



Smithsonian Institution

Annual Report of Repatriation Activities

of the Smithsonian Institution

2019

Annual Report 2019

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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 and consultation process with Indian tribes 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 by the NMNH:

	CY 2019 ¹	TOTAL ²
Human Remains³		
Number of Individuals	4	6,302
Catalog Numbers	4	5,700
Funerary Objects (Associated and Unassociated)⁴		
Total Object Count	0	221,600
Total Catalog Numbers	0	3,315

¹ CY 2019 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 2019.

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

³ At the NMNH, *Human Remains* mean 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* refer to the quantity of museum numbers assigned to the human remains or objects.

⁴ *Funerary Objects* refer to 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.

Objects of Cultural Patrimony and Sacred Objects Repatriated by the NMNH:

	CY 2019	TOTAL
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	1	27
Total Catalog Numbers	1	12

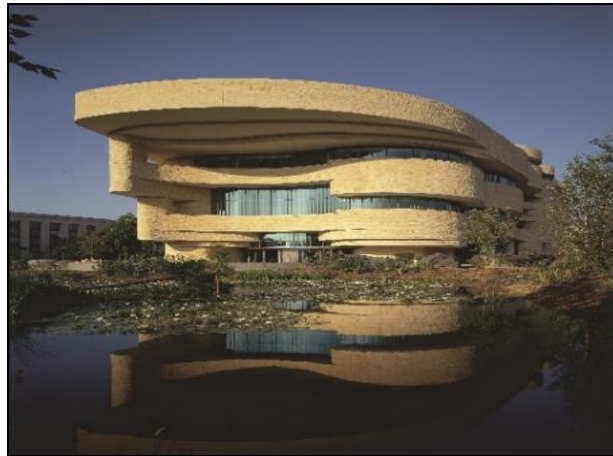
⁵ *Objects of Cultural Patrimony* mean items “having ongoing historical, traditional, or cultural importance central to the Native American group (Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization) or culture itself, rather than property owned by an individual.” NAGPRA, 25 U.S.C. §3001 (2) (3) (D).

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



Human Remains and Funerary Objects Repatriated by the NMAI:

	CY 2019	TOTAL ⁹
Human Remains¹⁰		
Total Count ¹¹	0	540
Total Catalog Numbers	0	245
Human Remains and Associated Funerary Objects		
Total Object Count	0	44
Total Catalog Numbers	0	41
Funerary Objects (Associated and Unassociated)¹²		
Total Object Count	0	29,646
Total Catalog Numbers	0	1,015

⁹ NMAI totals include repatriations within the United States as well as international repatriations to First Nations in Canada and Indigenous communities in Latin America.

¹⁰ 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).

¹¹ 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.

¹² *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).

Objects of Cultural Patrimony and Sacred Objects Repatriated by the NMAI:

	CY 2019	TOTAL
Objects of Cultural Patrimony¹³		
Total Object Count	0	19
Total Catalog Numbers	0	9
Sacred Objects¹⁴		
Total Object Count	1	994
Total Catalog Numbers	1	887
Objects of Cultural Patrimony/Sacred Objects		
Total Object Count	5	430
Total Catalog Numbers	4	356

Unethically or Illegally Acquired Objects Returned by the NMAI:

	CY 2019	TOTAL
Objects Acquired Illegally¹⁵		
Total Object Count	0	31
Total Catalog Numbers	0	26

¹³ *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).

¹⁴ *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).

¹⁵ *Objects Unethically or Illegally Acquired* refers to the longstanding Smithsonian policy stating that items that have been "stolen, unscientifically gathered or excavated, unethically acquired, or unlawfully exported from their country of origin should not be made part of Smithsonian collections" (SD 600, Section 9.2).

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.

