



2022
ANNUAL REPORT

Repatriation Activities at the Smithsonian Institution

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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 items 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-Heye Foundation in New York City to the Smithsonian. The NMAIA was 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 7,000 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, and the Government Accountability Office. It will also be posted on the repatriation websites of the NMNH and NMAI.

Repatriation Activities: Year at a Glance

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY



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Human Remains and Funerary Objects Available for Repatriation or That Have Been Repatriated by the NMNH

	CY 2022 ¹	TOTAL ²
Human Remains³		
Number of Individuals ⁴	19	6,521
Catalog Numbers ⁴	7	5,873
Funerary Objects (Associated and Unassociated)⁵		
Total Object Count	2,263	224,978
Total Catalog Numbers	163	3,480

1 CY 2022 lists the human remains and objects made available for repatriation during the calendar year.

2 Total lists the number of Native American human remains and objects repatriated or made available for repatriation within the United States, through time, including CY 2022.

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 The numbers reported in the total column have been updated and corrected by the NMNH Repatriation Office.

5 *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 2022	TOTAL
Objects of Cultural Patrimony⁶		
Total Object Count	0	50
Total Catalog Numbers	0	13
Sacred Objects⁷		
Total Object Count	0	3
Total Catalog Numbers	0	3
Objects of Cultural Patrimony/Sacred Objects⁸		
Total Object Count	0	2
Total Catalog Numbers	0	2
Other Items⁹		
Total Object Count	0	27
Total Catalog Numbers	0	12

⁶ *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.” NMAIA Amendments of 1996, 20 U.S.C. 80q-9a.

⁷ *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.” NMAIA Amendments of 1996, 20 U.S.C. 80q-9a.

⁸ *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.

⁹ *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.

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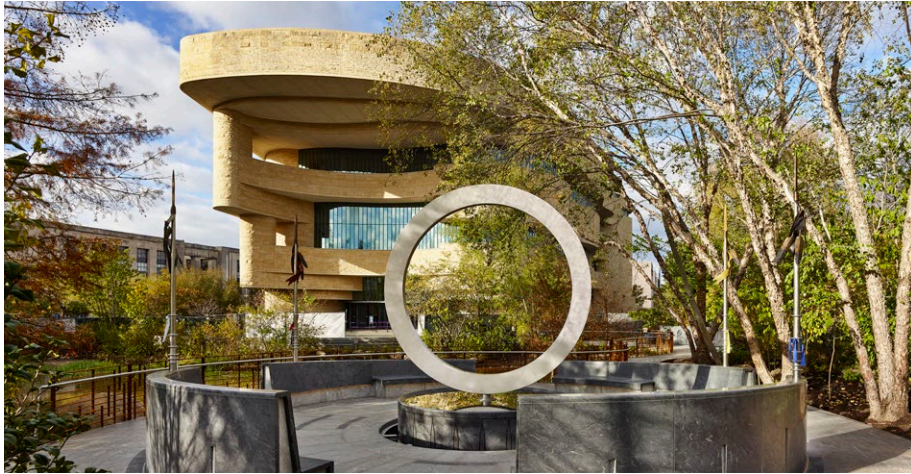


PHOTO: ALAN KARCHER FOR NMAI

Human Remains and Funerary Objects Repatriated by the NMAI

	CY 2022	TOTAL ¹⁰
Human Remains¹¹		
Total Count ¹²	13	563
Total Catalog Numbers	8	263
Human Remains and Associated Funerary Objects¹³		
Total Object Count	1	45
Total Catalog Numbers	1	42
Funerary Objects (Associated and Unassociated)¹⁴		
Total Object Count	33	29,679
Total Catalog Numbers	13	1,028

10 Total figures for NMAI include repatriations to tribes in the United States, First Nations in Canada, and Indigenous communities in Latin America.

11 At the NMAI *Human Remains* mean the physical remains of a human body, or any part thereof, whether or not naturally shed, freely given, or culturally modified. In some contexts, human hair may be considered human remains. For purposes of this policy, it is assumed that all human remains in the collection are of Native American ancestry unless otherwise known (NMAI Repatriation Policy 2022).

12 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. The NMAI uses this legacy data for numerical consistency and, when possible, also calculates MNI in its case documentation.

