

NEWS BRIEFS FROM INDIAN COUNTRY

Kennewick Man a Native American, government says

SEATTLE (AP) — Radiocarbon analysis has determined that Kennewick Man, one of the oldest skeletons found on the North American continent, is more than 9,000 years old and an early Native American, the Interior Department said.

"We do not believe he wandered to the mid-Columbia area. He was born here," Francis McManamon, chief archeologist for the National Park Service, said last month.

McManamon said a study of the sediment adhering to the bones and the shape of the spear point in his hip confirm Kennewick Man lived and died along the banks of the Columbia River.

But the announcement did not settle the future of the bones, which have been at the center of a dispute between Indian Tribes and scientists since they were discovered in 1996 near the southeastern Washington town of Kennewick. The Tribes want them buried. Scientists want them maintained for study.

An Old Norse pagan group had claimed Kennewick Man as an ancestor in a lawsuit, suggesting his facial structure was that of a Caucasian, and the Interior Department

said last fall that he may have been of Polynesian or Asian origin.

McManamon said the skeleton's skull structure is not identical to that of any current Indian population in the area, but he said Kennewick Man's cranium could have changed over the more than 9,000 years it lay in the sediment of the river, and there may be gaps in the archeological record of the region.

"He doesn't look like a European. He doesn't look like an Asian. He doesn't look like any modern population," Interior Department spokeswoman Stephanie Hanna said at the news conference.

Radiocarbon dating on samples of the remains from three laboratories estimated Kennewick Man's age at 9,300 to 9,500 years, McManamon said. Scientists estimate he was at least 40 when he died.

"His age shows that he was here more than 8,000 years before the arrival of European exploration of our hemisphere," McManamon said.

Five area tribes have claimed Kennewick Man as an ancestor. A federal judge has ordered the Interior Department to decide by March 24 whether the remains will be

given to a specific tribe.

The order came out of a lawsuit filed by eight anthropologists who want the remains available for study.

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 established the right of Indian Tribes to the bones of their ancestors.

While the bones would likely remain in the custody of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers if no Tribe is chosen, Corps spokesman Dutch Meier said it was not currently clear if scientists would then have the right to study them.

Yakama Tribal Council member Clifford Moses said his Tribe's claim has the best chance but that it did not matter which Tribe eventually is able to lay claim to the remains, as long as they are reburied.

Alan Schneider, a Portland attorney representing the anthropologists who sued, has pressed for DNA testing as the most effective means of pinpointing Kennewick Man's origin.

Kennewick Man likely was not among the earliest people on the continent. McManamon said debates about the first humans to set foot here put the dates at between 13,000 and 20,000 years ago or more.

Baseball team editing history of name

CLEVELAND (AP) — The Cleveland Indians are rewriting the history of their nickname a little bit this year.

The team plans a slight change in its 2000 media guide in the section about the origin of the nickname "Indians." For more than 30 years, the team has claimed it was named in honor of Louis Sockalexis, a Penobscot Indian who played for the Cleveland Spiders from 1897-99.

"We wanted to give a more accurate portrayal of the process of how the name was chosen," Indians Vice President Bob DiBiasio said.

The name "Indians" was said to have been given as a tribute to Sockalexis after fans were asked to vote on a name by local newspapers.

However, DiBiasio said research has shown that Cleveland owner Charles W. Somers had wanted to use the nickname "Indians" and asked local baseball writers to solicit their readers for their favorite nickname.

"And the name selected was Indians," said DiBiasio. "What we're going to do is change one sentence to more accurately portray that."

The history section of last year's media guide says: "In fan balloting through a local newspaper, Indians was chosen to honor former Spider Louis Sockalexis, the first well known Native American professional baseball player."

DiBiasio said that passage will be altered slightly in this year's guide.

"We'll say something to the effect that, 'that Somers solicited writers to ask their fans for their favorite nickname, and in turn, the name "Indians" was selected. And as legend has it, Indians was in reference to Sockalexis,'" DiBiasio said.

