

Keep Truganini's bones, say boffins

From MICHAEL RICHARDSON

CANBERRA. — The Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies wants Truganini's bones kept in the Tasmania museum.

The remains of Truganini — Tasmania's last full-blood Aborigine — have been there for 92 years.

The institute includes most of Australia's leading authorities on Aboriginal studies.

Many of its members are appalled the possible loss of the skeleton following demands by Aborigines, students and aboriginal affairs organisations for Truganini's reburial.

The annual Institute meeting yesterday endorsed two letters sent recently to the Tasmanian Government by the chairman (Mr. N. W. G. MacIntosh) and the principal (Mr. F. D. McCarthy).

Mr. McCarthy warns the Government against reburying the bones.

"All other skeletal remains of the Tasmanians in the Tasmanian museum and university collections would have to be buried, he said.

"This would be a scientific tragedy of such dimensions that it would rouse the scorn of the scientific world."

Professor MacIntosh points out that Truganini's skeleton is "A priceless and unique relic — the only authentic female Tasmanian skeleton in the world.

"The origins of the Tasmanians and their relationship to mainland Aborigines is unresolved and bones are the only relics left that may ultimately provide an

answer to this problem," he says.

"Study of the extinct Tasmanians is a very lively and vital issue overseas as part of an overall understanding of man's evolution."

Mr. McCarthy says Truganini's bones should not be exhibited in the museum. But he says their continued study might contribute much to modern understanding of her people.

He suggests the skeleton might be placed in a coffin in a vault in the museum "as a symbolic burial." Access should only be granted for scientific research.

As one leading institute member said last night:

"It could be a kind of monument to man's inhumanity. Reburial of Truganini's bones might help people forget the genocide of her race in the 19th century.

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