



Office of Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission

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Navajo Yei Bi Chei Jish Returned to Navajo Nation.

St. Michaels, Navajo Nation (AZ)-The designated delegation returned to the Navajo Nation on December 16, 2014 and securely delivered the Yei Bi Chei Jish to Navajo Nation Historic Preservations Department Traditional Culture Program.

With the efforts made from the NNHRC, NNHPD, Sacred Sites Subcommittee, Office of the Speaker, and Vice-President Rex Lee Jim, the seven Yei Bi Chei Jish were returned back the Navajo Nation, with set chants and prayers that were offered to the Jish before entering into the Four Sacred Mountains. The Jish are a vital entity in the Night Way Ceremony and have oral and ceremonial history to Navajo creation stories. It is the backbone to our way of life and to our very existence as Diné People.

“It’s important to remember” says Leonard Gorman, Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission, “that these are sacred Jish belong to the entire Navajo people, not a single Navajo person. These Jish and all other Navajo Jish are sacred to the Navajo people based on culture, traditions and beliefs”

The Navajo Nation made every effort to expel the Jish off the auction tables; however it is clear and unfortunate that many countries in the world do not recognize these Jish as sacred, or that they belong to the entire Navajo people, and are not for sale “While France is a party to the 1970 international law that prohibits the sale of sacred objects if obtained illegally, France does not have domestic laws regulating sale of sacred Jish,” Gorman said.

Furthermore, because there is no international repatriation law, it is also important to consider future actions to be taken by the Navajo Nation and other indigenous nations and peoples when other sacred objects are placed on auction. “It is clear,” Gorman said, “that under the condition that existed in Paris, the Jish will be sold on December 15th, Navajo Nation had to act in order to have these Jish returned to their homelands.”

According to Navajo Nation Cultural Resources Protection Act Subsection 1004-NNHPD is the Nations agency responsible for the protection, preservation and management planning for the Navajo Nations Cultural Resources. Therefore the Jish will be put back in to use by Hataalii’s across the Navajo Nation. For these Yei Bi Chei Jish were originated to be utilized in Navajo ceremonies by our chanters to conduct ceremonial rituals with set songs and prayers to ensure the well-being of the Navajo people.

For more information contact the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission at 928-871-7436.

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