# Indigenous Heritage and Public Museums: Exploring Collaboration and Exhibition in Canada and the United States

### by

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# *Abstract*

The struggle for Indigenous rights to self-determination has included the recognition that Indigenous peoples are stakeholders in the treatment of their cultural heritage within museums. Large public museums tasked with representing Indigenous heritage tend to support the principle of working with communities to create exhibits, but studies on specific practices are lacking. I address this problem by asking: "What does ethical collaborative practice look like in the context of museum exhibit creation?"

My research falls under three themes: 1) the history of collaborative practice; 2) collaborative processes; and 3) exhibit design. I show that patterns of increased collaboration were influenced by larger trends in Indigenous rights movements, and introduce the term "Indigenous museology" to frame engagement between Indigenous peoples and museums. I have defined *Indigenous museology* as museum work done "with, by, and for" Indigenous peoples, whereby they are recognized as primary stakeholders in museological practices. This dissertation presents a broad overview of the development of Indigenous museology over time, while focusing on exhibit creation as a key practice.

My fieldwork consisted of a multi-site ethnographic study at four large, public museums: the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum in Honolulu, Hawaii; the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories; the Denver Museum of Nature and Science in Denver, Colorado; and the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria, British Columbia. By exploring how these museums have engaged Indigenous peoples in exhibit creation, I found a variety of independent adoptions of similar principles. My results show that museums adopt a range of methods to engage communities, and that a "one-size-fits-all" practice for collaboration is impractical. Several patterns emerged that illustrate models for good practice. A preferred approach is to engage Indigenous peoples from the outset of projects. Even better is the involvement of Indigenous peoples as staff museum members working on interpretation. Techniques for effective design include storytelling, mobilizing "Native voice," and programming that includes Indigenous peoples. Strong institutional mission and vision statements are also important. These ways of working are significant trends in museum practice. Finally, research on Indigenous museology illustrates how ethical, collaborative practices manifest and can be further developed within museums.

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## *A Note on Terms*

The word "Indigenous" is commonly used to refer to the original inhabitants of countries that have been colonized, whereby Indigenous peoples are marginalized, exploited, and/or oppressed by the politically dominant population (as per UNESCO 2008). In this dissertation, I use the term "Indigenous" to refer to the First Peoples living within the Canadian and United States borders, who are distinguished from settlers who arrived in the last five centuries. Although this term is slightly ambiguous and somewhat problematic (see Maybury-Lewis 2002:6), it is nonetheless useful for identifying patterns that affect the way colonized peoples' heritage is treated within museums.

My research included fieldwork in four locations. The conventions for referring to the Indigenous people in each location are different. When I intend to refer only to people within the state, province, or territory in question, I therefore use the following locally accepted terms:

- Hawai'i – Native Hawaiians;

- Northwest Territories – Aboriginal Peoples (refers to Indigenous people in Canada and includes Métis and Inuit peoples);

- British Columbia – First Nations (refers to Indigenous people of British Columbia); and

- Colorado (and elsewhere in the United States) – Native Americans.

I use the preferred term when speaking about the people in that specific region, and the term "Indigenous" when speaking collectively about all of these peoples and when connecting them with Indigenous peoples globally.

# Chapter 1.

# Museums and Indigenous People

The struggle for Indigenous rights to self-determination includes the recognition that Indigenous peoples are stakeholders in the treatment of their material and intangible cultural heritage. This recognition encourages anthropologists, archaeologists, museologists, and others to develop practices and theoretical orientations that ensure greater involvement by Indigenous peoples in the management and presentation of their heritage, particularly over the past thirty years. Academic discourse, in turn, has influence on and is influenced by the involvement of Indigenous peoples in museum initiatives. The primary question arising from those efforts is "Who has the right to interpret and present Indigenous cultures in public museums?"

My aim is to demonstrate the value of Indigenous involvement in creating museum exhibits and to show that it is an essential part of ethical museum practice that should be fostered. In order to achieve this, I set out two goals for this study: 1) to examine how museum exhibits portray ideas about Indigenous peoples; and 2) to look at the level of involvement Indigenous community members have in creating these representations. Primarily, I seek to explore the ways in which they are involved with museums as *research partners* rather than as *subjects*. I identify the philosophies and techniques that are employed within museums for ensuring the active participation of Indigenous peoples; increasing their participation in museums clearly has an effect on museum missions, exhibition strategies, philosophies, priorities, and methodologies. The process that has led to this "indigenization"[1] of museums has been guided largely by Indigenous responses to museums—either through protests (e.g., Cooper 2008),

[1] Ruth Phillips (2011:8) describes the changes that have occurred in Canadian museums in the past 20 years as a move "towards Indigenization." While others may use the term "decolonization," the term "indigenization" suggests the greater involvement of Indigenous people but without the implication that colonialism will ever end.

collaborations, or by re-imagining and re-forming museums through direct involvement (Phillips 2011:8).

A necessary starting point to this discussion is to define "museum." The definition provided by the International Council of Museums is "… a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment."[2] There are a wide variety of types of museums, as defined by their collections and missions—ranging from historic buildings, to museums that explore a single topic, to those that are concerned with only one type of object, and so on (Falk and Dierking 2013:25). The museums I discuss in this study are those that feature ethnographic collections and have exhibits about local Indigenous cultures; however, their exhibitions and themes cover a wider range of subject matter.

In order to explore the ways in which Indigenous communities are involved in creating representations in exhibits, I conducted in-depth studies at four institutions: the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum in Honolulu, Hawaii; the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories; the Denver Museum of Nature and Science in Denver, Colorado; and the Royal British Columbia Museum, in Victoria, British Columbia. These are public museums that seek to represent their province, state, or territory through the collection and presentation of natural and cultural items. My study investigated the degree to which these public museums involve Indigenous peoples in the presentation of their heritage. Amy Lonetree (2012) and others have explored how museums run by Indigenous people (typically referred to as "tribal museums") use so-called "decolonizing" methodologies to create museums that seek to serve their agendas and present their culture. In contrast, the four case studies discussed herein involve multidisciplinary museums in which the presentation of Indigenous peoples' heritage is only one function among many. Rather than framing collaborations with Indigenous people as a decolonizing exercise at these institutions, I view these relationships as

[2] According to the International Council of Museum Statutes, adopted during the 21st General Conference in Vienna, Austria, in 2007 (see http://icom.museum/the-vision/museum-definition/).

being part of ethical museum practice, whereby Indigenous stakeholders and their culture is treated respectfully and with their input.

## Heritage and Indigenous Rights

The right of Indigenous peoples to participate in the management of their heritage is an issue of global relevance. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (2008:11) acknowledges their "right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions" and "right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions." Article 31.2 of this declaration emphasizes the responsibility of states to "take effective measures to recognize and protect the exercise of these rights [in] *conjunction with Indigenous peoples*" (emphasis added). Taken in the context of the contemporary role of museums, this portion of the declaration suggests that the material and intangible culture housed and presented in state-run museums should be managed in consultation with Indigenous people, and especially the descendants of the people whose cultural heritage was collected.

Although the presentation and management of Indigenous heritage in museums is an international issue (e.g., Peers and Brown 2003), the subject has particular import in so-called "settler states," such as Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, where images of Indigenous peoples have been historically presented to the public by institutions built for the edification (and entertainment) of the majority. Controlling the material culture of Indigenous peoples and interpreting its value and meaning within these establishments can have consequences on the public perception of Indigenous peoples and may influence governmental social policy (see Davidson 2001 for an example from South Africa). As James Clifford (1997:192) has noted, museums are colonial "contact zones" that enact and explore ideas about relationships among the state, the public, and Indigenous peoples. Ethnographic museums are also important as they serve as the "public face" of academic anthropology (Sturge 2007:129). As public institutions, museums convey information about anthropology and Indigenous peoples' role in society; they have the potential to either work for or against

reconciliation and may transmit messages about Indigenous sovereignty (see Simpson 2009).

## Critical Heritage Studies

This dissertation falls under the wider field of critical heritage studies. Tim Winter (2012:533) describes the main approach of critical heritage studies as "bringing a critical approach to bear upon the socio-political complexities that enmesh heritage." Furthermore, he notes that the field can also provide understanding of how heritage is affected by and effects challenges facing the human cultures a whole, such as safeguarding the environment and supporting human rights. My work is also aligned with the goals of the Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage (IPinCH) project, which is "concerned with the theoretical, ethical, and practical implications of commodification, appropriation, and other flows of knowledge about the past, and how these may affect communities, researchers, and other stakeholders".[3] I received a Doctoral Fellowship from the IPinCH project, and had many opportunities to engage with a wide variety of experts who are leaders in work on critical heritage studies. It is accurate to say that the project had a great influence on my work by encouraging critical reflection on the uses of Indigenous heritage.

I employ critical theory to encourage the involvement of Indigenous peoples in heritage projects and recognize the importance of ethical practices (see Witcomb and Buckley 2013). For museums, ethical practice with Indigenous peoples means considering the level of involvement they have in creating displays about their culture and heritage. Following this comes the question of which practices should be employed in order to engage communities and ensure that Indigenous heritage is used in an ethical manner. In the past few decades, museum theorists have been considering aspects of this engagement, while museum practitioners have been developing models for practice. In order to look at both the intellectual and practical aspects of museum work with Indigenous stakeholders, I question both how public museums can ensure that Indigenous peoples' interests are considered in the display of their cultural heritage and

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[3] http://www.sfu.ca/ipinch/about/project-description

which practices might best ensure that museums manage Indigenous cultural heritage in an ethical fashion.

Below I introduce the concept of "Indigenous museology" to describe the emerging dialogue between Indigenous peoples and museums. Defining Indigenous museology builds on the influence of Indigenous archaeology—archaeology done "with, by, and for" Indigenous peoples (as originally described by Nicholas and Andrews 1997:3). The move to expand the scope of archaeology to incorporate other elements of heritage management, including museums, echoes the discussion extant in the literature (e.g., Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Nash 2010; Nicholas and Hollowell 2007; Nicholas et al. 2010). Along with this trend promoting holistic heritage research has come the acknowledgement of the importance of applying non-Western epistemologies that acknowledge the value of Indigenous peoples as stakeholders and research partners.[4] If they are to remain engaged and relevant, I argue that Western institutions must be self-critical of their practice, must involve Indigenous peoples in the management and presentation of their heritage within museums, and must be able to bring new Indigenous-based practices into museum work.

Since the late 1990s, museum anthropologists have recognized that museums are an appropriate site of study that impart as much, or more, about the society that created the exhibits than about the cultures represented therein. Critical museum studies focus on many topics, such as the importance of involving various communities in museum projects (i.e., Karp et al. 1992), the history and modern role of museums (i.e. Ames 1992; Bennett 1995), and more recently, explorations of the meaning of objects and collections (i.e., Alivizatou 2012; Edwards et al. 2006a; Harrison et al. 2013). Following critical museum anthropological studies (Karp and Lavine 1991; McLoughlin 1999; Simpson 2001; Sturge 2007), my focus in this study is the creation of museum exhibits. As Stephanie Moser (2010:22) notes, "[m]useum displays are increasingly being recognized as discrete interpretive documents of great significance to the history of scholarly disciplines and the evolution of ideas" yet there is a "general lack of awareness... about the extent to which exhibitions *create* [emphasis in original]

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[4] See, for example, the aims of the Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage (IPinCH) project (www.sfu.ca/IPinCH).

knowledge about the subjects they seek to represent." This study expands upon that knowledge and advances discourse about museum exhibits.

I frequently use the term "collaboration" to refer to the way museums and Indigenous people work together, but it is important to be cautious of this term. Chip Colwell and T.J. Ferguson (2008:1) show that so-called "collaborative" archaeology falls along a spectrum, where one end is resistance, the middle is participation, and the other end is a full power-sharing partnership. Consider, too, that when discussing museums that are not under the control of Indigenous people, neither is the final decision-making in their hands. Some have noted that the term "collaboration" is merely a buzzword that requires caution in its application (e.g., Boast 2011; La Salle 2010). I use the term to refer to some form of "working together," but do not intend to imply that there is equal power and authority between parties in every case.

## The Problem

I address the management and subsequent presentation of Indigenous heritage in museums through an examination of the process of collaboration and the content of the resulting museum exhibits. The analysis reflects back on the larger question and also provides detailed examples on a micro scale through case study research. Within the museum studies literature in Canada and the United States, some institutions may be considered over-represented in discussions about Indigenous collaborations with museums. Two that have received a great deal of attention are the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia (e.g., Ames 1992; 1999; Clapperton 2010; Clavir 2002; Clifford 1997; Simpson 2001) and the National Museum of the American Indian (e.g., Lonetree and Cobb 2008; Phillips 2006; Turner 2011; West 2004). While I do not intend to downplay the importance of these institutions, my study seeks to explore issues of participation at sites rarely mentioned within museum studies literature.[5] For precisely that reason I focused on the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum,

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[5] Although the Denver Museum of Nature and Science staff publish widely in scientific journals, little has been written about their work with Indigenous communities and the museum itself is not generally recognized within the academic literature as a leader in working with Indigenous communities (compared to the Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver, for example).

the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, and the Royal British Columbia Museum. I observed their modes of collaboration in order to widen the range of examples available within academic discourse. These four institutions also provided an opportunity to examine how ethical principles are applied in different contexts and how local politics and history guide museums in their relationships with Indigenous peoples.

Some authors have raised cautions about the use of the concept of "indigeneity" to describe archaeological work, and this point holds true for my nascent concept of Indigenous museology. For example, Robert McGhee (2008) worried that Indigenous archaeology gives Aboriginal peoples inherent rights over the archaeological record based on their racial profile. He saw this as being detrimental to archaeology because he feared it eroded scientific authority, yet this fear seems to be based on the faulty assumption that archaeological science and Indigenous knowledge are diametrically opposed. In a rebuttal to this article, Colwell-Chanthaphonh et al. (2010) noted that the label "Indigenous" is applied more as a political and historical category than a racial one and that Indigenous rights over archaeology are legitimate for many reasons, not the least of which is that the record is a product of their ancestors.[6] Echo-Hawk and Zimmerman (2006) have also pointed out the pitfalls of essentializing "Indigenousness" as it serves to define all people as either colonizers or colonized. However, recognizing that one of the results of colonialism has been the suppression of Indigenous sovereignty over heritage has its role, as does the presentation of this heritage by institutions that had historically shut them out. Therefore, I employ the term "Indigenous" throughout this study as a way to refer to the shared experience of being part of the historical "other" within Canadian and United States museums.

## Fieldwork Methods

This study has purposefully focused on museums in just two countries: the United States and Canada. They are often examined together in the context of heritage studies as they do share a great deal in common in terms of the development of

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[6] Also see Kuper (2003) for a critical analysis of the usage of the term.

collaborative practice with Indigenous peoples, (a point also acknowledged by Lonetree 2012). There are also many Indigenous communities, such as the Blackfoot, the Mohawk, and the Tsimshian, that span the United States-Canada border; from their perspective, the international border is imposed and does not reflect traditional cultural boundaries. Harmful colonial policies enacted by both Canada and the United States have had devastating effects on Indigenous peoples' culture and land base. The development of anthropology and of museums has at times played a part in limiting and controlling Indigenous material culture. As the need to address and reconcile museums' (sometimes negative) relationships with Indigenous peoples has increased in the past thirty or so years, museums in both countries have faced similar challenges, and have found similar solutions.

In the United States, two pieces of legislation—the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990) and the National Museum of the American Indian Act (1989)—recognized the rights of Native Americans and Native Hawaiians over their cultural heritage housed within museums in the United States. Canada, on the other hand, has not enacted any federal laws regarding the treatment of Indigenous cultural heritage, although the "Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships between Museums and First Peoples" report created by the Assembly of First Nations/Canadian Museums Association Task Force (1992) has served as a de facto national guiding document for ethical museum practice with respect to working with Indigenous communities. These documents acknowledge the importance of Indigenous involvement in museums and emphasize ethical principles in museum work. The problem, however, is that models for engaging Indigenous communities in museum work are lacking, particularly in terms of collaborative exhibit work.

## Museums

My first site visit was the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum (hereafter the Bishop Museum) in Honolulu, Hawaiʻi, which I visited from April 7 to 21, 2013. Hawaiʻi is in a unique situation, in terms of United States museums, as it is culturally and physically removed from the rest of the country. The mission of the Bishop Museum is to "be a gathering place and educational center that actively engages people in the presentation, exploration, and preservation of Hawaiʻi's cultural heritage and natural history, as well as

its ancestral cultures throughout the Pacific." The museum seeks to present material from a Hawaiian perspective that involves Native Hawaiians, their culture, and language within the exhibits, particularly the Hawaiian Hall, which I chose to be my case study.

Next, I made two visits to the Royal British Columbia Museum (hereafter the Royal BC Museum) in Victoria, British Columbia, one year apart (April 29–30, 2013, and May 26–30, 2014). I chose this institution as I wanted to study a museum that was culturally similar to the place where I had been living, but one that I did not know much about. The focus of the Royal BC Museum is on British Columbian history, ethnography, and general science and nature. Its mission is to "promote an understanding of the living landscapes and cultures of British Columbia and engage people in a dialogue about their future."[7] Initially I planned to focus on the First Peoples Galleries, but fortuitously was also able to study the creation of a new exhibit called "Our Living Languages: First Peoples' Voices in British Columbia," which opened a few weeks after my second visit.

Next I conducted my study of the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre (hereafter the Northern Heritage Centre) in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories (NWT), between July 4 and 22, 2013. This location was recommended by Barbara Winter, one of my Ph.D. committee members, who worked there as a curator from 1980 to 1990. The Northern Heritage Centre identifies itself as a museum that collaborates with community to create all of its exhibits.[8] It is located in a unique subarctic context, being one of Canada's northernmost museums, and is the territorial museum serving a population of approximately 40,000 people spread over more than one million square kilometres. This population includes a higher percentage of Aboriginal people compared to the rest of Canada. The Northern Heritage Centre has a mission to "play a primary role in documenting and providing information about the cultures and history of the NWT."

Finally, I visited the Denver Museum of Nature and Science (hereafter the Denver Museum) in Denver, Colorado, from April 20 to May 8, 2014. I was already aware of some of the research being conducted on the collections at the Denver Museum that was innovative and collaborative (e.g., Nash 2014). The Denver Museum

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[7] http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/about/

[8] Barbara Winter explained that she had suggested including the PWNHC as a way to "get a Canadian perspective in which the First Nations control of heritage is done from a position of strength" (personal communication January 31, 2015).

is the only self-identified "science" museum of my case studies, whereas the other museums include history and some art. Its mission is to "Ignite our community's passion for nature and science,"[9] of which anthropology is one part. I focused on the "North American Indian Cultures" exhibit, known to the staff as "Crane Hall."

These four institutions span a wide geographical and sociocultural context. They exemplify some of the solutions museums have developed to address the need to engage communities in creating representations. Each has its own specific history and influences that have shaped current practices. Thus, by looking at the history, ways of working, and current exhibits of Indigenous heritage at each, it was possible to draw some parallels. I had the opportunity to interrogate their practices and to ascertain their effectiveness by reflecting upon larger patterns of collaboration with Indigenous people.

My fieldwork addressed the ways in which the heritage of Indigenous people is currently presented in museums. Moreover, I consider self-representation of heritage to be in the scope of Indigenous rights. Looking critically at on-the-ground collaborative heritage practices to assess whether they are successful and to ask whose needs are being served is important. I also looked at how working relationships between museums and Indigenous peoples are sustained and developed over time. Are they embedded within the institution as policy (staff positions, memoranda of understanding) or are they based on individual relationships? What should museums do to ensure the longevity of these relationships? What are museums doing to encourage more Indigenous people to pursue careers in cultural industries? Ultimately, I hope to encourage, deepen, and formalize collaborative methods in museums in order to consider Indigenous people as stakeholder communities who are the owners of the cultural heritage on display.

## Research Questions

My primary research question is: *"What does ethical collaborative practice look like in the context of museum exhibit creation?"* Through my study of museum collaboration, I hope to contribute to research about how ethical practice and the

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[9] http://www.dmns.org/about-us/mission-and-vision/

involvement of Indigenous peoples in museum undertakings is manifested in current practice. To accomplish my research goals, I developed a series of research questions to guide my literature review, case study research, and data analysis. Specifically, I consider:

1.  **The History of Collaborative Practice:**

    a.  **What is the history of collaborative exhibition creation involving Indigenous peoples in North American museums?**
    b.  **How have these collaborative relationships changed over time?**
    c.  **What lessons have been learned about successful collaborative practices?**

2.  **The Collaborative Process**

    a.  **What types of collaborative methods are currently being employed in exhibit creation?**
    b.  **How has the museum incorporated successful collaborative practice into its way of working at the institutional level?**

3.  **Exhibit Design**

    a.  **How does the use of collaborative methods affect the content and message of an exhibit about the culture and heritage of the partnering community?**
    b.  **How are the voices from Aboriginal Canada, Native America, and Native Hawaii represented in exhibitions?**

To answer these questions, I conducted a multi-sited ethnographic study (as per Marcus 1995:96) at the four museums selected, which consisted of (a) interviews with museum staff (38 in total), (b) critical reviews of exhibits (7 in total), and (c) participant observation at each site. This fieldwork was designed to provide practical examples that explore the concept of Indigenous museology.

My four case studies yielded the primary source of data relating to the first theme, *history of collaborative practice,* that I accrued from the interviews with staff at these institutions. My assumption throughout this work was that most museum practitioners would currently agree that Indigenous peoples should participate to some degree in decision-making over the management and presentation of their heritage. However, the levels of participation likely would have shifted as relationships intensified, as institutional priorities changed, as Indigenous peoples opted for careers in museums, and as exhibition themes grew more sophisticated. At each case study site there was at

least one staff member whose long-term tenure with the museum enriched their personal recollections, which helped to create my narrative arc. This information related to the history of collaboration was supplemented with published and unpublished written material, mostly collected while at each site.

I addressed the *collaborative process* questions primarily through interviews that entailed asking about current practice. I focused on understanding the process used to create specific exhibits on Indigenous culture. I also gathered information about other collaborative work in the museum, such as community engagement with collections, repatriation processes, and public educational programming. I sought details about past and present exhibits and other projects that involved some level of collaboration or consultation and explored the methods used to undertake this work. I also collected information from staff about which methods they judged to be effective and which—if any—were not.

Finally, to evaluate effective *exhibit design*, I examined the "look" and message of displays at the case study institutions. I assumed that there would be identifiable markers of collaboration present in exhibits co-created with Indigenous people. Each of the four museums had at least one exhibit on view at the time of my visit that was developed in consultation and/or collaboration with a local community. My general knowledge about museum exhibits, which has been gained through insider experience, and as a lifelong fan of museums, helped me recognize these design elements and critically reflect on the message that the curators wished to communicate. This information contributes to my definition of Indigenous museology.

## Personal Motivations

Taking a critical approach requires that my motivations and personal background are laid bare in terms of how it may affect my interactions with my interviewees, as well as my interpretation of academic literature and reading of museum exhibits. This I provide here. I am a non-Indigenous researcher who explores this topic with a concern for ethical practice. My research is guided by my personal beliefs, experience, and ethics. I am an academic, so I do not speak for Indigenous peoples; rather my research

focus is a critical analysis of practices within mainstream institutions and is therefore not "outsider research" (Dabulskis-Hunter 2002:xxiv). I position myself as someone who has worked and volunteered in public museums, and I am guided by my own sense of ethical practice.

I have a background and lifelong interest in and relationships with museums and archaeology. During my undergraduate degree at Trent University in Ontario, I became aware of the struggle of Aboriginal peoples for sovereignty and respect. As such, I strive to ensure that my archaeology and museum work always consider Aboriginal rights and ethical practice. I expanded on this idea in my master's degree research at the University of Northern British Columbia when I looked directly at issues of community-based, Indigenous archaeology in Canada (Carr-Locke 2005). After completing my Master's degree in Anthropology, I worked at the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia for four years. My educational background and personal experience influenced my decision to undertake my Ph.D. at Simon Fraser University.

Since beginning my formal Ph.D. studies, my relationship to one of my case study locations (and to my research topic as a whole) has changed significantly.[10] As a direct result of my fieldwork at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, I was encouraged to apply for a staff position the following year and was hired as the Assistant Director (Head of Visitor Services) in July 2014. This job has influenced my writing, and enhanced my insider point of view about the Northern Heritage Centre. Part of my job is to manage collaborative exhibition projects with Indigenous communities. I am now faced with balancing the operational realities of the principles and practices described in this study.[11]

Part of decolonizing practice is the recognition of the researcher's privilege and intentions (Battiste 2008:503). In this dissertation, my intentions for such research are to observe and record practice and to encourage the continued development of ethical practices within public museums. In this way I contribute to better understanding

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[10] Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics (ORE) required me to declare this conflict of interest as part of my yearly ethics review in 2015, and to attach the statement in Appendix A in order to ensure that the conflict was clearly identified to readers.

[11] See Carr-Locke (2015).

Indigenous museology. My intent is to critique current practices that ignore or dishonour tribal sovereignty and to promote ethical practices that involve Indigenous peoples in matters related to the management and presentation of their heritage. This study thus focuses on museums and privileges the voices and perspectives of museum staff, rather than those of Indigenous peoples. I do not assume to know how they think or feel about how each museum in my study represents their cultures—I am not qualified to make this judgement. My research will encourage increasing equitable exchanges between communities and heritage institutions and recognizes inherent Indigenous rights over heritage management, which I believe will ultimately benefit Indigenous people and heritage institutions worldwide.

## Organization of Dissertation

In this chapter, I have introduced the research problem and study objectives, presented background on my case studies, and discussed my personal relationship to the research topic. In Chapter 2, I present an overview of the historical and theoretical context for collaborative museum practice with Indigenous peoples that traces the history of the struggle for Indigenous rights over heritage and examines how these have affected museum theory and policy. It also provides some context for the concept of Indigenous museology.

My fieldwork methods are described in Chapter 3. After a brief explanation of my critical methodology, I present a detailed explanation of my data collection methods. These include interviews, critical analysis of exhibits, collection of research materials, and participant observation. I also provide an overview of the analytical methods employed and show how my research questions were addressed. In-depth information about my case studies is presented in Chapter 4 and 5. In the former, I describe how the methods described in Chapter 3 were applied at each individual site, and also provide necessary contextual information about each museum. In Chapter 5, I present the research data that I collected about collaboration with Indigenous communities at each location, organized by the three themes identified in my research questions: the history of collaboration, exhibit design, and current practices.

In my final two chapters, I present my discussion and conclusion. Chapter 6 brings all of my case study research together and compares it with practices from the literature that I reviewed in Chapter 2. Again, I return to the three themes of history, practices, and exhibit design. Several additional themes are also explored that arose out of my studies, so I spend the second half of the chapter exploring the importance of mission and vision statements, visitor experience, and the advantage of formalizing relationships with Indigenous groups. I also briefly discuss the challenges of all of these practices. Finally, in Chapter 7, I return to the wider concept of Indigenous museology as a theory and a practice, highlight some additional challenges, and present some personal reflections on my research.

# Chapter 2.

# The Development and Characteristics of Indigenous Museology

Museums and Indigenous peoples have a long history of interaction in Canada and the United States. One of the primary functions of museums has been to store and display the material cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples, both past and present, though these functions have not always involved Indigenous people themselves. Arthur C. Parker, recognized as the first professional Native American archaeologist, designed six dioramas about Iroquois life for the New York State Museum in 1912, making him an early progenitor of Indigenous museology (see Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2009). As museums, popular culture, and anthropological ethics changed and developed, so too has the relationship between museums and Indigenous peoples. Today, it is important to look at the degree of agency communities and individuals have in shaping and altering the culture of museums to suit the purposes and needs of community members.

I have defined Indigenous museology as museum work done *with, for,* and *by* Indigenous peoples, whereby standard museum practices are altered to suit their needs. The purpose of this chapter is to present an historical overview of what can be considered Indigenous museology and to trace the development of the relationship between museums and Indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States. Rather than being a new phenomenon, I show that the confluence of anthropological, museological, and Indigenous social movements and trends have helped to shape Indigenous museology over many years. This historical overview has been gleaned primarily from background reading on the topic. The development of Indigenous museology as both theory and practice continues, and I use this framework to contextualize the practices in the case studies described in subsequent chapters.

I begin with a summary of the history of Indigenous museology, which I break down into various phases. To provide context for this history, I then identify some of the key examples that are often discussed in the academic literature of museums with good practices that exemplify the ideals of Indigenous museology. Finally, I review some of the principal criticisms directed at Indigenous involvement in heritage activities and suggest how they might be addressed.

## Historical Development

There has been a general trend in "settler states" towards increasing Indigenous involvement in museum work in public institutions, including collections care and management, display/curation, and inclusive policy development (Phillips 2011:8). For this historical review, I have divided the history of Indigenous museology into three overlapping "waves" that represent distinct periods of development (see Table 1). This concept is borrowed from George Nicholas (2006), who noted the similarities between the women's rights movement's influence on feminist archaeology and the development of Indigenous archaeology.[12] The purpose of this is to demonstrate its parallels to museology and to show how it reflects the goals of a larger Indigenous rights movement and self-determination.

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[12] These "waves" are also similar to the phases outlined by Shawn Wilson (2008) to trace the development of Aboriginal research methods.

**Table 2.1.    Key Developments in Indigenous Museology**

| | Chronology | Goals | Events/Movements | Exhibitions | People |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Antecedents** | 1930s–1960s | Recognizing Native "art" | Tribal art market (Inuit prints, etc.) | | Bill Reid (artist) |
| **First Wave** | 1960s–1970s | Removal of culturally sensitive material; Repatriation of human remains begins; Repatriation of sensitive material begins (e.g., Zuni *Ahayu:da*) | American Indian Movement | New MOA building opens (1976) | Vine Deloria Jr. (critic) |
| **Second Wave** | 1980s–mid-1990s | Ethical and self-representation; critical theory to look at how museums might reinforce systems of power | "The Spirit Sings" protests (1988) NAGPRA (1990) Post-colonialism New museology Assembly of First Nations/Canadian Museums Association Task Force | "Primitivism" (MOMA) 1984 "Te Maori" (Met) 1984 "Trapline, Lifeline" (PWNHC) "Fluffs and Feathers" (1992) Glenbow Blackfoot exhibit (1990s) | Michael Ames James Clifford (critic) Julia Harrison Bruce Trigger |
| **Third Wave** | Late 1990s–2000s & beyond | Participation in decision-making; Collaborative exhibits and collection management; Self-representation; Indigenous methodologies; Inclusion of intangible culture | Participatory research Establishment of cultural centres | CMC Great Hall redesign Various MOA exhibits ROM redesign NMAI opening (2004) RRN (2010) | Moira Simpson Susan Pearce Conal McCarthy Ruth Phillips Gerald Conatay |

**Key**: MOMA = Museum of Modern Art (New York); Met = The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York); NAGPRA = Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act; PWNHC = Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre (Yellowknife, Northwest Territories); ROM = Royal Ontario Museum (Toronto, Ontario); AFN/CMA = Assembly of First Nations/Canadian Museums Association; CMC = Canadian Museum of Civilization (Ottawa, Ontario); NMAI = National Museum of the American Indian (Washington, DC); RRN = Reciprocal Research Network (Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver, British Columbia).

