**REPORT TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

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Forwarded to the Board of Governors on the Recommendation of the President

**APPROVED FOR SUBMISSION**

Santa J. Ono, President and Vice-Chancellor

**DECISION REQUESTED**

**IT IS HEREBY REQUESTED** that the **UBC Board of Governors** approve the repatriation of the Haida Mortuary Pole (MOA A50017) from the collection at the Museum of Anthropology to the Haida Repatriation Committee, as authorized by the Haida Nation.

**Report Date**

May 11, 2018

**Presented By**

Andrew Szeri, Provost and Vice-President Academic

Moya Waters, Acting Director, UBC Museum of Anthropology (MOA)

Susan Rowley, Chair of MOA Repatriation Committee

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Haida Mortuary Poles are graves for highly respected people. Constructed from a single large cedar tree, the top of the pole is hollowed out and is the receptacle for a bentwood box holding the remains of the ancestor. In 1957, members of the BC Totem Pole Preservation Committee visited SGang Gwaay (a small island that is part of Haida Gwaii and has at times been called Anthony Island or Ninstints) and removed parts of 12 poles including two mortuary poles. One of these mortuary poles (MOA A50017) entered the collection of UBC.

The pole was exhibited on University Boulevard in 1958 as part of UBC’s celebration of the centenary of the British Columbia becoming a crown colony. When the current museum building opened in 1976, this pole was on display in the Great Hall. In 2003 the Old Masset & Skidegate Repatriation Committee (hereinafter the Haida Repatriation Committee), working under the authority of the Haida Nation, informed MOA that they would be seeking the repatriation of this pole in the future. In 2009 MOA removed the pole from public view. This past September the Haida Repatriation Committee submitted a formal request for repatriation to the director of the Museum.

The return of this pole to the Haida falls directly under UBC Board of Governors’ Policy #128 Section 4.8.

‘Generally, the [MOA] Repatriation Committee will consider there to be a presumption in favour of recommending repatriation where the work:

4.8.2 was directly associated with burials linked to the applicant.’

Cost for UBC returning this pole to Haida Gwaii is estimated at $39,000 to be covered by the Provost’s office.
Haida mortuary poles were erected upon the death of a high-ranking person. The base of the tree formed the top of the pole in a reverse manner from all other pole types. The top of the pole was hollowed out and, a year after death, the body of the individual was placed inside a bentwood box inside this cavity. The cavity was then covered with a large carved panel. A mortuary potlatch was held when the pole was erected and the titles’ of the deceased transferred to living relatives. In essence mortuary poles are graves.

There is one Haida mortuary pole at the Museum of Anthropology. This pole has the MOA collection number A50017 (see attachment 1: Image of Haida Mortuary Pole (A50017)). This request seeks the return of this pole to the Haida as requested by the Old Masset & Skidegate Repatriation Committee (hereinafter the Haida Repatriation Committee) acting under the authority of the Haida Nation (see attachments 2 and 3).

The pole has been appraised, for the purposes of repatriation only, at $975,000. Packing and shipping are estimated at $39,000 and will come from the Provost’s office. This repatriation request is being sent to the Board of Governors under Policy #128 which states that in the case of deaccessioning from a University collection:

1.1.6. Where the work(s) that are the subject of such a recommendation has/have a total value exceeding $100,000 or its/their disposition is, in the opinion of the Vice-President, Academic and Provost, sensitive or precedent-setting, the Vice-President, Academic and Provost may forward the recommendation to the Board of Governors for authorization on the terms as recommended to him or her or on such other terms as he or she sees fit.

History

This pole was removed from the Kunghit Haida community of SGang Gwaay by the BC Totem Pole Preservation Committee (TPPC) in 1957. The TPPC was founded in 1954 and consisted of representatives from UBC, the BC Provincial Museum (now the Royal BC Museum), and Indian Affairs. The UBC representatives on this committee were UBC President Norman A. Mackenzie (Honorary Chair) and Professor Harry Hawthorn (Chair). The committee worked with Indian agents and local band councils to salvage poles from many different nations. In 1956 Wilson Duff visited SGang Gwaay and determined that a number of poles could be salvaged for the university and the provincial museum.

