



City of Arts & Innovation

City Council Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL DATE: MAY 6, 2025

FROM: MUSEUM DEPARTMENT WARD: ALL

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

ISSUE:

Approve deaccession from the Museum of Riverside's permanent collection of one (1) Serrano shell necklace (A134-229) associated with the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians.

RECOMMENDATION:

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

BOARD RECOMMENDATION:

At a regular meeting on March 26, 2025, the Museum of Riverside Board, with seven (7) members present for this vote and two (2) positions vacant, unanimously voted to recommend that City Council approve deaccession 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.

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.

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 recommends deaccession and repatriation following the determination that these items are part of the living cultural heritage of their affiliated tribes and, therefore, consistent with the requirements of the federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).

Note: Images of the item have 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).

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 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.

Prepared by:	Robyn G. Peterson, Ph.D., Museum Director
Approved by:	Kris Martinez, Assistant City Manager
Certified as to availability of funds:	Kristie Thomas, Finance Director/Assistant Chief Financial Officer
Approved as to form:	Jack Liu, Interim City Attorney

Attachments:

1. Museum of Riverside Board Draft Minutes – March 26, 2025
2. Museum Board Deaccession Recommendation Report – March 26, 2025