

Returning Home a Jemez Ancestor

By Julia Emerson

I have been asked to write about an experience, the best parts of which either cannot be put into words or may not be told. Nevertheless, I will try to sketch the outlines of this, for me, remarkable exchange in the best way that I can.

About twelve years ago I went along with a friend to a gallery of American Indian Art, and was captivated by a small intense mask. Its expression spoke to me of anger and alienation. The more I looked at it, the more I felt that it had volition, that it was miserable where it was, away from where it belonged, hanging on the wall of a gallery. Not knowing quite what to do, I purchased it, though I do not collect American Indian art. I knew it wasn't mine, but I didn't know where it belonged.



Julia Emerson

The American Indian Ritual Object Repatriation Foundation is a not-for-profit intercultural partnership chartered by the Board of Regents of the State of New York. The Foundation is committed to assisting in the return of sacred ritual material to American Indian nations and to educating the public about the importance of repatriation.

In November 1998, I read about Elizabeth Sackler and the Repatriation Foundation in the *New York Times*. I contacted Elizabeth,

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Welcoming Home an Ancestor

By Joshua Madalena

My funding is very limited, so Julia Emerson decided to make the effort in bringing the Ancestor back by driving to New Mexico. I assured Julia that she was doing a great deed for our people and that the Great Spirits would be protecting her on her journey.



Joshua Madalena

After many months of communicating with Anne Cassidy of the Repatriation Foundation and Julia, it was finally time. As the elders and I waited for Julia here at the Pueblo, a feeling no words can express rushed through me. This return was as significant as a long lost person coming home — I knew this was real.

We accepted the Ancestor with great honor and welcomed back our long lost soul. It was a great day. We as Native People believe if you do good deeds towards any living thing, then you will be rewarded and bestowed upon with great blessings.

Joshua Madalena is the Special Research Assistant in the Department of Resource Protection-Cultural Preservation. A Traditional Leader of the Jemez, Joshua oversaw the original investigation of the mask's origins, and made the arrangements for its return. He is currently designing an exhibit on the History of Jemez in the new Walatowa Visitor Center.

Thank You and Best Wishes

In our last issue of News & Notes, I welcomed Jason Harding to our staff. Jason has left us to continue his work in Native American repatriation as a consultant for the National Museum of the American Indian. He was an important member of our staff for all too brief a time. His knowledge, experience, and, not least, his humor will be missed. It is with regret and warm wishes for success that we bid him farewell.

Elizabeth A. Sackler, Ph.D., President

RETROSPECT

✿ Trustees Marilyn Youngbird and Anne Bleecker Corcos, Executive Director Anne Cassidy, and Repatriation Coordinator Jason Harding attended a conference in London entitled “Repatriation and Restitution.” The conference, hosted by the Museums and Galleries Commission, introduced the publication of guidelines for the repatriation of material from indigenous peoples from British museums and galleries. Marilyn Youngbird gave a presentation about Native American repatriation, and Anne Cassidy spoke about the work of the Repatriation Foundation. Anne Bleecker Corcos and the Museums and Galleries Commission provided financial support which made our participation possible. We extend our thanks to them.

✿ Executive Director Anne Cassidy chaired “Implementing the Spirit of NAG-PRA: Museum Practices Meet Native American Concerns” at this year’s annual conference of the American Association of Museums. Held in Baltimore on May 18, there were more repatriation panels than ever before, and they were well attended.

✿ Members of the Board of Trustees and the Advisory Committee have been particularly active in recent months, participating directly in repatriations. Marilyn Youngbird, Jack Trope, Anne Bleecker Corcos, and N. Scott Momaday have all worked to assist in the return of material from private collections.

Perspectives

By Elizabeth A. Sackler, Ph.D.
President

The highest profile Repatriation Claim to date was dropped on June 20, 2000, due to a carefully crafted agreement between the American Museum of Natural History in New York City and the Grande Ronde Community of Oregon. In dispute was the Willamette Meteorite known to the Grande Ronde as Tomanowos. One of the beauties of this progressive agreement lies in the compromise and satisfaction proclaimed by both parties. Mutual respect and recognition of distinct traditions launched the agreement signed by Tribal Chair Kathryn Harrison and Museum President Ellen Futter.

The agreement ensures access by the Community to Tomanowos for religious, historical, and cultural purposes while remaining on view at the museum in New York City for millions of visitors to see. The description of the importance of Tomanowos to the Grande Ronde is being placed beside the description of its scientific history.

There are interesting examples of the meteorite’s spiritual and scientific histories.

Grande Ronde Community*

Tomanowos — Representation of Sky People. Upon its descent, union occurred between sky, earth and water. Traditions and the spiritual link with Tomanowos continue today.

Resting on the ground, Tomanowos collected rainwater in the basins. This rainwater served as a powerful purifying, cleansing and healing source.

Museum of Natural History*

Meteorite — Possibly, core of a planet colliding with another planet. Our Sun formed 4.5 billion years ago giving rise to comets, asteroids, and planets and all life on earth.

Only 600 of the 2,500 meteorites found on earth are made of iron. Over many centuries rainwater interacting with iron sulfide deposits produced sulfuric acid resulting in the large cavities that held rainwater.

