

koovúr úumkun
kunpikshipvunaatih
They All Have Spirits



Respecting our Relatives:
*Reconnecting Karuk People and Collections at the
Autry National Center, Los Angeles, California*



*Dedicated to the living spirits of
Karuk culture, their skillful creators,
and the Karuk People*



*vuhvúha, 1899, White Deerskin Dance
photo by Mrs. Lytel, Braun Research Library collection*

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The Karuk NAGPRA visit to Autry at Griffith Park



A visit to the Historic Southwest Museum, Mt. Washington Campus with Peg Brady, Autry Permanent Collection Registrar; Karimah Richardson, Autry Archeologist; Robert Attebery, Karuk People's Center Advisory Committee; Verna Reece, Karuk Female Cultural Consultant; Julie Burcell, Karuk People's Center Director; Lena Hurd, visitor; David Arwood II, visitor; Kari Mans, Autry NAGPRA Coordinator; and Geena Talley & Julian Lang, Karuk Media Team.



Liza Posas, Autry Head Librarian, Kari Mans, Julie Burcell, David Arwood II and Bari Talley, Karuk media team, viewing archival material at the Braun Research Library



Geena Talley, Lisa Hillman, Karuk People's Center Advisory Board; and Bari Talley are advised to wear latex gloves, breathing masks and smocks while handling objects because of possible arsenic and other chemical contamination.



Entrance to the Autry Resource Center



Cultural Patrimony housed at Autry Resource Center

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Edited by
Lisa Hillman, Leaf Hillman, Julian Lang and Bari Talley





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The Autry collection contains a significant number of Karuk objects, many that qualify under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), passed by the U.S. Congress in 1990. This law requires institutions receiving federal funds to consult with federally recognized Native tribes, Alaska Native Villages and Native Hawaiian Organizations to repatriate culturally affiliated human remains, funerary items, sacred objects and items of cultural patrimony.

The Karuk Tribe recognizes that this booklet represents the combined effort and much generosity for a long standing desire to reconnect the Karuk People with the Collections at the Autry National Center from the following individuals, organizations, and federal funding institution:

Autry National Center

Karuk People's Center Advisory Committee

(Robert Attebery, Leon Hillman, Lisa Hillman, Alvis "Bud" Johnson, Paula McCarthy, Verna Reece and Joshua Saxon)

Karuk NAGPRA Team for Respecting our Relatives Project

(Robert Attebery and Lisa Hillman, Karuk People's Center Advisory Committee; Leaf Hillman and Verna Reece, Karuk Cultural Consultants; Julie Burcell, Karuk People's Center Director; Bari and Geena Talley, Karuk Media Team & Julian Lang, Karuk Language Specialist & Media Team)

Karuk Tribal Council

(Russell Attebery, Sonny Davis, Alvis "Bud" Johnson, Elsa Goodwin, Joshua Saxon, Arch Super, Michael Thom and Joseph Waddell)

National Park Service

Hélène Rouvier & Jaclyn Goodwin, Grant Writers

Amos Tripp
(in Memorium)





Foreword

Since time began, our people have believed in one constant: we are all connected through a transformative relationship that fuses all living things to one another in the pursuit of a common goal. As such, we have a responsibility to work towards this goal with the help of our relatives both present and past.

The animals, plants, water, fire, air, rocks, insects...everything that relies on this universe for life is connected through common ancestry, and it our calling as *karuk va'áraaras* to maintain this connection through the practice of our spiritual ceremonies and the practice of active management of our landscape.

While we have been practicing our ceremonial and managerial duties since time began, the last 200 years of non-Native influx and influence has brought about a significant and sometimes negative impact on our practices. With a large quantity of our family's ceremonial regalia now in museums, private collections, and in other parts of the world, our ability to fully and completely engage in ceremonies intended to fix the world has been severely hindered. These items are our relations and teachers. As a ceremonial participant with specific roles and responsibilities necessary for annual renewal, I understand how critical it is to be able to fully connect with these relations. My prayer for these lost relatives is simple: come home so we can be reunited under the evening sky and once again dance together for the good of everyone.

Joshua Saxon
Orleans District Representative
Karuk Tribal Council





Table of Contents

uknîi	<i>Introduction</i>	1
ípak	<i>to Return</i>	3
íhuk	<i>Flower Dance or Puberty Ceremony</i>	4
xâapish	<i>Brush Dance Ceremony (Child Healing)</i>	8
vuhvúha	<i>White Deerskin Dance</i>	11
sahvúhvuh	<i>Jump Dance Ceremony</i>	21
yumára'uup	<i>Funerary Objects</i>	25
ífuth	<i>Afterword</i>	27
	<i>Appendix - Transcript of Interview with W. Richard West</i>	28





nanuthívthaaneen

Karuk Ancestral Lands

Karuks have lived along the mid Klamath and Salmon Rivers for thousands of years as stewards of the resource-rich environment.

The rugged mountainous terrain provided geographic protection from contact with non-indigenous for over a hundred Karuk village sites until the mid-1800s.





uknîi

Introduction

In mid-April 2014, members of the Karuk Tribe made their way into the courtyard of the Autry National Center. Our ten-member strong body included tribal elders, youth, cultural experts, members of the People’s Center Advisory Committee, Karuk language speakers, and a Karuk media team. We came to reconnect with our relations.

For thousands of years before non-indigenous contact, we made our homes in more than one hundred villages along the mid Klamath River in the heavily forested, mountainous region of northwestern California. The Karuk people effectively managed land, river, and forest using a combination of sustainable harvesting, prescribed burning, and native horticultural practices.

As a result of genocide, warfare, federal and state Indian policies, legislation, and outright deceit, Karuk Ancestral Lands and Territory – once spanning over one million acres – were taken and held in either private or federal ownership. As a result of this massive loss of land, coupled with denied access to traditional subsistence resources, former wealth has been replaced with extreme poverty. According to the California Department of Social Services, the current unemployment rate for adults living in the Karuk Service Area today remains extremely high, exceeding fifty percent.

The photographic representations of Karuk cultural items you will find in this catalog depict a story of survival. At the time when these items were expatriated, all of our land and most basic human rights were denied our People.

Bereft of land and inherent fishing and hunting rights, vilified and disdained by the despoilers, the main source of income was provided

through the sale of “trinkets” and articles of cultural patrimony that are now housed in museum warehouses, such as at the Autry National Center.



Karuk NAGPRA project team



Karuk boys participate in Spirit Run for the Klamath River





Respecting Our Relatives: Reconnecting Karuk People and Collections

The Karuk Tribe’s status as a federally recognized Indian Tribe was confirmed in 1979, at which time we had little land and few resources. Our language and customs were on the verge of disappearing. We have worked since then to reacquire sacred homelands, re-establish ancient traditions, revive our language and build sustainable economies, which were lost during the 1850’s.

The *karuk va’áaraaras*, or Up-river People, have always considered the rocks, the moon, the stars, the land, the People, and the products of their combined resources to be our relations.

With so much skillful craftsmanship and knowledge of the People having gone with our ancestors, we look for the stories of our People and their gifts in our cultural heritage. The baskets, the regalia, and the implements sometimes hidden in the archives of museums complement and expand the knowledge and skills of our contemporary Cultural Practitioners and tribal community, connecting our past to our future. We grieve for our relations residing so far from our Homeland.

