

2021
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 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 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 2021 ¹ | TOTAL ² |
|---|----------------------|--------------------|
| Human Remains³ | | |
| Number of Individuals | 25 | 6,472 |
| Catalog Numbers | 26 | 5,857 |
| Funerary Objects (Associated and Unassociated)⁴ | | |
| Total Object Count | 6 | 222,606 |
| Total Catalog Numbers | 7 | 3,349 |

1 CY 2021 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 2021.

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 2021 | 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 | 0 | 27 |
| Total Catalog Numbers | 0 | 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.” NMAIA Amendments of 1996, 20 U.S.C. 80q-9a.

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

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

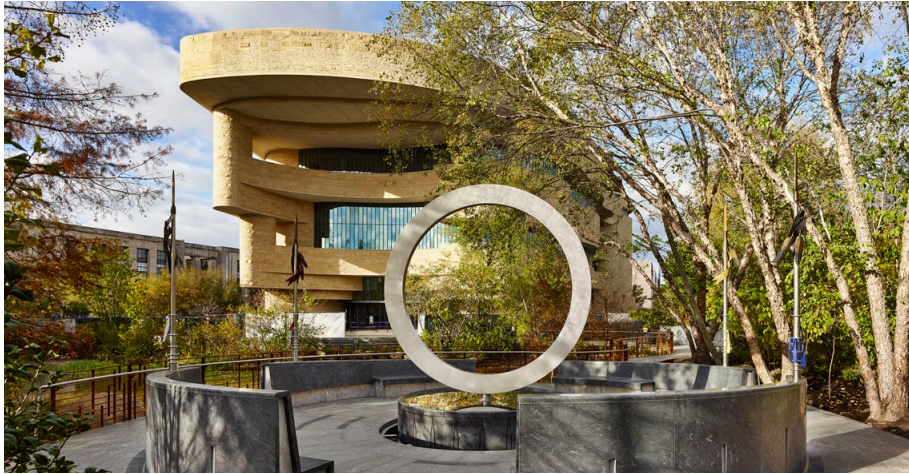


PHOTO: ALAN KARCHNER FOR NMAI

Human Remains and Funerary Objects Repatriated by the NMAI

| | CY 2021 | TOTAL ⁹ |
|--|---------|--------------------|
| Human Remains¹⁰ | | |
| Total Count ¹¹ | 0 | 550 |
| Total Catalog Numbers | 0 | 255 |
| Human Remains and Associated Funerary Objects¹² | | |
| Total Object Count | 0 | 44 |
| Total Catalog Numbers | 0 | 41 |
| Funerary Objects (Associated and Unassociated)¹³ | | |
| Total Object Count | 0 | 29,646 |
| Total Catalog Numbers | 0 | 1,015 |

⁹ Total figures for NMAI include repatriations to tribes in the United States, First Nations in Canada, and Indigenous communities in Latin America. (During an internal record review, an accounting discrepancy revealed ten funerary objects under NMAI stewardship that should have been deaccessioned in 1994. At the request of the Pueblo of Zuni, NMAI deaccessioned and transferred these items to NMNH to be reunited with human remains that were removed from the same location and under NMNH stewardship.)

¹⁰ 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 2020).

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

¹² This includes human remains and accompanying burial objects that are counted and cataloged together.

¹³ *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 2020).

Objects of Cultural Patrimony and Sacred Objects Repatriated by the NMAI

| | CY 2021 | TOTAL |
|---|---------|-------|
| Objects of Cultural Patrimony¹⁴ | | |
| Total Object Count | 0 | 19 |
| Total Catalog Numbers | 0 | 9 |
| Sacred Objects¹⁵ | | |
| Total Object Count | 80 | 1,074 |
| Total Catalog Numbers | 38 | 925 |
| Objects of Cultural Patrimony/Sacred Objects | | |
| Total Object Count | 2 | 432 |
| Total Catalog Numbers | 2 | 358 |

14 *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 2020).

15 *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 2020).

16 *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 2021 | TOTAL |
|--|---------|-------|
| Objects Acquired Illegally¹⁶ | | |
| 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 |

ADDITIONAL REPATRIATION ACTIVITIES AT THE NMNH AND NMAI

CY 2021 Tribal Repatriation Visits: Repatriation Consultation Visits and SI Sponsored Visits

| | NMNH | NMAI | Joint NMNH-NMAI |
|--|------|------|-----------------|
| Repatriation Consultation Visits¹⁷ | | | |
| Number of Representatives | 10 | 19 | 0 |
| Number of Tribes | 5 | 4 | 0 |
| Smithsonian-sponsored Repatriation Visits | | | |
| Number of Representatives | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Number of Tribes | 0 | 1 | 0 |

17 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.

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.

