Contact

Please contact the Stockbridge-Munsee Tribal Historic Preservation Office in Williamstown, Mass with inquiries regarding the potential return of object(s) or ancestral remains in your possession.

Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican Tribal Historic Preservation Office
86 Spring Street
Williamstown, MA 01267
thpo@mohican-nsn.gov
www.mohican.com

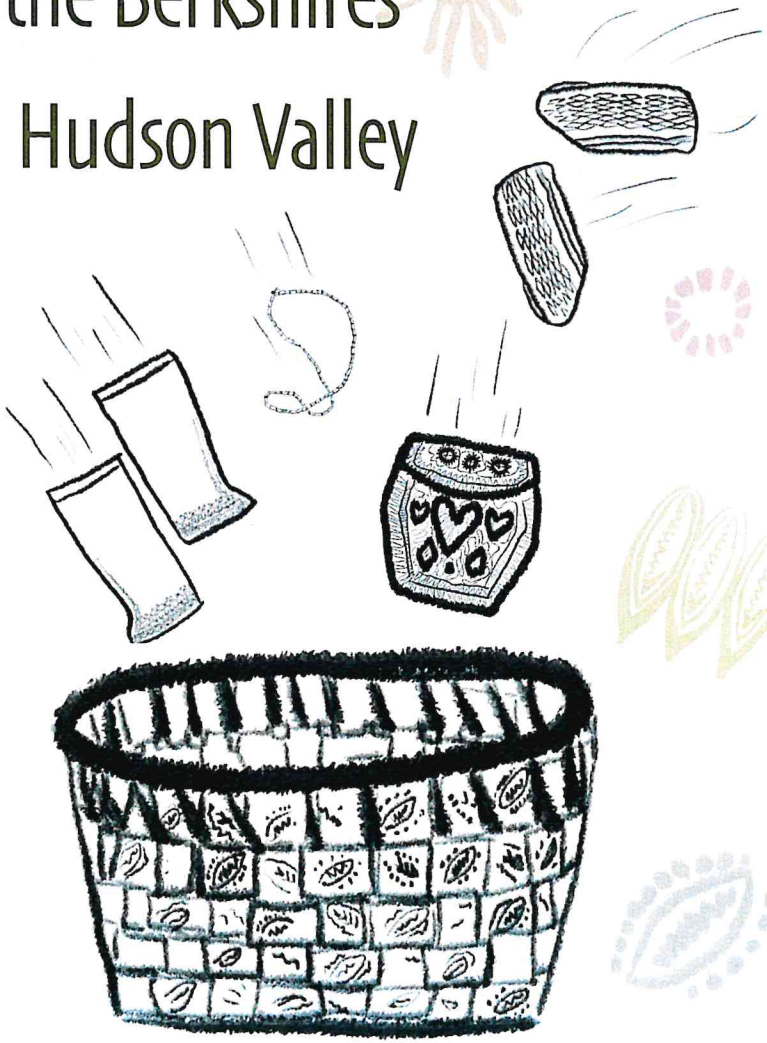
Anushiik/Oneewe

We thank you for your consideration of the immense meaning to the Stockbridge-Munsee Community in reuniting with our cultural heritage items.

Designed and Illustrated by Armanis Fuentes, Williams College '22
Object photos courtesy of New York State Museum

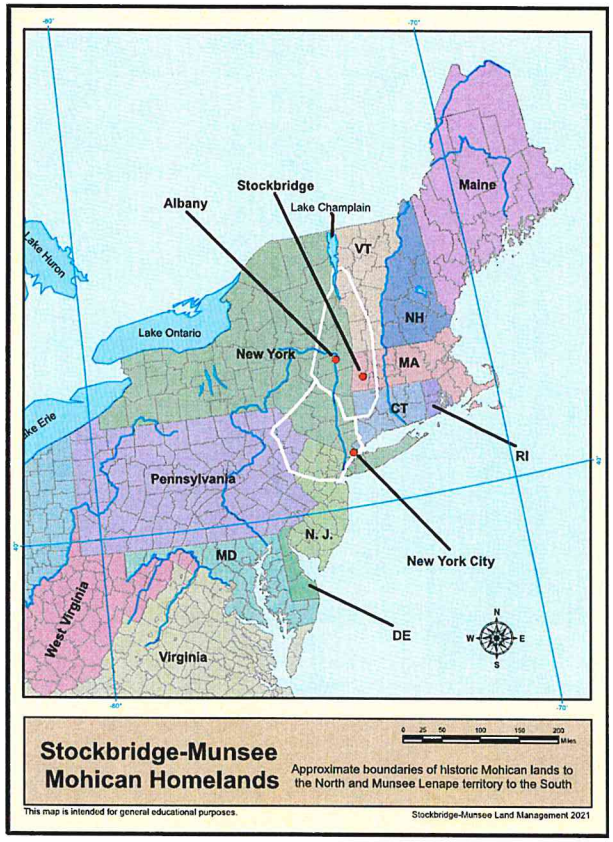
Repatriation and You:

A Community Guide For the Berkshires and Hudson Valley



Living on Mohican Lands

All in the Berkshires and the Hudson River Valley occupy the homelands of the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican people, who now reside on the Mohican Nation Reservation in Shawano County, Wisconsin. Despite removal from Munsee and Mohican homelands, many objects of cultural significance and ancestral remains are still found, collected, traded, and inherited by people in the region. The Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican community warmly welcomes any objects or remains of Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican origin back from any individuals, families, or businesses in and around their homelands.