We have survived, and not only through the representation of the things our People left behind. Despite the romanticized tale of the dying breed, in spite of the loss of most of our land and rights to our resources, in the face of the day-to-day struggle to feed our children, we continue to persevere.

Through the efforts toward repatriation made possible by the visionary leadership and dedicated staff

of the Autry Museum and funding provided by the National Park Service through the NAGPRA grant “**Respecting our Relatives: Reconnecting Karuk People and Collections at the Autry National Center,**” we are at a major milestone, representing a tremendous opportunity for our local communities to learn from our relatives. For this, we extend a heartfelt *yôotva - thank you!*

“**Respecting**”



a’uuyich- Center of the World, Somes Bar, California



W. Richard “Rick” West, President and CEO of the Autry National Center meets with the Karuk team





ípak

to Return

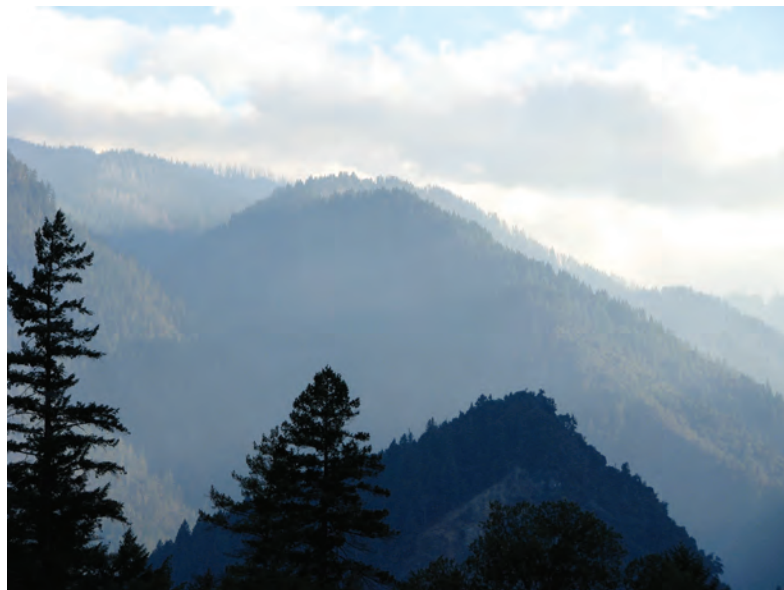
The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) (Public Law 101-601; 25 U.S.C. 3001-3013) describes the rights of Native American lineal descendants, Indian tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations with respect to the treatment, repatriation, and disposition of Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony, referred to collectively in the statute as cultural items, with which they can show a relationship of lineal descent or cultural affiliation.

Almost all of the items shown in this booklet follow under the categories of sacred objects and objects of cultural patrimony. While the Karuk Tribe questions external classification and characterization of its own cultural items, we understand that at the current time we must work with the following prescribed definitions:

Sacred objects are described as specific ceremonial objects which are needed by traditional Native American religious leaders for the practice of traditional Native American religions by their present day heirs.

Cultural patrimony is a label on objects having ongoing historical, traditional, or cultural importance central to the Native American group or culture itself, rather than property owned by an individual Native American.

The very last item featured in this booklet comes from the category described as associated **funerary objects**. Under the NAGPRA law, these are objects that, “as a part of the death rite or ceremony of a culture, are reasonably believed to have been placed with individual human remains either at the time of death or later,” and while the Karuk Tribe does not know if the human remains are presently in the possession of the Autry National Center or control of a Federal agency or museum, there is clear evidence this object was used for burial purposes [25 USC 3001 (3)(A)].



a'uuyich- top view Center of the World, Somes Bar, California



The Karuk Tribe is pleased that you have taken the time to place this booklet in hand. It is our profound hope that in reading and enjoying the photographic replications and descriptions, you will understand our responsibility to return these items and support our collaborative repatriation efforts with the Autry National Center to bring them – our relations – back to the place where they belong.





íhuk

Flower Dance or Puberty Ceremony

The *íhuk* ceremony is the Karuk girl's adolescent ceremony or coming of age ceremony, held by traditional families of means when their young girl has her first moon. This ceremony is observed today in a five day long celebration held in the spring in which specific and more general dance regalia is used, oftentimes "loaned" to the family for the event, and during which families provide hospitality to visitors. This is a People's dance, given to the Karuk People by the *ikxaréeyav*, Spirit Beings, at the beginning of time.

We resumed celebrating *íhuk* in the mid-1990s after decades of repression, bringing back the tradition of the three separate dances. The line dance begins with *vôoruvrathar*, when the dancers are on their knees, and finishes with *ikúrishrihar*, when the male dancers line up behind the *íhuk* maiden as she dances back and forth. The second dance is *parúruupathar*, or the circle dance: the *íhuk* girl is encircled by all male and female participants and finishes with each man dancing with the "new woman." The *íhuk* finishes with the War Dance.

Each of these dances underscores the family's pride in their young girl, reveals the high regard of the Karuk woman, and demonstrates the girl's character. The act of celebratory dance is in and of itself "good medicine."

The *íhuk* maiden starts the five day cycle dressed in a maple bark skirt and her head is adorned by a basket cap. She wears necklaces of pine nuts and juniper berries combined with beads, and 'hair ties' consisting of long strips of mink or some fine hide. A *pathráamvar*, the hair tie proper, sometimes extends beyond the bottom of the wrapping and is beautifully wreathed with shells and beads. Her left hand holds a flat open-weave *imváram*, or salmon plate, and her right hand clasps a deer-hoof rattle made of buckskin and fringed with deer hooves.

Other female participants wear dress, basket caps, necklaces and hair ties. Unlike the *íhuk* maiden, they hold an *iktiin*, or dance-wand. This mock-orange wood is whittled to show fronds from the wider end. The fronds are painted in red and black bands, sometimes extending 18 inches in length, and is struck in the left hand to keep rhythm to the singing.

On the final day of the ceremony the maiden wears newly made regalia: a specially made dress, new necklaces and cap, marking her transformation from girlhood to womanhood.



Braiding chaplets of flowers for hair wreathes worn by girls





axnanachihsíchakvutvar

Flower Dance Belt

(11.x.5)

Young woman's puberty belt worn in the *ihuk* Flower Dance Ceremony (girl's puberty ceremony). Constructed of otter fur, lined with deerskin, decorated with fringes of deer hooves, olivella & other shells, pine nuts & glass trade beads attached in 9 bunches of 4 deerskin thongs. Per inventory 9/1986: Only half of belt shown in photograph, other half similar. 36" x 2 5/8" (91.5 cm x 6.5 cm)

Collected (1918) by Mr. E.G. Johnson, near Somes Bar; Klamath River, California.

