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Pope returns 62 artifacts to Indigenous peoples from Canada as part of reckoning with colonial past



By NICOLE WINFIELD

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Vatican on Saturday returned 62 artifacts from its <u>vast</u> <u>ethnographic collection</u> to Indigenous peoples from <u>Canada</u>, as part of the Catholic Church's reckoning with its role in helping suppress Indigenous culture in the Americas.

<u>Pope Leo XIV</u> gave the artifacts, including an iconic Inuit kayak, and supporting documentation to the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, which said it would <u>return the items</u> to Indigenous communities "as soon as possible." A joint statement from the Vatican and Canadian church described the pieces as a "gift" and a "concrete sign of dialogue, respect and fraternity."

The artifacts are expected to land in Montreal on Dec. 6 and be taken first to the Canadian Museum of History in Ottawa, which will arrange for them to be "reunited with their originating communities," said Pomeline Martinoski, director of communications for the Canadian bishops conference.

For a century, the items were part of the Vatican Museum's ethnographic collection, known today as the Anima Mundi museum. The collection has been a source of controversy for the Vatican amid the broader museum debate over the restitution of cultural goods taken from Indigenous peoples during colonial periods.

Most of the items in the Vatican collection were sent to Rome by Catholic missionaries for a 1925 exhibition in the Vatican gardens. The Vatican insists the items were "gifts" to Pope Pius XI, who wanted to celebrate the church's global reach, its missionaries and the lives of the Indigenous peoples they evangelized.

But historians, Indigenous groups and experts have long questioned whether the items could really have been offered freely, given the power imbalances at play in Catholic missions at the time. In those years, Catholic religious orders were helping to enforce the Canadian government's forced assimilation policy of eliminating Indigenous traditions, which Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission has called "cultural genocide."

That policy included confiscating items used in Indigenous spiritual and traditional rituals, such as the 1885 potlatch ban that prohibited the integral First Nations ceremony. Those confiscated items ended up in museums in Canada, the U.S. and Europe, as well as private collections.

The Canadian Foreign Ministry welcomed the return of the items. "This is an important step that honours the diverse cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples and supports ongoing efforts toward truth, justice, and reconciliation," Foreign Minister Anita Anand posted on social media.

Negotiations accelerate on returning items

Negotiations on returning the Vatican items accelerated after Pope Francis in 2022 met with Indigenous leaders who had traveled to the Vatican to <u>receive his apology</u> for the church's role in running Canada's disastrous residential schools. During their visit, they were shown some objects in the collection, including the Inuit kayak, wampum belts, war clubs and masks, and asked for them to be returned.

Francis later said he was <u>in favor of returning the items</u> and others in the Vatican collection on a case-by-case basis, saying: "In the case where you can return things, where it's necessary to make a gesture, better to do it."

The Vatican said Saturday the items were intentionally being given back during the Holy Year, exactly 100 years after the 1925 exhibition.

"This is an act of ecclesial sharing, with which the Successor of Peter entrusts to the Church in Canada these artifacts, which bear witness to the history of the encounter between faith and the cultures of the Indigenous peoples," said the joint statement from the Vatican and Canadian church.

The "church-to-church" model used to return the items was similar to one used by the <u>Holy See</u> in 2023, when it gave its Parthenon Marbles to the Orthodox Christian Church in Greece. The three fragments were described by the Vatican then as a "donation" to the Orthodox church, not a state-to-state repatriation to the Greek government.

Describing the restitution of the 62 Indigenous artifacts as a "gift" irked some historians, who have not only questioned how the items arrived in the Vatican but demanded a much fuller accounting of what remains in its museum vaults. By some estimates, the original 1925 exhibition included 100,000 items from Indigenous groups around the world, of which 40,000 remain.

Leo "should know and acknowledge that these Indigenous ancestors were not gifted and the papal narrative needs correction," said Gloria Bell, associate professor of art history at McGill University who has conducted extensive research on the 1925 exhibit and concluded that the Indigenous items were hardly given over freely.

"We need to remember that thousands of Indigenous ancestors remain in the Vatican Museums that need to be returned home and brought back into Indigenous care and Indigenous hands," said Bell, who is of Metis ancestry and wrote about the 1925 exhibit in "Eternal Sovereigns: Indigenous Artists, Activists, and Travelers Reframing Rome."

