

Corporation Returns Cherokee Mask

On February 25, 1997, the American Indian Ritual Object Repatriation Foundation repatriated a ceremonial mask to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Chief Joyce C. Dugan, traditionalists Walker and Pat Calhoun, and Executive Director of Cultural Resources, Lynne Harlan, accepted the mask on behalf of the tribe. The mask had been donated to the Repatriation Foundation by Continental Casualty Company.

In early 1996, Lynne Harlan heard that Christie's was looking at a Cherokee mask for possible consignment. Chief Dugan wrote a letter to Christie's requesting that the mask not be sold. She offered several avenues for repatriation, including the mask's donation to the American Indian Ritual Object Repatriation Foundation. The Repatriation Foundation also sent information about its work as a conduit to Christie's to be forwarded to the unknown consignor of the mask. The consignor turned out to be Continental Casualty Company.

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.



Lynne Harlan, Elizabeth Sackler, Patrick Calhoun, (standing l to r) and Joyce Dugan look on as Walker Calhoun signs a Statement of Return restoring a Buffalo mask to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Photo by Laura Smith.

Over the years, Continental Casualty had amassed a large and diverse art collection. CNA Insurance Company acquired Continental Casualty in May of 1995, and made the decision to auction the art collection through Christie's auction house in New York. When Patricia Freda, Vice President for Corporate Real Estate at CNA Insurance Company was hired in June of 1996, the sale of the art fell under her direction. A collector of contemporary Native American crafts and art, Ms. Freda had always admired Native American culture. Ms. Freda learned of the ceremonial nature of the mask, and that the Eastern Band of

Cherokee Indians were requesting its return. Having visited the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians' Cultural Center, Ms. Freda felt that repatriation was the right thing to do. She convinced other CNA management executives that the ceremonial mask should be donated to the Repatriation Foundation to help facilitate its return.

The mask has now returned home to North Carolina. Since Chief Dugan's inauguration in October 1995, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians have begun to form a new cultural vision. They are keeping themselves

First Mesa Snake Society Regalia Repatriated

Two representatives of the Hopi First Mesa Snake Society accepted Snake Dance regalia repatriated by a private collector on a foggy March morning in Boston, two thousand miles from home. The regalia was gifted through the American Indian Ritual Object Repatriation Foundation on March 29, 1997. Thorton Coochyouma and Judge Delfred Leslie, a member of the Hopi Tribal Court, made the journey east in order to escort the ceremonial material home.

The regalia had been bought at a 1996 auction in Boston by Virginia Kropas, who appreciated its beauty. However, when the auctioneer informed Ms. Kropas that the previous owners had offered it for sale because Hopi friends had been offended by its display, she became concerned. She contacted Barbara Isaac, Repatriation Coordinator for the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, who suggested that Ms. Kropas contact the Hopi Tribe and the Repatriation Foundation.

The process of returning an object through the Repatriation Foundation to insure a full tax deduction for the donor involves two steps. First, the donor signs a Deed of Gift, which legally transfers the material to the Foundation. Then, the Foundation signs a Statement of Return, legally transferring ownership to its rightful Native tribe, clan, or family. These documents are often signed in a single ceremony, as they were for the transfer of the Hopi Snake Dance regalia. The Repatriation Foundation was represented at the return ceremony by Dr. Carol Master, a long-standing member of the Repatriation Foundation's Board of Trustees.

"The return of the item was probably a sacrifice for Virginia Kropas, and she is to be commended for her decision, and also blessed, in that she recognized that it must be more than just an object to look at," Mr. Coochyouma said. "Many of the objects that we use in our ceremonies have been disappearing over the years. We want to bring them back home, because as far as we're concerned, home is here, on Hopi lands."

RETROSPECT

☼ Polly Nordstrand, Education & Repatriation Coordinator, has left the Repatriation Foundation and is now working as the Assistant Curator at the Seminole Tribal Museum in Florida. We thank Polly for her wonderful work with us, and wish her the best in her new position.

☼ In April, the Repatriation Foundation submitted recommen-

dations to the National Park Service for consideration in its review of the Interim Regulations for NAGPRA, issued on January 13, 1997. These Interim Regulations describe procedures for assessing civil penalties upon museums that fail to comply with applicable provisions of NAGPRA. The NPS will soon publish the Final Regulations regarding civil penalties.

Artist Donates Painting

The Mexican artist Humberto Ortega de Villaseñor has generously donated his painting entitled *Cupula de la Evolucion* to the Repatriation Foundation. His intention is for the Repatriation Foundation to raise money by selling the painting.

Mr. Ortega de Villaseñor currently resides in Mexico, and has had several shows in New York City galleries, including Ramscale Art Associates and the First Peoples Gallery. Of Huastec Indian and Spanish heritage, Mr. de Villaseñor feels a strong solidarity with the Indigenous peoples of the Americas.

Cupula de la Evolucion, painted in 1992 on traditional Amate-Bark, depicts the rebirth of the Indian Spirit (represented as a white butterfly) out of the fiery chalice of evolution. Mr. Ortega de Villaseñor feels that Indigenous Americans' presence is gaining new power and recognition as we near the year 2000 AD.

The Repatriation Foundation looks forward to collaborating with Ramscale Art Associates, which has generously offered to assist the Foundation in the sale of this beautiful work of art.

In Print

People of the Seventh Fire: Returning Lifeways of Native America. Dagmar Thorpe. Ithaca, New York: Akwe:kon Press, Cornell University American Indian Program, 1996. A collection of interviews with traditional Native people struggling to maintain their culture for future generations, this book is for Native Americans interested in understanding ways to strengthen their spirit, as well as for those who support the efforts of traditional people in this work.

