

Chugach reburies ancient remains

"Oct. 9, 1990, was a truly glorious day. The sky was blue, ocean waters lay calm and mountain goats grazed while the killer whales hunted under the shadows of the mountain peaks of *Ingim-atya* — Chenega Island.

"This was the day the Chugach left the material world to arrive at a higher level of spiritual understanding," said Chugach Alaska Corp.'s Cultural Resource Manager John Johnson, following recent reburial services.

"Both young and old mobilized in a fleet of Beavers on floats to pay respect and re-inter their prehistoric ancestors in their original resting place after years of desecration of gravesites by mindless vandals," said Johnson.

The Rev. Archpriest Nicholas Harris of Saint Innocents Russian Orthodox Cathedral, Father Mark Luke of the Greek Orthodox Church and Eyak Elder Richard Stevens attended to spiritual needs at this re-interment.

The following attended the burial service: Patrick Barnes Sr., Jimmy Gregorieff, Gene Harris, Elizabeth (Liz) Hunt, Donna Jardinski, John Johnson, Harry Karshekoff, Henry Makarka, Peter Nagel, John Oreo and Fred (Fatty) Tiedeman Sr.

The reburials took place at two

prehistoric caves in Prince William Sound. One of the rock shelters was near the Columbia Glacier and was called "hidden people in a cave" and at one time contained 23 burials.

Some bodies were wrapped in sea otter skins with their paddles at their sides, while others were dressed in armor and ground hog skins. Some also wore masks representing human faces.

Animal bones that were noted at this cave were of sea otters, seals, sea lions, porpoises, marmots, porcupines, beavers and whales.

The cave near Knight Island was reported as containing seven mummies squatting with their backs to the walls. On cliff walls above their heads were red paintings of men paddling in boats near a killer whale.

"The desecration of these tombs took place in the name of science, greed and just plain stupidity," Johnson said.

Many of these mummified remains were carted off to various museums in California, Washington, Pennsylvania and also to the Smithsonian Institute in the nation's capital.

"Many remains to this very day are lying in some basement on foreign soil," he said.



Photos courtesy Chugach Alaska Corp.

Attendees at one of the services pause under a rock shelter near Knight Island. They include, front row from left, Richard Stevens, Gene Harris, Father Mark Luke, the Rev. Archpriest Nicholas Harris, Patrick Barnes, Henry Markarka, John Oreo; middle row, Fred (Fatty) Tiedeman Sr., Elizabeth (Liz) Hunt, Donna Jardinski; last row, Jimmy Gregorieff, Harry Karshekoff and John Johnson.

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—John Johnson

Good news is slowly emerging out this gloomy period in the history of mankind. Nearly all of these institutions have agreed to return these bodies back to Chugach.

"Our 'advanced' civilization is finally realizing that we must have respect for all cultures if we are to truly advance to a higher level of existence. The spirits of both the living and dead will not rest until these

wrongs are corrected," according to Johnson.

After the burial services, metal signs were placed at the sites stating: "Any person who . . . injures, destroys historical ruins is subject to arrest and penalty of law . . ."

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Rocks are placed over a resting place near Columbia Glacier to deter vandals.