



Smithsonian Institution

**Annual Report of Repatriation Activities
of the Smithsonian Institution**

2017

Annual Report 2017

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Repatriation and the Smithsonian: An Overview

The Smithsonian Institution has a long and successful history conducting respectful repatriations of Native American human remains and certain cultural objects to their communities of origin. Prior to the passage of 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 to 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 the Museum of the American Indian-Heys Foundation in New York City to the Smithsonian. The NMAIA is also the first piece of federal legislation to address the repatriation of Native American human remains and funerary objects. The NMAIA requires 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 for repatriation far exceed any other museum complex in the United States. The Smithsonian is committed to the repatriation process and consults with Native Americans throughout the nation. This 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.

Repatriation Activities: Year at a Glance

National Museum of Natural History



Human Remains and Funerary Objects available for repatriation or that have been repatriated at the NMNH:

NMNH	CY 2017 ¹	OVERALL ²
Human Remains³		
Number of Individuals	71	6,219
Catalog Numbers	51	5,620
Funerary Objects (Associated and Unassociated)⁴		
Total Object Count	2,565	221,577
Total Catalog Numbers	19	3,274

¹ CY 2017 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 2017.

² NMNH totals are for Native American human remains and objects repatriated within the United States.

³ At the NMNH *Human Remains* means the physical remains of a human body of a person of Native American ancestry. 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 individuals represented by a skeletal assemblage. *Catalog Numbers* refers to the quantity of museum numbers assigned to the human remains or objects.

⁴ *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.

Repatriations of Sacred Objects and Objects of Cultural Patrimony at the NMNH:

NMNH	CY 2017	OVERALL
Objects of Cultural Patrimony⁵		
Total Object Count	0	50
Total Catalog Numbers	0	13
Sacred Objects⁶		
Total Object Count	0	3
Total Catalog Numbers	0	3
Objects of Cultural Patrimony/Sacred Objects⁷		
Total Object Count	0	2
Total Catalog Numbers	0	2
Other Items⁸		
Total Object Count	0	26
Total Catalog Numbers	0	11

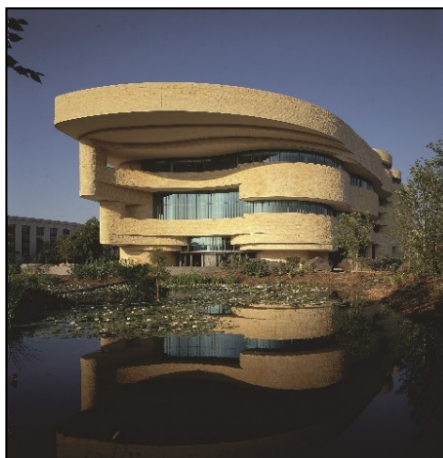
⁵ *Objects of Cultural Patrimony* mean items “having ongoing historical, traditional, or cultural importance central to the Native American group [Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization] or culture itself, rather than property owned by an individual.” NAGPRA, 25 U.S.C. §3001 (2) (3) (D).

⁶ *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).

⁷ *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.

⁸ *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



Repatriations of Human Remains and Funerary Objects at the NMAI:

NMAI	CY 2017	OVERALL
Human Remains⁹		
Total Count ¹⁰	3	540
Total Catalog Numbers	2	245
Human Remains and Associated Funerary Objects		
Total Object Count	1	44
Total Catalog Numbers	1	41
Funerary Objects (Associated and Unassociated)¹¹		
Total Object Count	6	29,645
Total Catalog Numbers	4	1,014

⁹ At the NMAI the term *Human Remains* means the physical remains of a human body of a person of Native American ancestry. In accordance with NMAI Repatriation 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).

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ *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).

Repatriations of Sacred Objects and Objects of Cultural Patrimony at the NMAI:

NMAI	CY 2017	OVERALL
Objects of Cultural Patrimony¹²		
Total Object Count	0	19
Total Catalog Numbers	0	9
Sacred Objects¹³		
Total Object Count	21	981
Total Catalog Numbers	3	874
Objects of Cultural Patrimony/Sacred Objects¹⁴		
Total Object Count	18	424
Total Catalog Numbers	12	351

Repatriations of Objects Acquired Illegally at the NMAI:

NMAI	CY 2017	OVERALL
Objects Acquired Illegally¹⁵		
Total Object Count	0	31
Total Catalog Numbers	0	26

¹² *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).