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apprised of what is for sale in the art market, sacred and non-sacred, so that they may learn how to better protect their sites. As Chief Dugan said in her letter to Christie's, "Of prime importance to my administration, which took office on October 2, 1995, is preservation of our cultural traditions essential to our cultural survival."

While the Repatriation Foundation has successfully worked with private individuals and collectors to repatriate ceremonial material, this marks our first donation from a corporation since our inception in 1992. We are happy to assist corporations and institutions holding Native American material, and not bound by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), in determining if the material is appropriate for repatriation and to whom it might be returned.



Patricia Freda, Vice President for Corporate Real Estate at CNA Insurance Company.

Perspectives

The Power of Memories: Cherokee Masks and Their Place in Our Memory

by Joyce C. Dugan
Principal Chief, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

The Cherokee are not known for our Ceremonial masks. Indeed, many in our community have never seen the dances and their ceremonials. Most of these pieces, few of which are authentic, were taken from our community by collectors and anthropologists. This led to the decline of the dances from which they originate, and led to the substitution of paper bags or "pokes" to conduct these ceremonies. While our traditionalists held close their knowledge of these dances and the memories of those important pieces which made the dances possible, the museums and collectors held close the masks as relics of a "forgotten" cultural heritage.

Through the work of Elizabeth Sackler and the American Indian Ritual Object Repatriation Foundation, we have been fortunate to repatriate a Buffalo mask made by Will West Long at our home, the Qualla Boundary, Cherokee, North Carolina. The mask came to our attention when Christie's auction house, concerned over its possible consignment, contacted the Repatriation Foundation. The Foundation, in turn, contacted us. I offered several letters to the owners who, at first, did not seem empathetic to our petition for return. We did not give up hope, however, that our mission to have this piece returned and to revive its dance would come to fruition.

Several months passed, several letters exchanged, and we had moved on to other matters important to our tribe. We were in the process of purchasing property that is the location of a significant Cherokee mound, and felt as though our attempts to regain strength in our cultural heritage were becoming a reality when the phone call came which gave us the news that the donors had agreed to return the mask. Walker Calhoun, one of our elders who has worked to preserve the dances, was notified.

Walker holds the memories of the use of this mask made by his uncle all those years ago and used in the place where he now lives. His memories have been shared by all who care to listen to his soft voice as he relives his life with us and tries to teach us the ways which have sustained the Cherokee since the Creator gave them to us. Now, with the help of our friends, Walker can teach those lessons of memory and our community can share the power of memory. This power has reached us through Will West Long, Walker Calhoun, Elizabeth Sackler and the American Indian Ritual Object Repatriation Foundation.

New Video

Your Humble Serpent: The Wisdom of Reuben Snake. Directed by Gary Rhine. Written by Reuben A. Snake, Jr. and Gary Rhine. Malibu, California: Kifaru Productions, 1996. A one-hour portrait of the late American Indian political and spiritual leader, Reuben A. Snake, Jr. (Winnebago). Includes an uncut presentation given by Mr. Snake in 1991 which he called "The Rebrowning of America," as well as interviews with Mr. Snake and many of his co-workers and relatives. Kifaru Productions: Tel. (310) 457-1617.

Web Site Crosses Borders

As an intercultural partnership, the American Indian Ritual Object Repatriation Foundation serves communities isolated from one another both geographically and culturally. The Repatriation Foundation's World Wide Web site, www.repatriationfoundation.org, online since September of 1996, has emerged as a way to reach Native and non-Native people from all over the United States who are interested in American Indian repatriation.

Tribal activists, scholars, archaeologists, government officials, participants in NAGPRA-related repatriation, and concerned citizens have signed the online guest book. "Keep up the good work and Creator look upon you and guide you," one visitor wrote. Another commented, "I know *Mending the Circle* was offered in the Cherokee Advocate several issues ago, but ... I can't find that issue. Glad I searched the net for it!" And, "Great to see so much information about these issues (and so many useful links to related sites) gathered together and made net-accessible! Good work, well done."

From September of 1966 until late February of 1997, the Repatriation

Foundation Web site received about 2,315 visitors – an average of 15 per day. About 55 "pages," or documents, are visited each day.

Responses to the site – online guest book comments, e-mail, phone calls, and snail mail – indicate that the site is assisting people involved in complex repatriation procedures, as well as newcomers to the concept of American Indian repatriation.

Visitors to the site are mainly from the United States, but eleven percent have come from foreign countries, including: Australia, Canada, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Egypt, Finland, Greece, Israel, Japan, Latvia, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Poland, Slovenia, South Africa and most of Western Europe. Many of these countries have Indigenous Peoples for whom repatriation is an important issue; others hold controversial art collections. One Japanese archaeologist wrote, "We have the same problem in Japan concerning the Ainu people who have not been treated well since long ago. For a comparative view, I will try to watch this site as a good resource for information."

Special announcements on the "What's New" page, links to relevant sites, and additions to reference areas of the site are all updated regularly. If you happen to be in the neighborhood, please visit!

Introductions

Board of Trustees: Walter Echo-Hawk, Esq., *Pawnee*; Michael Haney, *Seminole/Sioux*; Carol Master, M.D., Dr.P.H.; Franc Menusan, *Creek/Metis*; Elizabeth Sackler; Sheri Sandler, M.A.; Martin Sullivan, Ph.D.; Marilyn Youngbird, *Arikara/Hidatsa*.

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American Indian Ritual Object
Repatriation Foundation
463 East 57th Street
New York, NY 10022-3003

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