



Smithsonian Institution

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE REPATRIATION ACTIVITIES OF
THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION**

2015

ANNUAL REPORT 2015

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I. REPATRIATION AND THE SMITHSONIAN: AN OVERVIEW

The Smithsonian Institution has a long and successful history of the respectful return of Native human remains and cultural objects. Prior to the passage of the federal repatriation legislation, the Smithsonian engaged in such returns, including the voluntary return of human remains in the early 1980s and the well-known return of certain cultural objects affiliated with the Pueblo of Zuni in 1987.

In 1989, Congress enacted the National Museum of the American Indian Act (NMAIA). This law established the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) as part of the Smithsonian Institution and authorized the transfer of the collections from Museum of the American Indian-Heye Foundation in New York City to the Smithsonian. The NMAIA is also the first piece of federal legislation addressing the repatriation of Native American human remains and funerary objects. The NMAIA required the Smithsonian to return, upon request, Native American human remains and funerary objects to culturally affiliated federally-recognized Indian tribes. The NMAIA was amended in 1996, following the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), to include the return of certain Native American cultural objects, including sacred objects and objects of cultural patrimony. To assist in the repatriation process, both the NMAI and National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) have repatriation policies and procedures.

The Smithsonian has repatriated or made available for repatriation the human remains of more than 6,000 individuals, 250,000 funerary objects, and 1,400 sacred objects and/or objects of cultural patrimony. These totals far exceed any other museum complex in the United States with Native American collections. The Smithsonian is committed to the repatriation process and consults with Native Americans throughout the nation. This annual report to Congress will be sent to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, House Subcommittee on Indian Affairs, Congressional Regents, Government Accountability Office, and will also be posted on the repatriation websites of the NMNH and NMAI.

II. REPATRIATION ACTIVITIES: YEAR-AT-A-GLANCE



National Museum of Natural History

a. Repatriations of human remains and funerary objects available for repatriation or that have been repatriated at the NMNH :

	NMNH	
	CY 2015 ¹	OVERALL
Human Remains ²		
Number of Individuals	116	6,123
Catalog Numbers	97	5,554
Funerary Objects (Associated and Unassociated) ³		
Number	202	219,005
Catalog Numbers	11	3,253

¹ CY 2015 lists the number of human remains and objects made available for repatriation during the calendar year. Overall lists the total number of human remains and objects made available for repatriation, including CY 2015.

² At the NMNH *Human Remains* means the physical remains of a human body of a person of Native American ancestry. The term does not include remains or portions of remains that may reasonably be determined to have been freely given or naturally shed by the individual from whose body they were obtained. The *Number of Individuals* refers to the minimum number of individuals or MNI; a concept commonly used in anthropology to represent the fewest possible number of human remains in a skeletal assemblage. *Catalog Numbers* refers to the quantity of museum numbers assigned to the human remains or objects.

³ *Funerary object* means an “object that, as part of a death rite or ceremony of a culture, is intentionally placed with individual human remains either at the time of burial or later.” NMAIA, 20 U.S.C. §80q-14

b. Repatriations of sacred objects and objects of cultural patrimony at the NMNH:

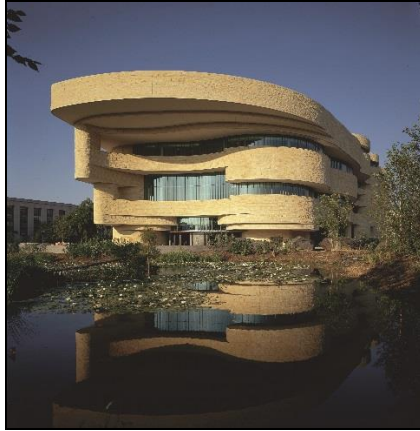
	NMNH	
	CY 2015	OVERALL
Objects of Cultural Patrimony ⁴		
Number	0	50
Catalog Numbers	0	12
Sacred Objects ⁵		
Number	0	3
Catalog Numbers	0	3
Objects of Cultural Patrimony/Sacred Objects ⁶		
Number	0	2
Catalog Numbers	0	2
Other Items ⁷		
Number	0	26
Catalog Numbers	0	21

⁴ *Objects of Cultural Patrimony* mean items “having ongoing historical, traditional, or cultural importance central to the Native American group [Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization] or culture itself, rather than property owned by an individual.” NAGPRA, 25 U.S.C. §3001 (2) (3) (D).

