gone home to the Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux, the Southern Arapaho, the Shoshone-Bannock, the Makah, the Warm Springs Confederated Tribes, and the Pawnee. The Archaeology Division of NMNH has also returned materials, most noticeably to Larsen Bay at Kodiak Island, and the Ethnology Division has returned objects to the Zia and Zuni Pueblos.[71]

Uncovering skeletal material is an issue for land developers, as well, for they, too, must be sensitive to repatriation requests. In Hawai'i, developers removed over 1,100 ancient burials for a beachfront Ritz Carlton Hotel in 1988. This act galvanized Native Hawaiians and prompted them to create Hui Malama I Na Kupuna 'O Hawai'i Nei, an organization whose name means "group caring for the ancestors of Hawai'i." As Edward Halealoha Ayau explained, "The bones of our ancestors nourished the ground from which our food grows, which, in turn, nourishes our bodies. Secure in the knowledge that our ancestors are where they belong, in Hawaiian earth, free from harm, our spirits are nourished as well." He added, "When speaking of one's ancestors, it is appropriate to recite one's *mo'ok u auhau* (genealogy). By reciting the names of my ancestors, I am reminded that but for their existence, I simply would not be. I am humbled by this reminder and duty bound to care for those who came before me."[72] Pressure from Native Hawaiians resulted in the state's purchase of the grave site, and the bones have now been reburied within a bottomless cement vault "intended to protect our ancestors' return to the earth goddess Haumea."[73]

Some tribes and native peoples are uninterested in the repatriation of human remains and fear the consequences if skeletal material is returned. In fact, there is no consensus on reburial issues among the more than 550 federally registered tribes in the United States. The Eastern Shoshone on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming, for example, do not want their ancestors repatriated because they doubt that the museum provenience (record keeping) of the bones is accurate.[74] The

California Chumash are not interested in assuming responsibility for reburial, and neither are the Zuni of New Mexico, who feel that in leaving their home area, ancestral bones lost their cultural identity. In addition, the Navajo have not yet repatriated human remains, though that may change.

Difficulties in Implementing NAGPRA

After more than a century of exploitation, a national consensus on granting tribal people hegemony over their dead has emerged. Across the nation, the return of human remains has added to a renewed spirit of cautious optimism among Indian peoples. Human remains on public display have been removed or closed from view at Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado, the Allen County Museum in Ohio, the Wickliffe Mounds in Kentucky, and the Dickson Mounds Museum and State Park in Illinois.[75] But the successes of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 and the Smithsonian's Repatriation Office have not been without their consequences.

Indians have been overwhelmed with paperwork from museums, and few tribes have adequate staff or facilities to process the immense flow of formal letters and computer-generated inventories, which may weigh several pounds. Tribes question who should answer the inquiries they are receiving as well as which tribal members should actually seek repatriation of associated funerary remains and sacred objects. Deep divisions have developed within tribes over who has the authority to speak on repatriation issues, and tribal cultural committees have found themselves embroiled in squabbles among Indian bands split between two or more reservations. Native American families argue over ancient artifacts and worry about the repercussions of bringing home human remains and the belongings of the dead.

According to Native American consultant Kenny Frost, those who have been the most troubled are the medicine men and women responsible for assessing human remains. "One of my friends at the Standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota has been handling human remains. Those medicine men are being separated by tribal members and being treated as if they are spirits," Frost reported. "They are not being accepted as a living person on this side but rather as a person from the spirit world. They are shunned by their own people." Medicine men and women who take human remains home for reburial must themselves undergo cleansing ceremonies, and some want to stop handling human remains altogether. As Frost observed, it is an "emotional drain, particularly in handling the crania of small children and women with evidence of bullet holes and trauma to the head."[76] For all tribes, the psychological effects of revisiting a bitter frontier past can trouble everyone.