13 This includes human remains and accompanying burial objects that are counted and cataloged together.

14 *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 2022).

Objects of Cultural Patrimony and Sacred Objects Repatriated by the NMAI

	CY 2022	TOTAL
Objects of Cultural Patrimony¹⁵		
Total Object Count	0	19
Total Catalog Numbers	0	9
Sacred Objects¹⁶		
Total Object Count	69	1,143
Total Catalog Numbers	14	939
Objects of Cultural Patrimony/Sacred Objects		
Total Object Count	0	432
Total Catalog Numbers	0	358

15 *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 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 2022).

16 *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 2022).

17 *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, 2020, Section 9.2).

Unethically or Illegally Acquired Objects Returned by the NMAI

	CY 2022	TOTAL
Objects Acquired Illegally¹⁷		
Total Object Count	0	31
Total Catalog Numbers	0	26

International Repatriation at the NMAI

The NMAI Act and its 1996 amendment address repatriation only to federally recognized Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations 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
24	2021	Alberta	Canada
25	2021	Ontario	Canada
26	2022	Ontario	Canada

ADDITIONAL REPATRIATION ACTIVITIES AT THE NMNH AND THE NMAI

CY 2022 Tribal Repatriation Visits: Repatriation Consultation Visits and SI Sponsored Visits

	NMNH	NMAI	Joint NMNH-NMAI
Repatriation Consultation Visits¹⁸			
Number of Representatives	58	19	0
Number of Tribes	26	10	0
Smithsonian-sponsored Repatriation Visits			
Number of Representatives	3	1	0
Number of Tribes	2	1	0

18 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.

19 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.

20 For NMAI, *Completed Repatriations* refer to the events where items have been physically returned to tribes, First Nations, or communities.

Claims, Reports, and Repatriations

	NMNH		NMAI	
	CY 2022	TOTAL	CY 2022	TOTAL
Claims				
Claims Received	5	15	2	13
Reports and Repatriations				
Repatriation Reports in Process	9	9	7	7
Completed Repatriation Reports ¹⁹	3	154	3	114
Completed Repatriations ²⁰	2	127	4	116

Oversight of Repatriation Activities

NATIVE AMERICAN REPATRIATION REVIEW COMMITTEE— NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

The Spring Repatriation Review Committee meeting of 2022 was held virtually on April 5, 2022. The second meeting was held in person at the NMNH on November 30 and December 1, 2022. The committee is composed of individuals nominated by tribes, tribal organizations, and scientific and museum organizations. The seven-member committee consists of Ian Thompson, Chair (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma), Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO); Darlene Miller, Vice-Chair (Seneca Nation), Legislative Specialist; Jamie Arsenault (White Earth Band of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe), THPO, Repatriation Representative, and Archives Manager; Irene Dundas (Ketchikan Indian Community), Cultural Heritage Specialist; Vincas Steponaitis, Department of Anthropology, University of North Carolina; George Milner, Department of Anthropology, Pennsylvania State University; and Bonnie Styles, Executive Director of the Association of Science Museum Directors. Dr. Ian Thompson and Ms. Darlene Miller served as the Committee's Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively, for all of 2022. Dr. Thompson completed his term on the committee and was thanked for his service at the Fall 2022 meeting. In November 2022, an election of officers for 2023 was held and Ms. Jamie Arsenault was elected Chair.

The NMNH Native American Repatriation Review Committee: Ian Thompson (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma); Vincas Steponaitis, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill; George Milner, Pennsylvania State University; Irene Dundas (Ketchikan Indian Community); Bonnie Styles, Association of Science Museum Directors; and Darlene Miller (Seneca Nation). *Not shown:* Jamie Arsenault (White Earth Band of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe).



REPATRIATION COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES—NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

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, NMAI Repatriation Committee members meet outside full board meetings to complete committee work. All meetings occurred virtually in 2022. NMAI Repatriation Committee consists of Armstrong A. Wiggins (Mískito), Shari Huhndorf, Chair (Yup'ik), Philip J. Deloria (Standing Rock Sioux), G. Peter Jemison (Seneca Nation), Leslie Wheelock (Oneida Nation), Elaine F. Peters (Ak-Chin Indian Community), Julie Fate Sullivan (Koyukon Athabaskan), and Johnson Cerda (Kichwa of the Ecuadorian Amazon).