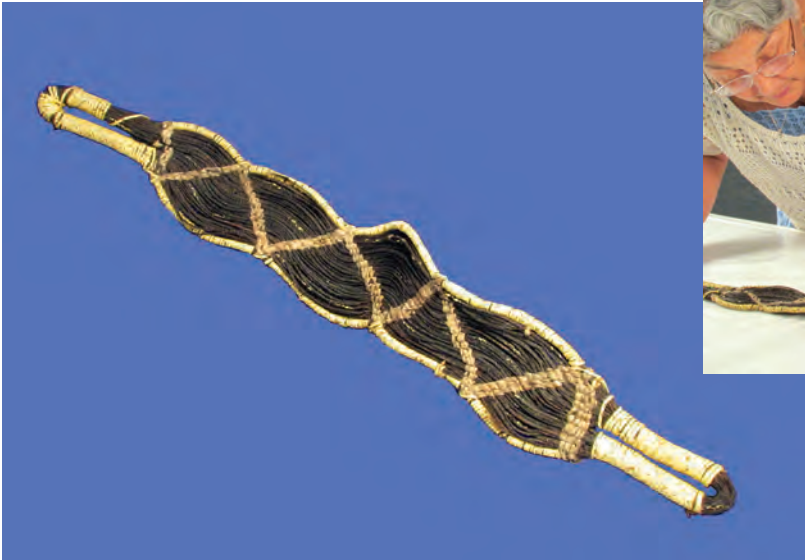
Culture: Karuk

Use: *ihuk*; Flower Dance; Ceremonial





a ararasíchakvutvar



Ceremonial Belt

(11.x.6)

Young woman's puberty belt worn in the Ihuk Flower Dance Ceremony (girl's puberty ceremony). Constructed of black horsehair woven with

deerskin thongs; loops wrapped with dyed and braided porcupine quills. 67 thin braids of black horsehair woven into a belt with zigzag lines of deerskin thongs; thick border and end loops wrapped with strips of braided porcupine quills dyed yellow.

Collected (1918) by Mr. E.G. Johnson, near Somes Bar; Klamath River, California.

Culture: Karuk

Use: *ihuk*; Flower Dance; Ceremonial





Íktiin

Dance Wand

(609.G.721)

Dance wand or cane used by young women as a rattle during religious puberty ceremony. Constructed of a long wooden stick, one end split two-thirds of length into 18 pieces, other end serves as handle. Decorated with horizontal bands of black paint. Overall length: 74"; width: 1.5". Collected 1922 by Miss Grace Nicholson.



Culture: Karuk

Use: *ihuk*; Flower Dance; Ceremonial





xâapish

Brush Dance Ceremony (Child Healing)

The *ikxaréeyav* have given this healing ceremony to the Karuk People to speed the recovery of ailing children. Held during the summer months at numerous sites up and down the Klamath River, it is commonly called, *arara'iihvúnaa*, but also has the older name *xâapish*. Like in many other ceremonies, the regalia highlight the pileated woodpecker and eagle feather dance plumes. These feather plumes, *pikvas*, are constructed with one or two eagle feathers attached to a carved and painted wooden rod. The plumes are decorated according to the taste of the regalia maker: down feathers can adorn the base of the tail feathers, woodpecker scarlet can be attached to the feather corpus or made to move with the dancer. Two feathers are inserted into the side of the headband worn by dancers.

The headwear for this dance is various: headbands can be simple bands of buckskin decorated with woodpecker scarlet; headrolls of buckskin are sewn into a circle and are adorned with feathers and the white belly hair of the deer; buckskin caps decorated with various bunches of woodpecker or yellowhammer (flicker) tail feathers which drape down the back; and caps are decorated with fur, feather, and shells.

Women wear decorative basket caps and beautifully wrought aprons and dresses, some examples of which follow.



xâapish, Brush Dance early to mid 2000's

Yáfus

(630.G.249)

Dress

Dress worn by woman in brush dance. Constructed of deerskin; ornamented with row of large haliotis pendants, brass thimbles, pendants of pieces of tin and bronze, attached to shell fringe with 2 brass bells; fringe under fold; old, stained and slightly torn. Tagged: "Karok--Old Lucy's dress and apron (from Sandy Bar). Very old fine specimen." Width approx. 40". Collected



before 1934 by unknown collector. Jane Virginia Dexter Baldwin Memorial Collection, gift of Mrs. Anita Baldwin.



Culture: Karuk

Use: *xâapish*; Brush Dance; Ceremonial





yáfus

Dress

(630.G.250)

Dress worn by woman in brush dance. Constructed of deerskin; fringed and trimmed with band of small bivalve shells, attached to netting of grass, wrapped cloth and fiber cord; finished with row of brass thimbles; shells look like a solid band of hundreds of bivalves. Collected before 1934 by unknown collector. Jane Virginia Dexter Baldwin Memorial Collection, gift of Mrs. Anita Baldwin.

Culture: Karuk

Use: *xâapish*, Brush Dance; Ceremonial



tántaav

Apron

(630.G.251)

Apron or front section of dress worn by woman in brush dance. Constructed of grass and attached to canvas belt; fringe of string wrapped with grass and tipped with pine nuts, brass buttons and small haliotis pendants; trimmed with cedar berries, black, white and blue trade beads; Rag string on one side, deerskin thong on the other. Collected before 1934 by unknown collector. Jane Virginia Dexter Baldwin Memorial Collection, gift of Mrs. Anita Baldwin.



Culture: Karuk

Use: *xâapish*; Brush Dance; Ceremonial





iyruh

(491.G.1948)

Ceremonial head ring worn by male dancer in brush dance (child's healing) ceremony. Constructed of grass, covered with deerskin, decorated with strips of white fur, red woodpecker, and green mallard duck scalps. Overall: 9 3/4". Collected (19xx) by Rev. C.W. Baker, and purchased from Dr. Baker, Orleans; Klamath River, California.

Head Roll

Culture: Karuk



Use: *xâapish*; Brush Dance; Ceremonial

(491.G.1949 A & B)

Head plumes used with 491.G.1948 (above), worn by male dancer in brush dance (child's healing) ceremony. Constructed of eagle feathers and down, decorated with red woodpecker scalps, and mounted on wooden pins. Collected by Rev. C.W. Baker, and purchased from Dr. Baker, Orleans; Klamath River, California.

Culture: Karuk

Use: *xâapish*; Brush Dance; Ceremonial



xâapish, Brush Dance early to mid 2000's



Pathraamvar

(491.G.1967A)

Thongs for wrapping women's hair in brush dance. Constructed of otter fur with buckskin leather ties. Length: 42.5" ; width: 1.3/8". Collected by Rev. C.W. Baker, Medical Missionary to the Indians; Orleans; Klamath River, California.

Culture: Karuk

Use: *xâapish*; Brush Dance; Ceremonial

Hair Wraps



Karuk girls practice wrapping "minks"





vuhvúha

White Deerskin Dance



vuhvúha, 2011, White Deerskin Dance

The White Deerskin Dance is the high point for the *pikyávish*, or Fix the World ceremonies.

During the late spring and summer, the *karuk va'áraaras* meet their responsibilities to perform these ceremonies at *inaam*, *panamnik* and *ka'timûin* at the Karuk Center of the World. These ceremonies are complex and exact in their implementation, involving the *fatavéenaan* or "he who does what," alluding to the confidential nature of this medicine-making. He performs sacred sweats each day of leading up to, during, and following the dance portion of the ceremonies. During the ten days of community participation, males begin the day with shooting

arrows to make medicine for the *fatavéenaan* for his daily travels and prayers. Use of tobacco is consider a sacred ritual.

vuhvúha begins the day after *irahiv*, when the medicine man stands for an extended time on a pedestal, and makes the "fix the world medicine" that begins the New Year. It is held every other year to remember the ancestors and the original instructions: the stories, the songs and the traditions. *vuhvúha* is held after the War Dance, during which dancers wear wolf belly hide blinders. These dances take place over a period of about ten days with regular performances of the dance several times during the day.

