REPATRIATION AT THE
SMITHSONIAN

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Repatriation at the Smithsonian

• Pre-1989 policy – return illegally or unethically acquired materials

• National Museum of the American Indian Act (1989)

• Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990)

• Amendments to NMAI Act (1996)
Repatriation at the Smithsonian

  - Federally Recognized Tribes
    - Includes 7 Virginia tribes recognized by Congress (6 recognized in 2018)
  - Human Remains
  - Associated Funerary Objects
  - Repatriation Review Committee
- Amendments to NMAI Act (1996)
  - Unassociated Funerary Objects
  - Sacred Objects
  - Objects of Cultural Patrimony
Repatriation at the Smithsonian

- **National Museum of the American Indian**
  - 540 individuals (187 remaining)
  - 29,646 funerary objects
  - 994 sacred objects
  - 19 objects of cultural patrimony
  - 430 sacred objects/objects of cultural patrimony
  - 31 unethically acquired items
  - 224 consultations

- **National Museum of Natural History**
  - 6298 individuals
  - 221,000 funerary objects
  - 55 sacred objects and objects of cultural patrimony
First step: Consultation
International Repatriation

Cuba

Maori – New Zealand
International Repatriation at the Smithsonian

- National Museum of the American Indian
  - Canada
  - Chile
  - Cuba
  - Ecuador
  - Peru

- National Museum of Natural History
  - Australia
  - New Zealand
Collections Care
Traditional Care
Traditional Care
Tribal Collaborations – Tlingit Tribe of Alaska

• Killer Whale Hat
• Sculpin Hat
• 3D Replicas
Shared Stewardship of Collections

Principle: The Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage acknowledges and respects the rights of artists, performers, participants, community-based scholars, and knowledge-keepers to collaboratively steward representations of themselves and their intangible cultural heritage in media produced, curated, and distributed by the Center.

Shifting perspective: Individuals and communities represented in our collections are joint stewards, not subjects.
Shared Stewardship of Collections

Goals:

• Foster sustained dialogue with source communities;
• Promote greater engagement with their heritage collections;
• Enhance and refine cultural documentation and associated metadata;
• Ensure culturally appropriate collection care and display;
• Recognize source community interest in the digital return and physical repatriation of archival collections in our care.

https://folklife-media.si.edu/docs/folklife/Shared-Stewardship.pdf