

HUMAN REMAINS POLICY

for the University of Indianapolis Archeology & Forensics Laboratory

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This document outlines protocols developed and adhered to by the anthropologists of the University of Indianapolis Archeology & Forensics Laboratory for the handling and disposition of human remains and associated funerary artifacts. It should not necessarily be construed as official policy by the University administration nor has it been ratified by its faculty as a whole. These guidelines apply equally to the Directors, Research Associates, and student assistants of the Laboratory, as well as to visiting researchers.

INTRODUCTION

1A. We offer consulting services to public and private organizations in the excavation and analysis of recent and ancient human remains. In some cases we charge a fair price for our services. We reserve the right to turn down cases that we feel are outside of the realm of our expertise, beyond our ability to mitigate, or that would violate our professional ethics.

1B. We will assess the scientific value of human remains and make recommendations to the consulting agency concerning the most appropriate course of action (additional study, permanent curation, or reburial). A copy of the guidelines we use to assess scientific value is appended to the end of this document.

1C. We will curate (store) human skeletal remains for consulting agencies on both a temporary and permanent basis.

1D. As a facility at an institution of higher learning, we consider our primary purpose to be education and public service. Therefore, the human remains we curate are used regularly in teaching and scientific research.

DISCLOSURE POLICY

1A. For reasons of confidentiality, propriety, due process, site protection, and security, we do not discuss the details of active human remains cases with the public, the press, or with agencies not directly involved in the investigation.

1B. Final reports, laboratory documents, photographs, and other file materials pertaining to human remains cases are released only with the consent of the consulting agency or with a valid legal subpoena. As outlined by Indiana Code 5-14-3-4(b)(6), scientific documents we produce as a research facility at a private educational institution are exempt from public disclosure. In addition, as stated in IC 5-14-3-4(a)(9), patient medical records and charts cannot be released.

1C. We will provide a copy of our Federally-mandated NAGPRA inventory to a recognized Native American Tribe upon written request by an officer of the tribe.

1D. We routinely use data collected during the excavation and analysis of human remains in scientific publications and educational presentations unless the consulting agency requests otherwise. We comply with Federal and State privacy laws and will not reveal the names or other identifying information about the decedent or their relatives in scientific or educational forums.

SCIENTIFIC STUDY AND REBURIAL OF HUMAN REMAINS

3A. We believe that human remains represent the collective heritage of humanity as a whole and that their study provides important scientific information concerning the human condition. Regardless of their age or ancestry, human remains excavated by plan or by accident should be analyzed. We argue against their wholesale and indiscriminant reburial or destruction prior to study.

3B. Human remains should be studied scientifically (1) for practical reasons, to determine their origin and to help identify the individuals represented, and (2) for theoretical reasons, to collect data that can help us understand the adaptation and evolution of the human species throughout history.

3C. We believe that the long-term curation of human remains is an important component of scientific study and instruction at institutions of higher learning. The training of medical personnel and forensic specialists depends on access to large and well-balanced collections of actual human remains. In addition, technological advances in the future will provide new and significant opportunities to learn from curated materials. Reburial removes remains from future scientific study and effectively results in the permanent loss of irreplaceable data, in addition to hindering the learning of new generations of health care professionals.

3D. We do not believe that ALL human remains must be permanently curated and, indeed, there may be circumstances where rapid reburial is appropriate and justified. We recognize the rights of relatives and communities to help determine what will ultimately happen to the remains of their ancestors or of those who were once an integrated part of their community. We will therefore work with all parties to come to a solution that addresses the needs of both science and society.

3E. As connections between the living and the deceased increase beyond a few hundred years, it becomes difficult to establish a secure biological or cultural relationship between them. In these cases we believe that long-term scientific study and curation are more appropriate, since the remains could represent the collective heritages of many (or possibly no) living groups.

3F. We support laws and actions that protect buried cultural resources from damage or looting. We do not condone the sale or trade of illegally-gained artifacts and antiquities, and we will not purchase or trade for such items. We will, however, accept such materials for donation to remove them from the market and will try to salvage as much scientific data from them as possible. We consider it our duty to report any instances of known or suspected looting or illegal antiquities trade to the appropriate authorities.

3G. We do not condone the sale or trade of human remains unless specifically and legally prepared as anatomical specimens for use by recognized specialists and institutions in research and teaching. We

do not condone the collection of non-anatomical human remains (such as ancient Native American Indian skeletons) by private citizens.

FIELD PROTOCOL

4A. We believe that only appropriately-trained personnel should be involved in the excavation and recovery of all human remains, whether ancient or recent. Baseline qualifications for archeologists are available from the Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology (DHPA) of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and are defined by Indiana Code 310-IAC-19-3-4. We support guidelines for professional qualifications and conduct established by the Registry of Professional Archaeologists and the Society for American Archaeology.

4B. The controlled excavation and collection of human remains takes a significant amount of time, frequently measured in days. We will not violate standard professional protocol for burial excavation unless significant extenuating conditions (safety, weather) are present. Thus our involvement will always slow the rate of evidence processing at the recovery scene.

4C. In order to conduct the recovery of human remains from an archeological site, we require the prior consent of the DHPA, the County Coroner, and the landowner.

4D. When we are working at a recent (forensic) human remains scene, we serve at the pleasure of the local authorities, a representative of whom must be present with us at all times. The recovery and removal of the remains from the scene requires the consent of the County Coroner.