¹³ *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).

¹⁴ *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 (NMAI Repatriation Policy 2014).

¹⁵ *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 NMAI's claim to them invalid.

International Repatriation at the NMAI:

The NMAI Act and its 1996 amendment address repatriation only to 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 requests for human remains, associated funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony by Indigenous communities outside of the United States on a case-by-case basis. The following table lists the countries outside of the United States where the NMAI has conducted repatriations. All international repatriation figures have been incorporated into their respective NMAI repatriation category totals.

International Repatriations at the NMAI:

Year	Province	Country
1992	British Columbia	Canada
1995	Pichincha	Ecuador
1996	Ontario	Canada
1996	Cusco	Peru
1997	Ontario	Canada
1997	Alberta	Canada
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
2016	Ontario	Canada

Additional Repatriation Activities at the NMNH and NMAI

CY 2017 Repatriation Consultation Visits:

	NMNH ¹⁶	NMAI	Joint NMNH-NMAI ¹⁷
Repatriation Consultation Visits			
Number of Representatives	78	46	9
Number of Tribes	30	10	2
Number of Smithsonian-sponsored Repatriation Tribal Visits¹⁸			
Number of Representatives	14	11	3
Number of Tribes	7	6	1

Claim Processing, Reports, and Repatriations at the NMNH and NMAI:

	NMNH		NMAI ¹⁹	
	CY 2017	OVERALL	CY 2017	OVERALL
Claims				
Claims In Queue ²⁰	3	7	2	18
Reports and Repatriations				
Repatriation Reports in Process	7	7	10	10
Completed Repatriation Reports	7	140	5	100
Completed Repatriations	4	122	7	107

¹⁶ Sponsored visits at the NMNH include both consultation and repatriation visit totals.

¹⁷ Also counted under each museum.

¹⁸ The Smithsonian under certain circumstances funds the travel of tribal representatives to visit the Smithsonian as part of the repatriation process.

¹⁹ *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.

²⁰ For the NMNH the overall total is the estimated number of reports that are in the queue.

Oversight of Repatriation Activities

Native American Repatriation Review Committee (NMNH)

The Native American Repatriation Review Committee met in Washington, DC, on May 1–2, 2017 and November 30 to December 1, 2017, 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.



Native American Repatriation Review Committee members for the NMNH (*left-right*): Walter Lara, Sr., Yurok Tribe; George Milner, Department of Anthropology, Pennsylvania State University; Darlene Miller (Vice-Chair), Seneca Nation; Vincas Steponaitis, Department of Anthropology, University of North Carolina; Shelby Tisdale, Director of the Center of Southwest Studies, Fort Lewis College; Ian Thompson, Historic Preservation Department, Choctaw Nation; Bonnie Newsom (Chair), Penobscot Indian Nation.

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 NMAI Repatriation Committee meets outside full board meetings to complete committee work.



2017 Repatriation Committee of the National Museum of the American Indian Board of Trustees (*left-right*): Repatriation Committee Chairperson Margaret P. Brown (Yup'ik), Director of Alaska Communications Systems, and President and CEO of Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (retired); Armstrong Wiggins (Mískito), Director, Washington Office of Indian Law Resource Center (Board Member); Amanda Cobb-Greetham (Chickasaw), Professor and Director, Native Nations Center, University of Oklahoma; Phil Deloria (Dakota), Professor of History, Harvard University; Brenda Child (Ojibwa), Professor of American Studies, University of Minnesota; Sven Haakanson (Alutiiq Tribe of Old Harbor), Associate Professor, University of Washington, Curator for North American Anthropology, Burke Museum; not pictured, Colin Kippen (Native Hawaiian), Executive Director of National Indian Education Association; Richard Luarkie (Laguna Pueblo), Governor for the Pueblo of Laguna; and Darreld "Deacon" Turner II (Cherokee), Director of Cherokee Nation Business LLC.