On December 4, 1956, the Indian Agent P.P. Henson wrote to the Committee stating “I believe that the Skidegate Council and descendants of the original inhabitants of Ninstints Village would be willing to approve the removal of any
salvageable totem-poles in order to have them properly preserved for posterity as objects of historic and cultural significance, but I doubt whether they would ever consent to the removal of grave-poles which contained the bones of their ancestors.” (see attachment 4). In April 1957 the Skidegate Council gave permission for the removal of poles from SGang Gwaay (see attachment 4).

The removal of poles from SGang Gwaay took place from June 20 to June 28, 1957. The mortuary pole (A50017) was sawn down on June 23rd. Jon Smyly, part of the removal team, wrote:

[This] was the most difficult and cumbersome pole we had to tackle. It was carved from a log almost four feet in diameter at the wider, uppermost end, and having the design of a grizzly bear and a whale holding an upside down human being in its mouth. The upper butt-end of the pole had been hollowed out to hold the grave box of the chief and then the cavity had been boarded over. The frontal board had once carried the carving of a moon, represented by a semi-human face, the nose of which turned into a bird’s beak. The frontal board had long since disappeared, but the carving on the lowest part of the support post was very fine. (Smyly and Smyly 2008:43 (see attachment 4))

Once the pole was felled the section that had held the grave box was sawn off and the remaining pole hauled to the beach for transport to UBC. Two films were made about the expedition to SGang Gwaay (one of the films, Totem, can be viewed here: http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/rescuing-the-timeless-totems-of-sgang-gwaay; the other is available through the BC Archives).

In 1958, UBC displayed 23 poles, including the Haida Mortuary Pole, along University Boulevard to celebrate the centenary of BC becoming a crown colony (film footage can be seen here:

http://searcharchives.vancouver.ca/uploads/r/null/1/1/1112772/9b87ac5c-325c-4d7f-9b51-a8c7972ec57b-V00203.mp4)

The Mortuary Pole was then moved to the newly constructed carving shed on campus and from there was installed in the Museum of Anthropology (MOA) building for its opening in 1976. This pole entered the MOA collection in 1966 and received the identification number A50017. See attachment 4 for a more detailed timeline.

Rationale

The Haida Repatriation Committee contacted MOA in regards to the Mortuary Pole in 2003. In 2004 the MOA Repatriation Committee discussed the pole and sent forward a recommendation in favour of repatriation to the MOA Management Committee. The rationale for the decision is straightforward. This pole is a grave and therefore its repatriation is moral, ethical and falls under the terms established by the UBC Board of Governors for Repatriation (Board Policy #128) which states:
4.8. Generally, the [MOA] Repatriation Committee will consider there to be a presumption in favour of recommending repatriation where the work:

4.8.1. was removed from a community or individual illegally;

4.8.2. was directly associated with burials linked to the applicant [emphasis added];

4.8.3. can be linked to the applicant and was employed in traditional healing; or

4.8.4. is necessary for on-going ceremonial practice and there is no cultural precedent for another object to be used in its place.

In 2004, the MOA Management Committee approved this repatriation pending a formal request from the Haida Repatriation Committee. This request was received on September 1, 2017 (see attachment 2). At that time MOA reaffirmed its commitment to the repatriation. The next steps included an appraisal of the mortuary pole, meeting with the Provost to discuss the repatriation and the writing of this report for the Board.

**BENEFITS**

Learning, Research, Financial, Sustainability & Reputational

Under Board Policy 128 Section 1.1.4.:

Any recommendation that is sent to the Vice-President, Academic and Provost in favour of deaccessioning a work must indicate that the interests of the public, the scholarly community (...), and the cultural community (including the needs of that community in the Vancouver region) have been carefully considered in view of the University’s mission statement and that, if the work was donated to the University, any terms associated with the gift have been addressed. Any such recommendation should also indicate that all reasonable alternatives to deaccessioning have been carefully considered.

In the case of the Haida Mortuary Pole (A50017) the museum’s Repatriation Committee has determined there is no alternative to repatriation. This is a grave of a Haida Nation member and its return to the community is necessary.