	Year	Province	Country
1.	1992	British Columbia	Canada
2.	1995	Pichincha	Ecuador
3.	1996	Ontario	Canada
4.	1996	Cusco	Peru
5.	1997	Ontario	Canada
6.	1997	Alberta	Canada
7.	1997	Ontario	Canada
8.	1998	British Columbia	Canada
9.	1998	Ontario	Canada
10.	1998	Ontario	Canada
11.	1999	Alberta	Canada
12.	2000	Alberta	Canada
13.	2002	British Columbia	Canada
14.	2002	Santiago de Cuba, Guantánamo, Pinar del Río	Cuba
15.	2002	British Columbia	Canada
16.	2007	Alberta	Canada
17.	2007	Alberta	Canada
18.	2007	El Loa	Chile
19.	2007	Arica	Chile
20.	2008	Ontario	Canada
21.	2012	Ontario	Canada
22.	2014	Ontario	Canada
23.	2016	Ontario	Canada

Additional Repatriation Activities at the NMNH and NMAI

CY 2019 Repatriation Visits:

	NMNH	NMAI	Joint NMNH-NMAI
Repatriation Consultation Visits			
Number of Representatives	112	19	0
Number of Tribes	26	12	0
Number of Smithsonian-sponsored Repatriation Visits¹⁶			
Number of Representatives	3	11	0
Number of Tribes	3	5	0

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

	NMNH		NMAI	
	CY 2019	TOTAL	CY 2019	TOTAL
Claims				
Claims in Queue ¹⁷	3	17	4	16
Reports and Repatriations				
Repatriation Reports in Process	10	10	3	3
Completed Repatriation Reports ¹⁸	2	144	4	108
Completed Repatriations	2	125	1	110

¹⁶ The Smithsonian under certain circumstances funds the travel of tribal representatives to visit the Smithsonian as part of the repatriation process. Sponsored visits at the NMNH include both consultation and repatriation visit totals.

¹⁷ For the NMNH the total is the estimated number of reports that are in the queue including reports addressing claims and proactive reports.

¹⁸ For NMAI, *Completed Repatriation Reports* 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 April 29–30, 2019, and November 18–19, 2019, 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; former member Shelby Tisdale; Ian Thompson (Chair), Historic Preservation Department, Choctaw Nation; former member Bonnie Newsom, Penobscot Indian Nation. Not shown are Bonnie Styles, Executive Director of the Association of Science Museum Directors; and Jamie Arsenault, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO), Repatriation Representative, and Archives Manager for the White Earth Band of the Minnesota Chippewa 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 NMAI Repatriation Committee meets outside full board meetings to complete committee work.



NMAI Repatriation Committee members, 2019 (*left-right*): Colin Kippen (Native Hawaiian), Armstrong A. Wiggins (Mískito), Shari Huhndorf (Yup'ik), Amanda Cobb-Greetham (Chickasaw Nation), Philip J. Deloria (Standing Rock Sioux), Richard Luarkie (Pueblo of Laguna), and G. Peter Jemison (Seneca Nation). Not pictured: Darrell Deacon Turner II (Cherokee Nation) and William R. Lomax (Gitxsan).

Highlighted Repatriation Activities

National Museum of Natural History

NMNH Repatriation Office Pioneers a New Form of Cultural Restoration Working with Tlingit *Kiks.ádi* Clan

On September 25, 2019, Tlingit leaders, clan members, and Smithsonian representatives gathered in Juneau for an unprecedented ceremony in which *Kiks.ádi* clan of Sitka dedicated a new hat to replace the old one. What was unique about this event is that the new hat was made by the Smithsonian using 3D scans. The scans were used to digitally repair the original damaged hat and a computer-guided machine carved the new hat. Historically, such hats were repatriated from museums and put back into use, but the broken hat, in the shape of a sculpin or bullhead fish, was collected in 1884 and was too badly broken and worn to be danced again in ceremony. The NMNH Repatriation Office, Digitization Program Office (DPO), and Smithsonian Institution Exhibits (SIE) worked closely with *Kiks.ádi* clan leader Ray Wilson Sr. and other clan leaders to carry out the process in a collaborative and culturally appropriate way. The project was suggested by Harold Jacobs, Cultural Resource Specialist for Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, and coordinated by NMNH Repatriation Office Tribal Liaison Eric Hollinger. Clan leaders were consulted at every step of the way and visited the Smithsonian in 2014 to initiate the project with the 3D digitization by the DPO and to plan the process. The digital files were then repaired in a computer by the SIE, with support from the DPO, and a grant from the Smithsonian Women's Committee funded the acquisition of wood from Alaska and computer-guided milling of the new hat. With guidance from a Tlingit artist and advisor, the new hat was then finished by painting; inlaying shell; and attaching furs, feathers, and deer hide.