The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, the region where the kayak originated, is arranging the transportation of the artifacts to Canada. If any are of uncertain origin, the Canadian Museum of History will hold them in trust while research led by Indigenous experts is conducted to establish their provenance, said Martinoski of the Canadian bishops conference.

The Canadian bishops said the return was an important milestone in their efforts at reconciliation. It "represents the church's ongoing friendship with Indigenous as well as our desire to support Indigenous communities in accompanying younger generations in passing on and valuing their heritage," the conference president, Bishop Pierre Goudreault, said in a statement.

A process of reckoning with abuses

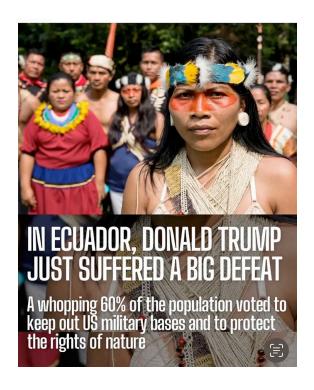
As part of its broader reckoning with the Catholic Church's colonial past, the Vatican in 2023 formally repudiated the "Doctrine of Discovery," the theories backed by 15th-century "papal bulls" that legitimized the colonial-era seizure of Native lands that form the basis of some property laws today.

The statement marked a historic recognition of the Vatican's own complicity in colonial-era abuses committed by European powers, even though it didn't address Indigenous demands that the Vatican formally rescind the papal bulls themselves.

The Vatican on Saturday cited the 2023 repudiation and said Leo's return of the artifacts concludes the "journey" of dialogue initiated by Francis.

Associated Press writer Rob Gillies in Toronto contributed.

https://apnews.com/article/vatican-canada-indigenous-artifacts-pope-37194143ef3b0d9648dda61e44d7065a?utm_source=firefox-newtab-en-us



Can AI translate Native languages in times of disaster?

In the wake of Typhoon Halong, an AI language company wants to hire Native translators, raising questions about data sovereignty.

Walter Nelson, managed retreat coordinator, points out the high water mark during flooding last month when the remnants of Typhoon Halong hit Napakiak, Alaska. Photo by Katie Baldwin Basile/High Country News, Illustration by Luna Anna Archey/High Country News

In 2022, after historic storms hit remote villages across Western Alaska, the Federal Emergency Management Agency hired a California-based contractor to help residents access disaster aid. Their job was to translate applications for financial assistance: The Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta is a constellation of small Alaska Native communities, and nearly half the region's population — some 10,000 people — learn to speak Yugtun, the Central Yup'ik dialect, before they learn English. Farther north, approximately 3,000 people speak Iñupiaq.

But when the translations came through and journalists at the local public radio station, KYUK, tried to read them, they found that the material was nonsense.

"They were Yup'ik words all right, but they were all jumbled together, and they didn't make sense," said Julia Jimmie, who is Yup'ik and works as a translator at KYUK. "It made me think that someone somewhere thought that nobody spoke or understood our language anymore."

Three years later, the region is reeling from another storm: Typhoon Halong, whose remnants displaced more than 1,500 residents and killed at least one person in the village of Kwigillingok in mid-October. And despite recent changes to FEMA policy, translation is once again raising questions — this time, about the role of AI in Indigenous communities.

Prisma International, a Minneapolis-based company, posted an ad seeking "experienced, professional Translators and Interpreters" of Yup'ik, Iñupiaq, and other Alaska Native languages on Oct. 21, the day before the Trump administration approved a disaster declaration for the storm.

The company has contracted with FEMA more than 30 times over the last few years, according to government records. <u>Its website</u> says that Prisma's tools "combine AI and human expertise to accelerate translation, simplify language access, and enhance communication across audiences, systems, and users." <u>According to the job listing</u>, the Alaska Native language translators would be asked to "provide written translations using a Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) tool."

A spokesperson for FEMA declined to say in late October whether the agency planned to contract with Prisma in Alaska, and the company did not respond to multiple requests for comment by phone and email. But the job posting notes a preference for applicants with experience translating or interpreting "for emergency management agencies, e.g. FEMA," as well as knowledge of the recent storm and a connection to local Indigenous communities. Multiple Yup'ik language speakers in Alaska confirmed they had been contacted by a company representative, who described Prisma as "a language services contractor for the Federal Emergency Management Agency."

Julia Jimmie was among those contacted. She said she would have been happy to translate for FEMA, but she had more questions about working with Prisma.

