

The Web That Connects the Heart and Mind

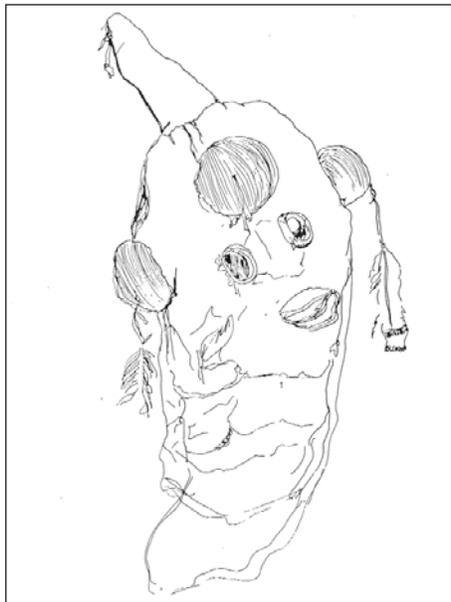
By: *Marilyn Youngbird*
(*Arikara/Hidatsa*)

Recently, last August as a matter of fact, I was gifted by my daughter Susan and my fourteen-month-old granddaughter Himalaya Shay to spend two weeks with them in Washington, D.C. I lived in Washington back in the early 1980s. However, my work in the Department of the Interior and the United States Senate did not give me much opportunity to visit the museums and landmarks Americans hold sacred.

For two weeks, pushing Himalaya in her stroller down almost empty streets to the museums was a miracle. Making our way into the many museums, we were greeted by smiling guards who were kind, gentle, caring, and incredibly generous. They were not only generous with information, they helped me with the stroller and chased Himalaya when she made her break for the elevators, glass doors, or some fragile artifact.

The two museums I was especially interested in were the Sackler Museum and the Freer Museum. There are displays of hundreds of ancient artifacts as well as photo exhibits. Every artifact I viewed was displayed in the most

careful, clean, crisp manner. The lighting gave the artifacts a hue that made me alert in case their spirits wanted to communicate with me. Walking slowly through the cool rooms where glass cases held the souls and stories of the ancient Asian cultures' fabric of life, gave me quiet time to think deeply about the museums that display my ancestors' souls.



"Koyemsi" pen-and-ink drawing by Elizabeth Sackler, June 1991, just before returning to Hopi.

Trying to be as respectful as I could be as I approached each artifact, I recalled memories of helping the Zuni Nation repatriate their War Gods from the Denver Art Museum. I still can see the faces of the two old Zuni men, Keepers of the War Gods, when they were trying their very best to explain to the forty members of the Board of Regents why the State of Colorado should return the War Gods.

Listening to the Keepers of the War Gods explain why it was so important for those Gods to be returned to the Zuni Nation was one of the most spiritual lessons I've ever learned. The presence of two tribal elders brought the forty Regent members seated in a horseshoe back to reality. No dreams, no facade. The tribal elders' small-framed statures were unobtrusive. Their everyday clothing, their brown-reddish hands and faces exuded only love and kindness — genuine unconditional love.

As the members called upon them to explain why the museum should return the War Gods, they rose gently from their chairs, one at a time, and addressed the members. Tears streaming down their earth-colored faces, they told their audience how their fabric of life had been tattered and torn since the War Gods had disappeared from their sacred shrine on the Zuni reservation. They explained how tribal members had lost their way of life. They said many of their members became alcoholics, were abusive to family members, and that physical, mental, and spiritual sickness seeped into their ancient, beloved culture through the tattered and torn fabric.

Weeping silently, they said to their audience: "The War Gods were given to the Zuni Nation directly from our Creator. The Creator entrusted us with these sacred objects to protect, guide, and direct our people. The War Gods came to us with a language. They came to us with specific prayers, specific songs, and specific instructions directly from God."

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The American Indian Ritual Object Repatriation Foundation is a not-for-profit intercultural partnership. 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.

Welcome

To Friends, Supporters, Teachers, and Students

I am pleased to announce a new relationship with the Association on American Indian Affairs (AAIA).