## Early History of Museums

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998:2) asserts that the ways in which majority cultures view "others" are reflected through presentations in museums. Within settler states, the majority cultures and the Indigenous others are products of colonial relationships that influence museum and government policy in the present day (Simpson 2001). Many have noted that the history of museums as public institutions is closely tied to colonialist and imperialist aims (e.g., Bennett 1995; Edwards et al. 2006a; McCarthy 2007; Simpson 2001). These ties go back to the very early history of museums; their precursors were "cabinets of curiosities"—rooms and display cases that contained trinkets, natural history specimens, and archaeological and ethnographic objects acquired by Europeans missionaries, explorers, and businessmen who came into contact with other cultures, generally as part of the imperial expansion (Ames 1992:16). Some members of wealthy classes kept such collections in their private homes as objects of interest and examples of incipient science; their guests were able to admire and touch the objects, bringing status to the owners.

The first public museums were located in Europe and developed as sites of scientific research, but their public functions focused on popular education. Founded in the late 19th century, museums mirrored Enlightenment principles that sought to bring order and to identify the world through the collection and subsequent classification of specimens. Charles Darwin's evolutionary scheme (*Origin of Species* 1859) provided a basis for the organization of natural species within museums. Darwin's work in turn influenced Edward B. Tylor's (1871) model for cultural evolution, whereby human societies moved through stages from savagery through barbarism to civilization. According to Elizabeth Edwards et al. (2006b:7), the stated purpose of early museums was to exemplify notions of science by displaying objects according to rational and organized principles. The scientific principle that was most often followed was one of unilinear evolutionary theory. Modeled after Tylor's cultural evolution, the principle served to influence the arrangement of the objects in cases and within the galleries to relay information about Victorian England and its relative place and "superior" status in the world. Human remains and cultural objects from non-European cultures were seen as scientific specimens that could be used to illustrate (race-based) evolutionary principles and teach Europeans about their own past (Bennett 2004:2). At the same

time, public visitors were taught such "proper" modes of behavior as quiet contemplation and the importance of visual learning, which represented the "civilized" way to gain knowledge (Bennett 1995:100).

The founding of museums went hand in hand with the development of the discipline of anthropology. The early, Victorian-era museums described above were places where the public (many of whom were not literate) could come to *see* and *experience* other exotic cultures—a "window into the discipline and space where the tangible forms of the societies studied by anthropologists could be displayed" (Harris and O'Hanlon 2013:8). The idea of "vanishing races" and interest in Indigenous peoples and cultures also led to the occasional display of *living* people for the purposes of education and entertainment. In 1893, the Chicago World's Fair (also known as the Columbian Exposition), for example, featured living dioramas of Native American communities from across the North American continent, and is an early example of exhibiting Native American and Inuit cultures (Raibmon 2005:35). There is some overlap between the Chicago World's Fair and other forms of human display (like "freak" and midway shows) and the early development of museums in the United States (Abt 2006:130; Skramstad 2004:119). North American and European publics could also encounter "Indians" in their traditional dress at touring "Wild West" shows (and their vestiges in the Calgary Stampede), which became popular following Buffalo Bill's model from the late 1880s (Francis 1992:90).

Raymond Corbey (1993) presents a fascinating overview of the history of these "ethnographic showcases" featuring "colonial natives" presented in their traditional clothing accompanied by tools and other props. There was clearly a social Darwinist intent to these displays as non-Western peoples were displayed as "early" forms of human culture, and anthropologists participated in presenting living peoples, although this form of display declined by the 1930s (Corbey 1993:358). Duane King (2009:26-7) argues that because the Indigenous peoples who acted as living displays willingly shared their culture with anthropologists and public visitors that this can be seen as an early form of museum collaboration. He points to the example of Ishi, "the last member of the Yahi tribe," who served as research partner to anthropologist Alfred Kroeber and occasionally served as a living cultural display at the Museum of Anthropology at the University of California Berkeley from 1911 to 1916.

In Canada, the earliest museum-type collections assembled by European colonists were in the Catholic mission in New France beginning in the 1700s. The presentation of religious relics continued into the 20th century as church administrators saw it as an opportunity to document the history of religious orders for the purposes of teaching and religious inspiration (Gillam 2001:53-4). As secular museums gained popularity in Canada in the late 19th century and also expanded outside of Europe, the need and desire to acquire objects for museum displays grew to focus on ethnographic objects.

The drive to procure Indigenous material culture also reflected the goals of salvage ethnography. The prevailing belief at the time was that the world's Indigenous peoples were on the brink of extinction and so preserving examples of their material culture for posterity and to educate the general public was important (Cole 1985:286). For example, Franz Boas' goal in the Jessup North Pacific Expedition (1897–1902) was to conduct anthropological research through the collection of tangible and intangible culture that would likely soon be destroyed by the "march of civilization." Historian Douglas Cole's (1985) description of the "scramble" to collect Northwest Coast artifacts shows how the rise of anthropological museums was closely associated with legal—yet sometimes coercive and predatory—methods of acquisition from the late 1800s to the Great Depression of the 1930s. This collecting imperative, which would go on to form the basis of many museum collections, was part of larger colonial practices that were focused on the containment and control of Indigenous people and their heritage (Edwards et al. 2006b:3). In Canada, for example, the federal government's ban on the potlatch—a ceremonial gift-giving event practiced on the Northwest Coast—led to a large illegal seizure of Kwakwaka'wakw material culture in 1921, under the so-called "Potlatch Laws." Objects from this collection would make their way into various museums (and private collections) across North America and the world (Webster 1990:134-5).

## Antecedents (1930s through 1960s)

By the 1930s, museums were firmly established throughout North America. While a move towards recognizing the rights of Indigenous peoples to participate in creating museum representations did not occur until after the 1960s, the three decades that

preceded it set the stage for future involvement (see Table 1). The information below is presented as context to set the stage for the three following waves of development.

A "primitivist" Western art fad began in the 1910s and 1920s, partially as a result of the French Surrealist movement (see Mauzé 2013; Torgovnick 1990). Anthropological interest in "tribal" art also affected museums in the 1920s as Franz Boas emphasized the value of studying material culture and looking at ethnographic objects in a relativistic framework (Morphy and Perkins 2006:7). The 1920s also brought the first evidence that Native people and their cultures were not disappearing despite policies designed to assimilate them into Euro-American society (Dawn 2013:305). By the 1930s, however, interest in material culture began to wane in anthropology, and museums became much less important to the discipline (Morphy and Perkins 2006:6). Thus, distinct categories of "art" and "artifact" remained contested by anthropologists as they served to define the heritage of Indigenous people from a Western point of view. Charlotte Townsend-Gault (1998) noted that utilizing such an art framework to present and describe Native artwork served to reinforce colonial narratives rather than break them down (also see Mithlo 2012; Townsend-Gault et al. 2013). Mainstream interest in Indigenous material culture and its redefinition as "art", encouraged new methods of display whereby lighting and mounting strategies helped to emphasize artistic achievement and aesthetic design rather than scientific value (Ames 1992:64-65).

Influenced by this early popular interest in tribal art, the sale and exhibition of North American Indian and Eskimo art rose dramatically in the 1960s and 1970s[13] (Jacknis 2002). Anthropologists in this period turned back to art and visual anthropology due to an increased interest in symbolic thinking by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966) and others (as described by Morphy and Perkins 2006:9). This focus on the aesthetic qualities expressed in material culture is reflected, for example, in the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology building, which opened in 1976 in Vancouver. Arthur Erickson's architectural design mimicked traditional Northwest Coast houses and highlighted the beauty of the totem poles featured in the Great Hall (Clifford 1991:212).

[13] Interest in Maori and Australian Aboriginal "art" also increased at this time (for a description, see Bolton 2003 and McCarthy 2011).

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Michael Ames cited Bill Reid's commissioned artwork "Raven and the First Men" (dedicated on April 1, 1980) for the Museum of Anthropology at UBC, and his reputation as a Haida artist, as an early example of participation with the museum (1987:70-76). Contemporary Aboriginal art was increasingly incorporated into ethnographic museums and art galleries,[14] bringing greater visibility to the resilience and contemporaneity of their culture. This shift in museums' and public consciousness opened the door to other changes within museums as modern Indigenous peoples were invited in to participate in shows of contemporary art (Dawn 2013:306). While the focus on the aesthetic qualities of their material culture broadened possibilities for interaction between Indigenous artists and museums, the assessment and interpretation of tribal art works remained based on mainstream values (Phillips and Steiner 1999).

## First Wave (1960s to 1970s)

The 1960s and 1970s saw increasing struggles for women's and African American rights in the United States and Canada. Indigenous rights movements also developed during these decades. Political groups, such as the American Indian Movement (AIM), publicly criticized the actions of the United States and Canadian governments in the treatment of Native Americans and the processes by which they were dispossessed of their land. By this time, the assumption that these "races" of people would disappear had been thoroughly discredited. A cultural renaissance accompanied these political movements as Indigenous peoples emphasized their cultural survival despite federal assimilationist policies (Simpson 2001:8). Individuals involved in nativist movements in North America directed some of their frustration towards anthropology and archaeology for the real or perceived negative treatment of their culture and heritage (e.g., Deloria 1969). Vine Deloria Jr.'s (1969) critique of anthropology famously raised questions about anthropologists' portrayal of Native Americans and the connection between anthropology and public policy (see Dyck and Waldram 1993). While Deloria's critique angered some archaeologists, some listened and several would later cite his critique as an important influence on their work (Atalay

[14] The Winnipeg Art Gallery made an early commitment in the 1950s and 1960s to proactively collect copies of Canadian Inuit prints and sculptures. It currently holds 11,000 works, one of the most comprehensive collections in the world (http://wag.ca/art/collections/inuit-art).

2006a:288; Nicholas 2008:1662). Other critical voices included Sioux anthropologist Beatrice Medicine (e.g., Medicine and Jacobs 2001), filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin,[15] and Anishinaabe writer, storyteller, language teacher, and scholar Basil H. Johnston (e.g., 2011).

Many of the objections raised by Indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States in this period concerned the mistreatment of ancestral human remains. As early as 1965, the Museum of New Mexico removed Native American skeletal remains from display at the request of local tribes (King 2009:28). Throughout North America, most of the human remains that were unearthed accidentally through construction, as well as those uncovered in archaeological excavations, ended up in public and university museums, although only a small portion were put on display. Protests by Indigenous people centered around first getting museums to remove the remains from display, and then having them repatriated to the proper community for reburial (for a brief overview see Sleeper-Smith 2009:39-47).[16] Concerns and protests about the treatment of Native American human remains in the 1960s set the groundwork for the development of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).[17]

Some museums went a step further and decided to build capacity among Indigenous peoples so as to involve them in museum work. Indigenous artists may have been early museum partners who set the stage for Indigenous museology, but programs developed over the last thirty years, such as the Museum of Anthropology's Native Youth Program,[18] the Canadian Museum of Civilization's Aboriginal Training Program, the National Museum of the American Indian's internship program,[19] and the School for Advanced Research training program,[20] have served as training grounds for the

[15] Obomsawin's film, *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993), had a large impact on my understanding of Native rights in Canada and led me to pursue Native Studies as my second major for my Bachelor of Arts at Trent University.

[16] Barbara Winter recalls, "In the late 1960s or early 1970s the Kamloops Museum was forced to remove human remains displayed in their galleries by a group who occupied the museum and demended respect be paid to the remains." Personal communication, March 10th, 2015.

[17] For a comprehensive overview of the treatment of human remains and the events that led up to NAGPRA, see Hurst Thomas (2000).

[18] See http://nativeyouthprogram.wordpress.com/history/

[19] See http://nmai.si.edu/connect/internships/

[20] See http://sarweb.org/?internships_paid_history

development of a professional corps of Indigenous people working as museologists who were part of this first wave (e.g., Rowan 1987). These programs laid the groundwork for future developments and aided in the capacity building of museum expertise in Indigenous communities across North America.

Conferences were also held on topics related to partnerships with and representation of Indigenous people in museums, although the details are difficult to trace in the literature. I found transcripts of several conferences on Indigenous museology from this period in the personal papers of Joyce Herold (Mt. Plains Museum Association. 1980; Risser 1979), who was the former Curator of Collections and a current Denver Museum volunteer. One of these documents was from the North American Indian Museums Association, which held their inaugural conference in Denver, Colorado, from April 30 to May 3, 1979, and included presentations by tribal museum leaders (Risser 1979). The North American Indian Museums Association only survived for ten years (from 1977 to 1987), during which time it served as an organizing body for tribal museums under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution (Abrams 2004:4). JoAllyn Archambault, a curator at the Smithsonian, noted that Native peoples were collaborating with museums on exhibits as early as the 1940s, but that records related to this are "scanty" and "like the history of ethnographic collecting, the history of consultation with native experts is poorly recorded" (1993:8).

The first wave of Indigenous museology yielded many so-called "tribal museums"[21]—museums located on reservations and governed by Indigenous community members. These museums and tribal centers can be found throughout the mainland United States and Canada; larger examples include the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center (established in 1998 in Connecticut), the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center (New Mexico, 1976), The Woodland Cultural Centre (Brantford Ontario, 1972), The U'Mista Cultural Society (Alert Bay, British Columbia, 1980), and the Alaska

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[21] "Tribes" are recognized legal entities in the United States, while in Canada it is more common to speak of "First Nations." The term "tribal museum," however, is the accepted term for Indigenous-run community museums in both the United States and Canada.

Native Heritage Center (Alaska, 2000).[22] The proliferation of these museums in the United States was due to the Economic Development Administration, which funded the construction of museums as a way to stimulate tourism as economic development on reservations (Abrams 2004:4). Tribal museums in the United States and Canada provided an opportunity for self-representation on the community's own terms. As Archambault (1993:10) described, "Issues, themes, and self-image as reflected in tribal communities are the source for much of their exhibit material." While not all of the museums established in the 1960s and 1970s have survived to the present day, they played an important role in the development of Indigenous museology as communities were able to develop ways of working and to prioritize community needs for their own museums.

Patricia Pierce Erikson (1996) identified the period beginning in the 1970s as a "Native American museum movement," which was part of a larger movement for self-determination in North America. The techniques employed by Indigenous peoples to appropriate the museum as their primary techniques were: a) protesting museum exhibition of and storage/curation/research of Native American human remains; b) pressuring for repatriation of excavated grave material for reburial; c) repatriating materials that were inappropriately alienated from a community; d) entering the museum profession in order to reform it from the inside, establishing rural and urban community museums/cultural centers; and e) raising public consciousness about the history of museums and Indigenous peoples (Erikson et al. 2002:33-4).[23]

## Second Wave (1980s to 1990)

By the late 1980s, the post-structuralism and critical theory (promoted by philosophers Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes, among others), exerted their influence on the humanities and social sciences. Many anthropologists, museologists, and archaeologists began to hear and react to the Indigenous peoples' critiques aimed

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[22] See www.tribalmuseums.org for a list of tribal museums in the United States compiled by the National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers. No such comprehensive listing seems to exist for Canadian tribal museums.

[23] See also Lonetree (2006) for an introduction to a special issue of *American Indian Quarterly* devoted to "Critical Engagements with the National Museum of the American Indian."

at their discipline and at museums. This new scholarship questioned museum and anthropological authority to represent Indigenous peoples (e.g., Cole 1985; Hymes 1972; McBryde 1985; Mulvaney 1983; Stocking 1985). Museum anthropologists also began to engage in discussions on how to "decolonize" museum storage and exhibition practices by ensuring that scholarly research did not serve to silence Indigenous voices (e.g., Ames 1987; Doxtator 1988; Harrison 1987; Kreps 1988; McMullen et al. 1987). This period marked the first appearance of several key Native-run museums in Canada, such as the U'mista Cultural Centre in Alert Bay and the Nuymbalees Cultural Centre in Cape Mudge (both in British Columbia), which were constructed to house objects of patrimony being returned through community repatriation efforts. The reclaiming of material culture held in Canadian national and provincial museums became a standard feature of the federal land claims process of both the Nisga'a (see Government of Canada 2000) and Nunavut (see Government of Canada 1993); both agreements contained lists of items that were to be returned.

The methods of acquisition of museum objects, the stories that were being told in the exhibitions, and the prioritization of scientific uses of museum material over other uses all became topics for the nativist critique of the early 1980s (Cooper 2008:1). Museums began to face a "crisis of representation" brought on by criticism from Indigenous peoples living in Canada, the United States, and Australia who saw their cultures being presented to others without their input and sometimes in conflict with their belief systems (Erikson et al. 2002:32). In the preceding few decades, modern urban centers had become more multicultural, causing both government and the public to question national cultural identity as solely British or European; museums were increasingly being asked to reflect this multiculturalism (Karp and Lavine 1991:1; Phillips 2011:156). These conversations also added to debates within museum discourse about whose interests were actually being served by public museums (Peers and Brown 2003:1). Meanwhile Native American perspectives were beginning to appear in museum exhibits (see, for example, McMullen et al. 1987).

In Canada, debates about representation and audience culminated in protest over a single exhibition—the Glenbow Museum's "The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples" exhibition, which was put on during the Calgary Olympics in 1988. The exhibit was designed to celebrate Canadian Aboriginal arts and culture, but it

offended members of several First Nations communities (Harrison 1993a:337). The local Lubicon Cree community began a boycott of the exhibit and museum to bring attention to their unsettled land claims. Shell Canada was one of the main sponsors of the exhibit, and had been drilling on unceded territory that was part of an ongoing land dispute between the Lubicon and the Alberta government. The Lubicon strongly objected to Shell's sponsorship of an exhibit ostensibly celebrating the culture of Aboriginal people while violating their land rights (Goddard 1991:140-58). A secondary reason for the boycott was that while the exhibit presented historical objects that were "beautiful," it did not connect the pieces to contemporary people and the present-day realities of Native life in Canada (McLoughlin 1993:1). Julia Harrison (1993a:340-341), one of the curators of the exhibit, noted that the issue was with consultation and lack of self-representation, rather than ownership issues over the cultural heritage presented. This boycott over the non-involvement of the local community in designing the exhibit received international attention in both the popular media and museum discourse.

"The Spirit Sings" exhibit left a lasting legacy on museum practice by means of the subsequent creation of a collaborative Task Force on Museums and First Peoples that undertook countrywide meetings and consultations related to Aboriginal participation in Canadian museums[24] (Assembly of First Nations and Canadian Museums Association 1992). The task force was composed of 25 cultural experts with extensive experience in heritage issues, including Native Elders. Task force member Tom Hill (2008:152) noted that the members of the task force agreed that rather than seeking Canadian federal legislation (like NAGPRA), museums and communities preferred the freedom to collaborate on repatriations on a case-by-case basis on their own terms. The task force recommendations set out ethical principles for conduct, but did not prescribe collaborative methods or practices. For example, Michael Ames (1999:1) described the difficulties that the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia faced in trying to put "principles into practice" when creating two collaborative exhibits with First Nations bands, an example I will return to later.

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[24] Similarly, the Canadian Archaeological Association formed the Aboriginal Heritage Committee in 1992 with a specific mandate to improve the relationship between archaeologists and First Nations in Canada by undertaking regional consultations. The end result was an ethics document, "Principles of Ethical Conduct Pertaining to Aboriginal Peoples" (Canadian Archaeological Association 2010).

For museums in the United States, the focus of criticism from Native American communities related to the possession and management of objects and human remains. The Zuni were one of the first groups to question museums' rights to display Indigenous religious items when they began an organized campaign for their recovery in 1978 (Ferguson 1990:7; also see Merrill et al. 1993). Many Zuni *Ahayu:da*, or "war gods," had been removed from shrines in Zuni territory in the southwestern United States, and ended up in many museums and private collections around the world. The Zuni used both legal and ethical grounds to argue for their return, noting that the *Ahayu:da* were communally owned and were of continuing religious significance. They easily demonstrated that they had been removed illegally from Zuni territory, which made a straightforward case for repatriation (Ewing 2011:86). The legal argument used was that the removal of the *Ahayu:da* from shrines violated the Zuni's ability to freely practice their religion (Ferguson 2010:194). For the Zuni, repatriation "restored harmony to the world" because the shrines were whole once more (Merrill et al. 1993:525). This repatriation process[25] is an example of early successful interaction and cooperation between museums and Indigenous peoples in North America and an acknowledgement by museums and collectors that the Zuni had fundamental rights to the *Ahayu:da* that took precedence over other uses, such as museum display (Ewing 2011:62).

Despite a focus on issues of ownership and repatriation of material culture and human remains held in museums, in the late 1980s, United States legislators came to acknowledge that there was a need to involve Native Americans in representing themselves in national museums. The United States government passed the National Museum of the American Indian Act (1989, amended in 1996), which acknowledged the rights of Native Americans to manage the storage and presentation of museum collections related to their heritage. Closely related to the National Museum of the American Indian Act legislation is The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), which became law in 1990 as a result of Native American protests over the treatment and display of human remains by archaeological and museum activities. Under this law, all museums receiving federal funding are responsible for making an inventory of all Native American human remains and

[25] See Merrill et al. (1993) for a detailed description of the process of negotiating a return from the Smithsonian Institution.

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associated grave goods in their collections and making these lists available to Native communities (US National Parks Service 1990). NAGPRA has been both celebrated and highly criticized by museum and Native American communities, but what is clear is that it has ushered in new relationships between Native Americans and museums (e.g., Bernstein 2010; Bruchac 2010; Ferguson 2010; Nash and Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2010).

## Third Wave (1990s to present)

In the early 1990s, the "new museology"—a critical self-examination of museum culture that came primarily out of the United Kingdom influenced by post-structuralist theory—addressed issues about power and representation in museum exhibits (see, for example, Vergo 1989). In North America, works such as Michael Ames' *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes* (1992) provided a critical analysis of Indigenous/museum relationships, including some consideration of potential collaborative methods. The "Fluffs and Feathers" exhibit, put on by the (Iroquois Six Nations–run) Woodland Cultural Centre established in Brantford, Ontario, in 1972, was one of the first exhibits that addressed how Aboriginal peoples had been represented in museums (see Doxtator 1992). Exhibits such as this demonstrated that they could include dialogue about contemporary Native life and issues, rather than showing Indigenous peoples as stranded in the past. This period of museum theory is characterized by a developing scholarship that deals with issues of involving Indigenous people in the museum profession, and looks at issues of power and representation (e.g., Bond and Gilliam 1994; Hall 1997; Henderson and Kaeppler 1997; Hooper-Greenhill 2000; Karp and Lavine 1991; Simpson 2001; Sturge 2007).

The development of Indigenous archaeology in the late 1990s was directly traceable to the postprocessualist approach, which also looked at issues of power, interpretation, and representation. That this brand of archaeology grew in popularity in the 2000s demonstrated a growing acknowledgment that Indigenous peoples have an inherent right to be involved in decisions related to their heritage (Nicholas and Andrews 1997:3). Indigenous archaeology developed as a body of theory, a method, a practice, and a general philosophical framework (Nicholas 2008:1660). As a practice, it has much in common with community-based participatory research methodologies that also became popular in social science research in the 1990s (see Atalay 2012). Due to both

the complexity of its goals and the fact that it has developed a profile only in the last two decades, it remains in a developmental stage as practitioners explore various ways of applying its principles. As countries struggling with overcoming colonialism and recognizing Aboriginal people as sovereign entities, Canada, the United States, and Australia are the primary locations for the development of this field (Nicholas 2008:1660).

While the critical theory movement in the social sciences sought to deconstruct research and the framing of "the other" (e.g., Said 1979), some museum professionals took cues from community-based participatory research to question how research methodologies might be made more equitable as well. For example, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, in her seminal book, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (1999), argued that social science research related to Indigenous peoples should be performed in line with their values as a way to address underlying racist assumptions and as a way of operating. She described her experience of being a "victim of imperialist research" and used this book as a way to "write back" to the West by providing her perspective on Western research methods while also offering practical suggestions for how to decolonize research (Smith 1999:2). Smith (1999:39) acknowledged the near-impossibility of an entirely Indigenous research methodology, and noted that:

> Decolonization... does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge. Rather it is about centering our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes.

While Smith did not include instructions for how to create a distinct bundle of methodologies that did not rely on Western worldviews, she identified "Indigenous projects" that serve to decolonize Western research methodologies by emphasizing the value of alternative epistemologies.

Indigenous archaeologists have provided some examples of projects that value Indigenous knowledge and decolonize Western research methodologies. Eldon Yellowhorn (2006:195) describes "internalist archaeology" as a way to "appropriate" archaeological methods, while foregrounding Indigenous community needs, values, and

knowledge to guide archaeological research projects. I use "internalist" throughout to refer to an Indigenous insider perspective and to make links with Yellowhorn's research. Further examples of archaeological projects that engage with local, Indigenous worldviews and priorities include the Xcalakdzonot Project described by Fernando Armstrong-Fumero and Julio Hoil Gutierrez (2010) and the Western Torres Straight Culture History Project described by Liam Brady and Joe Crouch (2010), found in the same volume. These examples engage with the principles outlined by Smith (1999) and may provide some guidance as to how to engage communities on community-focused heritage projects.

As consultation with Indigenous stakeholders has become standard practice in most museums, the role of the curator has evolved from the keeping of objects to engaging with descendant communities. Christina Kreps (2003a) credits NAGPRA as helping to change this role in the United States, noting that curation has increasingly become a social practice that involves facilitating community access to material culture. Both Shawn Wilson (2008) and Margaret Kovach (2009) underscored the relational nature of research with Indigenous people, where there is a relationship of trust built between the individual imparting knowledge and the one receiving it. This relationship emphasizes the responsibility and accountability of the researcher/curator. Within a museum context, curators are more fully involved in reciprocal relationships with Indigenous peoples, which mirrors the role suggested for outside researchers in community-based research (Ryan and Robinson 1996:8).

As part of theoretical exploration in the 1990s, the role of the museum curator was also questioned, arguing against their claim to interpret and accurately represent other cultures (e.g., Clifford 1997; Sturge 2007). Some museologists used Michel Foucault's (1997) concept of power to critically examine how museums may be used as tools of the state to control and present knowledge and reinforce state power (e.g., Bennett 1995; 2004; Hooper-Greenhill 1989). Others called for an increase in public participation and cultural self-representation as a way to increase democracy within museums (e.g., Barrett 2011). Much of the writing in the 1990s and early 2000s focused on the importance of including Indigenous peoples and other subaltern communities' museum work and explored the political issues regarding these relationships (e.g., Karp and Lavine 1991; Karp et al. 1992; Peers and Brown 2003).

An interesting example of perceptions and representation in museum exhibits appeared in the journal *BC Studies*. Nuu-chah-nulth student Gloria Frank (2000) wrote a pointed critique of the First Peoples Galleries at the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria, British Columbia, one of my case study institutions. Her impression of the Galleries was that they presented Northwest Coast cultures as static, particularly through the use of the Edward Sheriff Curtis folio of staged photographs taken at the turn of the 20th century that reified the salvage paradigm. Frank's article sparked a defensive rebuttal by Alan Hoover (2000), a Royal British Columbia Museum curator, who noted that many First Nations individuals and groups were consulted and helped work on the (then 30-year-old) exhibit. In defense of the paper, Wendy Wickwire (2000) pointed out that Hoover missed the point that Frank was "reading" the exhibit as presented and that the museum should take some blame for neither making the collaborative nature of the original exhibit clear nor updating the exhibit to fit with current exhibition practices. Wickwire noted that Frank's criticism of the choice not to put names to the faces of some of the Curtis photographs served to remove agency and "anonymize" the individuals pictured (Figure 2.1). This is an example of the need to honour and name the Nuu-chah-nulth and Kwakwaka'wakw people who were collaborators and consultants in the creation of the exhibit, as well as to advance the ongoing dialogue with the communities in the exhibit.[26] It was an informed reaction for how the exhibit made Frank *feel*, both as a student of museums and also as a Nuu-chah-nulth woman. This dialogue typifies the tensions inherent in the relationships between Indigenous peoples and museums, and shows how collaboration might be hidden from a reading of the exhibition content.

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[26] More information about the creation of the First Peoples Galleries is presented in Chapter 5.

**Figure 2.1.    Edward Curtis Photos, First Peoples Galleries, Royal BC Museum.**
Photo by S. Carr-Locke.


## Locations

The basic historical development of Indigenous museology did not arise
uniformly across North America; there are certain key centers of development where
indigenizing principles have been stronger. For example, the National Museum of the
American Indian and the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia
are both worthy of further exploration owing to the innovative work that has occurred at
each location with respect to involving Indigenous peoples. Tribal museums are also
important loci of study as locations where Indigenous peoples control the entire process
of museology. In this section I look at some institutions known for embodying some of
the principles of Indigenous museology in order to show how the historical developments
described below have shaped various museums.

## National Museum of the American Indian

The National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) is composed of three facilities: a museum on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.; the George Gustav Heye Center in New York City, New York; and the Cultural Resources Center in Suitland, Maryland (storage only). The mission statement articulates principles of Indigenous museology:

> The National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) is committed to advancing knowledge and understanding of the Native cultures of the Western Hemisphere—past, present, and future—through partnership with Native people and others. The museum works to support the continuance of culture, traditional values, and transitions in contemporary Native life.

Together these three units function as exhibition space and repository for the large collection of Native North American collections and as a vehicle to present "Native voice" (Blue Spruce 2004:5). The scope of the NMAI followed benefactor George Heye's collecting boundaries of including everything from Alaska to Chile, making it a museum of the Americas, and "national" only in the fact that it is on the United States National Mall and receives national funding. Until the founding of the NMAI in 2004, Indigenous heritage was considered part of the natural history collections of the Smithsonian—a common museum trope that has been phased out over the past few decades due to its negative implications (Jacknis 2008:23).

All of the NMAI's directors have been prominent Native American museum specialists, and its board of trustees come from Native American and Native Hawaiian communities.[27] Although it has been criticized by news media for not having enough interpretation presented with the objects (see Reinhardt 2005; Turner 2011 for summaries of popular media coverage), the NMAI disrupts "traditional" exhibition practices by focusing on the presentation of Native communities through their words, and through contemporary and historical objects. The NMAI has fostered innovative collaborative practices and serves as a place for the development of Native, community-based methods of developing and curating exhibits (see Lonetree and Cobb 2008). Ruth

[27] http://www.nmai.si.edu/about/governance/

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Phillips (2006) sees the public role of the NMAI as reconciliatory as it functions to redress governmental relationships with Native Americans in the United States. Given the fact that the United States government acknowledged the rights of Native Americans to control their heritage by founding the institution, some have criticized the museum for its lack of discussion of colonialism in any of its displays (Brady 2008:770; Phillips 2006:79), and for downplaying Native agency (Atalay 2006b:602)

## The Museum of Anthropology and Other Canadian Examples

Both the Museum of Anthropology (MOA) and the campus of the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, British Columbia, sit on unceded Musqueam territory. Originally its collection included many items from the South Pacific, but it is best known for its collection of Northwest Coast art, totem poles, and Haida artist Bill Reid's "Raven and the First Men" sculpture, which are the prominent permanent exhibits around which the building was designed. MOA's mission statement is "To inspire understanding of and respect for world arts and cultures," which also means being a "champion [of] collaboration" in its vision.[28] Wherever appropriate, the exhibits have included both ethnographic and contemporary Native art.

