



THE STATE  
*of* **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

## Department of Education & Early Development

DIVISION OF LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES & MUSEUMS  
Alaska State Museums

PO Box 110571  
395 Whittier Street  
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0571  
Main: 907.465.2901  
Fax: 907.465.2151

January 8, 2025

Subject: Letter to Tribes

Dear Tribal NAGPRA Contact:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Alaska State Museum in Juneau and the Sheldon Jackson Museum in Sitka regarding the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). New NAGPRA regulations require that museums consult with tribes concerning Native American collections and seek informed consent for activities using Alaska Native collections, including exhibitions and programming. We respectfully request to consult about the continued display of objects, public programming, and research on objects from your Tribe at the Alaska State Museums. Our webpage, <https://museums.alaska.gov/nagpra.html> contains more about our programs and collections.

The Alaska State Museum and Sheldon Jackson Museum are the two oldest museums in Alaska, with collections of Alaska Native material from all over the State. The Sheldon Jackson Museum has been operating in Sitka since 1887, and the Alaska State Museum was established by the U.S. Congress in 1900 as an official repository for Alaska history. In the years since, the museums have collected objects relating to the people, cultures, and nature of Alaska. The collection has grown substantially and now holds 41,000 objects, artifacts, and specimens, approximately half of which were made by Alaska Natives. While many items are known to be connected to specific tribes, some are only attributed to a particular region or language group.

There are several ways to access information about the Alaska State Museums' collections, exhibits, and educational programs, and to engage in the consultation process. Please see the enclosed "Consultations with the Alaska State Museums" document for more details and contact information for assistance or questions. There is a form available on the website that can be used to begin a dialog or consultation [NAGPRA Contact Form](#).

We seek guidance from your tribe concerning the objects we display and use for educational purposes. We recognize the importance of respecting certain cultural items' sacred and sensitive nature and intend to preserve and showcase these objects with the utmost respect and sensitivity, aligning our practices with the evolving standards set forth by the law. We wish to emphasize that the objects on exhibit from the museums' collections are not currently known to meet the

definition of human remains or funerary objects as defined by NAGPRA, though the tribes may consider them “objects of cultural patrimony” and/or “sacred objects.”

We are committed to fostering a collaborative and respectful relationship with you and welcome further discussions to address any concerns or considerations you may have regarding the significance and ongoing display of these objects.

The museums are dedicated to promoting understanding and appreciation of the cultural heritage of all communities within our region, and we believe that these objects contribute significantly to the educational mission of our institution. We value the opportunity to continue to showcase the artistry, history, and cultural richness of Alaska Natives, and we seek your formal approval to do so.

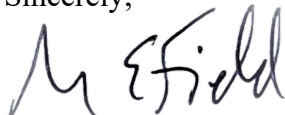
Over the years, the Museums have engaged in informal consultations with hundreds of individual members of Alaska Native tribes - long-term, deep relationships that continually inform our exhibits and other programs. Newly written regulations require us, and provide us with the opportunity, to formalize our relationships with tribes.

Please let us know if specific procedures or additional information are required to proceed with this request. We are open to any dialogue that ensures the respectful and responsible management of these objects that we have the privilege to hold in trust for you, the people of Alaska.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to working together to continue preserving and sharing Alaska Native heritage as a vibrant and central part of Alaska’s story.

Please feel free to contact me at any time at (907) 465-4866 or [Addison.field@alaska.gov](mailto:Addison.field@alaska.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Addison Field". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Addison Field  
Chief Curator  
Alaska State Museums

## **Consultations with the Alaska State Museums**

The Museums seek to comply with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act through consultation with federally recognized tribes in Alaska. The “Duty of Care” provision (43 CFR 10.1(d)) requires museums to “Obtain free, prior, and informed consent from lineal descendants, Indian Tribes, or Native Hawaiian organizations prior to allowing any exhibition of, access to, or research on human remains or cultural items.” Further, museums must “Make a reasonable and good-faith effort to incorporate and accommodate the Native American traditional knowledge of lineal descendants, Indian Tribes, or Native Hawaiian organizations in the storage, treatment, or handling of human remains or cultural items.”

### **Consultation Options**

Museums are required to actively seek opportunities to share information about collections as part of the consultation and the repatriation process—to return human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony, as defined by NAGPRA. By using inventories and summaries of the collections, tribes can make decisions on what materials should be returned to the tribe, and whether the museum may continue to conduct exhibits, research, and educational activities using materials from the tribe.

### **Search our Collections Database Online**

[Search the Collections](#) through our online portal. You can also find the link to the portal at [Collections | Alaska State Museums](#).

Search our collections database by tribe, place name, and/or object type.

For assistance with searches, contact our Curators of Collections, [Steve Henrikson](#) at the Alaska State Museum and [Jacqueline Fernandez-Hamberg](#) at the Sheldon Jackson Museum.

### **Take a Virtual Tour of the Sheldon Jackson Museum**

To provide a better sense of the exhibition program at the Sheldon Jackson Museum, a virtual tour is available online: [Sheldon Jackson Museum Virtual Tour - Sitka National Historical Park \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](#).

### **Request Customized Searches**

You may prefer to ask for our assistance in generating a list of artifacts from your location or tribe. The Curators of Collections can provide lists and photographs and may be contacted at the emails listed above.

## **Request In-person Access and Consultation**

In the past, many individual tribal members, as well as delegations sent by Alaska Native tribes, have arranged to visit collections in Juneau and Sitka to search collections. Our staff is eager to assist with scheduling such visits. While our budget doesn't allow us to directly fund the costs of such consultations, we have collaborated with tribes in applying for grants for consultation visits. Grants can be written and/or administrated by the museums or the tribe. We can support the tribes' efforts by writing letters of support, providing information for use in grant applications and in-kind support. Information on consultation and repatriation grants may be found at [Project Grants - Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](#).

## **Attend NAGPRA Open Office Hours Meetings Online**

The Museums are initiating quarterly online meetings to facilitate the consultation process and provide information to tribes about the Museums' repatriation procedures. Information on how to sign up for monthly meetings and archives of past sessions will be available at [Collections | Alaska State Museums](#).

We recognize that not all will be able to attend the Open Office Hours meetings and welcome questions or concerns about NAGPRA at any time.

For information about our next Open Office Hours session please contact [Jacqueline Fernandez-Hamberg](#) for a meeting link.