19 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 2021 | TOTAL | CY 2021 | TOTAL |
| Claims | | | | |
| Claims Received | 6 | 13 | 2 | 13 |
| Reports and Repatriations | | | | |
| Repatriation Reports in Process | 5 | 5 | 9 | 9 |
| Completed Repatriation Reports ¹⁸ | 2 | 151 | 2 | 109 |
| Completed Repatriations ¹⁹ | 0 | 125 | 2 | 112 |

Oversight of Repatriation Activities

NATIVE AMERICAN REPATRIATION REVIEW COMMITTEE— NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

The NMNH Native American Repatriation Review Committee did not hold their meetings in Washington, DC, due to COVID-19. The 2021 committee meetings were held by video teleconference with the NMNH staff on April 14, 2021, and November 17, 2021, for the committee to monitor the progress of repatriation at the museum. 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.

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 2021 due to COVID-19. NMAI Repatriation Committee consists of Colin Kippen (Native Hawaiian), Armstrong A. Wiggins (Mískito), Shari Huhndorf, Chair (Yup'ik), Amanda Cobb-Greetham (Chickasaw Nation), 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 Joshua Spear.



Armstrong A. Wiggins
(Mískito)



Shari Huhndorf
(Yup'ik)



Amanda
Cobb-Greetham
(Chickasaw Nation)



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 are Colin Kippen and Joshua Spear.

Highlighted Repatriation Activities

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Smithsonian Exhibit Highlights First Object of Cultural Patrimony Restored to Tribe Using 3D Technology



Replica of Kiks.ádi clan sculpin hat on display in Smithsonian *FUTURES* exhibit.

In 2021 an exhibition called *FUTURES* opened at the Smithsonian's newly renovated Arts and Industries Building, marking the 175th anniversary of the institution. The exhibit combined science, art, technology, and history to explore many possible futures. One featured object was an exact replica of a Tlingit ceremonial crest hat that was made by the Smithsonian using 3D technology to aid in cultural restoration and revitalization.

At the request of the Kiks.ádi clan of Sitka, Alaska, the NMNH Repatriation Office worked with Smithsonian Exhibits and the Smithsonian's Digitization Program Office to 3D digitize and then replicate an ancient clan hat shaped like a sculpin fish that had been in the NMNH collections since the 1880s. The original hat was broken and too badly damaged to be worn and danced again in ceremony. With a generous grant from the Smithsonian Women's Committee and working in close collaboration with the clan, the Smithsonian team combined traditional cultural protocols with high-tech methods to scan the original hat, digitally repair it, and use computer-guided milling to create two exact replicas from wood and other traditional materials. One replica was then presented to the Kiks.ádi clan. The replica was dedicated in ceremony making it a sacred and ceremonial object and restoring it to clan use for the first time in 135 years.

In coordination with the clan, the second replica was exhibited in *FUTURES* as an example of how new technologies, combined with close consultation and cooperation between museums and Indigenous communities, can aid in cultural restoration efforts that complement repatriation. Over an eight-month period, the *FUTURES* exhibit was seen by more than 600,000 visitors and had nine billion online visits. The sculpin hat restoration project is already serving as a model for similar collaborations around the world and has led to a growing interest among tribes in applying 3D technology to issues of repatriation and cultural restoration.

Harold Jacobs, CCTHITA Cultural Preservation Specialist, using 3D replicated Tlingit spear thrower.



The NMNH Uses 3D Technology to Help Restore a Forgotten Hunting Tool

There are only two dozen Tlingit spear throwers in existence today and all are in museums or private collections. Two of these ancient hunting tools have been in the collections of the NMNH since the mid-1800s. Spear throwers were used as hunting tools for thousands of years before the invention of the bow and arrow. Tlingit spear throwers, known as *shee aan*, are elaborately carved and were thought by some researchers to have been only ceremonial, non-functional objects.

The NMNH Repatriation Office, working with Alaska State archaeologist Richard VanderHoek and Alaska State Museum curator Steve Henrikson, and in consultation with cultural preservation specialist Harold Jacobs of the Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA), sought to test the hypothesis that the Tlingit throwers were actually functional hunting tools. The throwers in the NMNH collection

were CT scanned, which revealed hidden metal reinforcements suggesting that they had been used to exert force. The digital data from the scans was then used to 3D-print exact replicas of the Tlingit throwers using high-strength nylon. When the replicas were tested by throwing actual spears, it was clear that they would have functioned well as throwers used for hunting, most likely for seals and otters.

