



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

National Park Service

[N7508; NPS-WASO-NAGPRA-NPS0043798; PPWOCRADN0-PCU00RP14.R50000]

Notice of Intended Repatriation: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, VA

AGENCY: National Park Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts 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 Siera Hyte, Schiller Family Curator of Indigenous American Art, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 200 N. Arthur Ashe Blvd, Richmond, VA 23220, email siera.hyte@vmfa.museum.

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 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 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 three cultural items have been requested for repatriation. The three objects of cultural patrimony are one headdress frontlet, one raven rattle, and one halibut grease dish. The frontlet is made of wood and abalone and is dated to the 19th or early 20th century in the museum's records. In the museum's records, it is alternatively referred to as a headdress frontlet and as a "sun mask." The frontlet was purchased by Robert and Nancy Nooter in 2007 from Alaska on Madison, a New York-based gallery. The frontlet's provenance prior to 2007 is not

currently known, and it was accessioned into the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts collection in 2017. The raven rattle is made of wood and pigment and is dated to circa 1890 in the museum's records. It was acquired by Robert and Nancy Nooter in 2008 from Tambaran Gallery, a New York-based gallery. Prior to Tambaran Gallery, collector records indicate only that the rattle was previously held in a private collection in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The rattle was accessioned into the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts collection in 2017. The halibut grease dish is made of carved and painted alder wood, and the museum's records indicate that it was made prior to 1943. It was first acquired in May of 1943 by Axel Rasmussen (American, 1886-1945), collector and former superintendent of schools in Wrangell, AK. Following Rasmussen's death, his collection was dispersed to Skagway and Wrangell, AK, as well as to Colorado and Indiana, and eventually purchased and reconstituted by the dealer Earl Stendahl (American, 1888-1966). Stendahl sold part of the collection to the Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR, including this dish, in 1948 or 1949. The Portland Art Museum sold the dish, along with several other items from the Rasmussen Collection to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in 1955. In the museum's records, all three objects are labeled as culturally affiliated with the Tsimshian people. Results of consultation with the Metlakatla Indian Community confirm that all three cultural items are affiliated with the Ts'msyen (Tsimshian) people of the Metlakatla Indian Community and are not severable from the Ts'msyen people of the Metlakatla Indian Community. Furthermore, the Metlakatla Indian Community asserts that the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts does not have right of possession to the cultural items.

Determinations

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts has determined that:

- The three 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

Metlakatla Indian Community, Annette Island Reserve.

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 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts 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 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts 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: September 17, 2026

Melanie O'Brien,
Manager, National NAGPRA Program.

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