This repatriation puts into action UBC’s new Purpose of “Pursuing excellence in research, learning and engagement to foster global citizenship and advance a sustainable and just society across British Columbia, Canada and the world” and highlights our commitment to UBC’s Values of integrity, respect and accountability and specifically supports UBC’s definition of Respect through the recognition and upholding of the Haida concept of Yahguudangan - the act of paying respect (see attachment 5).


This repatriation also continues UBC’s important work in the area of reconciliation. The return of the Haida Mortuary Pole (A50017) is not solely the return of the physical pole, but it is also an acknowledgement of the rights, power and authority of the Haida Nation.
Repatriation leads to long-term benefits in terms of enhanced learning potential for UBC students about issues of social justice and research into repatriation and pathways forward in terms of building stronger relationships based on mutual respect.

**RISKS**

**Financial, Operational & Reputational**
The legal transfer of the Haida Mortuary Pole (A50017) will occur following the Board meeting. We know the history of this pole, its function and where it was erected. No financial, operational or reputational risks have been identified.

**COSTS**

**Capital & Lifecycle Operating**
Costs of returning the pole to Haida Gwaii are estimated at $39,000.

**FINANCIAL**

**Funding Sources, Impact on Liquidity**
The University will cover the transportation costs for the repatriation of this pole to Haida Gwaii. Funds will come from the Provost’s Office.

**SCHEDULE**

**Implementation Timeline**
Once approved by the Board of Governors the Haida Repatriation Committee with MOA will undertake to complete the repatriation this fiscal year.

**CONSULTATION**

**Relevant Units, Internal & External Constituencies**
Extensive consultation with the Haida Repatriation Committee.

**Attachments:**
1. Images of Haida Mortuary Pole (A50017). (A1_Haida Mortuary Pole (MOA A50017) Image.pdf)
3. Authority of the Haida Repatriation Committee to undertake repatriation for the Haida Nation. (A3_Haida Nation Authority Letter.pdf)
5. *Yahguudangang*—To Pay Respect. (A9_Yahguudangang—To Pay Respect.pdf)
HAIDA GWAI MUSEUM AT KAY LLNAGAAY

September 01, 2017

Dr. Anthony Shelton, Director
UBC Museum of Anthropology
6303 NW Marine Drive
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2

Re: Repatriation of Haida Mortuary Pole A50017

Dear Dr. Shelton,

Please accept this letter as an official request from the Council of the Haida Nation, facilitated through the Haida Repatriation Committee and Haida Gwaii Museum at Kay Llnagaay, for the repatriation of the Haida Mortuary Pole (MOA collection # A50017) originating from the village of Nan Sdins, SGang Gwaii, Haida Gwaii.

We appreciate that MOA took this sacred piece off display in the Great Hall in 2010 because of its history of use as a mortuary pole. The Haida Repatriation Committee has been directed by the lineage representative of SGang Gwaii, and the Hereditary Chiefs’ Council, to request the return of this pole.

We fully understand that this letter constitutes the beginning of a process that involves the Museum of Anthropology and the UBC Board of Governors.

We respectfully request that you initiate the appropriate process for this cultural treasure to return to Haida Gwaii.

Respectfully,

Nika Collison
Co-chair Haida Repatriation Committee,
Skidegate Branch; Curator Haida Gwaii Museum

Jason Alsop
Co-chair Haida Repatriation Committee
Skidegate Branch; Council of the Haida Nation Executive Member and Cultural Committee Chair

cc: Hereditary Chiefs Council, Council of the Haida Nation
Mr. Mervin Dunn, SGang Gwaii lineage representative
Dr. Scott Marsden, Executive Director, Haida Gwaii Museum
COUNCIL OF THE HAIDA NATION

February 23, 2000

To Whom It May Concern:

Please be advised that the Old Massett & Skidegate Repatriation Committees are authorized to undertake the repatriation of Haida ancestral remains and cultural objects from museums and other institutions around the world. The committees work through Old Massett Heritage Resources and the Haida Gwaii Museum respectfully, supervising any repatriation undertakings.

The Haida Nation sees repatriation as based upon mutual respect, co-operation and trust between the Haida and the museum community. The matter of repatriation is not viewed by the Haida Nation as the substance of Treaty Negotiations. Consequently, the return of Haida ancestral remains and cultural objects from museums/institutions to Haida Gwaii should not be subject to the finalization of a treaty process.

As the Haida Nation, we accept our responsibility to ensure that our Haida heritage endures from our past, through today and into the future; repatriation is a part of that responsibility.

We the undersigned support the Old Massett & Skidegate Repatriation Committees in their continued work to build good relationships with museums and institutions around the world and to bring home Haida ancestral remains and cultural objects.

Respectfully,

signatures on following pages
Haida Mortuary Pole (A50017) Timeline

Sometime in the mid-nineteenth century a highly respected member of the Raven moiety probably from Those Born at Songs of Victory Town passed away. The relatives hired members of the Eagle moiety to carve a mortuary pole at SGang Gwaay. Different from the construction of most poles, mortuary poles are carved with the top of the tree being the base – as a result they are narrower at the base than at the top. The top of the pole was hollowed out in order to hold the box containing the physical remains of the departed. A frontal plate carved with the moon and thunderbird covered the box. The tree for this mortuary was brought to SGang Gwaay as western red cedars of a suitable height for poles don’t grow on the island.

1774 The Haida meet Spanish explorer Juan Perez and crew, aboard the SV Santiago in Haida waters off of Kiis Gwaay (Langara Island). This occurrence is the first western-accepted documentation of European contact on the Northwest Coast.

1780 -90s – European and American traders visited the area around SGang Gwaay (which they called Anthony Island) on numerous occasions.

1787 – George Dixon and crew trade
1787 – Colnett in the Prince of Wales (Howay 1941:98)
1788 – Charles Duncan in the Princess Royal trades (Howay 1941:98)
1789– Meares in the North West America trading out of Nootka (Howay 1941:98)
1789 – June 11 Robert Gray in the Lady Washington (Howay 1941:98)
June 1791 – John Kendrick and a Haida Chief (possibly Koyah) battle – about 40 Haida killed including the chief’s wife and two children (AH_Box16_Folder8a_Mute Relics_Duff_1976).
1794 – Koyah captures an American and a British ship and kills their crews American ship may be Eleanora (Duff and Kew 1958:c58)
1795 – A Haida Chief (possibly Koyah) dies in a battle with John Boit and his crew Fifty to seventy Haida die. (AH_Box16_Folder8a_Mute Relics_Duff_1976).

1836-41 – SGang Gwaay is listed probably as Quee-ah in as a place of 20 houses and 308 people. (Given in John Wark’s list in Schoolcraft Indian Tribes, 1885)

c.a. 1860 – Tom Price who later becomes Chief Nan Sdins (often written in English as Ninstints) born at SGang Gwaay (Glatthaar 1968:27)

1862 – August – Francis Poole in the Rebecca starts copper mining venture at Skincuttle. Poole writes “Shortly after our landing in August, the brother-in-law of Ninstence [sic], chief of a tribe inhabiting the southern-most portions of Moresby Island, had declared himself the proprietor of the land we were then settling on, and
to keep friendly with the savage, we had paid him down fifty 'two-and-a-half point' blankets. (Poole 1872:122-3).

1862-3
Small pox epidemic killed upwards of 90% of Haida across Haida Gwa’ii.

1863 – Summer - Poole talks of small-pox at Skincuttle and burning houses to ensure it doesn’t spread. (Poole 1872)

1863 December – Poole was on the Leonide coming back from Victoria he writes: At New Aberdeen we had compassionately taken a European on board as a passenger via Queen Charlotte to Victoria. As ill-luck would have it, what should he do but fall sick of small-pox, some days before we arrived at the copper-mines? I entered a vehement protest against his being put on shore, knowing only too well the certain consequences. The little skipper insisted, however, and then weighed anchor without him. We whites, it is true, were not attacked; but scarce had the sick man landed when the Indians again caught it; and in a very short space of time some of our best friends of the Ninstence or Cape St. James tribe—to my sorrow, seeing how few genuine friends we counted in any of the tribes—had disappeared for ever from the scene. It was long before health could be restored to the surroundings of our little colony. (Poole 1872:194-5)

