

## Shades of Gray: Skeletal Analysis and the Repatriation Process [Abstract]

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Guilt, fear, power, politics, legitimacy, science, religion, and denial—all of these elements have played a role and are integral to the ongoing debate regarding the repatriation of Native American burials and associated funerary objects. Scientists and tribal groups have argued the repatriation issue for two decades, gradually reaching some common ground, but not without major tension that is, at times, of explosive proportion. Designed to support the repatriation process, the NAGPRA law companions well with anthropology. And anthropology provides an alternate lens by which to view population history through such means as skeletal biology which, in turn, has contributed to modern biomedical research. A continual investigation as to the relationship between disease processes and their effects on skeletal physiology and soft-tissue would be valuable in the determination of past and present disease patterns, as well as causal factors. Environment and genetics can be considered within the framework of the biocultural history of a population. Such knowledge has the potential to inform the present, as well as the past, and could be beneficial to modern Native American populations, having the potential for real-life applications in terms of public health and public policy making.

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