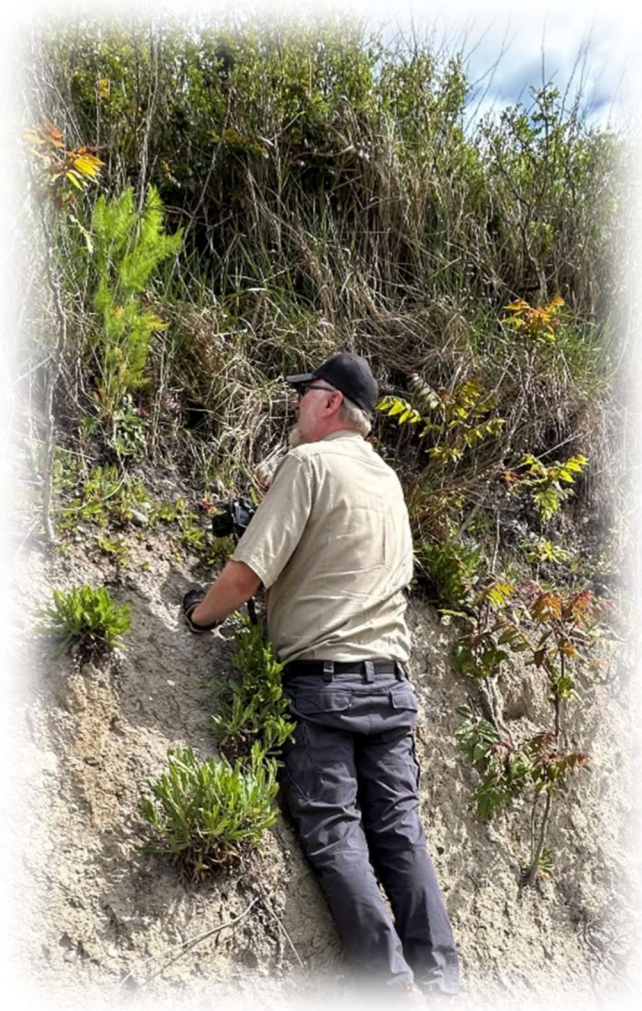


HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS AND CEMETERY PROGRAM



***2023-2025 Biennial Report
to the Washington State
Legislature per RCW
68.50.645***

November 15, 2025



***Department of
Archaeology and Historic Preservation***

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Cover Illustration: *The State Physical Anthropologist inspecting an eroding Native American burial on Whidbey Island in Island County.*

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Human Skeletal Remains and Cemetery Program

2023-2025 Biennial Report to the Washington State Legislature per RCW 68.50.645

November 15, 2025

Prepared by:

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Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

Allyson Brooks, Director

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables.....	4
List of Figures.....	4
Cover Letter from Director Brooks.....	5
Executive Summary.....	7
Lead Staff	8
Introduction	9
Non-Forensic Human Skeletal Remains Cases	11
Reporting Counties and Case Types	11
The State Physical Anthropologist’s Determination of Ancestry.....	14
Reported Origin of Remains	15
Letter Notifications	16
Disposition of Human Skeletal Remains.....	18
Skeletal Human Remains Assistance Account.....	21
Other Activities of the State Physical Anthropologist	23
Cemeteries and Burial Sites.....	25
DAHP’S Care and Maintenance Certificate for Abandoned Cemeteries.....	28
Cemeteries and Burial Sites Database Updates and References Digitization.....	29
Historic Cemetery Preservation Capital Grant Program	29
Summary	31

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	Tribes Notified and Number of Cases for the 2023-25 Biennium.....	18
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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Flow chart illustrating Washington’s human skeletal remains process.....	10
Figure 2.	Distribution of all non-forensic human skeletal remains cases by reporting county through the end of the 2023-25 biennium	12
Figure 3.	Number of non-forensic human skeletal remains cases by case type for the 2023-25 biennium	13
Figure 4.	State physical anthropologist’s determination of ancestry for the 2023-25 biennium	15
Figure 5.	Reported origin of human skeletal remains cases from the 2023-25 biennium	16
Figure 6.	Numbers of certified letter notifications sent by letter notification type for the 2023-25 biennium	17
Figure 7.	DAHP’s repatriation of Indian remains to representatives of the Puyallup Tribe of Indians	19
Figure 8.	DAHP’s repatriation of Hawaiian remains to representatives of the Native Hawaiian community	19
Figure 9.	DAHP’s secure human skeletal remains laboratory.....	20
Figure 10.	Reburial of non-Indian human skeletal remains at the Evergreen Washelli Cemetery in Seattle, Washington conducted on June 11, 2025	20
Figure 11.	Donated headstone to mark the location of the reburial plots for non-Indian human skeletal remains at the Evergreen Washelli Cemetery in Seattle, Washington	21
Figure 12.	Human remains reburial by the State Physical Anthropologist, tribes, and project proponents in Skagit County	22
Figure 13.	Human remains reburial by the Assistant State Physical Anthropologist and Lummi tribal representative in Whatcom County	22
Figure 14.	Example of a recorded cemetery from the Washington Cemeteries and Burial Sites Database.....	25
Figure 15.	Example of DAHP’s cemetery and burial site GIS layer	26
Figure 16.	Source information for the recording of cemeteries and burial sites.....	27
Figure 17.	Distribution of recorded cemeteries and burial sites across the state by county as of the end of the 2023-25 biennium	27
Figure 18.	Distribution of ownership of cemeteries and burial sites	28

COVER LETTER FROM DIRECTOR BROOKS

November 15, 2025

Javier Valdez, Chair
Senate State Government, Tribal Affairs, & Elections Committee
226 John A. Cherberg Building
PO Box 40466
Olympia, Washington 98504-0466

Representative Sharlett Mena, Chair
House State Government & Tribal Relations Committee
319 John L. O'Brien Building
PO Box 40600
Olympia, Washington 98504-0600

Dear Senator Valdez and Representative Mena:

Please find our report to the Washington State Legislature regarding the activities performed under House Bill 2624 passed into law in 2008. Under this law, the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) is required to communicate biennially with the appropriate committees of the legislature regarding the numbers of inadvertent human skeletal remains discoveries and other associated activities performed under this law. The following summary and detailed report fulfill this statutory requirement.

In summary, DAHP opened 184 human skeletal remains cases in the 2023-25 biennium. These cases have resulted in notifications by letter, as required under the law, to 40 tribes. Many of these cases have been determined to be Indian by the State Physical Anthropologist and have been or are being repatriated to tribes on their timelines.

In addition to the human skeletal remains program, DAHP is required under the new law to develop and maintain a centralized database and GIS layer of all known cemeteries and known sites of burials of human remains in the state of Washington. Currently, a total of 3,085 cemeteries and burial locations have been recorded.

A more detailed presentation of these activities follows this cover letter.

Sincerely,



Allyson Brooks
Director, Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was prepared in response to HB 2624, which requires the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) to communicate with the appropriate committees of the Washington State Legislature regarding the number of inadvertent discoveries of human skeletal remains and associated activities performed under this law. The summary below provides details regarding non-forensic human skeletal remains finds in Washington and activities associated with DAHP's Cemeteries and Burial Sites Database and GIS Layer.

Non-Forensic Human Skeletal Remains

- A total of 184 cases representing at least 254 individuals were opened in the 2023-25 biennium. This number is a 173% increase in case load compared to earlier bienna, during which the DAHP opened around 52 cases per year (one case per five DAHP business days). The case load during this and the previous (2021-23) biennium indicate that in the future we can expect around 92 cases per year (one new case per three DAHP business days).
- Non-forensic human remains cases derive primarily from counties in northwestern Washington, including King, Whatcom, Island, San Juan, Clark, Snohomish, Pierce, Clallam, Skagit, and Kitsap. During the 2023-25 biennium, approximately 8% of non-forensic cases were inadvertent finds.
- Though most non-forensic cases in past biennia were typically identified as Indian, this number has decreased (54% during the 2021-23 biennium to 46% in the current biennium). The number of individuals identified as non-Indian increased substantially, from 44% during the 2021-23 biennium to 52% in the current biennium.
- During the 2023-25 biennium, the DAHP sent 2,911 certified letters notifying tribal chairs and appropriate cemeteries of non-forensic human skeletal remains. An estimated additional 5,822 hard copies of the letters were sent to tribal cultural resource professionals. In 2024, a shift to sending electronic copies to tribal cultural resource professionals expedited the notification process. The DAHP is currently exploring the option of notifying tribal chairs via electronic certified mail which will further streamline the notification process.
- In the 2023-25 biennium, the repatriation and/or burial of 191 human remains cases were completed. Repatriations of ancestral remains to tribes (48 cases in 2023-25 biennium) occurred on tribal timelines at the tribes' request.
- DAHP's secure Human Skeletal Remains Laboratory currently houses 264 cases representing at least 411 individuals. These cases are undergoing the notification and disposition process. As of the end of the 2023-25 biennium, funds provided by the Washington State Legislature have allowed for the burial of 185 non-Indian cases, representing at least 285 individuals (most of these burials occurred in the 2023-25 biennium).