MOA is known for its collaborative work with Indigenous communities. Michael Ames (1999) described one of the museum's first in-depth experiences with exhibit collaboration after the 1992 Task Force on Museums and First Peoples report, and showed how the development of their first two collaborative exhibits was a difficult adjustment for staff, but ultimately led to improved practices and relationships. These exhibits had a profound and lasting positive effect on both MOA and the communities that they worked with, the Stó:lō and Musqueam in particular (see Clapperton 2010). Community needs and collaborative methods are also embedded in its collections management and conservation practices. Miriam Clavir (2002) notes that standard conservation practices were altered to situate the conservation of cultural practices above the preservation of objects.

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[28] http://moa.ubc.ca/about/

MOA's recent renovation project, "A Partnership of Peoples: New Infrastructure for Collaborative Research" (completed in 2010) was planned in partnership with three First Nations (Stó:lō, Musqueam, and Kwakwaka'wakw) in order to ensure that research facilities would include a consideration of community needs. Architectural elements include a Culturally-Sensitive Research Room and a Community Lounge—allowing the museum to accommodate traditional care practices such as burning tobacco and providing food offerings. The Reciprocal Research Network[29] was developed as one facet of this partnership that provides virtual access to collections around the world, while prioritizing community needs. MOA has employed memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with several First Nations and cultural organizations as a way to foster mutual respect and as an acknowledgement of sovereignty. Marie Battiste (2008:xvi), a First Nations scholar at the University of Saskatchewan, argues that MOUs are a necessary first step for collaborative projects.

Examples of Indigenous museology are evident in certain exhibits and practices at several museums in Canada. For example, since the controversy in the late 1980s, the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta, developed a large permanent exhibition project—"*Niitsitapiisini*: Our Way of Life"—in collaboration with the Blackfoot Nation. This was the first time an exhibit (and its associated programming) had been entirely planned and created with the community acting as full partners (Conaty and Carter 2005:43). A similar endeavour was initiated by the Canadian Museum of History's (formerly the Canadian Museum of Civilization) First Peoples Hall (opened in 2003). This exhibit was also guided by the principles of the 1992 Assembly of First Nations and Canadian Museums Association Task Force on Museums and First Peoples Report. The museum assigned one Aboriginal and one non-Aboriginal curator to the curatorial team, and the advisory committee had "15 Native members from across Canada... given responsibility for defining the exhibition's thematic structure and messages" (Phillips 2006:77). The exhibit is multivocal, presenting Indigenous perspectives along with archaeological ones—a strategy that makes the narrative less cohesive (Harrison 2003:298). Positioned at the start of the exhibition is an introductory video in which Aboriginal people from all

[29] https://www.rrncommunity.org/

over Canada provide a greeting, showing diversity, survivance[30], and contemporary use of language. As with the National Museum of the American Indian, both the First Peoples Hall and "*Niitsitapiisini*" use community-based methods and a wide variety of contemporary and historical objects to portray Indigenous communities as part of modern society.

## Tribal Museums

The proliferation of museums owned and controlled by North American Indigenous peoples began in the 1960s during the first wave of Indigenous museology. Museums and cultural centres were founded within their communities, sometimes to house items repatriated from federal, provincial, or state museums (e.g., Bowechop and Erikson 2005; Isaac 2005; Webster 1990). These so-called "tribal museums" are developed and run by First Nations, Aboriginal communities, or Native American tribes to serve the local community and were developed for the purpose of self-representation to their communities or for cultural tourism initiatives. In 2004, a report on tribal museums commissioned by the American Association of State and Local History noted that there is no standard definition of what counts as a tribal museum, so numbers for North America at that time ranged from 120 to 236 (Abrams 2004:3). Tribal museums also differ from public museums as they use some elements of standard museology while also prioritizing local knowledge that emanates from the worldviews of Indigenous people. These institutions are thus interesting in terms of both their use of classic museological practices and their development of new, local practices that incorporate Indigenous knowledge.

Duane King (2009:29) notes that most tribal museums are only a half-century old, having been established after the 1960s, and that "virtually all see their mission as preserving and perpetuating tribal culture and history." Tribal museums present new opportunities for cultural preservation and for reinterpreting the role of objects as part of the community's heritage; they also provide examples of community-based

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[30] "Survivance" is a term originally employed by Native American critical theorist Gerald Vizenor (1999) to encompass the idea of survival, endurance, and resistance. Sonya Atalay (2006b) also employs the term in reference to the National Museum of the American Indian.

methodologies (Duane 2009:30). The A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center at
Zuni Pueblo, New Mexico, for example, merges Euro-American museological concepts
with Zuni philosophy and cultural values (Isaac 2005:3). The community curators worked
with Zuni Elders to create appropriate protocols for the presentation of and access to
photographs and knowledge about cultural practices (Isaac 2005:9). The Zuni decided
that the museum should focus only on presenting public secular knowledge, such as the
Zuni worldview, pottery, and ideas of continuity (Isaac 2005:8).

The Makah Cultural and Research Center in Neah Bay, Washington, is an oft-
cited example of a community-run museum that utilizes Indigenous methodologies (see
Bowechop and Erikson 2005; Erikson et al. 2002 for description). The Makah Indian
Tribe created the center in 1979 partly to house material that was excavated in a
community-based archaeological salvage excavation at nearby Ozette.[31] The material
from the archaeological site was not taken away to a university or other institution for
analysis (as is typically the case with archaeological excavation), but kept at the centre,
which collaborated with the archaeologists to develop public, educational archaeology
programs (Ames 2005:20). Patricia Pierce Erikson (2002:28) describes this presentation
of archaeological material as an "autoethnography." That is, the Makah have used their
traditional knowledge and language to guide the museum work of caring for and
presenting archaeological and contemporary material. This includes sorting and storing
objects following a classification system based on the Makah language, an exercise that
provided new insights into connections between word forms and methods of
manufacturing wooden objects (Bowechop and Erikson 2005:268). When collaborations
with non-Makah museum experts occur, they are so done so on Makah terms as control
over the research is retained through an approval system (see Bowechop and Erikson
2005; Erikson et al. 2002). The use of conventional museology is strategic and applied
critically in ways that preserve and enrich Makah cultural traditions.

The U'mista Cultural Centre in Alert Bay, British Columbia, was created primarily
as a place to house repatriated objects that were seized from the community during the

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[31] The Ozette site is an important Northwest Coast archaeological site due to the preservation of
material, techniques of excavation, and community-based practice. For an overview, see
Kenneth Ames (2005). Yvonne Marshall (2002:212-213) acknowledges Ozette as a key early
example of community-based archaeological practice.

potlatch prohibition in the 1920s (Webster 1990). The community was successful in repatriating many items from this collection and they are now cared for and displayed in a culturally accepted way. The goal of the U'mista Cultural Centre is to "promote and foster… cultural and artistic activities… and to collect, record and make available information relating to language and history of the Kwakw*aka*'wakw for the use of the Kwakw*aka*'wakw" (Webster 1990:135). As the centre is under the control of the community, the community is able to dictate the methods used to care for the objects housed there and to follow their own protocols to repatriate materials from elsewhere.

Tribal museums such as these are owned and directed by Indigenous people as collective heritage. They challenge conventional practices and in turn are influenced by mainstream museums. A degree of collaboration between tribal and mainstream institutions and staff is likely to occur—the loaning and borrowing of objects for exhibits, for example—requires interaction and negotiation between institutions (Bowechop and Erikson 2005:270). Indigenous museology will continue to evolve from this dialogue so long as individuals and institutions cross-pollinate their methods. Community-based and collaborative practices with Indigenous peoples have now become increasingly common in museological contexts, in both settler states (e.g., Simpson 2001) and elsewhere (see Nakamura [2007] for an example from Japan).


## In Search of Good Practices

I began this chapter by describing the history of Indigenous museology. I contend that it is a practice with its own theoretical foundation, as well as a guiding set of good principles that operate differently in diverse settings. For the remainder of this chapter, I take a more in-depth look at four common features of the distinctive practices that have been adopted in museums: 1) applying community-based methodologies; 2) incorporating traditional care practices into collections management; 3) shifting focus towards the importance of intangible and virtual heritage; and 4) exhibition practices that emphasize the voices of Indigenous peoples. Taken together, they show how the involvement of Indigenous peoples in museums can challenge the orthodoxy of museum work.

Tribal museums have great potential for more innovative practice because they are designed to respond to the specific needs of the host community. Larger public museums, however, may have developed more nuanced collaborative practices and their exhibits generally reach a broader audience. Indigenous museology has been and will continue to be developed in both contexts. The main focus of Indigenous museology is to ensure that Indigenous peoples have a say in how their material culture is managed and displayed in museums.

## Community-Based Methodologies

Community-based practices are acknowledged by museum academics as the appropriate way to foster collaboration between communities and museums, as they provide a structure for shared decision-making (e.g., Bruchac 2010; Kreps 2003b; Peers and Brown 2003; Shannon 2009; Stam 2005). However, despite these calls for collaborative practice, curators and staff in public museums are not always certain of the shape that community-based museology should take (Ames 1999:176; Shannon 2009:233). Such an approach generally requires a museum curator or staff member to guide the project and help the community create content that reflects its goals; however, the community also must have input into the final content or look of the exhibit, which becomes a symbolic "community space" (Phillips 2003:163). The role of the curator is to facilitate the process, as described above.

Building on Linda Tuhiwai Smith's work (1999), the current trend among some Indigenous researchers is to develop general research methodologies that are said to promote decolonization and Indigenous ways of knowing (e.g., Battiste 2008; Kovach 2009).[32] These models begin with community-based participatory research principles that strive to create a uniquely Indigenous research methodology whereby insider research is conducted using epistemologies specific to the researcher's cultural background (e.g., Atalay 2012; Chilisa 2012; Denzin et al. 2008; Kovach 2009; Wilson 2008). Although the focus of this type of research has primarily been on solving health

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[32] Similar examples of decolonizing strategies within archaeology are presented in Lydon and Rizvi (2010).

and social problems, as opposed to matters related to cultural heritage (Wilson 2008:19), they are applicable to the development of Indigenous museology.

Margaret Kovach (2009) expands on Smith's (1999) concept of decolonization and seeks to identify Indigenous ways of working and encourage the development of internalist research, which she describes as "flowing from tribal paradigms" and sharing four ethical considerations:

- That the research methodology be in line with Indigenous values;
- That there be some form of community accountability;
- That the research gives back to and benefits the community in some manner; and
- That the researcher is an ally and will not do harm (Kovach 2009:48)

In this way, Kovach explores the relational nature of knowledge and narrative, emphasizing the importance of an ethical relationship between researcher and subjects for sharing and knowledge and presenting results.

Similarly, Shawn Wilson (2008) takes a more personal and politically autonomous approach to the topic by including his personal story as an Opaskwayak Cree as part of the description of the research process. He also argues that imported research methods will never be adequate to solve the problems Indigenous people face, and underscores the need for research methodologies to incorporate their cosmologies, worldviews, and ethical beliefs (Wilson 2008:15). By emphasizing research that originates from and remains embedded within their communities and worldviews, he appears to question the usefulness of research "with" communities, because "outsider" research has its own agenda that may not represent Indigenous people. While Kovach's (2009) proposal for ethical practices resonates within public museum work, Wilson's internalist approach may be more applicable to tribal museums. In public museums, ideas and reasons for creating exhibits are less likely to emanate from the internal dialogue of Indigenous people or remain completely under their control.

Community-based heritage practices form the basis of Indigenous archaeology to ensure that local communities have equitable control and input in the entire process. Such an arrangement in research guarantees that they participate as full partners in

archaeological undertakings (e.g., Atalay 2006a; Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2004; Nicholas and Hollowell 2007; Nicholas 2008; Smith and Wobst 2005; Watkins 2000). Most work that falls under the umbrella of Indigenous archaeology reflects Kovach's (2009) concept of collaborative methodologies, but includes a fair degree of community control and a focus on decolonization (Smith and Wobst 2005:6). A variety of grassroots and community-based practices are being employed in museums, but detailed discussions about how these procedures work are largely absent from museum literature (for some discussion of community-based methods see Kahn 2000; Shannon 2009).

## Collections Care and Management

Museums now routinely take on a stewardship role when they store objects, but they acknowledge that Indigenous people who are the descendant communities are stakeholders in their care and interpretation. An example of this changing ethos includes inviting Elders and ceremonialists to engage in "traditional care practices," such as burning tobacco or providing food offerings to the objects, at the behest of communities (see Clavir 2002). Indigenous peoples' work to repatriate human remains and other sacred objects, as well as discussions over, and visits with, collections and objects have brought communities into closer contact with museums. Some of the information that they share about the objects has pertained to how to care for them in culturally appropriate ways in accordance with their provenance. More recently, partnerships between Indigenous peoples and museums have focused on working together to manage and care for items in the museums' possession rather than working to return items of a non-sensitive nature (Bernstein 2010:196).

Both the Zuni and the Blackfoot Nations undertook programs in the 1980s to have culturally sensitive material removed from view in museums, which eventually conceded to their requests (e.g., Ferguson 2010; Flynn and Hull-Walski 2001; Merrill et al. 1993). In 1990, the drafting of NAGPRA legislation recognized the sensitive nature of Native American grave goods and human remains that led to policies requiring special

treatment by museum staff. Staff member Krista Bergstrom[33] noted that items in the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia collections storage area include various instructions regarding who may handle certain objects; these restrictions may be directed at spiritually initiated members of a group or those of a certain age or gender.[34] The proper treatment of these objects includes traditional care practices defined by the source community. Christina Kreps (2003a:4) has argued that Indigenous people have customary methods of caring for their ceremonial objects that can be understood as "museological behavior." Such traditional care practices can include leaving offerings for objects and the ritual smudging and feeding of objects; these are increasingly being incorporated into museum protocols and practices (e.g., Clavir 2002; Flynn and Hull-Walski 2001; Rosoff 1998). As Bruce Bernstein (2010:197) asks, "We spend our lives researching and writing about other people, their lives, and cultures—so why not include their belief system when you are handing objects from that culture?" Through community-based work with collections, Indigenous knowledge is used to inform contemporary practices; museums are no longer a place for static, dead culture.

## Intangible Heritage and Virtual Culture

Knowledge about objects, including their manufacture and care, is one example of intangible heritage. The separation of tangible and intangible heritage is arguably a Western construct that is partially a result of museum culture where objects were removed from their original provenance and valued for their aesthetic or symbolic meaning according to curators and anthropologists (Edwards et al. 2006b:3). The inclusion of intangible heritage can serve to re-contextualize museum objects into their wider webs of cultural practice and to demonstrate the vitality of contemporary cultural practices. Within a museum context, intangible culture may include knowledge about how to care for objects following practices from the source community. In *Preserving What is Valued: Museums, Conservation, and First Nations*, Miriam Clavir (2002) argued that, as a conservator at the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, her job was the preservation and care of objects, but that the concept of

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[33] Krista Bergstrom, personal communication, February 21, 2011.

[34] The National Museum of Australia has put systems in place to restrict access to secret/sacred items based on gender (see Kaus 2008).

"care" should be expanded to include care for the community of manufacture and the traditional care practices that ensure the object remains an active part of a dynamic culture.

There are several examples of projects in which Native American or Canadian Aboriginal groups have travelled to museums to interact with specific collections of objects that were collected in their communities (e.g., Clifford 1997:188-190; Fienup-Riordan 2005; Krmpotich and Peers 2013; Lyons et al. 2011). Such visits may be initiated by staff at the museums, by the communities, or by independent researchers. These "re-engagement projects" offer an opportunity for mutual learning between museum officials and community representatives that can lead to future collaborative projects (see Krmpotich and Peers 2014). Ann Fienup-Riordan (2003:xxiii) described her project with Yup'ik Elders at the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin, Germany, as "visual repatriation," noting that a "primary concern was not to reclaim museum objects but to re-own the knowledge and experiences that the objects embodied"—a sentiment that seems to be common across these projects. The Inuvialuit visit to the MacFarlane Collection at the Smithsonian Institution resulted in a grassroots effort to create a digital archive project that brings together images of the objects with community knowledge (see Hennessey et al. 2013). These visits build trust between the museums and communities and help to re-introduce artifacts to their birthplace. Communities benefit from these visits by reconnecting with items of their material heritage and repatriating traditional knowledge about the objects, such as the revival of traditional manufacturing techniques (for example, the moccasin-making technique described by Lyons et al. 2011). They are also sometimes the first steps on the path to repatriating the physical objects.

Language is one example of valuable intangible heritage that is unfortunately often absent from museum work. As mentioned above, Janine Bowechop and Patricia Pierce Erikson (2005) describe how sorting objects by their name in the Makah language[35] led to unexpected insights into the manufacturing techniques. For example,

[35] Barbara Winter (personal communication, July 3, 2013) noted that the Canadian government–supported Canadian Heritage Information Network (a digital public database of Canadian museums and other heritage resources) had a field for "Native name" as early as the 1970s.

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the Makah wished to re-develop their collections management system to make it more relevant to the community (2005:264). When collections staff began to use Makah language to sort objects, it led to the grouping of chisels, wedges, adzes, and canoe paddles as they shared the same prefix which described tools for use on "a working surface perpendicular to the plane of action," thus demonstrating that these objects had something in common that had been previously unnoticed by the collections staff (Bowechop and Erikson 2005:268). The use of Makah language categories led to the realization that the etymology of words described physical aspects of use and design implicit in the item. The result was that "conceptual categories became used not only for organizing the collection but also for stimulating reflection on Makah worldviews codified in their language" (Bowechop and Erikson 2005:268). This example illustrates Steven Conn's (2010:7) point that objects in museums continue to gain meaning even as they are removed from their place of origin. He believes that these stories and meanings are valuable to tell to the public. Indigenous museology should also include a critical examination of museum practices such as storage techniques.

Most of the examples presented here concern the tangible aspects of heritage; however, there is a virtual context for Indigenous museology as well. The Reciprocal Research Network, co-created by the Museum of Anthropology, the Musqueam Indian Band, the U'mista Cultural society, the Stó:lō Nation/Tribal Council, and 13 other museum partners, curates a virtual exhibit and research space where museum records and images of Northwest Coast objects are within reach of remote communities. The Reciprocal Research Network illustrates the efficacy of Indigenous museology. It is an endeavor created and managed by an equal partnership and governed by a steering committee made up of members of four First Nations groups (Rowley et al. 2010). It is a virtual platform for viewing object photographs and records from partnering (national and international) museums. With this platform, users may build their own projects, collaborate on shared projects, upload files, hold discussions, research museum projects, and create social networks—all of which bring benefits to both the holding institutions and Indigenous community researchers. While the Reciprocal Research Network is unique in its scope and collaborative development, it shows the value of online "museums" and their relevance to the further development of Indigenous museology. These include such digital collaborative projects as The Great Lakes

Research Alliance for the Study of Aboriginal Arts and Culture (GRASAC),[36] *Dane Wajich*—Dane-ẕaa Stories and Songs: Dreamers and the Land,[37] the Plateau Peoples Web Portal,[38] and Mukurtu cultural management software.[39] Common amongst these programs is the ability to adjust settings to limit access to information when cultural protocols require it.

## Exhibitions

      The New Museum movement in the 1990s revisited museums' power to create knowledge and narratives. One issue within this conversation was the presentation of curatorial interpretation within exhibits as a single neutral, authoritative voice. The promotion of a wider variety of voices has often been suggested as a decolonizing strategy for museum displays, yet there has not been much discussion on how this might be achieved in a practical sense. Presenting interpretations and voices of Indigenous peoples in exhibitions is a key feature of Indigenous museology. The inclusion of "Native voice" is part of the mission statement for the National Museum of the American Indian, but when Jennifer Shannon (2009:233) asked her colleagues there exactly what this meant, she found no consensus. She described the inclusion of Native voice in the opening exhibits, which included quotes from community collaborators and focused on the experience of community members. The presence of this Native voice is exemplified in first-person quotations and the use of Aboriginal language (e.g., "*Niitsitapiisini*: Our Way of Life").

      Indigenous museology has also had an effect on the content of exhibits. Ruth Phillips (2003:163; also see Lonetree 2012:22) noted that community-based exhibits are more likely to favor narratives, stories, and performances rather than being object-oriented. Some have suggested that decolonizing exhibition practices could include the detailed presentation of the entire life history of an object or group of objects (e.g.,

[36] https://grasac.org
[37] http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/expositions-exhibitions/danewajich/english/index.html
[38] http://plateauportal.wsulibs.wsu.edu/html/ppp/index.php
[39] http://www.mukurtu.org/

Bruchac 2010; Edwards et al. 2006a:13).[40] Their assumption is that telling an object's story will unmask the collecting and presentation practices of the museum and will also honour the object's history, whereas these stories could be lost or remain untold if the items were repatriated to the community and/or kept out of view (Conn 2010). Moira Simpson (2001) also sees value in knowing under what circumstances the object was acquired by the museum. By researching the meaning of objects in a variety of contexts, more information about them will be revealed to augment data accrued by traditional academic practice alone (Bowechop and Erikson 2005; Smith and Wobst 2005; Stam 2005). Acknowledging the more detailed and nuanced history of ethnographic objects presents an opportunity for museums to tell critical stories about the history of Indigenous/non-Indigenous relationships, colonialism in general, repatriation, and other stories that may elude curatorial authority.[41] This aspect of Indigenous museology is still in development and has yet to be fully realized.

There are also examples of other types of exhibit innovation that portray messages about ownership and persistence of Indigenous people. For example, Jennifer Kramer (2004) described two projects carried out by artists at the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia that challenged the viewing audience to reformulate its conceptions of museum objects and ownership. She showed how First Nations artists publicly asserted ownership over both museum objects (which are incorporated into their art pieces) and the museum space as a place for cultural criticism (Kramer 2004:178). Other projects that use similar methods to challenge conventional museum display practices include "Mining in the Museum: An Installation by Fred Wilson" (Corrin 1994) at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore, Maryland, and "Peter Morin's Museum: An Installation with Performances" (Morin and Duffek 2011) at the Satellite Gallery in Vancouver, British Columbia. These examples of contemporary art exhibition demonstrate how Indigenous peoples use museum objects to tell stories within museums even though the institutions assert physical ownership of the objects. Indigenous peoples can exert a degree of control over their management and they can

[40] Archaeologists have also found value in studying the life history of a single object (see Janet Spector [1993] and Lynn Meskell [2004]).

[41] The Museum of Anthropology mounted a small exhibit in 2008/2009 that explored the history of a single object from a community perspective called "The History of 'Walas Gwaxwiwe', the Great Raven Hamsiwe'," curated by Kwakwaka'wakw artist William Wasden Jr.

insert their voices in museums through creative, artistic acts that use objects within the museums as critical tools to disrupt Western curatorial authority (Kramer 2004:178).

## Critiques

"Collaboration" may be a buzzword within Indigenous studies, but using this label does not always mean that such practices involve power sharing between parties (e.g., Boast 2011; Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008; La Salle 2010). Even for those working to "indigenize" archaeology and museums, essentialist thinking can mitigate the effectiveness of the decolonization process if scientific "truth" is simply swapped for an essentialist Indigenous "truth" (e.g., Colwell-Chanthaphonh et al. 2010; Echo-Hawk and Zimmerman 2006; McGhee 2008). Indigenous museology requires a blending of worldviews with museum practices to honour multiple ways of knowing and presenting multiple stories. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (1991) caution, however, that the public is attached to the authority of museums, which risk losing the public's interest when destabilizing this authority. Indeed, this is supported by Jennifer Shannon's (2009:226) experience at the National Museum of the American Indian where both the media and the public criticized the museum for not including more objects in some of the exhibits.

Miriam Kahn (2000) highlights some problems with collaborative museology and questions whether collaboration with Indigenous groups actually resolved the issues of representation that were raised in the 1990s. Her point of reference is the Pacific Rim exhibition "Pacific Voices" that she worked on at the Burke Museum in Seattle, Washington, in the early 1990s, which required work with many different communities. Kahn (2000:72) felt that the results were a compromise that did not satisfy anyone because the exhibit did not seem to resolve the issue of showing cultures as "adaptable, dynamic, and evolving." She also noted the limitations of collaboration in terms of power sharing with public institutions: "Regardless of how collaborative the exhibit agenda may appear, museums still invite others to fit within institutions and narratives that are not of the community members own making" (Kahn 2000:72).

## Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have provided an overview of the historical development of museums' outreach to Indigenous peoples, culminating with the concept of Indigenous museology. Indigenous peoples' experience with museums developed in successive waves, each dealing with a different group of issues, but all ultimately seeking justice and equality. The purpose of this overview is to demonstrate that Indigenous museology has been in development over several decades. Like Nicholas (2006), I see the value in presenting the evolution of Indigenous peoples' struggles for heritage rights as a series of waves.

This chapter also described the antecedents and the three waves of Indigenous museology in order to underscore the social and political aspect of this development. The first wave was an increased understanding of museums to spiritually significant objects; some were taken off display and some were repatriated. The second wave coincided with museum theorists thinking critically about the way power is reinforced when creating representations in museums and Indigenous people starting to demand inclusion in decision-making processes within museums. The third wave reflects increased creation of collaborative exhibitions and object management practices. Common practices within such collaborations include the use of community-based methods, special ways of treating objects, the inclusion of intangible heritage, and changes in the way in which this material is presented to the public. I also identified institutions that illustrate the principles of Indigenous museology, such as the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia and the National Museum of the American Indian.

Finally, this chapter encapsulates both the literature review and theoretical framework for my study. The case study museums that I describe in the following chapters were influenced by the waves of Indigenous museology described above. Along with the practices described in this chapter, the theoretical and historical context is provided in order to afford a richer understanding of the history and current practices of the museums that comprise my case studies.

# Chapter 3.

# Fieldwork Methods

The goal of my fieldwork was to learn about the principles of Indigenous museology as they are put into practice at four public museums: the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, the Royal British Columbia Museum, and the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. This chapter will describe the methods I employed in order to conduct my fieldwork. These methods are well-suited to my goal of learning about the history of each institution's relationship with local Indigenous communities and understanding the current practices in place for collaborative projects.

I describe my methods in three parts: 1) overall approach; 2) data collection methods used and types of data collected; and 3) data analysis. My approach follows a critical ethnographic methodology. I discuss my methods for: conducting interviews (which formed the bulk of my data); reading exhibits; recording impressions about each museums' culture; and handling additional unpublished museum literature and ephemera. Finally, I review data analysis methods and finish with a critical analysis of some of the strengths and weaknesses of my methods.

## Approach

I approached my case studies as a non-Indigenous ethnographer with little connection to or experience of the museums prior to my fieldwork study. While I did read what academic writing was available about each museum before my arrival, I purposefully chose museums that I did not know too much about and therefore did not have very many preconceived notions about, allowing my learning to occur organically and on the ground. This position gave me the advantage of looking at the methods and

culture of each museum with a dispassionate, comparative perspective, and it also encouraged candour among the staff in their interviews. During the time of my fieldwork, I was not working as a museum professional; however, my experience working at the Museum of Anthropology from 2006 to 2010 did influence my studies. I also had a theoretical outlook grounded in Indigenous archaeology and critical museum theory. I tried to remain aware of my biases throughout my fieldwork.

Broadly speaking, this heritage research study was influenced by critical inquiry. More specifically, I focused on the way in which power and authority are displayed and mediated through exhibits as a form of cultural representation. My approach to museum studies has followed the critical outlook of museum theorists who are influenced by Michel Foucault's critical theory (Mason 2006:23; Peers and Brown 2003:13). I was also influenced by James Clifford (1997:188-219) and his concept of museums as colonial "contact zones" where social and political relationships in wider society are absorbed and played out in museums, thus making them an iteration of the wider discourse.

My research methodology was inductive (Palys 1999:82) and qualitative (Marshall and Rossman 1989:14) anthropological research. Rather than trying to prove a hypothesis, I began with the assumptions that a range of collaborative practices exist in museums and that my study was to be an exploration that aspires to better understand these practices in order to develop theory. I arrived at each case study with basic knowledge about the museums as found in the academic literature and on-line, but I knew very little about their specific mode of operation vis-à-vis working with communities. I was deliberate with my preference for selecting institutions that were not overanalyzed in current academic literature.[42] This study thus fits the description of an "interactive inquiry between the researcher and the participants... that is primarily descriptive and relies on people's words as the primary data" and is "intended to discover patterns" (Marshall and Rossman 1989:11). Museum staff members are the best source of data on the methods employed and philosophies followed in their institutions as they relate to working with Indigenous peoples. I therefore focused the bulk of my fieldwork on interviewing those individuals, particularly if they were involved in

[42] The Denver Museum was the exception to this (e.g., Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Nash 2010, Maxson et al. 2001) yet there were no articles describing their methods of creating exhibits.

creating exhibits and/or working directly with community members. In addition to my ethnographic study, I added archival research methods to gather whatever information I deemed necessary.

My fieldwork took place between April 2013 and May 2014. I visited four museums: two in Canada and two in the United States. I spent an average of two-and-a-half weeks at each case study location, visiting the museum almost every weekday. My approach was to conduct museum ethnographies involving a combination of interviews, exhibit analysis, and published material. This multi-sited study gave me the best vantage point for studying museums and exhibits. A review of the academic literature revealed it an effective tactic that others have used to conduct similar studies regarding the relationship between Indigenous peoples and museums in Canada and the United States—many of these are the result of dissertation work (e.g., Erikson 1996; Simpson 2010).

Moira Simpson's (2001:5) *Making Representations: Museums in the Post-Colonial Era* describes her case study research at numerous museums in Canada, New Zealand, Europe, and Australia in which she interviewed staff, analyzed exhibits, and collected documents in order to look at issues of representation. A more recent example is Amy Lonetree's 2012 book *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*, which documents her use of "archival materials relating to the development of the exhibitions, interviews with key staff members involved in the development process, and close visual analysis of the texts, objects, and images in the exhibitions themselves" (Lonetree 2012:2). She credits Patricia Pierce Erickson as being especially influential (e.g., 1996; Erikson et al. 2002) and notes the similar methods employed by Gwyneira Isaac in her 2007 study of the A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center in Zuni, New Mexico, and John Bodinger de Uriarte's (2007) study of the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center in Mashantucket, Connecticut. Such endeavours are generally understood as being ethnographic studies of museums (Bodinger de Uriarte 2007:29).

