



DNA Barcoding of Northwest Coast Objects: A method for fostering reciprocal relationships between museums and communities

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The American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) has undertaken the restoration of the Northwest Coast Hall to improve the representation and inclusivity of the exhibited cultures through collaboration with First Nation leaders and Native scholars. Several objects in the collection, dating from the late 19th Century and early 20th, contain unknown animal materials including fur, hide, hair and skin. Using molecular techniques to extract degraded DNA, genetic analysis was performed using Sanger sequencing and subsequent genetic information was checked against existing genetic databases to identify unknown animal materials. Identification of species used in the preparation of cultural objects is important for the conservation of cultural knowledge and informs the conservation and interpretation of cultural objects. The results from our on-going collaboration will be provided to a council of Native representatives to help maintain traditions and foster reciprocal relationships between the museum and the cultures represented within our walls.