During *vuhvúha*, the dancers hold albino deer hides aloft with fir poles and "rock packers" dance and blow their haunting whistles in front of the line. As the vocalist sings, the hides are "danced" in slow arcing movements from side to side and moving slowly up and then lowered to emulate the sacred deer feeding.

The white deer, a true albino deer, is cased as a single hide and its head is filled with straw-like grasses. The eyes, ear and the mouth is shielded with stylized red scarlet of the pileated or California woodpecker scalp. Out of the mouth, a pendant of deer hide decorated with woodpecker scarlet and braided bear grass dangles with small sea shells attached. The knees and ankles of the deer's legs are also wrapped with the woodpecker scarlet.



vuhvúha, 2011, White Deerskin Dance





Íptaahkoo

(630.G.245)

Albino Deer



Deerskin carried by male dancers in white deerskin dance. Constructed of complete tanned and stuffed skin of a grayish deer; sewn and stuffed with grass; prepared for the ceremony; head stuffed with grass, eyes adorned with red woodpecker scalps; ears lined with white fur and

adorned with red woodpecker scalps; tongue adorned with red woodpecker scalp, glass trade beads and abalone fringe; legs and throat ornamented with red woodpecker scalps. Tagged "Karak--Deerskin for Deerskin Dance. Old Pine Redskin." Collected (date unknown) by unknown collector. Jane Virginia Dexter Baldwin Memorial Collection, gift of Mrs. Anita Baldwin.



Culture: Karuk

Use: *vuhvúha*; White Deerskin Dance; Ceremonial

Pasnikêer

(444.G.202)

Whistle

Bone Whistle used by rock packer in white deerskin dance, world renewal ceremony. Whistle constructed of bone, broken and mended. Asphaltum plug--bound in center with fiber. Collected (1918) by Mr. E.G. Johnson, near Somes Bar; Klamath River, California.

Culture: Karuk

Use: *vuhvúha*; Deerskin Dance; Ceremonial





Vaas

(491.G.1962)

Dress Apron

Dance apron worn by man around waist in deerskin dance. Constructed of 7 Ring-tail cat skins, sewn onto deerskin band; waist ties. Length, without ties: 29.5". Collected (19xx) by Rev. C.W. Baker, Medical Missionary to the Indians; Orleans; Klamath River, California.

Culture: Karuk

Use: *vuhvúha*; Deerskin Dance; Ceremonial



araréeshpuk

Dentalium Necklace

(511.P.1)

Dentalium necklace worn by male dancer in white deerskin dance. Constructed of 5 strands of beads, alternating with incised ishpuuk, which is dentalium shell Indian money. Each strand is attached to strips of fur which are wrapped around a couple of pieces of string. The strands include blue, pink, yellow, violet, and brown glass trade beads. There are seven beads of the same color in a bunch, alternating with a piece of dentalium shell money, that has been incised with a linear pattern. Overall: 51cm; depth: 3cm. Collected (date unknown) by Mr. Craig Bates.

Culture: Karuk

Use: *vuhvúha*; White Deerskin Dance; Ceremonial





ahvanápvuuy

Blinder



(491.G.1965)

Ceremonial headband of painted skin.

Designs in red and

blue; trimmed with hair; length without ties and trailer 22"; trailer of fur, 13". Collected before 1947 by Rev. C.W. Baker, Medical Missionary to the Indians; Orleans; Klamath River, California.

Culture: Karuk

Use: Deerskin Dance; Ceremonial



ikríkir

Spiked Headress

(491.G.1954)

Ceremonial headband worn by "rock packer" in white deerskin dance. Constructed of deerskin with 7 extra large sealion teeth fastened, wrapped, sewn onto deerskin band with sinew. Length without ties 20.5". Collected (19xx) by Rev. C.W. Baker, Medical Missionary to the Indians; Orleans; Klamath River, California.

Culture: Karuk

Use: *vuhvúha*; Deerskin Dance; Ceremonial



ikríkir

Spiked Headress

(491.G.1968)

Ceremonial headband worn by "rock packer" in white deerskin dance. Constructed of deerskin with 7 extra large sealion teeth fastened, wrapped, sewn onto deerskin band with sinew. Length without ties 21". Collected (19xx) by Rev. C.W. Baker, Medical Missionary to the Indians; Orleans; Klamath River, California.

Culture: Karuk

Use: *vuhvúha*; Deerskin Dance; Ceremonial





anxutxáasich

(491.G.1964)

Ceremonial head ornament worn by “rock packer” in white deerskin dance. Constructed of woven iris fiber, decorated with painted designs in red, brown, and black, with blue jay feather fringe. Old and fine; 3.5” x 8”. Collected before 1947 by Rev. C.W. Baker, Medical Missionary to the Indians; Orleans; Klamath River, California.

Culture: Karuk

Use: *vuhvúha*; Deerskin Dance; Ceremonial

Hanger



anxutxáasich

(491.G.1966)

Netted hair ornament. Diamond design; white feather fringe; total length as worn about 2'. Netted iris fiber with feathers and deerskin thong ties. 24". Collected before 1947 by Rev. C.W. Baker, Medical Missionary to the Indians; Orleans; Klamath River, California.

Culture: Karuk

Use: *vuhvúha*; Deerskin Dance; Ceremonial

Hanger



anxutxáasich

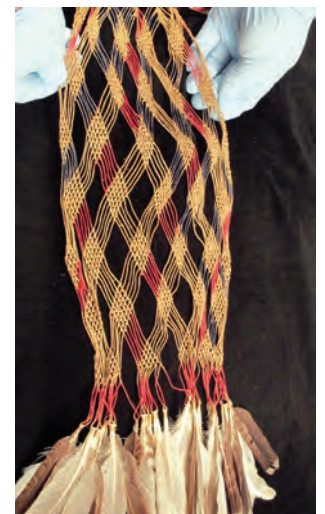
(630.G.246)

Netted headdress for Deerskin Dance. 16” long, 21” long with feather fringe. Indian hemp, knotted in diamond form, decorated with blue and red paint, feathers attached to lower edge. Attached to .5” wide headband of deerskin decorated with red paint. 21” x 6”. Collected before 1934 by unknown collector. Jane Virginia Dexter Baldwin Memorial Collection, gift of Mrs. Anita Baldwin.

Culture: Karuk

Use: *vuhvúha*; White Deerskin Dance; Ceremonial

Hanger





anxutxárah

Hanger

(630.G.247)

Hanger Woven headdress worn in Deerskin Dance. Tapers slightly to top where it is attached to a 1" band of deerskin with thongs for tying. Lower edge finished with a row of feathers. Closely woven, with painted design in blue and vermillion red triangles in vertical zigzag. Painted; feathered; bound edge; netting; crocheted; paint; cordage; sinew; feathers; leather. Dimensions: 35" x 12 3/4". Collected before 1934 by unknown collector. Jane Virginia Dexter Baldwin Memorial Collection, gift of Mrs. Anita Baldwin.



Culture: Karuk

Use: *vuhvúha*; White Deerskin Dance; Ceremonial



Karuk man early 1900's War Dance



vuhvúha, 1899, White Deerskin Dance

ithkamáhyaanaram

Feather Case

(630.G.248)

Case used for storage and transportation of ceremonial dance feathers. Constructed of fibrous herbaceous material, bound into a mat with native string, gray color; damaged; made to hold the loose feathers used in ceremonies or for ceremonial gear. Tagged "Kurok ceremonial feather case". Dimensions: 20.5" x 15.5". Collected before 1934 by unknown collector. Jane Virginia Dexter Baldwin Memorial Collection, gift of Mrs. Anita Baldwin.