DiBiasio said the change was prompted by research done by Ellen Staurowsky, an Ithaca College professor who has been campaigning for the Indians to change their name, and others as well.

In recent years, protesters have demonstrated against the "Indians" nickname and the club's smiling Chief Wahoo mascot, saying they are degrading to American Indians and that the club should make a change.

Cleveland fans sometimes argue the nickname was meant as a tribute to Sockalexis and not an insult.

"This hasn't changed anything in our estimation," said Juanita Pelphey of the United Church of Christ, a critic of the nickname and logo. "It's still perpetuating a lie."

Merchandise featuring the Chief Wahoo logo is among baseball's best-selling.

Larry Dolan, who is buying the Indians, said the name and logo will remain under his ownership.

The team first began mentioning the Sockalexis link in its 1968 media guide, and in the 1999 guide a full page was devoted to Sockalexis and a history of Cleveland's nicknames.

Thorpe honored as USOC's athlete of the century

COLORADO SPRINGS (AP) — Weeks after what family members and supporters say was a snub from some organizations compiling lists of athletes of the century, the United States Olympic Committee unveiled a bust of Jim Thorpe last month and accepted a replica of a gold medal won at the 1912 Stockholm games.

"Our position is he is the greatest athlete of the century," said Dick Schultz, executive director of the USOC. "We think it is very important to honor him."

Thorpe came in seventh in an ESPN poll of the century's 50 best athletes while Sports Illustrated named boxer Muhammad Ali as the century's best. Thorpe, who was named the greatest athlete of the first half-century in a poll by the Associated Press, finished third in the AP's athlete of the century poll behind Babe Ruth and Michael Jordan.

"He'd be frustrated," said John Adler, one of Thorpe's adult grandsons at the unveiling ceremony.

"Babe Ruth doesn't have all that many gold medals and I don't know how he jumped up in the polls."

In 1912, Thorpe became the only person to ever win gold medals in the pentathlon and decathlon, a record that still stands.

The year following his Olympic victory, Thorpe was stripped of his gold medals by Olympic officials who said he lost his amateur status by earning \$25 to \$30 by playing for a minor league baseball team in Rocky Mount, N.C., in 1909 and 1910.

He died in 1953 at the age of 64.

After years of working to restore Thorpe's amateur status and gold medals, the International Olympic Committee returned Thorpe's name to the Olympic record books in 1982 and presented his family with two replicas of his two gold medals.

The gold medal donated to the USOC last month along with the other gold medal donated years earlier will be displayed at the USOC's visitor center. They were made from the same mold as Thorpe's original medals.

"It took us 70 years to get his medals back and now we're giving them away," Adler said. "They've been sitting in a bank safety deposit box and we just felt it would be selfish not to put them on public display."

If Thorpe harbored any resentment against the establishment for stripping him of his medals, he never let his family know said daughter Grace Thorpe, 77, of Prague, Okla.

"I asked him once and he said, 'I

never wrote a letter to have them returned,'" Ms. Thorpe said. "And he turned around and read his paper."

Asked what her father would have done if he were at the ceremony, Ms. Thorpe replied: "He would turn and go the other way if he could. He didn't like all the fuss made over him. He really didn't like it."

Many of the 250 people who attended the ceremony were American Indian, as was Thorpe, and they brushed aside the controversy surrounding Thorpe's status as the greatest athlete of the century.

"It's good for Indian people," said Terry Batiest, a Choctaw Indian raised in Broken Bow, Okla., and now lives in Boulder. "He's a positive role model. The king of Sweden in 1912 said he's the greatest athlete in the world. I think that is what we carry in our hearts."

The bronze bust of Thorpe, based on photographs of him and on daughter Grace Thorpe's chin, fulfilled a promise made by sculptor Andrew Lester, 85. Lester met Thorpe in 1932 while Thorpe was standing outside a department store in Oklahoma City as a promotional stunt.

"I told him I would make a sculpture of him, and I did," he said.