



ASSOCIATION ON AMERICAN INDIAN AFFAIRS

Protecting Sovereignty • Preserving Culture

Educating Youth • Building Capacity

SINCE 1922

Press Contact: Eldred D. Lesansee
Eldred.aaia@indian-affairs.org

THE MEDFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY MAY STILL BE IN VIOLATION OF NAGPRA

WASHINGTON, D.C., November 21, 2018, 11:00 am E.S.T. – The Association on American Indian Affairs affirms that the Medford Public Library in Medford, Massachusetts is likely in violation of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), and the Library could be subject to civil penalties under NAGPRA.

On November 13, 2018, the Medford Public Library announced the sale of 19th Century Pacific Northwest Coast items at Skinner Auctioneers and Appraisers' December 1st sale *American Indian & Ethnographic Art – Auction 3185B*. After numerous protests regarding the legality of the sale, Medford's Mayor Stephanie M. Burke withdrew the items from the sale. NAGPRA provides criminal penalties for trafficking of Native American cultural items. However, the Library could still be subject to federal civil penalties because NAGPRA requires any institution that has received federal funds since November 16, 1990 to provide inventories and summaries of its collections of Native American cultural items. Upon searching the public databases located on the National NAGPRA Program website at <https://www.nps.gov/nagpra/ONLINEDB/index.htm>, the Medford Public Library is not showing as having submitted any inventory or summary. Any person can file a civil complaint against an institution that has violated NAGPRA.

Additionally, Skinner Auctioneers and Appraisers' December 1st sale continues to include other Native American cultural items, including sacred and cultural patrimony, that could be in violation of NAGPRA, or other federal, state and Tribal laws. These types of items often show up as “antiquities” or “artifacts,” are items usually over 100 years old, and do not have an artist's signature denoting that the item is a commercial piece of art. Unless Tribal governmental representatives have verified that such an item is not the patrimony of the Tribe, then it is questionable whether an item has proper provenance information and may be a looted or stolen object. Therefore, it is imperative that any collector, auction house or other institution holding Native American cultural heritage items purposefully consult affiliated Tribal government representatives to perform their due diligence in determining proper provenance of each cultural heritage item.

Please contact the Association on American Indian Affairs for assistance in contacting proper affiliated Tribes to your institutions' Native American cultural heritage items.

The Association on American Indian Affairs is the oldest non-profit serving
Indian Country and is a 501(c)(3) organization.

DONATE AT WWW.INDIAN-AFFAIRS.ORG

966 Hungerford Drive, Suite 30-A Rockville, MD 20850 (240) 314-7155 General.AAIA@Indian-Affairs.org