



International Indian Treaty Council
Consejo Internacional de Tratados Indios

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Agenda Item 6: Country Engagement
International Indian Treaty Council Intervention presented by Andrea Carmen

Thank you Madame Chair. It is with profound gratitude that I inform you of the repatriation of our sacred Maaso Kova, a living being and spirit of life renewal for the Yaqui Nation. It came home on Wednesday July 12th, 20 years after we found it in a glass cage in the National Swedish Ethnographic Museum. It was returned to the Yaqui traditional authorities and cultural leaders in Vicam Pueblo Rio Yaqui, along with other cultural items taken by Danish anthropologists in 1937 from Yaqui prisoners of war in Tlaxcala Mexico.

I share the heartfelt thanks of our Yaqui Traditional Authorities and cultural leaders for the consistent support of the Sami Parliament, as well as the advocacy of the UN Permanent Forum and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We also thank the government of Mexico for safely transporting the boxes with our sacred items unopened and undisturbed from Stockholm to Rio Yaqui, and Sweden for finally allowing them to come home.

We especially recognize the vital role of the EMRIP and its country engagement process which made this victory possible. Despite our many years of requests for return of the Masso Kova, along with explanations of its spiritual significance and the harm being done to our Peoples the Swedish Museum refused. In fact, in 2014 they told us in an official written communication that *“the Museum of Ethnography can find no reasons to restitute the Yaqui items”*.

However, after IITC requested that this be taken on as a country engagement in 2019, EMRIP, under the presidency of Kristen Carpenter, was able to bring Sweden together with Yaqui leaders from Arizona USA and Sonora Mexico, and Sweden finally agreed to return our Maaso Kova. They also accepted that the Yaqui laws governing these matters have equal authority in accordance with Article 11 of the UN Declaration, an historic recognition that benefits all Indigenous Peoples.

We now await the establishment of an international repatriation mechanism as called for by the UN Declaration, the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, the UN Permanent Forum, the Human Rights Council and other UN bodies. We ask EMRIP to continue to play an active role and to also encourage UNESCO to join this effort. The spirit of the Maaso Kova calls us to support all Indigenous Peoples who are waiting for the return of their sacred items and human remains. Choque Utesia.

Working for the Rights and Recognition of Indigenous Peoples
Trabajando por el reconocimiento y los derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas