

Grade 11

Significance of Repatriation



Repatriation

Repatriation - The return of someone or something back to its country of origin.

- The return of Indigenous ancestral remains, their burial belongings, and sacred and cultural objects back to their original Tribes and lineal descendants.



Tribal Advocacy

- American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian peoples have been working to protect, access, and control their cultural resources for decades.
- Tribal advocacy in the 1970s and 1980s led to the protection of Indian burial sites and requirements around repatriation.
- **Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)** was enacted in 1990.

Key Concept: Tribal Sovereignty

Sovereignty - The inherent authority of a nation to govern itself.

Tribal sovereignty is the inherent right of a Tribal nation to create its own constitution, governance structure, and laws, and to negotiate government-to-government treaties and other legal agreements with other sovereign nations.



Key Concept: Living Culture

Native people continue to exist and thrive in the world today as individuals and Tribes. Indigenous people remain connected to their ancestral teachings, cultures, and languages and assume responsibility for the spiritual and cultural health of their communities.

Repatriation of cultural artifacts supports Indigenous communities by:

- Validating the persistence of Indigenous knowledge and expertise
- Supporting Native people learning and teaching about their cultures
- Helping Indigenous communities recover from cultural and spiritual disruption

Repatriation and Cultural Heritage

“Culture is a living, dynamic, ever-changing and yet ever-constant thing—it is a story, a song, a dance performance, never a ‘dead thing’ to be represented in the form of an artifact to be looked at through glass.”

– Kalpana Nand,
Education Officer of Fiji Museum

Repatriation of cultural artifacts helps Tribal nations and Indigenous communities preserve and revive cultural practices.

Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians

The Tribal cultural resources program:

- Works to protect, promote, learn, and teach Siletz Tribal cultural heritage
- Reclaim cultural artifacts
- Support Tribal members learning and practicing Siletz culture and language

Video Activity: Repatriation and Survivance

Watch: [The Copeland Collection: Original artifacts from the Siletz Indian Reservation](#)
(0:00–13:46)

As you watch, consider these questions:

- How are the regalia and other cultural artifacts described by the Siletz tribal members in the video? What is their purpose?
- What is the significance of having access to these materials for the Siletz people in the video?
- What impact do you think the decision to return materials to the Tribe had for Tribal people?