An equally thorny issue involves Indian tribes not seeking repatriation of skeletal remains in museums but instead claiming skeletons found

on public land as their descendants, thus pressing for an extension of land claims. Though these Indians are unwilling to have scientific DNA studies conducted to see if the human remains really are their genetic forebears, they argue that, because of cultural affiliation and oral traditions about their tribal origins, human remains found on public lands are their ancestors and tribal land claims should therefore be re-opened. This issue is especially acute in the Southwest, where tribal rivalries continue among the Navajo, Hopi, Zuni, Ute, and Pueblo peoples. The dead are being used as pawns in land claim cases and political disputes.[77]

In Colorado, when human remains are found on public land, fourteen different tribes who at one time or another hunted or gathered within the present boundaries of the state must be notified. The legal complexities of complying with NAGPRA are enormous and include respectful repatriation and reburial even for Indian remains for which there are no known descendants. Federal regulations have also been written concerning the disposition of human remains from prehistoric or historic tribes that no longer exist.[78]

As for science, physical anthropology, and archaeology, a century after the wholesale looting of Indian graves, a quiet truce has been negotiated. The dialogue has begun on how to conduct scientific investigations. According to Kenny Frost, "If scientists approach Indian tribes in regards to testing human remains in a manner that will benefit mankind, then tribes are somewhat willing to agree to testing if the benefits are there and the remains are returned for repatriation at a later date." He also mentioned that scientists can have longer than a year to do their studies if they "work diligently on the remains and show cause why the remains should be kept for additional study."[79]

Kennewick Man and the Umatilla

Much of this accommodation has come about because of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, but the act is now being challenged in federal court in a case involving Kennewick Man, a prehistoric skeleton found in 1996 along the Columbia River in Kennewick, Washington. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which controls the river basin, determined that the bones (which were shown by carbon dating to be 9,000 years old) should be returned under NAGPRA. The Umatilla Indians, leading a coalition of five tribes and bands in the Columbia River basin, claimed the skeleton and quickly sought to rebury it in an undisclosed place.

However, early forensic reports found that Kennewick Man has few Indian traits. The first examiners thought he was a Caucasian despite the fact that an Archaic Cascade projectile point was embedded and broken off in his pelvis. Physical anthropologist Grover Krantz, a professor at Washington State University, concluded that "this skeleton cannot be racially or culturally associated with any existing American Indian group." He went on to contend, "The Native [American Graves

Protection and] Repatriation Act has no more applicability to this skeleton than it would if an early Chinese expedition had left one of its members here."[80]

Prominent physical anthropologists are now suing in federal court for the right to examine the bones. NAGPRA will be tested, as will the idea that the earliest inhabitants of the New World may have arrived in several migrations, with Native Americans coming later. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers stored the remains in a vault at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland, Washington, and according to Douglas Preston, "they are now at the center of a legal controversy that will likely determine the course of American archaeology."[81] For native peoples, the issue of "who was here first" is a deep moral and religious question that is not easily resolved. Meanwhile, under a judge's ruling, further study of Kennewick Man has taken place at the Burke Museum of the University of Washington in Seattle, where research may redefine racial typologies as we have known them for a century and a half.

Whatever happens legally with Kennewick Man, NAGPRA has been successful in repatriating human remains back to tribes, and a basic human right, the right of the dead to stay buried, has been generally agreed on. The long-term storage of Native American human remains that began in the nineteenth century is over. A century ago, scientists thought there was much to learn about Native Americans and other indigenous peoples as "vanishing races." A century later, there is even more to learn from living tribal peoples. This chapter concludes with commentaries by Native Americans and a Native Alaskan who express some of the personal difficulties they have encountered while reburying their dead.

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Return to Mother Earth

Our children must learn that we honor those who have returned to Mother Earth. We must put our ancestors to rest. We must let them go on their journey. Should we dig up Custer and see what he ate? No, we would be put in jail. Now my religious leaders are afraid to put their things out in the mountains. Nonnatives need to leave these things alone because they are placed there for their good, too. We don't want to be studied any more. We have been studied enough.

—Rex Salvador, second lieutenant governor
Acoma Pueblo, Acoma, New Mexico[82]

The Spirits

Our Indian people have different types of spirits—the land, the birds, the sky. The spirits can latch on to you. Our medicine men, some of them were evil. They destroyed men and marriages. My grandfather would take the hair of someone and destroy their lives. There's not a whole lot of good in the past. We get along better today.

My father was a medicine man who took care of burials. If someone was being haunted he took care of that and dusted graves with rose bushes. When the missionaries came we gave up our songs and our traditions. My 104-year-old aunt told me about giving medicine bundles to priests and missionaries. Some of the bundles were not very good. She said I should not want them back. They could damage the lives of the grandkids. Don't bring back my grandfather's medicine bundle she said. When you use medicine to damage people you inherit all their sins and then you must work hard to be cleansed—if you can.

