

[original article:] https://www.gob.mx/presidencia/prensa/mexico-recibe-del-gobierno-de-suecia-la-coleccion-maaso-koba-cabeza-de-venado-piezas-rituales-que-seran-restituidas-al-pueblo-yaqui?fbclid=IwAR1x1Wu0KXqIx-jobaW0_8dm2xkvpWwXyVx7zhX2gPwIPxRYcdpYYpgnMto&fs=e&s=cl

Mexico receives the “Maaso Kova” (Deer’s Head) collection from the Swedish Government, cultural items that will be returned to the Yaqui People

Request for transfer makes up a part of the agreements reached by traditional authorities and the Mexican Government within the framework of the Plan for Justice for the Yaqui People
Office of the President of the Republic of Mexico | June 3, 2022 | Press Release

[photo]

Mexico receives the “Maaso Kova” (Deer’s Head) collection from the Swedish Government, ritual items that will be returned to the Yaqui People

The repatriation is the result of actions taken by the International Indian Treaty Council, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the UN Human Rights Council, as well as the implementation of the Plan for Justice

The collection, made up of 24 cultural items, will be transported to our country in a dignified and respectful manner, and it will be up to the Yaqui People to determine the best place to house it

Stockholm, Sweden, June 3, 2022.- This Friday, at the Mexican Embassy in Sweden, the agreement was formalized to hand over a collection of cultural items to the Mexican Government and the Yaqui People, including the “Maaso Kova” (Deer’s Head), a sacred figure for the eight Yaqui Pueblos that make up the Yaqui Nation, on behalf of the Government of the Kingdom of Sweden and via the Museum of World Cultures located in Gothenburg.

The ceremony was presided over by the Undersecretary of Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights of the Secretariat of Foreign Relations (SRE), Martha Delgado Peralta, the Mexican Ambassador to Sweden, Francisco del Río López, the Director General of Human Rights and Democracy of the Foreign Ministry of Mexico, Cristopher Ballinas Valdés, and the Director General of the Museum of World Culture of Gothenburg, Ann Follin.

Also in attendance were the director of International Affairs of the National Institute of Indigenous Peoples (INPI), Saúl Vicente Vázquez, the Secretary of the Traditional Government of the Huirivis Pueblo, Juan Gregorio Jaime León, the Second Governor of the Vicam Pueblo, Dolores González Buitimea, and the former Governor of the Potam Pueblo, Felipe Álvarez García.

Also in attendance were the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Francisco Cali Tzay, and the Executive Director of the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), Andrea Carmen.

The transfer of the items is the result of the agreements reached by the traditional Yaqui government and the Government of Mexico, as a part of the Plan for Justice for the Yaqui People, in addition to the 19-year struggle and requests made by the Yaqui Nation, along with the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and specialists from the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH).

In addition, the diplomatic actions taken by the Secretariat of Culture, via the INAH, SRE, and INPI, were of fundamental importance for successfully bringing the collection back.

After a long period of time within the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Governments of Mexico and Sweden and representatives of the Yaqui Nation and of the Sami Council and Parliament agreed, in June 2020, to begin a process to repatriate the Maaso Kova, along with 23 other sacred items of the Yaqui People that were in the collection of the Museum of World Culture (Världskulturmuseet) located in Gothenburg, a process which culminated in their formal transfer.

The Plan for Justice for the Yaqui People has been a major contributor to these procedures, as in December 2020, the joint work by the INAH, INPI and SRE was aimed at responding to the demand of the authorities of the eight Pueblos, which had been set forth in the document delivered to the President of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, on 28 September, 2021.

The Maaso Kova is a sacred item with great cultural value, one that not only reflects the relationship between the peoples of northwestern Mexico and their environment, but also possesses elements of enormous spiritual significance and symbolism, given the fact that, in the worldview of these peoples, dancers who wear it are transformed into the embodiment of the sacred deer.

On behalf of the Government of Mexico, Undersecretary Martha Delgado thanked the Museum of World Culture and the Government of the Kingdom of Sweden for their willingness to agree to the repatriation and stated that, given the commitment by our institutions to ensure the collective rights and human rights of Indigenous Peoples, the sacred nature of the “Maaso Kova” has been recognized and, within the framework of the Plan for Justice for the Yaqui People, this item and 23 others will be returned to their legitimate heirs.

“They are all an essential part of collective memory. For this reason, I thank the Yaqui People for giving us the opportunity and the honor, as the Department of Foreign Relations, to be the means of bringing about the repatriation of the ‘Maaso Kova’ and other sacred items of the Yaqui People.”

Indigenous Peoples share the same experience all over the world: one of colonization, a process that not only robbed them of their particular way of life, but also caused them to be subjected to systematic and structural forms of abuse throughout history, including discrimination.

These circumstances make clear the need to promote processes of dialogue, reconciliation, and justice for Indigenous Peoples. The repatriation of these items represents significant progress in this direction, as the recovery of this sacred object has been an historic demand of the Yaqui Nation.

The Director General of the Museum of World Culture of Gothenburg, Ann Follin, affirmed that “this is not the culmination of a process, but rather the beginning of a long-lasting relationship and a new form of communicating with Indigenous Peoples.”

On behalf of the delegation of the Yaqui Pueblos, the Secretary of the Traditional Government of Huirivis, Juan Gregorio Jaime León, thanked the Governments of Mexico and Sweden and expressed his happiness that, after years of efforts, the return of these items has been made a reality.

The Executive Director of the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), Andrea Carmen, stated that this is a process in which many people have been involved, including the Saami People and their authorities in Sweden, whose collaboration she recognized.

The Director General of Human Rights and Democracy, Cristopher Ballinas Valdés, emphasized that “this case sets a precedent, an innovative mechanism implemented jointly by the Human Rights Council, EMRIP, and institutions and governments, via which it is possible to negotiate the repatriation of cultural patrimony back to its legitimate peoples, and it is an example of how these items must be treated with respect and dignity.”

It should be pointed out that this collection will be transported back to our country with dignity and respect, and it will be up to the Yaqui People to determine the best place to house it.