The project is described in detail and the 3D files can be viewed here <https://dpo.si.edu/blog/smithsonian-uses-3d-tech-restore-broken-sacred-object-tlingit-indians>.



Original broken Sculpin hat (under protective case in center) and digitally restored new hat at the start of the ceremony (Photo by Bill Billeck).

At the request of the clan, the Smithsonian transported the new hat and the old, broken hat to Juneau for the dedication ceremony. The clan invited representatives from the Smithsonian teams that worked on the project and Sant Director Kirk Johnson from the National Museum of Natural History to witness the ceremony. Clan leaders from Tlingit Wolf/Eagle moiety clans gathered to witness and validate the ceremony and Raven clan leaders brought out their ceremonial objects in support of the *Kiks.ádi* clan. Many of the objects displayed by clan leaders for the ceremony had been previously repatriated from museums around the U.S. under NAGPRA and the NMAI Act.



Wolf/Eagle clan leaders place the new hat on *Kiks.ádi* clan leader Ray Wilson Sr. (Photo by Eric Hollinger).

The nine-hour ceremony included spirit songs, dances, speeches by clan leaders, feasting and gifts, and stories of the origin of the sculpin in Tlingit tradition. When the new hat was placed on the head of Ray Wilson Sr., the spirit of the sculpin was put into it, transitioning it from a replica into a living object or *at.óow*, a sacred object. The new hat was danced by clan leaders and given the name *Wéix' S'áaxw* (Sculpin hat). Clan leaders thanked the NMNH and other Smithsonian units for working together to help restore the Sculpin hat and return it for use by the Tlingit. Under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the museum, the new hat is now owned by the *Kiks.ádi* clan and the old broken hat returned to the Smithsonian for curation. A second replica of the new hat was also made to be used by the Smithsonian in exhibits to tell the story of this pioneering form of cultural restoration using 3D digitization and replication technology.



The newly restored *Wéix' S'áaxw* being received and acknowledged by the hats of the Wolf/Eagle moiety (Photo by Bill Billeck).

Western Aleutian Islands Repatriation and Documentation of the Kagamil Island Collections

In May of 2019, Mark Snigaroff, President of the Native Village of Atka and Chair of the Board of the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association (APIA), and Millie McKeown, Cultural Heritage Director for the APIA, visited the National Museum of Natural History. The representatives visited the Museum Support Center to review the Aleut collections and consult and assist with the documentation of collections from Kagamil Island. The Kagamil Island collections include human remains of an estimated 225 individuals and more than 500 objects. Among these are well-preserved mummies; complex woven basketry and mats; wooden dishes; leather and gut clothing and bags; cordage and

nets; and stone, bone, and ivory tools. The visiting representatives helped Tribal Liaison Eric Hollinger to review the collection and advised on the documentation of the wide-ranging materials present to aid in assembling a complete inventory and accurate understanding of the materials necessary for repatriation.



Mark Snigaroff and Millie McKeown reconstructing an *Unanga* hunting visor from Kagamil Island (Photo by Raymond Hudson).

President Snigaroff also asked to proceed with repatriation of human remains of 185 individuals and 269 funerary objects from Amchitka Island, Kiska Island, Little Kiska Island, the Near Islands, and the Andreanof Islands. These remains and objects are culturally affiliated with the Native Village of Atka in previous Repatriation Office reports. In June, the collections were deaccessioned and repatriated to the Native Village of Atka and President Snigaroff requested that the collections be held at the NMNH in trust for Atka until preparations for the physical return and possible reburial of the collections could be completed.