⁵ *Sacred Objects* mean items that are “specific ceremonial objects which are needed by traditional Native American religious leaders for the practice of traditional Native American religions by their present-day adherents.” NAGPRA, 25 U.S.C. §3001 (2) (3) (C).

⁶ *Objects of Cultural Patrimony/Sacred Objects* refer to claims for the repatriation of cultural items that meet the definition of both an Object of Cultural Patrimony and a Sacred Object.

⁷ *Other Items* refer to circumstances in which the cultural item offered for repatriation does not meet the definition of an object available for repatriation under the NMAIA or the policy of the NMNH. Since the NMAIA was not intended to limit the authority of the Smithsonian to conduct repatriations of certain items from its collections, the category of *Other Items* was developed to track and monitor NMNH museum collections offered for return for which no other repatriation category is available or appropriate.



National Museum of the American Indian

c. Repatriations of human remains and funerary objects at the NMAI:

	NMAI	
	CY 2015	OVERALL
Human Remains ⁸		
Number ⁹	0	549
Catalog Numbers	0	257
Funerary Objects (Associated and Unassociated) ¹⁰		
Number	0	29,641
Catalog Numbers	0	1,012

⁸ At the NMAI *Human Remains* means the physical remains of a human body of a person of Native American ancestry. In accordance with the policy, it is assumed that all human remains in the collection are of Native American ancestry unless otherwise known. The term does not include remains or portions of remains that may reasonably be determined to have been freely given or naturally shed by the individual from whose body they were obtained, such as hair made into ropes or nets (NMAI Repatriation Policy 2014).

⁹ Historically, the NMAI did not assess the minimum number of individuals (MNI), but used other methods, including counts of individual elements, counts of the number of bone fragments, and other counting standards. Currently, the NMAI uses this legacy data for numerical consistency and when possible, also calculates MNI in its case documentation.

¹⁰ *Funerary Objects* are identified as a part of the death rite or ceremony of a culture reasonably believed to have been placed with individual human remains either at the time of death or later (NMAI Repatriation Policy 2014).

d. Repatriations of sacred objects and objects of cultural patrimony at the NMAI:

	NMAI	
	CY 2015	OVERALL
Objects of Cultural Patrimony ¹¹		
Number	0	19
Catalog Numbers	0	9
Sacred Objects ¹²		
Number	3	1,057
Catalog Numbers	3	967
Objects of Cultural Patrimony/Sacred Objects ¹³		
Number	4	308
Catalog Numbers	4	242

¹¹ *Objects of Cultural Patrimony* are objects having ongoing historical, traditional, or cultural importance central to the Indian Tribe or Native Hawaiian Organization or culture, rather than property owned by an individual Native American, and which, therefore, cannot be alienated, appropriated, or conveyed by any individual regardless of whether or not the individual is a member of the Indian Tribe or Native Hawaiian Organization. The given object shall have been considered inalienable by the Indian Tribe or Native Hawaiian Organization at the time the object was separated from said group (NMAI Repatriation Policy 2014).

¹² *Sacred Objects* are objects needed by traditional Native American religious leaders for the practice of Native American religions, including objects needed for the renewal of a religious practice (NMAI Repatriation Policy 2014).

¹³ *Objects of Cultural Patrimony/Sacred Objects* refer to the repatriation of cultural items that meet the definition of both an Object of Cultural Patrimony and a Sacred Object.

e. Repatriations of objects acquired illegally at the NMAI:

	NMAI	
	CY 2015	OVERALL
Objects Acquired Illegally ¹⁴		
Number	0	31
Catalog Numbers	0	26

f. International repatriation at the NMAI:

The NMAI Act and its 1996 amendment address repatriation only for federally recognized Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organization within the United States. However, in accordance with its mission and in recognition of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the NMAI considers repatriation request for human remains, associated funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony by non-federally recognized tribes, including indigenous communities outside of the United States, on a case-by-case basis. The following list represents countries outside of the United States where the NMAI has conducted international repatriations. All international repatriation figures have been incorporated into their respective NMAI category totals.