This is how we feel. In our area there are a lot of people buried with shiny, polished grinding stones. And these were buried with women and it was their most important possession. And it should be buried for all time.

Sometimes when you go into an area as an Indian you feel the presence of others. I was in a canyon with my adopted father and we could feel the presence of the dead buried along the rim under rocks, because in the old days we had no shovels. It's really a gift that you have to feel these things. You need not worry about being haunted—just walk with respect.

I have done reburials for forty years. I have reburied hundreds of our ancestors. I am grateful to have been called on. I am grateful to assist because I feel our ancestors' presence through the Great Spirit. We always left food at the grave because the spirits will come nibble at the food or if it washes away in the rain that is the way it is meant to be.

—ANDREW JOSEPH, repatriation manager
Colville Reservation, Colville, Washington

Ancient Acoma

We are one of nineteen pueblos and our home at Acoma is ancient. We are still there today. We are faced with a common destiny to define who we are and to respect each other's ways. We have seen all the laws come down. The laws that define how I am to be an Indian and how I am to relate to the land. Now there is a law about how I am to relate to my ancestors. We have received 400 letters on NAGPRA but very few human remains directly relate to Acoma. Now the challenge of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act is to explain how we are culturally affiliated with objects and remains. This is very difficult. The law had good intentions to right the wrongs of the past, but this law is creating difficulties for us.

As a modern tribal people we listen to what scientists say, but we know where we came from and we have always been willing to tell about ourselves. Science, especially archaeologists, will now have to involve Indian peoples and look at our ancient myths. We insist that human remains not be stored in museums or kept in boxes. They should go back close to where they came from. This is quite a challenge—to explain to scientists why we reject further research on our people and our beliefs of the spirit world. We do not have a ceremony for reburial. How do we ask forgiveness? How do we apologize for the bones of our mother's people having been removed from the earth?

There has to be mutual cooperation as we move forward with NAGPRA. There must be cooperation with time and money. If we can get the understanding not to remove our native people without our involvement, we will have gained ground. There will be times when removal will have to happen. All that we ask is that we be involved together.

At Acoma we are really opposed to the science of archaeology. When human remains have to be disturbed we must be involved. Today at the Zuni Archaeology Program or with the Hopis we hear about doing tests to prove cultural affiliation, but it has to be done with mutual cooperation. We must learn together. Human remains were reburied in Rainbow House at Bandelier National Monument in New Mexico. It rained because the spirits were happy to be back in the ground.

—PETUUCHE GILBERT, tribal councilman and realty officer
Acoma Pueblo, Acoma, New Mexico

Naevahoo'ohtseme—"We Are Going Back Home": Repatriating a Young Cheyenne Girl Killed at the Sand Creek Massacre

One of the successful repatriations we have conducted was to return 18 human remains from the National Museum of Natural History of the Smithsonian Institution. The remains had been collected during that period from 1860 to 1880, mostly in Kansas and Colorado. After battles were fought, apparently the army medical personnel, under orders of General Otis, collected these remains and shipped them to the army medical museum. They were later transferred to the National Museum of Natural History.

We were one of the first tribes in Oklahoma to successfully conduct repatriation. Every time that the Cheyenne societies, namely the Outscraper, the Bowstring, the Dog Soldiers and the Kit Fox society plus the chiefs, met, the tepee was always set up and people were invited to come—especially members of the societies and those who were chiefs and their families, and there was always a meal served and then, after the meal, the societies and the chiefs went into the tepee to discuss the repatriation.

It was initially difficult to talk about the remains of our ancestors, because of the 18 remains at the Smithsonian, five of those were victims of the Sand Creek Massacre. And of the five, one was a ten-to-thirteen-year-old female; an adolescent girl was killed and we made special plans for her. The society suggested that we appoint four women to be in the delegation that went to the Smithsonian to prepare the remains, and they were charged to specifically be the ones to handle the remains of this female.

