

research notes. One archaeology graduate student, who witnessed the action, was shocked. "We were trying to preserve their culture," he said, "not destroy it." The activists responded with the ironic rejoinder that archaeologists seemed to think the only real Indians were dead ones. Indian activists also staged occupations and protests at the Field Museum in Chicago and the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles, charging that their exhibits failed to show proper respect for Native cultures.

An early first step in resolving the repatriation issue came in 1976 when—at the urging of David Risling (Hupa/Yurok) and other outspoken Indian leaders—the California legislature created the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC). Consisting of nine Native members, the commission was to be informed whenever an Indian burial site was discovered. The NAHC was charged with identifying the "persons most likely descended" from the deceased and informing them of the discovery. The descendants then were authorized to monitor the excavation and claim the remains for reburial. Tribal leaders applauded the new policy, but some anthropologists denounced it as "political interference." Under the leadership of such energetic executive directors as Steven Rios (Juaneño) and Larry Myers (Pomo), the NAHC became a powerful force for cultural resource protection. It filed suit to halt the development of a sacred site (*Puwuigina*) on the campus of the state university at Long Beach and negotiated successfully with the mission at San Diego to end the desecration of an Indian cemetery. Seventeen other states followed the lead of California and adopted similar laws governing the handling of Indian remains, but none created a commission comparable to the NAHC.

Left unresolved was the question of what to do with the hundreds of thousands of Native American skeletal remains and other objects held in existing collections. The largest single collection of bones (18,000 individuals) was at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. In 1989 Congress approved legislation requiring the Smithsonian to begin returning most of its skeletal remains and associated funerary objects to their modern descendants. Called the "Bridge of Respect Law," the legislation won the enthusiastic support of Native American tribal and spiritual leaders. The American Committee for the Preservation of Archaeological Collections (ACPAC), an organization of physical anthropologists and others, denounced the new law:

Once again the public is sacrificed to small pressure groups. Once again the religious claims of 'traditional Indians' are more important than any other consideration. . . . Once again the proposed rules simply fail to recognize that there is a difference between a recent cemetery and an archeological find thousands of years old.

Several private and public universities also acceded to the demands of Native Americans for the repatriation of skeletal remains and other objects. Stanford University had in its collection more than 500 skeletal remains when local tribal leaders began pressing for their return in the mid-1980s. Over the strenuous opposition of an anthropologist who had spent forty years collecting the bones, the university administration agreed in 1989 to their return. Larry Myers, of the Native American Heritage Commission, helped to coordinate the transfer, and Rosemary Cambra, an Ohlone activist, was one of the many Native people who participated in the reburial ceremony on a hill overlooking San Francisco Bay. "We were helped by the Great Spirit, through the prayers of women and men who have a healthy relationship with each other," said Cambra. "Our old ones gave life to us. Now we gave a final life to them by putting them to rest back where they belonged." San Jose State University also agreed, over the objections of members of its anthropology department, to return more than 200 skeletal remains to the Ohlones. In 1989 the University of Minnesota agreed to repatriate 1,000 Indian remains taken from burial mounds, and the University of Nebraska agreed to return 100 Omaha skeletons to tribal authorities. In 1990 Harvard University's Peabody Museum also repatriated about 280 sacred Omaha artifacts to the tribe.

The most important resolution of the issue came in 1990 when Congress passed the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act. The law required all institutions receiving federal funds—which included virtually every museum and university in the country—to inventory fully their collections of Indian bones and other artifacts, share this information with existing tribes, and return to the tribes whatever items they requested. The law fulfilled precisely what Rosemary Cambra and other Indian leaders had been saying for years: "We have to respect the remains of our ancestors."

The repatriation law provoked a mixed reaction from museum officials and scientists. Frank Norick, a principal researcher at the University of California's museum of anthropology in Berkeley, labeled the new law "disastrous." He was determined to keep intact the museum's

collection of the bones of about 10,000 individuals. “I don’t think science should be sacrificed on the altar of religious beliefs,” Norick said. “Some Native Americans claim they believe in spirits and that’s why they want the bones back. But to me, that just isn’t good enough. That kind of thinking disappeared in the Dark Ages.” Other museum officials accepted the new national policy with equanimity. Barbara O’Connell, a professor of anthropology at Hamline University in Minnesota, urged her fellow scientists to cooperate fully with the new policy on repatriation. To resist would only further alienate Native Americans. “Science always operates under limits,” she reminded her colleagues. “If we resist this movement, the field may be stopped a lot quicker than if we work together on this issue.” Many cultural anthropologists also supported the new policy; they agreed with the proponents of repatriation that respecting the sensitivities of living Indians outweighed scientific values.