Highlighted Repatriation Activities

National Museum of Natural History

Igiugig Village Repatriation in Alaska

In September 2017, the Yup'ik community at the Igiugig Village in Alaska reburied the ancestral remains of 24 individuals and one funerary object that had been repatriated by NMNH. The skeletal remains of the individuals had been obtained in 1931 from the nearby Kaskanak Village site by Ales Hrdlicka, curator at the NMNH. Hrdlicka's records indicate that a Russian Orthodox metal cross was once associated with one of the individuals and it is likely many of the individuals were members of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The remains arrived at Igiugig in a small prop plane and were transported to the village's St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, where Igiugig community members placed them in three wooden coffins. A funeral service was then held at the church with nearly everyone from the community in attendance. Accompanied by large number of village residents, the remains were taken by small boats to a former village site on a hill overlooking the Kvichak River where they were interred. After the reburial there was a blessing song by the Igiugig Yup'ik dance group and then the community gathered for a meal back in Igiugig. The community welcomed the attendance and participation of Kirk Johnson, Sant Director of the NMNH, and Bill Billeck of the NMNH Repatriation Office.



Igiugig community members and guests carrying ancestral remains to a former cemetery site.



Community participating in the funeral service by a Russian Orthodox Priest, Father David Askoak, for ancestral remains at the internment site.



Blessing songs performed by the Igiugig Yup'ik dance group.

NMNH Osteology Workshop for the Identification of Human Skeletal Remains for Native American Repatriation Representatives

In response to requests from Native American Tribal Historic Preservation Officers and cultural resource managers, the National Museum of Natural History's Repatriation Office has developed an Osteology Workshop. Identification of human remains is critical for cultural concerns and project planning. Human versus non-human identifications can be a challenge when one considers that bones are often fragmentary and incomplete, and may represent individuals of different ages and sizes. The workshop is designed as a cultural and knowledge exchange between Smithsonian experts and Native specialists. A successful second workshop on the identification of human skeletal remains and animal bone was held for three participants from two federally recognized tribes in September 2017. There are requests for another workshop from other federally recognized tribes.



Examining Animal Skeletons during Osteology Workshop (*left-right*): Sarah O'Donnell, Osage Nation; Erica Jones, Repatriation Office; Kilan Jacobs, Osage Nation; John Fox, Osage Nation; Chris Dudar, Repatriation Office; and William Tarrant, Seneca-Cayuga Tribe.

Tule River Indian Tribe and Santa Rosa Indian Community Repatriation

On November 29, 2017, representatives from the Tule River Indian Tribe visited the museum for the repatriation of the skeletal remains of a female individual whose remains had been obtained by Stephen Powers in 1875 from the Tule River Indian Reservation. The representatives met in the NMNH Director's Office for the repatriation and transported the remains to California for reburial.



Tule River Indian Tribe repatriation meeting with NMNH Director (*left to right*): Eric Hollinger, Repatriation Office; Bill Billeck, Repatriation Office; Felix Christman, Tribal Archaeological Monitor; Kirk Johnson, NMNH Director; Joseph Garfield, Tribal Councilman; Donna Tuggle, NMNH Chief of Learning Venues and Visitor Experience (Ohlone Tribe); Torben Rick, Anthropology Department.