Cemeteries and Burial Sites

- Thirty cemeteries and burial sites were added to the DAHP's Cemeteries and Burial Sites Database and GIS Layer in the 2023-25 biennium.
- The DAHP currently manages certificates of authority to care for and maintain abandoned cemeteries held by eight non-profit associations and one municipality. One of these nine certificates was granted by the DAHP during the 2023-25 biennium.

- Established in 2016 with the enactment of House Bill 2637, the Historic Cemetery Preservation Capital Grant Program is intended to support projects preserving historic cemeteries. During the 2023-25 biennium, grants totaling \$494,170 were awarded to 20 cemeteries thanks to funding from the Washington State Legislature.

LEAD STAFF

Dr. Guy L. Tasa

State Physical Anthropologist

Dr. Jennifer Spence

Assistant State Physical Anthropologist



INTRODUCTION

This report was prepared in response to HB 2624, which requires the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) to communicate with the appropriate committees of the Washington State Legislature regarding the number of inadvertent discoveries of human skeletal remains and other associated activities pursuant to this act.

House Bill 2624, presented in 2008, clarified the process for notification upon discovery of human skeletal remains. The bill was introduced to the Washington State Senate in January 2008 and signed into law by Governor Christine Gregoire on March 31, 2008. The bill amended and added new sections to existing state laws including RCW 68.50 (Human Remains), RCW 27.44 (Indian Graves and Records), RCW 68.60 (Abandoned and Historic Cemeteries and Historic Graves), RCW 43.334 (Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation), RCW 27.34 (State Historical Societies – Historic Preservation), and RCW 27.53.030 (Definitions).

A major goal of the new legislation was to clarify the notification procedures when human skeletal remains are discovered for both Indian and non-Indian remains. As outlined in the new law, it is the duty of all citizens who know of the existence of human skeletal remains to notify both local law enforcement and the local coroner or medical examiner (Figure 1). Coroners and medical examiners have five days, if possible, to determine whether remains reported to them are forensic (related to a modern unexplained death) or are non-forensic. If the remains are non-forensic, the DAHP must be notified by the county coroner/medical examiner within two business days. The DAHP assumes jurisdiction over non-forensic human skeletal remains until provenance is established.

Once the DAHP is notified that remains are non-forensic, the DAHP must notify any appropriate cemeteries and the tribal chairs and tribal cultural resource professionals within two business days. The State Physical Anthropologist is also required to determine if the remains are Indian or not and communicate that finding to tribes and any appropriate cemeteries within two business days. If the remains are determined to be Indian, tribes then have five business days to respond to the DAHP as to their interest in the remains.

House Bill 2624 also required the director of DAHP to appoint a State Physical Anthropologist, which was accomplished in August of 2008. The primary responsibilities of the State Physical Anthropologist are the investigation, preservation, and, when necessary, removal and reintering of discoveries of non-forensic human skeletal remains. These duties also include the notification of appropriate cemeteries and tribes when non-forensic remains are discovered. In addition, the State Physical Anthropologist is available to any local

government or tribal government to assist in the determination of whether discovered human skeletal remains are forensic or non-forensic.

The new legislation also created the Skeletal Human Remains Assistance Account in the custody of the State Treasurer. This account was set up to pay for archaeological determinations and excavations of inadvertently discovered human skeletal remains and for their removal and reinterment when necessary. The Director of DAHP or their designee may authorize expenditures from the account.

Lastly, the new legislation required that DAHP develop and maintain a centralized database and geographic information system spatial layer of all known cemeteries and sites of burials of human remains in Washington State.

What follows is a detailed description of the activities performed under the new legislation since its effective date and since DAHP's last biennial report prepared in November 2023 for the 2021-23 biennium.

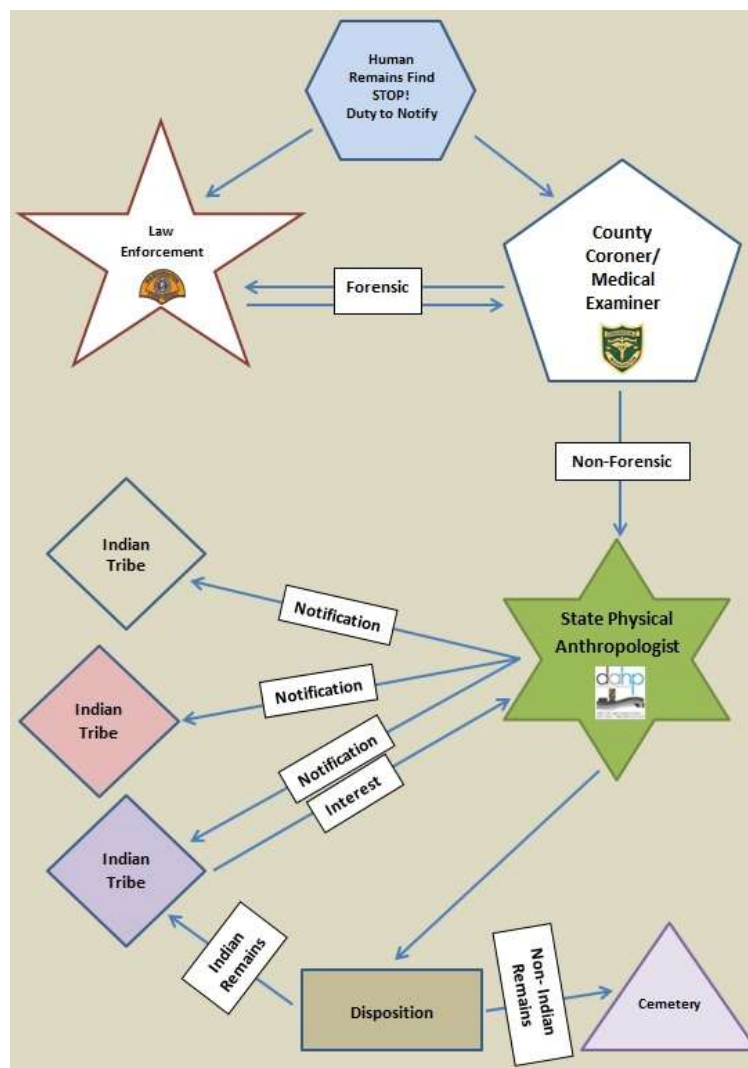


Figure 1. Flow chart illustrating Washington's human skeletal remains process.



NON-FORENSIC HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS CASES

Since the appointment of the State Physical Anthropologist in August of 2008, the DAHP has opened and investigated 1,036 non-forensic human skeletal remains cases. One hundred and eighty-four cases (representing at least 254 individuals) were opened in the 2023-25 biennium, an increase of 173% over previous biennia. Based on earlier biennia, DAHP anticipated around 52 non-forensic human skeletal remains cases per year, averaging about one new case every five DAHP business days. However, case numbers from the 2021-2025 biennia have increased estimates to around 92 cases per year, a new case every three DAHP business days. At the end of the 2023-25 biennium, of the 1,036 cases, 245 were open and 791 were closed. Closed cases include cases in which remains were repatriated to tribes for reburial; non-Indian remains reburied by the DAHP and tribes; cases in which Indian remains were left in place; cases that fell under federal jurisdiction (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act) and were transferred to the respective federal agencies; cases returned to the respective counties for forensic investigation (originally determined to be non-forensic); cases in which remains could not be located after having been reported to the DAHP; and cases in which remains were determined not to be human. Open cases include cases awaiting transfer of jurisdiction to DAHP; cases in the notification, determination, or repatriation process; cases of non-Indian skeletal remains awaiting disposition and held at DAHP; and cases held at DAHP at the request of tribes until repatriation.