Why it matters?

The Stockbridge-Munsee Tribal Historic Preservation Office has the honor of protecting Mohican and Munsee cultural sites and burial places. We also work to repatriate cultural items to the community and to return ancestors held by museums or other institutions for respectful reburial. This is usually guided by federal law and regulation. But much repatriation work remains to be done at the individual level.

It is invaluable to Stockbridge-Munsee citizens to welcome home lost objects and ancestors. A grandmothers necklace, a great-aunt's basket, the moccasins of an ancestor — every return is another small, tender victory. We have had individuals realize one day that they were inn possession of lost objects, and out of respect and care decided to return the objects to the Stockbridge-Munsee, home to their people. This booklet was born from stories of community members doing the right thing. These practices go a long way toward restoring invaluable elements of our cultural identity.

If you or anyone you know is in possession of such an item, and want to return it, please reach out to the Stockbridge-Munsee Tribal Historic Preservation Office at the email address in the **Contact** section.

What happens after a return?

Once an identified object or set of remains is arranged to be returned to the Stockbridge-Munsee community, a number of things can happen. Funerary objects, projectile points, and ancestral remains return to the earth in reburial ceremonies. Other items will live at the Arvid E. Miller Library and Museum in Shawano County Wisconsin. The Miller Library is the official repository for the archives of the Stockbridge Munsee Community; it preserves and protects our history and culture for the community and general public.

How do loans work?

Loan agreements can be considered on a case by case basis. In the absence of repatriation, the Arvid E. Miller Library may wish to develop exhibits or educational programming, wherein loaned materials can help illuminate more of our history and culture at home with our people. Funerary objects, ancestral remains, and other items that have to be returned to the earth via reburial are never appropriate for loans.

Auction Items

We also welcome your knowledge of potential Mohican or Munsee cultural heritage items that you are aware of at auctions, eBay, or for sale by other private parties. We can evaluate and inquire about such items from there. Please contact out Historic Preservation Office in Williamstown, MA with your knowledge of potential auction items.

Repatriation?

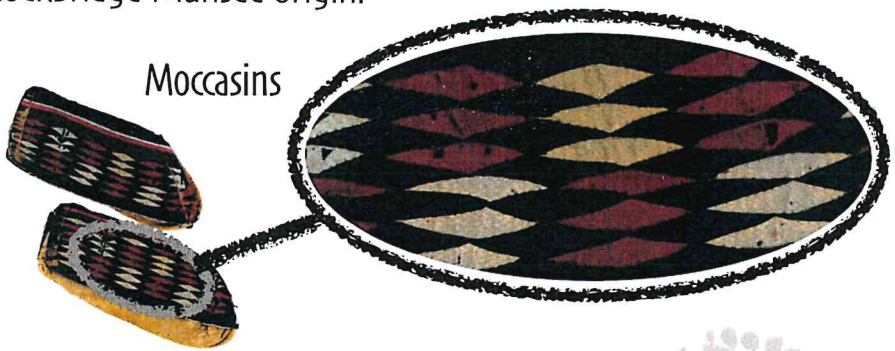
Repatriation is the process of returning objects and ancestral remains home.

This guide seeks to demystify basic repatriation procedures in hopes that everyday people consider how they can participate. Although there are laws that govern repatriation for public institutions, **repatriation is not something that happens only amongst museums, archives, and other collecting institutions**. Many objects or remains are in private collections —they might be inherited through families, found on a property, purchased at an antique shop or flea market, or otherwise exist in the possession of private collectors. Acts of repatriation are often personal. It is common for the Stockbridge-Munsee Tribal Historic Preservation Office to get calls from individuals and families in the community wondering about repatriation, having no idea how to begin that dialogue. They may be hesitant to reach out about ancestral remains; though it is indeed a difficult situation, we would rather

Every instance of repatriation is different, but the process usually starts with the **identification** of the object or remains. After identification, most individuals simply **return** objects or remains to the rightful tribal group(s). In special circumstances, and ones not involving ancestral remains, individuals can also choose to make arrangements for long-term **loans** with tribal groups, if it is amenable to them.

Identifying objects?

Identifying the origin of objects or remains is absolutely essential to repatriation work. It's crucial that objects and remains of indigenous origin be returned to the appropriate place and peoples. This is why records of ownership, recognizable marks or patterns, paperwork and photographs, memory, and stories are so important to this work. Please hav this 'provenance' information ready to share with our office to assist in identification Potato stamp baskets, colorfully beaded bags, hide moccasins—the Stockbridge-Munsee have rich traditions of making. Below is small selection of items of Stockbridge-Munsee origin.



Moccasins



Leggings



Bag



Ash Splint Potato Stamp Basket