Although ultimately this research points to the value of community-based and participatory action research methods, these methods are not the ideal for multi-sited, short-term comparative studies such as this one. Likewise, my study is related to action

research as it may inform policy and practice, but as a researcher I did not take action to address the issue of collaborative museology as part of this dissertation.[43] My hope is that my study will inform the future development of collaborative methods within museums and highlight the importance of doing so, but I contextualize this work as a milestone for Indigenous museology and critical heritage studies, rather than being community-based research.

## Data Collection

The data collected at my fieldwork sites consisted of (1) interviews, (2) exhibit reviews, (3) museum literature, and (4) direct experience through participant observation. I describe each in turn below.

### Interviews

In order to answer my research questions about the history of collaborative methods and the specific processes employed, I conducted a total of 38 interviews (at an average of nine interviews per institution). Since some of these were group interviews, I was able to talk with 43 museum staff in total. I was also able to meet with two Indigenous consultants who did some work with the museums in Yellowknife and Denver. This research technique was the most direct and effective way to answer my research questions, as the information I was seeking has not always been publicized and details about specific museum practices are not typically available in the archives. Staff members accrue institutional memory about their ways of working such that one interviewee even claimed that he could recite an "oral history" of institutional work with Indigenous peoples.[44]

Before my arrival at each location, I contacted someone who would be my "host" at the museum. In this manner they acted as my advocate, introducing me to staff, distributing information about my study, assisting with room bookings, ensuring I had

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[43] I do, however, plan to incorporate it as a way of working in my future career.
[44] Royal BC Museum Curator of Archaeology Grant Keddie, personal communication (email), May 22, 2014.

appropriate security clearance, arranging a work space for me, and generally enabling my research. Through this primary contact, I booked several of the interviews with key individuals before I set foot in the museums; the rest were scheduled after my arrival.

*Subject Selection*

My choice of informants was guided by personal connections and availability rather than by following a formal sampling program. This is a non-probabilistic, convenience sampling method where I sought out informants who fit specific criteria (Palys 1992:146-147). Based on knowledge of both my research goals and the staff roles at the museum, my hosts made recommendations about the most appropriate staff to interview. These consisted primarily of individuals who were or had been involved with the research, design, or implementation of ethnographic or anthropological exhibits— typically curators and designers. After meeting with these individuals, I would then interview staff who were more peripherally involved in exhibits, but who could provide additional background about the museum priorities and other non-exhibit activities that involved working with community members. This group included educators, collections managers, and directors. I also followed up on suggestions about other staff to talk to or literature to collect that were made during my interviews.

Ultimately, my institutional hosts were both stakeholders in and gatekeepers of my research results, with *stakeholders* being "people or groups that are involved with the project or program and have a vested interest in its outcome" and *gatekeepers* the "people who control access to information or to the research site itself" (LeCompte and Schensul 2010:176). My hosts controlled access to other staff members and generally guided my research, but all staff at museums are gatekeepers in one way or another. Due to the central function of caring for collections, museum staff must control access to various parts of the museum. Public access is typically restricted to exhibits and other areas designed for hosting visitors. A second level of access is granted to those who work in museum offices and various workshops. The most restricted areas are collections storage spaces, which are generally controlled by security doors. Although I often gained access to collections areas through my informants, I was never allowed to access them myself (nor was it necessary for my research).

As museum practitioners, my interviewees are all stakeholders in my research, since my results have the potential of informing their work. In my informed consent document, I noted that my research was low-risk and will have either neutral or positive benefits for each institution. Most informants were interested in my topic and how their institution fit into the overall history of collaboration with Indigenous people and they were curious about how their techniques compared to others. Due to the lack of academic literature describing collaborative practices, the many casual conversations I had with staff proved exciting and productive as they learned about how others tackled similar problems. There were many opportunities to talk about how other institutions addressed similar problems.[45] I expected my interviewees to be curious about my results and engaged with the subject matter.

My relationship with my hosts obviously created a bias because I was not necessarily introduced to people who disagreed with policy or showed the museum in a bad light. The staff members at the museums were fairly eager to show me their best side, but did not avoid being self-critical about their techniques. My stance was to be positive and encouraging and to avoid being critical of the individuals and institutions while the interviews were underway. It is possible that this positive outlook created a bias where I was exposed to more positive stories and information. Still, I do believe that I was able to collect useful data by combining interviews with my own critical analysis of the exhibits. Ultimately, my fieldwork goal was not to criticize the ways of working of each museum, but to understand and contextualize their methods.

*Interview Process*

The interviews took place in private rooms (with some exceptions) or in the informants' personal offices. I began each interview by introducing myself, explaining where I came from, and spending a few minutes explaining the purpose and goals of my study. I then asked each subject to read and sign the informed consent form I asked and gained permission to record the interviews. My interviews lasted anywhere from 30 to 90 minutes.

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[45] For example, while I was at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, I was asked to do a public talk and I spoke about the similarities between them and the Bishop Museum.

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All my interviews were semi-structured and conducted in-person, which meant they that often veered into anecdotes and casual conversation. I typically started with open-ended questions (see Appendix B), which I adjusted before the interview, and I sometimes added specific questions that I wanted to ask each person to make sure they were discussed. These questions served as a guide, but I did not have them in front of me to refer to directly during the interview as I wanted to encourage a more personable, informal style of interview. I usually prompted the interviewee at the start and then let the conversation proceed naturally. I found that by letting the banter flow, rather than asking formal questions, my informants brought up a lot of unanticipated data that triggered relevant stories. I conducted only one interview per person or group. I found this method to be effective as I was able to then drill down into any topic or story that I found interesting rather than be constrained by the need to ask every question on a list. The interviews often went longer than expected, as the informants seemed to enjoy the conversations.

As Ted Palys (1992:166) notes, the in-person interview, though labour-intensive, is an effective way to get in-depth responses from a small sample of informants. Long-form, one-on-one, loosely structured interviews provide opportunities for "heuristic discovery and the flexibility to respond to new insights with unanticipated avenues of questioning" (Palys 1992:166-167). He also explains the occurrence of "reactive" bias—the way in which the interviewees look for clues from the interviewer to see how they are doing. This is something I noticed during the interview process. Many of the interviewees worried that they were getting off track or rambling when they were talking about their personal experience or their jobs. I often had to encourage them with reassurances that I was interested in their anecdotes.

Introducing the consent forms directed my relationship with the interviewees. I began each interview by allowing my informants to read and sign the forms and provided each a copy that included my contact information. Most of the interviewees indicated on the form that they would like to receive copies of my dissertation and any other publications I created from the interview data. I took some notes during the interviews, focusing on material I wanted to collect or things I needed to ask other people about, with the assumption that I would not be transcribing the interviews until after I left the field sites. I took some general field notes at the end of each day, which allowed me to

reflect on my experience and the information I uncovered. After returning home from each case study, I followed up with a thank you note to each interviewee.

## Reading Exhibits

Before visiting the museums, I looked at each one's website to learn about current exhibits to help narrow down my exhibit foci. I wanted to explore exhibits that highlighted the culture of local Indigenous people and/or those that were identified as being created *in consultation with* specified communities. I therefore arrived at each location with a particular exhibit in mind in order help formulate my questions about collaboration. Once I became familiar with each museum, however, I found that staff often talked about key partnership exhibits that I was not previously aware of—this turned out to be valuable to my study. These exhibits were either no longer on display (e.g., the Kū exhibit at the Bishop Museum), were works in progress (e.g., the "Our Living Languages" exhibit at the Royal BC Museum), or were not necessarily identified on the website as being created in collaboration with Indigenous communities (e.g., the Maya exhibit at the Denver Museum). Based on this knowledge, I broadened my analysis during my visits beyond my initial focus to gather information on the full roster of displays. This was possible through my critical visual analysis of the exhibits, but also through archival research, website searches, and by gathering material (such as exhibit catalogues) from staff. Although I limited my scrutiny to those exhibits currently open to the public, the additional data I collected contributed to my overall analysis and discussion.

At each museum I began with an initial solo walk-though of each exhibit (prior to the interviews) and recorded my first impressions. Over the course of each research trip, I visited the exhibits several times and took over 100 photographs in each museum of objects, text, labels, and exhibit spaces.[46] Occasionally, interviewees would walk through the exhibits with me to point out the things we were discussing. The images were my mnemonic devices that helped me recall details of the exhibit once I left, and served to eliminate the need to write down all label text. I visited each venue four to five times;

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[46] For an example of a photographical investigation of the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center, see Bodinger de Uriarte (2007).

sometimes in the company of informants who would spontaneously conduct guided tours. I also visited and took photographs of the rest of the museum for perspective and to understand how studies of Indigenous people fit in with the wider exhibit context and narrative.

Before beginning my fieldwork, I created the following list of questions to serve as points of reference while undertaking my critical exhibit analysis:

- What is the intended message of the exhibit?;

- What do I think are the curator's goals?;

- How is information presented?;

- What design elements are present?;

- How is technology used?;

- What are the exhibit's strengths and weaknesses?;

- Is it entertaining/informative?; and

- What does the exhibition communicate about local, national, or global history?

I also looked for specific references to the collaborative nature of the exhibit and evidence they included the perspective of Indigenous people, by reflecting on the following:

- Does the exhibit have signage or text that identifies the creators/makers of the exhibit? If so, does this include individual names or the tribal/national/cultural affiliations of the exhibit creators?;

- Are there direct quotations that are attributed to Indigenous individuals?; and

- Are the museum curators' and/or designers' names on the exhibit?

There seems to be no standard method for analyzing museum exhibits, though some critical theorists have helped museum anthropologists view exhibits as "texts" that can be "read" (Mason 2006:27). These readings take into account all of the elements that may affect visitors' perceptions of the exhibit and the messages they read, which can be different from those intended by the exhibit creators. Stephanie Moser (2010:22),

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a professor of Archaeology at the University of Southampton, England, proposed a "methodological framework for conducting research on the knowledge-making capacity of museum displays" that cites a list of critical factors that help to understand how the exhibit shapes visitors' understandings. These factors transmit conscious and unconscious messages and are as important to consider as the labels and objects. Below I reference Moser's (2010:24-30) list and have described each of the features that she highlights in my own words:

- **Architecture, Location, Setting**: The shape and architecture of the museum building and its geographical placement within the urban and natural landscape;

- **Space:** The size and shape of the room or area where the exhibit is mounted, the way visitors are directed to move through the space;

- **Design, Colour, Light:** The design of the exhibit, including colour and text fonts, display case structures, and furniture;

- **Subject, Message, Text:** The topic and stated message of the exhibit, the style of narrative and interpretive voice;

- **Layout:** The spatial distribution of contents and design elements, the relationship between the exhibit layout and the rest of the museum;

- **Display Types:** The types of display used and the types of multimedia included as interpretation or content;

- **Exhibition Style:** Object-centred vs. thematic; and

- **Audience and Reception**: Every visitor brings different background knowledge, personal experience, and museum literacy to their interpretation.

My examination of the exhibits touched on many of the factors described above. Critical approaches that take all of these elements into consideration allow museum anthropologists to reflect on the unintended meanings of the exhibits, and emphasize the aforementioned point that museum exhibits *produce* knowledge that is mediated by visitor experience (Mason 2006:27). The textual approach is also sensitive to the issue of curatorial "voice" (Mason 2006:26; also see Bal 1992). Critics must ask, "Who has written the text and is their authorship apparent?" (Moser 2010:27). For my study, the idea of voice was an important issue as I wished to identify whether and in what way Indigenous people and their viewpoints were evident in the exhibit.

My readings of the exhibit were structured by two factors. First, I did not come to the museum with much knowledge about the local context in terms of being familiar with the cities, people, or history of each locale. This meant that I might encounter the cultures that were represented within as a tourist or outsider. Second, my experience working in museums, and as a scholar of museum theory, provided me a critical lens with which to view the exhibits. I did not seek to channel a typical visitor in reading the exhibit; with each viewing of the exhibit, I tried to stay open to new readings. In the end, however, each individual will have a different reading of a given exhibit, and mine was informed by my professional and academic experience.

## Ephemera and Unpublished Materials

I augmented each museum review by conducting additional research on commonly accepted techniques for enhancing the visitor experience, coupled with amassing the archival material they publish. I collected all printed material (e.g., maps, lists of current events) that had been created to orient and inform museum visitors. I describe this material as "ephemera" as it is typically designed for one-time use. These materials are helpful in understanding what messages the museum is trying to portray to public visitors and also give a sense of the museum's look and design ambience. My interviewees and museum colleagues often gave me other written information such as member newsletters—this material constitutes their "grey literature" as they are often unofficial publications with a limited production run. These are valuable sources of information because they provide details about past exhibits and events and occasionally provide information about community partnerships.

Museum catalogues and websites are particularly important sources of information on exhibits since they often contain additional background details or history about the exhibit, which visitors may not see. I was given copies of old publications from various temporary exhibits by some of my interviewees. These catalogues enriched my understanding of the motives and themes they speak to, and offered insights into the methods used in exploring them. Unfortunately, since they are products accompanying temporary or travelling shows they were not always available for every exhibit that piqued my interest.

Archives are also rich sources of data so I decided to spend time in each institution looking at their records. However, archival research can take a great deal of time and categories are not always set up in a way that makes it easy to find information on collaborative projects/exhibits, for example. I also found that many of the records related to working with communities were still in staff files in personal offices, and had not yet been archived.

The websites for each museum were another valuable source, both during and following my visit. Each institution's online presence varied greatly, but always contained some marketing and advertising, updates about exhibit content, an electronic record of the museum (including staff bios), and some archival data related to past exhibits. The Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, for example, featured many online exhibits and several project reports were available to download, whereas the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum posted its collections online. Again, though some of this information was peripheral, it was nonetheless useful in contextualizing museum/community relationships, as well as for relating general information about each museum.

## Participant Observation

Although interviews and exhibit analysis were the foci of my case study research, I gained knowledge by spending time at the museums and getting to know staff in their places of work. Since museums also encourage research they typically provide a space to work in proximity to other staff and they may issue a staff or volunteer pass. Thus for the period of my case study, I was often treated as a temporary staff member. I attended public lectures, social events, and meetings, such as the opening of the new storage spaces at the Denver Museum, a storytelling and hand games demonstration at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, and a staff birthday celebration at the Bishop Museum. I was generally given free rein to move about within public areas and the low-security, behind-the-scenes areas, but not collections storage, conservation, or workshop areas.

By travelling to each location and immersing myself in each museum's culture, I was able to gain an understanding of what makes up each one's character. Museums are also a part of a wider civic discourse—I learned about this wider context by visiting

other cultural sites and historical landmarks as a tourist in Honolulu, Yellowknife, Denver, and Victoria in the evenings through my own explorations. These experiences fed into my "reading" of the case study museum and its exhibits and helped me understand the wider social and geographical context.

## Data Analysis: Addressing Research Questions

After my interviews, I listened to the recordings and transcribed the relevant passages in the months following the visit. Some merited full transcription either because I expected to use many direct quotations or to ensure accuracy. Other interviews did not require word-for-word transcription as we were talking about general ideas or veered into topics that were tangential to my core research questions. In this case, I took general notes with time signatures so that I could return to those sections if I decided later that they were important. When the interviewee mentioned an exhibit, event, or other topic that was directly relevant, I would immediately afterwards corroborate the information through online or archival sources, which enriched the interviews. I did not quantify or code any of the interview data, but used them simply as descriptions of practice and to record the perspectives of the staff.

Below I describe how my research was designed to elicit the information required to address my research questions.

1.  **The History of Collaborative Practice:**

    a.  **What is the history of collaborative exhibition creation involving Indigenous peoples in North American museums?**
    b.  **How have these collaborative relationships changed over time?**
    c.  **What lessons have been learned about successful collaborative practices?**

By conducting a literature review that made up the initial stages of my research, I gained a broad understanding of the general trends of bilateral relationships between museums and Indigenous people in Canada and the United States over the past 100 years. Through the archives I gleaned some specific information about the history of collaboration at each institution I studied, and I traced some broad patterns of change over time. Very few documents alluded to any "lessons learned." The primary source of information for strategies for successful collaboration came from my informants when

they were willing to reflect critically on their work and successful practices. Interviews also filled gaps in some of the historical background that were absent from written sources. In my analysis below (Chapter 6), I correlate the information gathered with the wider narrative of collaborative exhibit creation and outreach beyond the usual audience.

**2. The Collaborative Process**

    **a. What types of collaborative methods are currently being employed in exhibit creation?**
    **b. How has the museum incorporated successful collaborative practice into its way of working at the institutional level?**

I addressed questions related to the collaborative process through my interview data, as well as through exhibit analysis and observation while at my fieldwork sites. By interviewing staff at the four museum locations, I gained a picture of the types of methods currently being employed in creating exhibits about Indigenous people. These methods varied greatly and were not always defined as "collaborative" by the case study museums.[47] I then compared my results with other museum exhibition projects self-described as "collaborative" within the academic literature (e.g., Kahn 2000; Shannon 2009; and several examples from Peers and Brown 2003). I considered real-world examples of collaboration that function to satisfy the needs of the museum and the community and whether the available theory pertaining to collaboration is adequate for understanding the complex relationships between Indigenous peoples and museums.

Collaboration was incorporated into philosophy and mission statements of the museums I visited, and is implicit in the training that staff receive. I searched the grey literature collection and employed participant observation to find examples of it from the institutional milieu. Informants often had their own personal philosophies and/or ways of working with communities, but institutional ways of working are guided by mission and vision statements, internal memos, and even job titles and descriptions. Through interviews, data I gathered in the archives, as well as through observation, I chronicled the distinct ways that museums in my case studies invited Indigenous people into their institutions.

[47] Moreover, collaborative practices sit on a continuum of methods that fall under that umbrella and only critical assessment can truly distinguish them (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008:1).

3. **Exhibit Design**
   a. **How does the use of collaborative methods affect the content and message of an exhibit about the culture and heritage of the partnering community?**
   b. **How are the voices from Aboriginal Canada, Native America, and Native Hawaii represented in exhibitions?**

Questions related to exhibit design were answered primarily through my critical analysis of exhibit content. By asking staff and community consultants about how the exhibit content was negotiated, I was also able to add to the information in question. I began with several assumptions about the design and content of collaborative efforts. I expected responses to include the first-person perspective of Indigenous people and use of personal pronouns in the exhibit text, information about worldview, and intangible heritage, such as spiritual teachings, stories, and songs. I also assumed that these design elements would shift over time due to changing aesthetics and institutional trends.

My critical exhibit analysis was the most effective method of answering these questions. Occasionally interviews and exhibit analysis were combined when informants walked around the galleries with me. In this informal setting, I collected anecdotes about intended messages for the exhibits and attempts to include non-curatorial voices. I visited every pertinent gallery in each institution to get a sense of the characteristics that exemplify collaborative exhibits.

## Limitations

With any fieldwork there are limitations to what can be accomplished in the time provided. By choosing to undertake four case studies, I favoured variety over depth. The case study research took place over the course of one year (April 2013–May 2014), on five different trips (two to Victoria, one year apart). Its inherent advantage was that I improved my methodology with each trip so as to find focus and be effective in my fieldwork. The specific character of each location also guided my experience and research in both negative and positive ways; this is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Procuring organizational charts proved challenging and understanding the staff structure and their roles before my visit was equally difficult. As such, I needed to take a fair degree of direction from others while making my first interview appointments. I sought out those whose expertise would bring me insights about exhibit creation and working with communities. As mentioned above, my choice of interviewees was guided by one of the staff. Upon my visit, it was still not always possible to learn about every staff member's role and experience at the museum—job descriptions themselves can be deceptive as they are sometimes vague and each person may achieve their job goals through different tasks.

Finding community members who had worked for, or with, each museum was especially difficult so this aspect of my research remains under-represented. The names and contact information of these people were not public information, and I was therefore not able to contact anyone on my own. At the Bishop Museum, their cultural protocols required that proper introductions be made and there was simply not enough time to make plans with community members and arrange for visits. It may have been possible to meet cultural practitioners had there been a cultural event at the Bishop Museum, but there was no convenient opportunity. That said, I was able to interview a guest community curator in Yellowknife, having been introduced through my primary contact, and I also interviewed the leader of a Native youth program at the Denver Museum.

Time was a constraint for access to informants as it was in other aspects of my fieldwork. I spent an average of two-and-a-half weeks at each site. In retrospect, I feel that a full three weeks to a month-long visit would have allowed me to gain a more complete picture of each institution and to have access to a wider range of informants. A longer visit would also have enabled a broader and deeper understanding of the cultural and social context of the museum in terms of its wider role in communicating and contradicting local ideas about Indigenous peoples. I was able to visit the Tłįchǫ Government Offices in Behchokǫ̀, Northwest Territories, and it again helped me understand the local Indigenous context in Yellowknife.

A key constraint in the time I spent at each institution was budget. I received funding for travel through Simon Fraser University and the Northern Studies Training Program (for travel to Yellowknife). However, since my time in each place was limited I

was inspired to make use of every minute. Additional funding would have allowed me to expand my study to include an international example. Many people recommended the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington as an appropriate addition to my study, as I it would have allowed me to contrast and compare museological work in New Zealand with my examples from North America. However, an international trip was not possible within the bounds of my time and budget. I was thankful, however, to be able to include Hawai'i as an example of a South Pacific museum as a compromise.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a detailed overview of the methods that I employed to conduct my fieldwork at my four case study institutions: the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, the Royal British Columbia Museum, and the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. My study was a multi-sited, critical ethnography that included interviews, critical analysis of exhibits, the collection of pamphlets and other literature, and participant observation. The interviews were my primary source of information at each location and were used to uncover information that was not available through published literature. Upon my return from each case study site, I transcribed and analyzed all of these different data sources.

These methods allowed me to collect the necessary data in order to create a complete picture of the history of Indigenous museology, and the current practices employed to work with Indigenous people at each location. Others, such as Moira Simpson (2001) and Amy Lonetree (2012), have used similar methods to explore the issue of Indigenous participation and cultural representation in museums. My research was directed through local hosts, who guided my decisions about who to interview, and typically my focus remained on the perspectives of museum staff, rather than community partners.

# Chapter 4.

# Case Studies

My research was designed to explore how Indigenous peoples have been involved in creating museum exhibits about their culture and history. Since the principles of collaborative exhibit creation mix with practice in idiosyncratic fashion, fieldwork is the only means for observation. Between April 2013 and May 2014 I visited four locations: the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, the Royal British Columbia Museum, and the Denver Museum of Nature and Science.

In this chapter, I describe my fieldwork sites individually. I provide a short history of the institution, followed by an examination of its current mission. Following this, I discuss the details of my fieldwork by referencing the methods introduced in Chapter 3. For each location, I describe my interview process, my analysis of the exhibits, and finally what other material I studied in terms of additional experiences and grey literature that supplemented my study. As much as possible I tried to minimize bias so I followed this template at each of the four case study sites. Table 2 summarizes and compares important data on the museums in graphic form.

Before describing the case study institutions, it is useful to understand something about the range of museum types. Current museum practice often sees museums separated by discipline (i.e., Canadian Museum of Nature, Canadian Science and Technology Museum, Canadian Museum of History). The four museums in this study, however, have collections that include biological specimens, minerals, archaeological artifacts, contemporary objects, and historical objects, amongst others. All four institutions also house archives that include paper records, photographs, and audio recordings. Such eclectic collections can thus be classified as multidisciplinary in character due to their variety and because of this they attract social science researchers from across the globe. The smallest museum, the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage

Centre, does not conduct much natural history research, although natural history and mining history are represented in the exhibits (see Table 2.1 for a comparison of key features of each museum). It also supports research activities with an interdisciplinary focus, such as archaeology, anthropology, and ethnography. Each museum I visited was a landmark in their respective capital cities. Their central goal is to amass, preserve, and display collections that are representative of their territory, state, or province for public edification. My primary criterion for selecting research sites was that each housed an ethnographic collection that included many items from local Indigenous communities. However, there are many differences between each museum's research strategy, history, and exhibit programs, as evident in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1.    Case Study Museum Information.**

| Data | Bishop Museum | Northern Heritage Centre | Royal BC Museum | Denver Museum |
|------|---------------|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Annual visitors | 387,398 (numbers from 2011 reported in 2013) | Approx. 48,000 in 2014 (visitors, events, and programs) | 480,000 visitors, including school programs (2012/13 Annual report) | "served 1,353,580 visitors at on-site and off-site programs around the state" (2013) |
| Collections size | 7 million objects; 350,000 ethnographic | 65,254 (museum also cares for 148,816 objects for Nunavut) | 1,116,764 total objects; 436,000 ethnographic, including photographs | 1,400,000 total objects |
| Number of permanent staff | 166 staff listed in the 2013 annual report | Approximately 35 | Approximately 110 | 73 (listed on the phone list) |
| Population of urban location | 390,738 (Honolulu City), metro area: 953,207 2010 census | 19,234 (2011 census) (Yellowknife); NWT total is 40,000 people spread over 1,171,918 km in 33 communities.[48] | 80,032 (2011 census) (Victoria) | 604,356 (Denver County) according to 2010 census |
| Aboriginal population[49] | 85,678 of metro area (Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander); 9% (2010 census estimates) | 20% of the population of Yellowknife.[50] In the NWT as a whole, 48% Aboriginal (28% Dene, 11% Inuit or Inuvialuit, 9% Metis). | Estimated about 20,000 from greater Victoria area, 15,000 from local reserves.[51] 2006 census data, 3% of total Victoria population.[52] | Native: 7,162 or 1.2% (2010 census) Local nations: Mountain Ute, Southern Ute |
| Governance Structure | 23-member Board of Directors, elects the President/CEO (who sits on the board) | Comprises the Culture and Heritage Division, Dept. of Education, Culture, and Employment. | Corporation with ten-member Board of Directors, appointed by the Province of BC, and accountable to the Minister of Community, Sport and Cultural Development. | 16-member Board of Trustees, hire President/CEO |

[48] http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/demo60a-eng.htm

[49] National average, 3.8% of the population in Canada (http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-638-x/2010004/article/11086-eng.htm)

[50] http://www.gov.nt.ca/publications/asg/pdfs/ourp.pdf

[51] http://www.vnfc.ca/

[52] http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-638-x/2010004/article/11086-eng.htm

# Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum

The Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum (hereafter Bishop Museum) in Honolulu, Hawai'i, boasts the largest American museum off the United States mainland. Table 2.1 provides data about visitor numbers, collections size, and other relevant details. Hawai'i's culture and history is the pivotal theme on display, most of which focuses on the connection of Hawai'i to the Pacific Ocean and Polynesian heritage rather than its shared history with the United States. Visiting the Bishop Museum provided a good opportunity to see how Indigenous people are represented in this context. I wanted to know how being removed from the mainland of the United States has affected the Bishop Museum's methods of engagement with Indigenous people within its walls, as well as the dialogue directed to representation.

The founding story of the Bishop Museum is bound up with the contested history of Native Hawaiian sovereignty and cultural continuity. The museum was named for its founder and benefactor, Bernice Pauahi Bishop, a Native Hawaiian, who was the wife of Charles Reed Bishop. She was one of the last three high-ranking female *ali'i* (hereditary chiefs) of the Kamehameha Dynasty so she inherited all of the royal property and almost twelve percent of the Kingdom's land (Rose 1980:7). After her death, her personal estate, which consisted mainly of large and valuable Hawaiian royal items and other ethnographic objects, was left to Charles Bishop. She also left him with instructions to found a museum and school.

Charles and Bernice Bishop likely envisioned the museum's role as encouraging urban Native Hawaiian youth to keep in touch with their traditional material culture, which explains its location on the Kamehameha School grounds. The original focus of the museum when it was founded in 1889 was on science and popular education, with research and collection expeditions undertaken right from the early days (Rose 1980:23). The royal inheritance also provided an endowment to be used to procure and preserve items of significance to Hawai'i, such as natural history specimens and ethnographic objects (Rose 1980:63).

When the United States annexed Hawai'i in 1893, the ensuing political instability caused worry that the national treasures then on loan to the museum by the Kingdom of

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Hawai'i would be confiscated by the United States government (Rose 1980:57). The ownership of the museum collection was thus transferred to the museum's board of trustees in 1898 by the then-president of the Hawaiian Republic (Rose 1980:59). The Bishop Museum finally received designation as the official Natural and Cultural History Museum for the State of Hawai'i in 1988. Its focus and mission is to collect artifacts, natural history specimens, documents, and photographs of Hawai'i and other Pacific Island cultures.[53]

## Mission

The museum "campus" sits on land that officially belongs to the Kamehameha School. It consists of nine buildings, some of which are currently utilized for storage and offices rather than exhibits. The main exhibit space is in the Richard Mamiya Science Adventure Center, a 1,500 $m^2$ facility devoted to environmental science. Castle Hall houses a permanent exhibit on the story of immigration to Hawai'i and temporary exhibit space, and the main building features the Polynesian and Hawaiian Halls, the Abigail Kinoiki Kekaulike Kahili Room (for Hawaiian royal treasures), and other smaller exhibit and multi-use spaces. The campus is connected via the Great Lawn, which is full of botanical specimens on its grounds, a native plant garden, and a planetarium.

The mission statement of the Bishop Museum reads as follows:

As "The Museum of Hawai'i," Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum's mission is to be a gathering place and educational center that actively engages people in the presentation, exploration and preservation of Hawai'i's cultural heritage and natural history, as well as its ancestral cultures throughout the Pacific.[54]

Although the museum is officially a private institution, it receives the bulk of its funding from state cultural programs. A 33-member board of directors, composed of local business people, community advisors, and philanthropists, governs the museum and appoints the president and CEO who acts as the museum director. In addition to

[53] http://www.bishopmuseum.org/aboutus/
[54] http://www.bishopmuseum.org/images/pdf/stratplan.pdf

overseeing the exhibition and scientific research programs, the museum also runs a sizeable publishing house—the Bishop Museum Press. The current president, Blair Collis, was hired to help revivify this mandate in 2003. He introduced a children's press with a focus on Native Hawaiian culture. During the last several years, the museum has increased its concentration on teaching about Hawai'i, with a specific focus on its culture history, as its central guiding principle. A new strategic plan, launched in 2011, identified a Native Hawaiian perspective as vital to maintaining the museum's relevance in the 21st century.

Recent academic literature pertaining to the Bishop Museum focuses on its complicated relationship with the NAGPRA legislation (e.g., Pala 2008; Russo 2011). This includes, for example, the so-called Forbes Cave collection that contained human remains and burial objects, which were excavated by amateur archaeologists in 1905 and donated to the Bishop Museum. In 2000, they became the subject of intense debate concerning what constitutes a community organization and what constitutes funerary objects, a debate made more complicated in Hawai'i due to overlapping claims of cultural authority by different groups (Pala 2008:46). Part of the issue here was whether the way NAGPRA had been functioning on the United States mainland was analogous to the situation in Hawai'i. In light of the discussions on NAGPRA in Chapter 2, I thought that this controversy would make for an interesting study. However, upon my arrival, I found that nobody brought up this incident, either directly or indirectly. According to the Director of Cultural Collections Betty Lou Kam, the main problem with NAGPRA legislation is that in Hawai'i, there are no clear recipients for human remains and objects, as there are many Native Hawaiian organizations and 25 different groups made claims to the Forbes Cave collection (Pala 2008:47). Considering this potentially loaded relationship, I wondered how the Bishop Museum engaged Native Hawaiian community organizations when planning for exhibits.