Implementation of the new repatriation policy posed some unexpected problems for Native Americans. Tribal governments were inundated with inventory lists from universities and museums around the country that detailed the human remains, burial items, rugs, jewelry, and other items held in their collections. The Navajos alone received more than 300 inventories listing thousands of items that could be returned. “We want to get the items returned, but we don’t have the staff or the money to take care of all of [them],” explained the director of the Navajo Historical Preservation Office. The Navajos completed a new cultural center in 1994, but even it did not have enough space for all the incoming items. Daniel Deschigny, leader of an organization of Navajo medicine men, was especially concerned with getting back the hundreds of medicine bundles due to be returned to the tribe. The bundles were among the most sacred of ceremonial objects and contained such items as eagle feathers, corn pollen, and ritual stones. Deschigny said that once the bundles were repatriated, their contents would be removed by medicine men and “returned to the earth.”

Typical of the careful treatment accorded repatriated human remains was the burial in Montana of the skeletons of eighteen Northern Cheyenne men, women, and children. Soldiers had killed the Indians in 1879 as they were trying to escape from the disease and starvation of a reservation in Oklahoma. Their remains were collected as objects of scientific curiosity by the Army medical examiner and held in Washington, D.C., for more than a century. In the early 1990s, tribal lead-

ers requested the remains be returned under terms of the repatriation act. Once the bones were returned, a group of 200 Northern Cheyennes gathered for a traditional tribal burial on a crisp Saturday morning in the fall of 1993. “They’ve been held in captivity for too long,” said tribal chairman Llevando Fisher. “All we wanted to do was to bring them home and bury them.” For these Northern Cheyennes, brought home after an exile of 114 years, their struggle at last was over.

SOURCES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

The most important source for the discussion of recent economic developments is Robert H. White, *Tribal Assets: The Rebirth of Native America* (1990). Also extremely useful are Peter Matthiessen, *Indian Country* (1984); Marjane Ambler, *Breaking the Bonds: Indian Control of Energy Development* (1990); Peter Nabokov, *Native American Testimony: A Chronicle of Indian-White Relations from Prophecy to the Present, 1492–1992* (1991); and Ward Churchill, *Struggle for the Land: Indigenous Resistance to Genocide, Ecocide, and Expropriation in Contemporary North America* (1993). See also Sar A. Levitan and Barbara Hetrick, *Big Brother’s Indian Programs—With Reservations* (1971); John H. Moore, ed., *The Political Economy of North American Indians* (1993); Lloyd Burton, *American Indian Water Rights and the Limits of Law* (1991); and the summaries in Arlene Hirschfelder and Martha Kreipe de Montañó, *The Native American Almanac: A Portrait of Native America Today* (1993) and Duane Champagne, ed., *The Native North American Almanac* (1994).

Of the works previously cited, two are particularly important for this chapter: James S. Olson and Raymond Wilson, *Native Americans in the Twentieth Century* (1984) and Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., *Now That the Buffalo’s Gone: A Study of Today’s American Indians* (1982).

On the recent economic activities of the Navajos, see Robert H. Young, *A Political History of the Navajo Tribe* (1978) and Peter Iverson, *The Navajos* (1990). The triumphs and travails of the Navajo tribal chairman are described in Peter MacDonald and Ted Schwarz, *The Last Warrior: Peter MacDonald and the Navajo Nation* (1994) and Peter Iverson, “Peter MacDonald,” in R. David Edmunds, ed., *American Indian Leaders* (1980). For an account of Hopi economic activities, see Harry C. James, *Pages from Hopi History* (1990). The definitive work on the land dispute between the Navajos and the Hopis is Emily Benedek, *The Wind Won’t Know Me: A History of*