



Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD DATE: JULY 9, 2026

FROM: MUSEUM COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: RECOMMEND DEACCESSION FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION OF FORTY-FOUR (44) OBJECTS INCLUDING THIRTY-THREE (33) POTSDERDS (A459-1) AND ELEVEN (11) BASKETS (A8-94, A8-105, A8-106, A8-107, A8-108, A8-113, A8-126, A284-1, A284-3, A284-47, AND P90-1) ASSOCIATED WITH THE MORONGO BAND OF MISSION INDIANS.

ISSUE:

To recommend to City Council to approve deaccession from the permanent collection of forty-four (44) objects including thirty-three (33) potsherds (A459-1) and eleven (11) baskets (A8-94, A8-105, A8-106, A8-107, A8-108, A8-113, A8-126, A284-1, A284-3, A284-47, and P90-1) associated with the Morongo Band of Mission Indians.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Museum of Riverside Board recommends that City Council approves deaccession from the permanent collection of forty-four (44) objects including thirty-three (33) potsherds (A459-1) and eleven (11) baskets (A8-94, A8-105, A8-106, A8-107, A8-108, A8-113, A8-126, A284-1, A284-3, A284-47, and P90-1) associated with the Morongo Band of Mission Indians.

BACKGROUND:

Over several decades the City of Riverside's then-named Riverside Municipal Museum acquired and accessioned the objects described in this report.

The brownware potsherds (A459-1) were removed from Morongo Canyon near the San Bernardino and Riverside County lines sometime before its donation in 1964 by Mike Taylor of Sunnymead, California.

Seven (7) of the Cahuilla baskets (A8) were collected by Harwood Hall (1859-1928) sometime before his death in 1928 and likely during his time as superintendent at Sherman Indian School of Riverside, California. Museum of Riverside records indicate four (4) of the baskets collected by Mr. Hall were acquired from the Banning, California, area, two (2) originate from the Morongo Reservation, and one (1) once had a tag labeling it "Malki." Malki is the original name

of the Morongo Reservation. These were donated in 1951 by Harwood Hall's widow Frances Dean Hall.

Three (3) Cahuilla baskets (A284) were donated by Mrs. Peter Reid of Banning, California, in 1960. The donor of these baskets was a relative of Mr. Charlie Reid who owned a General Store in Banning.

One (1) Cahuilla basket (P90) was purchased by the Museum of Riverside in 1997 from Mrs. Maria del Carmen Gasser who purchased it from a Denis Eros auction in the 1980s. It was originally purchased by Mrs. Chlorene Hayword in 1932 from Ms. Martha Rice on the Torres Martinez Reservation, who was described as a Cahuilla Indian in her 90s in 1932.

At its meeting on May 13, 2026, the Museum's Collections Committee voted unanimously in support of recommending that the Museum Board forward the recommendation regarding the Morongo Band of Mission Indian resources 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 historical research, correspondence, and in-person consultation with representatives of the Morongo Band of Mission Indians (MBMI), it was determined that these objects have a cultural affiliation with MBMI. The Museum consulted with representatives from the MBMI including members of their Tribal Council with an in-person consultation taking place on March 16, 2026. On April 3, 2026, the Museum received a formal request for repatriation from Charles Martin, Morongo Tribal Council Chairman. The letter stated:

MBMI acknowledges these objects as significant contributions to our traditional lifeways and culture and, therefore, confirms their value and need to be returned to our people. These objects have been confirmed as either culturally affiliated with MBMI through direct provenience documentation from the donor or as originating from MBMI's ancestral territory.

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: Images of these resources have not been included in this report out of respect for the preference of many Indigenous peoples not to photograph or publish their rituals or culturally significant artifacts.

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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