Martin Sullivan, former director of the Heard Museum, Phoenix, AZ, introduced Jack Trope, now AAIA's Executive Director, to me in 1991. Together, we worked on the By-Laws and Constitution for the Repatriation Foundation (AIRORF), discussed standards, procedures, and the legal implications and requirements of repatriation from the private sector. In addition, over the years, Jack has drafted more than half a dozen letters on behalf of the Foundation to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

I approached Jack in 2002 about a potential relationship with AAIA. The boards of both organizations considered the opportunities of such a partnership and agreed that the combined power of the Repatriation Foundation and the Association strengthens influence and the range of support for repatriation and the protection of sacred sites and burial grounds.

I welcome Karenne Wood (*Monacan*), the new Repatriation Coordinator of the AIRORF Project of AAIA. Karenne has a Master of Fine Arts degree from George Mason University. She was Program Director at the Monacan Indian Nation for six years and is a member of the Virginia Council on Indians. She worked as a Public Programs Specialist with the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) and has worked on repatriation for her tribe. She is also an award-winning poet.

I thank each and every one of you who have participated, with the gifts of time, energy, money and ideas, both daily and from afar, to the Foundation over the last decade. I hope you will continue to support this new relationship.

With affection and in anticipation,

Elizabeth Sackler
President

The American Indian Ritual Object Repatriation Foundation and the Association on American Indian Affairs Forge New Relationship

At their annual meeting in August, the American Indian Ritual Object Repatriation Foundation board of trustees approved the formation of a new working relationship with the Association on American Indian Affairs (AAIA). AAIA is an 80-year-old Indian advocacy organization with offices in Maryland, South Dakota and Arizona, and members in all 50 states. Currently, AAIA programs focus to a considerable extent in the areas of cultural preservation (protection of sacred sites, repatriation of human remains, and language preservation), youth (Indian child welfare, scholarships, and youth summer camps), health (particularly diabetes prevention), and federal recognition for unrecognized Indian tribes. The Executive Director of AAIA is Jack F. Trope who has also been a member of the Repatriation Foundation board since 1999.

AAIA was actively involved in the effort that led to the enactment of the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), an Act whose implementation has been one of the priorities of the Repatriation Foundation since it was founded in 1992. AAIA has worked with tribes seeking to use NAGPRA over the last decade and has succeeded, together with the tribes, in obtaining the repatriation and reburial of more than 2,000 Dakota and culturally unaffiliated remains from a number of institutions, including Hamlin University in Minnesota and the Peabody Museum in Massachusetts.

Earmarked support from the Repatriation Foundation is available to AAIA for our new Repatriation Coordinator who is coordinating what is known as the "American Indian Ritual Object Repatriation Foundation (AIRORF) Project of the AAIA." The Repatriation Coordinator is responsible for following up on the Repatriation Foundation's pending cases from private collections, responding to telephone and e-mail queries, overseeing the website and the editorial for the biannual newsletter, *News & Notes*, and participating in NAGPRA-related seminars and conferences. The AIRORF Project will also, to the extent feasible, handle repatriation issues identified by AAIA that are not currently part of the Repatriation Foundation, such as the repatriation of ancestral remains.

The Repatriation Foundation Outreach Coordinator, Stephanie Morillo, continues to handle the technical aspects of the Repatriation Foundation's website and newsletter production, and she is managing sales of *Mending the Circle: Native American Repatriation Guide*. Elizabeth Sackler, Founder and President of the Repatriation Foundation, is working with Karenne Wood, Repatriation Coordinator, to introduce the standards and procedures for repatriation from the private sector developed over the past ten years. Dr. Sackler will continue to write and lecture about issues of ethics in the art market.

This new relationship builds on the strength of both organizations: the Repatriation Foundation's commitment to the return of ceremonial materials and AAIA's initiatives with cultural tradition preservation (e.g., the protection of Native American sacred sites).

Further integration of the two organizations is possible in the future if this AIRORF Project is implemented successfully. The boards of both organizations are excited about this new initiative.