REPORTING COUNTIES AND CASE TYPES

A critical component of the process codified into law in 2008 is the reporting of non-forensic human skeletal remains to DAHP by the respective county coroners and medical examiners. Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of reported non-forensic human skeletal remains cases by county across the state through the end of the 2023-25 biennium. Most reported non-forensic cases originate from the western half of the state, particularly King, Whatcom, Island, San Juan, Clark, Snohomish, Pierce, Clallam, Skagit, and Kitsap counties. The trend continued in the 2023-25 biennium except for a relatively large number of cases from Kittitas and Spokane counties. These counties represent more populated counties in which relatively more development occurs, and consequently more human skeletal remains are encountered and reported. Two counties (Ferry and Pend Orielle) have yet to report any non-forensic human skeletal remains cases to our office as of the end of the 2023-25 biennium.

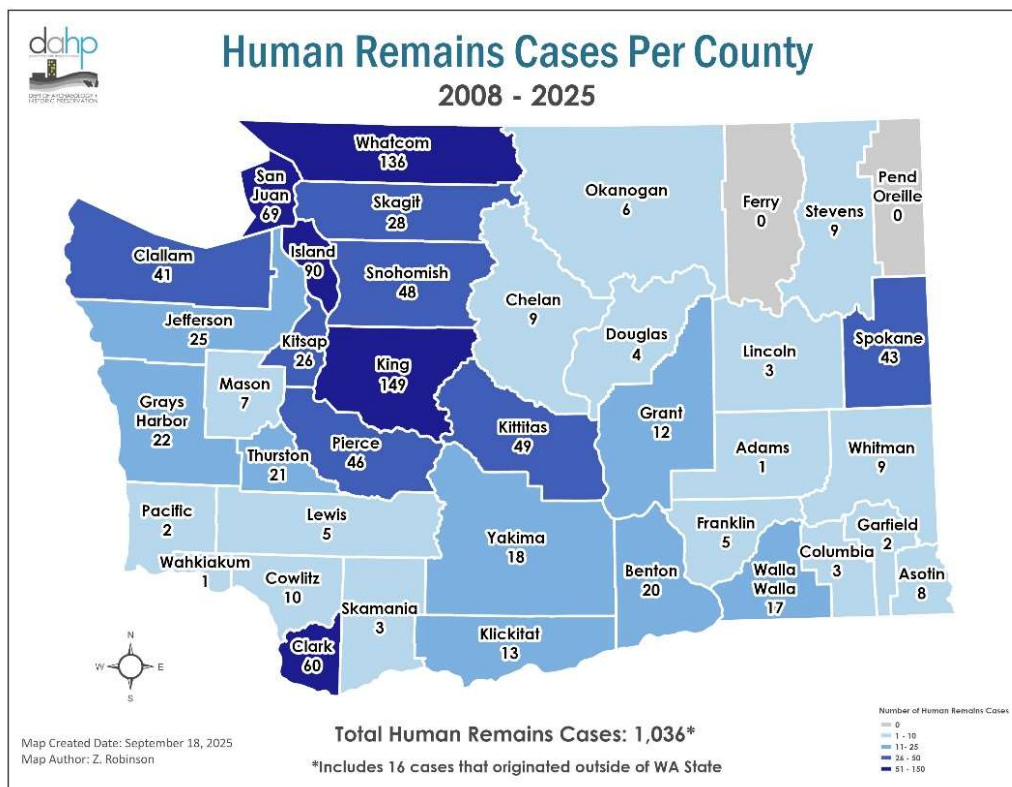


Figure 2. Distribution of all non-forensic human skeletal remains cases by reporting county through the end of the 2023-25 biennium.

Since 2008, a large proportion of the human remains cases reported to the DAHP have been cases held by the counties since before the passage of the new legislation – referred to as “Previous Finds.” Although this type of human remains case was anticipated originally, the large number of “previous finds” was unanticipated. With the closing of the 2015-2017 biennium and subsequently, “previous finds” were no longer the most common case type in a biennium. By 2017-2019 biennium they were also no longer the most common case type in the history of the program. While the number of “previous finds” continues to dwindle, the current biennium indicates the presence of these case types in various county coroner’s and medical examiner’s offices, which continue to emerge in significant numbers. Although previous biennial reports suggested that many counties had generally divested themselves of pre-law non-forensic human skeletal remains cases, these case types continue at significant percentages (10% of all cases) in the current biennium (Figure 3).

The counties of medical examiners and coroners who have reportedly completely divested themselves of past (pre-legislation) non-forensic human skeletal remains cases include Benton, Clark, Grays Harbor, Island, Jefferson, King, Pierce, San Juan, Snohomish, Walla Walla, and Whatcom. The status of these offices in other counties is unknown although since 2009 the DAHP has sent annual reminders informing Washington counties of the change in the law. Presentations by the State Physical Anthropologist to the Washington Association of County Medical Examiners (WACME) in Tacoma in 2015 and Spokane in 2008 further educated Washington’s county coroners and medical examiners and their personnel about the unified process for non-forensic human skeletal remains. The State Physical Anthropologist plans to conduct another training for the Washington Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners (WACME) in the next biennium.

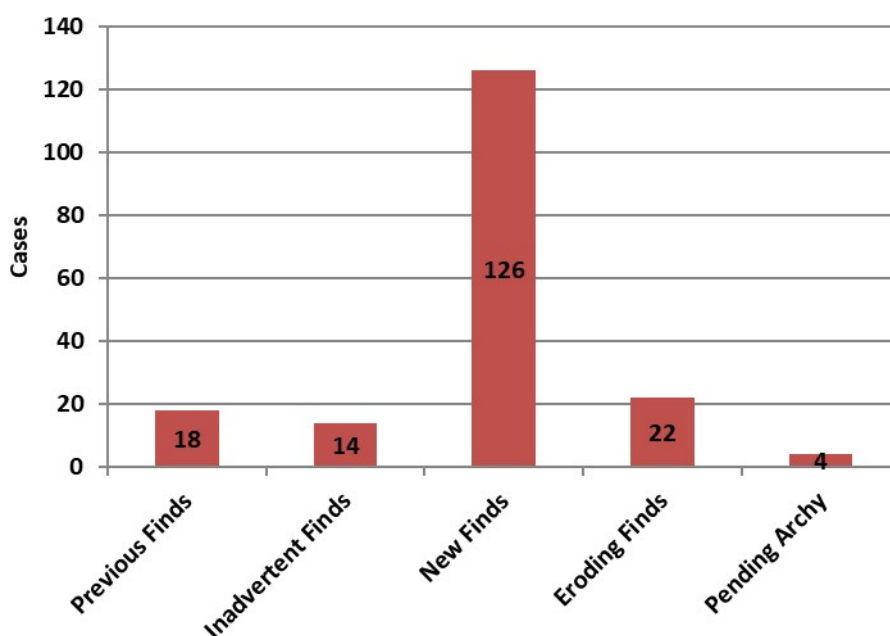


Figure 3. Number of non-forensic human skeletal remains cases by case type for cases from the 2023-25 biennium.

In addition, it has become clear that other county agencies (particularly law enforcement) may also hold non-forensic human skeletal remains that were acquired before and since the change in law. In the 2023-25 biennium, several law enforcement agencies turned non-forensic skeletal remains over to DAHP for handling and disposition. A goal for the future should be a concerted effort to communicate with law enforcement agencies across the state to identify any possible non-forensic human skeletal remains requiring reporting to DAHP that are held outside of the various county medical examiners' and coroners' offices. This effort will undoubtedly extend the trend in these case types beyond the next few years.

