



POLICY ON HUMAN REMAINS

The Arizona State Museum (ASM) houses and curates human remains recovered from archaeological sites, primarily from the State of Arizona. ASM recognizes the humanity of these individuals, not to be regarded as objects, and strives to treat them with respect and dignity at all times. ASM additionally recognizes the diversity of cultural practices regarding interaction with the deceased and endeavors to respect the beliefs and customs of descendant communities regarding the remains of their ancestors. ASM further acknowledges that any and all research conducted on the Native American (American Indian) human remains is viewed by descendant communities as disrespectful and harmful to both the Ancestors and their descendants.

I. Definitions

- A. “Human remains” means the physical remains of a human body.
- B. “Cultural affiliation” means a relationship of shared group identity that can be traced historically or prehistorically between members of a present-day organization and an identifiable earlier group.
- C. “Geographical affiliation” or “geographically affiliated” means a connection between repatriation-eligible collections and a present-day American Indian Tribe is established by the association of a geographical location where the collection originated, such as from Tribal lands, aboriginal land, or an aboriginal claim area.
- D. “Repatriation” means the return or transfer to the care or possession of a culturally or geographically affiliated group.
- E. “Research” means the systematic investigation into, and study of, human remains, objects, and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions.

II. Policy

- A. Human remains must be treated with dignity and respect at all times.
- B. ASM recognizes the rights of descendant communities to determine disposition of culturally and geographically affiliated human remains and fully supports the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (UNDRIP).
- C. ASM complies fully with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA or P.L.101-601) and its regulations, 43 CFR 10, regarding human remains in ASM collections.
- D. ASM administers and complies fully with State of Arizona laws A.R.S. §41-844 and A.R.S. §41-865 regarding new discoveries of human remains on state and private lands.
- E. ASM engages in on-going consultation with federally recognized American Indian tribes and with representatives of other groups who are culturally affiliated with human remains in ASM collections to ensure cooperative relationships and effective communication.



- F. ASM freely shares information about collections with descendant groups while also guarding the privacy of sensitive information.
- G. ASM recognizes the cultural sensitivities of descendant communities regarding human remains and cultural items subject to repatriation and responds accordingly.
- H. ASM makes every effort to ensure that no human remains are left behind when completing a repatriation project.

III. Native American (American Indian) Human Remains

- A. ASM will not grant access, for the purpose of research, to human remains known to be of Native American (American Indian) descent.
- B. Access to human remains known to be of Native American (American Indian) descent will be granted for the practice of traditional religious activities by members of a descendant community that has an established cultural or geographical affiliation with the human remains in question.
 - 1. Requests for access to human remains for the practice of traditional religious activities must be accompanied by a formal approval from an appropriate office (i.e., Tribal Government Office) from the affiliated tribe(s).
 - 2. There may be limits to the accommodations that ASM can make related to certain traditional religious activities, based on its current facilities and the policies and procedures of the University of Arizona.

IV. Non-Native American (Non-American Indian) Human Remains

- A. ASM may grant research access to human remains of non-Native American (non-American Indian) descent if the proposed project demonstrates a legitimate scholarly goal.
 - 1. Applications for research access to such human remains should be submitted to the Curator of Bioarchaeology and include a description of the project with clearly stated goals and expected outcomes.
 - 2. Applications from student researchers should be accompanied by a letter of support by a faculty advisor describing the student's ability and qualifications to carry out the proposed research activity, the potential contribution of the research, and the student's progress toward degree.
 - 3. If human remains for which access is requested are affiliated with a non-Native American descent group (e.g., African American, Asian, Hispanic, etc.), the request must also include written permission from an appropriate descendant organization (e.g., *Los Descendientes del Presidio de Tucson*).
 - 4. The ASM Repatriation Committee will review requests for access to human remains of non-Native American (non-American Indian) descent and respond with an approval or a denial.
 - 5. At the completion of any project, the applicant must submit copies of all data, images, and final products of the research activity to the ASM Bioarchaeology Lab for curation.