Perspectives

By: **Franc Menusan**, (*Creek/Metis*)
Professor of American Indian Studies
Gallatin School, New York University

As Native Americans, we live as ghosts in our own land. The popular belief is that the Indian has simply gone the way of the dinosaur. This belief has made the work of desecrating and pillaging our ancestral sacred places much easier. If we are not “real,” if we are “invisible,” then there is no conflict in developing our sacred ceremonial ritual objects into “objects of art.” Our past, present and future have become a pastime for curiosity-seeking anthropologists; our spiritual objects are simply curios with a profitable market value and they are “great decorative accents” as well!

At the Museum of Natural History in New York City, I was studying a diorama of a Creek Green Corn Ceremony when I heard a woman behind me say to her family, “Look at all these beautiful things. Isn’t it a shame that all the Indians are gone?” A thousand reactions simultaneously played themselves out in a few seconds. I took a deep breath, turned to her and said, “We are not all gone!” It was her reaction that was the most fascinating part. She grabbed my arm, audibly gasped, and excitedly said, “Look, honey, I’m touching a real Indian! Boys, when you go to school on Monday, you can tell your teacher you actually saw a real Indian!”

A “real Indian”? This extraordinary experience brought out some important issues. As I viewed the expressionless Indian mannequins wearing the regalia of past days — the mute flutes originally singing the beautiful courtship melodies to a beloved, and the masks and rattles separated from their purpose — I felt a real heaviness in my heart.

Medicine bundles were opened and vulnerable to gawking tourists who laugh at our “silly superstitions.” Pipes, used by great people in their sacred ceremonies, were displayed like captured animals in a zoo! For us, these are the distilled energy. For us, these objects are alive, sacred beings that aid us in maintaining balance and harmony with all matter and spirit.

It is my prayer and deepest feeling that America will begin to empathize with Native Americans and understand that we are real. We are living, vital cultures that have survived 502 years despite colonial occupation, genocide, assimilation, termination policy, and the ultimate humiliation—the desecration of our sacred ceremonial objects and sites.

If this country is to be the greatest country in the world, then the foundation for this greatness lies in respect for the first peoples of the land and in restoring the purity of our water and air so that all who live here will prosper and benefit from generation to generation. We do this with our rituals and ceremonial objects on sacred ceremonial sites. We continue to attempt to keep our traditions as we were instructed from the beginning. We continue to pray for all our relations on Mother Earth.

It is a beautiful and loving gesture to be part of the healing of this country, and the mending of the circle of friendship and mutual respect that has taken too long — but is never too late to begin.

The Web That Connects

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They said, “Our War Gods are sad and lonely. No one in America, no people walking by them in the museums know their songs, their names, and their prayers. People who walk past them are filled with anger, hatred, jealousy, and greed. Those people spread their sickness onto them. No one cleanses them or prays for them.”

They told their audience that the War Gods are not only for the Zuni people; they are also for all the inhabitants who live on our mother earth. They said, “You have noticed that the weather has been erratic, damaging, and the winds are getting stronger and out of control. Our ancestors have taught us how to pray with the War Gods to speak to Nature — the wind, rain, thunder, lightning, snow, and many other of our Creator’s creations.”

Spirit, our Creator, directed the breath of life of the two holy Zuni elders right into the hearts of the forty Board of Regents. When our blessed Creator determines the time is exactly “right,” miracles happen then and there. The Board agreed to give back the War Gods to the Zuni Nation, and promised to help to protect them with a donation of \$10,000.

Twenty-six years have passed since this incredible event. The lesson I learned can never be fully expressed to the extent I would love to give it to each and every human being I meet.

The impact of that experience resurfaced again in another incredible event that happened to me less than four years ago. In early May 1998, I was invited to present at the Conflict Resolution Peace Conference in St. Petersburg, Russia. While in St. Petersburg, the organizers made it possible for me to visit the Native American Museum. The museum director and curators were excited to share the Native American artifacts Peter the Great had collected from the Americas and brought back to Russia.

