

What is NAGPRA? NAGPRA stands for Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. Since 1990, Federal law has provided for the protection and return of Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony. By enacting NAGPRA, Congress recognized that human remains of any ancestry "must at all times be treated with dignity and respect." Congress also acknowledged that human remains, and other cultural items removed from Federal or tribal lands belong, in the first instance, to lineal descendants, Indian Tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations. With this law, Congress sought to encourage a continuing dialogue between museums and Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations and to promote a greater understanding between the groups while at the same time recognizing the important function museums serve in society by preserving the past.

Source: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nagpra/index.htm>

What are the new NAGPRA regulations? As of January 2024, regulations require museums and federal agencies to obtain free, prior and informed consent from lineal descendants, Tribes or NHOs before allowing any exhibition of, access to, or research on human remains or cultural items.

What about human remains? MCNY's collection does not include culturally unidentifiable human remains.

What objects have been removed from this gallery? The objects currently off view are objects of Native American origin. They help us tell the story of the original inhabitants of this region and of interactions between Native people and the people of the Dutch colony of New Netherland.

The objects – which include pottery sherds, tools, and projectile points found at sites around New York City – have been removed and replaced with digital illustrations while the Museum's staff communicates with Tribal leaders and ensures compliance with NAGPRA regulations regarding the display and collection of Native American cultural items.

For how long will the objects be removed from display? The original objects will be off view while the Museum seeks approval for display of from affiliated Tribes.

The Museum of the City of New York is located in the center of the New York metropolitan area, the lands of the Lenape, Manahatin, Canarsie, Shinnecock, Munsee, Mattinecock, Setauket, Unkechaug, Montauket, and others, all of whom have descendants living today. The Museum is currently working with several Native nations and the American Indian Community House on a long-term project to tell the stories of the resilience and resistance of Native communities from the colonial period to today.

We recognize and respect the Indigenous inhabitants of this land, and we look forward to continuing to work with our Native partners to share these important stories.

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