



PRESS RELEASE

CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF THE COLVILLE RESERVATION

Media Contact:

Meghan Francis

meghan.francis.cbc@colvilletribes.com

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COLVILLE TRIBES' CHAIRMAN PRAISES FINAL PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION THAT WILL RETURN ANCIENT ONE TO HIS HOMELAND

NESPELEM, WA- The Chairman of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation praised the vote by the U.S. Senate over the weekend to send President Obama a water infrastructure bill that will return "The Ancient One" to his homeland on the Columbia Plateau for a proper and traditional burial. The Senate approved the "Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act" (WIINS Act) by a 78-21 vote early Saturday morning. Section 1152 of the legislation includes language that would direct transfer of the Ancient One remains.

"For us claimant tribes our goal and vision has always remained unchanged, and that is the return of the Ancient One to his home for joint repatriation and burial, to be with his land and his people. We are thankful to the Burke Museum, who have cared for and protected our relative for the past 20 years," Colville Business Council Chairman Dr. Michael Marchand said today.

After proceeding slowly through the Army Corps of Engineers' administrative transfer process for more than a decade, the DNA results provided fresh momentum to effectuate the transfer of the Ancient One remains legislatively.

The skeletal remains of the Ancient One were found in 1996 by two college students near Kennewick. The discovery was followed by a long legal battle between tribes and scientists who disputed his Native American ancestry seeking to maintain control of his remains for scientific study. Ultimately, independent and peer-reviewed DNA testing proved that the remains are related to American Indians.

The language in the WIINS Act requires the Army Corps of Engineers to repatriate the Ancient One's remains to the five Columbia Basin Tribes that filed a joint claim under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. The Confederated Tribes of Colville Reservation, the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Nez Perce Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Wanapum Band of Priest Rapids will receive the remains for final burial. The transfer will be accomplished through the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) introduced the stand-alone version of the legislation in the Senate in August of 2015. Rep. Denny Heck (D-WA) later introduced the House companion legislation, which was co-sponsored by Reps. Dan Newhouse (R-WA), Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA), and a dozen other House members.

The amendment requires repatriation of the Ancient One to the named Tribes within 90 days of enactment, so long as the Tribes agree on a final burial place in Washington State.

“The Colville Tribes, together with other claimant Tribes, have all shared the same goal—to bring the Ancient One home for burial.” Marchand said.

Marchand said that the Colville Tribes looks forward to coordinating with the other claimant tribes and the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation to effectuate the transfer.

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