The Native American Museum was in an incredibly ornate building not far from the

the Heart and Mind

Hermitage Museum. The second floor of the building was filled with thousands of sacred objects and artifacts from the Americas.

Time was of an essence, so I could only tour the North American Native American collection.

Walking past glass cases filled with life-sized statues dressed in full Hidatsa, Lakota, and Pomo ceremonial clothing was awesome. At the foot of one of the statues, clothed in a full buckskin dress, lay sweet grass, sage, and a sacred pipe.

Although our verbal languages were an ocean apart, we managed to speak through an interpreter. They were eager to learn and they were so pleased that I took time to visit their museum.

I told them that we Native American people never connect our sacred pipe together unless we are pure and doing ceremony. They were truly respectful and asked me to help them with the pipe. They opened the glass case and let me disconnect the bowl from the stem. Then I filled the bowl with fresh sage, laid the stem and bowl on more fresh sage, and circled them with fresh sweet grass I had carried to Russia with me.

Walking along, side-by-side with the director and curators, I noticed one of the most incredible cases. In that case were two life-sized statues in one of the most sacred Pomo Nations' ceremonial dress. The dresses were covered from the head, neck, and arms to the body with black woodpecker feathers. Never had I seen anything so magnificent! I know that many of the Pomo people had never placed their eyes on their most sacred creations.

I spoke about the Pomo Nations' ceremonial dress to them. They informed me that they had invited the Pomo Nation to come and visit

the museum and the Pomo elders were to arrive just one week after I was to depart.

After shaking hands and hugging, they walked me out to the waiting bus. Overwhelmed with their graciousness, respect, and beauty, I stepped onto the bus, walked down the aisle between the seats and planted my body at the very back of the bus. Several blocks down the street the bus came to a stop to let passengers on. The bus started moving slowly again. All of a sudden we saw a man chasing the bus, and when he caught up to us, he knocked on the door.

Those beautiful moccasins are now in the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Museum, on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, New Town, North Dakota.

The bus came to a stop and the bus driver opened the door. The man stepped into the bus, but only stayed at the doorway. He spoke to the interpreter and she replied. He handed her a box and she took it, holding it in her hands along with a note. She said, "This gift is for Marilyn Youngbird." If I had false teeth, they would have fallen out right then and there. She proceeded to read the note, "I am a curator in the museum. I want you to know I have the greatest respect for your Native American people and honor you. In this box is a pair of old Hidatsa moccasins I have had for many years. I was once in Wisconsin and purchased them there. I want to return them to your people."

Before I could jump up from my seat to thank him, he stepped off the bus, the bus driver closed the door and drove off. I rushed to the window, pressed my face and hands against the glass to wave and say thank you.

The buckskin and beads on the moccasins are old. You can see the full imprint of the sole of the foot of the person who walked in them. I think this beautiful Russian man may have walked in these moccasins. I think that is why he has such great honor and respect for us Native American people. There is a saying that goes something like this: Do not judge a person until you have walked in his moccasins.

Those beautiful moccasins are now in the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Museum, on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, New Town, North Dakota.

I love my Russian brothers and sisters. They live and have lived a very difficult life. However, living a life of struggle has made them as strong, courageous, loving, brave and appreciative of life as we Native Americans.

Watching Himalaya chase the pigeons in the park across the street from the White House, hoping I lost at least five pounds from all the water I perspired, I thought, I leave to go back to Colorado tomorrow morning, I should take something back with me as a remembrance. Picking Himalaya up, putting her in her stroller, and flagging down the first available taxi I saw, I rushed back to the Sackler Museum.

So often we hear from some white folks that we Native Americans are one and the same as the Mongolia Nations. I thought it only right that I take back to Colorado a "Reclaiming Genghis Khan" t-shirt, a Tuva throat-singer CD, and the movie "Genghis Blues"!

In Print

Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence

by Gregory Cajete, Leroy Little Bear
Publisher: Clear Light Publishers
Pub. Date: November 1999

A Tewa Indian from Santa Clara Pueblo, Cajete (Professor of Education and Cultural Studies, University of New Mexico) introduces readers to the Indigenous view of reality. He delves into storytelling; the philosophy of native science; community ecology; plants, food, medicine, and gardening; animals; a sense of place; astronomy; and how the Indigenous approach can help the world.

