



Repatriation Policy

The Canadian Canoe Museum (CCM) recognizes that First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples designed, built and used the first canoes and kayaks, and the Museum has an ethical role to play in honouring their cultural histories and stories within our collection. The Museum holds as a core principle the idea that working with Indigenous communities to represent canoes, kayaks and other artifacts and their roles, histories and associated traditional knowledges is of the utmost importance to our commitment to ethical stewardship.

As part of engaging with Indigenous communities and taking forward its responsibilities to them, the Museum recognizes that repatriation claims may arise. The Museum views repatriation claims as a process of strengthening relationships and strengthening the Museum.

Criteria for consideration of repatriation claims

There is no legal constraint on disposal of CCM collections through repatriation processes.

Repatriation claims can be considered only for items of which the Canadian Canoe Museum is the legal owner. If an artifact is poorly documented, the Museum must be able to demonstrate that it has made a diligent and documented attempt to determine ownership and provenance, and that there are no legal restrictions that prohibit de-accessioning the artifact, before a claim can proceed.

Items in the collection will be therefore considered for repatriation where:

- It can be shown that the item claimed was acquired by the Museum or donor in an illegal manner, in contravention of the Museum's Collecting Ethics statement (Collections Policy). This includes cases where the item was acquired from someone who did not have either legal or Indigenous customary right to sell the object, or where an item was illegally brought across international borders.
- It can be shown that the item claimed was acquired by the Museum or donor under duress, coercion, or without the consent of owners including Indigenous customary owners.
- It can be shown that the item claimed is of such importance to a community of origin today as to be required by the community for the maintenance of cultural health.

CCM may also choose to proactively deaccession and return items from the collection when they are found to fall into these categories.

The core principle in repatriation is that items are returned to the direct descendants or community of origin of the makers.

Communities of origin may include:

- People who are genealogically descended from makers or owners of the item(s) being claimed



- People who are cultural descendants of makers or owners of the item(s) being claimed

In some cases, a nation-state may make a claim for artifacts, either on behalf of a particular community of origin or for all of its nationals. In order to ensure that the community of origin is involved and empowered in such a claim, the Museum will only consider claims made through a national government where:

- it is clear the community from which the artifacts originated has been clearly identified and consulted, **and**
- it is clear that the community of origin endorses the return and proposed disposition of the artifacts.

Claims will not be considered from third party groups without demonstrable links to the community of origin for the item claimed.

Process for making a claim:

A claim may be made verbally or in writing to any member to CCM staff. The claim will be referred to the Curator as soon as possible, who will contact the claimant, document the claim and notify the Executive Director. The claim process will be managed by the Curator in close contact with the Executive Director.

Claimants should provide information to help Museum staff to understand what the item being claimed is and what it means to them, and why they are claiming it. The information should include:

- the item being claimed
- the nature of the claimant's relationship to the item claimed
- the significance of the item claimed today
- all information known from the community perspective about the item's history, including maker where known and history of ownership and possession;
- any potential rights and claims by others: are there other descendants of a maker, for instance, or other community members who might also have a claim on this item?

Museum process for responding to a claim:

Upon receipt of the claim, the Executive Director will acknowledge the claim in writing. The claimant will be invited to discuss the claim with Museum staff and to consider whether a creative solution to co-stewardship might be arrived at to enable the item claimed to remain within the Museum's collections, or whether the claim needs to follow the Museum's repatriation process.

The Museum's response to all claims will follow these steps:

- **Research and reflection:**
The Museum's Curator will coordinate research and communication with the claimant across this process. The Curator will:
 - Confirm CCM's legal ownership of the item



- Research the item's provenance, especially processes of acquisition, bringing in external expertise when required
 - Work with the claimant to establish whether there are other potential claimants, particularly within the community of origin
 - Consider the potential impact to the Museum if the item claimed leaves the collection
 - Consider the special research value of the item(s) claimed: if it is a particularly important historical or cultural example, can it be researched and documented with community input so that the Museum becomes a future community archive as well as a global one?
 - Consider the information provided by claimants and through the research process
 - Museum staff will work with the claimants to discuss the possibility of creative solutions to resolve the claim, including loans, co-curation, and replication.
- **Decision-making process:**
 - In coordination with and approval of Executive Director, the Curator will make a recommendation on repatriation claims to the Collections Committee. The Collections Committee meeting to consider repatriation decisions should be augmented by the claimant and, where appropriate, other members of the community of origin for the item being claimed.
 - Following discussion at the Collections Committee, a decision and rationale will be presented for recommendation to the CCM's Board of Directors. The Board will make a final motion that will trigger the Curatorial Department to inform the claimant promptly of this decision.

If a claim for return is not approved by the Board of Directors:

The Curator will communicate reasons why this decision was reached. In such cases the Museum will continue to work with claimants and may consider another claim at a later date.

When a repatriation claim is approved for object return:

The Museum will work with the claimant to ensure appropriate handover ceremonies if desired, and arrangements for transport. The Museum requests that in such cases a co-written press release is worded jointly by the Museum and the claimant. In consultation with the claimant, all accession numbers and museum markings may be removed from the artifact. The accession number will not be reused to identify future acquisitions.

Creative resolution agreement:

The Museum will always seek a creative resolution to providing access to heritage items in the collection to claimants. If, during the process of a repatriation claim, a creative solution is arrived at, the Museum will seek to negotiate and sign an agreement documenting this with the claimant to ensure that the agreement is honoured over time.



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THE CANADIAN CANOE MUSEUM
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Professional, national and international contexts:

As stewards of cultural heritage, CCM exists within a national and international set of contexts which inform this document. In particular, the Museum recognizes:

- The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007; Canada signatory 2016)
- the recommendations of the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Committee
- the Report of the Canadian Task Force on Museums and First Peoples, 1992
- this policy is informed by other Canadian and international repatriation policies, including: *Royal Ontario Museum object repatriation policy; Royal Saskatchewan Museum repatriation policy guidance; Royal Alberta Museum repatriation policy; Tropenmuseum (Leiden) restitution policy; Pitt Rivers Museum and Cambridge University Museum policies on repatriation.*