1864 – Spring – ‘... the next day we were simply inundated with natives, who seemed not to have the slightest notion of leaving me sole master of our chosen premises. Never having seen any of their faces till then, I could not at first conceive where they had all come from. I soon learnt, however, that they formed a reinforcement of Cape St. James Indians, who had arrived in two large canoes during the night. ... I counted a hundred and twenty-two of them. (Poole 1872: 248-9)

1878 - Dawson visits SGang Gwaay and notes ‘there are still a good many Indians there’ (Dawson 1880: 170)

1884 – Newton H. Chittenden visited SGang Gwaay and noted “30 inhabitants, 20 houses, 25 carved poles and 20 burial columns.” (Chittenden 1884:24). He was invited to sleep in a house at SGang Gwaay (Chittenden 1884:37 and 64). ‘Day after day and week after week we paddled, and rowed and sailed along these wonderful shores visiting the Indian villages of Cumshewa, Skedance, Laskeek, or Tanoo and Ninstints all occupied, and several others now abandoned.’ (Chittenden 1884:63)

1884 - The Indian Act is revised to include the Potlatch ban, the Potlatch being essential to Haida law and social and economic function, including the raising of poles.

c. 1885/6 - Missionary Thomas Crosby visited SGang Gwaay: “On the first visit we made to Clue we saw an exceedingly pitiful sight. On my way south we passed the heathen villages of Cumshuah and Ninstinks [sic], which had hardly any people left.
There remained a forest of crest poles, as monuments of their pride and folly.” (Crosby 1914:330)

late 1880s - By sometime in the late 1880s the few remaining families of SGang Gwaay had moved to Skidegate. They visited SGang Gwaay at various seasons to harvest resources.

c.a. 1892 – several houses at southern end burned by Koskimo [sic] and crew of a seal schooner (BC Archives, Charles F. Newcombe Fonds A01760_35_100)

Pre1900? Peter Kelly is taken to Ninstints by his stepfather, Thomas Price and Chief Ninstints. “Peter never forgot the time his stepfather and the old Chief Ninstints took him to visit deserted Ninstints in which most of the houses were and totem poles were still standing. (They were later destroyed by fire.). The party camped in one of the houses and Price told them many of the legends of the village. Later, Chief Ninstints took Peter to the ‘dead house’ on a small tidal island near the village,’ to meet my family. Many of the corpses were well preserved and the chief, lifting the lids of the coffins, introduced the boy to them as if they were still living persons. He tenderly stroked his mother’s long black hair and showed Peter the bullet hole that had ended the life of his former wife’s brother. He spoke to them in respectful greeting and that night, as the small party huddled around the fire, talked in all seriousness of the dead still inhabiting the village where they had lived and died. When they composed themselves to sleep no one left the house and to their knowledge there was no one else on the island, but towards morning they were awakened by a tremendous thump and clatter on the roof. The old chief went to the door and called, ”We come in all respect to greet you.” When daylight came and they went outside they saw that two stones, each the size of a man’s head had been lifted from the ground and thrown on the roof “They knew we were talking about them,” said the chief, “and they let us know they know we are here.” Christians or not, the Haidas believed in unseen powers and Peter never quite lost that belief. (Morley 1967:45-6)

1901 - Charles F. Newcome visits SGang Gwaay and takes photographs of the poles including the Haida Mortuary Pole (A50017).

1903 – Charles F. Newcome visits SGang Gwaay (BC Archives, Charles F. Newcombe Fonds A01759_34_1)

c.a. 1906 – Tom Price takes name Nan Sdins (Glatthaar 1968:27)

1913 – Charles F. Newcome visits SGang Gwaay (Province of BC Report of the Provincial Museum for the year 1913; 1914: G24)

1915 - An unknown group visits SGang Gwaay and takes a photograph of the frontal plate of the Haida Mortuary Pole (A50017), which has fallen to the ground.
Post 1915? Brush fire burns many poles

1927 – possible visit by Bureau of Mines. (Smyly and Smyly 2008: 127)

1935 - W.J. Alder removed four poles from Ninstints and they were taken to Prince Rupert parks (AH_Box16_Folder8a_Mute Relics_Duff_1976).

1947 Anthropologist Marius Barbeau visits SGang Gwaay. (MacDonald 1983:106)

1951 The Indian Act is amended, "legalizing" the Potlatch.

Early 1950s - Walter Koerner visits SGang Gwaay.

1956 – May 6 – Powell River Executives visit SGang Gwaay (AH_Box11_Folder27_Totem Pole Island_1956)

1956 - October 16-20th - Wilson Duff and Michael Kew visit SGang Gwaay as part of BC Totem Pole Preservation Committee to look at poles and see if any are worth salvaging. (AH_Box16_Folder2_Crowsnest_1957_Poles). Listing and map of poles exists (BC Archives Wilson Duff Fonds B6046_112). Walter Koerner paid for this work (AH_Box18_5-D-2).

1956 – October 30 letter from Molly Stewart to Anfield re: poles at Ninstints. She writes from Ketchikan, Alaska. Says belonging to her ‘great great grandfather, Elijah Ninstints” continues to write: “I am the only living relative of my forefathers, and as a child remember my grandmother, Matilda Brown and her cousin, Timothy Tate, sold four totem poles from this location, Chief Ninstints Village.” She thought that they had already been taken and was upset that no permission had been sought. On Dec 3 Wilson Duff responded that no poles had yet been taken and that they were in the process of finding out about poles and payments and any information she could give would be much appreciated. (AH_Box12_Folder4_TotemPoleData_1956)

1956 – November 14 letter from Duff to Hawthorn telling of a visit from Dr. Peter Kelly re: Anthony Island poles “His present reaction is that we should search out the owners and pay them individually. He gave me the names of two candidates (in addition to himself), a man in New Metlakatla and a woman in North Vancouver. There are a couple of leads to others. It looks as though a trip to Skidegate will be necessary to clear the matter up.” (AH_Box12_Folder4_TotemPoleData_1956)

1956 - Dec 4 letter from P.P. Henson Queen Charlotte Agency, Masset – “I believe that the Skidegate Council and descendants of the original inhabitants of Ninstints Village would be willing to approve the removal of any salvageable totem-poles in order to have them properly preserved for posterity as objects of historic and cultural significance, but I doubt whether they would ever consent to the removal of grave-poles which contained the bones of their ancestors.” (Queen Charlotte Agency, Dec 4, 1956).
1956 – December 19 Letter from Duff to Skidegate Band Council – Apologizes for misleading press accounts. They are trying to find living descendants – Dr. Peter Kelly of Nanaimo and Molly Stewart of Ketchikan have given them some assistance. Also they are working to get some legal status for island to protect it.
(AH_Box12_Folder4_TotemPoleData_1956)

1957 – January – Anthony Island declared a Class A Provincial park

1957 – April – Wilson Duff travels to Skidegate and meets with numerous elders and then talks with Band Council about salvaging the poles. (BC Archives Wilson Duff Fonds B6043_5)

1957 – April 17 Skidegate Council resolution to permit salvage of poles. Payment $50 per section – not less than $700 nor more than $900 to the band who takes on responsibility of payment to owners if any can be found and if not to disburse for benefit of the band. Signed by Peter N. Martin (chief), Clarence Collinson (Councillor), and Dwyer Brown (Councillor).
(AH_Box12_Folder9_TotemPoleData_1957)

1957 – June 20-June 28. - a dozen poles removed- 7 to UBC – two interior poles, four frontal poles and one mortuary pole.

1957 – June 22 starting at 3 p.m. cutting of two memorial poles (both at Royal BC Museum) and mortuary pole (A50017). “The latter was the most difficult and cumbersome pole we had to tackle. It was carved from a log almost four feet in diameter at the wider, uppermost end, and have the design of a grizzly bear and a whale holding an upside down human being in its mouth. The upper butt-end of the pole had been hollowed out to hold the grave box of the chief and then the cavity had been boarded over. The frontal boards had once carried the carving of a moon, represented by a semi-human face, the nose of which turned into a bird's beak. The frontal board had long since disappeared, but the carving on the lowest part of the support post was very fine. (Smyly and Smyly 2008:43)

1957 – June 23 – Jon Smyly notes: “With no more crates to make for the time being, we [Smyly and 'Swede'] helped the others ready the bear and whale mortuary for its box. The top hollowed out section of the column, which bore on each side a relief carving of the whale’s dorsal fin, had to be cut off to do away with unnecessary weight. Nearly everyone took turns at this tough sawing job. Like all the rest of the poles, the mortuary was soaking wet and a tanglement of roots grew all through it. The saw, which was none to sharp to begin with, would either snag on these roots, or the cut would close and jam it. Then wedges were driven in, or pieces chopped off with the axe so sawing could continue.