As AI expands into new areas of everyday life, including translation, it's prompted both excitement and skepticism in Indigenous communities. Many Native tech and culture experts are intrigued by its potential, particularly when it comes to language preservation. But they warn that the technology risks distorting cultural knowledge and could threaten language sovereignty.

"Artificial intelligence relies on data to function," said Morgan Gray, a member of the Chickasaw Nation and a research and policy analyst at Arizona State University's American Indian Policy Institute. "One of the bigger risks is that if you're not careful, your data can be used in a way that might not be consistent with your values as a tribal community."

Though the U.S. government does not formally regulate AI or its use, the concept of "data sovereignty" — a tribal nation's right to define how its data is collected and used — is increasingly part of international discussions about Indigenous intellectual property. Free, prior and informed consent for the use of Indigenous cultural knowledge is written into the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. UNESCO, the U.N. body that oversees cultural heritage, has called for AI developers to respect tribal sovereignty in dealing with Indigenous communities' data.

"A tribal nation needs to have complete information about the way that AI will be used, the type of tribal data that AI system might use," Gray said. "They need to have time to consider those impacts, and they need to have the right to refuse and say, 'No, we're not comfortable with this outside entity using our information, even though you might have a really altruistic motivation behind doing it."

It's still unclear whether Prisma has contacted tribal leadership in the Y-K Delta. The Association of Village Council Presidents, a consortium of 56 federally recognized tribes in the region, did not respond to a request for comment.

On its website, Prisma says that clients can opt to use only human translators, noting that its AI use is governed by an AI Responsible Usage Policy. But the details of that policy are not readily available online, and the company did not respond to requests for clarification.

Representatives from three emergency response agencies set up a place for people to apply for aid in the school in Napakiak, Alaska. Sitting at the table are Dara Rickles with the Red Cross and Kali Grunden, FEMA Region 10 tribal liasion. Photo by Katie Baldwin Basile/High Country News, Illustration by Luna Anna Archey/High Country News

In the three years since its contractor produced the notoriously botched translations, FEMA has sought to improve its work with Alaska Native communities. KYUK's reporting on the scandal prompted a civil rights investigation, and the California contractor, Accent on Languages, reimbursed the agency for the faulty translations. A spokesperson for FEMA said the agency now employs only "Alaska-based vendors" for Alaska Native languages, prioritizing those in disaster-impacted areas. It also requires a secondary quality-control review of all translations. "Tribal partners are continuously consulted to determine language services needs

and how FEMA can meet those needs in the most effective and accessible manner," the spokesperson wrote in an email.

The agency's policies on AI are less clear. The email did not directly address questions about whether FEMA has policies in place to regulate the use of AI or protect Indigenous data sovereignty, though it said that FEMA "works closely with tribal governments and partners to make sure our services and outreach are responsive to their needs."

According to government records, FEMA has contracted with Prisma in more than a dozen states. Prisma's website <u>highlights a case study</u> in which it used its "LexAI" technology to help a federal agency provide information about disaster relief in multiple languages following a wildfire. The case study says it offered translation for more than 16 languages, including "rare Pacific Island dialects."

The company has also worked with several other federal agencies, the government database shows, but it does not appear to have contracted with the federal government in Alaska before.

In the Y-K Delta, the Yup'ik language translators Prisma contacted shared a practical concern: Would AI be able to translate their language accurately?

"Yup'ik is a complex language," Jimmie wrote in a message. "I think that AI would have problems translating Yup'ik. You have to know what you're talking about in order to put the word together."

Most AI models rely on extensive data to help produce accurate translations. But that kind of data is rarely available for Indigenous languages, and AI has a <u>poor record</u> when it comes to translating them, often providing inaccurate sentences and even completely invented words.

Sally Samson, who is Yup'ik and a professor of Yup'ik language and culture at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, said she was skeptical that AI could master Yugtun syntax, which differs substantially from English. Her concern wasn't just that the technology might provide misinformation, but that it would fail to convey the nuances of a Yup'ik worldview.

"Our language explains our culture, and our culture defines our language," she said. "The way we communicate with our elders and our co-workers and our friends is completely different because of the values that we hold, and that respect is very important."

"Our language explains our culture, and our culture defines our language.".

Indigenous software developers are <u>actively working to address</u> some of AI's shortcomings around Native languages. Many hope to mobilize the technology to preserve endangered dialects. An <u>Anishinaabe roboticist</u> has already designed a robot to help kids learn Anishinaabemowin, while a <u>Choctaw computer scientist</u> created a chatbot to converse in Choctaw.

