



# Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

*City of Arts & Innovation*

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**TO: MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD** **DATE: JANUARY 25, 2023**  
**FROM: MUSEUM COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE** **WARDS: ALL**  
**SUBJECT: DEACCESSION FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION OF FOUR  
ITEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PUEBLO, APACHE, AND OGLALA  
(LAKOTA) PEOPLES (A9-15, A9-17, A8-331, A597-101)**

**ISSUE:**

To approve a recommendation to deaccession from the permanent collection four items associated with the Pueblo, Apache, and Oglala (Lakota) peoples (A9-15, A9-17, A8-331, A597-101)

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Museum of Riverside Board recommends that the City Council approve deaccession from the permanent collection of four items associated with the Pueblo, Apache, and Oglala (Lakota) peoples (A9-15, A9-17, A8-331, A597-101)

**BACKGROUND:**

In December 1925, the City of Riverside's Municipal Museum received the donation of a lightning wand, possibly associated with a Pueblo tribe (A9-15), and an Apache headdress associated with the Gaan dance ceremony (A9-17) from Mrs. Mary E. Rumsey, widow of Cornelius Earle Rumsey (1844-1911), who collected these two items prior to 1911.

In December 1951, the City of Riverside's Municipal Museum took possession of and accessioned an Oglala (Lakota) otter skin headdress (A8-331) from Mrs. Mary Hall, widow of Harwood Hall (1866-1929), who collected the headdress prior to 1929.

In 1968, the City of Riverside's Municipal Museum took possession of and accessioned an Oglala (Lakota) otter skin medicine bag (A597-101) from Mrs. Florence A. Purple, widow of Samuel Maus Purple (1878-1965), who collected the medicine bag prior to 1965.

These four sacred items are listed on a November 13, 1995, summary submitted to the National Park Service, the agency overseeing implementation of the federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA).

At its meeting on October 12, 2022, the Museum of Riverside's Collections Committee unanimously supported the recommendation to deaccession the Apache Gaan headdress (A9-17).

At its meeting on December 14, 2022, the Museum of Riverside's Collections Committee unanimously supported the recommendation to deaccession the lightning wand possibly associated with a Pueblo tribe (A9-15) and the two sacred items associated with the Oglala (Lakota) tribe (A8-331 and A597-101).

## **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.

Based on the donors' records, curatorial research, and tribal consultations, these four items have been identified as sacred following research by Museum of Riverside (Museum) staff. 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). The Museum is fulfilling its responsibility to American Indian peoples by being compliant with 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.

Regarding the lightning wand (A9-15), the Museum is in consultation with representatives from the following Pueblo nations in New Mexico: Pueblo of Acoma, Pueblo of Cochiti, Pueblo of Isleta, Pueblo of Jemez, Pueblo of Laguna, Pueblo of Nambé, Pueblo of Ohkay Owingeh, Pueblo of Picuris, Pueblo of Pojoaque, Pueblo of San Felipe, Pueblo of San Ildefonso, Pueblo of Sandia, Pueblo of Santa Ana, Pueblo of Santa Clara, Pueblo of Taos, Pueblo of Tesuque, and the Zuñi Tribe of the Zuñi Reservation. Tribal representatives will decide on the specific tribe to whom the Museum will physically repatriate the object. Their decision will be adhered to by the Museum.

Regarding the Apache Gaan headdress (A9-17), the Museum is in consultation with the San Carlos Apache Tribe, the Apache Tribe, and the Apache Tribe, and the All-Apache NAGPRA Working Group of the Apache Tribes, who will decide on the specific tribe to whom the Museum will physically repatriate the headdress. The All-Apache Working Group of the Apache Tribes' decision will be adhered to by the Museum.

Regarding the otter skin headdress (A8-331) and the otter skin medicine bag (A597-101), and in consultation with the Oglala Sioux Tribe, the Museum intends to repatriate these resources to the Oglala Sioux Tribe located in South Dakota.

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. 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: Images of the items 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 No. 1.1 (strengthening Riverside's portfolio of arts, culture, recreation, senior, and lifelong learning programs and amenities), Goal No. 1.2 (enhancing equitable access to arts, culture, and recreational service offerings and facilities), and Goal No. 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 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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