Another case type that has now become the most frequent case type in the last two biennia and has exceeded the number of all other case types for the history of the program is that of "New Finds". "New Finds" cases include skeletal remains turned in by private parties and institutions or confiscated from private individuals during law enforcement investigations. In the 2023-25 biennium, this case type makes up 68% of all cases – up 11% over the previous biennium (Figures 2 and 3) – and it is the source of the nearly doubling of overall case numbers seen in the last two biennia. Since 2008, law enforcement has become more familiar with the state law and has ensured that many human skeletal remains found during law enforcement activities are properly handled through the process outlined in state law. In addition, publicity of many of the cases handled under the process has led to numerous private parties coming forward to turn over human skeletal remains that they have had in their possession. The most common "new finds" cases over the past two biennia have been unwanted medical and teaching skeletal remains turned into county agencies for final disposition. These remains derive from both private parties and from institutions across the state who are following a nationwide trend of divesting themselves of real human skeletal teaching remains (as opposed to casts of human skeletal remains) because of ethical concerns about how the remains were originally collected. Other "new finds" cases include

material originally held by anthropologists and occasionally archaeologists who have retired or passed away. Human remains cases of this case type are likely to continue in future biennia.

Eroding human skeletal remains from archaeological sites make up the next highest number of the kinds of skeletal remains cases investigated. They account for nearly 12% of all the skeletal remains cases in the 2023-25 biennium (Figure 3). These cases are typically most common during the late winter and early spring months when the public frequents for the first time since the previous year the coastal and riverine areas of the state for recreation and, therefore, discover eroding human skeletal remains. The trend for these kinds of cases has slowly increased since 2008 and is now at an average of about eleven cases per year.

“Inadvertent Finds” (human skeletal remains found during construction where none were previously indicated or anticipated) make up a significant number of human skeletal remains cases. This case type has decreased as a relative percentage (8%) in the 2023-25 biennium (Figure 3). Although inadvertent finds occur throughout the year, they are particularly frequent during spring and summer when construction is at its peak and, consequently, the likelihood of encountering human skeletal remains increases.

Lastly, cases associated with pending archaeological excavations (“pending archy finds”) in which the probability of encountering human skeletal remains is high generally make up just over 2% of the cases investigated. This case type continued into the 2023-25 biennium, which saw four cases of this type (Figure 3).

THE STATE PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGIST’S DETERMINATION OF ANCESTRY

Once human skeletal remains are reported to the DAHP, the State Physical Anthropologist is required under RCWs 68.50.645, 27.44.055, and 68.60.055 to determine whether the remains are Indian or not. This determination is achieved through a detailed examination of the remains using standard osteological procedures for the inventory and the determination of ancestry. Other sources of information used to support a determination of Indian or non-Indian may include information about archaeological site location in the discovery area, archaeological context of the remains within the discovery area, associated artifacts, and information from previous archaeological investigations in the discovery area. This additional information supplements the documentation of the skeletal remains to provide the best possible determination of ancestry using all available evidence.

In the past most of the human skeletal remains examined by the State Physical Anthropologist were typically identified as Indian. The number of other remains were typically identified as non-Indian, indeterminate, forensic, or non-human in that order. This trend shifted in the 2023-25 biennium (Figure 4), during which remains identified as non-Indian were the most numerous (52% of the 254 individuals examined) followed by remains identified as Indian (46%), non-human (<2%), forensic (<1%), and indeterminate (0%). A 26% increase in the number of remains identified as non-Indian in the current biennium reflects an increase in the number of medical/teaching remains being turned over the DAHP as noted above. Remains identified as forensic by the State Physical Anthropologist are returned to the respective counties for further investigation.

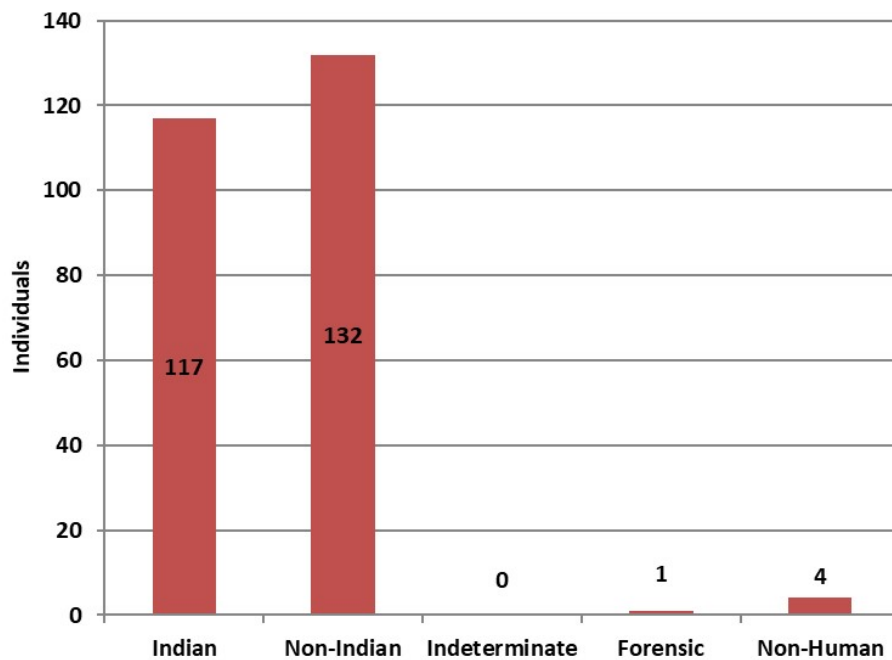


Figure 4. State physical anthropologist's determination of ancestry for the 2023-25 biennium.

REPORTED ORIGIN OF REMAINS

All inadvertent, eroding, and pending archaeological work case types are associated with skeletal remains found within the state of Washington. Many previous finds held by county coroners and new finds confiscated by law enforcement also originate from the state of Washington. These cases represent most of the non-forensic human skeletal remains handled by the DAHP. However, a significant proportion of non-forensic human skeletal remains seized or turned into law enforcement in past biennia reportedly originated from other states or other countries. These trends continue into the current biennium with 96% of the cases from the current biennium originating from Washington, 3% from other states, and 1% from outside of the country (Figure 5). Other states identified as the origin for these remains have included Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, and South Dakota. Other countries include Britain, Canada, Egypt, India, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Mexico, Peru, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Turkey.

Remains originating from other states and countries present special problems when attempting to create a final disposition. They require consultation with distant tribes and state historic preservation offices and, in the case of remains from other countries, with commensurate agencies within those governments. Successful repatriations of remains identified as Indian have been made to appropriate tribes in Colorado, Montana, Oregon, and Utah for five cases, and arrangements have been made with the appropriate tribes in Oklahoma and Alaska for three others. Other remains repatriated have included Native Hawaiian remains and currently the DAHP is working to repatriate Native Marshallese remains to the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

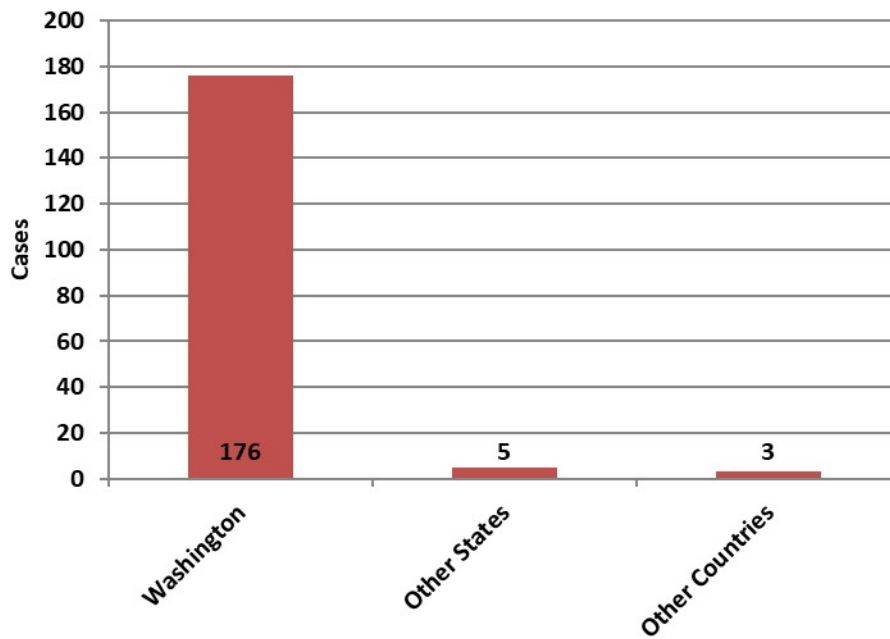


Figure 5. Reported origin of human skeletal remains cases from the 2023-25 biennium.

