



# Press Release

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation  
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## **The Ancient One is Finally Laid to Rest Again**

Mission, OR – The Ancient One has been reburied after twenty years of court challenges and scientific study.

In 1996, two young men inadvertently discovered human remains along the Columbia River in Kennewick, WA and reported their find to local authorities. The remains are those of an ancestor to the Columbia River Plateau tribes, an ancestor who lived over nine thousand years ago and is commonly known as the Kennewick Man, and known to the tribes of the plateau as the Ancient One.

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Nez Perce Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and the Wanapum Band of Indians have worked together rebury the Ancient One in accordance with their religious and cultural practices. After many court challenges, scientific study and finally a DNA analysis, it was determined the Ancient One is most closely genetically related to these modern day Tribes.

On February 17, the five Tribes met at the Burke Museum in Seattle, WA where the Ancient One has been held, with representatives of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, and curators of the University of Washington Burke Museum to repatriate the remains to the five claimant Tribes as directed under the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act of 2016.

“The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is proud to have worked with all parties to repatriate the Ancient One to the Tribes,” said Chairman Gary Burke of the CTUIR Board of Trustees, “we jointly believe in respecting our ancestors of our past and have fulfilled our responsibility to finally lay the Ancient One to rest.”

During the early morning hours of February 18, over 200 members of the five Tribes came together to lay the Ancient One to rest. Religious leaders from each of the Tribes jointly conducted a ceremony ending the Ancient One’s journey among the living. The remains were buried at an undisclosed location on the Columbia Plateau.

“This is a big day and our People have come to witness and honor our ancestor,” said Armand Minthorn, CTUIR Board of Trustees Member and Longhouse leader, “we continue to practice our beliefs and laws as our Creator has given us since time immemorial.”

In 1996, the five Tribes believed that the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) would protect their rights and the Ancient One would be quickly returned for reburial. The subsequent court challenges and cases to the validity of the Tribes’ claims under NAGPRA greatly delayed the reburial.

“We always knew the Ancient One to be Indian,” said Aaron Ashley, CTUIR Board of Trustees Member and chair of the Cultural Resource Committee, “we have oral stories that tell of our history on this land and we knew, at the moment of his discovery, that he was our relation.”

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is made up of the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla Tribes, formed under the Treaty of 1855 at the Walla Walla Valley.

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