Culture: Karuk

Use: *vuhvúha*; White Deerskin Dance; Ceremonial





ahupikrívkir (or arareekrívkir)

Wooden Seat or Stool



(444.G.130)

Carved wooden seat or stool used by men in ceremonial sweat house. No legs, roughly made, dark brown. Top diameter: 12.5"; bottom diameter: 28.5"; Overall: 3 3/4" x 28 1/2". Collected (1918) by Mr. E.G. Johnson, near Somes Bar; Klamath River, California.

Culture: Karuk

Use: Used by Karuk priest to stand on during *irahiv* world renewal ceremony; Ceremonial



Xuskáamhar (or Araraxúskaamhar)

Bow

(444.G.131)

Curved bow used by male participants in world renewal ritual "arrow shooting." Bow constructed of yew wood, notched ends, wrapped with 4" deerskin strip in center, painted red, white, and blue. 31" x 2 1/4". Collected before 1932 by unknown collector.

Culture: Karuk

Use: *pikyávish*; Ceremonial





akvákir

Quiver

(491.G.1963)

Quiver used to carry arrows for the world renewal ritual “arrow shooting.” Constructed of whole pelt of fisher-skin; with fur on; skin thong sling; decorated with bird feathers. Length: 20”. This record was created as a whole record for 9 pieces. See records 491.G.1963 A-I for details. Collected before 1947 by Rev. C.W. Baker, Medical Missionary to the Indians; Orleans; Klamath River, California.



Culture: Karuk

Use: *pikyávish*; Ceremonial

kunihar

Arrow

(491.G.1963 A-I)

Nine (9) arrows used in the world renewal ritual “arrow shooting.” Constructed of carved wood; bound with sinew; eagle or hawk feather fletching. 24” (B-E) 4 arrows, 24” long, two only, eagle or hawk feathers on each; self-points arrow; carved wood bound with sinew; eagle or hawk feather fletching. 24” (F-I) 4 arrows, 25” long, 2 only, small feathers on each, self-points. G arrow carved wood; bound with sinew; eagle or hawk feather fletching. 25” (F-I) 4 arrows, 25” long, 2 only, small feathers on each, self-points. Collected before 1947 by Rev. C.W. Baker, Medical Missionary to the Indians; Orleans; Klamath River, California.

Culture: Karuk

Use: *pikyávish*; Ceremonial



vuhvúha, White Deerskin Dance, 1899





Xuskáamhar (or Araraxúskaamhar)

Bow

(630.G.257A)

Bow used by male participants in War Dance world renewal ceremony. Bow constructed of yew wood; sinew back; painted red and black; grip wrapped with strip of deerskin; ends finished with deerskin; sinew bowstring. Per inventory 10/1986, not strung. Poor condition; bow is cracked.



Culture: Karuk

Use: War Dance; Ceremonial

Vimtaap

(630.G.257B 1-6)

Arrow

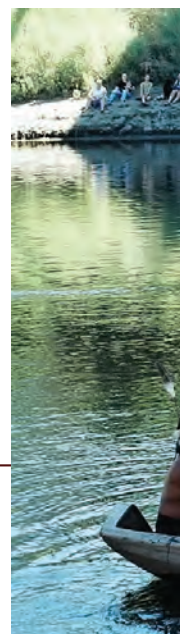
Six arrows used in the War Dance world renewal ritual “arrow shooting.” Constructed of carved and painted wood; bound with sinew; shafts inserted into stone points (jasper, chert, and possibly chalcedony); feather fletching. 43” x 2”. Collected before 1934 by unknown collector. Gift of Mrs. Anita Baldwin.

Culture: Karuk

Use: *pikyávish*; War Dance; Ceremonial



pikyávish fathrin, 2007, Boat Dance





Uhraam

Pipe

(778.G.39A)

Pipe used by *fatavéenaan* during *pikyávish* ceremony. Constructed of dark wood carved; bowl carved from greenish steatite stone; inserted; perforated. Overall: 3.5"; depth: 7/8". Tagged: Old Karok pipe and case used by Old Captain at Camp Creek. This pipe has a case, see (778.G.39B) below. Collected (unknown date) by unknown collector. Jane Virginia Dexter Baldwin Memorial Collection, gift of Mrs. Anita Baldwin. Homer E. Sargent Collection.



Culture: Karuk

Use: *pikyávish*; Ceremonial

Xéehvaas

(778.G.39B)

Pipe Sack

Case used for storing and transporting pipe used by *fatavéenaan* during *pikyávish* ceremony. Constructed of leather; deerskin tie thong; sinew sewn. Part of 778.G.39A. Tobacco at bottom. Tagged: Old Karok pipe and case used by Old Captain at Camp Creek. Per inventory 8/1986, case is in poor condition because it is worn and dirty. Overall: 5.5"; depth: 2.5". Collected (unknown date) by unknown collector. Jane Virginia Dexter Baldwin Memorial Collection, gift of Mrs. Anita Baldwin. Homer E. Sargent Collection.

Culture: Karuk

Use: *pikyávish*;
Ceremonial



pikyávish fathrin, unknown date, Boat Dance





sahvúhvuh

Jump Dance Ceremony

S*ahvúhvuh* or Jump Dance is held only at the village site of *ameekyâaram*, which means ‘where they make the salmon.’ The *ikxaréeyav*, or Spirit Beings, lived here before Human Beings and it is here that the salmon originated. When the *karuk áraar* came into being, the first thing they did was to hold *sahvúhvuh*.

sahvúhvuh is most often associated with ridding the earth of sickness and the malevolent forces at work in the Karuk world. Its regalia is distinct and formidable, with brilliant scarlet headdresses of pileated woodpecker scalps and cylindrical baskets held in the hands of the dancers. The scarlet scalps are attached in rows to a rectangular shaped piece of buckskin for the *paathkir*, or headdress, the surface of which is laminated with the white belly hide of the deer. There are approximately 20-to-30 scalps to each headdress, generally arranged in a fence-like patten and interspersed with areas decorated with feathers of other birds.

Dancers hold cylindrical baskets with dramatic black geometric design overlay. The *vikapuh*, which translates to ‘having been weaved,’ is unique in that it is made solely for the purpose of “dancing,” raising up and away from the bearer’s body in an arc and returning as the dancer firmly stamps the ground.

Young women also dance in this ceremony. They wear traditional dresses densely decorated with shells, braided beargrass and natural beads, and multiple-stranded necklaces of shells and natural beads (glass beads have been a modern addition). Adorning the head is a headband consisting of porcupine quill dyed a brilliant yellow and braided over strands of twine.

The female ceremonial dress is made up of two parts, the body, *úish*, and the apron, *tántaav*. The buckskin body of the dress can be decorated with any combination of shells, beadwork or embroidered with beargrass and maiden hair fern wrapping and is heavily fringed at the bottom. This article of clothing wraps around the hips and over the apron, which is highly decorated by seed and shell design work strung vertically with buckskin fringe and string. At the bottom of this panel, abalone shells hang. Moving with the body, these shells make the sound often associated with water.





Kaschip'úuhkir

(491.G.1953)

Headband or halo worn by girls in Jump Dance. Constructed of five strands of porcupine quills, dyed yellow, and bound at one end with quills. 10.5". Collected (date unknown) by Rev. C.W. Baker, Medical Missionary to the Indians; Orleans; Klamath River, California.

