

Child's remains returned to Chemainus First Nation for burial

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By Aaron Bichard
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The bones of an aboriginal child that have been on display in a Ladysmith museum will be returned to the Chemainus First Nation for reburial.

An anonymous call recently brought the display to the attention of the Chemainus members and it was quickly verified the bones were the remains of a child aged six to 10 years old.

"Our meeting with the museum owner was amicable," band administrator Stephen Olson said. "He understood why we wanted the bones back and we reminded him that it was illegal to be in possession of human remains."

The bones have been on display in a cedar burial box estimated to be around 150 years old. Also displayed and being returned are the skull of an adult, a mandible and two cranial fragments.

A First Nations chief reportedly gave the bones to the owner's great-great grandfather.

Olson said the remains and the burial box would first go to the Royal B.C. Museum for research and documentation before being returned for burial.

"They'll be able to tell us how old the bones are and what the age and gender of the child are," he said. "The tests won't be overly extensive."

Olson said, while there are other First Nations items on display in the private museum, right now the Chemainus members are just concerned with getting the bones back.

"We discussed the possibility of in the fall helping to set up a more informative and more locally specific display or information booth in the museum," Olson said.

Owner Kurt Guilbride couldn't be reached for comment.