

Ceremonial Basket Cap Returns Home

The Yurok Tribe of northern California welcomed the return of a ceremonial basket cap on June 16 in Santa Fe. Yurok Repatriation Coordinator Dale Ann Frye Sherman, Yurok elders Glen Moore, Sr. and Walt McCovey, Jr., and seven other tribal members received the cap on behalf of the People of the Klamath River. The ceremony was attended by Repatriation Foundation president Elizabeth Sackler and representatives of tribes from around the country. They were all in Santa Fe for the annual Keepers of the Treasures conference (see page 2, "Keepers").

It was thanks to the initiative of Professor Franchot Ballinger (who teaches at the University of Cincinnati) that the cap was returned. His own research led him to believe that he had in his possession an object of ceremonial significance for the Yurok, and he decided to repatriate it (see page 3, "Perspectives"). He then contacted the Repatriation Foundation for assistance with its return.

The American Indian Ritual Object Repatriation Foundation is a non-federally funded intercultural partnership committed to assisting in the return of sacred ritual material to American Indian nations and to educating the public of the importance of repatriation.



Yurok Repatriation Coordinator Dale Ann Frye Sherman by the Klamath River. Photo courtesy of Michael R. Meuser.

Steve Thornton of the Repatriation Foundation contacted both the Karuk Tribe of California and the Yurok Tribe about the cap. Karuk Tribal Chairperson Alvis Johnson confirmed Professor Ballinger's identification of the cap as probably a Yurok ceremonial item. Meanwhile, Ms. Sherman consulted with Yurok elders and other tribal members, and then informed the Repatriation Foundation that the cap was indeed Yurok and that the tribe would be happy to accept its return.

The return ceremony took place at the Institute of American Indian Arts. Most of the Keepers conference attendees gathered as Ms. Sherman, the Yurok elders and other Yurok tribal members, Dr. Sackler, and the Board of Directors of Keepers stood with the cap. Dr. Sackler, representing the Repatriation Foundation, presented the cap to Ms. Sherman

on behalf of Professor Ballinger. Ms. Sherman presented the cap to the Yurok elders. Mr. Moore and Mr. McCovey then sang a Yurok ceremonial song normally only sung on the banks of the Klamath River in the context of Yurok ceremony. It was a deeply moving experience for everyone.

"It was such an affirmation of what NAGPRA is all about, and of what we had been hearing about at the conference," said Ms. Sherman. "And what was very special was having someone give something from the heart, not just because he *had* to give it back." Ms. Sherman was referring to the fact that the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) requires that federally funded institutions such as museums return

Farewell with Thanks, Marty

Dr. Martin Sullivan's carefully considered resignation from the Repatriation Foundation's Board of Trustees this past May was eight years almost to the day of our first communications. In May 1991, Marty was the Director of The Heard Museum and Vice President of AAM, chairing a national task force on Museum/Native American relations. In a letter to me at the time of my return of "masks" to the Hopi, Marty wrote, "We may be entering an era of far greater respect for native people and their traditional cultures, in which museums, dealers and collectors can play a powerful educational role." Marty's commitment to repatriation had already been sealed: as Director of the New York State Museum from 1983-1990, he provided the final thrust needed for the return of twelve wampum belts to the Iroquois Confederacy, after nearly a century of rebuke at requests for their return home.

Marty and I met and shared our experiences of repatriation. We marveled at resulting life changes that had swiftly occurred after our actions. Marty was the first of many non-Indian people that I have since met whose lives took a new turn after involvement with spiritual items and the people from whence they originated.

As a Founding Trustee, serving two rotations, Marty assisted us in reaching national visibility: setting our course, providing pragmatic guidance, and unswerving enthusiasm. Now, seven years later, in addition to his continued directorship at The Heard, Marty is Chairman of the Cultural Property Advisory Committee (appointed by the President), on the NAGPRA Review Committee, and Commissioner of the Accreditation Commission at AAM. Marty's plate is full!

Thank you Marty, for the energy you have given to the Repatriation Foundation and your continued work which provides vital direction in the repatriation of American Indian human remains and belongings.

Elizabeth Sackler, President

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RETROSPECT

✿ On June 10, 1998, the U.S. House Resources Committee heard testimony regarding a proposed amendment to NAGPRA, H.R. 2893. Known as the "Hastings Amendment," it was written without tribal input and would make Native Americans' ancestors' remains more available to scientific experiment without Native American consultation or consent. The Foundation submitted testimony for the record.

✿ The Foundation was represented at the seventh annual Keepers of the Treasures conference by President Elizabeth Sackler. The theme for this year's conference was: "Native Languages: Repatriating the Spirit of

Nations." It was held in Santa Fe on June 15 - 18.

✿ Anne Cassidy represented the Foundation at the fourth annual conference for the International Day of the World's Indigenous People, held at the U.N. on August 5-6.

✿ President Elizabeth Sackler gave a presentation, "Intercultural Partnerships and the Private Sector" at the Partnership Opportunities for Federally-Associated Collections Conference, held November 18 - 20. The conference was sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of the Interior, and hosted by The San Diego Natural History Museum with the San Diego Archaeological Center.

Keepers of the Treasures

Keepers of the Treasures is a Cultural Council of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. It is a national organization devoted to preservation, affirmation, and celebration of native cultures through traditions and programs that maintain native languages and lifeways.

The group also works for the protection and conservation of places that are historic and sacred to indigenous peoples, providing technical assistance and identifying funding sources.

In addition, they provide information on legislative and regulatory developments affecting cultural heritage preservation activities. Keepers of the Treasures was established in 1991. A newsletter is published quarterly.