Culture: Karuk

Use: *sahvúhvuh*; Jump Dance; Ceremonial

Halo (porcupine)



Vikapuh

(630.G.252)

Basket carried by men in jump dance. Body constructed of conifer root, plain twined over hazel warps. Decorated with design in half-twist overlay in beargrass (white) and maidenhair fern (black); ends: hazel sticks scaffolding covered with buckskin, sewn on with black thread, design in red and blue paint; handles: two hazel sticks sewn to each edge of the cylinder and covered with buckskin, decorated with leather and feather tassel. Dimensions: 21" x 4.5" x 3 3/4" (53.5 cm x 11.5 cm x 9.5 cm). Gift of Mrs. Anita Baldwin.

Jump Dance Basket



Culture: Karuk

Use: *sahvúhvuh*; Jump Dance; Ceremonial





Vikapuh

Jump Dance Basket



(811.G.1969)

Basket carried by men in jump dance. Body constructed of conifer root, plain twined over hazel warps. Decorated with design in half-twist overlay in beargrass (white) and maidenhair fern (black); flicker feathers; ends painted designs in black and white. Tuft of deerskin fringe and white feathers on one end. Black triangle design. Basket filled with white shavings and feathers. Deerskin ends. Curved handles. Overall: 6" x 19"; depth: 4". Collected before 1920 by Mrs. Caroline

Boeing Poole. The Caroline Boeing Poole Collection.

Culture: Karuk

Use: *sahvúhvuh*; Jump Dance; Ceremonial



Vikapuh

Jump Dance Basket

(811.G.1970)

Basket carried by men in jump dance. Body constructed of plain twined conifer root over hazel or willow warps; overlay design in beargrass and maidenhair fern; ends are covered with buckskin and are sewn on with white cotton string; painted with red and blue triangle designs; edges are rimmed with sticks with upturned ends; each covered with buckskin and tips painted red; one end has fringe and the remnants of feathers; ties are black, possibly painted sinew. Collected early 1900's by Mrs. Caroline Boeing Poole. The Caroline Boeing Poole Collection.

Culture: Karuk

Use: *sahvúhvuh*; Jump Dance; Ceremonial





Vikapuh

Jump Dance Basket

(811.G.1971)

Basket carried by men in jump dance. Body constructed of conifer root plain twined over hazel warps, design in half-twist overlay in beargrass (white) and maidenhair fern (black); ends covered with sinew-sewn buckskin, design in red and black paint; two hazel sticks handles sewn to each edge of the cylinder and covered with buckskin, decorated on both ends with flicker feathers tassels; ends painted in red and black triangles; red stripes on handles; flicker and white feather tufts at end of handles; deerskin sewn on ends. 17" x 5" x 4 1/4". Collected early 1900's by Mrs. Caroline Boeing Poole. The Caroline Boeing Poole Collection.



Culture: Karuk

Use: *sahvúhvuh*; Jump Dance; Ceremonial

Vikapuh

Jump Dance Basket

(813.G.11)

Basket carried by men in jump dance. Body constructed of hazel warps twined with plain conifer root; design in half-twist overlay in beargrass (white) and maidenhair fern (black); overlaid with beargrass; hourglass pattern in maiden hair fern; center constricted; 4 encircling stripes; ends covered with sinew-sewn buckskin; design in red paint; triangle pattern; handles of two hazel sticks sewn to each edge of the cylinder and covered with buckskin; decorated on both ends with yellow-shafted flicker feathers. 17" x 5" (43cm x 12.5cm). Dance basket - unusually fine. HSL list #60 Karok tribe. Dance basket used in ceremonies; rare. Bought from Mrs. Randolph's Collection \$25.00. "57-8-0-9-60 from Mrs. Fred M. Hess, Bishop, Cal." "Now-Santa Rosa" (in another hand)" May-June 1917. Collected before 1925 by Mrs. Minnie C. Randolph. H. Shumway Lee Collection.



Culture: Karuk

Use: *sahvúhvuh*; Jump Dance; Ceremonial





“ûutihatápaan, koovúrapamú'uup, vaa
vúra takun'ishunvásar axvithinihak.”

*Even flint blades, all his property,
they bury that in the grave with him.*

*[page 164 of John P. Harrington's, Tobacco among the Karuk Indians of
California (Bureau of American Ethnology), Bulletin 94; 1932.]*

yumará'uup

Funerary Objects

Finally, we come to the category known as “*associated funerary objects*.” When an object is marked by a Native American Tribe’s indicator that it has been a part of that culture’s death rite, the NAGPRA laws protect – give the right to the Tribe to repatriate that object.

While all obsidian blades hold high respect for the Karuk People, this particular object is not only unique in its proportions and the quality of its material, it is also very clearly an object previously used for burial purposes. One glance at the rock’s beauty and the location of the clean break tells the story.

This is our story: our beautiful and treasured relations, our teachers and our children’s teachers, they are broken in spirit and buried in the sepulchral archives of distant museums. Our story is shared by Native Peoples throughout this continent and beyond. With the help of the Native American Graves Repatriation Act and the support of institutions like the Autry National Center, the Karuk Tribe is blessed with the opportunity for healing: let us mend those broken ties to our relations, let us celebrate their return together.





úutiha

Blade

(491.G.963)

Ceremonial dance blade carried by “rock packer” in white deerskin dance. Blade constructed of black obsidian, flaked, percussion chipping, repaired. As it is broken in half and mended, it is clearly a funerary object. Overall length: 33.5”; width: 6”; depth: 1.5”.

Collected by xxxxx Purchased from Everett & Ben Wilder (19xx).

Culture: Karuk

Use: *vuhvúha*; Deerskin Dance; Ceremonial



vuhvúha, 2011, White Deerskin Dance





Afterword

Respecting our Relatives: *Reconnecting Karuk People and Collections at the Autry National Center* has been a deeply enriching experience for the whole team and one we hope others will find meaningful.

Working on this project over the past couple of years allowed us to more deeply appreciate our ancestors for their knowledge and skills, as well to focus on ingrained spiritual beliefs regarding the interconnectedness of nature and spirit.

It was a great privilege and honor to work on this project and we would like to share some of the insights gained.

- The NAGPRA repatriation process can be a lengthy one so that the sooner you begin the process the sooner you will get results.
- As in all things organic, there will be changes usually resulting in delays, so avoid procrastination or you will not have the time to do the job well—and it is such important work you will want to do your best.
- The documentation process is complex—give yourself time to reflect and process both alone and with the team.
- It's important to have a diverse team with a wide range of complementary skills.
- An advisory board is important to keep your project on track—these things can go on for years.
- It is important to follow up on every step: you may think something's being taken care of, but you may be wrong.
- Include youth on your team—they will build skills to insure the forward progress of the people as well a vitality that is helpful to all.
- The emotional toll is exhausting—be aware and take care of your spiritual being.
- Wear comfortable shoes and clothing in layers. There can be lots of stairs, walking and the temperature differences can be extreme.

yôotva to the U.S Parks Service, the Autry National Center and to the Karuk Tribe's People's Center Advisory Committee for the opportunity to reconnect with our respected relatives.

~The Karuk Autry NAGPRA Project Team



W. Rick West

President and Chief Executive Officer of the
Autry National Center of the American West

April 3, 2014



Mr. West, what do you feel was the intention of the NAGPRA legislation?

I think the intentions of NAGPRA legislation, formally passed in 1990, were two-fold.

One was the literal meaning of the legislation, which was that, upon application, certain kinds of material held any museum that received federal funds in any form, needed to be returned to tribes.

There were categories of material, which included human remains; funerary objects, both associated and unassociated with remains; sacred materials; and cultural patrimony. The notion was that those materials, upon application, if they fell into that category, should be returned to the originating Native community. So, that was the literal purpose of NAGPRA legislation.

But for me, the return of certain kinds of materials was simply the tip of the iceberg, because NAGPRA meant that the power relationship between museums and Native communities had been completely readjusted through this Congressional enactment. And it meant that, in contrast to the past, Native peoples would be treated as having authority with respect to those categories of objects; which, really, in Congress' determination, should never been in museums in the first place.

How do you feel that NAGPRA serves the Native peoples from the perspective of a Director, as a Native person, and as a lawyer? What is your role in helping tribes pursue NAGPRA implementation?

I think NAGPRA serves the Native peoples because it puts back in their hands a couple of different categories of material. One is that it requires the return of human remains. That is a matter of human dignity and human rights really, to have those kinds of remains returned to the communities from which they came. So, that was really a decency proposal, I think, in the NAGPRA legislation.

The other categories of materials that included sacred material and cultural patrimony, are slightly different, equally important, but slightly different, in my own view, because those NAGPRA provisions were intended to be sure that contemporary Native communities still had in their hands materials that they needed to continue culturally into the future. In other words, these are kinds of objects which are needed for either ceremonial purposes or which have historical and cultural significance from the past that are necessary for culture to continue into the future. That was really the intention of those provisions, I think.

Now, as a director, and as a Native person, because I was a Native person who was a director, indeed the Founding Director of the National Museum of the American Indian, so I was in a kind of an odd position. And I remember a number of my museum colleagues coming to me and asking "How does this work?--that you come into office because there is federal legislation enacted that requires the establishment of the National Museum of the American Indian, that's one half of your legislation; and in the other half is that it also established, with respect to the Smithsonian Institution, the first piece of federal legislation requiring repatriation and the return of certain kinds of objects. How does that work?--that you are to establish a museum that must turn around and actually de-accession materials from their collections? For me that was not a conflict, either as a director or certainly as a Native person.

Transcript of Interview with W. Rick West, continued

Why was that not a conflict? Because museums have a positive stake in being sure that certain kinds of objects are in the hands of Native peoples that permit them to continue culture into the future, because we benefit from the continuance of cultural life in Native communities.

The National Museum of the American Indian is very much about contemporary Native people and not just historical figures. And, if you want contemporary Native people to survive into the future, then the museum has a stake in giving them the tools to do that. And, that is by insuring that they have access to objects that have ceremonial and religious import, as well sit in the category of cultural patrimony. So, that's a confluence, as far as I'm concerned, not a conflict. And, that is the way I saw it as the Director, as and the Director of the National Museum of the American Indian, who happened to be a Southern Cheyenne by blood. I see no conflict between that.

Let me say that, it was helpful that I as the first Director of the National Museum of the American Indian, I also happened to be a lawyer, because when you think of it, NAGPRA is in in the beginning, and in it's origin, a legal instrument. It's a piece of legislation. It is a law that has to be interpreted. And, it is a law which, by the way, doesn't give you much in the way of guidance beyond the headlines of what you have to do with respect of certain categories of material that have to be returned, what the standard of proof is, etc. But, there is a lot that is not on the face of that legislation where it was very helpful to be a lawyer.

I know when I first went to the National Museum of the American Indian, I worked with somebody in the office of General Counsel at the Smithsonian Institution who also was a very fine lawyer. And, because we were both lawyers, it made it easier for us to put our arms around the NAGPRA legislation, which really wasn't very definitive in what it said on the face of the statute beyond the fundamental requirements and make sense of it going forward. And, we did. And, with the NAGPRA legislation, you develop a body of, what we in the law would call, a common law, which is to say you have experience, you have precedents, there are cases that come and get resolved, and you learn something from those. And, now of course, there are regulations that accompany the NAGPRA too, and those are helpful. But, what you always have to remember, I think, is that with respect to NAGPRA, virtually every case that comes before any tribe, any museum is almost a matter of first impression, because it depends upon matters of culture that the tribe, or the Native community, and the museum simply have to work their way through--deduce what the particular facts of a case are, and then that's what determines whether they align with the standards that are set in the NAGPRA legislation itself.

Fulfilling the intentions of this law, and trying to make it work is a practical matter, which involves my background both as a Native person to begin with, and as a museum director. Because I do come from a Native community and grew up in one, it is very helpful in dealing with tribal communities on repatriation and NAGPRA issues that that is my background. There is an inherent initial comfort at least; with the fact that there is empathy, I kind of know what is being discussed here, I have a certain feel for it. So, I think that is helpful almost as an informal matter.

It has been helpful for me to be in the role that I am, and respect that role. And, respect what museum directors need to do—they preside over collections, I understand that. But, being Native gave me a bigger view of it in this sense: It was not just a matter of presiding over a collection, it was a matter of trying to figure out with respect to issues raised under NAGPRA what the best interests of the museums were. And, the best interests of the museum were: that there was material sitting in our collections, and sometimes it had been there a very long time, which was really necessary and required to be in the hands of the contemporary Native communities, who were the originating communities; and, that we had an interest in that as a museum, because if in their hands, as it should be, then the Native communities had the opportunities to pursue cultural continuance and to do those things which are essential for their lives both personally and collectively in the community; to be Native in the future. And, the museum benefits from that, plain and simple. If these communities continue to exist, not only is a national matter is it important for the cultural fabric of the United States, but it is important for the museum.

So, it was a win-win proposition if you look at repatriation and the role of a museum director in that light.

Transcript of Interview with W. Rick West, continued

Give examples of barriers you see for Native Tribes as they pursue implementation.

Understand that most museum people, who are directly connected with the care of collections, look at their duty and their responsibility as a matter of physical preservation of collections. I can think of actually an instance that precedes the enactment of NAGPRA, where there were Zuni war gods held by the Smithsonian, that the Pueblo Zuni had applied to get returned to them, and were eventually returned to them. And, the National Museum of Natural History which held the Zuni war gods, I know some of its curators, and the collections folks went through living hell, because what happens with the Zuni war gods is that they are placed in nature. They are placed outside. They are not protected physically. That is the point. They are supposed to return to the earth, if you will. That is the intention from creation of the Zuni war gods. That is anathema to lots of museum collections people.

And yet, really, that's what the NAGPRA legislation then said subsequently, was that's what we really had to expect might happen in certain situations and that's because NAGPRA is unconditional in the manner that they restore objects. There are no tags that get attached to the returned objects. Can't be returned because you know it's going to go to a nice safe place. Can't be returned because you know that's it's not going to--like the Zuni war gods, go back to nature or go back to Mother Earth. You can't attach conditions like that to it. So, those are practical issues that both Native people and museum people just had to deal with. Native people, of course, understand it quite well, museum people not so much, but they learn through time.

