



City of
Peterborough

To: Members of the Museum & Archives Advisory Committee

From: Susan Neale, Museum Director

Meeting Date: June 10, 2021

Subject: Report MAAC21-006
Peterborough Museum & Archives: Repatriation

Purpose

A report to recommend the approval of the repatriation of one (1) object in the care of the Peterborough Museum & Archives.

Recommendation

That the Museum & Archives Advisory Committee approve the recommendation outlined in Report MAAC21-006 June 10, 2021, of the Museum Director, as follows:

That the Haida Gwaii totem pole be repatriated to The Haida Gwaii Museum, British Columbia.

Budget and Financial Implications

There are no immediate budget or financial implications associated with the recommendation.

Background

A Matter of Ownership: First Nations and Métis Objects in the Peterborough Museum & Archives Collection

The PMA in-house exhibition entitled “A Matter of Ownership: First Nations and Métis Objects in the Peterborough Museum & Archives Collection” (April to June 2017) was developed and installed in recognition of the call for action by the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission of Canada. While the PMA has acted as a steward of the featured Indigenous objects for many years, “A Matter of Ownership” prompted discussions regarding repatriation, in particular, sacred and ceremonial objects.

The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada emphasizes several articles under the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* that have particular relevance for museums in Canada. Accordingly, the PMA “shall seek to enable the access and/or repatriation of ceremonial objects ... in their possession through fair, transparent and effective mechanisms developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned [Article 12:2]”.

Haida Gwaii Totem Pole

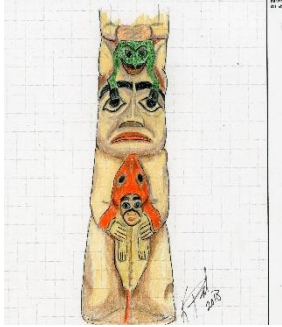
The exhibition, “A Matter of Ownership: First Nations and Métis Objects in the Peterborough Museum & Archives Collection”, featured Indigenous objects currently in the care of the PMA, including a model totem pole.

The Haida Gwaii totem pole is not formally part of the PMA Collection and the collection records offer scant information. The totem pole was transferred to the PMA from the Peterborough Public Library circa 1995.

Repatriation

PMA staff recommend that the Haida Gwaii totem pole be repatriated to The Haida Gwaii Museum, British Columbia (Table 1).

Table 1 Peterborough Museum & Archives: Object for Deaccession and Repatriation.

Accession Number	Object	Method of Disposal
Not applicable	<p style="text-align: center;">Totem Pole</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">89 cm L x 12 cm W x 9.5 cm D</p>	Repatriation

The Haida Gwaii people recognize the totem pole as an object of cultural significance. It has been tentatively identified as the work of the Haida artist, “Ridley” (possibly Robert Ridley, 1855-1934). Its attribution has been provided by the Haida artists and

scholars, Christian White, Tyson Brown, Patrick McGuire, by Jisgang Nika Collison, Executive Director and Curator of the Haida Gwaii Museum, as well as by Robin K. Wright, Curator Emeritus of Native American Art, Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, USA.

The Haida Repatriation Committee (HRC) has formally agreed that the totem pole should be honoured and safely housed at the Haida Gwaii Museum. The HRC is made up of two official branches: The Skidegate Repatriation & Cultural Committee (located in the village of Skidegate and administered through the Haida Gwaii Museum) and The Old Massett Repatriation & Cultural Committee (located in the village of Old Massett, and administered through the Haida Heritage Society). Individually, each committee works on behalf of their community and together they work on behalf of the Haida Nation <http://www.repatriation.ca/>

Summary

The Haida Gwaii totem pole, currently in the care of the Peterborough Museum & Archives, shall be returned to the Haida Gwaii people to ensure their right to use and to control objects that are integral to the history and continuity of their nations and their communities.

Submitted by,

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Museum Director

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