4E. We require proper chain of custody forms for all remains and evidence released into our custody, to be signed by all relevant parties.

LAB PROTOCOL

5A. We believe that only appropriately-trained personnel should be involved in the analysis of all human remains, whether ancient or recent. Baseline qualifications for osteologists are available from the DHPA and are defined by Indiana Code 310-IAC-20-3-4. We support guidelines for professional qualifications and conduct established by the American Association of Physical Anthropologists, the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, and the American Board of Forensic Anthropology.

5B. In general, we follow the inventory and analysis guidelines for archeological human remains published by Buikstra & Ubelaker (1994). This comprehensive protocol outlines not only traditional methods of osteological data recovery, such as measurements and observations, but also recommends the collection of specialized data through, for example, radiography and scanning electron microscopy. We may alter the analytical procedures, however, depending on the unique circumstances surrounding the case, the time allotted for study, the availability of trained personnel, and the availability of funding.

5C. Sufficient time should be allocated for the scientific study of human remains and grave goods before reburial. Periods measured in hours or days are unreasonably short. Weeks, months, or years are more appropriate in most cases.

5D. All students, assistants, and researchers who work in the lab are required to undergo training in human remains protocol, safety and security procedures, and confidentiality issues. Written guidelines are provided to all individuals, who are required to sign a statement of understanding.

5E. All human remains are handled with utmost dignity and respect at all times. We will do our best to honor reasonable special requests for handling or storage that are made by relatives or Native American groups while remains are in our care.

5F. The perimeter of our lab is secured by an alarm system. In addition, our evidence room, which houses especially sensitive remains, can be opened only by the directors of the laboratory. Access to human remains and associated evidence by unauthorized personnel is therefore restricted.

5G. Safety procedures must be followed with remains that may be biohazardous. Individuals working with biohazardous materials must undergo special training and must provide proof of a completed Hepatitis B vaccination.

5H. Even in cases where repatriation is planned, it may be important to keep small samples of human bone for later study, including but not limited to radiocarbon dating, histological examination, chemical analysis, and DNA extraction. A protocol for removing and storing such samples, as well as a list of suggested specimens, is given by Buikstra & Ubelaker (1994).

5I. All remains that enter our laboratory are given accession numbers that are written on each bone in black ink, to facilitate tracking and inventory. Bones that are slated for long-term curation may be coated with a plastic preservative to limit further erosion and damage.

COOPERATION & DISPUTE RESOLUTION

6A. We recognize that some groups believe that the study and curation of human remains is inappropriate. We respect the desires of individuals and groups to determine the destiny of the remains of their immediate ancestors and for this reason we are willing to discuss different paths to the resolution of cases we are involved with. To this end, we will:

- work in good faith with other agencies and organizations to come to a mutually-amenable solution;
- adhere to the federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990 and other applicable state and local laws;
- follow the recommendations of the Indiana State Archeologist where NAGPRA guidelines are unclear or not applicable.

APPENDIX: ASSESSMENT OF SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Our assessment of the scientific value of an assemblage of human skeletal remains is a general estimate of the quantity and quality of scientific data that would be lost upon reburial if no further analysis was conducted. In general, standard data recovery procedures (as outlined by Buikstra & Ubelaker 1994) should be completed on all remains prior to repatriation, and samples of bone should be retained for future biomolecular and biochemical analysis. Unfortunately, funding and time restrictions may limit the range of analytical procedures that can be conducted on the remains.

The four broad categories that follow are cumulative in nature, although not all points in a particular category may apply equally in a given case. It is the overall constellation of traits that is most important. Our assessment **does not** take into account the value of the remains as instructional (educational) specimens. To incorporate instructional value, one should increase the scientific value by at least one category.

MINIMAL VALUE

- Few elements are present;
- Bones show high fragmentation, poor preservation, or extensive diagenesis;
- Key biological parameters (sex, age) are unknown due to lack of diagnostic elements;
- Mixing of individuals is possible and they cannot be clearly separated;
- The archeological / temporal context is uncertain or unknown.
- **no significant loss of scientific data if repatriated**

MODERATE VALUE

- Many elements are present, but the skeleton is still incomplete;
- Bones show fair to good preservation and many can be reconstructed if fragmented;
- Many diagnostic elements are present and most key biological parameters are known;
- The number of individuals is known and most can be separated with confidence;
- The archeological / temporal context is known.
- **loss of some scientific data if repatriated**

HIGH VALUE

- Most bones are present and show good to excellent preservation;
- All important biological parameters can be ascertained;
- Interesting elements (such as pathological or unusual variants) may be present.
- **significant loss of scientific data if repatriated**

EXTREMELY HIGH VALUE

- Applies primarily to large collections of well-preserved skeletons but may also include:
- remains from archeological / temporal contexts that are unstudied or unknown, OR
- skeletons that are positively identified and thus have known biological parameters.
- **extensive loss of unique scientific data if repatriated.**

REFERENCE CITED

Buikstra J & Ubelaker D (1994). Standards for Data Collection from Human Skeletal Remains. Arkansas Archeological Survey Research Series No. 44.

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Suggested citation of this document: Nawrocki S (1998). Human Remains Policy for the University of Indianapolis Archeology & Forensics Laboratory. University of Indianapolis Archeology & Forensics Laboratory (<http://archlab.uindy.edu>).

Last update 6-30-06