## Fieldwork

My introduction to the Bishop Museum was through email correspondence with a staff archaeologist who provided me with suggestions about key personnel at the museum. I also spoke with a former employee. Both contacts provided preliminary

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advice, but were not part of my fieldwork program since I focused on the public side of the museum and did not formally interview anyone in the Anthropology Department.

As my fieldwork focused on the creation of exhibits and working with Indigenous people, I began to work with the Cultural Resources Division, which includes Anthropology, Library and Archives, Conservation, and Cultural Collections. I received permission to proceed with my research from the cultural resources division manager, and was subsequently put in touch with Betty Lou Kam, the director of cultural collections. Kam was part of the team that directed the Hawaiian Hall renovation. She also directed the team that worked most closely with Native Hawaiian communities.

*Interviews*

While at the museum, I conducted formal one-on-one interviews with seven individuals. President and CEO Blair Collis; Volunteer Richard Wong; Hawaiian Hall Docent Coordinator Bill Marston; Assistant Collections Manager Kamalu du Preez; Collections Technician Lissa Gendreau; Head of Visitor Experience Mike Shannahan; and Senior Exhibit Designer Dave Kemble all graciously answered my queries. In one lunchtime session I interviewed Noelle Kahanu (Director of Community Affairs), DeSoto Brown (Historian), and Betty Lou Kam (Director of Cultural Collections). On another occasion I dined and spoke with Marques Marzan (Cultural Research Specialist), Lokomika'i Lipscomb (Cultural Educator), and Marcus Quiniones (Cultural Educator). I also had an informal lunch with several volunteers (as a social visit).

Each interview covered several themes, one of which was the construction of Hawaiian Hall. Dave Kemble, Noelle Kahanu, DeSoto Brown, and Betty Lou Kam were closely involved with the project. Brown and Kemble provided me with information related to the project background and planning. Mike Shannahan and Richard Wong discussed the visitor experience in Hawaiian Hall and what information volunteers were sharing, as well as what experiences the public were having in the space. Kamalu du Preez and Lissa Gendreau explained to me that the anthropology collections were sometimes used by the community for research and ceremonial purposes. They, along with Noelle Kahanu, discussed their personal impressions about their work at the museum and their standing in their respective communities.

All meetings were arranged through Betty Lou Kam. I was glad to have interviewed President and CEO Blair Collis first as he provided a broad understanding of the Bishop Museum's recent history and current priorities. Volunteer Richard Wong also gave me a guided tour of Hawaiian Hall. Many people identified Betty Tatar as an important contact, but she declined to participate.[55] I was hoping to interview someone who was not a museum staff member in order to get the perspective of a community expert engaged for a specific project. Kam intimated that arranging to meet a community member would be possible if I stayed longer and that planning such meetings ahead of time without knowing me was awkward. Ultimately, my three-week stay was not quite long enough to make community connections. I also chose not to interview the staff from the Anthropology Department who concentrate on archaeology as they did not seem to be directly engaged with exhibit creation. I am confident that through my focus on collections, exhibits, and visitor experience staff, I gathered the information required for my study.

## Exhibits

I began my study of exhibits at the Bishop Museum with Hawaiian Hall, which is a three-storey room in which the second and third floor open to a central courtyard. It was originally completed in 1903 and featured the Victorian architectural aesthetic extant for the era, but over the years it has been "altered in some uncomplimentary ways" (Mason 2009:8). Between 2006 and 2009, the museum undertook a major project both to restore the architecture of the space and to completely redesign the exhibits. The exhibit program was guided by a desire to present Hawaiian culture and history on home soil from an internalist perspective, and the project included various forms of community collaboration. I spent considerable time in this gallery and studying its institutional footprint so as to synthesize the corpus of critical analysis dedicated to this space.

## Ephemera and Unpublished Materials

As the Bishop Museum was my first field site, I took some time to refine my focus with respect to gathering secondary (grey) literature. Therefore, I collected a sample of

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[55] Dr. Tatar was deeply involved in the Forbes Cave collection controversy, which might explain her reluctance in speaking with someone who is researching Native Hawaiian/museum relationships.

many different types of material. While I was visiting there, the staff provided me desk space in the library and archives. Librarian B.J. Short, my host, provided me with many suggestions and assistance. I spent time reviewing and collecting some of this material to find later that it was not directly relevant to my study. Previous academic studies that I found in the library, including Harrison (1993b) and Kelly (1993), provided me with some insight about the culture and history of the museum. Short provided me with my own issues of the Bishop Museum magazine, *Ka'Elele Hawai'i*, which were helpful for tracing recent exhibits and events. Historian DeSoto Brown gave me pages of the visitor comment book to review and I recorded some impressions of the entries. I also viewed and copied some files about proposed renovation plans from the 1980s and 1990s from Senior Exhibit Designer Dave Kemble.

Betty Lou Kam and others stated that the Native Hawaiian worldviews were implicit in the programs offered to the public and educational programming offered to schoolchildren. I attended several of these programs during my visit to witness this practice. The first was called "Holo Kai, On the Ocean Blue," and was a performance by Lokomika'i Lipscomb for a group of fourth graders. I also watched a public program presented by Marcus Quiniones, "Ola Nā Mo'olelo: Oral Traditions." These programs were theatrical in that Lipscomb and Quiniones acted out aspects of Hawaiian history, but they also invited participation and included teaching moments about Hawaiian language and culture. In the spirit of participant observation, I served as a volunteer during a large public outdoor event held on a Saturday. While working in the gardens I managed to observe the museum effectively use its grounds.

While in Honolulu, I visited other historic and cultural sites, such as 'Iolani Palace and the Royal Mausoleum of Hawaii (*Mauna 'Ala*), each of which provided additional information about Hawaiian history. Outside of these tourism experiences, I had no exposure to Native Hawaiian cultural practices or much opportunity to socialize with museum staff or local residents. Honolulu is a large and cosmopolitan city that is heavily focused on tourism, which limited my interaction with locals.

## Summary of Key Observations

This was the first case study I conducted, and thus it presented some challenges. I was at times unsure of what information to collect, particularly with respect to my library research. I later realized that much of the background reading that I conducted was tangential to my goals or results, so it contributed little to my fieldwork. I wrote in my field notes that I was not sure that 30-minute interviews were long enough; however, I am now confident that I collected a sufficient amount of information to enable a fair analysis.

My experience at the Bishop Museum was mediated by Director of Cultural Collections Betty Lou Kam. I believe this to be positive, even if that meant looking past the academic side of the museum. The Bishop Museum produced a significant amount of printed material regarding the Hawaiian Hall renovation, which made collecting information relatively easy. The Bishop Museum was a good first case study, since Hawaiian Hall provided a discrete unit of analysis and collaboration with Native Hawaiian communities was readily observable.

# The Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre

The Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre (hereafter the Northern Heritage Centre) sits on the edge of a small lake in the centre of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. The 2,440 m$^2$ building is owned and run by the Government of the Northwest Territories, which functions as the territorial museum. It also houses the archives, territorial archaeology programs, and other related culture and heritage programs. The Northern Heritage Centre provided an opportunity to study a unique northern-Canadian, government-run museum work with the resident Aboriginal people to create representations of their culture. Because no formal history of the Northern Heritage Centre has been written, the following is compiled from personal notes provided by Curator Joanne Bird, archival documents I found, and personal communications with founding Director Robert R. Janes.

The ethnic makeup of Yellowknife is quite different than the rest of Canada, where approximately fifty percent of the population self-identify as Aboriginal, Inuit, or Métis. Along with English and French, the Northwest Territories officially recognizes nine

Aboriginal languages: Cree, Tłįchǫ, Chipewyan, South Slavey, North Slavey, Gwich'in, Inuvialuktun, Inuktitut, and Inuvinnaqtun. The north shore of Great Slave Lake (where Yellowknife is located) is home to the Yellowknives and Tłįchǫ Dene. The Yellowknives Dene live in two communities, Dettah and N'Dilo, adjacent to the city of Yellowknife and the Tłįchǫ live at Behchokǫ, about 100 kilometers out of town. The Yellowknives Dene are named after the copper knives they customarily carried, which gifted the city their name. There are also populations of Western Arctic Inuit and Inuvialuit in the northern half of the territory above the Arctic Circle, mostly around the Mackenzie River Delta, many having also relocated to Yellowknife.

## History

Like the Bishop Museum, the reason for the founding of the Northern Heritage Centre was due to concerns that cultural and historical material was being removed from the area for museums in larger, urban centres, particularly the national museum in Ottawa (then called the National Museum of Man). In the 1960s, the Northwest Territories also comprised what is now the territory of Nunavut so its mandate included Inuit material from the Eastern Arctic. The precursor to the Northern Heritage Centre, the Museum of the North, established in 1963, was run by a society for several years, until that responsibility, and all it entailed, fell to the Government of the Northwest Territories in 1970. Construction of the new building started in 1975. The founding director, Robert R. Janes, started his job in 1976. He guided the completion of the new building and hired the necessary staff to run the institution. The architectural designs for the museum did not include an understanding of the environmental controls required for museums or northern climates so they had to be altered significantly by Janes when he arrived (personal communication, August 2014). On April 16, 1979, His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, Prince Charles, officiated at the opening of the facility that bears his name.

From the outset, the museum was envisioned as multidisciplinary in terms of both collections and research. The founding goal of the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre was to showcase the cultural traditions of the Aboriginal peoples of the Northwest Territories, to represent human history in the North (through archaeology and history), and to showcase the local flora and fauna. Once Nunavut Territory was

established in 1999, the size of the territory—and therefore the area of responsibility of the Northern Heritage Centre—shrank by more than half. A condition of the Nunavut final agreement was that the collections from Nunavut became the property of its government. The museum thus removed all of the Nunavut material from display, but continues to hold both the objects and archives in trust until such time as the people of Nunavut have the capacity to care for them in their territory.

## Mission

Sometimes described as "more than a museum" in promotional literature, the Northern Heritage Centre is the intersection of all things cultural in the territory. As such, caring for collections, conducting research, creating exhibits, and providing public education only begins to describe its influence. The museum's statement of purpose reads as follows:

> The Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre (PWNHC) is the Government of the Northwest Territories' museum and archives. The PWNHC acquires and manages objects and archival materials that represent the cultures and history of the Northwest Territories (NWT), plays a primary role in documenting and providing information about the cultures and history of the NWT, and provides professional museum, archives and cultural resource management services to partner organizations.

The Northern Heritage Centre also houses an arts and culture funding program ("Community Programs"), the Northwest Territories Archives (holding both governmental and other public records), and the "Cultural Places Program." This last program administers the archaeological permitting system in the territory, conducts original archaeological research, and documents historic places. The Cultural Places program also researches and records Aboriginal place names throughout the territory for the purpose of official recognition by the Territorial government.[56] The bulk of the research currently conducted in the museum falls under the auspices of Cultural Places. Consequently, much of the recent academic publishing has focused on the

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[56] See http://www.pwnhc.ca/cultural-places/geographic-names/database-of-nwt-geographic-names/

archaeological research on melting glaciers, "ice patch archaeology" (see, for example, Andrews et al. 2012).

The Government of the Northwest Territories operates the Northern Heritage Centre, which houses the Division of Culture and Heritage within the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (the name of this department has changed over the years). The museum does not charge admission, and most of its services (such as educational programs and tours) are free of charge. Its operating budget comes from the Government of the Northwest Territories, which administers salaries, making all of the staff public servants. The museum is able to apply for federal museum and heritage grants to undertake special research or renovation projects.

It was difficult to find academic papers about research activities sponsored by the Northern Heritage Centre, although I have amassed a larger list since I began working at the institution. In the decade when Robert R. Janes was director (1980–1990), four Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre *Occasional Papers* were published on various northern research topics (Hart and Wolfe 1985; Janes et al. 1986; Kobelka and Stephens 1988 Patterson et al. 1985). Other research publications in the 1980s and 1990s were primarily focused on Northern Heritage Centre archaeological projects (i.e., Arnold and Scott 1991, Hanks and Winter 1986), a trend that has continued to this day as archaeology is a key research focus at the institution (i.e., Andrews and MacKay and Andrew 2012; Helwig et. al 2014). The volume of academic publishing seems to have generally diminished in the last two decades as the number of staff engaged in research activities has decreased along with staff interest in academic writing.

Not very much has been written about the Northern Heritage Centre itself, either in museum literature such as *Muse* (the Canadian Museum Association magazine) or other museum-focused journals; I could only find one article (Atamanenko et al. 1994). Robert R. Janes did write about the museum's philosophy in its early days (i.e., Janes 1983, 1985, 1987), but the institution's overall history has not been compiled in any official way. Again focusing on archaeology, Tom Andrews, Territorial Archaeologist and Head of the Cultural Places Department, discusses the methods of community collaboration that guide the archaeological work at the Northern Heritage Centre (see Andrews and Zoe 1997). Andrew's Ph.D. dissertation, *There Will be Many Stories:*

*Museum Anthropology, Collaboration, and the Tłı̨chǫ* (2011), provides detailed descriptions and analysis of some of his collaborative work and touches on exhibits at the museum. Despite this active research program, the other museum staff members do not currently write about or publish their work as they have little incentive to do so; this dissertation can be viewed as a missed opportunity to bring attention to the work being conducted at the Northern Heritage Centre.

## Fieldwork

Territorial Archaeologist Tom Andrews was my host in Yellowknife, and assisted me with the planning and execution of my research. My senior supervisor George Nicholas co-authored with him a key book on Indigenous archaeology in the late 1990s (Nicholas and Andrews 1997), giving me a connection. Andrews welcomed me as a guest in his home, and gave me extensive tours of Yellowknife and the surrounding environment. While at the museum, he introduced me to the staff and ensured that I had what I needed to conduct my studies, including a desk in the administrative area.

Andrews has a close relationship with many members of the Tłı̨chǫ community since he has partnered with them on many projects over the last three decades. He has travelled on the land and learned a great deal about their cultures, practices, and languages over his 30-year career. I also had the benefit of the company of anthropologist Ingrid Kritsch, Tom's wife and research director of the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute. With their combined experience, knowledge, and willingness to share, Andrews and Kritsch were generous hosts. Our evenings became nightly anthropology seminars about the people, history, and culture of the Northwest Territories.

### Interviews

The staff members at the Northern Heritage Centre were open and friendly. All were very curious about my project and seemed eager to talk about both the successes and the possibilities for improvement with regards to working with communities and the way that this work translates into exhibits. The director, Barb Cameron, encouraged them to take time during their work to talk to me and to see my work as a benefit to the institution. I was given a desk in the staff work area and was incorporated into the everyday workings of the staff, including attending weekly all-staff "stand-up" meetings.

Due to the small size of the Northern Heritage Centre, I met almost all of the staff in person and before long I fit easily into the daily life of the museum. Given the small staff size, I had no trouble targeting the key staff positions that related to my project. I began by interviewing Director Barb Cameron, who was supportive of my project. She spoke candidly to me about the issues and challenges of the exhibition program and gave me background on the ongoing creation of the new diorama spaces by touring me around for the second part of the interview.

Karen Wright-Fraser held the position of Community Liaison Coordinator. Her job description interested me the most so I joined her for lunch and an interview. Her position falls under the Community Programs Office (recently re-named "Community Cultural Development"), which provides funding to arts and culture organizations (including other Northwest Territories museums) by redistributing government contributions. I also spoke with Boris Atamanenko, who is the manager of Community Programs, but the functions of this division were not directly related to my research interests.

I interviewed Curator of Collections Joanne Bird. Bird held the only position at the Northern Heritage Centre that includes "curator" in the title at the time. She does not interact with exhibits a great deal but does work closely with communities on special projects. Susan Irving is a curatorial assistant, meaning that her duties are to assist with collections activities, including loans and visits. Irving has also held a variety of roles in the museum in the past, including ethnographic and archaeological researcher, and was a good resource who provided me with historical background and information about collaboration and exhibit creation.

The exhibits team is made up of two exhibit designers and a graphic designer. I had one long interview with both Dot Van Vliet (Graphic Designer) and Rae Braden (Exhibit Assistant). I was able to speak with Myrna Pokiak, an Inuvialuit anthropologist who has held several temporary positions at the museum and who also curated the "*Qilalukkat!* Belugas!" exhibit on beluga whale hunting. She is a private consultant who works occasionally with the museum on contract. Wendy Stephenson is another private consultant who has done a lot of work on the Centre's exhibits over the years. She provided much of the cultural content for the diorama project, based on interviews and

engagement with Aboriginal community members. I was able to speak to Stephenson on the phone, but was not able to conduct a formal interview. Tom Andrews introduced me to Pokiak and put me in contact with Stephenson.

Although Tom Andrews offered me a great deal of background information along the way, we also conducted a formal interview near the end of my visit. He planned the timing so as not to influence my other interviews. His perspective is that of a long-time Northern Heritage Centre employee and also as a long-time research partner with the Tłı̨chǫ community and an advocate for them. Andrews took me on a day trip to their community of Behchokǫ̀, where he arranged for me to interview John B. Zoe, a special advisor to the Tłı̨chǫ government. Zoe does not have an official job title, but is considered a leader in the community in terms of negotiating land claims with the federal government. He is also creating policies to support their language. He is considered an expert in his Aboriginal culture and history.

I was fortunate to be in Yellowknife at the same time as Robert R. Janes, who served as the Northern Heritage Centre's inaugural director. Janes has authored several key museum studies works (Janes and Conaty 2005; Sandell and Janes 2007; Janes 2008: Janes 2013) and is Editor-in-Chief Emeritus of the *Journal of Museum Management and Curatorship*. He generously made himself available for an interview in which he shared his perspective on the changes evident at the Northern Heritage Centre since his departure. He also provided valuable comments and insights on the more general aspects of my dissertation topic.

*Exhibits*

The Northern Heritage Centre has several galleries that function as exhibit spaces. They are spread over two floors connected by a central ramp. Adjacent to the lobby area on the first floor is a small display of a Dene hunting cabin from the 1970s along with a community display area and a children's discovery area. There are several small alcoves that hold exhibit areas where visitors can linger as they move up the ramp. These areas feature the history of the NWT, (including a small display about the history of the Northern Heritage Centre), information on mining, and selected objects from the collections. The largest of these alcove exhibits is the Feature Gallery, which houses the Dene moose-skin boat and its related interpretation. The Aviation Gallery, which sits at

the top of the ramp area, features a full-size airplane and exhibits that discuss travel in the North.

The North and South Galleries feature Northern-themed dioramas that showcase the landscape and animals of the north and south regions of the territory—these were the focus of my study and were still under renovation as part of the Gallery Renewal project when I visited in 2013. Each of the seven dioramas illustrates a unique geographical setting using a large-scale photograph of the area as the backdrop. Along with smaller cases and interpretive panels, they outline cultural information related to the environment and its flora and fauna.

At the time of my visit, there was an archaeological exhibit titled "Kuukpak"[57] installed at the hub of the North Gallery that presented material from an Inuvialuit site excavation led by former Northern Heritage Centre Director Charles Arnold. The Gallery Renewal diorama installation in the North Gallery was almost complete. The South Gallery had a "Staff Picks"[58] display, which proved interesting in terms of exploring content. The South Gallery dioramas were only partially complete, but some of the bigger taxidermy pieces were installed already.

As the Gallery Renewal project was a work in progress, I turned my critical gaze to the content of some of the other exhibits. The Feature Gallery, which houses the moose-skin boat, contained an exhibit called "*Yamǫ̀ria*: The One Who Travels," which was a great example of collaboration and the presence of Native voice. This gallery also featured material from the ice patch studies[59] conducted by the Cultural Places Program. Since the contents of the museum are relevant to my study, I performed a critical visual analysis of the contents of the North, South, and Feature Galleries.

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[57] An online version of this exhibit can be seen at http://www.pwnhc.ca/exhibits/ kuukpak/index.html

[58] Staff Picks is also available online at: http://www.pwnhc.ca/exhibits/staffpicks/

[59] Alpine ice patches are found on north-facing sides of mountains all over the world and are layers of snow that do not typically melt in the summer. As global temperatures have risen, melting ice patches have yielded many well-preserved artifacts. For an introduction, see Dixon et al., 2005.

*Ephemera and Unpublished Materials*

In his role as my research host, Tom Andrews provided me with a substantial amount of printed information on the Northern Heritage Centre, along with reports and copies of articles related to his research projects. Ingrid Kritsch also generously provided me with books and reports about projects that she was involved with that were associated with the museum. Despite the fact that the current staff publish little in anthropological or academic publications, I collected the most printed material from this case study, though most of it proved more useful as background research and was circumstantial to my study.

Many booklets printed in small runs were used by the community and museum. These have been transferred to "print on demand" via PDFs available on the website. Since my visit, more publications have been made available online (http://www.pwnhc.ca/books/). Of particular interest is a group of publications pertaining to Elder and youth visits and their interaction with items from the collection. I saw the paper copies of these, but there were no samples for me to take home. All were subtitled, "Sharing our Stories,"[60] and are examples of collaborative projects with the collections.

During my stay in Yellowknife I was asked to give a public talk about my work, which I titled "Making Exhibits Together: Examples of Museum and Community Collaborations." My presentation included examples of collaboration from the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, as well as preliminary results from my Bishop Museum study, which I then compared to the Northern Heritage Centre. The talk was well attended by staff and several members of the public. During the Q&A following the talk, Fred Sangris, a prominent member of the Yellowknives Dene community, spoke about his willingness to collaborate with the Northern Heritage Centre to create an exhibit. As of August 2014, there is a collaborative exhibit in process between the Yellowknives Dene and the museum.

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[60] See http://www.pwnhc.ca/collections/sharing-our-stories/ Interestingly, this series of projects were proposed by Wendy Stephenson, a freelance researcher who approached the museum with the idea.

## Summary of Key Observations

I was able to interview nine museum staff members at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre. The intimate setting (a small city and museum) and the close relationships formed during this case study allowed me to be more fully immersed in the culture of the institution and local community. Being in a small city with a knowledgeable and willing tour guide also provided the opportunity to understand the local setting and politics in a way that I did not at the other field sites. It was unfortunate that the diorama project that was my exhibit focus at Northern Heritage Centre was still under development.[61]


# Royal British Columbia Museum

The Royal British Columbia Museum (hereafter the Royal BC Museum) sits in Victoria's inner harbour beside the British Columbia Legislature and the historic Empress Hotel. The museum presents histories about Aboriginal people, settlers, and the natural environment, starting with impressive Ice Age mammals on display, and its famous immersive experience. Having lived in Vancouver, British Columbia, from January 2000 to July 2014, I was already familiar with the West Coast cultures, landscape, and history presented in this museum. Its location being a short ferry ride away, I had the luxury to spread my study over two visits, spaced one year apart.

## History

The Royal BC Museum was founded in 1886, when 30 prominent Victoria citizens gathered to prepare a petition to convince the province to create a museum (Corley-Smith 1989:17). The "scramble" for Northwest Coast ethnographic material occurring at that time is well documented by Douglas Cole (1985), and the patrons grew "anxious" about the removal of this material to United States and European museums (Corley-Smith 1989:46). Over the years, there has been tension between whether

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[61] Since July 2014, I have been employed in a senior management position at the Northern Heritage Centre, meaning that there is (potentially) less objectivity in my analysis of the institution.

natural history or ethnography should be the primary focus of the institution (see Corley-Smith 1989). In the 1940s, Anthropology Curator Wilson Duff undertook a totem pole restoration program, which included commissioning replicas to display in nearby Thunderbird Park.[62] The current Royal BC Museum building was opened in 1968, and became the repository for historical artifacts and the British Columbia Archives (Corley-Smith 1989:138-9). The First Peoples and archaeological galleries opened in 1977, with other galleries devoted to natural history opening in the following few years, and a new curator responsible for "modern history" being added in recent years.

## Mission

The Royal BC Museum's collections are the property of British Columbia and are thus publically owned. Its mission is "to promote an understanding of the living landscapes and cultures of British Columbia and engage people in a dialogue about their future." According to the website, the museum fulfills this mission by: 1) taking a leadership role in research and scholarship; 2) developing, preserving, and exhibiting a world-class collection; and 3) delivering innovative programming and partnerships.[63] In 2003, the British Columbia Archives, Helmcken House, the Netherlands Carillon, Thunderbird Park, St. Ann's Schoolhouse, and the Royal BC Museum all came under the jurisdiction of the Royal British Columbia Museum Corporation, creating a cultural precinct in the heart of Victoria.[64]

The Royal BC Museum's Human History Collections include modern history, ethnology (both objects and audio/video records), and archaeology. The ethnology collection has over 14,000 objects from the early 19th century to the present and boasts a comprehensive collection of First Nations cultural materials from British Columbia.[65] The museum also houses an ethnographic photography collection, which dates from the 1850s until the present and includes 65,000 images and 3,700 sound recordings.[66] The

[62] http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/about/museum-history/
[63] http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/about/
[64] http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/about/museum-history/
[65] https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/hh-collections/ethnology-objects/
[66] https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/hh-collections/ethnology-audiovideo/

British Columbia Archives are housed in the museum building but are operated independently. As the provincial government museum, the Royal BC Museum has been the main provincial repository for material collected under archaeological permits since 1960, although there was a major reduction in staff after the 1970s. Since then, the museum has received most of its archaeological collections from private contractors rather than conducting its own research.[67]

The Royal BC Museum uses immersion as a crucial ingredient of the visitor experience. The Modern History Galleries, for example, contain reconstructed "sets" representing key periods in British Columbia history with pedestrian walkways. A soundscape of the era, strategic lighting, and textured flooring complete its ambience. The immersive exhibits are in the same style as those featured at the Canadian Museum of History[68] in Gatineau, Québec, which Director George MacDonald based on the Walt Disney World Epcot Center (MacDonald and Alsford 1989:51). The large First Peoples Galleries are set up similarly, and have undergone few changes since they were created in the 1970s. Displays include a reconstructed pit-house based on examples found in south-central British Columbia, as well as a reconstructed Kwakwaka'wakw big house. There are many totem poles within the museum and in the adjacent Thunderbird Park, both new and old, with a Kwakwaka'wakw and Haida provenances. The museum also features exhibits on natural history, and one of its most famous is that of a large woolly mammoth. The museum also accommodates large "blockbuster"[69] exhibits and regularly hosts other travelling exhibits. For example, during my second visit I saw the international touring exhibit "Vikings: Lives Beyond the Legends."[70]

The Royal BC Museum has a long history of working with Aboriginal artists and consulting its network of First Nations communities. Nevertheless, critics continue to lob accusations of insensitivity at the First Peoples Galleries for its apparent lack of

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[67] https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/hh-collections/archaeology/

[68] Formerly the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

[69] [69] A so-called blockbuster exhibit is a large-scale, highly publicized exhibit in an art gallery or museum that attracts visitors that may not typically visit museums. The first blockbuster exhibit was "Treasures of Tutankhamun." It was created by the British Museum in 1972 and toured internationally (Barker 1999:127-128). I saw the exhibit as a young child.

[70] See http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/exhibitions/past/vikings/

collaboration with Aboriginal people (i.e., Frank 2000). While the galleries were indeed created with the input of First Nations peoples, the collaboration seems hidden, which I thought made this museum worthy of study. The museum is also interesting from a political perspective as the collections are tied up with the British Columbia First Nations treaty negotiations process. Some of the collections have been repatriated as part of agreements among First Nations, Canada, and the provincial government. British Columbia recognizes 203 First Nations,[71] representing about 196,075 individuals as outlined in the 2006 census.[72] As the provincial museum, the Royal BC Museum has an obligation to represent all of the cultures of British Columbia.

## Fieldwork

As a long-term resident of British Columbia, I was already fairly familiar with the history and culture of the region before beginning my case study. This familiarity was also enhanced through my previous work at the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, which houses similar ethnographic content. I had not, however, met any of the staff from the Royal BC Museum before this study. My studies there comprised two visits that were spaced one year apart. With the exception of being introduced to CEO Jack Lohman, I contacted all staff on my own and did not have an institutional host to the same degree as my other case studies. Upon being contacted, staff members were friendly and willing to share some of their time and provide suggestions and feedback about my ideas.

*Interviews*

Martha Black, the Curator of Ethnology whose specialty is British Columbia First Nations, was a key contact at the Royal BC Museum. When I was initially forming my dissertation plan, I spoke to her on the phone and she gave me useful suggestions and guidance. During my first visit, I spoke to her at length, and she observed that my study and questions lacked focus. During my subsequent visit, I was able to ask her much more specific questions. All in all, she spent several hours with me and I am very

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[71] http://www.bcafn.ca/files/about-bcafn.php
[72] http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/StatisticsBySubject/AboriginalPeoples/CensusProfiles.aspx

grateful for her time. Given her position, which has responsibility for the First Peoples Galleries, I count her among the key stakeholders in my research. I contacted the rest of the staff myself, heeding some of her recommendations.

When I began my dissertation research, I considered including a visitor study as one component of my fieldwork. Although I removed that element from my research design before arriving to undertake my first study, I had been in touch with Tim Willis, Vice President of Visitor Engagement, who was going to help organize my visitor studies. He had also told me that he had some interesting experiences from a previous job that were relevant to my study. My first formal interview at the Royal BC Museum was with Willis, and focused on his experience at the Royal Alberta Museum. Although they did not contribute significantly to my fieldwork, it provided interesting background material for my research. Willis retired from the Royal BC Museum one month after my visit.

In May 2014, I interviewed the Head of Exhibits, Mark Dickson, who provided perspective on exhibit design, philosophy, and manufacture at the museum, and spoke about the First Nations language exhibit that was opening soon. To get a description of research activities, I interviewed Lorne Hammond, Curator of History, and Grant Keddie, Curator of Archaeology. They have both had very long careers at the Royal BC Museum and hold much institutional memory so they have deep, insightful perspectives about the work it sponsored. I also conducted a short interview with Curator of History Tzu-I Chung who is relatively new at the museum and works with the Chinese and other cultural communities. This interview was useful for learning about how the museum works with white settler communities in British Columbia.

Through personal connections, I was introduced to CEO Jack Lohman by email before my first visit. He was very encouraging and offered some suggestions related to my research. Lohman was unable to see me during my first visit, but I was able to interview him during my second visit. His recent hiring by the Royal BC Museum meant he had little institutional memory, but his international experience allowed him to give me a good indication of the direction and philosophy that will guide the Royal BC Museum in the coming years. He is an academic who writes about representation in museums and

has interesting views about the role that museums take in social justice and reconciliation (e.g., Goodnow et al. 2006).

During my visits, I did not meet with anyone from the Learning Department who could provide a perspective on public engagement through events and programs. However, I did conduct a phone interview with their Head of Learning, Janet MacDonald, a few weeks after my return home. This interview was valuable and it contributed useful data to my study.

