



ASSOCIATION ON AMERICAN INDIAN AFFAIRS

Protecting Sovereignty • Preserving Culture

Educating Youth • Building Capacity

SINCE 1922

Press Contact: Eldred Lesansee
Eldred.aaia@indian-affairs.org

RAGO AUCTION WITHDRAWS NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURAL HERITAGE SCHEDULED FOR SALE

WASHINGTON, D.C., October 17, 2018, 12:00 p.m. E.S.T. – The Association on American Indian Affairs demanded that the Rago auction house in New Jersey halt its upcoming sale of Native American cultural heritage scheduled to take place on Friday, October 19, 2018 and contact Tribes affiliated with the collections to determine whether the items should legitimately be held for sale or if items are in collectors' hands through theft, looting and illegal trafficking.

Rago scheduled an auction that included seventeen Native American cultural items attributed to sovereign Tribal Nations including the Apache, Iroquois, Sioux and Tlingit Nations. Tribal laws consistently protect items that are inalienable objects of cultural patrimony, sacred objects and burial items, as well as ancestral remains. Such items cannot be legitimately taken away from their origin communities without violating Tribal laws, and potentially violating state and federal laws.

On October 8, 2018, the Association on American Indian Affairs contacted Rago's Managing Partner Miriam Tucker and asked whether the auction house performed a thorough investigation on each item's origin, including consultation with affiliated Tribes. Ms. Tucker affirmed that Rago relies on a "specialist in Tribal art" and that no Tribes were consulted to verify provenance.

On October 15, 2018, the Association's Executive Director Shannon Keller O'Loughlin contacted Rago, demanding the auction house halt its Friday sale until a proper provenance investigation be conducted. The New Jersey auction house withdrew 15 of 17 cultural items in order to work with Tribes to determine provenance. The Association commends Rago for its leadership in taking such a position, understanding the importance of dealing with their customers honestly and in good faith, as required by professional auctioneer ethical standards.

Yet, since the items were removed, Rago will not return any of the Association's communications and we do not know what has happened to the items. In addition, Rago has given no reasoning why the remaining two items are still scheduled for auction.

The Association strongly reaffirms that it is imperative that collectors consult affiliated Tribes in order to perform their due diligence to determine whether an item is a stolen or looted item of inalienable cultural heritage. Without such investigation, the sale and possession of any particular item may be highly questionable. The Association can assist collectors to make those connections with affiliated Tribes.

The Association on American Indian Affairs is the oldest non-profit serving
Indian Country and is a 501(c)(3) organization.

DONATE AT WWW.INDIAN-AFFAIRS.ORG

966 Hungerford Drive, Suite 30-A Rockville, MD 20850 (240) 314-7155 General.AAIA@Indian-Affairs.org