“The original length of the mortuary before we cut it was 20 feet three inches by four feet in diameter. Its weight was estimated at about two and a half tons. Even with five feet cut off the column, all of us shoving could not budge it.
Blocks and tackle from the seiner’s rigging had to be put into different service. A sled was constructed and a track of driftwood logs was laid down to the beach. Small round logs were found to act as rollers.

First, ropes were placed around the pole at each end. Then everyone tugged furiously to roll it onto the sled. Just as the mortuary began to move at last, Wilson shouted, “Hey! Hold it! Hold it! The ropes are damaging the carving!” He quickly took off his jacket and stuffed it under the rope where most of the damage was being done. [Sue Rowley Note: This is probably the area around the right eye where rope cuts can still be seen]

We started pulling again. Slowly but surely we got the pole resting on the edge of the sled, where it suddenly flopped with a crash into its cradle, breaking some of the cross-pieces in the process. The column just about rolled off the other side, but somehow we managed to hold it.”

Blocks and tackle were dragged down the beach. With one end fastened to the pole and the other tied to rocks projecting from the small island in front of Ninstints, we began the task of hauling the mortuary to the beach. The whole crew, except the two cameramen who were filming our struggles, were pulling on the ropes with all their strength. It was a two-hour battle – and then it began to rain hard.

Everyone dropped the ropes and ran to fetch their raincoats from camp. By the time we returned, it had stopped raining. We shed our rain gear, took hold of the ropes, and a few minutes later the rain came again. This type of weather kept up until we finally got the pole dragged into the centre of the bay, where we hoped it would float when the tide came in.

After gulping down a quick lunch, we had to hurry to get three sides of the mortuary crated before high tide. The idea was to complete three sides, then at high water, to take the rowboat out, turn the pole over and just wait for the ebb tide on the morrow to rush out and finish the crate. The sea was sloshing around our feet when we had gone as far as possible with the crating and had secured it with ropes to logs high on the beach. (Smyly and Smyly 2008:45-7)

1957 – June 27 – Jon Smyly noted “I asked them how they felt about the removal of totems from their ancestral homes. Roy said that they didn’t really mind but added, “How would you like it if we came to Victoria and took away the tombstones from Pioneer Square?” I was not certain how I would feel under the circumstances, as none of my relatives are interred there, but I took his point. (Smyly and Smyly 2008:67)

1957 – June 29 – they left island towing the crated poles.

1957 – June 30 at 5 a.m. began loading crates on the navy ship Laymore (Smyly and Smyly 2008: 79)

1957 – July 3 – after visiting Victoria and leaving some poles there the Laymore arrived in Vancouver with mortuary pole and others for UBC.

1957 November 1 – Bill Reid CBC radio piece on totem poles airs. Available here:
http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1742276814

1958 – Pole A50017 is erected as part of a display of 23 poles along University Boulevard from June to September. Poles were erected as part of celebrations of the centenary of BC becoming a crown colony (AH_Box16_Folder2 press clippings). Video footage of installation is available at http://searcharchives.vancouver.ca/uploads/r/null/1/1/1112772/9b87ac5c-325c-4d7f-9b51-a8c7972ec57b-V00203.mp4

1959 – End of January all the poles were moved from University Boulevard to the new carving shed. (AH_Box16_Folder8_Press clippings_1957)

1959 – Bill Reid documentary film Totem about removal of poles from SGang Gwaay is released. It is available here: http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/rescuing-the-timeless-totems-of-sgang-gwaay

1961 – Film The Silent Ones about the removal of the poles from SGang Gwaay created by the BC Department of Recreation and Conservation. Colour Film. Film and film out takes are available for viewing at BC Archives.

c. 1973 – Haida citizen canoes to SGang Gwaay and takes on its care through 1981.