Our collections people actually accumulated volumes of information, which they got from tribes in the process of repatriation, which spoke to exactly those practical kinds of questions. And so, we actually evolved what we refer to as cultural conservation, not just physical preservation. And cultural conservation is a different kind of thing. It allows you in the process of repatriation to deal with questions that otherwise can be diverting and take you in the direction that you should not go. There are always those kinds of practical problems that do come up.

Another category of them, I suppose, is some museums are more cooperative in the process than other museums are. It's largely a thing of the past. I think museums are very different places in that regard at the present time, and the impulse to cooperate and collaborate from the very beginning is much more there than it may have been in the past. And, I think one of the reasons that it is there, and it was certainly the National Museum of American Indian's experience, and it is our experience at the Autry National Center of the American West, and that is we have learned, completely apart from repatriation and what we learned about objects that indeed were repatriated, because that evidence has to be demonstrated in the process of repatriation; but, what we learned about other objects in our collections relating to that community that had nothing to do with repatriation because they didn't fall into repatriatable categories, was phenomenal. And, we came out of it knowing far more about our own collections because of that collaborative spirit with Native communities that really originated in repatriation.

Give examples of when the NAGPRA process that didn't work?

I can't really, in my own experience at the National Museum of the American Indian or at the Autry, think of a single instance where an object that a tribe wished to have returned, was not returned. If anything, the examples almost go the other way. For example, in the case of certain Alaskan objects, not out of the NMAI's collection, but out of National Museum of Natural History's collection, they were returned I believe, you would have to check me on this, but they were returned to the Aleut community in Alaska. But they were objects located in a particular area of Alaska in Aleut territory, and they were 6,000 years old. The tribal people felt they still had a collection with those materials, because we see how we set cultural boundaries may not exactly be, from the standpoint of the museum, pure science, but it was culturally the position that was taken by the tribe and ultimately accepted by the National Museum of Natural History and approved by the Secretary of the Smithsonian, but, very controversial, because there were a number of scientists sitting in the National Museum of Natural History who thought that particular repatriation was out of bounds because they couldn't demonstrate, as a purely scientific matter, that those remains, in that case, were connected with a contemporary Aleut community. So, my only example, of how something sort of got turned around is where it got turned around in the other way.



Transcript of Interview with W. Rick West, continued

The scientists at the Smithsonian who were very upset, were indeed following their rules of western science; and there is both Native science and cultural science, if you will, that may be at odds with that. But, what NAGPRA said at the very beginning was that those views were to be part of the evidentiary mix when you are going through the repatriation process.

What are “articles of cultural patrimony”--legal versus cultural definitions?”

The term cultural patrimony is of course one of the two major categories of repatriation that sits on the law, where you are actually returning objects that are essential for the continuance of culture. One is sacred objects or sacred material and the other is cultural patrimony—and the definitions are different in the law itself.

Sacred material, by my recollection without having the law right in front of me, is material that is connected with a sacred ceremony and where a religious leader is presiding over the ceremony that involves that material.

Cultural patrimony was one step beyond that, quite frankly, in terms of how it defined that material. It is material that is not individually owned, but where there is some kind of collective right to the material, and where the significance is historical and cultural are two of the words—there’s a third adjective, but I can’t think of it at the moment. It does not necessarily say a religious ceremony per se. It also does not require that a religious leader be involved in the use of that material. But, it is material that has cultural significance to the tribe. That is the category that is the most difficult to describe.

Now, if you trying to think of what kind of object could that be; there are things that I can think of for a tribe is might have historical significance.

The other requirement for cultural patrimony is that it be something that maybe the person who gave the material away, or sold the material away, did not really have the right to do that.

So, let me give you an example of what I think might be involved. We have a number of societies, I myself belong to the Society of Chiefs, I have a younger brother who belongs to the Kifox Society—these are both significant cultural entities, if you will, within the tribe. Not everything they do is sacred, they are also social gatherings, I mean they are groups of people. But they have standing and cultural significance and historical significance within the tribe.

But, it could be an article of clothing, an article that was used in conducting the business of that society. It might even be an implement or object that belonged to the leadership of that society. It’s that kind of thing I’m talking about, where there is really a collective connection on the part of a group of people within the tribe to whatever it might be that we are talking about and where it has cultural and historical significance, but not necessarily used in a religious ceremony per se.

How much repatriation activity is currently going on, in your opinion?

I think, at the present time, that there is repatriation going on in any museum that has significant Native collections. The difficulty I think with repatriation, as we have gotten further into it is not necessarily from the museum side, in the sense of their not being prepared to proceed, as it has been a lack of resources at the tribal community end of the process. And, that is where there has been time that has been required because many tribes don’t have the resources to deal with it.

We distributed the inventories on schedule at the NMAI and Autry to the tribes, offered that we would try to help them initiate the process. But there have to be resources at the other end. The resources are two-fold and sometimes neither is present quite frankly. One is that it simply requires money, and quite frankly, that was an aspect of the NAGPRA legislation that never has been fully implemented. They have not appropriated the money that is authorized in connection with that legislation in the amount that is required to help Native communities really deal with the matter. So, that’s one thing.

Transcript of Interview with W. Rick West, continued

The other is that sometimes the human infrastructure is not present in the tribe. They may even have the money, but there is nobody tending to this particular element of it all.

My experience has been that there is much going on, and if there is any limitation to what's going on, it quite frequently is at the tribal end, not because they are lazy about it, they just don't have the resources to do it. But, it's there rather than at the museum's end of it.

We actually had the financial capacity, which not all museums do these days, to help facilitate it from our end. In other words, we brought tribal delegations back to the NMAI sometimes on our dime, not on theirs. We weren't able to do that all the time, because our resources had some limitation too, but we were able to do that. Most museums, I suspect, are not in that same position, and so that's what holds it up sometimes.

Give examples of successes.

Elements of success in pursuing repatriation for Native communities and the museums in which they work, some are very practical and I can give you a couple examples.

First of all, a relationship that is sort of mutually collaborative and positive needs to be established at the very beginning. I think that's easier now than it was before. Honestly, if I look back at the beginning days of repatriation in 1990, understandably and as a historical fact, there was deep mistrust on the part of Native communities about museums and whether they were going to do anything under this legislation. I think we are beyond that. It's not that there aren't glitches along the way in some instances, but we are basically beyond that. So, you begin with that, the fundamentals of the relationship, the spirit with which everybody goes into it.

From the tribe's standpoint, in terms of being practical about it, my advice to tribes is to always begin with museums that are near you if you are limited with how much you can travel and where you can go. Start with someone that is somebody that is relatively local if you can possibly do it.

In the instance we are talking about, that is not as true as you'd want it. It would be better if the Autry was in northern California rather than southern California, but at least we are in the same state, and so I think that is helpful.

And, as we also discussed in our conversations together: consolidation. In other words, if you are going to make a trip that takes you a long distance and is therefore costly to you, and you can't do it repeatedly—consolidate. If you are looking at the National Museum of the American Indian, also look at the National Museum of Natural History, and you might even throw in the American Museum of Natural History in New York because it's on the same coast. That kind of thing can be of practical import to communities who are doing it.

I'm hoping that as we go into the future, that once we get by the times right now as a matter of the federal budget, that there will be more financial resources that come through the legislation to tribes to try to put the resources into the hands of Native communities in order to do what needs to be done under repatriation.

Thank you very much; I look forward to seeing you many times during this process, which we are about to enter together.





*vuhvúha, 1899, White Deerskin Dance
photo by Mrs. Lytel, Braun Research Library collection*

