



# THE NAVAJO NATION



## HERITAGE & HISTORIC PRESERVATION DEPARTMENT

JONATHAN NEZ  
President

MYRON LIZER  
Vice-President

December 14, 2022

Heritage Auctions  
Delia Sullivan  
Dallas Texas

RE: RETURN OF YEII MASK (JISH) TO THE NAVAJO NATION

Dear Heritage Auctions:

The Navajo Nation Heritage and Historic Preservation Department would like to express our appreciation to the Authentic Tribal Art Dealers Association (ATADA) in working with friends, family and others, and the wellness to work with the Navajo Nation in returning traditional Navajo *Jish* (Medicine Bundles) under ATADA's Voluntary program. Some of these *jish* were taken by ethnographers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, some were stolen from Navajo families or sold not knowing what to do or how to care for them after their grandfather or father who were *Hataalii(s)* (Medicine Man/Chanter) had passed.

These Navajo *jish* which have been returned by ATADA, are used in the ceremonies which are still widely practiced by *hataaliis*/chanters of the present-day Navajo tribe, for this reason we are able to accurately identify these objects. The Navajo people believe that all *jish* are alive and must be treated with respect. The primary purpose of Navajo *jish* is to cure people of physical and mental illness, diseases, and to restore beauty and harmony. These sacred objects were made by knowledgeable Navajo people and in order to possess Navajo *jish*, one must have the proper ceremonial knowledge and teaching with which to care and utilize them.

As the Navajo Nation and other indigenous communities are faced with cultural and social changes of modern day, the Navajo Nation is grateful that organizations such as ATADA is working to correct what was done wrong in the past to the Navajo people and other indigenous communities. By returning ceremonial *Jish* which is our foundation, our way of life, and our identity, which will restore our language, our songs, our prayers, for generations to come. It is important that the Navajo Nation and ATADA build a foundation of trust so we can be effectively protecting such items from leaving their home lands, or going to foreign countries.

In closing, the Navajo Nation extends our appreciation to the ATADA voluntarily returning our *jish* under their direction and returning these items back into the hands of the rightful caretakers.

Sincerely,

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