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Katsina Kwaatsi purchased at Auction in Paris, France Returned to the Hopi Tribe

KYKOTSMOVI, Ariz. – Hopi Chairman LeRoy N. Shingoitewa, a few Hopi Council members and Soongopavy Katsin Mongwi Lawrence Keevama First Mesa Katsin Mongwi Sam Tenakhongva gathered in Flagstaff on Friday to receive and welcome back one of the Hopi kwaatsim sold at an auction in Paris, France in April.

In their attempts to stop the sale of the Hopi objects, Attorney Pierre Servan-Schreiber and Jean Patrick, Coordinator of the French based Survival International, filed a motion on behalf of the Hopi Tribe to stop the auction. A Judge in Paris, France ruled against and rejected the motion saying it could only intervene to protect human remains or living beings.



Attorney Servan-Schreiber, who represented the Hopi Tribe Pro Bono, purchased one of the objects, which he returned to the Hopi Tribe on Friday. He was accompanied by Jean Patrick, Coordinator of the Survival International French Office, Leila Batmanghelidj, Coordinator and Kayla Wieche, Assistant Coordinator of the U.S. Survival International.

The tireless efforts of Servan-Schreiber and his staff in filing a temporary injunction to stop the auction until they could figure out the origin and authenticity while researching repatriation laws, was the hardest part of the case. “This was a hard case because of repatriation” said Servan-Schreiber and affirmed by Jean Patrick. “Outside the United States there are no Native American Graves and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) rules that apply to these types of cases. In the United States NAGPRA is very strong in repatriation of indigenous objects, but out of the Country it is not known. This has, however, educated people around the world and is good for the public to know that these issues exists.”

Leila Batmanghelidj from the San Francisco based Survival International office said, “we are honored to have been able to play a small part in the return of the katsina to Hopi. We will not forget the kindness and hospitality of everyone we've met. Survival International believes, above all, in respect for indigenous people around the world, and for us it's been an incredible experience to see that respect between cultures in action. It contrasts with the audacity of the French auction house that insisted on the auction going ahead. Perhaps out of that, some good has come after all.

The group stated they did not know who bought the other objects, but did say a French Foundation was in possession of one of the objects and had plans to return them to the Hopi Tribe later in the year.

The Survival International is a non-profit organization which helps tribal people defend their land rights and livelihood. This is the first time they represented a Native American Tribe in the United States. Survivalist defended the Yanomami Tribe from Brazil in 1992 when their bio reserves were targeted.

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