Year	Province	Country
1992	British Columbia	Canada
1995	Pichincha	Ecuador
1996	Ontario	Canada
1996	Cusco	Peru
1997	Ontario	Canada
1997	Alberta	Canada

¹⁴ *Objects Acquired Illegally* refers to the longstanding Smithsonian policy that the NMAI may repatriate, upon request, any materials that were acquired by or transferred to the NMAI illegally or under circumstances that render the Museum’s claim to them invalid.

1997	Ontario	Canada
1998	British Columbia	Canada
1998	Ontario	Canada
1998	Ontario	Canada
1999	Alberta	Canada
2000	Alberta	Canada
2002	Santiago de Cuba, Guantanamo, and Piñar del Rio	Cuba
2002	British Columbia	Canada
2002	British Columbia	Canada
2007	Alberta	Canada
2007	Alberta	Canada
2007	El Loa	Chile
2007	Arica	Chile
2008	Ontario	Canada
2012	Ontario	Canada
2014	Ontario	Canada

g. CY 15 Consultation and repatriation visits at the NMNH and the NMAI

	NMNH	NMAI	Joint NMNH-NMAI ¹⁵
Consultation and Repatriation Visits			
Number of Representatives	57	51	2
Number of Tribes	29	17	2
Number of Smithsonian-sponsored Repatriation Tribal Visits¹⁶			
Number of Representatives	8	13	0
Number of Tribes	6	4	0

¹⁵ Counted also under each museum.

¹⁶ The Smithsonian does, under certain circumstances, fund the travel of tribal representatives to visit the Smithsonian as part of the repatriation process. These sponsored visits are counted in the above consultation and repatriation visit totals.

h. Claim processing, reports and repatriations at the NMNH and the NMAI

	NMNH		NMAI ¹⁷	
	CY 2015	OVERALL	CY 2015	OVERALL
Claims				
Claims In Queue	1	1	2	16
Reports and Repatriations				
Repatriation Reports in Process	8	8	16	15
Completed Repatriation Reports	9	128	2	111
Completed Repatriations	3	117	2	98

¹⁷ *Completed Repatriation Reports* at the NMAI refer to the total number of assessments. This includes reports, addenda, and/or memoranda that have resolved repatriation cases. Due to the complexity of repatriation claims, there is not a one-to-one correspondence between reports and *Completed Repatriations*. A single report may address more than one claim and/or result in multiple repatriations. Conversely, a single repatriation may be the result of multiple claims and/or reports.

OVERSIGHT OF REPATRIATION ACTIVITIES

Native American Repatriation Review Committee (NMNH)

The Native American Repatriation Review Committee met in Washington, DC, on May 19-20, 2015 and November 12-13, 2015, to monitor the progress of repatriation at the NMNH. The committee is composed of individuals nominated by tribes, tribal organizations, and scientific and museum organizations. The members in 2015 are Walter Lara, Sr., Yurok Tribe; Darlene Miller, Seneca Nation; George Milner, Department of Anthropology, Pennsylvania State University; Bonnie Newsom (Chair), Penobscot Indian Nation; Ian Thompson, Historic Preservation Department, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma; Timothy K. Perttula, Archeological & Environmental Consultants; and Shelby Tisdale, Vice President of Curatorial and Exhibitions, Autry National Center of the American West (Vice Chair).



Native American Repatriation Review Committee members for the NMNH (left-right): Timothy K. Perttula, Archeological & Environmental Consultants; Bonnie Newsom, Penobscot Indian Nation; Darlene Miller, Seneca Nation; Shelby Tisdale, Autry National Center of the American West; George Milner, Pennsylvania State University; Ian Thompson, Choctaw Nation; and Walter Lara, Sr., Yurok Tribe.

National Museum of the American Indian Board of Trustees (NMAI)

The National Museum of the American Indian Board of Trustees meets three times a year to discuss museum business, including NMAI repatriation matters brought forth through the repatriation committee of the board. As necessary, the repatriation committee of the board meets outside the full board meetings to complete committee work.



