

Kitimat Museum & Archives

Repatriation Policy

(March 2022)

The Repatriation Policy for the Kitimat Museum & Archives (KMA) is a living document. Change can occur as the Policy is flexible and responsive to community needs. The KMA has a constitutional purpose to collect and display Indigenous materials of the Kitimat area – Territory of the Haisla Nation. However, it will only exercise its mandate for Haisla heritage and culture on a basis of consultation with the Haisla Community and Haisla Nation Council. The Museum's priority is to foster partnerships with the Haisla Nation.

Preamble

The Haisla Nation heritage collection at the KMA is now over 200 objects – contemporary and traditional, purchased and donated. Additionally, the KMA is listed as a provincial repository for archaeological materials of the area and the collection features many. The KMA continues to hold in trust pieces of a decorated steam-bent cedar box for the Haisla Nation. There are also a few cultural objects in storage – baskets, masks, and carvings – from other Indigenous Nations. All cultural objects of the Haisla Nation and other Nations are inventoried.

The Haisla Nation heritage collection is housed in three cases and gallery space on the second floor and is accompanied by nine cultural information panels. Panel information and images received approval in 2020 from the Haisla Education Centre. Several objects are also displayed in drawers and cases in the main floor gallery.

The KMA has a responsibility in its constitution to collect, display, and diffuse knowledge. In its mission, the KMA will foster a deeper appreciation and understanding of the indigenous culture of the area. The collection is displayed in an open public space for all. Access to the collection is increased by a mechanical lift to the second floor for visitors who have difficulty negotiating stairs.

Over the decades, the KMA has returned objects and the human remains of one individual. In 1985, the human remains were repatriated to the Shuswap Nation for burial. There are now no human remains in the Museum collections.

Repatriation Policy

- The Kitimat Museum & Archives (KMA) recognizes that the cultural heritage of Indigenous Peoples belongs to Indigenous Peoples.
- The KMA is committed to the return of human remains and associated burial materials and will return and advocate for the return of any remains or materials known and/or offered to the Museum.
- The KMA is committed to the return of objects that may have been acquired under circumstances that render the KMA's claim invalid. The KMA will return cultural objects to individuals and families in cases where the objects are private and ceremonial and/or left the family under dubious circumstances. At the written request of an individual or family with a demonstrable claim (historical relationship) to an object, the object will be returned.

- The KMA is open to co-management and stewardship arrangements of cultural objects at the Museum with an individual or family with a claim to foster learning by visitors on Haisla culture and offer assistance for the long-term preservation of the objects.
- The KMA acknowledges that the costs of repatriation of ancestors and associated cultural patrimony should not be borne by Indigenous Peoples.

Repatriation Process

Contact: Louise Avery, Executive Director, 250-632-8951, lavery@kitimatmuseum.ca

By mail: 293 City Centre, Kitimat, B.C., V8C 1T6

In consultation with the Acquisitions Committee, Board of Directors, the KMA will:

1. Receive a written request identifying the cultural objects, the claim, the individual or family making the claim, and the reasons for the request.
2. Locate all information associated with the culturally significant objects/archives within the collection that have been requested.
3. Assess the request based on the information provided and Museum documentation.
4. Consult with the Haisla Community contacts and notify the Haisla Government of the claim. In the event of a conflicting claim, the parties will be informed of the conflict, and defer decisions about repatriation until the conflict can be resolved. For other Nations, the KMA will contact the Government of the claim.
5. Post notifications, advertise, or take other necessary steps to identify other possible claimants. A one-month waiting period must take place to allow any interested or conflicting parties to contact the KMA. Note, the requestor will remain anonymous. Only the object(s) and corresponding documentary information will be shared.
6. Hold repatriation discussions in confidence until a joint resolution and public announcement are agreed upon. Explore alternatives to repatriation such as a stewardship arrangement.
7. Submit object(s) to be repatriated to the Acquisition Committee/Board of Directors for review and approval.
8. Deaccession object(s) from the collection and file paperwork. The Museum will maintain a written record, photographs, and copies of all documents pertaining to the object(s). A copy of these records will be provided to the requestor.
9. Arrange details and transportation of repatriated item(s) in accordance with the claimant and cultural protocol.
10. Pay all costs related to transfer.

Repatriation Timeline

Repatriation of collection items is an organizational priority and will be expedited. From request to return, it is anticipated that repatriation will take up to 6 months. The claimant will be kept apprised of progress.