

Alameda Native History Project  
2201 Shoreline Drive #6334, Alameda, California 94501  
(510) 747-8423 • [info@nativehistoryproject.com](mailto:info@nativehistoryproject.com)

May 7, 2024

Alameda City Council  
Council Chambers  
Alameda City Hall  
2263 Santa Clara Avenue  
Alameda, California 94501

via E-Mail to:  
[CITYCOUNCIL-List@alamedaca.gov](mailto:CITYCOUNCIL-List@alamedaca.gov)

Hello,

My name is Gabriel Duncan; founder of the Alameda Native History Project. I'm writing to you regarding a few topics.

1. Alameda Museum
  - a. DOI Final Rule 88 FR 86452 (attached)
2. City Commissions
3. Proper Stewardship of Native Plant Landscapes
4. Turkey Hunting Licenses
5. Native American Cultural Programming
  - a. City & City Dept. Partnerships with Alameda Native History Project
  - b. City Easements for Traditional Native American Cultural Activities
  - c. Acorn Granary Challenge
  - d. City-Wide Acorn Harvest

1. Alameda Museum

The Alameda Museum holds several Native American Artifacts which were taken from Native American Graves in Alameda, from the 1900's through to today. These artifacts are stolen, because no surviving tribal member gave the City of Alameda permission to retain said artifacts—nor was there

any permission given to the City of Alameda to place said artifacts on display to the public.

No attempt has ever been made to give the artifacts back back to any Native American tribe.

Nor was there ever any attempt to secure the permission to possess or display these items.

Furthermore, the City of Alameda never made a serious attempt to identify the artifacts' provenance, or the tribe to whom the artifacts belong. That work was done by Gabriel Duncan, for the Alameda Native History Project, because the Alameda Museum errantly identified the artifacts mentioned herein as belonging to “a branch of the Miwok tribe”, where they are indisputably Ohlone artifacts.

The City of Alameda engaged the archival and storage services of the Alameda Museum (also known as the “Alameda Historical Museum”), which has since allowed the artifacts to become water damaged, and mislabeled, among other events detrimental to the sanctity and integrity of what are Native American Grave Goods—things which were meant to be buried in a grave, alongside a person's remains.

To add insult to injury: the human remains recovered from the excavations of the “Sathers Mound” are missing; claimed to be transferred to the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, but the Alameda Museum has been unable to prove this transfer ever occurred, and the Hearst Museum has provided no receipt for any transfer from the Alameda Historical Museum. Where are the bones?

On Wednesday, December 13, 2023, a change to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) Systematic Processes for Disposition or Repatriation of Native American Human Remains, Funerary Objects, Sacred Objects, and Objects of Cultural Patrimony was published to the Federal Registrar. This published document contains the “Final Rule” published by the Department of Interior, regarding NAGPRA.

The final rule, mentioned above, revises and replaces certain definitions and procedures to implement the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA). “ These regulations provide a step-by-step roadmap with specific timelines for museums [...] to facilitate

disposition or repatriation.”

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990, and the corresponding Final Rule published in the Federal Register as “RIN 1024–AE19” are incorporated into this letter by reference.

I would like to bring to your attention several requirements which the City of Alameda, and the Alameda Historical Museum (aka, “Alameda Museum”) have under these new rules/revisions/procedures/etc.:

- Museums are now required to reasonably incorporate and accommodate traditional Native American knowledge in the storage, treatment, or handling of human remains or cultural items.
- **Consultation, Collaboration, and Consent with and from lineal descendants and tribes is now a requirement** in determining the final disposition of Native American remains and cultural items, and **in all decision-making steps**.
- Native American Grave Goods and Cultural Items are not allowed to be exhibited by museums without permission from a lineal descendant [of Muwekma, the only (formerly) federally recognized Ohlone tribe of this area.]
- If Alameda, and its Museum, receive federal monies for the museum, grantees are required to comply with federal laws and regulations, including NAGPRA.

These points are not all of the changes listed in the Final Rule, or NAGPRA. As the owner/possessor of Native American Grave Goods/Cultural Items, I would like to know how the City intends to address the changes; include Consultation and Collaboration; gain consent for any work that includes even disturbing the soil on known Native American Graves; and protect Ohlone bodies,

cultural items, and sacred sites from the disrespect and desecration which has been, and still remains, an Alameda tradition.

## 2. City Commissions

It has come to our attention that several city commissions, including the Alameda Historical Commission, has been understaffed, and the meetings of these commissions have been regularly cancelled.

I applied for membership to at least three city commissions, and received a rejection notice from a commission I didn't even apply to. This is shared as an observation, because it seems like these commissions are not being staffed the way they should be.

Specifically, the Alameda Historical Commission should include Native American voices, especially in lieu of the NAGPRA changes mentioned in item 1.

## 3. Proper Stewardship of Native Plant Landscapes

We have observed the lack of traditional care and land stewardship of our native plant landscape—which create healthy, vibrant ecosystems and land bridges for local and migratory wildlife (including birds and butterflies).

The Alameda Native History Project asks that you please consider caring for Native Plants in a responsible manner that includes pruning, instead of hapless shearing and drastic cutting back which actually harms plants like rush and milkweed.

## 4. Turkey Hunting Licenses

We would like to be able to hunt turkeys for traditional uses, and food. We would also like to test them for diseases before doing so.

5. Native American Cultural Programming

a. City & City Dept. Partnerships with Alameda Native History Project

We would like to explore opportunities to collaborate with the City and its Departments. Including the Library, Parks & Rec, and Planning Department. And discuss a First Alameda exhibit or museum.

b. City Easements for Traditional Native American Cultural Activities

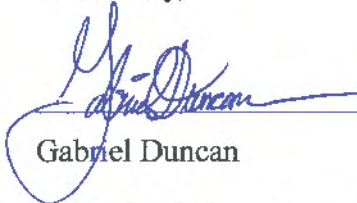
We would like to have easements for the purpose of gathering traditional materials from public lands across the island.

c. City-Wide Acorn Harvest

We would like to invite all Alamedans to participate in the first City-Wide Acorn Harvest; which will happen in late September, and early October. And we would like to partner with the City of Alameda to make this an annual event. You can find out more information on our website at [NativeHistoryProject.org](https://NativeHistoryProject.org); or by emailing us at [Info@NativeHistoryProject.org](mailto:Info@NativeHistoryProject.org)

Thank you for your service, and for your attention.

Yours truly,



Gabriel Duncan

Alameda Native History Project  
2201 Shoreline Drive #6334  
Alameda, California 94501

<https://NativeHistoryProject.org/>

(510) 747-8423  
[info@nativehistoryproject.org](mailto:info@nativehistoryproject.org)