Repatriation Committee of the National Museum of the American Indian Board of Trustees (left-right): Sven Haakanson (Alutiiq Tribe of Old Harbor), Associate Professor, UW Curator for North American Anthropology, Burke Museum; Richard Luarkie (Laguna Pueblo), Governor for the Pueblo of Laguna; Victor Montejo (Jakaltek Maya), retired Professor of Native American Studies at the University of California; Brenda Child (Ojibwa), Professor of American Studies, University of Minnesota; Repatriation Committee Chairperson Margaret P. Brown (Yup'ik), Director of Alaska Communications Systems and President and CEO of Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (retired); Loretta Tuell (Nez Perce), Partner, Greenberg Traurig, LLP; Brian Patterson (Oneida), Bear Clan Representative to the Oneida Indian Nation's Men's Council and Clan Mothers, Tribe's governing body, responsible for directing policy for the Oneida Indian Nation; not pictured Deborah Parker, Councilwoman Tulalip Tribes.

IV. HIGHLIGHTED REPATRIATION ACTIVITIES

Consultation with the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation, formerly Smith River Rancheria

On June 1-2, 2015, the NMAI Repatriation Department hosted Loren Bommelyn, Tribal Chairman; Donald Steinruck, NAGPRA Specialist; and Donald James, NAGPRA Committee Member; as they reviewed collections associated with the Tolowa. During the consultation Chairman Bommelyn expressed the importance of Dee-ni' ceremonial objects, "These are some of our tribe's dreams ... We are trying to continually reintroduce our cultural selves to ourselves ... These are a few of the reasons why bringing these objects home would mean so much. ..."



(Left to right): Donald Steinreck, Loren Bommelyn, and Donald James discussing the use of ceremonial regalia during the world renewal Nee-dash ceremony.

Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) Conference Presentation Washington, D.C.

On June 5, 2015, NMAI Repatriation Department staff Lauren Sieg, Terry Snowball, Risa Arbolino, and Jackie Swift gave a presentation entitled, "*Vine Deloria's, Repatriation Problem: How a Lost Hat Became a Forum for Debating Repatriation at the NMAI.*" The repatriation staff reviewed the ways in which ethical issues such as decolonization, sovereignty, cultural preservation, religious freedom, and geopolitical considerations have factored into cases that have been addressed in the past 25 years. This presentation was organized around an unpublished essay by Vine Deloria entitled, "Repatriation Problem" and moderated by Brenda Child, NMAI Board of Trustee and member of the Repatriation Committee of the Board.



**Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) Conference Presentation
(Left to right): Brenda Child, Lauren Sieg, Terry Snowball, Jackie Swift, and Risa Arbolino**

Tlingit Repatriation

On December 8, 2015, NMAI Repatriation Department staff, Terry Snowball and Risa Arbolino escorted seven objects belonging to the Tlingit of the Dał'áweidi, Kaagwaantaan, Kiks.ádi and Ganaaxteidí Clans back to Alaska for repatriation. President Richard Peterson of The Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska signed the Receipt and Release documents on behalf of the clans. Three battle helmets and one headdress were returned as both sacred objects and objects of cultural patrimony; and one battle helmet, one shirt and one Chilkat blanket were returned as sacred objects. The red shirt left of the blanket was previously repatriated by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and part of the Tlingit send-off ceremony hosted by the NMAI Repatriation Department on December 1, 2015.



Respective members of the associated clans and Central Council staff preparing to ceremonially acknowledge their “At.óow,” and officially documenting their ancestors’ return for posterity.

Repatriations at the NMNH

The Repatriation Office at the NMNH completed the repatriation of the human remains of 116 individuals and 202 funerary objects to several tribes in 2015. Human remains from Nebraska were returned to the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska with the support of the Ho-Chunk Nation. Human remains and funerary objects from Maine were returned to the Wabaniki Tribes of

Maine. Human remains and funerary objects from Georgia were returned to Kialegee Tribal Town, the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma, the Poarch Band of Creek Indians of Alabama, the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and the Thlopthlocco Tribal Town of the Creek Nation. Background information on the ways in which NMNH obtained the remains and funerary objects has been placed on the Repatriation Office's website to make it easily accessible to Native communities (<http://anthropology.si.edu/repatriation/reports/summaries.htm>).