LETTER NOTIFICATIONS

When non-forensic human skeletal remains are reported to the DAHP and when the State Physical Anthropologist determines the ancestry of those reported remains, those events are required by law to be reported to appropriate cemeteries and tribes (tribal chairs) via certified mail. In addition, once tribes are notified of Indian remains, a third letter notification (a repatriation letter) is sent to identify interested tribes and arrange for a meeting to discuss final disposition of the remains. Interested tribes determine and direct the disposition of Indian remains to the DAHP.

On average, DAHP sends approximately 670 certified notification letters per year, approximately three tribal chair letters per DAHP business day. In the 2023-25 biennium, the DAHP sent 2,911 certified letter notifications (up 210% from the previous biennium) to tribal chairs from 40 different tribes regarding non-forensic human skeletal remains cases (Figure 6). The increase for the 2023-25 biennium represents an average of over 1,455 certified letter notifications per year, nearly six tribal chair letters per DAHP business day. The increase in the number of letter numbers is directly related to increase in case load for the biennium. These letters included 1,397 letter notifications of the reporting of non-forensic remains to DAHP, 1,397 letter notifications of a determination of ancestry by the State Physical Anthropologist, and 117 letter notifications regarding final disposition (Figure 6).

In addition, copies of these notification letters are required by law to be provided to the respective cultural resource departments of each tribe notified. These normally average an additional six letters per DAHP business day. Tribal cultural resource staff generally average about two individuals per tribe and letters sent to them

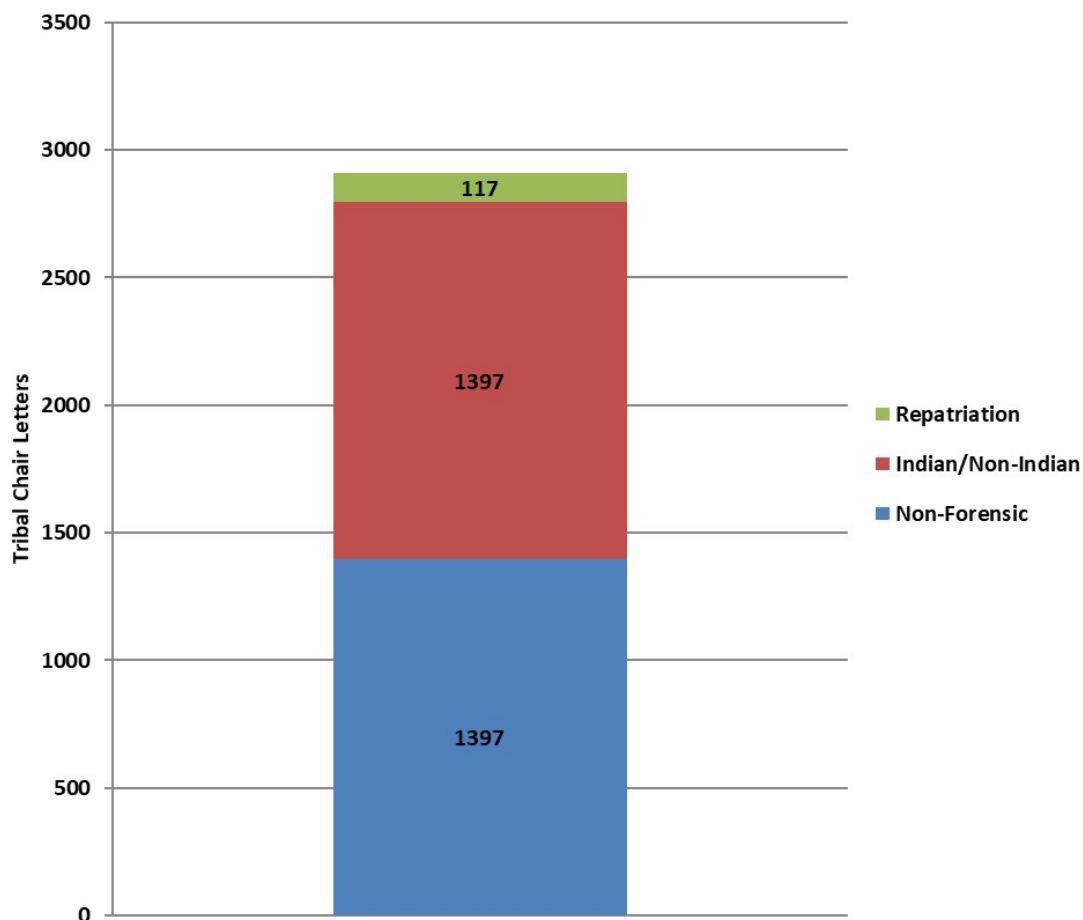


Figure 6. Numbers of certified letter notifications sent by letter notification type for the 2023-25 biennium.

account for an estimated additional 5,822 notification letters for the current biennium (up over 212% from the previous biennia). This represents an increase to twelve additional letters per DAHP business day. The increase in letter numbers is again the result of the increase in case load for the 2023-25 biennium.

To expedite the notification process, the DAHP now sends hard copies of tribal chair notifications electronically to tribal cultural resource professionals. The DAHP is currently exploring electronic certified mail as an option for notifying tribal chairs, streamlining the process further.

Tribes are notified about cases based on a tribe's self-identified area of interest and the cases originating in that area. Table 1 presents the tribes notified and the number of cases per tribe during the 2023-25 biennium. The data reflects the high number of cases reported by counties from western Washington, particularly the Puget Sound region (see also Figure 2). The high case numbers for the Puyallup Tribe of Indians and the Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe are explained in part because both tribes have identified the entire state of Washington as an area of interest for non-forensic human remains discoveries.

Table 1. Tribes Notified and Number of Cases for the 2023-25 Biennium.

Tribe	Cases	Tribe	Cases
Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation	3	Quinault Indian Nation	2
Chinook Indian Nation	43	Samish Indian Nation	78
Coeur d'Alene Indian Tribe	5	Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe	157
Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	15	Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe	2
Cowlitz Indian Tribe	43	Confederated Tribe of Siletz Indians	1
Duwamish Tribe	13	Skokomish Indian Tribe	8
Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde	43	Snohomish Tribe of Indians	18
Hoh River Indian Tribe	0	Snoqualmie Indian Tribe	92
Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe of Indians	18	Spokane Tribe of Indians	7
Kalispel Tribe of Indians	4	Squaxin Island Tribe	23
Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe	7	Steilacoom Tribe	7
Lummi Nation	54	Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians	46
Makah Indian Tribe	5	Suquamish Tribe	55
Muckleshoot Indian Tribe	39	Swinomish Indian Tribal Community	73
Nez Perce Tribe	59	The Tulalip Tribes	61
Nisqually Indian Tribe	7	Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation	47
Nooksack Indian Tribe	34	Upper Skagit Indian Tribe	52
Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe	8	Wanapum Indian Tribe	8
Puyallup Tribe of Indians	157	Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs	42
Quileute Tribe	5	Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation	60

DISPOSITION OF HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS

The disposition of Indian and non-Indian human skeletal remains is required by state law. To resolve the disposition of human skeletal remains determined to be Indian, the State Physical Anthropologist facilitates a consultation meeting among tribes who have expressed interest in the remains. The interested tribes decide the disposition of Indian remains and the agreed upon disposition is fulfilled by the DAHP. During the 2023-25 biennium, the State Physical Anthropologist arranged for and successfully completed the disposition of human skeletal remains for 191 cases, a three-fold increase over the previous biennium. Of these, 48 cases were repatriated to tribes after consultation (Figure 7), six cases determined to be Indian were reburied in place at the request of tribes, and 137 cases determined to be non-Indian were buried in the DAHP's communal plots at the Evergreen Washelli Cemetery in Seattle. An additional 13 cases were found on federal land and therefore were handled by respective federal agencies under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). Remains associated with 10 cases could not be located or had been previously repatriated or reburied, and four cases did not have identifiable human remains or the remains were determined to be non-human. The remaining cases acquired within the current biennium are either awaiting final disposition by the DAHP or are awaiting transfer to the DAHP for investigation. The DAHP has also been able to successfully repatriate Indian skeletal remains deriving from Alaska, Colorado, Hawaii, Montana, Oregon, and Utah (Figure 8) and arranged for repatriations to Oklahoma and the Republic of Marshall Islands.