The issue of reburial came up, but I explained to them that all of these remains of the victims had never been buried. Their deaths occurred during a massacre or during a battle, and they were laying in a field when they were collected by the army medical personnel so there had been no burial service. Upon that knowledge then, the societies and the chiefs went ahead and planned for a special ceremony to be conducted

Sets of Cheyenne human remains from the Sand Creek Massacre are wrapped in blankets and packed with cedar chips in cedar boxes by three leaders of the Southern Cheyenne—(left to right) Moses Starr Jr., Nathan Hart, and Lucien Twins. The handmade boxes then made the journey to Oklahoma for tribal burial. Photo by Laurie Minor-Penland, National Museum of the American Indian.

at the National Museum and that was accomplished on the first of July in 1993.

By the 10th of July, we had a burial ceremony at the Concho Cemetery, which is located near our tribal headquarters. It was selected because the remains would be fairly close to us and they'd be guarded or at least relatively safe. The traditionalists selected representatives from their group along with those four women and included among the men were priests of the Arrow Ceremony and the Sun Dance Ceremony. They went along and were the ones who were responsible for conducting the ceremonies and the various rituals in preparing the remains of our ancestors. My job was simply to raise funds to help with expenses and I did that.

I raised enough funds for everyone to fly. The Smithsonian was able to purchase about four airplane tickets plus a couple of hotel rooms. For the rest of the group of about fourteen we'd have to find funds for traveling and for lodging, which we did. We also asked for contributions, in addition to funds, of small Pendleton blankets that would be used to wrap the skulls, and then we collected funds to have small boxes or small coffins made of cedar. This was what was prescribed by the societies—that cedar wood would be used.

I have a friend in Pennsylvania. I contacted him to see if he might find a cabinetmaker who could construct those boxes for us in Lancaster County, not far from Washington, D.C., and this friend agreed that he would find someone and would help transport all the boxes, the eighteen boxes, to the National Museum of Natural History. He did find a cabinet maker named Immanuel Fisher. He's an Amish craftsman. I actually went to visit him to make the contract. He had selected some wood, some cedar wood, at least three different types, and I selected one of them. He also had some various finishes. I selected them and gave him the dimensions of the boxes, which had been given to me by the National Museum of Natural History and we shook hands and that was

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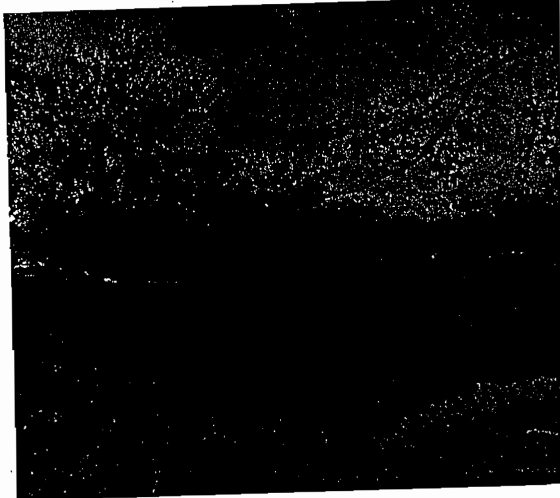

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our contract. This was their way and it was also their way of preparing for the burial of their people.

On the day of the repatriation ceremonies, there were many traditions that our people used. First of all, we had to wait until a choir announced our coming. The Cooper Room of the National Museum of Natural History building had been selected by both Dr. Killion [director of the Repatriation Office of the NMNH] and me. Tables were set up there and the 18 human remains were placed there along with the boxes underneath the tables. The boxes were then marked with the accession numbers of each of the skulls, so that we would know where each of the human remains were, especially the young thirteen-year-old female.

The choir then called the general calls that they announce four times. They cry toward the southeast, southwest, northwest and northeast. They wait a few minutes before they begin again for their second round and the third round and then after the fourth round we went into the Cooper Room. The remains had been prepared that evening by the museum personnel. They were transported to the room, and I had asked the staff to cover the remains with white sheets. They were covered so when the people gathered, when our people gathered around the tables and it was time to start the ceremony, then appropriate rituals were conducted.