Sacred Objects and Sacred Places: Preserving Tribal Traditions

by Andrew Gulliford
Publisher: University Press of Colorado
Pub. Date: May 2000

Sacred Objects and Sacred Places combines native oral histories, photographs, drawings, and case studies to present current issues of cultural preservations vital to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. Complete with commentaries by curators, native peoples, and archaeologists, this book discusses the repatriation of human remains,

the exhibition of sacred masks and medicine bundles, and key cultural compromises that contribute to preservation successes in protecting sacred places on private, state and federal lands. Though the book describes tribal tragedies and examples of cultural theft, *Sacred Objects and Sacred Places* affirms living traditions. It reveals how the resolution of these controversies in favor of native people will ensure their cultural continuity in a changing and increasingly complex world. The issues of returning human remains, curating sacred objects, and preserving tribal traditions are addressed to provide the reader with a full picture of Native Americans' struggle to keep their heritage alive.

People of the Circle, People of the Four Directions

by Scott McCarthy
Publisher: Blue Dolphin Publishing
Pub. Date: April 1998

In *People of the Circle, People of the Four Directions*, Scott McCarthy explores the common spiritual symbols of the Native People of North and South America. Drawing on poetry, stories, ceremonies, and ethnological studies, McCarthy provides examples of the use of circles, the four directions, and the number four (both individually and in combina-

tion) as common themes running through all Native American cultures. An invaluable, highly recommended contribution to Native American studies, *People of the Circle, People of the Four Directions* will encourage a sharing and understanding between the different Native American cultures and broader Eurocentric American culture as they interact and sometimes collide.

Coming This Summer to Our Website!

Mending the Circle: A Native American Repatriation Guide will soon be available for free download on our website at www.repatriationfoundation.org. This definitive guide includes articles on NAGPRA, the Smithsonian Institution's repatriation policies, and strategies for the private sector. Please continue to check the website for further updates.

The website is a great research tool for those interested in learning about American Indian repatriation efforts in the United States.

We accept contributions towards our continuing efforts on our website (all contributions are tax deductible).

New Contact Information

For information regarding repatriation, please contact:

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AN OPEN TRIBUTE: TWO SPECIAL THANKS

The Repatriation Foundation has, over the last decade, benefited from the participation of volunteers from various professional backgrounds and from many wonderful college interns who assisted us on various projects. Without them, we would not be marking so many achievements.

Our Outreach Coordinator, Stephanie Morillo, was a student at Fordham University in May 2000 — beginning with us as an intern. Now, three years later, Stephanie is immersed more than ever in the Foundation's repatriation activities — communicating with the board of trustees on various matters and coordinating the production of our newsletter and year-end mailing. In addition to being a delight to work with, Stephanie has been a joy to watch as she grew professionally and matured personally over the last year, especially. As we embark on the new relationship with AAIA, Stephanie is going to continue to oversee the management of our website and *Mending the Circle: A Native American Repatriation Guide*. Stephanie, I extend to you my warm and heartfelt appreciation for your diligence, dedication, and daily effervescence.

In 1994, Marilyn Ewer, of MKE Enterprises, contacted me to offer her expertise "in whatever way she could." Since then, Marilyn has been designing and overseeing the production of our newsletter and has honored our modest ways when she designed the "look" of our bi-annual *News & Notes*. She always makes sure that articles fit well, read with ease, and that all the "t's are crossed and i's dotted." In addition to giving us the benefit of her knowledge and background, Marilyn has been an enthusiastic supporter of the Repatriation Foundation's work and is a lively, personal friend.

Marilyn, as we move to this next phase, I want to extend my deep gratitude for your assistance over the years and my gratitude that you are continuing to oversee the design of *News & Notes* with AAIA.

Brava, Stephanie!
Brava, Marilyn!

Elizabeth Sackler

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Staff: Stephanie Morillo, Outreach Coordinator.

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