At the end of the 2024-25 biennium, skeletal remains associated with 264 cases and representing at least 411 individuals were housed in the DAHP's secure Human Skeletal Remains Laboratory awaiting disposition (Figure 9). This number has decreased since the previous biennium. They include both Indian and non-Indian remains.



Figure 7. DAHP's repatriation of Indian remains to representatives of the Puyallup Tribe of Indians.



Figure 8. DAHP's repatriation of Hawaiian remains to representatives of the Native Hawaiian community.



Figure 9. DAHP's secure Human Skeletal Remains Laboratory.

The DAHP continues to successfully complete the disposition process as intended, with repatriations of Indian remains occurring on a timeline determined by tribes. While the disposition of Indian remains is clearly indicated in state law and requires consultation with tribes, the disposition of non-Indian is less clear. Currently, the DAHP houses the non-Indian skeletal remains deriving from 51 cases. These remains include unidentified historic period non-Indian remains and remains used for teaching purposes that were confiscated or turned into law enforcement because they are no longer used. The number of non-Indian cases housed at the DAHP has decreased considerably from the last biennial report because of two interments in the DAHP communal plot during the 2023-25 biennium (see below).

In a previous budget cycle, DAHP sought and was awarded funds by the legislature to rebury unidentified non-Indian skeletal remains. Working with the Evergreen Washelli Cemetery in Seattle, the DAHP acquired through donation two plots (Cemetery E, Section 12, Lot 304, Grave 2 and Lot 307, Grave 2) and a headstone for these plots (Figures 10 and 11). The funds were used to purchase grave liners and to conduct the burials. The remains of 285 non-Indian individuals from 185 human remains cases were laid to rest in four separate interments on September 30, 2015, June 8, 2017, June 17, 2024, and June 11, 2025. The two graves provide room for around 100 banker's boxes, and roughly 66% of the space has been utilized so far.



Figure 10. Reburial of non-Indian human skeletal remains at the Evergreen Washelli Cemetery in Seattle, Washington conducted on June 11, 2025.



Figure 11. Donated headstone to mark the location of the reburial plots for non-Indian human skeletal remains at the Evergreen Washelli Cemetery in Seattle, Washington.

SKELETAL HUMAN REMAINS ASSISTANCE ACCOUNT

The Skeletal Human Remains Assistance Account was created in 2008 to subsidize or cover the costs associated with the inadvertent find of human skeletal remains. The primary purpose of the account is to cover the costs of recovery, reburial, erosion control, re-interment, or other expenses deemed by the Director of the DAHP to be essential to the resolution of a case involving the inadvertent find of human skeletal remains. Recovery costs would be covered by the account when an archaeological contractor was required to complete the work. The original biennial allocation for the account was \$500,000. The biennial allotment was reduced during the recession by the Washington State Legislature to \$200,000, but additional monies have been added since that time. No applications were made to use funds from this account during the 2023-25 biennium because landowners were able to rely upon the in-house work of the State Physical Anthropologist and the Assistant State Physical Anthropologist to conduct necessary fieldwork associated with inadvertent finds of human skeletal remains (Figure 12 and 13). Our ability to conduct this work and preserve funds is possible only if the work does not interfere with the State Physical Anthropologist's and Assistant State Physical Anthropologist's duties to respond to inadvertent finds elsewhere and if additional help is available from other DAHP staff. Thirty field responses (totaling 506 field hours and including 8,135 road miles) were conducted in the 2023-25 biennium and included nine recoveries and reburials by the State Physical Anthropologist and the Assistant State Physical Anthropologist, most of which were to assist private landowners.



Figure 12. Human remains reburial by the State Physical Anthropologist, tribes, and project proponents in Skagit County.



Figure 13. Human remains reburial by the Assistant State Physical Anthropologist and a Lummi tribal representative in Whatcom County.

OTHER ACTIVITIES OF THE STATE PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGIST

In addition to fulfilling statutory requirements, the State Physical Anthropologist and Assistant also routinely review documents for compliance with the law, including memorandums of agreement, inadvertent discovery protocols, archaeological permits, policy documents, and archaeological reports submitted to the DAHP for review by various agencies. These activities are not currently tallied but should be more diligently accounted for in future biennia as they constitute a significant part of our work.

In the 2023-25 biennium, the State Physical Anthropologist and the Assistant State Physical Anthropologist provided training about Washington's human remains laws to over 130 individuals from local, state, and federal governmental agencies as well as for tribal representatives and the public.

Lastly, the State Physical Anthropologist is increasingly called upon by law enforcement agencies, medical examiners, coroners, governmental agencies, archaeologists, and private individuals to identify suspected human skeletal remains found across the state of Washington. The State Physical Anthropologist and the Assistant have lent their expertise in the identification of these remains (46 instances in the last biennium) and helped to refer the entity making the request for identification to the proper reporting process as outlined in the law.



CEMETERIES AND BURIAL SITES

Under the new legislation, DAHP was charged with the development and maintenance of a centralized database and geographic information system (GIS) spatial layer of all known cemeteries and burial sites in Washington. The purpose of the database and GIS layer was to help protect these unique cultural resources from inadvertent impacts due to construction. The database and GIS layer are available online through Secure Access Washington (SAW) to qualified and approved users.

This task of creating the database and GIS layer commenced in July of 2008 when the Washington Historical Cemeteries and Burial Sites Database and GIS Layer were created (Figures 14 and 15, respectively). At that time, archaeologists were encouraged to record previously unrecognized cemeteries and burial sites using DAHP's standard archaeological form, while a new cemetery form was developed for public use. Both forms are available on DAHP's website and through WISAARD. Updates and additions to the database and GIS layer occurred throughout the 2023-25 biennial period and will continue as more cemeteries and burial sites are identified and recorded in the future.

WASHINGTON HISTORICAL CEMETERIES: Add/Edit

Record ID: 879 Name on cemetery sign, if any: Bayview Cemetery Archy Site ID: WH00787

NAME/LOCATION **OWNER/CONTACT** **GENERAL INFO** **DESIGN CHARACTER** **CEMETERY HISTORY**

Other Known Names: Physical address, if any: 1400 Woburn at Lakeway Drive

City/Town/Community: Bellingham ☐ Vicinity Zip Code: County: Whatcom Info Source: Other

Directions from nearest community:
From downtown Bellingham, go east on Lakeway Drive. Cemetery on the north side of road.

Township/Range/Section **Quadrangle** **Parcel/Lot #:**

Township	Range	E/W	Section
38	03	E	28

BELLINGHAM NORTH
BELLINGHAM SOUTH

380329535080 (4 parcels) & 380329551222 (2 parcels)

Listing Status: Not Identified Historic Property Scan ID: Non-DAHP #:

References
1989 Cemetery Centennial; USGenWeb; Cemetery records of Whatcom County - Whatcom Genealogical Society (1973); "History of Whatcom County" by Roth (1926)

Site Description

Entered by: Susan Goff Completed Date: 8/7/2008 GIS Method: Digitized From 24K USGS Map **Print** **Save** **Exit**

Figure 14. Example of a recorded cemetery from the Washington Cemeteries and Burial Sites Database.