Dr. Killion and I removed the sheets, and it was a very difficult moment for our people to see these remains, but they relied on priests to conduct the appropriate ceremonies using medicine, and we then proceeded to prepare each of those remains. We took the boxes out from underneath the tables and placed them beside the skull and then someone would hold the Pendleton blankets, and then they would be carefully wrapped. Before they were placed into the box there were some cedar shavings that were poured into the bottom and then the remains were carefully placed into the boxes. But before all that occurred, one of our

The exact location of the Sand Creek Massacre in eastern Colorado has recently been determined, thanks to a new National Park Service research project funded by a congressional bill that Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell sponsored. Photo of the Sand Creek area courtesy of Hal Gould, Camera Obscura Gallery, Denver, Colorado.

priests went around the entire room beginning with remain number one to remain number eighteen and painted each of the skulls with red paint from our sacred mountain, Bear Butte. And, he conducted rituals at each point, at each station where the remains were. Following that, as each tribal member was called to assist in actually handling the remains, they were brushed off with cedar so that they could touch the remains of our ancestors who were then wrapped in a blanket. Once they were placed into the box, the void spaces were filled with the cedar and the lid was put on.

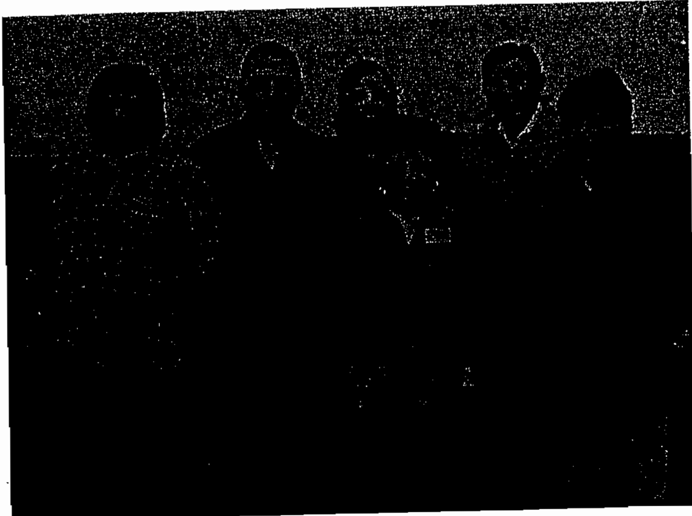
That continued routinely until we got to box number 13, which was the adolescent female victim's number in addition to the accession number that was already on the box. She was victim number 13 among the 18, and it was very difficult for the women. There was open weeping. It was a traumatic experience. My daughter, Connie, was one of those four women, and she had been asked to be the one to actually handle the remains of this adolescent female victim. She was so moved that when she picked up the remain to place it into the box, she actually brought it to herself and hugged it, because as my daughter told the story later, when in the confusion of the attack on the village at Sand Creek, no one had been there to hold the young girl. Then the other three women also participated in preparing her, and once the lid to her box was placed we proceeded on. Richard West, who is the Director of the National Museum of the American Indian, made his appearance.

He was taken aside and was empowered, I use that word, he was empowered by one of our priests to help with the ceremony. He was given one of the other Sand Creek victims, and he assisted then with the Cheyenne human remains, because he is Cheyenne. Later on I visited with him and he said that was an experience that he'll never forget.

We had also invited the Northern Cheyenne to be represented and Mr. Steve Brady and Mr. Alfred Strange were there. Each of them were also given the remains of Sand Creek victims, and I also handled one of the remains so that everyone, every Cheyenne person who was there, had the task of handling the remains and placing them into the boxes. When we finished the priests had to go outside to conduct the closing ritual. After that we were done, and we had the staff of the repatriation office then pack the boxes into various cartons, and as it turned out, I think we had about four large cartons that we picked up the following day.

We had rented a truck, a moving truck, and they were loaded on the truck, and the deaccession papers were signed by our tribal government officials, and then the truck was driven to Oklahoma by our traditional people [who were] the representatives of the four societies that I mentioned earlier. And, in their prescriptions, they made four stops along the route to conduct rituals, and one of the [rituals] was to sit down and light a pipe and smoke together. They repeated this four times, and my younger son was traveling with them.

