

DNA evidence ends ancestry debate over 9500 year old skeleton

Nearly two decades after the ancient skeleton called Kennewick Man was discovered on the banks of the Columbia River, the mystery of his origins appears to be nearing resolution. Genetic analysis is still under way in Denmark, but documents obtained through the federal Freedom of Information Act say preliminary results point to a Native-American heritage.

If that conclusion holds up, it would be a dramatic end to a debate that polarized the field of anthropology and set off a legal battle between scientists who sought to study the 9,500-year-old skeleton and Northwest tribes that sought to rebury it as an honored ancestor.

In response to The Seattle Times' records request, geochemist Thomas Stafford Jr., who is involved in the DNA analysis, cautioned that the early conclusions could "change to some degree" with more detailed analysis. The results of those studies are expected to be published soon in a peer-reviewed scientific journal. Stafford and Danish geneticist Eske Willerslev, who is leading the project at the University of Copenhagen, declined to discuss the work until then.

But other experts said deeper genetic sequencing is unlikely to overturn the basic determination that Kennewick Man's closest relatives are Native Americans.

Read full, original story: [First DNA tests say Kennewick Man was Native American](#)