1976 – The Haida Mortuary Pole (A50017) is installed in the new Museum of Anthropology building.

1980 - SGang Gwaay is declared a Provincial Heritage Site under BCs Heritage Conservation Act.


1981 – Skidegate creates the Haida Gwaii Watchmen Program to protect village sites in the southern-end of Haida Gwaii, including SGang Gwaay.

1983 - SGang Gwaay named a UNESCO World Heritage Site (AH_Box16_Folder8_NinstintsFilm)

1983 - Film Ninstints: Shadow Keepers of the Past is released. It contains footage of both Totem and The Silent Ones in it. (AH_Box16_Folder8_NinstintsFilm; transcript of film is available here: http://uvac.uvic.ca/gallery/spreitz/ninstints-shadow-keepers-of-the-past-haida-gwaii/)

1985 – The Council of the Haida Nation declares Gwaii Haanas (the region within where SGang Gwaay is located) a Haida Heritage Site.
1993 – The Gwaii Haanas Agreement is signed, an interim measures agreement between the governments of the Haida Nation and Canada until the Haida Title case is resolved, where the region of Gwaii Haanas is managed by a 50/50 board of Haida and Canadian representatives appointed by their respective governments.


2004 – MOA Repatriation Committee provisionally approves repatriation and MOA Management Committee also provisionally approves in advance of request from Haida Repatriation Committee.

2009 – Haida Mortuary Pole (A50017) removed from Great Hall and placed in Massive Carving storage.


2017 – September- MOA restates provisional approval and requests an appraisal as required under UBC policy.

2017 – October 18 - Appraisal received from Jon Livingstone. Mortuary Pole (A50017) appraised at $975,000 for repatriation purposes only.

2017 – November 13 – Estimate of $39,000 to transport pole from UBC to Haida Gwaii received from Pro-Tech Industrial Movers.

2018 – January – Meeting of MOA Repatriation Committee Chair and Provost and VP Academic re: repatriation of Haida Mortuary Pole (A50017)

2018 – March – Meeting of MOA Repatriation Committee Chair and Haida Repatriation Committee Chair and Executive Director of the Haida Gwaii Museum.

2018 – May – Submission of Report to UBC Board of Governors.

**Bibliography**

AHHLA (Audrey and Harry Hawthorn Library and Archives at MOA)
Audrey Hawthorn Fonds: AH_Box12_Folder9_TotemPoleData_1957; AH_Box11_Folder27_Totem Pole Island_1956; AH_Box16_Folder2_Crowsnest_1957_Poles; AH_Box16_Folder8_Smyly_Canadian Geographic_1981; AH_Box16_Folder8_NinstintsFilm; AH_Box16_Folder8a_Mute Relics_Duff_1976; AH_Box18_5-D-2

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Yahguudangang—To Pay Respect

As museum professionals, and as human beings, we carry the responsibility to affect societal change by mainstreaming Canada’s dark history with Indigenous peoples while actively working to set things right. In the Haida museum realm, the path towards conciliation has been shaped by Yahguudangang—the act of paying respect.

The Haida Nation sees this work, also known as “repatriation,” as based upon mutual respect, cooperation, and trust. Yahguudangang is how we’ve brought home and reinterred the remains of over 500 of our relatives. It is why we visit our belongings held in museums around the world. It is how the Haida Gwaii Museum came into being. It is what our own collection of treasures is built upon.

Yahguudangang has brought a new depth to our Nation’s healing, and our ability to heal with others. It provides opportunity for mainstream museums to become voluntary agents of change, rather than physical evidence of Canada’s biological and cultural genocides. It can result in long-standing, mutually beneficial relationships between nations and institutions, and cherished friendships between people on the ground.

Yahguudangang challenges us to stick around, even when we think our work is done, because colonization is still alive and well. So what are we going to do about it? Decolonization is not quick, easy, or pretty; it is complicated, powerful, and transformative. It is more than repatriation—it is a way of life. We want people to want to give our relatives back. We want people to want to see our treasures back home. We want people to want to make things right and find a way forward, together.