

# **Kennewick Man skeleton may be on its way back to ancestral home**

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The 9,000-year-old skeleton Native Americans call The Ancient One and scientists refer to as Kennewick Man may be headed back to his ancestral home very soon.

A spokeswoman for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers confirmed Friday morning that representatives from the Corps and the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation are conducting an inventory of the bones at the University of Washington museum where the remains have long been stored.

The inventory will take about three to four hours, and after it's complete the bones will be handed over to the state, said Amy Gaskill of the ACOE.

The Corps is "doing the final transfer paperwork today," she said.

Under legislation signed by former President Barack Obama on Dec. 19, the state will then transfer the remains to Native American tribes that have fought for two decades to reclaim and reburial what they consider to be an honored ancestor.

Gaskill said she doesn't know if that transfer will take place Friday. Representatives of the state archaeology department could not be immediately reached.

Chuck Sams, spokesman for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla

Indian Reservation, has said the reburial will be private.

The federal legislation specifies that the transfer must take place within 90 days of the bill's enactment.

Unearthed from the banks of the Columbia River in 1996, the bones comprise one of the oldest and most complete human skeletons ever discovered in North America. The find set off a bitter legal battle between scientists who wanted to study the remains and local tribes who wanted them reinterred.

Scientists won and conducted several rounds of analysis on the bones. Based on the shape of the skull and chemical tests, lead researcher Doug Owsley of the Smithsonian Institution argued that the man was not Native American and might have come from the coast, not the Columbia Valley.

But two independent laboratories later conducted DNA tests that confirmed the man was most closely related to modern Native Americans.

Representatives from several tribes, who have regularly visited the Burke to pay homage to The Ancient One, said earlier that they have plans for reburial on ancestral lands near the Columbia River.

The tribes that will take possession of the skeleton include the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Nez Perce Tribe, and the Wanapum Band of Priest Rapids.

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