



Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD DATE: MARCH 26, 2025

FROM: MUSEUM COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE

**SUBJECT: RECOMMEND DEACCESSION FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION OF
ONE (1) SERRANO SHELL NECKLACE (A134-229) ASSOCIATED WITH THE
SAN MANUEL BAND OF MISSION INDIANS**

ISSUE:

To recommend to City Council to approve deaccession from the permanent collection of one (1) Serrano shell necklace (A134-229) associated with the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Museum of Riverside Board recommends that City Council approves deaccession from the permanent collection of one (1) Serrano shell necklace (A134-229) associated with the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians.

BACKGROUND:

In August 1971, the City of Riverside's Municipal Museum, now operating as the Museum of Riverside (Museum), acquired and accessioned one (1) Serrano shell necklace (A134-229) which originated with the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians. The necklace was donated by Mrs. J. R. Gabbart (Elizabeth Gardon Gabbart, 1884-1975), who had moved to Riverside in 1912 and collected the necklace at an undocumented date prior to 1971.

At its meeting on January 29, 2025, the Museum's Collection Committee voted unanimously in support of recommending that the Museum Board forward the recommendation regarding the Serrano necklace to City Council.

DISCUSSION:

The term "deaccession" refers to the procedure of formally removing an object from a museum's permanent collection, after which the object may be considered for sale, exchange, gift, transfer

to another entity, transfer to a collection other than the permanent collection, or – in the case of irretrievably deteriorated objects – disposal.

With this action, the Museum would be continuing to fulfill its responsibility to Indigenous North American peoples and acting in compliance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), 25 USC 3001 et seq. NAGPRA was enacted on November 16, 1990, to address the rights of lineal descendants, Indian tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations seeking repatriation of human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony. NAGPRA is administered by the National Park Service.

According to NAGPRA, objects subject to repatriation include “Sacred Objects: Specific Ceremonial objects which are needed by traditional Native American religious leaders for the practice of traditional Native American religions for their present-day adherents.” [USC 3001 (3)(c)] Recent updates to NAGPRA protocols issued by the National Park Service require identification of a tribe willing to accept a repatriation prior to listing on the Federal Register and prior to executing a physical return of Indigenous resources.

Following correspondence with a representative of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, it was determined that this object was more than likely ceremonial and once affiliated with a burial. The Museum consulted with Jeannine Pederson-Guzman, Tribal Repatriation Curation Program Manager of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, who wrote in correspondence “[I]n Serrano culture, shell beads (especially in large quantity) are often associated with burials and are considered funerary objects” (Guzman: February 22, 2024). The necklace also exhibits evidence of having been burned, which further supports the identification of it as a funerary object. On October 21, 2024, Jeanine Pedersen-Guzman informed the Museum of the tribe’s intention to seek repatriation of this funerary object to the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, located in Highland, California.

The Museum of Riverside’s Collections and Exhibitions Management Policies list criteria for deaccession, which include foremost among them compliance with state, federal, or international law (see Section 4.2). Further, the respect that the Museum accords to Indigenous cultures prohibits use of an object with a sacred function in exhibitions, programs, or publications against the preferences expressed by official representatives of the tribes. Thus, the lack of potential for an object to be exhibited or interpreted is also a criterion for deaccession.

Note: An image of the necklace has not been included in this report out of respect for the preference of many Indigenous peoples not to photograph or publish their sacred rituals or artifacts.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

The activities of the Museum of Riverside align with the Strategic Priority, “Arts, Culture and Recreation” and in particular goal 1.1 (strengthening Riverside’s portfolio of arts, culture, recreation, senior, and lifelong learning programs and amenities), goal 1.2 (enhancing equitable access to arts, culture, and recreational service offerings and facilities), and goal 1.5 (supporting programs and amenities to further develop literacy, health, and education of children, youth, and seniors throughout the community).

Museum programs further support the Strategic Priority, “Community Well-Being.” Specific

goals supported by Museum programs and partnerships include goal 2.3, which includes strengthening neighborhood identities, and goal 2.5, which points to fostering relationships between community members and partner organizations.

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1. **Community Trust** – Willing compliance with federal legislation protecting Indigenous resources and repatriating according to tribal preference build trust within the Museum’s larger national community.
2. **Equity** – The deaccession process leading to repatriation demonstrates equitable consideration of cultures, which reflects through action on a national level the diversity in Riverside’s own communities.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – Deaccession of Indigenous resources for the purpose of repatriation keeps the Museum in legal compliance and reduces the cost of collection maintenance for items that ethically belong to others and will not be used in Museum programming.
4. **Innovation** – Compliance with legal requirements is not innovative, but the Museum’s willing engagement with Indigenous peoples throughout the multi-year repatriation process has earned noted marks of respect from individual tribes, which places the Museum at the leading edge of a national decades-long effort that has not progressed smoothly in all museums.
5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – Repatriation actions support cultural sustainability, streamline Museum operations, and model and teach cultural preservation.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report. Items deaccessioned for the purpose of repatriation are formally transferred and returned in-person to their tribes of origin.

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