He and I actually sealed the boxes with screws while the remaining group was outside conducting a ceremony on the lawn of the National Museum. We sealed those boxes with tools and they were never to be



Native Americans, particularly Cheyenne Indians, want the Sand Creek site acquired by the National Park Service and interpreted as a site of shame. In this group portrait at Sand Creek are (left to right) Joe Big Medicine, Sun Dance priest, from Longdale, Oklahoma; Laird Cometsevah, traditional chief, Southern Cheyenne, and president of the Sand Creek Descendants Association, from Clinton, Oklahoma; George Black Owl, Southern Cheyenne artist, from Clinton, Oklahoma; Colleen Cometsevah, genealogist, of the Sand Creek Descendants Association; Arly Rhodes, director, Cheyenne-Arapaho Senior Center, from Clinton, Oklahoma; and the son of Joe Big Medicine—Little Joe. Courtesy, Hal Gould, Camera Obscura Gallery, Denver, Colorado.

opened again. He traveled with the caravan and got an opportunity to conduct one of those rituals, because that's how our people learn these traditions, these rituals. They are instructed. An elder who is qualified, generally a priest in this case, assisted him and told him exactly what to do during the whole ritual. He had observed two of them already so he basically knew, but then on the third one when he was asked to perform the ritual, he was given some instruction, and so that's how he learned.

When we got to Oklahoma, the remains were temporarily stored at the Oklahoma Historical Society, and then later on July 10th they were picked up and transported to the Concho Cemetery where we had graves dug in a circle. We marked on paper exactly where each of the remains would go so that we'd know where the Sand Creek victims are buried. We know where the victim was killed at [a frontier fort], the victim killed on the Saline River, the victim killed on the Republican River, we know exactly where they are, and especially that female adolescent.

What was really moving about the female adolescent was that there were many families who had responded to her especially. Some of them made some goods for her to take, as they expressed it, on her journey. One of them made a special case of brain-tanned skin. It was a bag, and in that bag were some sinew and beads and some small pieces of brain-tanned skin. Another family brought a shawl. Others brought things like a necklace or a bracelet for her, and these were then placed on top of her coffin after her coffin was lowered by one of our Cheyenne men. And so those objects became associated funerary objects and were buried with that adolescent female victim.

We had a large crowd of people. Families with children, and I especially appreciated that they brought their children so that they could learn about this event and especially about the Sand Creek Massacre. People would pause at grave number 13, and just openly weep, because

in our oral tradition stories, we know what happened to her. We know that she was deliberately shot—that's backed up by U.S. Congressional testimony from an inquiry held following the massacre.

One of the things that I appreciated was that the ceremonies would have been used a century ago had these people been given proper burials. In the beginning in the 1860s and into the 1880s, they wouldn't have had elements of the Christian religion. It was planned that way. I didn't have to mention it. The societies understood and planned it such that all the ceremonies would be traditional and they were. I think the traditionalists assumed a very important responsibility and allowed the people to see what could be done by the traditionalists when they would get together for a task such as this. They met several times and it brought the people together, and brought a sense of reliance upon these traditional leaders, and that was the good part about it, along with the use of our traditions. None of the decisions that were ever made was made outside the tepee. It was always inside the tepee, and every decision was by consensus.

—Lawrence Hart, executive director
Cheyenne Cultural Center, Clinton, Oklahoma

A Smallpox Cemetery in Sitka, Alaska: Voices From the Tlingit Ancestors

Ten years ago there was a housing project that came into our village and the contractors were building new homes for our citizens and part of the homes were being built on our cemetery. The contractor went up there and dug up the ground, and they destroyed our whole graveyard and destroyed the headstones and the cremation mounds from an 1830 smallpox epidemic that came through our village. All our children and elders were wiped out so they were all cremated up there. That site was completely destroyed by this housing contractor.

Bones and skulls were all over the place and when I came on the scene and saw what was there, it really affected me very deeply, and with the help of some of the other residents we gathered up all of the remains that we could and put them in boxes and took them up to the church and stored them in the basement of the church. As far as I was concerned that was the end of my duty there.

But after that, the following evening, I started getting nightmares. After weeks of nightmares and becoming accident prone and a lack of sleep I ended up having to return those remains myself. Then I went up to the site and found about seven acres of a very neglected cemetery. It was overgrown so I started clearing all the brush. It took us all summer to clear about seven acres of cemetery and we were really very surprised at what we found. We thought there was only a few graves in there, but it turned out there was about sixteen hundred graves. All the headstones and grave markers were destroyed over the years from vandalism and neglect. After we cleared it out, we discovered that there were a lot of graves that were robbed and some that were sunken and right around the whole perimeter were all these skulls and bones and desecrated graves. I had to do something.