Armstrong A. Wiggins
(Mískito)



Shari Huhndorf
(Yup'ik)



Philip J. Deloria
(Standing Rock Sioux)



G. Peter Jemison
(Seneca Nation)



Leslie Wheelock
(Oneida Nation)



Elaine F. Peters
(Ak-Chin Indian
Community)



Julie Fate Sullivan
(Koyukon Athabaskan)

Not pictured is Johnson Cerda (Kichwa of the Ecuadorian Amazon).

Highlighted Repatriation Activities

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

NMNH Director Visits the Seminole Tribe of Florida

In 2022, NMNH Sant Director Kirk Johnson visited the Seminole Tribe of Florida and was given a tour of tribal territory. He visited the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum and the tribe's collections and research spaces. Through deep and meaningful conversations with tribal members and repatriation representatives, Director Johnson built new relationships that have helped the Repatriation Office move forward on its work with the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and Catawba Indian Nation Repatriation

The NMNH repatriated eighteen individuals and 1,122 funerary objects from two sites in Caldwell County, North Carolina. The remains had been collected by researchers associated with the Bureau of American Ethnology's (BAE) Mound Exploration Project. The repatriation was carried out by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in coordination with the Catawba Indian Nation. A representative from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians traveled to the NMNH to escort these individuals back to North Carolina and, during the visit, reviewed items in the NMNH collections that came from the Cherokee people.

Director Kirk Johnson (second from left) with members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.



Caldwell County, North Carolina.

Repatriation and Conservation staff utilizing new virtual engagement equipment at the Cultural Resource Center while consulting with Darren Bonaparte, Director of the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe's Tribal Preservation Office.



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Repatriation staff continues to conduct research on multiple repatriation cases, attend both virtual and in-person conferences and trainings, and find areas of collaboration through museum panel discussions focused on current repatriation events and challenges.

VIRTUAL CONSULTATION

Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe

On April 25, 2022, Repatriation staff conducted its first official virtual consultation with Darren Bonaparte, Director of the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe's Tribal Preservation Office. On the tribe's behalf, Mr. Bonaparte reviewed and shared information about items initially claimed by the Haudenosaunee Standing Committee on Burial Rules and Regulations. During the pandemic, a cross-departmental team was established to increase the museum's capacity to build relationships with Native constituents through a sustainable program of virtual collections visits. The program's investment in new cameras and staging equipment enabled Repatriation staff to consult with Mr. Bonaparte while he viewed items in real time over a video call. Repatriation staff continue to use the virtual engagement workroom at the Cultural Resources Center (CRC), facilitating community access and engagement with NMAI collections when travel to the CRC is not possible.

INTERNATIONAL REPATRIATION

On May 25, 2022, Melissa Wiatrolik, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians (LTBB), traveled to the CRC to escort thirty-two unassociated funerary objects (represented by twelve catalog numbers) home on behalf of the LTBB, the Ottawa Tribe of Oklahoma, and the Wikwemikong Band of Ontario.

To ensure a safe return home, NMAI worked with the Department of Homeland Security's TSA tribal liaison, Marie Trottier, who greeted Ms. Wiatrolik at the airport and accompanied her through security as she personally escorted the items home for reburial (Case No. 2013.007).

L-R: Rachel Shabica, NMAI Supervisory Registrar; Melissa Wiatrolik, THPO, Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians; Cynthia Chavez Lamar, NMAI Director; and Risa Arbolino, NMAI Repatriation Research Specialist.



Additional Information

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Repatriation Websites

NMNH Repatriation:

<http://Naturalhistory.si.edu/research/anthropology/programs/repatriation-office>

NMNH Guidelines and Procedures for Repatriation:

<https://naturalhistory.si.edu/sites/default/files/media/file/repatriation-guidelines-and-procedures-2012.pdf>

NMAI Repatriation:

<http://AmericanIndian.si.edu/explore/collections/repatriation/>

NMAI Repatriation Policy:

<https://americanindian.si.edu/sites/1/files/pdf/repatriation/NMAI-Repatriation-Policy-2022-r.pdf>

Smithsonian Collections Search Center:

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

