

**Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 12th Session, 15 - 19 July 2019,
Palais Nations, Geneva Switzerland**

Agenda Item 6: Country Engagement

Statement by the International Indian Treaty Council, July 16, 2019, presented by Vice Chairman Peter Yucupicio, Pascua Yaqui Tribe of Arizona

Thank you Madame Chair and respectful greetings to all delegations.

The Yaqui Nation, including traditional cultural leaders from Arizona United States and the Yaqui Traditional Authorities of Rio Yaqui Sonora Mexico, as well as the International Indian Treaty Council, thank the EMRIP with our hearts, minds and spirits for its intention to carry out a country engagement to promote dialogue between the Yaqui and the Swedish government.

The Swedish Museums of World Culture which includes the National Ethnographic Museum in Stockholm, has held our Maaso Kova in its possession since the 1930's. The Maaso Kova is one of our most sacred cultural items and ceremonial regalia. Our requests for its return began the day we found it in on display in the National Museum in Stockholm in 2003.

Since then, we have arranged meetings with the museum, including a visit by their Director General to the Pascua Yaqui Reservation so that they could better understand the cultural protocols regarding the Maaso Kova and the urgent need for its return to the Yaqui homelands. We have also met on several occasions with the Swedish government, including the State Secretary of Culture at the Swedish Mission in New York, to build their understanding about the Maaso Kova as a living spirit that sustains our People and all life in this world. Nevertheless, we have not been able to make progress in achieving its return.

We therefor deeply appreciate the EMRIP's agreement to carry out a country engagement with Sweden to help us to reach an outcome that respects the rights of Yaqui Peoples and upholds the dignity and well-being of all involved, as the spirit of the Maaso Kova requires. We hope that the government of Sweden will agree that country engagement can help us to find a positive solution.

We also express our thanks for the ongoing support, from the first day of our efforts to bring the Maaso Kova home, of the Sami People, the Sami Parliament of Sweden and the Sami Council. We continue to appreciate their support as an example of true and lasting Indigenous solidarity that we will never forget.

Finally, we hope that the engagement of the EMRIP on this matter will advance the establishment, called for in Articles 11 and 12 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Paragraph 27 of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, of a United Nations mechanism for the international repatriation of sacred items and human remains for the benefit of Indigenous Peoples around the world.

Choque Utesia, Thank you very much.