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MUKWONAGO COMMUNITY LIBRARY REPATRIATES BELONGINGS TO THE WILTON RANCHERIA TRIBE IN CALIFORNIA

(MUKWONAGO, WI) – The Mukwonago Community Library (MCL) has committed to reuniting a Collection with the Wilton Rancheria Tribe in Elk Grove, California, this May, under the federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). This Collection was part of the donated Grutzmacher Collection before being legally repatriated to Wilton Rancheria in April 2023. The Mukwonago Community Library is the first public library in Wisconsin, and the third public library in the nation, to transfer control of Tribal Belongings under NAGPRA.

“This repatriation has been a meaningful collaboration between the Wilton Rancheria Tribe and the Mukwonago Community Library Board,” said Library Director Abby Armour. “These Belongings were removed from a burial site near Sacramento decades ago and we are proud to be able to reunite them with the Tribe in time for reburial.”

MCL’s Grutzmacher Collection currently contains approximately 12,400 Native American items. The items, along with other historical artifacts, were willed to MCL in 1965 by Arthur Grutzmacher, a local collector and dealer. MCL has worked with the Mukwonago Historical and Museum Society to display the majority of the Collection for the last 54 years at the Red Brick Museum. In 2022 it was recognized that MCL met the federal

criteria as a “museum” and therefore has the responsibility to comply with NAGPRA. As part of the process, MCL worked with Bernstein & Associates NAGPRA Consultants to catalog the Grutzmacher Collection, identify eligible items, and submit the required Summary to the Federal Register and Tribes. Since November 2022, MCL Director and Trustees have participated in 9 consultations with Tribes to work towards repatriation.

The Wilton Rancheria Tribe’s Collection will be delivered by Library Director Armour in person to maintain the chain of custody and ensure its safety. The Library Board utilized endowment funds to pay for the travel of Director Armour to California. “Each Tribe handles the physical return of Belongings very differently,” stated Director Armour. “We are always learning about how we can be better stewards and fulfill our duties to the local, Tribal, and educational communities.”

“The Wilton Rancheria Tribe has been working diligently toward the safe and honorable return of their Ancestors and Belongings. Great relationships, like the one we have with the Mukwonago Community Library, are what makes this process easier. We are immensely proud of these partnerships that help us bring them home,” said Wilton Rancheria’s NAGPRA Manager. “This partnership between the Tribe and the Library is a prime example of how repatriation can be accomplished together.”

MCL expects additional requests for repatriation of other items in the Grutzmacher Collection and is dedicated to complying with all NAGPRA requirements and working together with Tribes.

For more information about the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), visit www.nps.gov/subjects/nagpra.

For more information about the Grutzmacher Collection, visit <https://www.mukwonagolibrary.org/grutzmacher-collection>.

About the Mukwonago Community Library

The Mukwonago Community Library (MCL) is a public library in the Village of Mukwonago, a family-oriented community located 25 miles southwest of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The MCL serves over 23,000 area residents and offers a variety of services and spaces in its 28,000-square-foot Library facility including the MetaSpace 511 (makerspace), The Thingery (library of things), and the Memory Lab for digitizing family photos and film. The MCL is a member of the Bridges Library System which includes the 24 libraries located in Jefferson and Waukesha Counties in Wisconsin. For more information visit www.mukwonagolibrary.org

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