National Museum of the American Indian

Blackfoot Nation of Montana Repatriation

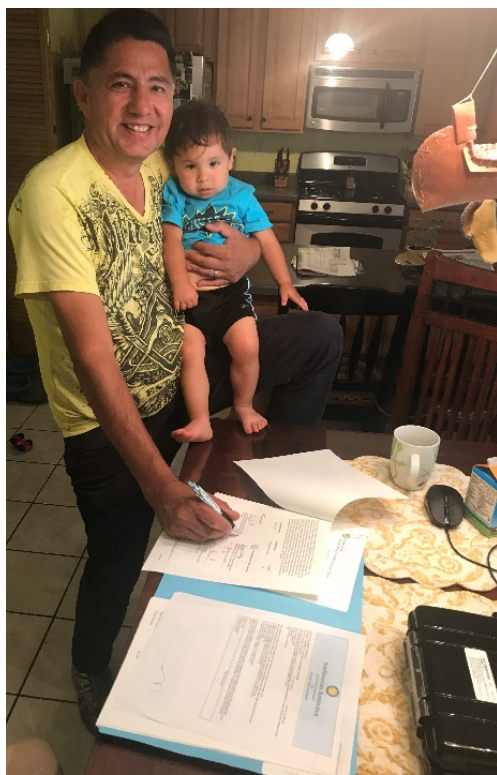
On March 20, 2017, the Repatriation Department hosted a delegation of Blackfoot Confederacy representatives at the NMAI Cultural Resources Center for the repatriation of four medicine bundles to the Blackfoot Nation. Traditionally, medicine bundles were used for a variety of purposes, including protection in war, healing, aid in planting, and general safety. These bundles are meant to be transferred to new caretakers on a regular basis, and serve to provide a connection between the Blackfoot people and their environment and landscape. The transfer of the bundles from one caretaker to the next is the way this knowledge, connection, and sense of identity are shared within the community. The delegation consisted of members from the Blackfoot Nation, Blood Tribe, and Piikani First Nation medicine societies from the United States and Canada. Following ceremonies conducted by traditional elders, society members escorted the medicine bundles to their tribal community in Browning, Montana.



Blackfoot Confederacy delegation members (*left to right*): Pam Heavy Head, Martin Heavy Head, Leonard Weasel Traveler, Audrey Weasel Traveler, Wendy Bremner, William Kennedy, Carol Murray, John Murray, Tyson Running Wolf, Marie McNeely, and James McNeely.

Repatriation of a Sacred Object by Lineal Descendant from the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians

On July 19, 2017, Repatriation staff escorted 19 items represented by one catalog number to Leon Valliere, a tribal member of the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians and lineal descendant to the last drum owner, Eniwabe. These 19 items are associated with the Eniwabe Dream Dance Drum that was used in the Big Drum Religion for healing ceremonies. In anticipation of the repatriation of the entire drum, Mr. Valliere requested the return of loose items from Eniwabe's Drum as "token beads" for the purpose of fulfilling a traditional protocol in the Big Drum Religion. This religious requirement calls for a token element from an original drum to be incorporated into a new drum. This replication process transfers the drum spirit from the loose items into a new Grandfather Drum. Upon completion, the Grandfather Drum will be given to another community to fulfill its spiritual purpose of healing and protecting members of Big Drum Religion.



Leon Valliere holding his nephew, Maska Martin, while signing the Receipt and Release document for the repatriation of the "token beads" in Lac du Flambeau, Wisconsin.



NMAI 253563.012
Dream Dance Drum fragments

Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation Consultation

On December 5–6, 2017, Repatriation staff hosted a delegation of 21 tribal members from the Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation from Glenevis, Alberta, Canada. Elizabeth Letendre, Repatriation Officer, and Sherry Letendre, Repatriation Consultant, were accompanied by 19 youth and elders for the consultation. The delegation conducted a private ceremony prior to their collections review. During their visit, the delegation explored archival records and resources to understand the history of the museum acquisition of the Alexis Nakota items. Of paramount importance to the Nation was the participation of the entire community. Three remote sites—an elementary school, middle school, and the community center—were linked for a real time remote viewing of the objects. At the end of the consultation, Repatriation staff met with the primary representatives to discuss the repatriation process, including a detailed explanation of the NMAI Act and Repatriation Policy, and to ensure community members understood the categories eligible for repatriation. In addition, the Registrar’s contact information was provided to the representatives due to their interest in exploring the possibility of a loan agreement.



Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation tribal members consulting with community members on ceremonial and utilitarian objects from three remote sites.



Front row (*left to right*): Taylor Alexis, Emeriah Alexis, Toni Letendre, Vanessa Kyme, Sherry Letendre, Chasidy Alexis, and Elaine Letendre; Second row (*left to right*): Sandra Bruno, Genevieve Gladeau, Jonah Letendre, Willard Alexis, Charlie Letendre, Roderick Alexis, Doreen Alexis, Nathan Alexis, Bernice Alexis, and Elizabeth (Liz) Letendre; Back row (*left to right*): Orlando Alexis, Duane Kootenay, Brennan Mustus, and Sebastian Cardinal.

Additional Information



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Repatriation Websites:

NMNH Repatriation: <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: <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/>