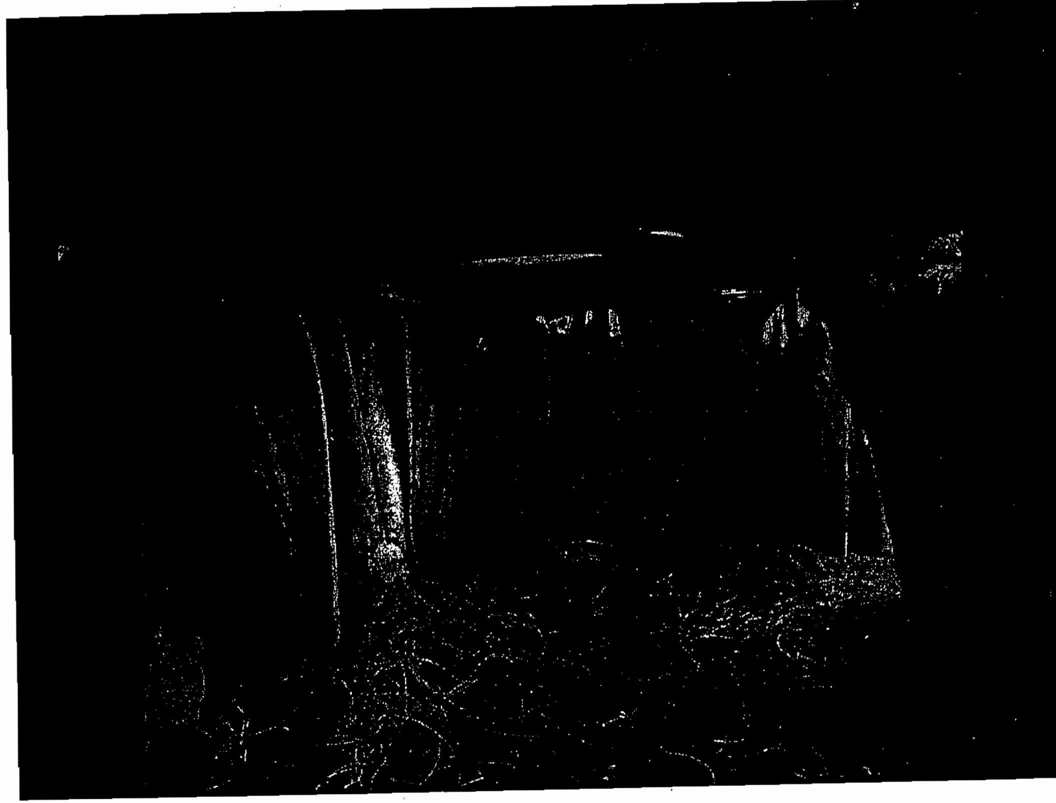


Photo of a whalebone-and-sod house, ca. 1900, from an abandoned village on an island on the farthest western point in the Chuckchi Sea, Alaska. Perhaps the structure was abandoned because of disease. The entrance to the house, which would have been home to a large extended family, is on the right. For most native peoples, abandoned home sites are sacred places. Photo by Jet Lowe, Historic American Building Survey, 1991.

I spent the next two years re-intering remains from that cemetery, and I put them all underneath the trees. I ended up isolating myself for two years because I became a very angry person. I resented what had happened to my ancestors and I was very bitter about it. So I isolated myself to the point where I quit participating among the living. I just spent all my time in the cemetery filling in sunken graves, up-righting headstones, re-intering remains and clearing all the brush and making the place look better. I spent all that time those first few years in just total isolation. I got sick. I got pneumonia and I almost died.

My elders were watching me. They were very concerned about my health and very supportive of my work. So they came up and they asked if I would be willing to be trained as a spokesperson for my tribe as a storyteller, and that they would train me to speak on behalf of our people to share what I experienced with the remains. So they sent me to Juneau, Alaska where we formed this theatre company, and we were all hand-picked to be storytellers. It was a very rewarding experience for me, because it helped bring me back to the living.

—Robert Sam, Tlingit storyteller
Sitka, Alaska