Replicas were taken to southeast Alaska where Tlingit clan leaders and students were given an opportunity to test their spear-throwing skills. The Smithsonian then worked with

Original Tlingit spear throwers (the two shown at the bottom of the image) and their 3D replicas (shown at the top of the image).



the CCTHITA to make a set of replica throwers for use in summer culture camps. Tlingit youth are now learning the history of the ancient hunting tools and can experience firsthand these masterpieces of cultural heritage. The Repatriation Office continues to work with Tlingit communities to reintroduce the tools through 3D replica technology. Today, Tlingit carvers are once again making the *shee ann* using the replicas as models. This collaborative effort illustrates how the technology can be used to restore cultural objects back to communities even if those items do not fit a traditional repatriation category or when an original may be too fragile or damaged to put back into use.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

During COVID-19, Repatriation staff continued to conduct research on multiple repatriation cases, attend virtual conferences and trainings, and find areas of collaboration through museum panel discussions focused on current repatriation events and challenges.

VIRTUAL CONSULTATION AND REPATRIATION

Siksika Nation (July 7, 2021)

NMAI staff conducted its first successful virtual consultation during the pandemic with representatives of the Siksika Nation. On June 4, 2021, the NMAI Board of Trustees deaccessioned NMAI 016748.000 (Prairie Chicken Society Headdress) and NMAI 132384.000 (Weather Dance Robe), identified as sacred objects and objects of cultural patrimony, to the Siksika Nation. The following month, Siksika Nation Band Councillor Kent Ayoungman and

Siksika Nation Repatriation: L-R, clockwise: Ceremonial Elder Herman Yellow Old Woman, Samantha Hixson (Research Specialist), Cynthia Chavez Lamar (former Acting Associate Director, Museum Assets and Operations), Jackie Swift (Repatriation Manager), Rachel Shabica (Supervisor Registrar), Lauren Sieg (Research Specialist), and Siksika Nation Chief and Councillor Kent Ayoungman.





L-R: Kent Ayoungman and former Board Chair, Kim Baird, following the ceremony that reintroduced the Prairie Chicken Society headdress to the community.

Traditional Cultural Practitioner Herman Yellow Old Woman traveled to the NMAI Cultural Resources Center (CRC) to escort these ceremonial items home in time for their Sun Dance ceremonies.

During their visit to the CRC, Mr. Yellow Old Woman extended an invitation for an NMAI representative to attend the ceremony that would reintroduce the Prairie Chicken Society headdress into the community. Given international travel issues due to COVID-19, former Board Chair Kim Baird of the Tsawwassen First Nation attended on behalf of the NMAI.

INTERNATIONAL REPATRIATION

Haudenosaunee Standing Committee on Burial Rules and Regulations, on behalf of the Six Nations of Grand River (December 11, 2021)

On November 8, 2019, the NMAI Board of Trustees approved the repatriation of 80 items (represented by 38 catalog numbers) determined to be sacred items culturally affiliated with the Six Nations of the Grand River. Due to COVID-related travel restrictions and the cross-border permitting process, Repatriation staff met with Six Nations representatives Paul Williams and Miran Hill at the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Peace Bridge Port of Entry in Buffalo, NY, to conduct the physical return.

Since many of these items included feathers and animal species regulated by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Migratory Bird Act, permits were required by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in coordination with the Canadian Wildlife Service. This repatriation afforded Repatriation staff and tribal representatives the opportunity to work with the Indigenous Affairs Secretariat of the Canadian Border Security Agency (CBSA). The CBSA also played an integral role in the successful repatriation of items across

the border to the Siksika Nation in 2021. Through collaboration with the Indigenous Affairs Secretariat, the NMAI has since gained valuable insight and tools for future repatriations, including the organization of VIP customs and border access for the Six Nations representatives.

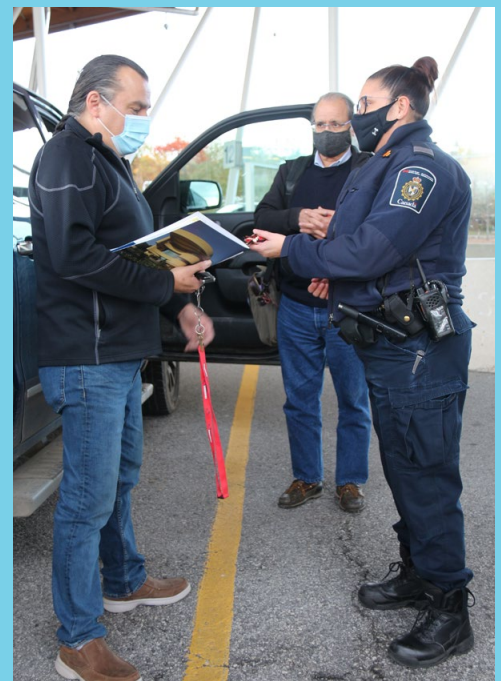
L-R: Catherine Bechard (Indigenous Affairs Secretariat Representative), Miran Hill, Paul Williams, and Canadian Border Security Agent Representative.



L-R: Paul Williams, Jackie Swift (Repatriation Manager), and Miran Hill following the Receipt and Release signing.



L-R: Miran Hill and Paul Williams upon arrival at Canadian border with customs agent.



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:

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

Smithsonian Collections Search Center:

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

