



City of Arts & Innovation

City Council Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL **DATE: MARCH 2, 2021**

FROM: MUSEUM DEPARTMENT **WARDS: ALL**

SUBJECT: DEACCESSION FROM THE MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE'S PERMANENT COLLECTION OF TWENTY-THREE SACRED OBJECTS OF THE HOOPA VALLEY TRIBE (A1-165, A1-166, A1-177, A1-178, A1-179, A8-230, A8-293, A34-2, A48-5 THROUGH A48-12, A48-14, A48-15, A48-19, A48-20, A48-24 THROUGH A48-26)

ISSUE:

Approve deaccession from the Museum of Riverside's permanent collection twenty-three sacred objects of the Hoopa Valley Tribe (A1-165, A1-166, A1-177, A1-178, A1-179, A8-230, A8-293, A34-2, A48-5 through A48-12, A48-14, A48-15, A48-19, A48-20, A48-24 through A48-26).

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council approve deaccession from the Museum of Riverside's permanent collection of twenty-three sacred objects of the Hoopa Valley Tribe (A1-165, A1-166, A1-177, A1-178, A1-179, A8-230, A8-293, A34-2, A48-5 through A48-12, A48-14, A48-15, A48-19, A48-20, A48-24 through A48-26).

BOARD RECOMMENDATION:

At a virtual special meeting on December 2, 2020, the Museum of Riverside Board, with six of its nine members present for this vote, unanimously agreed to recommend that City Council approve deaccession from the permanent collection of twenty-three sacred objects of the Hoopa Valley Tribe (A1-165, A1-166, A1-177, A1-178, A1-179, A8-230, A8-293, A34-2, A48-5 through A48-12, A48-14, A48-15, A48-19, A48-20, A48-24 through A48-26).

BACKGROUND:

In 1925, twenty sacred items of the Hoopa Valley Tribe were donated to the Museum of Riverside as part of the institution's founding donation from the collection of Cornelius Rumsey. In 1951 and 1952, three additional Hupa¹ sacred objects were accessioned into the permanent collection. The twenty-three objects include: one string bag, four dance aprons, two dance baskets, two

¹ The spellings "Hoopa" and "Hupa" are used interchangeably in much of the literature. This tribe's own name for itself is "Na:tini-xwe," although some of their institutions use the name known outside their community.

dentalium strings, one dress, four hair ornaments, one headband, four headdresses, one necklace, one pipe, and two purses.

According to one donor's records, fourteen or 64% of the Museum's Hupa sacred objects came from the Alexander Brizard Collection. This collection is known to the Hoopa Valley Tribe. The Museum held consultations with Hoopa Valley Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Keduescha Lara-Colegrove and Hoopa Valley Tribal member Cutcha Risling Baldy with respect to the Hupa sacred objects.

At its meeting on October 28, 2020, with ten Committee members supporting and one Committee member absent, the Museum's Collections Committee approved a recommendation to deaccession the twenty-three Hoopa Valley Tribe objects from the Museum's permanent collection so that they may be repatriated to the tribe.

DISCUSSION:

Deaccessioning is the process by which an object or specimen is formally removed from the permanent collections of a museum. The Museum of Riverside's Collections and Exhibitions Management Policies state that deaccessions can occur when an accessioned object has "doubtful potential to be exhibited or published" or if it "falls outside the scope of the Museum's mission." While objects stemming from the California-based Hoopa culture are within the Museum's mission, the respect that the Museum accords to Native cultures prohibits use of objects with sacred functions in exhibitions, programs, or publications against the preferences expressed by official representatives of Indigenous peoples. The Museum wishes to act in the same spirit that led to passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA) regarding sacred objects even when a given sacred object may not technically be considered grave goods or otherwise within the scope of NAGPRA.

Based on the donors' records, curatorial research, and Hoopa Valley Tribal consultations, these objects were identified as sacred objects. The Museum justifies the recommendation of deaccession and repatriation on the grounds of these being sacred objects and part of the living cultural heritage of the Hoopa Valley Tribe and, therefore, consistent with the requirements of NAGPRA.

The Hoopa Valley Tribe's Hoopa Tribal Museum in Hoopa, California, houses the Hupa collection.

"The Hoopa Tribal Museum is a 'Living Museum' in that most of the artifacts and items of cultural patrimony are still actively being used by members of the tribe for tribal ceremonies and functions. The exhibitions are not just for public display. They are still being used for their original intended purposes in an active culture. The museum is unique in the world because this is their core premise and function. The museum is for the Hupa people and not just about them."²

The Hoopa Valley Tribe, through its museum, provides stewardship to preserve their heritage. The Hoopa Valley Tribal members regularly participate in renewal ceremonies during which they wear and use objects of their heritage. Some Tribal members have ceremonial clothing and

2 <https://www.hoopa-nsn.gov/departments/1490-2/museum/>

related objects from the 1800s that family members have worn for these ceremonies for generations.

In consultation with Hoopa Valley Tribe Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Keduescha Lara-Colegrove with respect to the Hupa sacred objects, it was determined that the Hupa sacred objects should be returned to today's descendants—the Hoopa Valley Tribe. Keduescha Lara-Colegrove will act as liaison with Hoopa Valley Tribal leadership with respect to the repatriation of these sacred objects to the Hoopa Valley Tribe.

The Museum sent a letter to Byron Nelson, Jr., Chairman of the Hoopa Valley Tribe with respect to the deaccession and repatriation of these sacred objects. Silischitawn S. Jackson, Curator of the Hoopa Tribal Museum, responded via email to this letter, expressing the tribe's interest in receiving the items. The Museum is willing to transfer these sacred objects to the Hoopa Valley Tribe who will incorporate them into their cultural practices and has the resources to provide stewardship. The transfer would ensure the preservation of the sacred objects and provide a link between their cultural past (circa 1900) and today.

Deaccession and transfer of the twenty-three Hupa sacred objects to the Hoopa Valley Tribe demonstrates the Museum of Riverside's commitment to cultural sustainability and respect for the practice of contemporary Indigenous peoples using historic tribal ceremonial objects for continuing spiritual practice.

Note: Images of the artifacts have not been included in this report in order to respect the preference of many Indigenous peoples not to photograph or publish their sacred rituals or artifacts.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

Prepared by:	Robyn G. Peterson, Ph.D., Museum Director
Certified as to availability of funds:	Edward Enriquez, Chief Financial Officer/City Treasurer
Approved by:	Moises Lopez, Deputy City Manager
Approved as to form:	Kristi J. Smith, Interim City Attorney

Attachment:	Museum of Riverside Board Minutes December 2, 2020
-------------	--