*Reading Exhibits*

My target at Royal BC Museum was the First Peoples Galleries, which covers approximately 1,350 m$^2$. The galleries are divided into several areas: Totem Hall; Nisga'a: People of the Nass River, Jonathan Hunt House, Haida Argillite Carving, and Archaeology. I spent a lot of time in this area over two visits. By the time of my second visit, the Archaeology section had received its long-awaited renewal and update. I concentrated my content analysis on the portions surrounding Totem Hall, the exhibits that show "arts and artifacts in the context of traditional technologies and ways of life" (in the mezzanine), and the galleries that describe First Nations histories in the modern era.

At the time of my first visit, I was informed of a First Nations language exhibit that was in development. By May 2014, "Our Living Languages: First Peoples' Voices in British Columbia" was in the final stages of installation and I was able to see many of the exhibit elements in place. Mark Dickson, head of exhibitions, guided me on a preview tour. I spent some time recording my impressions of this exhibit-in-progress and took some photos, particularly since it came up in several of my interviews. I attempted to contact Michelle Williams, the co-curator and representative from the partnering organization First Peoples' Cultural Council, but I was not able to set up an interview.

*Ephemera and Unpublished Materials*

I collected a minimal amount of grey literature from the Royal BC Museum, since the collection of archival material at the other locations had not proven useful. I acquired all of the pamphlets and maps handed out to visitors, but did not independently collect any additional information from the archives or elsewhere. During my initial visit, Martha Black loaned me a manuscript she had authored that chronicled the history of

collaboration between the Royal BC Museum and First Nations communities and individuals; the paper was published later that year (Black 2013). Grant Keddie also gave me a copy of his book on Songheese history (Keddie 2003).

Due to my familiarity with Victoria and British Columbia culture, I did not have the same need to explore and understand the context as with my other case studies, which were new locations for me. I thus spent the least amount of time here, and did not spend as many hours as I had in the other museums when I was not conducting analysis or interviews. Staff at the Royal BC Museum suggested that I could work in the archives. This proved of limited value and not particularly comfortable or useful considering that I was not conducting archival research. In light of this, I did not get a sense of the culture of the Royal BC Museum or how the staff members interact with each other.

## Summary of Key Observations

While I got an overview of the exhibits and the recent history of the Royal British Columbia Museum, there were limitations in terms of my overall understanding and analysis of institutional culture due to not spending as much day-to-day time with the staff. I also chose to undertake two visits spaced one year apart, which made this case study different than the others. The benefit of my approach was that I spoke to people who were not available during my first visit, as well as to the Curator of Ethnology, Martha Black, several times. Reflecting on what I had learned since the first visit gave me a good perspective and allowed me to refine my fieldwork methods by the second. The disadvantage was that I learned less about the culture of the museum staff.

# Denver Museum of Nature and Science

The Denver Museum of Nature and Science (hereafter the Denver Museum) is the state museum of Colorado and is located in a large urban park in the city of Denver. It is an interesting example of how anthropology can be framed and applied in a museum that focuses primarily on natural history and science. I chose the Denver Museum because I was aware of the work that curator Chip Colwell was undertaking with Puebloan communities on the storage and naming of the museum's collection of

Kachina figures (see Nash 2014). I had also read about NAGPRA work that was being conducted there (Nash and Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2010). Once I arrived, I realized the profit of experiencing the different context of a museum with a hard science focus. I was very glad about my decision to visit.

## History

Since its creation, the Denver Museum has focused on the natural world. In 1892, Edwin Carter, a gold prospector with a passion for natural history, sold his collection of 3,000 specimens to form the founding collection of the Colorado Museum of Natural History (Colwell-Chanthaphonh et al. 2013a:12), which is today's Denver Museum.

The history of the Department of Anthropology at the Denver Museum indicates that it has always housed some cultural material, though there was little "consensus concerning where it belonged" (Colwell-Chanthaphonh et al. 2013b:283). The museum's art gallery presented artistic and ethnographic works from around the world until it was closed in 1932 and the majority of the items were transferred to the Denver Art Museum (Colwell-Chanthaphonh et al. 2013b:284). The ethnographic collection continued to grow after the transfer as additional objects were donated and accessioned into the collection. The museum was involved in co-sponsoring the excavation that led to the discovery of the famous Folsom Site,[73] which was a key find for pushing back the dates of human history in the Americas by about 5,000 years (Colwell-Chanthaphonh et. al 2013:286). The museum also sponsored several ice age archaeological projects in the 1930s.

Between 1935 and 1968, archaeologist Marie Wormington ran the Colorado Museum of Natural History's Archaeology Department. She was a pioneer in Paleoindian archaeology in the Southwest. Wormington helped to found the Hall of Man, the first anthropology exhibit in the museum, which opened in 1956 after years of attempts to secure more museum-quality exhibits (Colwell-Chanthaphonh et al.

[73] Folsom points are still used as diagnostic markers of a PaleoIndian group that lived in Central North America from 11,000–10,000 years ago, making this intial discovery significant in understanding population movements in Ancient North America.

2013b:299). The archaeology-themed exhibit was dismantled in 1968, perhaps not coincidentally the year she retired (Colwell-Chanthaphonh et al. 2013b:302).

The most significant development in Denver Museum history with respect to anthropology was the donation of 12,000 Native American artifacts from the Crane family in 1968, which formed the Department of Anthropology core collection. The main goal of the department for the next several years was to create the North American Indian Hall (also known as Crane Hall), which was opened in phases between 1974 and 1978 (Colwell-Chanthaphonh et al. 2013b:307). The display in Crane Hall has evolved slightly as sections are updated, but there has not been an overhaul of the display since its creation. The museum has struggled with issues of representation and repatriation over the last 40 years, but recent initiatives for working more closely with Native communities are bearing fruitful relationships with them.

## Mission

The Denver Museum is best known for its natural history collection and stunning animal dioramas that cover all the continents. The museum's mission is succinct: "Be a catalyst! Ignite our community's passion for nature and science." This tagline announces a strong focus on science education; the vision seeks to create "an empowered community that loves, understands, and protects our natural world."[74] The role of anthropology and human history are not directly articulated in this mission and vision, which was launched in 2005.

The permanent exhibits of the Denver Museum include "Prehistoric Journey" (the history of life on Earth, which ends with the arrival of humans), "Expedition Health" (exploring the human body), "Gems and Minerals," "Space Odyssey," "Wildlife Exhibits" (dioramas), "North American Indian Cultures," "Egyptian Mummies," and a collection of gem carvings of Russian folk life by the artist Vasily Konovalenko. Facilities also include an IMAX theatre and a planetarium. Public adult education programs are plentiful and varied, including evening cocktail lectures and field trips. There are many programs for

[74] http://www.dmns.org/about-us/mission-and-vision/

schools and children of all ages. The new Discovery Zone, a hands-on science education area geared towards children, opened just after my visit.

Although the Department of Anthropology conducts research and displays material in a fashion similar to that of the other museums in this study, culture is not mentioned in the mission or vision statements. While the North American Indigenous cultural material is presented by geographic region in Crane Hall, there are only a few other places where anthropological content is seen, such as in the small Egyptian mummy gallery, the small gallery of Vasily Konovalenko gemstone carvings, a case with a collection of Amazonian Shipibo[75] pottery adjacent to the diorama area, and two panels talking about research in Botswana and South America respectively.

## Fieldwork

For my Denver Museum study, I had space to work in the Department of Anthropology's meeting room, which is attached to the staff kitchenette. This location gave me the opportunity to have several productive yet casual conversations and to be somewhat incorporated into the life of the museum. My initial point of contact was with Curator of Anthropology Chip Colwell[76], who is a colleague of my supervisor and a fellow Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage (IPinCH) associate. Although he was in Denver, Colwell was officially on leave during the time of my research—he introduced me to Steve Nash, head of anthropology, who helped with arrangements at the museum.

*Interviews*

My first interview was with Chip Colwell. Despite his leave, he met me in a local coffee shop for an hour-long interview on the first day of my study. I met with him again for another more informal conversation at the end of my trip.

Laurie Edwards-Ryder, administrative assistant for the department, acted as my liaison with staff and arranged all of my other interviews. She made recommendations

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[75] The Shipibo are an Indigenous people from the Amazon rainforest in Peru, who are well known for their unique geometric designs on pottery and textiles.

[76] Formerly known as Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh.

based on her understanding of the kind of information that I wanted to collect. I spoke to people at the museum who had an overall view of exhibits and collections as well as those who were concerned only with anthropology. Edwards-Ryder contacted and set up interviews with staff members, such as the collections registrar, Heather Thorwald, and the in-house lawyer, Lyndia K. Knowles. These two interviews were useful as both women have been involved in NAGPRA-related work within the museum, which is a key example of collaboration with local Indigenous communities.

I spoke with Jodi Schoemer, who is Director of Exhibits, and Frances Kruger, who is the exhibition content developer and writer. The Exhibits Department works across the museum so anthropology makes up only a small part of what they do. Speaking with these women was valuable for understanding the Exhibits Department's relationship with the rest of the institution. They have the task of interpreting research for the viewing public through their work. Adult and Children's Programs Manager Liz Davis provided me with information on the programming and education philosophy of the institution.

A key member of the Department of Anthropology who I interviewed was Michelle Koons, Curator of Archaeology. While she started her job at the Denver Museum less than a year earlier, she shared some information about her experience creating the current Maya exhibit, and also spoke to me about her community-based archaeological work. Anthropology Collections Manager Melissa Bechhoefer was a good resource as she has worked closely with many community members and cultural organizations on NAGPRA compliance. She also discussed the Denver Museum philosophy about how collections are used and accessed by researchers, Indigenous community members, and others.

My interview with Joyce Herold was most valuable for providing a deeper understanding of the history of the Department of Anthropology as a whole. Herold had a long career at the museum, serving as the Curator of Anthropology for several decades. Now retired, she continues her research as a volunteer. During our interview, she shared some of her personal archives with me. Some of her opinions on recent decisions made by the department differed from those in charge so getting her impressions on the

current and past philosophies that have guided anthropology at the museum was educational.

My interview with Department Chair and Curator of Anthropology Steve Nash was helpful for understanding the current and future priorities of the department. Nash has a critical gaze and is familiar with the institutional history of the Denver Museum. He was supportive of my research and passed on copies of relevant articles and publications.

*Reading Exhibits*

My main focus was what the website and promotional literature calls the "North American Indian Cultures" exhibit. It showcases the North American cultural collections (most of it from the Crane Collection), arranged by geographic region from the Arctic to Mexico, much like Clark Wissler's culture-area concept (see Kroeber 1997). I made detailed study of this gallery and took over 100 photos; my interviews focused on its themes and content.

I was transfixed by a temporary exhibit that the Denver Museum had a hand in creating. Titled "Maya: Hidden Worlds Revealed," this exhibit was such an interesting example of collaboration and community voice that I felt compelled to include it in my critical exhibit reading. I also visited all of the other exhibits at the Denver Museum and documented the instances where the natural history galleries referred to anthropology. I also conducted a brief analysis of the "Egyptian Mummies" exhibit and the small gallery of gem carvings made by Russian artist Vasily Konovalenko (for a description, see Nash 2014). A museum trustee purchased these carvings in the 1980s and space was found to create a permanent display.

*Ephemera and Unpublished Materials*

As mentioned, I collected some useful literature from some of my interviewees. Steve Nash provided me with copies of published articles, and Joyce Herold allowed me to copy documents from her personal files. Some of the most interesting material were minutes from meetings from the late 1970s and early 1980s that showed evidence of cooperation and collaboration between museum officials and Native American groups

occurred much earlier than is typically acknowledged in the academic literature (Mt. Plains Museum Association 1980; Risser 1979).

I spent several hours in the archives, working with Archivist Sam Schiller who helped me locate files and photographs from old exhibits. I was interested in material related to the 1970s exhibit "Moccasins on Pavement," as it had been mentioned in several interviews. I also wanted to see some photographs of older layouts of Crane Hall. I was successful in finding information on these exhibits, but in the end much of it was not relevant to my final analysis.

Before leaving Denver I visited some related institutions. The Denver Art Museum has a significant collection of Native American art, both ethnographic and contemporary. I attended an event that featured a performance by Native Artist-in-Residence Rose B. Simpson. I also went to nearby Boulder, Colorado, to visit Jen Shannon, who gave me a behind-the-scenes tour of the University of Colorado Museum of Natural History, which includes a sizeable ethnographic collection. I also managed a short road trip to visit some small mining museums.

## Summary of Key Observations

At the Denver Museum of Nature and Science I had the opportunity to speak to all of the staff members whose jobs were relevant to my study. Although I relied on Department of Anthropology Administrative Assistant Laurie Edwards-Ryder's interpretation of my research goals as the guide to arrange the interviews, I think this worked out well. The interviews were typically scheduled for 30-minute time slots, and while some of them lasted longer, I feel that this initial time limitation made some of the conversations more succinct, which enabled easier transcription.

## Chapter Summary

In this chapter I addressed the basic parameters for my case studies at the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, the Royal British Columbia Museum, and the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. I have described the basic features of each museum by describing their institutional

history and mission statements. From the mission statements, these institutions reveal considerable variety in displaying Indigenous people and their cultures, yet all hold and display ethnographic material and work with Indigenous people to create exhibits with some of this material to some degree.

This chapter also described the ways in which the methods presented in Chapter 3 were operationalized once I arrived at my case study sites. While I followed similar strategies, each location presented different opportunities for learning. As my research continued, I also refined some of my data collection techniques.

# Chapter 5.

# Results

To address my research goals, I sought to identify patterns of on-the-ground practices of exhibit creation wherein Indigenous people are partners and subjects. By visiting four museums over a period of two years, I gathered valuable information about these practices from curatorial and design staff. This chapter presents what I learned from each of the four case studies in relation to my research questions. I focus here on the institutions individually in order to understand their recent history and current relationships with Indigenous peoples and their broader communities. The information presented in this chapter comes primarily from interviews, and is supplemented with other sources, such as published works and museum literature produced for the public (e.g., exhibit catalogues, museum websites).

For each of the museums, the results are presented under three main topics: 1) the history of anthropology/ethnography exhibits and relationships with Indigenous people; 2) an analysis of the design of the key exhibit; and 3) an examination of the collaborative process. I also provide an in-depth description of the specific exhibit I chose as the focus for my analysis at each location, along with information about other exhibits and projects that were identified as important to understanding current policies and relationships with Indigenous communities. In Chapter 6, I provide a comparative analysis of these results that focuses on common patterns and themes.

## Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum

The Bishop Museum was a good choice for my first case study as the Hawaiian Hall (completed in 2009) as it is an example of successful collaboration with visually striking results. At the time of my visit, the Hawaiian Hall had recently renovated galleries

and upgraded displays to refine the focus on internalist Native Hawaiian perspectives. For the staff that I interviewed, the experience of creating the galleries was fresh in their minds and they easily described the processes of working collaboratively with community members. Driven by the success of this collaboration, the institution also launched a significant international exhibit on images of the god Kū. The museum is working to support a strategic framework and mission/vision that focuses attention on honouring Native Hawaiian protocols, worldviews, interpretations, and involvement in museum work.

## History of Collaboration: Research vs. Public Education

As noted earlier, the Bishop Museum was founded in order to display the Native Hawaiian treasures gifted directly by Native Hawaiian leaders, whereas the leadership of the museum, including those scholars who assigned value, was white and American. The early exhibits at the museum followed the Victorian style that was popular when the museum was founded in 1889 whereby objects were grouped by type and by use. Throughout most of the museum's history, ethnographic objects in the Hawaiian Hall were presented in lit cases and organized by type (e.g., "bowls"), accompanied by factual information in a scientific manner. Ethnographic studies of the Bishop Museum's culture published in the 1990s (i.e., Harrison 1993; Kelly 1993) show that the museum seems to have struggled over the years to achieve a balance between its exhibits and its research activities, the latter often having received priority.

The 1950s heralded a new era that focused on engaging the public through exhibits and public education activities, as he saw public monies as a means to fund research activities (DeSoto Brown, April 15, 2013).[77] Attempts to modernize the Hawaiian Hall and make it more visitor-friendly, including updates to some of the exhibit cases, continued throughout the 1960s. However, the habit of invoking an "academic style" proved hard to break and the language then in vogue was difficult for visitors to understand (Dave Kemble, April 18, 2013). Hawaiian Hall Docent Coordinator Bill

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[77] Here and throughout, interviews conducted for this research will be identified by first and last name followed by date. The word "interview" is omitted for simplicity.

Marsden visited the museum often as a child in the 1970s, but had the impression at the time that its "*haole*" (white person) voice diminished Native Hawaiian perspectives.

By the 1980s and 1990s, the Bishop Museum's changing focus paralleled a "national shift in museum emphasis from scholarship to showmanship" (Kelly 1993:viii). The first international touring exhibit created by the Bishop Museum was "Hawai'i, Royal Isles," which showcased some of the most important and beautiful objects in the history of Hawai'i and its "crown jewels," including *kāhili* (feather standards). Unfortunately, the exhibit received some negative reviews in the media in New York and elsewhere for not being spectacular enough compared to the other "blockbuster" exhibits of the day (DeSoto Brown, April 15, 2013; Dave Kemble, April 18, 2013). "Hawai'i, Royal Isles" was installed on the first floor at the Bishop Museum in 1980, and may have been the first step in bringing a Native Hawaiian point of view to Hawaiian Hall (DeSoto Brown, April 15, 2013; Betty Lou Kam, April 15, 2013).

## Exhibit Design: Hawaiian Hall

The Hawaiian Hall is the flagship exhibition designed to present an internalist perspective on the islands' culture and history (Figure 5.1 shows the Hall from the ground floor of the courtyard). Changing preferences about the role of the museum in the broader community from the 1960s to 1990s led the Bishop Museum leadership to direct more attention to visitor experience. Moreover, concern about external relations accelerated development plans to renovate Hawaiian Hall and present an internalist point of view about Hawaiian culture (Bishop Museum 2009:3). Historian DeSoto Brown (April 15, 2013) characterized the feeling in the museum leading up to the redevelopment in the 2000s: "I think it's valid to say that the whole Hawaiian Hall project followed a period of great discord and great deal of stress and drama about 'What was the Bishop Museum doing?'" Although the necessary upgrades were well-known and were discussed many times over the years, other projects took precedence until the Hall took on the likeness of a "neglected child" (Betty Lou Kam, April 15, 2013), despite the fact that it was really the "heart and soul of the museum" (Bill Marsden, April 11, 2013). Director of Community Affairs Noelle Kahanu (April 15, 2013) notes that, before the

update, the history presented in the Hall was so colonial that the story of Hawaiʻi started with the death of Captain Cook.



**Figure 5.1.    Hawaiian Hall, Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum.**
Photo by S. Carr-Locke.

*Methods: Community at the Table*

The staff I interviewed at the Bishop Museum pointed out two initiatives that influenced the methods and results of the Hawaiian Hall project: a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant in the 1980s and a New Trade Winds grant (from the Institute of Museum and Library Services) in 2000 (Dave Kemble, April 18, 2013). Under the NEH grant, Director of Cultural Collections Betty Lou Kam brought together about a dozen Native Hawaiians to brainstorm the new "look" for Hawaiian Hall. The collaborative process took six months and resulted in a document that spelled out some

potential storylines and identified appropriate artifacts.[78] Despite this planning, the project did not go ahead. Senior Exhibit Designer Dave Kemble reported that due to the lack of funding for an overall plan, from 1984 to 2004, the museum was only able to make small changes to Hawaiian Hall to update individual cases. The staff were slightly frustrated that a major renovation was delayed, but Kemble, DeSoto Brown, Betty Lou Kam, and Noelle Kahanu all agree that there was a silver lining to the renovation project being initiated in the 2000s instead. Kemble (April 18, 2013) explained that institutional changes that occurred between the 1980s and 2000s (such as additional support for Native Hawaiian involvement) "made it a much more successful project than it would have been" if the project had proceeded following the New Trade Winds grant. Technical innovations such as the ability to stream video content easily in the galleries also allowed for more of the voices and faces of community members to be presented.

Finally, in 2006, after the Hawaiian Hall building had begun to leak due to structural failure, the Bishop Museum decided to initiate a large-scale project (Betty Lou Kam, April 15, 2013). Applebaum Architects were hired as the project lead for the restoration and renovation. They began by identifying stakeholders both within and outside of the museum, and then commenced a series of consultations and interviews. From the outset they were eager to engage people who had not been coming to the museum in order to learn what they thought the museum should be (Betty Lou Kam, April 15, 2013). The museum formed a "content team" consisting of Director of Strategic Initiatives Betty Tatar (who led the project), Dave Kemble, Noelle Kahanu, Betty Lou Kam, and DeSoto Brown. The content team also established links to Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners, academics, and other community members from the beginning of the project, and key decisions were brought back to the community for input.

Dave Kemble (April 18, 2013) noted that such inclusion enhanced the qualities Hawaiian Hall expresses, which was made easier due to institutional changes that encouraged Native Hawaiians to join the staff. Today, many occupy positions across the museum and approximately half of members of the board of directors are Native

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[78] Betty Lou Kam noted that her consultation was naïve, as in retrospect she does not think it was a good idea to bring people together to plan when there was no funding to be able to execute the ideas.

Hawaiian. In this way the museum is accountable to the community. Betty Lou Kam (April 15, 2013) described the exhibition creation process as follows:

> [the content team]… met for months and went through every case one at a time and then went back and changed cases [based on community consultations]. It was hard work… the thing you have to do is that you engage [the community] at the beginning with the ideas and the themes that are important but you can't get their criticism until you have something to show them. We brought in cultural practitioners… and went over plans for particular cases… we couldn't have given them a case and said 'design it'.

Several of my interviewees credited Noelle Kahanu as a key link between the museum and Native Hawaiian community; for example:

> The community absolutely trusts Noelle… she understands the museum's needs and the needs of the community. Because she has such trust in the community, if she goes out and asks them to be involved in a Bishop Museum project, they will almost always sign on. Because they've had a history with the museum in the past. A lot of managers… we know Noelle is very helpful (Mike Shannahan, April 18, 2013).

Kahanu was also an advocate for ensuring that modern Native Hawaiian objects were included to illustrate continuity in their art and creative expressions.

*Results: Presenting Hawaiian Worldview*

The physical structure of Hawaiian Hall retains the original Victorian architectural design, with three floors opening to a central courtyard. The ironwork embellishments (Figure 5.2) and wooden columns and banisters tinge it with nostalgia. The most impressive aspect of the renovation was that the end result is a hybrid space that show its English roots beneath the feel, look, and sounds of Hawaii. By chance, the Victorian style and structure of the building ended up working very well for the message, so much so that more than one interviewee alluded to its synchronicity. As Dave Kemble (April 18, 2013) opined: "I would never say, 'Let's put it in a Victorian-style, three-tiered space'. Yet it's the authenticity of the space that makes it work for me… there is a lot of subtlety in the architecture, the detailing of the ironwork, etc." The three floors of the exhibit hall were transformed so as to each represent one of the three realms of Hawaiian spirituality: *Kai Akea* (everyday gods, legends, beliefs, and folk history); *Wao Kanaka* (where people live and work, focus on land and daily life); and *Wao Lani* (inhabited by

gods and royalty—where political history is told). Subsistence activities on the third floor are presented through associations with phases of the moon (Figure 5.3)—an idea that came to Noelle Kahanu when the team realized that there were 28 reader rails (i.e., waist-level museum labels that typically include text and photos).



**Figure 5.2.     Ironwork in Hawaiian Hall, Bishop Museum.**
Photo by S. Carr-Locke.

**Figure 5.3.     View of Hawaiian Hall from Second Floor, Bishop Museum.**
 Photo by S. Carr-Locke.

The exhibit cases house heritage objects that are mounted and arranged artistically, with small labels with object numbers and names. These include explanatory text that incorporates archival quotes from ethnographic studies, quotes from contemporary interviews, as well as words from Hawaiian chants on the case vitrines. This creates a layered experience whereby visitors encounter Polynesian aesthetics in the objects on display, then the scientific value of the objects, and finally the intangible heritage that emerges from Hawaiian spiritual thought. Contemporary Native Hawaiian art occupies its share of space in the Hall to illustrate aspects of myth that capture the island ambiance. Videos with images of the Hawaiian landscape, including bird and wave sound recordings, complete the design, and an interactive video screen plays a *hula* (Hawaiian dance) demonstration. In this way, the voices of Native Hawaiian people and images of the land are present in the Hall through video and sound recordings. The names of the curators, designers, and community consultants are listed on a plaque.

With its dark wood, atmospheric sounds, and chants written on the glass vitrines, Hawaiian Hall feels like sacred space or, as Dave Kemble (April 18, 2013) described it, "a jewel box." Kemble explained that there are layers of engagement and a great deal of hidden meaning embedded in the design and messaging. Noelle Kahanu (April 15, 2013) also mentioned the importance of scaling information for audiences that spend varying amounts of time in front of each display. According to Kemble (April 18, 2013), this layering mimics the cadence of poetry in Native Hawaiian culture. He pointed out a similar facet of the background photos for the cases. Each was carefully chosen to animate the Hawaiian concept that every picture has a deeper meaning. DeSoto Brown (April 15, 2013) explained that the planning for the Hall followed the *kino lao* philosophy, which means that each of the gods can be manifested in different forms. So "representations" of these gods are treated as living beings by the staff and this bond inspired the wording of the labels. In order to contextualize a sperm whale skeleton that was installed in the early 1900s and that could not be removed in the renovation, the curators "added the other *kinow* (gods)" by putting models of fish and manta rays beside the whale (visible in Figure 5.3, although the whale is out of the frame at the top left), so "he [wasn't] by himself anymore" (Dave Kemble, April 18, 2013). The whale was thus transformed from a natural history specimen into a sacred being.

In addition to messages about spirituality, everyday life, and the use of objects, there is also a strong message about Native Hawaiian sovereignty that emerges in "Wao Lani" (the heavenly realm) on the third floor. The Wao Lani exhibits present the story of Hawaiian annexation by the United States and the ongoing struggle for Native Hawaiian political sovereignty. DeSoto Brown (April 15, 2013) noted that the timing of the renovation resulted in a strong message about Hawaiian self-perception and politics that was absent ten years earlier. Interestingly, the display does not connect Native Hawaiian struggles to the international Indigenous rights movements.

## Current Ways of Working

Renovating Hawaiian Hall set the tone for a renewed focus within the institution on presenting an internalist perspective on culture and nature. In 2010, the Bishop Museum undertook a project that involved collaboration with the Native Hawaiian community. The resulting exhibition "E Kū Ana Ka Paia: Unification, Responsibility and

the Kū Images" (known to staff as the "Kū exhibit"), was installed in the Hawaiian Hall and consisted of three 3-m-high wooden representations or "images" of the god Kū. The Bishop Museum worked closely with the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, and the British Museum in London, England, where there lay two Kū *ki'i* (figures), to bring them together on Hawaiian soil for the first time in over 160 years (the Bishop Museum's Kū image is visible in Figure 5.1 on the left and Figure 5.2). These three figures are the last great Kū images that survived the abolishment of the ancient Hawaiian *kapu* (religious) system by Hawaiian leaders in 1819 and the subsequent Christianization of the islands. They retain their spiritual vitality for some Native Hawaiians today.

Several interviewees mentioned the Kū exhibit as a milestone in the museum's efforts to work with descendant communities to create an exhibit of contemporary cultural importance. Noelle Kahanu (April 15, 2013) referred to "turning the corner" with the dozen Native Hawaiian cultural experts who ensured that proper protocol reigned during the transfer and exhibition of the figures. The exhibit opened on the 200th anniversary of Hawaiian unification, with a ceremony and celebration. Thousands of people visited on the first weekend and left with the impression of a spiritually powerful show. Many members of the community deposited *lei* (flower garlands) and other offerings. Both the planning and programming for this exhibit enabled staff, visitors, the public, and traditional Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners to have conversations about cultural identity, responsibility for preservation, and the role of museums. President and CEO Blair Collis (April 10, 2013) noted that, "We weren't able to resolve [our philosophical debate about our identity] until after Kū was here. [We realized] that we are an educational institution. It is not enough simply to collect things and study them… we need to share them."

In 2011, the museum launched a new strategic plan and vision that utilizes the philosophy employed by the Cultural Resources Division (which had led the Hawaiian Hall renovation) to bring the rest of the institution in line with the principle of inclusion of Native Hawaiian voices and to ensure community participation in the museum.[79] Blair Collis (April 10, 2013) felt that the museum "needed a real vision for where we were

[79] See http://www.bishopmuseum.org/images/pdf/stratplan.pdf

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going." In order to realize that new vision, he consulted with the same groups that helped with Hawaiian Hall "to help develop an interpretive master plan for the entire campus." He emphasized the importance of interpreting the plan to make it a reality, which is why the mission is translated into key themes or topic areas. Collis asked, "What do we need physically to facilitate interpretive success?"

The new mission of the Bishop Museum is to "be a gathering place and educational center that actively engages people in the presentation, exploration and preservation of Hawaiʻi's cultural heritage and natural history, as well as its ancestral cultures throughout the Pacific."[80] The successful partnerships that created the Hawaiian Hall exhibit are a fascinating example of the intersection of collaborative methods and results. Several staff members identified the positive changes that the strategic plan has brought to the museum. Cultural Educator Lokomikaʻi Lipscomb (April 17, 2013) said that the description of the museum as a "gathering place" is meaningful for her and shows a "really different mindset than more traditional museums." Cultural Educator Marcus Quiniones (April 17, 2013) stated that there were great advantages to "aligning the staff on the same mission and purpose." He described the improvements as follows: "I saw a huge change in the four years that I have been associated with the museum. That's so key, that it comes from the top down. It feels a lot different from when I started because of that." Lipscomb (April 17, 2013) remarked that the strategic plan is based on relationships, which help the staff and community come together to strengthen the museum. Cultural Specialist Marques Marzan (April 17, 2013) summed up her impression with her observation: "There was nothing pulling us together, [that is a] good thing about the new mission statement."

At the time of my visit in April 2013, Dave Kemble took me to see Pacific Hall, which was under construction.[81] Its development bears the same signs of the guiding principles that informed Hawaiian Hall, but the consultation worked differently as few staff there had cultural connections to other Pacific cultures (Noelle Kahanu, April 15, 2013). The same curatorial team assembled again, but this time the consultative process was hampered owing partially to the diversity of cultures and their geographic distance

[80] http://www.bishopmuseum.org/images/pdf/stratplan.pdf
[81] The Pacific Hall opened on September 21, 2013.

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to Hawai'i (Noelle Kahanu, April 15, 2013). Unlike the Hawaiian Hall, there is an archaeology display in Pacific Hall. Betty Lou Kam (April 15, 2013) noted that Pacific Hall is a work in progress that aspires to compose an internalist portrayal of Polynesia.