Though vocabularies as fact or attitudes of compilation of data may differ, metaphors of the age, import and universal power echo loudly.

*Information taken from a press release sent by the Museum of Natural History.

In Memorium

We join with Dr. Elizabeth A. Sackler and her family in mourning the passing away of her mother, Mrs. Else Sackler, on March 16, 2000. Mrs. Sackler’s in-kind contributions over the years were tremendously important to the Repatriation Foundation. She was a member of our highest category of contributors, the Circle of Friends, and followed our work, cheered our successes and shared her own knowledge and experience freely. She is missed.

Another Bird Returns to Hopi

Mr. Wes Mudge of La Jolla, California was surprised to see a picture in the *San Diego Union* last year of a small wooden bird that looked very much like one in his own collection. The bird in the newspaper, he read, was sacred to the Hopi Tribe, and had recently been returned to the Hopi by a collector who had recognized its importance to them. Mr. Mudge contacted the Hopi Tribe and the Repatriation Foundation about the one that he held.



A joyous occasion—Wes Mudge, Howard Zatzkin, and Marilyn Youngbird gather with the Hopi Councilors following the repatriation.

Mr. Mudge had admired the beauty of the bird when he purchased it from a gallery several years earlier, and had been told very little about its origins and history. But when the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office received photographs of it, tribal elders recognized it, and knew which Hopi community it had come from. It was not long before Mr. Lee Lomayestewa, Research Assistant for the Cultural Preservation Office of the Hopi Tribe, contacted both the Repatriation Foundation and Mr. Mudge with the news that the bird is indeed of special religious significance to the Hopi. The Hopi, he said, would like to receive the bird.

For Mr. Mudge, the question was not whether to return the bird, but how. There were various options for transporting it. And there was the possibility of a tax deduction. However, there was also the sacred nature of the bird, and its role in the lives of the Hopi and of Mr. Mudge himself. He explained to the Repatriation Foundation and to the Hopi that he needed time to think about how to return it.

In April 2000, in consultation with the Hopi Cultural Preservation

Office, Mr. Mudge prepared the sacred bird for travel according to traditional practice, and brought it to Arizona. Representatives from communities throughout the Hopi Tribe met and prayed with Mr. Mudge when the bird was returned.

Marilyn Youngbird (Arikara/Hidatsa), Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Repatriation Foundation also traveled to Hopi in order to represent the Foundation at the solemn and joyous occasion. She described the return: "It was so touching. The priest took the sacred object and he prayed before he opened it, and seeing that it had been wrapped according to ancient tradition, he said to Wes, 'Who told you how to do this?' Wes replied, 'A friend told me that it should be wrapped in something and not just be brought open handed.'

"They thanked him, and said that what he had done was really honorable. The elders began to pray over the object and for Wes in the ancient

language of the Hopi. "They went around the entire table," remembers Marilyn, "Everyone prayed and touched the sacred object, literally crying that it came home. The interpreter told us that it had been stolen thirty years ago from its altar. And there it was!

"When they finished, everyone came around in a circle and shook our hands. As they were shaking our hands, I couldn't help myself — I was crying. Every one of the elder men were crying. Seeing them cry made me cry even more. It was just so powerful! There are no words to describe the power of the prayer and the power of the elders who had prayed so long.

"They said, 'So much has changed, and we'll pray hard for our way of life to come back, but so much has been lost, and we just have to pray with what we have. Pray to learn how we can bring back our sacred way of life.' It was very powerful."

and subsequent research coordinated by Joshua Madalena, a traditional leader of the Jemez and the Special Research Assistant in the Department of Resource Protection-Cultural Preservation, confirmed that the mask was indeed important and had been missing from the Pueblo for some time. The repatriation of the mask became a long process that resulted in an indescribably moving experience.

When I packed the mask for the trip to the Pueblo last October, I had the distinct impression that it was aware that it was going home. The energy felt different. In place of the angry frustrated expression that I had perceived before, it seemed to me that I saw something gentle and sweet and full of anticipation. This may have been my imagination, but I felt a surge of excitement that I don't think was entirely my own.

After Joshua received the mask on behalf of the Jemez, I sat for a while and talked to the men who had been there to welcome it. Joshua gave me a special tour of the village, a unique experience for a visitor to the Pueblo.

The Jemez wanted to know more about how the mask had come to me and how I had kept it. They felt that my relationship with the mask had been good and deep, that they would always consider me the surrogate parent of the mask, that I would receive many blessings and that I would always be welcome at the Pueblo. As the Elders suggested, it has been a good year, full of magic and wonder. I have no doubt that the blessings that they spoke of have been protecting and inspiring me.

On a more mundane level, the mask turned out to be very valuable in the eyes of an appraiser, and its return allowed me to claim a significant tax reduction. I had promised myself that if this were the case, I would donate the money I had saved to the Pueblo to be used for Cultural Preservation. At the beginning of this year, I was able to send a check for \$10,000 to assure that the work of Jemez cultural preservation continues.

Julia Emerson is a California book artist with a lifelong interest in Native American Peoples.

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