National Museum of the American Indian

Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (September 5, 2019)

The NMAI repatriated five items from the area of Wrangell, Alaska, to the Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA), who received them on behalf of three Tlingit clans. This collection included daggers representing the Land Otter, Wolf, and Killer Whale belonging to the *Kiks.ádi* and *Sit'kweidí* clans; a beaded dance shirt depicting two Killer Whales; and a Chilkat robe depicting one Killer Whale. The dance shirt and Chilkat robe both belong to the *Naanya.aayí* clan. This repatriation occurred after the NMAI evaluated the last of the claims submitted by the Tlingit between 1998 and 2015. In total, the claims resulted in 14 consultations and 19 separate repatriation events to address 73 funerary objects, sacred objects, and/or objects of cultural patrimony.

Harold Jacobs, Cultural Resources Specialist for the CCTHITA, traveled to the NMAI Cultural Resources Center to receive the five items and escort them back to Alaska. Michael McNulty, a member of the *Kiks.ádi* clan, was present to witness the transfer on behalf of the Raven moiety. NMAI, NMNH, and the National Museum of American History staff were invited to attend the signing ceremony, during which the items were returned to Tlingit custody and prepared for their journey home.



Left to right: Eric Hollinger (Tribal Liaison, NMNH), Jackie Swift (Repatriation Manager, NMAI), Harold Jacobs (Cultural Resource Specialist, CCTHITA), Risa Arbolino (Repatriation Research Specialist, NMAI), Michael McNulty (*Kiks.ádi* clan member), and Lauren Sieg (Repatriation Research Specialist, NMAI).

Returning Home

The items that NMAI has repatriated to the CCTHITA since the 1990s have been reunited with their respective clans. The *at.óow* (sacred objects and objects of cultural patrimony) have resumed their roles in *khoo.eex'* (ceremony). Some examples of their continuing importance for the Tlingit are illustrated in the images below.



Tlingit veterans wearing battle helmets (repatriated by the NMAI in 2015) during a *khoo.eex'* to protect the herring spawning grounds near Sitka, Alaska, in 2018. Photo by Bethany Goodrich, shown with permission by Ray Wilson, *Kiks.ádi* clan leader.



Five *at.óow* repatriated by the NMAI sit with their associated clans to greet their relative, the Sculpin clan hat, and witness its initiation during a 2019 *khoo.eex'* in Juneau, Alaska. (Photo by Steven Henrikson, Alaska State Museum, shown with permission of Ray Wilson, *Kiks.ádi* clan leader, and Steve Henrikson).

Signing of Repatriation Memorandum of Understanding between Ministry of Culture and Heritage of Ecuador and the NMAI (December 13, 2019)

On December 13, 2019, Ambassador Francisco Carrión Mena hosted Ministry of Culture and Heritage and NMAI staff at the Embassy of Ecuador for the signing of a repatriation MOU. Minister Juan Fernando Velasco signed on behalf of the Ministry and Director Kevin Gover signed on behalf of the NMAI. This agreement ensures the Ministry's collaboration with the NMAI for the repatriation of human remains to the Indigenous organizations of Pueblo Kayambi (Pichincha Province) and Federation of Chachi Centers of Ecuador (Esmeraldas Province) and the Indigenous communities of Comuna Pepa de Huso and Sequita (Manabí Province).

Through extensive collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, National Institute of Cultural Patrimony, and community representatives, three repatriations were scheduled to occur in March 2020. Due to COVID-19, this repatriation project has been temporarily postponed.



Left to right: Kevin Gover (Director, NMAI) and Juan Fernando Velasco (Minister, Ministry of Culture and Heritage of Ecuador) following the MOU signing (Photo by Katherine Fogden).

Additional Information



Smithsonian
National Museum of Natural History

Bill Billeck
Program Manager
Repatriation Office
Department of Anthropology
National Museum of Natural History
Smithsonian Institution
10th and Constitution Avenue
Washington, DC 20560
billeckb@si.edu
202-633-0865



Smithsonian
National Museum of the American Indian

Jacquetta (Jackie) Swift
Repatriation Manager
Repatriation Department
National Museum of the American Indian
Smithsonian Institution
Cultural Resources Center
4220 Silver Hill Road
Suitland, MD 20746
swiftj@si.edu
301-238-1548

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/>