



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

National Park Service

[N7173; NPS-WASO-NAGPRA-NPS0042844; PPWOCRADN0-PCU00RP14.R50000]

Notice of Intended Repatriation: Eiteljorg Museum of American Indian and Western Art, Indianapolis, IN

AGENCY: National Park Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), the Eiteljorg Museum intends to repatriate certain cultural items that meet the definition of objects of cultural patrimony and that have a cultural affiliation with the Indian Tribes or Native Hawaiian organizations in this notice.

DATES: Repatriation of the cultural items in this notice may occur on or after [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE **FEDERAL REGISTER**].

ADDRESSES: Send additional, written requests for repatriation of the cultural items in this notice to Katie Haigh, President/CEO, Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, 500 W. Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204, email khaigh@eiteljorg.com.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This notice is published as part of the National Park Service's administrative responsibilities under NAGPRA. The determinations in this notice are the sole responsibility of the Eiteljorg Museum, and additional information on the determinations in this notice, including the results of consultation, can be found in the summary or related records. The National Park Service is not responsible for the determinations in this notice.

Abstract of information available

A total of four cultural items have been requested for repatriation. The four objects of cultural patrimony are one Bear Mask, one Raven Rattle, one Chilkat Blanket, and one Brown Bear Shirt. In the mid-to late nineteenth century, four cultural items were removed from undisclosed sites in unknown counties in southeastern Alaska. Documentation regarding their removal and/or subsequent transfers prior to their accession into the Eiteljorg Museum's collection is scarce. Preceding the foundation of the Eiteljorg Museum in June 1989 by Harrison

Eiteljorg, these four cultural items were part of the personal collection of Harrison Eiteljorg.

According to museum records, three of these four cultural items are identified as Tlingit, and the other, Haida. The Bear Mask was previously owned by John A. Buxton of Shango Galleries, and was purchased by Harrison Eiteljorg on November 15, 1979. The Mask, dated circa 1880, is carved from a single piece of wood, highlighting prominent ears indicative of a bear, as well as eyebrows, and a mouth. The irises and teeth have abalone shell inlay; the ears' edges are inlaid, accentuating a contoured red pigmented pattern within the bear's ears. Hair is attached to the back of each ear and affixed to the back of the mask is a leather strap for the wearer. The Raven Rattle, dated circa 1830, was purchased by Harrison Eiteljorg from Parke-Bernet Galleries, in April 25, 1981; it was originally owned by Leon and Polly Gordon Miller of Ohio. It is made of carved cedar that has been halved and the center was carved out to hold metal balls (possibly lead shot). The two pieces of wood are nailed together with four metal nails, and the rattle is elaborately carved, featuring two birds (Raven and Kingfisher) and a horizontal human figure, painted all over with red and black pigment. The Chilkat Blanket, dated 1900–1910, was purchased by Harrison Eiteljorg from John A. Buxton of Shango Galleries probably in 1979, and it became a part of the Museum's permanent collection on November 21, 1991. It is not known how the Blanket was acquired by Buxton. It is of a double Killer Whale design, facing away from one another, dyed with natural dyes in yellow, light blue, and black. It is woven from Mountain Goat (*Oreamnos americanus*) and yellow cedar, twisted wool and cedar fringe edge the sides and bottom of the blanket. The Brown Bear Shirt, dated circa 1880, was purchased by Harrison Eiteljorg from Howard Roloff on April 8, 1981. It is constructed of dark brown wool trimmed with red fabric sewn around the edges of the neckline, armholes, and hem; a Grizzly bear design forms the shirt's central pattern. Shark teeth have been sewn within the mouth of the top central figure's mouth to represent bear's teeth. Mother of Pearl discs were sewn on to create the irises of the two figures and stitched on Dentalium tube-like shells function as the outline of the two figures. Abalone shell pieces configure the lower lip of the bottom figure and abalone buttons adorn the Grizzly bear's inner ears.

During consultation with representatives of the Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida

Tribes (hereafter Central Council), they identified the Bear Mask (Xhoots L'axh'keit), Raven Rattle (Yéil Sheixhooxh), Brown Bear Shirt (Xhoots Kudás), and Chilkat Blanket (Naaxhein) as objects of cultural patrimony. Northwest Coast art historian Bill Holm referred to the Bear Mask as a headdress or helmet crest; per the Central Council, the Bear Mask is clan-owned, belonging to the entire clan and not just the person who is charged with being its caretaker; moreover, a clan needs the hat to be able to speak to their ancestors. The Brown Bear Shirt or sleeveless tunic (kanna.át) contains clan crests and since Dentalium (Tax'xee) were an expensive trade item, only wealthy clan members wore them during special events. The Raven Rattle is typically a part of a clan chief's ceremonial regalia but it is also considered imbued with life—a voice—integral to the imparting of oral traditions from generation to generation. During consultation of the Chilkat, it was disclosed that this Blanket was most likely woven by a master weaver whose work reflects a year's worth of time. Additionally, the Blanket is an all in one design, not divided into three sections. Chilkat Blankets are the communal property of a clan, not an individual as they represent the clan's crest or animals with distinct facial features in Northwest Coast formline design. They are still worn by the wealthiest clan leaders during important events such as a Potlatch and are literally deemed as "titles of ownership."

As indicated through museum records and consultation with the Central Council, the cultural affiliation of the three cultural items is Tlingit, the Brown Bear Shirt as Haida. According to Tlingit oral tradition, the Tlingit people have owned and occupied southeastern Alaska since time immemorial. And according to Haida oral tradition, the Haida people have occupied Haida Gwaii since time immemorial. In the early eighteenth century, the Kaigani Haida (with which the Brown Bear Shirt is culturally affiliated) migrated north, settling next to the Tlingit. As Potlatches were outlawed in 1884, many cultural belongings of both the Tlingit and Haida were destroyed or became part of museum collections in North America and around the world.

Determinations

The Eiteljorg Museum has determined that:

- The four objects of cultural patrimony described in this notice have ongoing historical, traditional, or cultural importance central to the Native American group, including any

constituent sub-group (such as a band, clan, lineage, ceremonial society, or other subdivision), according to the Native American traditional knowledge of an Indian Tribe or Native Hawaiian organization.

- There is a connection between the cultural items described in this notice and the Central Council of the Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes.

Requests for Repatriation

Additional, written requests for repatriation of the cultural items in this notice must be sent to the authorized representative identified in this notice under ADDRESSES. Requests for repatriation may be submitted by any lineal descendant, Indian Tribe, or Native Hawaiian organization not identified in this notice who shows, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the requestor is a lineal descendant or a culturally affiliated Indian Tribe or Native Hawaiian organization.

Repatriation of the cultural items in this notice to a requestor may occur on or after [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE **FEDERAL REGISTER**]. If competing requests for repatriation are received, the Eiteljorg Museum must determine the most appropriate requestor prior to repatriation. Requests for joint repatriation of the cultural items are considered a single request and not competing requests. The Eiteljorg Museum is responsible for sending a copy of this notice to the Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations identified in this notice and to any other consulting parties.

AUTHORITY: Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, 25 U.S.C. 3004 and the implementing regulations, 43 CFR 10.9.

Dated: May 19, 2026

Melanie O'Brien,
Manager, National NAGPRA Program.

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