Blair Collis (April 10, 2013) noted that the entire Bishop Museum campus would benefit from more cultural connections, like those presented in Hawaiian Hall. He believes there is a need to redesign and upgrade many of the structures and spaces to bring them in line with the new mission and vision. Part of this work means finding a balance that acknowledges both Western scholarship and Native Hawaiian ways of knowing. Collis' philosophy is to make an "old-style natural history museum that has a heavy cultural component into something truly vibrant and not reactive, but proactive and interactive." He envisions a new Bishop Museum that focuses on cooperating with the Native Hawaiian community and learning from their dialogue with its collections.

## Summary

The city of Honolulu is the most popular tourist destination of all the locations I studied. The Bishop Museum thus presents a unique opportunity for tourists to Hawaii to learn about the island culture and natural history. Any visitor to the islands can attest to the bombardment of tourist kitsch that drowns out "authentic" Native Hawaiian voices. As Director of Cultural Collections Betty Lou Kam (April 15, 2013) observed, "The museum needs to be not a museum *for* Hawaiians but a museum *of* Hawaiians. Not a museum where the community and institution hold hands, but… the community has to be part of the museum and the museum has to be part of the community."

At the Bishop Museum, ideas for Hawaiian Hall were developed through projects that brought the Native Hawaiian community members to the museum to work on planning. Once the project began, they provided their expertise to guide the designers. The wider community participated in focus groups, while the Native Hawaiian staff liaised with their kinfolk. The final exhibit includes information about the islands' culture and political struggles from an internalist point of view. The collaborative methods used in the project set a high standard for future exhibits, which generated an institutional strategy for Native Hawaiian engagement. The staff I met with were proud of both what they accomplished in renovating Hawaiian Hall as well as the way the strategic plan was

developed. Many staff expressed passion for their work and told me of their personal connection and stake in their role at the museum—this was particularly true of Native Hawaiian staff. Assistant Collections Manager Kamalu du Preez (April 12, 2013), for example, sees her role in cultural collections as that of an ambassador between the museum and her community: "It's not just a job. It's more than that."

# Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre

The Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre is both the newest and the smallest of the museums in my case study, opening to the public in 1979. It does not have the same number or size of exhibitions as the other institutions in the study. It is in the Northwest Territories in what many Canadians would consider a remote location. The Northern Heritage Centre makes for an interesting case study due to its significant distance from other large city centres, and the fact that Aboriginal people form a much larger percentage of the population than other Canadian cities.[82] As a territorial government institution, its current focus is less on pure research and more on serving the public needs. Since its early days, museum staff made the decision to collaborate and consult with Aboriginal peoples and communities in the development of programs and services, since they are recognized stakeholders and the viewing public. It has been branded as "more than a museum" since its founding in 1979 when it began supporting art funding, place names research, and other activities that are not typical of such institutions.

## History of Collaboration: The Standard Way of Working

The Northern Heritage Centre's 40-year history covers a significant era in the political evolution of the Northwest Territories and my interview with founding Director Robert R. Janes revisits those days. Janes described the first decades of the museum, a time when the Northwest Territories included what is now Nunavut. The commissioner of

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[82] "Aboriginal" is the preferred term to refer to the Indigenous people of the Northwest Territories, which includes Dene, Inuvialuit, and Métis peoples.

the Northwest Territories had the idea for the museum as he and others were concerned about the amount of cultural material that was being taken out of the North to go to the national museums in Ottawa.[83] There was a need for a professional facility to care for and display Northern heritage in the North.

Despite his lack of museum experience, Janes had conducted anthropological research in the North so he was the ideal first employee. The multidisciplinary research focus of the museum came from his dissertation methodology, which combined ethnohistory, ethnography, and archaeology and involved working closely with community members (Janes 1975). He reasoned that the centre should include a library and archives, and should provide a museum advisory to other institutions in the territory. The focus of the museum was to cover the cultural and natural history of the Northwest Territories, both arctic and subarctic regions—this remains the broad focus to this day.

Janes described the initial exhibits as being "advanced for their time," with the natural environment built right in with the cultural history, covering prehistory, Indigenous history, the fur trade era, and industrial development (April 12, 2013). There were originally three exhibit galleries: the orientation gallery (introducing the Northwest Territories); a gallery that presented Dene and Inuit history; and a gallery that traced the fur trade/"settler" history and the founding of the territory. These galleries were joined by an art gallery along the second floor mezzanine and temporary exhibits in several smaller areas leading up to the larger gallery spaces. Janes (2013) wanted to illustrate two main concepts: the "relationship of man to the natural environment" and "continuity and change in the Northwest Territories." In a newspaper article written before the official opening, Janes was quoted as saying that the museum is not taking an "object for object" approach, but is attempting to take an "educational-teaching approach… to tell a story, and reveal information that could be useful to the visitor" (Verge 1978).

Collaborative methods were part of the workaday environment at the Northern Heritage Centre from the beginning. When Janes arrived on the job in 1976, a full two-

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[83] As mentioned in Chapter 2, there was great popular interest in Inuit art in the 1960s and 1970s.

thirds of the population was Native-born, most were Métis, Inuvialuit,[84] or Dene. The
Aboriginal population held the power and authority in the government. Janes (July 12,
2013) told me he "reported to as many Native people as Euro-Canadians" during his 14-
year tenure. The Berger Inquiry[85] had just been completed in 1976, and Janes noted that
the decision "really empowered Indigenous people" in the North. Such organizations as
the Indian Brotherhood (later renamed the Dene Nation) "insisted that they talk to us [at
the museum], we couldn't do [our work] if we didn't talk to them" (Robert R. Janes, July
12, 2013). He went on to explain: "There was a whole combination of things that made
consultation a requirement. It wasn't necessarily easy—there were hard feelings too. We
had our exhibit script read by these two umbrella organizations—the Dene Nation (that
was still the Indian Brotherhood at that point) and the Inuit Tapirisat." Janes noted that in
his later work at the Glenbow Museum he brought Elders in as co-authors from the initial
planning stages, but this was not done for the initial Northern Heritage Centre exhibits.

In a newspaper article from 1989, Director Chris Stephens stated that the role of
the museum was "to advance the process of native peoples presenting themselves to
the world" and that he took direction from the "priorities expressed by the Indigenous
population of the NWT" by "providing a link between the past and the future" (Pelly
1989a:1). The same publication also includes an article about "Trapline, Lifeline," a key
exhibition project at the Northern Heritage Centre that was identified in my interviews as
being created in partnership with Aboriginal people. The exhibit, created in the late
1980s, showed the importance of northern trapline economies and subsistence lifestyles
in response to the Greenpeace anti-sealing and fur protests at the time (Susan Irving,
July 16, 2013). Curatorial Assistant Susan Irving spoke to me of her travel to Northwest
Territories communities and her intensive research collecting information on trapping
from community members. It was the first Northern Heritage Centre exhibit from the

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[84] Inuvialuit are Inuit people of the Western Arctic. Before the creation of Nunavut in 1999, the
Inuit of the Eastern Arctic were represented in the museum, but their numbers in the
population of Yellowknife were lower.

[85] In 1974, British Columbia Supreme Court Justice Thomas Berger was hired to travel along the
Mackenzie Valley in the Northwest Territories to consult with Dene and Inuvialuit
communities to record the possible impacts of a pipeline project. The results of this
consultation ultimately stopped the project. The consultation is significant as one of the first
examples of in-depth community consultations, where testimonies and interviews of
Aboriginal peoples halted a potentially harmful development project.

North to tour nationally, travelling to 18 venues across Canada between 1989 and 1993. The exhibit sent a "strong message" that "trapping is more than a job—it's an integral part of a culture" (Pelly 1989b:1). At the stop in Winnipeg, this controversial topic inspired some protestors to throw red paint on the exhibit (Barbara Winter, personal communication, December 29, 2014).

The galleries' content changed little over the years so there were few opportunities to create collaborative exhibits. There were, however, dozens of archaeological, ethnographic, and other types of cultural projects undertaken in partnership with Aboriginal people and their governments and cultural organizations, where ancillary products were created that could be displayed at the museum.[86] For example, in 2002 the museum partnered with the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute to send a group of Gwich'in seamstresses to the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau, Quebec, to create replicas of a 100-year-old men's caribou clothing outfit. Replica outfits were made for each Gwich'in community and one was displayed at the Northern Heritage Centre (see Kritsch and Wright-Fraser 2002). In another example, the Northwest Territories Cultural Places Program of the Northern Heritage Centre partnered with the Tłı̨chǫ community (at their request) to create an interactive website to record and present the history and significance of a traditional trail between Great Slave and Great Bear Lake (http://www.lessonsfromtheland.ca/). These projects helped foster relationships between museum staff and Aboriginal people in the territory.

Myrna Pokiak is Inuvialuit and is also trained as an anthropologist; her family participates in the beluga harvest every year. She spoke to me in detail (July 17, 2013) about the "*Qilalukkat!* Belugas!" show, which was installed in 2006. She told me that the museum wanted to do an exhibit on Inuvialuit culture and she joined their team, as a cultural consultant, to curate the display on the Inuvialuit beluga harvest. The project took about a year. She went on the hunt, took numerous photographs, and interviewed many people about the harvest. Pokiak told me that she wanted to show that whale hunting is part of contemporary Inuvialuit life rather than something that happened in the

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[86] Curator of Collections Joanne Bird noted that although the Aboriginal communities are interested in these "reproduction projects," she was not sure how to treat the reproductions from a collections management standpoint.

past. The Inuvialuit Hunters and Trappers Committee in Tuktoyaktuk approved all photos and other exhibit elements. Pokiak expressed disappointment that the exhibit was only up for a year, particularly as there was a great deal of positive feedback from the community about it. She noted that the Elders in particular liked the realistic reproduction of *muktuk* (beluga blubber).

## Exhibit Design: North and South Gallery Dioramas

By 2005, the museum had been open for 25 years and the Director Charles Arnold reasoned that its exhibits needed to be refreshed. So began an ambitious renovation plan to upgrade the facility and the administrative area that supports the infrastructure. During my visit I received a copy of a planning document that outlines the initial plan for the redevelopment strategy entitled "Northern Voices." The name refers to the theme that "recognizes [that] museum objects provide unique opportunities for communicating information about the cultures and heritage of the Northwest Territories, and that stories and narratives are an engaging way of interpreting those objects" (Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre 2005). The planning document indicated the need to refresh the galleries, to improve accuracy by ensuring that post-Nunavut landscapes are properly represented, and to "bring more Aboriginal history, experiences and voices to the exhibits." The objectives of the project as listed in 2005 were to:

- Present both the cultural and natural heritage of the North and its people to visitors from a variety of backgrounds;
- Involve Northerners in the telling of their own stories; and
- Make Northern stories as moving, relevant and personal as possible, while still being grounded in museum objects that will be the focal point of the exhibits (Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre 2005).

A project summary produced in 2010 described the diorama projects in more depth, and calls the project "Voices of the Land Exhibits," a slight shift from "Northern Voices" (Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre 2010). This shift reflects the emphasis on natural heritage, as the backdrop and focal points of the galleries were now to be animal diorama scenes. All cultural information about the animals appeared on the reader rails in front of the displays. Cases at the side of each diorama were to feature

objects related to the harvest and use of the animal. The goals of the exhibit in 2010 were to:

- Convey cultural and natural history in an exciting, meaningful and educational manner, to create interest and understanding of the environmental and cultural diversity of the NWT;
- Involve Northerners in the telling of their own stories and to promote official languages of the NWT;
- Foster a sense of connection between visitors and life in the NWT (historical, contemporary and future); and
- Display museum objects and archival and materials from the collections of the Northern Heritage Centre (Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre 2010).

*Methods*

Director Charles Arnold initiated the gallery renewal and contracted a Vancouver company, D. Jensen and Associates[87] (hereafter D. Jensen), to come up with a gallery plan. Exhibit Designer Terry Pamplin[88] liaised directly with D. Jensen to plan the galleries. When Arnold retired in the summer of 2009, Barb Cameron took over as museum director and project lead. She explained (July 9, 2013) that the approach to collaborate with communities evolved over the design phase. D. Jensen had planned for large-scale photos to be installed as backdrops. Cameron asked a group of 20 Elders where these photos should be taken as she wanted the locations to be places of importance to the communities. Historian and consultant Wendy Stephenson joined the team on contract to perform the community consultation for the reader rails. She formed a working group (that included Cameron) tasked with adding content that explained the dioramas. Joanne Bird (July 11, 2013) explained that the narrative of the exhibit was done first, and then Stephenson was then asked which objects were in the collection that filled the needs of the story.

Barb Cameron (July 9, 2013) described a "bit of going back and forth with community to adjust the content of the dioramas, and to share stories of other family perspectives." Several of the interviewees noted that when Barb was hired as director in

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[87] See http://www.djensen.com/

[88] Pamplin was on leave during my visit in July 2013, and therefore was not interviewed as part of my research.

2009, she attempted to bring more cultural information and collaborative practice into creating the dioramas (Mike Mitchell, July 17, 2013; Rae Braden, July 16, 2013). As Van Vliet (July 16, 2013) explained:

> When Barb came on, there was a feeling that the exhibits were too natural history–oriented and not cultural enough, so we made some adjustments along the way and we spent the last two years making those adjustments to try to get more cultural content into the exhibits and the reader rails and the cases.

Susan Irving (July 16, 2013) noted that the consultation process was not straightforward:

> … there have been community consultations, there have been consultations with individuals and band councils. The individual have been the most constructive. It's been a hodgepodge in terms of what the director wanted and what had been set in motion by the exhibits planner.

*Results: Animals with Culture*

The ten dioramas are spread over two galleries, called the "North Gallery" and the "South Gallery" by the staff (although they are not officially named with museum signage). The North Gallery dioramas include:

- Muskrats and a red fox near Aklavik in the Mackenzie Delta, in early spring (Figure 5.3);
- Barren-ground caribou female and calf at their northern calving grounds, in late spring;
- Beluga whale female and calf in the Beaufort Sea, in early summer[89];
- Muskox male on the tundra on Banks Island during the autumn breeding season (Figure 5.4); and
- Polar bear and Arctic fox on Beaufort Delta winter sea ice.

The South Gallery dioramas include:
- Waterfowl of the Slave River Delta, near Fort Resolution during spring migration;
- Bald eagle near Reliance in the East Arm of Great Slave Lake, Thaidene Nene, in summer;
- Male moose of the Mackenzie River wetlands near Willow Lake River, in autumn;

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[89] Some of the elements from the 2006 "*Qilalukkat*! Belugas!" exhibit created by Myrna Pokiak appear in the reader rails for the beluga diorama.

- Whitefish and other fish species of Great Bear Lake, at Deerpass Bay in early spring; and

- Mountain caribou and Arctic ground squirrels in the Mackenzie Mountains, in autumn (wording from PWNHC website).



**Figure 5.3.    Muskrat diorama, Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre.**
Photo by S. Carr-Locke.

**Figure 5.4.    Muskox diorama, Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre.**
Photo by S. Carr-Locke.

My impression was that the exhibit orbited the animal dioramas, which were the predominant focus. Cultural information about each animal filled the signage and employed a first-person perspective, with direct quotations and explanations regarding how each animal was harvested and used.[90] Audio-visual elements provided additional information and provide some scientific information such as beluga migration patterns. The tone and objects presented in the cases emphasize the contemporary use of the animals, and show a continuity of cultural practice. Despite the original plans for the renewal of the galleries (Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre 2010), the final product prioritized its focus on the natural, rather than cultural, history of each region.

[90] Robert R. Janes (personal communication, June 16, 2015) noted that all of the original exhibitions at the Northern Heritage Centre were written in the first person.

My interview with Territorial Archaeologist Tom Andrews (July 15, 2013) was conducted at the end of my research visit, after I had time to form my own impressions and speak to others about the gallery renewal project. Andrews was critical about the prominence of the dioramas and their content; he felt them to be a detriment to other exhibits in the museum. He noted that the museum has "gone from being a place of culture to a place of natural history… little bits of cultural knowledge related to plastic whales, instead of reversing that and putting culture on the walls and putting whales on the reader rails." He felt that the dioramas do not fit with his interpretation of the mission and vision of the Northern Heritage Centre today, and nor did they acknowledge his work and relationships with communities. He explained that he has heard from Dene Elders that "stuffed animals" are disrespectful to animals and nature, and that the museum might have potentially injured its relationship with some of its Aboriginal partners.

Tom Andrews (July 15, 2013) further noted that, although the exhibit designers did a beautiful job, the Northern Heritage Centre lacked direction and an understanding about the obligations owed to community members that he and others have fostered. Exhibit Designer Rae Braden (July 16, 2013) stated that, "People love the stuffed animals, they are a big draw." While this may indeed be true, it does not embody the spirit and intent to focus on Aboriginal and Northwest Territories culture and heritage. French Language Heritage Education Officer Mike Mitchell (July 17, 2013) said he was personally disappointed by the lack of spiritual information included about the animals. He described his impressions of the project in this way:

> I feel like the focus is on killing and [animal] products because it's easy to represent. I read some of Tom's papers about Tłı̨chǫ worldview and the importance of animal stories and that's something that could [have] come out. I'm not sure worldview is reflected in the exhibits. (Mike Mitchell, July 17, 2013)

## Current Ways of Working: Times of Change

When I conducted my research in 2013, the staff still struggled to understand the vision for exhibits. Many complained about a lack of leadership and clear direction in terms of priorities for visitor services. There was no curator of exhibits on staff, and Tom Andrews was the only staff member who conducted research projects, although his

projects did not focus on creating an exhibit as a final product. In order to provide cultural and other content for all of the Northern Heritage Centre exhibits, private consultants were routinely hired to perform historical and anthropological research and to consult with communities; no staff were "doing research and story collection" (Joanne Bird, July 11, 2013). Dot Van Vliet (July 16, 2013) noted the need for "someone who knows our collections and what research is happening here and to pull that all together" to create exhibits and programs for the public. Van Vliet expressed that the collections do not seem to drive current exhibits and that the relationship between the curator of collections and the Exhibits Department was unclear.

The new diorama exhibits were designed to be changed more easily than the previous exhibits, with reader rails and technological elements quite easy to swap out. Dot Van Vliet (July 16, 2013) noted the change in institutional philosophy that saw exhibits as being more flexible with the expectation of them changing more often. She noted, however, that "staffing didn't change to accommodate the new philosophy… we don't actually have the staff or the structure to make decisions on how these exhibits are going to be selected." Rae Braden (July 16, 2013) stated that the logistics of changing exhibits more often also makes collaboration with Aboriginal community members more difficult, since it takes more time and more staff.

Both members of the exhibits team, Rae Braden (July 16, 2013) and Dot Van Vliet (July 16, 2013), mentioned a lack of guiding mission and vision for exhibits. Braden said, "The mission and purpose [are] big question marks at this point." Van Vliet noted the lack of a "unified plan" in the museum that would guide exhibit development and ensure that the galleries covered the priority subjects for the museum. The lack of mission and a clear articulation of priorities has also resulted in the unclear role of collaboration with Indigenous communities going forward. While everyone I interviewed agreed in principle that Aboriginal communities were the primary stakeholders and should be involved in museum exhibit creation, there was no clear plan as to how this should be achieved. As Joanne Bird (July 11, 2013) explained:

> I guess something that I think is different in the NWT as compared to elsewhere is that everything is community-oriented. We are always doing everything for the communities. So many of the communities are technically Aboriginal communities. It's sort of taken for granted that you are doing [museum work] for Aboriginal people.

Mike Mitchell (July 17, 2013) expressed the desire to see more Dene language within the galleries. Myrna Pokiak (July 17, 2013) said that although some community voices are represented in the museum, there is not enough representation of the whole diversity of the Northwest Territories. She stated that there should be an exhibit from each cultural area.

The museum's website contains an impressive archive of collaborative projects and showcases many community-based exhibits that are no longer on display in the museum (see www.pwnhc.ca). The staff I spoke to related that the website is a good tool for outreach. Tom Andrews (July 15, 2013) noted that it was a good platform to "create a virtual experience for youth. Maybe it will tease the mind of some young person to go and speak to his grandparents. That was the goal [of creating digital content]." Susan Irving (July 16, 2013) also pointed to the online exhibits as a positive thing that the museum does in terms of making its work more accessible. Several of the interviewees spoke of the advantage of providing collections information online as a way to be more transparent to communities.

## Summary

As a relatively new, Northern institution, the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre understands the importance and value of prioritizing Aboriginal involvement in its activities. There have been many innovative projects conducted with Aboriginal partners, but the creation of fully collaborative exhibits has not always been prioritized. The creation of the new dioramas has taken significant staff time and institutional resources, but does not seem to have been received well by everyone. The methods used to create the diorama project were not consistent from the beginning, which also made the project more complex and lengthy.

As an institution that is funded directly through the territorial government budget, the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre is free of the requirement to bring visitors in with the goal of getting their dollars in order to operate. Perhaps because of this lack of need to appeal to visitors for money, the exhibits program at the museum has never been the top priority of the institution. Although the museum's mission and vision are vague, the staff seem to agree that what is done there must be for the benefit of

communities and should be of value the people of the Northwest Territories. The staff expressed frustration with some other aspects of the museum. The first and most obvious was the lack of mission that would provide focus and a justification for how resources are distributed throughout the institution. The second was the lack of in-house researchers that would provide content for the exhibits and additional uses for the collection. One staff member also complained that the museum "seems tentative" and lacks "humour and exuberance."

As a museum that is operated as part of the Government of the Northwest Territories, the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre has always conducted work with a sensibility for Aboriginal community involvement. Compared to the other regions covered in my study, the Northwest Territories features a greater number of Aboriginal people per capita, and a higher degree of Aboriginal involvement in territorial politics. However, the museum has not developed clear or standard practices that guide exhibit projects according to interviewees, and thus has suffered from a lack of leadership regarding the vision for the exhibits program as a whole.

# Royal British Columbia Museum

As British Columbia's provincial museum, the Royal British Columbia Museum (hereafter Royal BC Museum) has the duty to represent the 198 First Nations resident in the province. The challenges that multiculturalism implants in this museum make for an interesting case study in collaboration. This large institution is well known for its collections and exhibits of coastal First Nations art, including totem poles and architectural features. The Royal BC Museum's immersive exhibit style strives to create a memorable experience for visitors, but many of the permanent exhibits are now at the end of their 30-year shelf life. The newer exhibits at the Royal BC Museum are innovative and ambitious, with most of the design and construction done in-house.

## History of Collaboration

The Royal BC Museum was officially founded in 1886, and its history is entwined with that of the province of British Columbia, including its relationship with First Nations.

For the purposes of this chapter, I focus on the post-1966 history of the museum following the move to its current location. The First Peoples Galleries were opened in 1977, during a period when the provincial government officially suppressed the rights of Aboriginal people. Moreover, the museum's maturation parallels closely changes in the provincial statutes regulating historic places and archaeology. Archaeologist Grant Keddie (May 29, 2014), whose career at the museum spans 30 years, noticed a "general pattern" of interacting with the many different First Nations during his tenure.

The Royal BC Museum is a large institution that houses significant natural and human history collections. First Peoples Galleries, Thunderbird Park (composed of buildings and totem poles on the front lawn of the museum), and the archaeology exhibit contain First Nations history and culture. The Modern History Galleries tell the history of British Columbia, focusing on the Euro-Canadian and—to a lesser extent—the Chinese immigrant experience; they do not include First Nations in this history.[91]

It was not until 1966 that First Nations became engaged in planning discussions for ethnology and archaeology exhibits and were asked directly how they wanted to be involved (Grant Keddie, May 29, 2014). Both Keddie and Curator of Ethnology Martha Black (May 29, 2014) noted that community engagement with the museum most often flowed through family groups, often via individuals who worked directly with the museum. For example, Kwakwaka'wakw artist and community leader Mungo Martin, along with various members of the Hunt family, had close links with the museum. In recent years, politics related to the treaty process has been a significant influence on the museum's dialogue with First Nations because the land claims negotiation process between First Nations and the province (such as the Nisga'a) contain provisions for the return of cultural material held by the Royal BC Museum (Tim Willis, April 29, 2013; Martha Black, May 29, 2014).

Grant Keddie (May 29, 2014) described the collaborative method he used while planning to replace the original archaeological exhibit, "The 12,000 Year Gap," in the late 1980s to early 1990s. The exhibit was slated for relocation due to renovation of the

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[91] However, curator of History Lorne Hammond (May 28, 2014) mentioned that he put Native designer Dorothy Grant's clothing into a case under "history of clothing" as a conscious choice.

escalators. With the help of an unnamed First Nations educator, Keddie assembled a curatorial group. He began by asking the group to use their cultural knowledge to articulate the messages they wished to impart and then they worked together to create a shortlist from these initial ideas. They also discussed ways to layer information so as to present multiple stories and themes. In the end, however, the plan did not go ahead due to other institutional projects taking priority.

Those early consultations were not, however, lost to posterity. When the museum later asked Grant Keddie (May 29, 2014) to put an archaeological exhibit together 20 years later, time constraints on his schedule meant bypassing community dialogue. His "temporary" exhibit was supposed to stay up for under three months yet it was still on display 12 years later. In 2012, Keddie created a new archaeology exhibit and included more elements from the curatorial community consultation 20 years earlier. He noted that, for the archaeological collection, he was dealing with an enormous number of artifacts and a short time frame for creating the exhibit, making collaboration with any or all of the groups whose heritage would be on display almost impossible.

## Out of the Mist

"Out of the Mist: *HuupuKanum Tupaat*, Treasures of the Nuu-chah-nulth Chiefs" was the oft-cited example of bilateral relations at their best. The idea for this exhibit was put forward by the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council, which became "the RBCM's valued partner and advisory body for all aspects of the project" (Black 1999:13). Grant Keddie (May 29, 2014) noted that the museum's Archaeology Department and the community had previously cooperated on a project. Items were loaned by over twenty museums, adding to the Royal BC Museum's collection of over 200 Nuu-chah-nulth objects. The exhibit was guided by the principles of *HuupuKanum* and *Tupaat* (both meaning "royal belongings") to "introduce non-Aboriginal people to the philosophical and personal connection that these objects had—and continue to have—with Nuu-chah-nulth communities" (Black 1999:13). The Royal BC Museum worked with the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council to create protocols and they met in a series of consultations to create the exhibit and catalogue (Black 1999:14).

Curator of Ethnology Martha Black (May 29, 2014) noted that the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council insisted on having interpreters in the gallery and being involved in promotion and programming. Together they interviewed candidates to act as gallery hosts and then tour with the exhibit. Head of Learning Janet MacDonald (June 5, 2014) said that the experience helped the Learning Department understand how to create collaborative programming. She described her role as being a facilitator as she worked with Elders to hear what they wanted in terms of content. First Nations artists were paid for some contemporary pieces within the show (Grant Keddie, May 29 2014).

## Exhibit Design: "First Peoples Galleries"

The First Peoples Galleries were opened to the public in 1977 and consist of a series of separate exhibit bays and displays that are thematically linked. Since its installation, some aspects have received makeovers in an attempt to update them. Some of the changes have been to update exhibit bays, and others have been structural, such as the relocation of the escalators, which used to take the public up from the museum entrance to the Galleries (Lorne Hammond, May 28, 2014).

*Methods*

None of the staff I interviewed had a hand in creating the original content for the First Peoples Galleries in the 1970s; however, institutional memory persists today and some staff shared that lore. For example, First Nations artists were involved in the final design of the space by creating contemporary works of art, including the Jonathan Hunt House (Martha Black, May 29, 2014). Grant Keddie (May 29, 2014), who worked at the museum at the time, remembered the choice to hire Indigenous people to narrate the mask exhibit because the museum "wanted a First Nations voice" to tell the stories. Generally, however, staff gave me their impressions of what they think is wrong with the exhibit and the portrayal of Aboriginal people. Some even mused out loud about the best model for working with communities to re-imagine the galleries.

In his book on the history of the Royal BC Museum in the 1960s and 1970s, *The Ring of Time,* Peter Corley-Smith (1985) provides some details about the decisions that led to the First Peoples Galleries. He recounts that its designer and curator "travelled

through the Interior and along the coast so that the designer could develop a genuine sense of Indian culture," visiting 'Ksan Village, Alert Bay, and Gilford Island (Corley-Smith 1985:33). Staying true to the romantic style of the book (which was written for a popular audience), he wrote that the First Peoples Galleries helped visitors "re-examine their concept of the native peoples as they existed before the coming of the white man" (Corley-Smith 1985:33). In his narrative he challenged ideas of European superiority that diminished Indigenous technology and artistic complexity that visitors might not fully appreciate. His style of writing betrays his sense that the primordial cultures ended at the time of contact and the negative consequences of disease, colonialism, and modernity. He certainly captured the politics of the day with his message of "before vs. after" that is the visual metaphor of the Galleries (Corley-Smith 1985:40-44).

In a rebuttal to Gloria Frank's (2000) criticism of the First Peoples Galleries,[92] Alan Hoover (2000) identifies some of the First Nations individuals who worked with the museum to create the exhibits. He notes that the curator of ethnology, Peter Macnair, had contacted the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) and invited its participation in planning the new exhibits, including the hiring of consultants. The UBCIC appointed two members "to meet with Macnair and review plans" and he estimated that at least twenty Aboriginal people contributed to the final product, constructing the pit-house, bentwood boxes, and other modern elements (Hoover 2000:66-7). Artist Norman Tait[93], who made the model for the mannequin of the Nisga'a chief (described by Martha Black as a signature object), sought permission from the community on the museum's behalf to display the clothing on it. Throughout his article, Hoover documented examples of reaching out to various communities and seeking permission to use songs and stories for the Galleries. He notes too that First Nations artists and advisors provided feedback and suggested amendments to the display during its development.

For whatever reason, First Nations consultants and artists are absent from the signage acknowledging the designers of the First Peoples Galleries and this led to criticism about their lack of participation (e.g., Frank 2000). Martha Black (May 29, 2014) explained that the exhibit design firm hired was known for its minimalist style and

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[92] As mentioned in Chapter 2.
[93] A famous Nisga'a artist and totem pole carver.

concise label text. The "self-conscious" museums emerged with the new museology, but collaboration had been going on in some form at the Royal BC Museum since the 1950s. She believes that if the museum were to make the exhibit today, indicates collaboration "would be very overt and explicit on all the signage" (Black, May 29, 2014).

In 2002, the Royal BC Museum updated a section of the First Peoples Galleries by creating the "Nisga'a: People of the Nass River" exhibit bay. Bilateral relations between the community and the museum are evident everywhere but especially so through a collaborative Nisga'a totem pole project. The city of Prince Rupert donated the Nisga'a pole to the Royal BC Museum in 1963, but it is slated for eventual repatriation to the Nisga'a Lisims Government as part of the Nisga'a Final Agreement signed in 2000. It is symbolic of a partnership with the provincial government that "expresses Nisga'a cultural values and what the treaty means to the Nisga'a people" (Black 2013:788).

