

Approved (September 29, 2010)
Mission and Vision Statement

Repatriation Committee
of the
Field Museum of Natural History

Preamble:

The Field Museum of Natural History (“the Museum”) is an educational institution that seeks to increase knowledge about the diversity of life on earth and understanding of the world’s diverse peoples and their cultures. To accomplish this goal, the Museum performs interdisciplinary research and maintains one of the world’s most extensive collections on the origin and evolution of the planet, its life and cultures. Because new knowledge is gleaned from these collections over long periods of time, the Museum holds its collections in trust for future generations. Accordingly, the Museum strategically manages the collections for long term conservation, adhering to clearly defined objectives and in keeping with the best legal, ethical, moral and scientific practices of the day, including the repatriation of human remains and cultural objects.

Because of the important relationships between the Museum and the diverse peoples represented in the collections and the complexity of repatriation matters, the Museum assigned general responsibility for such matters to a special subcommittee of the Museum’s Committee on Science. This special subcommittee is called The Repatriation Committee of the Field Museum of Natural History (“the Committee”).

Mission:

While carefully balancing numerous interests and diverse worldviews and considering current and historical ethical principles, the Committee reviews, monitors, and makes decisions on behalf of the Museum regarding requests for repatriation of any kind as deemed appropriate to resolve under existing policies and procedures. Additionally, the Committee makes recommendations to the Committee on Science and the Board of Trustees on all other matters regarding repatriation. The Committee informs and advises the Board of Trustees about its dual fiduciary obligations to preserve and interpret collections and to comply with current ethical, moral, and legal practices regarding repatriation. As part of this assignment from the Museum, the Committee acts to strengthen existing relationships and to forge new relationships with diverse peoples.

Vision:

The Committee fosters and maintains mutually respectful and sustainable relations between native communities and the Museum. Through visits and communication with representatives of native communities, museums in general, and the public, the Committee promotes greater cultural awareness and understanding of indigenous cultures worldwide. The Committee informs and advises the Board of Trustees on the importance of its role in the repatriation process and advocates for the allocation of necessary and appropriate resources for the Committee and the Museum staff to carry out the Committee’s mission.