New NMNH Repatriation Brochure Distributed by NMNH

As part of our ongoing outreach to Native communities, the Repatriation Office created a new brochure that describes the repatriation process at the NMNH. The new brochure was sent to each federally recognized tribe in 2015. The brochure briefly describes the repatriation categories, the role of the Native American Repatriation Review Committee, and the repatriation process at the NMNH. It also provides information for Native communities on how to access the collections and contact the Repatriation Office staff.

The Native American Repatriation Review Committee

The NMAI Act required that the Smithsonian establish a special committee to monitor the repatriation process. The committee is required to ensure fair and objective consideration of all relevant evidence, and may, upon request of any affected party, review any findings of cultural affiliation, and facilitate the resolution of any dispute between tribes concerning the repatriation of human remains and objects. This external committee consists of seven members, two of whom are required by law to be traditional Native American religious leaders. Review Committee contact information and a list of the present and past members can be found [here](#).

Laws


The National Museum of the American Indian Act, passed in 1989, requires the Smithsonian Institution to inventory, identify, and upon request, repatriate culturally affiliated human remains and funerary objects to federally recognized Native American tribes. Amendments to this act, passed in 1996, direct the Smithsonian to consider sacred objects and objects of cultural patrimony for repatriation as well.

The NMAI Act was the first federal law created to address repatriation. A similar law, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), passed in 1990, directs repatriation for all other U. S. institutions that receive federal funding. The Smithsonian Institution is specifically exempt from this law.

Collections

The archaeological and ethnological objects in the NMNH collections are searchable and some images of ethnology objects are available at our [website](#).

The online objects, archives, and library collections of NMNH and other Smithsonian museums can be searched at [here](#).

Smithsonian Institution

Repatriation
at the
National Museum of Natural History

*Photo By James Diloreto
 Smithsonian Institution Photo Services*

Repatriation Office
 NMNH MRC-138
 10th and Constitution NW
 P. O. Box 37012
 Washington D. C. 20013-7012
 (202) 633-0865
[Click here for website](#)

Photo by Cheri Botic, Repatriation Office

Repatriation is the process through which museums and other institutions transfer possession and control of Native American human remains, funerary objects, objects of cultural affiliation of human remains and cultural objects, and to facilitate their final disposition.

In response to the NMAI Act, the National Museum of Natural History established the Repatriation Office in 1991. The office is located within the Department of Anthropology at the National Museum of Natural History. The Repatriation Office staff follow the mandates of the NMAI Act to work with federally recognized tribes to determine the disposition of human remains and objects subject to the legislation.

Consultation is a critical part of the repatriation process, and tribes are encouraged to consider making a visit to the NMNH to discuss repatriation matters. Visits to Washington can be funded through grants from the Smithsonian's Repatriation Review Committee, which provides for transportation, lodging and meals.

Photo by Bill Billeck, Repatriation Office

A section of the new brochure that describes the repatriation process at the NMNH.

V. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information on the repatriation activities of the Smithsonian Institution, please contact the individuals and websites listed below.

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Jacquetta (Jackie) Swift
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Repatriation Web Sites:

NMNH Repatriation webpage: <http://anthropology.si.edu/repatriation/>

NMNH Guidelines and Procedures for Repatriation:
[http://anthropology.si.edu/repatriation/pdf/NMNH Repatriation Guidelines and Procedures 2012.pdf](http://anthropology.si.edu/repatriation/pdf/NMNH%20Repatriation%20Guidelines%20and%20Procedures%202012.pdf)

NMAI Repatriation webpage: <http://nmai.si.edu/explore/collections/repatriation/>

NMAI Repatriation Policy: <http://nmai.si.edu/sites/1/files/pdf/repatriation/NMAI-RepatriationPolicy-2014.pdf>

Smithsonian Collections Search Center:

<http://collections.si.edu/search/>