The annual conference hosted by the Keepers is always a well-attended event. Repatriation specialists, tribal elders, and concerned members of constituent tribes come from every part of the country. Lectures, workshops and formal ceremonies are scheduled, but impromptu gatherings and discussions are always an important part of the conferences, too. This year's conference theme was "Native Languages: Repatriating the Spirit of Nations."

Recently, Keepers of the Treasures moved their offices from Washington, D.C. to Santa Fe, New Mexico. They may be contacted at:

Keepers of the Treasures
P.O. Box 6807
Santa Fe, NM 87502
Tel: (505) 827-4016

sacred material, but there is no legal requirement that private collectors repatriate Native American sacred objects. The cap had been part of Professor Ballinger's private collection.

A receiving line formed and the guests came through to greet the cap and to congratulate the Yurok.

Ms. Sherman told later about what happened when a two-year-old Yurok boy came through the receiving line: he touched the cap attentively, spoke quietly to it, then to her. "It was an important moment for me," she explained, "because it was a promise for the future."

Once the cap was back in Yurok territory, it was taken to the river where the dances traditionally take place.

The Yurok Tribe's repatriation office is new, and this was their first repatriation. It has been the catalyst for discussion among the Yurok about establishing a Cultural Center that would serve to protect material returned to the Yurok and to make it available for ceremony and education.

"Sacred objects won't be behind glass, but will be part of the community. The Cultural Center will be a celebration of our survival and continuance and of the sacred."

For the Yurok, as for many tribes, resources are limited, and there are not enough staff members for the tremendous work involved in the implementation of NAGPRA. But in spite of the difficulties that NAGPRA presents, Ms. Sherman feels strongly that the legislation has allowed for important progress. "There's a power in our ancestors and their memory, and it lives in us. It's up to us to bring them home."

Perspectives

By Franchot Ballinger

About a decade ago, my wife and I were given a piece of Native American basketry. The giver told us nothing about its origin or how she came to have the piece; nevertheless, we admired the artistry the basket reflected. Last year, I discovered that the "basket" was, in fact, a Yurok ceremonial hat. Having such a sacred object in our home was exciting, but I knew that our home was not where the cap belonged and that it should return to the Yurok people. A little research brought me to the American Indian Ritual Object Repatriation Foundation, which agreed to contact the Yurok tribe about repatriating the hat.

Finally, arrangements were made for Dr. Elizabeth Sackler to return the cap publicly to Yurok representatives at the June *Keepers of the Treasures* meeting in Santa Fe. I could not be present, but Dr. Sackler and Dale Sherman (NAGPRA Coordinator for the Yurok Tribe) have recounted for me some of the evening's touching events, specifically two Yuroks singing over the cap a song normally sung privately in a ceremony on the banks of the Klamath River. This was followed by a Lakota group's singing an honoring song. Then the guests formed a receiving line to honor the cap and to congratulate the Yurok people.

Now in its true home, the cap is being used ceremonially again. In a letter to me, Ms. Sherman wrote that the cap looks "healthier" and that "a deep rich luster is returning to the cap."

Even though I could not personally return the cap, events surrounding its repatriation have been profoundly moving for me. What I have felt most is a great joy in knowing that the cap is where it belongs, doing what it was meant to do. I have never experienced so intensely and dramatically the truths that giving creates joy for the giver and that others' joy (in this case, the Yuroks') can become mine.

I thank the American Indian Ritual Object Repatriation Foundation for their role in the cap's repatriation. Most of all, however, I thank the Divine Spirit for making me a part of this experience. My gratitude is deep and immeasurable.

NOW AVAILABLE

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In Print

The Rights of Indians and Tribes: The Basic ACLU Guide to Indian and Tribal Rights. Stephen Pevar, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press. American Civil Liberties Union, 1992. This "ACLU handbook" discusses the powers of Indian tribes; civil and criminal jurisdiction on Indian reservations; Indian hunting, fishing and water rights; taxation; the Indian Civil Rights Act; the Indian Child Welfare Act; and tribal jurisdiction over non-Indians.

Supplement I Update

The Repatriation Foundation has published *Supplement I to Mending the Circle: A Native American Repatriation Guide (Understanding and Implementing NAGPRA, the Official Smithsonian and other Repatriation Policies)*. *Supplement I* updates *Mending the Circle*, which the Foundation originally published in 1996.

Supplement I includes a chapter by Jack Trope, Esq., explaining how the NAGPRA regulations (effective January 1996) and the National Museum of the American Indian Act

International Journal of Cultural Property. Vol. 7, No. 1, 1998.

"Special Issue: Ethical Considerations and Cultural Property." Cary, NC: Oxford University Press. A bi-annual journal edited by Patty Gerstenblith. A special issue planned for next year will focus on heritage issues of indigenous groups. Subscription on a yearly basis costs US\$155, or US\$60 reduced rate for academic individuals. Single issues cost US\$90, or US\$45 for academic individuals. For more information call, (800) 852-7323.

amendments (October 1996) affect the original legislation. It also explains the procedures set forth by the Interim Rules on Civil Penalties (issued January 1997). Appendices include the complete text of the NAGPRA regulations, the NMAI amendments and the Interim Rules on Civil Penalties, as well as international repatriation procedures for the NMAI. *Supplement I* provides the most current policies and procedures for the Smithsonian Institution, as well as repatriation committee members.

For more information, see the order form on page 3. If you have questions, please call: (212) 980-9441 or fax: (212) 421-2746.

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