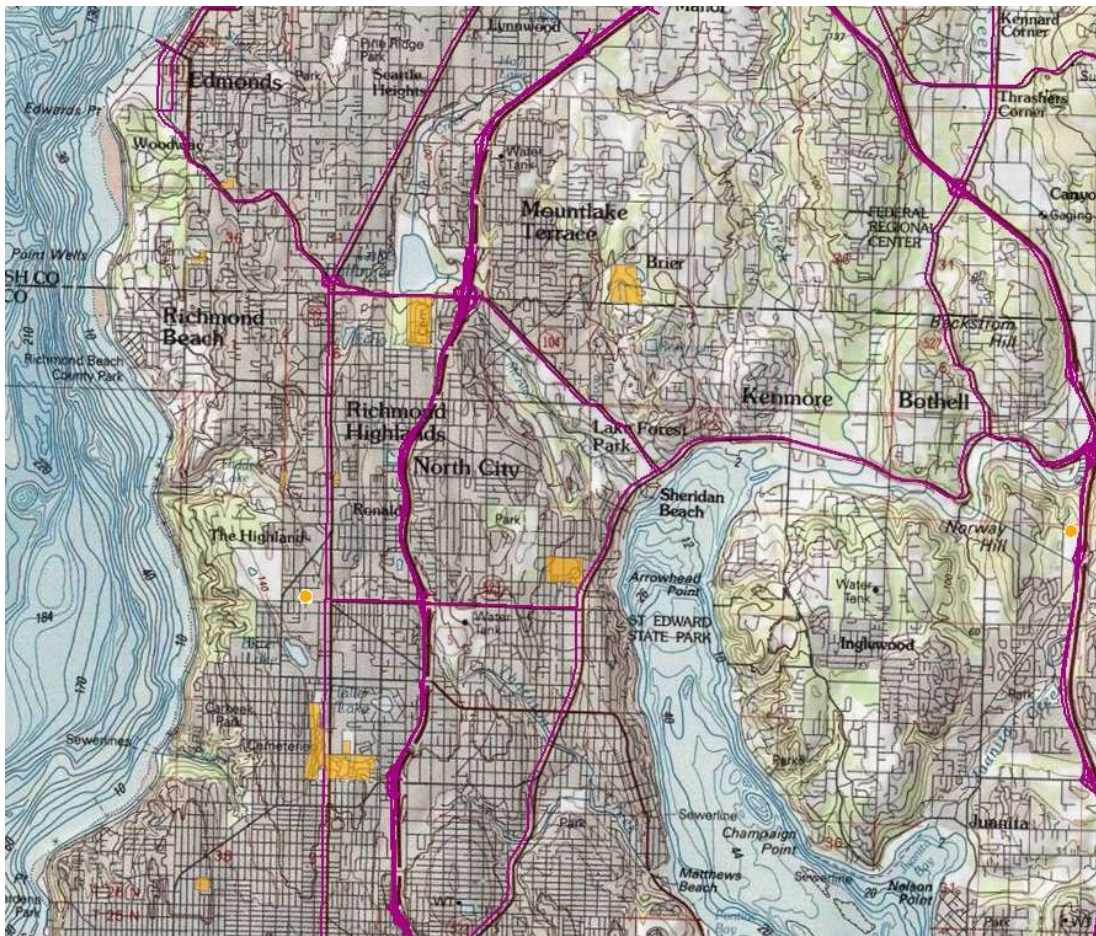


Figure 15. Example of DAHP's Cemetery and Burial Site GIS Layer (cemeteries and burial sites are indicated in orange).

Prior to the passage of the legislation and DAHP's efforts to document these cemeteries and burial sites, only 154 cemeteries were listed in records kept by the State Funeral and Cemetery Board (Figure 16). The DAHP's internal records documented an additional 1,208 burial sites. To create the current cemeteries and burial sites database and GIS layer, DAHP utilized a variety of sources, including historic maps and data collected from the public, genealogical societies, the internet, historical societies, state archives, local government records, archaeologists, and tribes. This effort enabled the DAHP to record numerous additional cemeteries and burial sites and this effort continues. Human skeletal remains cases found through inadvertent discovery and handled by the State Physical Anthropologist have also been added to the database and GIS layer. Currently, the database includes 3,085 cemeteries and burial sites. Of these, 30 were added in the 2023-25 biennium. Figure 17 illustrates the currently known distribution of these cemeteries and burial sites by county. Approximately 85% of the cemeteries and burial sites included in the database have been mapped on the agency's GIS layer. The other 15% are lacking sufficient location information for them to be accurately placed on the GIS layer.

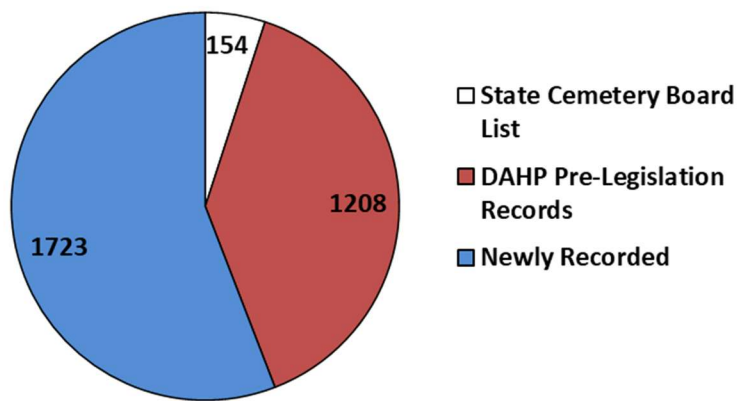


Figure 16. Source information for the recording of cemeteries and burial sites.

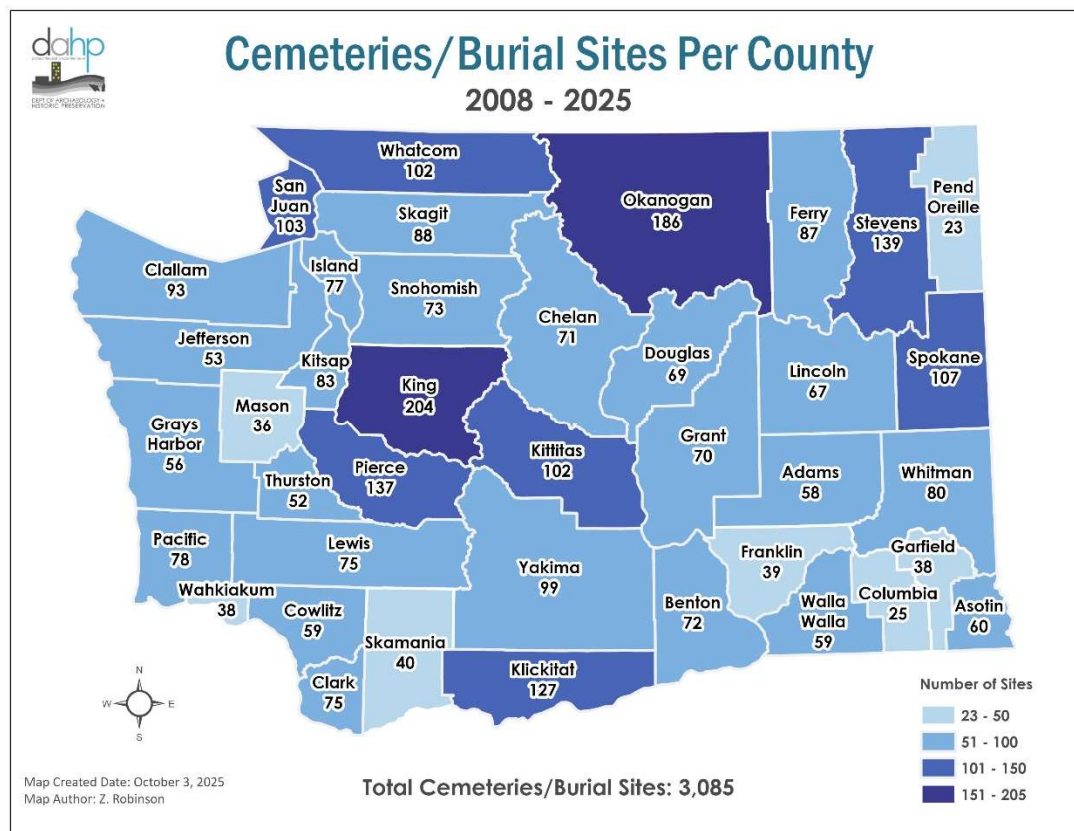


Figure 17. Distribution of recorded cemeteries and burial sites across the state by county as of the end of the 2023-25 biennium.