But in those cases, Indigenous people have been the ones developing the AI models and making decisions about how to use them. Crystal Hill-Pennington, who teaches Native law and business

at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and offers legal consultation to Alaska tribes, said she worries about the potential for exploitation if AI is trained on the work of Indigenous translators for future use by non-Native companies.

"If we have communities that have a historical socioeconomic disadvantage, and then companies can come in, gather a little bit of information, and then try to capitalize on that knowledge without continuing to engage the originating community that holds that heritage, that's problematic," she said.

Native communities have centuries of experience with outsiders extracting and exploiting their cultural knowledge — but there is also recent precedent for this kind of controversy. In 2022, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Council voted to banish a nonprofit that had promised to help preserve their language. After Lakota elders spent years sharing cultural knowledge with the non-Native group, the organization copyrighted the material and tried to sell it back to tribal members in textbooks.

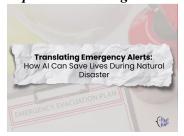
Hill-Pennington said the introduction of AI by private companies adds another layer of complexity to contemporary conversations around intellectual property.

"The question is, who ends up owning the knowledge that they're scraping?" she said.

Standards around AI and Indigenous cultural knowledge are evolving quickly, just like the technology. Hill-Pennington said that some companies using AI may still be unfamiliar with the expectation of informed consent and the concept of data sovereignty. But, she said, those standards are becoming increasingly relevant.

"Particularly if they're going to be doing work with, let's say, a federal agency that does fall under executive orders around authentic consultation with Indigenous peoples in the United States, then this is not something that should be overlooked," she said.

https://www.hcn.org/articles/can-ai-translate-native-languages-in-times-of-disaster/



https://video translator.ai/blog/translating-emergency-alerts-how-ai-can-save-lives-during-natural-disaster/alerts-how-ai-can-save-lives-during-natural-during-natura

Alaska Natives are underserved by emergency translation services

Bringing fast, reliable broadband to rural Alaska could cost \$1.8 billion

The EPA vetoed Alaska's proposed Pebble Mine (worth a re-read)

Annie Rosenthal is the Virginia Spencer Davis fellow at High Country News, reporting on rural communities, agriculture, migration and life in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands. Email her at annie.rosenthal@hcn.org.

Ken Burns Says His New Documentary Forced Him to Revisit Everything He Thought He Knew About the American Revolution

Ahead of the PBS production's premiere, the legendary filmmaker and co-director Sarah Botstein share insights on their research process and the surprising, long-overlooked stories featured in the six-part series

https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/ken-burns-says-his-new-documentary-forced-him-to-revisit-everything-he-thought-he-knew-about-the-american-revolution-180987667/?
is_pocket=1&utm_source=firefox-newtab-en-us

Ed note: subtational coverage of Native activity/alliances/politics at that time

Indian Relay

In a thrilling and fast-paced segment, 60 Minutes correspondent Bill Whitaker takes viewers to the heart of the Indian Relay, known as America's original extreme sport. In this high-risk bareback horse race, Native American tribes compete with intense speed and precision, and the stakes are high. Whitaker explores how this traditional sport has grown in recent years and what it means for the next generation of Native American youth, offering them a sense of pride and connection to their heritage. This segment delves into the cultural significance of the Indian Relay and its role in shaping contemporary Native American identity.

 $https://60 minutestonight.com/60-minutes-reports-on-larkins-war-left-behind-indian-relay-anisland-off-an-island-caligulas-gardens-return-to-gorongosa-may-25-2025/\#google_vignette$

For much more entertainment, google PBS + Indian Relay (had missed this series)

And then: (click on pic)



Sacred Dog [Full Documentary] | E:60

This is the story of the mighty Lakota and one family's fight against their historical bloody and impoverished past to teach their young about their own culture that is on the brink of extinction through the sport of Indian Relay - a sport derived from fighting battles against their enemies. Our story centers around the Brewer family, split between two teams, the Brew Crew and Dancing Warrior, as they compete against other tribes throughout the Midwest in an attempt to regain their Lakota pride and give their children a blueprint for the future.

https://www.espn.com/watch/catalog/cae40223-6294-41fc-8bd5-f4697e0fcb3a/sacred-dog

