

The Path Home for Naga Ancestors

September 5, 2026.
Dimapur.

On 13th July 2026, the University of Oxford Council formally agreed to return 39 Naga ancestral remains kept in the Pitt Rivers Museum, UK. In her letter to Rev. Dr. Wati Aier, Convenor of the Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR), the Director of the Pitt Rivers Museum, Prof. Laura Van Broekhoven, said ‘We hope we can now commence the work...towards bringing the Naga ancestors to their homeland’.

This journey to bring Naga ancestors to the homeland has been 6 years in the making. In 2020, Prof. Broekhoven reached out to the FNR to help facilitate and support the repatriation of the Naga ancestors. Together with two Naga University Professors, one in the US, Dolly Kikon, and the other in the UK, Arkotong Longkumer, the FNR established a research initiative – Recover, Restore and Decolonise (RRaD) - to work on the process of return. RRaD – all volunteer researchers - have been working with various Naga tribe Hoho leaders, civil society, church leaders and members, students, and intergenerational communities across the Naga homeland to educate, share, and build solidarity. The response has been overwhelming and demonstrates the need to understand, embrace and live our history, while building a shared future that leads to healing and unity amongst the Naga people.

In June 2025, Pitt Rivers invited a group of Naga Tribe Hoho leaders and elders and members of the FNR and RRaD to travel to the Museum to see and bear witness to the Naga ancestors for the first time. Between 9-13 June, the Naga delegation consulted, discussed, and interacted with various members of the Museum. This led to the historic Naga Oxford Declaration on Repatriation on the 13th of June. It said:

1. We are grateful to our ancestors for being a testament and silently proclaiming the stories of our people.
2. We are sorry that it has taken us several decades, but we are here now to reclaim and return you to the homelands from where you were taken. We are committed to the process of your return from museums.
3. We acknowledge that this Repatriation process is towards the healing and wholeness of the Naga people.

4. As Nagas, we do so in a united voice, with mutual respect and consensus and to offer you a dignified rest, establishing a Naga monument of healing and peace for all generations, symbolising the oneness of the Nagas.
5. We extend our solidarity to fellow Indigenous Peoples across the world who seek to undertake a similar journey of repatriation in the hope of bringing decolonisation, justice, and peace, not just for ourselves, but for humanity.

We welcome the University of Oxford Council's intentional decision to return the Naga ancestral remains. In response, a Naga delegation led by the Naga Tribe Hoho leaders with FNR-RRAD will travel to PRM to claim and return our ancestral remains. The path home for the Naga ancestors has now become a reality as they journey to the Naga homeland. Repatriation, for the Nagas, is not simply about bones and ancestral remains finding their way back to the land, but importantly it is about memory returning to where it belongs. It is an essential step of a longer journey towards justice and dignity, and towards healing and wholeness.

Through this journey, we bring back the light of our ancestors that was dimmed but never extinguished.

We pray that it will only grow stronger with every passing generation.

Jointly issued by the:

Naga Tribe Hohos

and the

Forum for Naga Reconciliation-Recover Restore and Decolonise