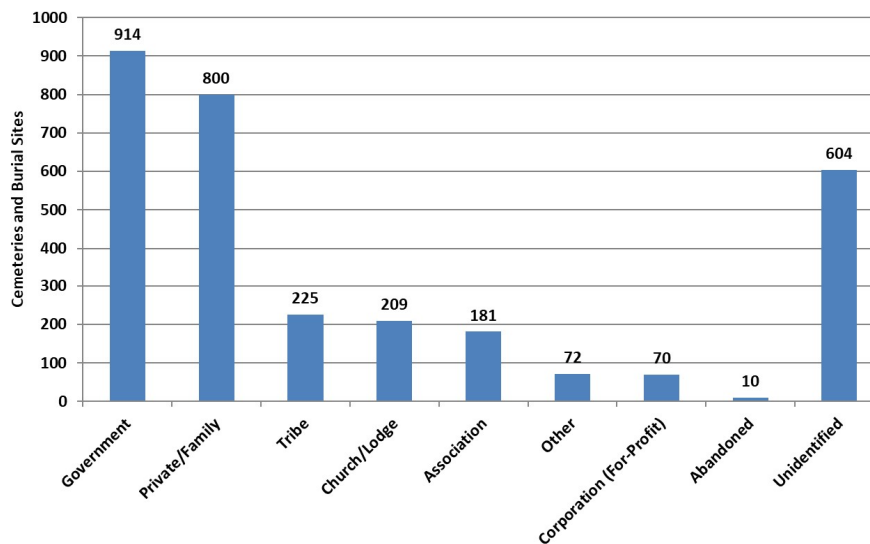


Figure 18. Distribution of ownership of cemeteries and burial sites.

Prior to passage of the new law, the state had on record with the State Funeral and Cemetery Board only those cemeteries that fell under its jurisdictional control (cemetery associations and for-profit cemeteries). State law (RCW 68.05.400) excluded nonprofit religious cemeteries and cemeteries controlled and operated by a coroner, county, city, town, or cemetery district. Of the 3,085 DAHP recorded cemeteries where ownership has been identified (2,481 cemeteries), 69% are owned by either government agencies (city, port, county, state, or federal) or by private ownership (Figure 18). The remaining cemeteries and burial sites are owned by a variety of entities and only a small proportion (<3%) are for-profit cemeteries and associations regulated by the State Funeral and Cemetery Board.

DAHP'S CARE AND MAINTENANCE CERTIFICATE FOR ABANDONED CEMETERIES

The DAHP, under the authority granted by Washington state law (RCW 68.60.030), may grant nontransferable certificate authority to maintain and protect abandoned cemeteries to preservation organizations incorporated for the purpose of restoring, maintaining, and protecting an abandoned cemetery. This authority is limited to the care, maintenance, restoration, protection, and historic preservation of an abandoned cemetery. Authority may also be granted to Washington nonprofit corporations not expressly incorporated for these purposes.

Abandoned cemeteries were originally described as cemeteries for which no ownership can be determined by the county assessor. In 2017, House Bill 1907 expanded this definition to include cemeteries that no longer hold a valid certificate of authority to operate as determined by the Washington State Funeral and Cemetery Board. In 2019, House Bill 1801 added local governmental organizations to the list of potential applicants for care and maintenance certificates issued by the DAHP. In addition, the bill required DAHP to establish standards and guidelines for granting certificates of authority and this was accomplished in the 2017-19 biennium. Since 2009, DAHP has granted certificate authority to care for and maintain 14 recorded abandoned cemeteries (one in the last biennium). These included twelve non-profits and two local governmental organizations over the years though currently only nine non-profits and one local governmental organization hold certificates.

CEMETERIES AND BURIAL SITES DATABASE UPDATES AND REFERENCES DIGITIZATION

Several long-term projects have been initiated by the DAHP to facilitate use of the Cemeteries and Burial Sites Database and GIS layer. A project to make cemetery reference materials available to users began in 2017. The first step of this project was to link citations in the database to corresponding digitized documents. In addition, a standardized file structure was created to store all reference materials by cemetery record number on the DAHP's server. The digitization of reference materials was completed during the 2017-19 biennium. The digitized documents were placed on the DAHP's server and links were created during the 2023-25 biennium.

The ability to add newly discovered reliable documents and photographs by DAHP staff was added in the 2021-23 biennium to the database. Base programming work was also completed that allowed updates to cemetery and burial site information to beyond DAHP staff by WISAARD users. Completed in the 2023-25 biennium, this function also allows qualified WISAARD users to record data for newly identified cemeteries and burial sites. The recording of these additional cemeteries and burial sites will allow for their effective protection. The DAHP's efforts to complete the task of recording Washington's cemeteries and burial sites continue as the State Physical Anthropologist and Assistant State Physical Anthropologist add new information gleaned through Federal Register NAGPRA Notices, county plat maps and records, new archaeological site forms and reports, and new cemetery forms. The new ability of qualified WISAARD users to add cemetery and burial site records will greatly increase the chronicling of these irreplaceable cultural resources.

Currently, less than one percent of the over 1,800 historic period cemeteries in the cemetery and burial site database have been professionally recorded. While some of these are expected to be officially recorded by archaeologists during project reviews in the future, many may never be recorded. Consequently, the State Physical Anthropologist and the Assistant State Physical Anthropologist will continue to record historic-period cemeteries when time permits as they respond to non-forensic human skeletal remains cases.

HISTORIC CEMETERY PRESERVATION CAPITAL GRANT PROGRAM

In 2016, legislation was passed to create the Historic Cemetery Preservation Capital Grant Program housed within the DAHP to fund construction, renovation, or rehabilitation projects that preserve the historic character, features, and materials of a cemetery or maintain and improve cemetery function. Management of the grant was awarded to the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation under contract. The State Physical Anthropologist and Assistant provide technical support to the Grants Committee and to applicants. In the 2023-25 biennium, the Washington State Legislature allocated \$500,000 for cemetery preservation grants, and the grants committee provided grants to 20 cemeteries totaling \$494,170.



SUMMARY

Changes to Washington State law in 2008 created a uniform reporting process for the discovery of human skeletal remains within the state. In addition, the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation was given jurisdictional control over the handling and disposition of non-forensic human skeletal remains and the responsibility of reporting those remains to appropriate cemeteries and tribes. The new law also created the position of the State Physical Anthropologist, whose primary responsibility is the investigation, preservation, and, when necessary, the removal and reinterment of non-forensic skeletal remains. The law also required DAHP to create and maintain a database and GIS layer of all known cemeteries and burial sites within the state.

In the 2023-25 biennium, DAHP opened and investigated 184 new non-forensic human skeletal remains cases, which entailed 506 field hours and 8,135 travel miles. These cases represent the skeletal remains of at least 254 individuals. A large proportion of these remains were identified as Indian, and most come from counties in the northwestern portion of the state. Dispositions for these remains were completed for 191 cases in the 2023-25 biennium and included the repatriation of Indian remains from 48 cases to interested tribes. The average caseload for the agency is 52 cases per year, or approximately one new case every five business days, but in the 2021-23 and 2023-25 biennia that number has risen to 92 cases per year, or one new case every three business days.

The cases in the 2023-25 biennium required 2,911 certified letter notifications to tribal chairs and appropriate cemeteries and an additional estimated 5,822 letter copies to cultural resource groups within those respective tribes. Many of the non-forensic human skeletal remains reported to DAHP have been identified by the State Physical Anthropologist as Indian. This trend continued into the 2023-25 biennium although a continuing increase in the numbers of non-Indian remains was noted and is attributable primarily to educational institutions in the state divesting themselves of human remains used for teaching.

The State Physical Anthropologist and Assistant State Physical Anthropologist have added an additional 30 cemeteries and burial sites in the 2023-25 biennium to the database and GIS layer bringing the total number of cemeteries and burial sites documented to 3,085. This process will continue as additional non-forensic human skeletal remains cases are handled by DAHP and as other cemeteries are documented by archaeologists and other entities. In addition, the State Physical Anthropologist and Assistant State Physical Anthropologist continue to maintain and update information on currently known cemeteries and burial sites as it becomes available. Since 2017, DAHP has issued certificates of care and maintenance authority to twelve non-profits and two local governmental agencies to care for and maintain historic abandoned cemeteries. Currently nine non-profits and one governmental agency hold certificates.

Back Cover Illustration: *The Assistant State Physical Anthropologist Investigating a Burial Site in Skagit County.*



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