

Research Policy
Native American Artifacts and Ecofacts
Museum of Natural and Cultural History, March 2024

This policy was developed in response to contemporary collections stewardship and ethical standards, and in compliance with Standards for [Museums with Native American Collections](#).

PURPOSE

The University of Oregon Museum of Natural and Cultural History (MNCH) is committed to conducting responsible and ethical research that respects the natural and cultural heritage entrusted to our care. This policy outlines the principles and procedures governing non-destructive and destructive research activities of Native American artifacts and ecofacts within the MNCH Division of Collections, emphasizing collaboration with stakeholder communities. Any research activities on collections held but not owned by the MNCH must first be approved by the agency of record.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all researchers, staff, and external collaborators engaged in Collections-based research activities of Native American artifacts and ecofacts at the MNCH.

NON-DESTRUCTIVE COLLECTIONS-BASED RESEARCH

Non-Destructive Research Definition: Non-destructive research involves the study and analysis of museum collections without causing harm or alteration to the original specimens or objects. This includes but is not limited to imaging, scanning, non-invasive sampling, and other methods that do not physically alter the artifact or ecofact.

Researcher must submit a short (1-2 page) research proposal that includes (1) the purpose of the proposed research, including the specific questions you aim to answer; (2) the collections of interest; (3) the proposed duration and schedule of the research; and (4) the research methodology. Additionally, all proposed research must meet MNCH expectations for Native American consultation (see below).

Requirements for Approval:

1. **Consultation:** Researchers must engage in meaningful consultation with relevant Native American tribes and communities before initiating research on objects of cultural significance. Inform relevant Native American tribes of proposed non-destructive research activities. Allow tribes to provide feedback on the proposed research and consider their input in the research design process.
2. **Transparency:** Researchers must maintain open and transparent communication with Native American tribes throughout the research process.
3. **Documentation:** Researchers must agree to document all communication and collaboration efforts with Native American tribes, ensuring transparency and accountability.

4. **Sensitive Information:** Researchers must agree to safeguard sensitive cultural information obtained during research, ensuring it is used ethically and in accordance with the wishes of the involved Native American communities.

DESTRUCTIVE COLLECTIONS-BASED RESEARCH

Destructive Research Definition: Destructive research involves the study and analysis of museum collections that results in the harm or alteration to the original specimens or objects.

Destructive analyses may include but are not limited to radiocarbon dating, DNA analysis, and other techniques that require the alteration or partial consumption of the sampled material.

Researcher must submit a short (1-2 page) research proposal that includes (1) the purpose of the proposed research, including the specific questions you aim to answer; (2) the collections of interest; (3) the proposed duration and schedule of the research; and (4) the research methodology. Additionally, all proposed research must meet MNCH expectations for Native American consultation (see below).

Requirements for Approval:

1. **Consultation:** Researchers must provide information about the proposed destructive analysis, seek input on the potential impacts on cultural heritage, and discuss the scientific objectives and the benefits of the research with relevant Native American tribes and communities.
2. **Consent:** Researchers must acquire consent from relevant Native American tribes and communities before proceeding with destructive analysis. The consent process will include a clear explanation of the analysis, its purpose, and potential implications.
3. **Decision-Making Process:** Destructive analysis will only be considered when there is a clear scientific justification that cannot be achieved through non-destructive methods. The MNCH will weigh the scientific benefits against the potential cultural impacts, ensuring that ethical considerations are at the forefront of the decision-making process. A designated internal committee, including representatives with expertise in both the scientific and cultural aspects, will review proposals for destructive analysis.
4. **Transparency:** Researchers must maintain open and transparent communication with Native American tribes throughout the research process.
5. **Documentation:** Researchers must agree to document all communication and collaboration efforts with Native American tribes, ensuring transparency and accountability.
6. **Sensitive Information:** Researchers must agree to safeguard sensitive cultural information obtained during research, ensuring it is used ethically and in accordance with the wishes of the involved Native American communities.

Compliance and Enforcement:

Failure to comply with this policy may result in the suspension of research privileges and other appropriate measures, as determined by the MNCH executive leadership.

Review and Revision:

This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. Changes may be made in consultation with Native American communities and other stakeholders.

Please submit your proposal to both the MNCH Director of Anthropological Collections and the MNCH Executive Director via email.