MEDIA RELEASE
World Archaeological Congress applauds the removal of a Tjuringa stone from Canterbury Auction Galleries sale and urges that it be treated with proper respect
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The World Archaeological Congress applauds the decision by the Canterbury Auction Galleries to withdraw from sale a sacred Aboriginal Tjuringa stone but notes that it must now be treated properly. This stone holds sacred power and is intimately tied to the land from which it was removed. In addition, it can be dangerous for those without the proper knowledge to view the object. It is important that the community to which this object is sacred be involved in determining its disposition.

"WAC is extremely concerned that this object may still be subject to private sale and urges all parties to the sale to begin to consult with the Indigenous communities to whom this object is sacred." stated WAC President Claire Smith. "Everyone should now be aware that this stone is a sacred item and should be treated as such."

According to David Ross of the Central land Council, a Commonwealth Statutory Authority with responsibility for representing the views and wishes of Aboriginal peoples within the CLC's region, "With regard to the object put up for auction recently by the Canterbury auction house, the CLC supports its return to the appropriate custodians, following a process of consultations to seek their views. The CLC would be happy to undertake those consultations." He further stated "These artefacts are repositories of spiritual powers, directly related to important sites on the land, and provide an intimate link between Aboriginal people and their land. Those who inappropriately access or use such objects are believed to be endangering themselves by doing so. They are also endangering the health and well being of the correct custodians."

The World Archaeological Congress bases its objection to this sale on the WAC Code of Ethics, which includes the Tamaki Makau-rau Accord on the Display of Human Remains and Sacred Objects. The Tamaki Makau-rau Accord states in part "We agree that the display of human remains or sacred objects may serve to illuminate our common humanity. As archaeologists, we believe that good science is guided by ethical principles and that our work must involve consultation and collaboration with communities."

Professor Smith noted that the "Sacred material from all cultures should be accorded respect regardless of its country of origin, religious affiliation or cultural tradition." She stated "The buying and selling of the Tjuringa stone cannot be considered respectful treatment."
FURTHER INFORMATION:
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BACKGROUND:
The World Archaeological Congress is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization and is the only elected international body of practising archaeologists. WAC holds an international congress every four years to promote the exchange of the results of archaeological research; professional training and public education for disadvantaged nations, groups and communities; the empowerment and betterment of Indigenous groups and First Nations peoples; and the conservation of archaeological sites.
URL: http://www.worldarchaeologicalcongress.org