



Occasionally people find human remains exposed through erosion, construction, or through some other kind of ground disturbance, including archaeological work.

IF YOU HAVE FOUND HUMAN REMAINS OR SUSPECTED HUMAN REMAINS, FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

STOP

Any person engaging in ground disturbance activities that resulted in the exposure of human remains must cease all activity.

PROTECT

Remains should not be touched, moved, or further disturbed.

SECURE

The area of the find must be secured. You are responsible for preventing unnecessary access until law enforcement arrives.

NOTIFY

Washington State law **requires you to notify** the county medical examiner/coroner and local law enforcement in the most expeditious manner possible. DAHP also suggests notifying the State Physical Anthropologist, in addition to the legally required notification parties. Once they arrive, the county medical examiner/coroner will assume jurisdiction over the skeletal remains and make a determination of whether those remains are forensic or non-forensic.



DEPT OF ARCHAEOLOGY + HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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HUMAN REMAINS IN WASHINGTON STATE



Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
Protect the past, shape the future





Skeletal remains represent the physical remains of once living individuals and as such should be treated with the utmost care, dignity, and respect.

Human Remains in Washington State



The Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) has jurisdiction over all non-forensic human skeletal remains found in the state of Washington on non-federal and non-tribal lands (except tribal

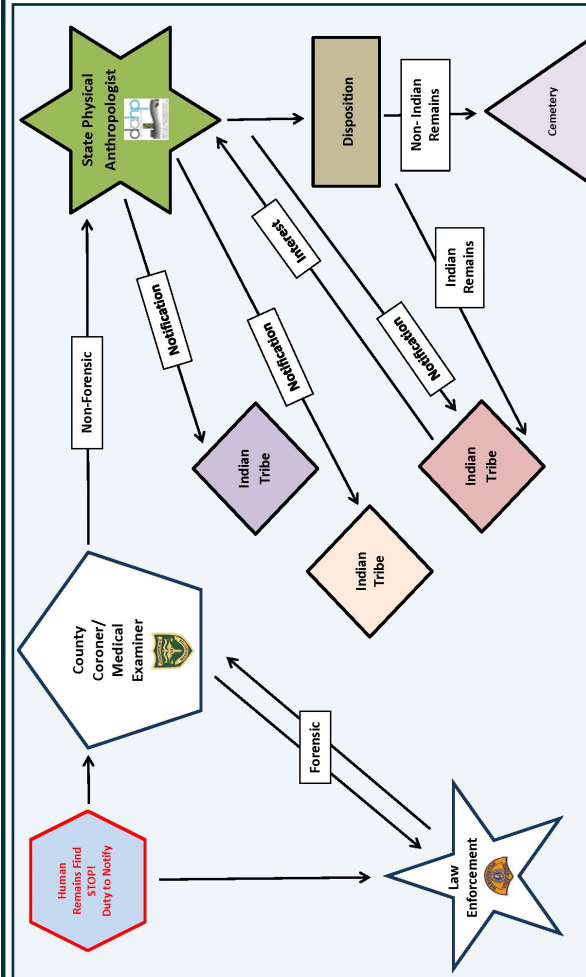
fee land). Non-forensic remains are those determined by the coroner/medical examiner to not be within their purview (RCW 68.60) and can include archaeological finds, teaching specimens, and others.

The State Physical Anthropologist at DAHP

- ◆ Investigates, preserves, and, when necessary, removes and reinters non-forensic skeletal remains.
- ◆ Notifies appropriate cemeteries and affected tribes when non-forensic skeletal remains are discovered.
- ◆ Determines whether human skeletal remains finds are Indian (Native) or not. This step is required by law and is solely the jurisdiction of the State Physical Anthropologist.



The State Human Remains Process



For More Information:

- ◆ Indian Graves and Records (RCW 27.44)
- ◆ Human Remains (RCW 68.50)
- ◆ Abandoned and Historic Cemeteries and Historic Graves (RCW 68.60)
- ◆ Archaeological Sites and Resources (RCW 27.53)



Duty to Notify

Per RCW 68.50.645, every person who knows about human skeletal remains and where they are located has a legal duty to notify (1) law enforcement and (2) the county coroner as soon as possible. This legal requirement extends to ALL human skeletal remains (not just archaeological finds). Failure to give notice to the appropriate authorities is a misdemeanor.

Possession of Human Skeletal Remains

Per RCW 68.50.070, limited exceptions for possession of human skeletal remains include: Non-Indian remains retained by physicians, surgeons, or accredited education institutions for the purposes of education; or lawful possession of the cremated remains of a loved one.

I'm a WA archaeological professional or other WA state employee. I have questions about the state process and/or remains I found. Who can I ask?

Questions, including osteological identifications (helping to determine if remains are human or not), should be directed to the State Physical Anthropologist. Be prepared to describe how and where you found the remains and provide quality photos.

NOTE FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROFESSIONALS: Please use best practice for archaeological photos including removing excess soil and photographing remains on a clean background, in good lighting, with a scale.