Native Community Action Council P.O. Box 46301, Las Vegas, Nevada 89114 www.nativecommunityactioncouncil.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE INTERNATIONAL URANIUM FILM FESTIVAL NORTHAMERICAN TOUR 2025 LAS VEGAS, NEVADA NOVEMBER 21, 22 & 23, 2025

CONTACT: Laura Piffero, Shoshone/Paiute (602) 391-3656, Thalia "Star" Guerrero: (435) 879-9086 Norbert Suchanek, norbert.suchanek@uraniumfilmfestival.org uraniumfilmfestival.org

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA, USA - The International Uranium Film Festival (IUFF) is proud to announce the highly anticipated North American Tour 2025taking place November 21, 22 & 23at the Downtown Cinemas in Las Vegas. Showcasing an array of compelling films and exploring the detrimental impacts of nuclear weapons testing, the festival promises to captivate audiences with its thought-provoking narratives and powerful storytelling. "You can't hug your children with nuclear arms," said Ian Zabarte Secretary of NCACOrganizers of the IUFF Las Vegas, the Native Community Action Council (NCAC) composed of Shoshone and Paiute peoples believe these films are a necessary part of the ongoing awareness, witness and resistance to nuclear war, human health and a livable Mother Earth.

HIGHLIGHTS: "TO USE A MOUNTAIN" • "WAYS OF KNOWING" • "SILENT WAR"

• "UNDER THE CLOUD" are among the films addressing uranium, the fuel for both nuclearweapons and nuclear energy. As 2025 marks the 80th anniversary of the first atomic bombings at the Trinity Site, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki, the world faces a new Manhattan Project that includes nuclear modernization of weapons and the fast-tracking of uranium mining for nuclear-powered AI (artificial intelligence) data centers. The IUFF recognizes all radiation victims. Downwinders of nuclear weapons test sites and nuclear energy facilities are all impacted by environmental contamination that creates undue health risks that produce cascading health effects to future generations. The IUFF is a space for everyone who supports a nuclear-free future! We invite all to come together to view original films and to meet with affected community members, organizations and activists working toward protection from radiation risks, protection of our lands and water, and protection of all Peoples worldwide.

"The Shoshone Nation still bears the deadly legacy of nuclear testing on our unceded lands an act that violates our treaty, our land and our lives." said Laura Piffero of the NCAC.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: <u>uraniumfilmfestival.org</u> Nativecommunityactioncouncil.org

For a lot more background about the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability and some very indepth information about isses, concersn and activities go to https://www.einpresswire.com/article/867363672/the-alliance-for-nuclear-accountability-condemns-the-suggestion-of-nuclear-testing-by-president-trump

Hawai'i is home to 18 plant species with just one known individual remaining in the wild. (Hawai'i Public Radio

Fredina Drye-Romero, Education Programs Professional for Indian EducationNevada Department of Education, Office of Comprehensive Student Services

Due to a planned statewide accounting system upgrade, the Nevada Department of Education will be unable to process payments between October 6, 2025, and October 19, 2025. To ensure timely reimbursement, please submit reimbursement requests by September 26, 2025.

For specific questions and/or information regarding Dispute Resolution, please email: disputeresolution@doe.nv.gov; for general Special Education information and/or questions, please email: specialeducation@doe.nv.gov.; or for information and/or questions regarding Indian Education, please email: indianeducation@doe.nv.gov.~

208-Year Icon SHUTS OWN—They're Done

When a 208-year-old American icon suddenly calls it quits, what does it say about the future of tradition, technology, and the soul of rural life...

<u>Continue Reading</u> <u>https://targetdailynews.com/208-year-icon-shuts-own-theyre-done/</u>

Enbridge still at it

We are writing to inform you that the Detroit District has posted a public notice to our internet home page for the proposed project noted below.

File Number: LRE-2010-00463-56-A19Applicant: **Enbridge Energy**, Limited Partnership

Location: Point LaBarbe, Mackinac County, Saint Ignace, and McGulpin Point, Emmet County, Mackinaw City, Michigan Waterway: Lake Michigan

The public notice is to advise the public that the Detroit District has prepared a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement, which will be available for public review and comment at www.line5tunneleis.com. Please visit our District Webpage to view the complete public notice: https://www.lrd.usace.army.mil/Missions/Regulatory/Michigan/

Sincerely, Regulatory Branch, Detroit District, US Army Corps of Engineers



Bucky Harjo Magnetic Storm 11/13/25