*Results*

The First Peoples Galleries comprise the largest space that I studied in my fieldwork. They are actually a series of spaces that together link approximately 1,300 m$^2$, occupying about one-third of the Royal BC Museum's third floor. The website[94] delineates the different exhibits as "Totem Hall," (Figure 5.5) "Nisga'a: People of the Nass River," "Jonathan Hunt House," "Haida Argillite Carving," and "Archaeology" (which includes a *kekuli* [pit-house]). Surrounding Totem Hall are displays of "masks, regalia and modern works by Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw, Heiltsuk, Nuxalk, Haida, Tsimshian, Gitxsan, Nisga'a, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Salish master carvers."[95] Indigenous technologies relating to resource use (hunting, fishing, etc.) make up the display on the mezzanine floor while the history hall shows First Nations as they modernized with British Columbia.

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[94] http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/first-peoples/
[95] http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/first-peoples/

**Figure 5.5.    Totem Hall, First Peoples Galleries, Royal BC Museum.**
Photo by S. Carr-Locke

There is no overarching narrative that connects the Galleries though one distinct reading is the presentation of much of the material as "art." Dark backdrops intentionally drenched with dramatic lighting and minimal labels in Totem Hall, in the Jonathan Hunt House, and particularly in the Argillite Carving exhibit, focus attention on the aesthetic appeal of the objects. The First Peoples Galleries were artistically designed to provide an atmosphere reminiscent of Northwest Coast–style big houses, numerous wooden, carved elements were created by First Nations artists (Sarah Hunt, personal communication, May 31 2014[96]). The webpage for the First Peoples Galleries justifies the focus as an opposition to anthropological exhibit styles, but also acknowledges that "art" is a non-First Nations concept:

[96] Sarah is artist Richard Hunt's daughter. She told me that her father and grandfather carved the bannisters and some other fixtures of the Galleries. His participation in carving the Jonathan Hunt House is documented, but his role in carving the fixtures is not.

When the First Peoples Gallery opened in 1977, First Nations works were usually classed as anthropological artifacts or examples of material culture rather than as art. Although First Nations languages do not have words for art in the sense of works intended only for decoration and contemplation, this exhibit uses the term in recognition of the exceptional aesthetic qualities and superb workmanship of Northwest Coast carving of the past and today. The display unites old and new works, which is appropriate in an exhibit that emphasizes the continuing artistic traditions of the Northwest Coast First Nations.[97]

The First Peoples Galleries are beautiful and they defy the changes wrought on exhibition design since the 1970s. Light falling on the totem poles and other monumental objects have not lost their potency to imbue the visitor experience with a sense of wonder. The history display is the most problematic area as it emphasizes captains Cook and Vancouver. Unfortunately, the message implies that their post-contact history is only a series of tragedies, rather than the story of survival, continuity, and renaissance. The prose is detached with only a modicum of first-person quotations. By contrast, the Nisga'a exhibit breaks with this style and portrays a dynamic culture adapting to modern Canada. CEO Jack Lohman (May 28, 2014) believes that the black-and-white photographs and other design elements in the First Peoples Galleries inadvertently applies the vanishing race doctrine to the Aboriginal peoples of British Columbia.

A second problem lies in the overwhelming floor space devoted to Coastal British Columbian cultures. This is a result of the collection policies and practices that necessitated the Royal BC Museum. Douglas Cole aptly describes the "scramble" for Northwest Coast artifacts in his book *Captured Heritage* (1985). Aesthetics, not cultural values, guided the amassing of the objects, with limited understanding about these societies. Even Corley-Smith (1985:29) noted that the collections were "not comprehensive enough to furnish all the aspects of all the language groups," and that the focus on the Northwest Coast limited the stories that can be told.

There was consensus by the Royal BC Museum staff that the First Peoples Galleries are in need of updating and renewal. Now-retired Vice President, Visitor

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[97] http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/first-peoples/

Engagement and Experience Tim Willis (April 29, 2013) believed that the museum's focus on creating and hosting blockbuster exhibits in the 1990s was a drain on resources that hindered them from updating their own permanent galleries. At the time of my study, there was no current plan to renovate and remodel the Galleries, and everyone agreed that this would be a massive undertaking. Moreover, such plans require millions of dollars, the hiring of additional staff, and would significantly hinder visitorship during the renovation (Martha Black 2014). Nonetheless, minor changes that update community names or replace outdated anthropological terminology (such as updating "Kwakiutl" to "Kwakwaka'wakw") do take place (Grant Keddie, May 29, 2014). However, one staff member said that it would be best to "wipe it off and start again from scratch" rather than continuing to make patchwork changes, which several other staff agreed is awkward as it only highlights the need to refresh the rest of the gallery.

While a full-scale renovation of the First Peoples Galleries is not on the horizon, the staff spoke about a "re-scripting" of the Galleries, following the style that was employed in their Natural History Galleries. Such a re-scripting would involve keeping the touchstone elements intact but amending the story about British Columbia and the First Nations. Martha Black (May 29, 2014), the curator responsible for the First Peoples Galleries, noted that many of the current objects and content are "quite valid, in that it is the history of contact and the kind of material culture and art objects in each place." She would like to see more information provided about the objects themselves—where they came from, how they arrived at the museum, and what their relationships are to communities and families today. More information about lands and treaties should also be emphasized, according to Black. Finally, she believes that there is a strong need to make more connections between the past and present and to destabilize the division between archaeology and ethnography. Others mentioned the need to revisit the historical narrative between the First Peoples Galleries and the Modern History Galleries.

## Current Ways of Working

One of the most interesting exhibit projects that I came across in my fieldwork was the "Our Living Languages" exhibit at the Royal BC Museum. When I visited in

2013, Tim Willis described the plans for the exhibit, which originated with CEO Jack Lohman. The goal of the exhibit was the focus on "intangible heritage" in representing the thirty-four different language groups in British Columbia. Rather than focusing on objects, and in order to represent all of the groups, the project was carried out in partnership with the First Peoples' Cultural Council, an arm's-length Crown corporation that represents most (but not all) of the First Nations of British Columbia (Martha Black, May 29, 2014). The Council was a good fit as their mandate of language rejuvenation and education was aligned with the exhibit goals (Tim Willis, April 29, 2013). The museum provided the space and constructed the exhibit, while the First Peoples' Cultural Council used its network to communicate with communities across the province to amass the content via a community curator that they hired. The Council was then responsible for consulting with its constituents through their existing networks, meaning that the museum was able to work with a single point of contact.

When I arrived to conduct the second part of my Royal BC Museum study in 2014, the exhibit was almost complete (Figure 5.6). In my preview of the soon-to-be opened exhibit, I saw most of the elements and learned about the details of mounting such an exhibit. Michelle Williams of the First Peoples' Cultural Council was the staff member who had been handpicked to contribute to the project. Although Martha Black was the official curator from the museum's side, she explained that her role was primarily to edit some of the text and help share information about how to create an exhibit (May 30, 2014). Exhibits Department Head Mark Dickson (May 26, 2014) said that due to the fact that neither the First Peoples' Cultural Council nor Williams had much museum experience, the Royal BC Museum held an "interpretive planning session" and helped them "shape the story [so] it would be palatable for the average visitor." According to Dickson, one of the key successes in the collaborative method was ensuring the First Peoples' Cultural Council's project manager had desk space in the Royal BC Museum Exhibits Department and free access to the staff so that she could watch and participate in the construction of the exhibit.

**Figure 5.6.      Our Living Languages exhibit, Royal BC Museum.**
Photo by S. Carr-Locke

The "Our Living Languages" show is an interesting example for representing intangible heritage. There are 34 columns that together form a "forest"; each column features one language group. As the visitors walk among them, they hear audio greetings in different languages. There is a "calming little cocoon"[98] that is "meant to represent being in a cradleboard as a child and listening to the voices of the Elders wash over you" (Mark Dickson, May 26, 2014). Martha Black (April 30, 2014) noted that while some recordings of Aboriginal languages are used in the First Peoples Galleries, they are all ceremonial, whereas the "Our Living Languages" exhibit emphasizes the everyday use of language and attempts to highlight cultural groups that are not well represented in the First Peoples Galleries. The exhibit also features the screening of movies produced in First Nations languages. Cases surrounding the area with clothing

[98] http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/our-living-languages/about/

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from the museum's collection include labels in the maker's language. Other cases display oral history recording equipment. Overall, a positive story about language revitalization emerges and creates a vibrant introduction to visitors who then continue on to the First Peoples Galleries. All of the staff I interviewed about the exhibit were enthusiastic about it and expressed their firm conviction that it has and will continue to have a positive impact on the museum.

Jack Lohman was appointed as the museum's CEO in January of 2012. He seems to be pushing the Royal BC Museum to "tell a more inclusive story" about British Columbia that ensures the Modern History Gallery includes First Nations rather than sequestering them in a prelude gallery (Jack Lohman, May 28, 2014). As a recent immigrant to Canada, Lohman brings fresh impressions of First Nations and their role in the museum. His viewpoints are also informed by his time working in post-apartheid South Africa where he worked to update and change the way museums represented Indigenous South Africans (see Goodnow et al. 2006). He illustrates his interest in intangible culture by supporting the creation of the language exhibit and in his desire to "re-script" the galleries to bring stronger First Nations voices into the institution. He spoke to me about the importance of equitable partnerships where the Royal BC Museum takes its directives from First Nations and other community partners.

Royal BC Museum Curator of History Tzu-I Chung (May 28, 2014) imbues her community-based exhibits with references to diaspora studies in British Columbia. For example, she formed a partnership with the Chinese community in Victoria to accurately portray them in an exhibit about their history. The Learning Department recently decided to end a thirty-year program where volunteers lead tours through the First Peoples Galleries in order to bring in more First Nations voices and perspectives.[99] The "Our Living Languages" exhibit may be a new model for partnership and co-curation that may influence the way the museum collaborates in the future.

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[99] To this end, the Learning Department has been in discussions with the Victoria Native Friendship Centre to develop new school programs.

**Summary**

All of the staff members at the Royal British Columbia Museum seemed to agree that the principle of collaboration with community is important. Curator of Ethnology Martha Black (May 29, 2014) told me that collaboration with First Nations is a practice that the museum strives to develop. Curator of History Lorne Hammond (May 28, 2014) noted that, "it is impossible for the staff to ignore local Indigenous people" at the Royal BC Museum. Although there may be a cultural distance between local First Nations and the museum, they visit the building to see what is happening like all visitors.

While First Nations artists and other community members contributed to the creation of the First Peoples Galleries in the 1970s, the style of exhibition and lack of signage obscures public understanding of their involvement. The staff agreed that the exhibit was outdated and needs to have a modern style that emphasizes collaboration with First Nations. They also concur that the scale of the project would require significant resources. In the meantime, the museum has made some changes and is planning to re-script the galleries to emphasize First Nations in the 21$^{st}$ century.

# Denver Museum of Nature and Science

The Denver Museum of Nature and Science (hereafter the Denver Museum) was unique in my study because of its focus on presenting science. My research focused on multidisciplinary museums; the Denver Museum is interesting as its mission concentrates on the hard sciences. Anthropology fits its definition of science, and this provided an interesting perspective and example of how ethnographic objects fit into a scientific outlook. The museum's Department of Anthropology employs researchers who focus on innovation and collaboration with Native American communities. Thus, as Curator of Anthropology Steve Nash (May 2, 2014) noted, there is a unique institutional relationship with the Department of Anthropology and the scientific perspective the museum fosters.

## History of Collaboration in the Department of Anthropology

In 1968, the Crane family gifted the Denver Museum with its collection of 12,000 Native American objects. Prior to this, the museum-sponsored anthropological research focused on archaeology. The exhibits in "Hall of Man" portrayed an archaeological theme, even though it was later renamed the "Hall of Ancient Peoples." It told the story of the prehistoric peoples of the Americas and remained on display from 1956 to 2000. In the early years, the museum also housed a small art gallery that included Native American craft items along with art works from around the world, but it was transferred to the Denver Art Museum in 1932 (Colwell-Chanthaphonh et al. 2013b:284). The Crane Collection was a substantial private anthropology donation, unusual in scope even in the United States.

In 1968, the Department of Archaeology was shut down with the dismissal of the curator of archaeology, and out of its ashes rose the Department of Anthropology to begin a new chapter at the museum. During my visit, I was fortunate enough to interview Joyce Herold, the former curator of collections and now a volunteer, who worked at the museum in the early 1970s. Plans were afoot to put the Crane Collection on display in the "North American Indian Cultures" gallery (commonly referred to as "Crane Hall"). Its creation consumed the attention of the Department of Anthropology for several years, with the first phase opening in 1974 and the last in 1978 (Colwell-Chanthaphonh et al. 2013b:309).

The period of consultation with Native American communities began in the early 1970s (Chip Colwell, April 22, 2014), which was an era rife with the politics of the American Indian Movement. As Joyce Herold (May 1, 2014) recalls:

> In the beginning years, I began working with Native American people with [Curator of Anthropology] Skip Neal. She had a deep respect and a feeling of conviction that she wanted to bring contemporary people into the process that we were going through in establishing the Hall and gaining community recognition of a new resource (i.e., the collection).

In 1973 the museum established a formal relationship with the local Denver community through the creation of the Native American Advisory Council, later renamed the Native American Resource Group. A major issue at the time for the city of Denver

was the large influx of Native Americans from across the American Southwest, where populations increased tenfold between 1950 and 2000 (Colwell-Chanthaphonh et al. 2013b:312). The "Moccasins on Pavement" exhibit addressed the urban Native experience with photographs and first-person narratives. The Denver Museum hosted it from November 30, 1978 to May 30, 1979, before it went on a national tour of museums. Chip Colwell (April 22, 2014) told me that while the creation of a formal entity was "innovative" and giving Native Americans a role in exhibit design was "forward thinking" at the time, there were limitations to the usefulness of the Native American Resource Group. Colwell noted that everyone in the advisory group had grown up in Denver with little connection to their culture or language, and none of the members were traditional or political leaders with any type of authority to speak for their communities. As Colwell asked, "What was their role? How can they meaningfully contribute to development when they don't have expertise?" The Native American Resource Group remained active as a consultative body in the museum until 2008 when it was disbanded in favour of fostering other types of collaborative relationships, such as the Native science mentorship programs.

The museum's other ongoing connection with the local Native American community was through the spring buffalo feast and honouring ceremony. This annual event began in the 1990s, when an exhibit project on buffalo was started and then cancelled and the museum wanted to make amends to the stakeholders. The feast always took place the day before the Denver March Powwow (the first of the season and one of the largest in the country). Although the event seemed to be a good method of informal engagement and getting people in to the museum, the costs were significant ($20,000/year). By 2007, Curator of Anthropology Steve Nash felt that it was no longer serving the institution. The funds were subsequently reinvested in the Native Science Initiative,[100] which sought to provide fellowships and educational opportunities to Native American youth interested in science and working with the museum collection.

Many staff at the Denver Museum acknowledged that the NAGPRA process (beginning in 1990) brought many benefits in terms of developing and strengthening the museum's relationship with Native American communities. The museum's policy on

[100] See http://www.dmns.org/science/research/anthropology/native-american-sciences-initiative

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repatriating human remains and sacred items entails transparency and collaboration. Previous to the enactment of NAGPRA, the Denver Museum had already worked with the Zuni people to repatriate six sacred *Ahayu:da* (war god) figures. The museum had never purposefully collected Native American ancestral remains as part of research activities, and there had never been physical anthropologists on staff who wanted to study remains.[101] Joyce Herold (May 1, 2014) said that when Native groups came to the museum to negotiate the repatriation of objects or remains, they looked at the Crane Hall exhibit and occasionally provided feedback. One example of this feedback involves some Iroquoian visitors who saw an Iroquoian False Face Mask that the museum had on display. As they consider such masks sacred, viewing it publicly is inappropriate so they asked that it be immediately removed from the exhibit; the mask was eventually repatriated to them.

## Exhibit Design: "North American Indian Cultures" (aka "Crane Hall")

Although the official name of the anthropology exhibit at the Denver Museum is "North American Indian Cultures" (entrance pictured in Figure 5.7), all of the staff at the museum refer to the gallery as "Crane Hall." The geographic region covered by the exhibit extends from the American Arctic to northern Mexico. Its role within the Denver Museum is to present the peoples and cultures of the North American continent. The Hall is the main space where information about people and anthropology is presented in the museum.

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[101] Interestingly, human remains found in Colorado and believed to have been Native American in origin were often sent to the museum. Conversely, other (non-Native) human remains were typically sent to the coroner.

**Figure 5.7.    Entrance to Crane Hall, Denver Museum.**
Photo by S. Carr-Locke.


*Methods*

The Crane Hall exhibit was created in a six-year period between 1968 and 1974. The Native American Resource Group was established in 1973 to act as a resource for Crane Hall project consultation. When asked about the methods employed to engage the group, Joyce Herold said that the feedback given was sometimes in response to direct questions from the museum, but was also sometimes guided by what the community wanted from the museum. She recounted that "Right at the beginning, [Native American Resource Group members] said that they would like exhibits about what was going on locally. One of the biggest points was 'We are not dead. We are here. We are doing things'."

The Native American Resource Group helped the museum staff "steer clear of some of the sensitive areas" (such as spirituality), which were problematic for display

(Joyce Herold, May 1, 2014). The Crane Collection did not include many old items, since most of the objects were collected between 1951 and 1968, yet the community were in favour of using these contemporary objects to show living traditions.

Joyce Herold (May 1, 2014) mentioned that there was also "an American Indian on staff" at the museum, who acted as a liaison to his own community. Members of a Cheyenne family contributed to the hall by posing for a diorama (Figure 5.8) and were consulted to ensure the accuracy of the exhibit. Herold (May 1, 2014) said that she watched the process of the diorama being created:

> [The] Cheyenne Elder [was] sitting in silence for a long period of time thinking about what things should be in there—this was not in the literature! It takes history and belonging [with the museum] to advise on certain things. People like this really helped us with a lot of parts of the exhibit.



**Figure 5.8    Cheyenne diorama, Crane Hall, Denver Museum.**
Photo by S. Carr-Locke

Some updates were made to Crane Hall over the years. In the 1990s, the exhibit was "refreshed" with new lighting and by rotating some of the collections. In 2012, the Navajo and Southwest sections were renovated and updated by adding video (to show contemporary weaving) and to change the language to emphasize the diversity of cultures in the Southwest. In the interim, signage was updated throughout the Hall to add a new story about repatriation. Director of Exhibits Jodi Schoemer (April 24, 2014) said that these changes were made to "deliberately make a point that we are working with contemporary cultures, but it is just piecework," while noting that exhibits by their very nature "capture a moment in the past." Schoemer noted that the department is "working on a video for the Hall that would talk about the impact of climate change on Arctic Native cultures, so that is a very contemporary issue."

*Results*

The "North American Indian Cultures" exhibit begins with an entrance that features a relief map of North America with the words, "we are all different, we are all the same." Below it is a case containing moccasins from around the continent. A video monitor located on the adjacent wall features a looped sequence of Native Americans (and likely Aboriginal Canadians) giving greetings in their Native language[102] (screen visible in Figure 5.7). As Joyce Herold (May 1, 2014) explained, the message of the entranceway was intended to show that "there is no typical Indian—something that many people in Denver didn't know." The entrance exhibit has minimal signage; information on the video participants and the moccasin makers is available on boards in a box on the adjacent wall.

The intended central message of Crane Hall is to show the connection between culture and the environment (Colwell-Chanthaphonh et al. 2013b:308). The pedestrian trail meanders around to cover each geographic zone, beginning with the Northwest Coast and travelling south, then east, before ending with the Arctic. There are several different exhibits for each region, featuring object cases, platforms, some re-creations of traditional architecture, photos, videos, two dioramas, and one model village scene. Jodi

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[102] Joyce Herold (May 1, 2014) told me that these recordings were collected opportunistically as individuals came to the museum for NAGPRA work. She said that the idea for this video likely came from the Native American Resource Group and the exhibit designers.

Schoemer (April 24, 2014) summed up the message that the museum would like to transmit through Crane Hall:

> Native American cultures still exist and they are diverse and vibrant and are not necessarily as depicted in the dioramas. Second, the environmental resources that are available vary through time and help shape the culture. Some of the differences… between Native American cultures and Caucasian culture…depends on the resources that were available [past and present]. They are complex messages, especially to illustrate completely.

My overall impression of the space is that it follows outmoded museum tropes in its design, but I did notice the inclusion of information about contemporary issues such as repatriation in the wampum belt display (Figure 5.9). Wampum belts are beaded, patterned belts used as guides or records of history, traditions, and laws among Haudenosaunee and related cultures of the Eastern Woodlands. The label on one belt reads: "Wampum continues to be a valued part of cultural identity and a symbol of the sacred and powerful for Native Northeastern people. Under federal law, Native groups can reclaim wampum from museums. This belt probably won't be claimed because its specific origin is unknown." Thus while the label refers indirectly to NAGPRA legislation and the contemporary importance of these objects, it does not present the object from a Native point of view.

**Figure 5.9.     Wampum case, Crane Hall, Denver Museum.**
Photo by S. Carr-Locke


When I visited, there was a temporary exhibit called "Insider/Outsider" in Crane Hall (Figure 5.10). The exhibit was inspired by Chip Colwell's (2011) article on the ethics of creating sketches of sacred and private Pueblo rituals. Jamie Powel, a member of the Osage Nation and University of Denver undergraduate who was on a Denver Museum Native American Internship, was co-curated the exhibit with Colwell. The goal was to provide a strong critical perspective on Native American representation in the gallery. Powel had also been part of a project that brought critical Native American youth perspectives into Crane Hall through the use of QR codes,[103] which were developed in a course hosted by the Denver Museum under the Native American Sciences Initiative (Calvin Pohawpatchoko Jr., May 7, 2014).

[103] "Quick Response Code," a matrix barcode that can be read with smartphone applications, to give users additional information on their hand-held devices.

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**Figure 5.10.   Insider/Outsider exhibit, Denver Museum.**
Photo by S. Carr-Locke.


Critical perspectives, such as those expressed by artist James Luna, were put on display in the Hall in other ways.[104] Luna created a video installation and performance piece about his life and Native American identity that was shown in Crane Hall from September 2012 to March 2013. It was a collaborative project that benefited the museum by inviting staff to think about using the gallery more creatively. As Adult and Children's Programs Manager Liz Davis (April 28, 2014) noted, "It was challenging for us, because we had to let go a little, but at the end I think that our organization moved forward and learned a lot working with James." Davis expressed that the project illustrated the direction that the museum is taking to be "more nimble" and responsive to incorporating the community into the museum.

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[104] http://www.dmns.org/museum-blog/post/?nid=13449

There is an uncertain future with respect to the permanent exhibits for the Crane Hall and the Department of Anthropology in general. All of the staff I interviewed felt that Crane Hall needed to be updated and that this was difficult to do piecemeal (similar to what was said about the Royal BC Museum's exhibit). The last strategic plan included renovating Crane Hall and creating a new anthropology exhibit, but the project was skipped in favour of other institutional priorities, such as building new collections and education infrastructure. When I conducted my research in 2014, there was still no plan for changing the Hall.

The staff discussed what a new anthropology display might look like. There was some consensus that it should represent people from all over the world rather than just Native North Americans. Staff also noted the lack of a permanent archaeology exhibit since the "Hall of Ancient Peoples" was taken down in 2000 to make room for the "Space Odyssey," and the need to include archaeology in the exhibits. Chip Colwell (April 22, 2014) suggested that one possibility would be along the lines of "Anthropology 101," involving basic anthropological information about culture and the human condition. Another option that Steve Nash (May 2, 2014) proposed was not to have a separate display at all, but to insert anthropology into other galleries as a kind of "sociology of science" so that the museum could "tell a better story of the scientific endeavour being contingent and contextual, driven by agendas and personalities and biases." Although the museum is today no closer to getting a new anthropology hall installed than when he first arrived, he thinks that a new hall would be a worthwhile investment. He is also cautious about sending messages that link Native Americans to the idea of unilinear cultural evolution.

## Current Ways of Working: Repatriation and Relationships

Like many other museums, the Denver Museum invests its resources in creating and managing travelling "blockbuster" exhibits. Steve Nash often takes the lead in these shows, as anthropology exhibits are particularly popular. Among their recent offerings was the "Maya: Hidden Worlds Revealed" show, which occupied most of the third floor and was co-produced with the Science Museum of Minnesota. Michele Koons, Denver Museum archaeologist, was the lead curator on the project, although she was hired after

much of the content was already in place. The exhibit takes an archaeological perspective of the ancient Maya by showing visitors how researchers use scientific techniques to uncover and then interpret archaeological information. The introduction to the exhibit features a video in which a young Mayan girl speaks about her cultural and spiritual connections to her ancestors, providing a message that the Maya people still exist. Koons (April 28, 2014) said that there was a "conscious decision on the part of our museum and also Minnesota to make sure the Maya people are there… we wanted to have a contemporary voice as part of the interpretation of what happened in the past."

Steve Nash (May 2, 2014) said that the goal he set out for the Department of Anthropology in 2008 was to "curate the best understood and most ethically held anthropology collection in North America." Although he felt these goals were a bit naïve in retrospect, when I visited he reported that great steps had been made towards achieving these aims. The museum still receives donations of objects, and none of the anthropology curators currently collect ethnographic objects; instead, they focus on learning about and researching the items already in the collection (for example, see Mattson 1997; Nash 2014). According to Nash, the three anthropology curators are "about as engaged as you can get with the collection."

At the Denver Museum, "ethically held" collections mean that the principle of informed consent is applied to all human remains at the museum. When I visited in April 2013, all Native American ancestral remains with known tribal affiliation had already been returned. The museum works alongside the Ute Mountain Ute tribe to work out protocols for the interment of all human remains that do not have tribal identification. Steve Nash (May 2, 2014) and President and CEO George Sparks (May 7, 2014) indicated to me that their target date for repatriations was September 2014.[105] The museum staff and board see it as a human rights issue, and chose to go above and beyond the legal requirements of NAGPRA (Lynda Knowles, April 24, 2014).

The Denver Museum also took the unusual step of initiating an international repatriation of objects to Kenya when a researcher realized that the museum received

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[105] I assume that this was achieved, but I have not found a press release to say that it had occurred. Steve Nash (May 2, 2014) told me that it was his intention to publicize this fact once the process had been completed.

some items that had a clouded title. *Vigango* figures are erected by Kenyan families to commemorate someone who has died; they hold the spirit of the ancestor. The figures became popular in the Western art market in the 1960s, and the museum found a photograph that suggested that at least one of the figures in the Denver Museum collection was stolen from Kenya (Heather Thorwald, April 23, 2014). Proper ceremonies were conducted according to Kenyan protocols in February 2014. When I visited in April 2013, final arrangements were being made to ship the figures back to Kenya.[106]

There was discussion amongst staff about a new "Community Voices Initiative," which was still in the early stages of development at the time of my visit. The initiative aims to determine how to better serve under-represented visitor groups, Hispanic families in the Denver area in particular (George Sparks, May 7, 2014). Sparks said that the anthropologists' research skills would be used to help the museum to facilitate cross-cultural engagement. Steve Nash (May 2, 2014) felt that this would change the relationship of anthropology to the rest of the institution, noting that, "the good news is that people all the way up to the president and the board of trustees are saying, 'We've all got to be anthropologists now'—we can't just do market research anymore." Liz Davis (April 28, 2014) explained that the idea of the initiative is to "set our agenda aside and work with and respond to the needs of the communities that we are just not [currently] serving." A great deal of community consultation will be needed in the next few years. Nash hopes that this consultation will help guide the museum in the creation of new anthropology and/or archaeology exhibits.

## Summary

The Denver Museum of Nature and Science has made some small changes to its "North American Indian Cultures" (aka "Crane Hall") exhibit in order to ensure that it shows continuity of cultural traditions to the present day. When the collection arrived in the late 1960s, the Native American Resource Group provided some direction on content and message of the exhibits. The Department of Anthropology conducts extensive collaborative work behind the scenes, including taking a strong ethical stance

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[106] For more information, see http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/04/arts/design/denver-museum-to-return-totems-to-kenyan-museum.html

on the repatriation of Native American skeletons. There are plans to disassemble the "North American Indian Cultures" exhibit in favour of a new exhibit that would connect Native Americans to the human experience on a global scale.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the results of my case study research. Each museum has a unique story about developing its collaborative practices and how the current exhibits were created. More specifically, I learned the following about each museum:

Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum:

- Hawaiian Hall was created collaboratively, with community engaged from the start of the project;

- It became a model for other exhibit projects, and the method and philosophy ultimately inspired the creation of the new strategic framework; and

- There are many Native Hawaiian staff working at the museum as well as on the Board of Directors, and they feel a cultural and personal connection to their work.

Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre:

- The Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre's diorama project took a long time to complete due to changes in leadership and late engagement with community members. The results were not well received by all of the staff or community members; and

- The lack of a clear mission and vision was mentioned as a concern by the staff. While still evident, collaboration was not solidified as part of standard exhibit practice.

Royal British Columbia Museum:

- All of the staff at the Royal British Columbia Museum say that collaboration is important and the proper way to create exhibits about First Nations culture and history;

- There is a long history of First Nations involvement at the Royal British Columbia Museum, but the style of the First Peoples Galleries does not communicate their involvement. The museum is working on ways to "re-script" the exhibits to emphasize First Nations agency; and

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- The exhibit entitled "Our Living Languages" is a creative new addition to the First Peoples Galleries that was a partnership with an Indigenous organization. It is unique in that the exhibit focuses on intangible heritage.

Denver Museum of Nature and Science:

- Crane Hall was originally created with some Native American input, partially though the Native American Resource Group that was formed to advise the museum;

- The Crane Hall exhibit has been updated over the years to show that cultures are contemporary. The museum ultimately plans to de-commission the gallery in favour of an exhibit that speaks about human culture more generally; and

- Collaborative principles are in place and followed at the museum, but there is little freedom to put this into practice in exhibits.

# Chapter 6.

# Discussion

The aim of this dissertation is to examine the methods of collaboration with Indigenous peoples that are employed by museums to create exhibits that relate to Indigenous culture. This chapter compiles the results of my fieldwork and then comparing and contrasting aspects of practice at each of the museums I studied. By visiting four very different case study institutions, I was able to observe a range of collaborative methods.

The sections of this chapter reflect the three main foci of my research: 1) the history of collaborative practice; 2) the collaborative process; and 3) exhibit design. The goal here is to show how the results presented in Chapter 5 address the research questions that fall under these three themes. The chapter begins with a review of the history of collaborative exhibits as illustrated through the case study interviews and information obtained from them. The so-called waves of Indigenous museology identified in Chapter 2 are then used to frame this history. Following this, I present an analysis of exhibit creation and current best practices, teasing out some of the themes uncovered in my research, and identify common elements in collaborative exhibits. I then explore the way exhibit design brings together the intended message of the exhibit and the methods that are utilized to present an internalist perspective. Finally, I examine the challenges in creating collaborative exhibits as identified in the case studies.

## Collaborative Exhibits: Historical Development

During his interview, Royal BC Museum Curator of Archaeology Grant Keddie (May 29, 2014) identified two key factors necessary for understanding the history of First Nations involvement with this museum. First, he said, look at the personnel and observe

those individuals who decide exhibit content and/or First Nations involvement with the museum. Second, look at the "political evolution of how people interact with First Nations and what is ethically expected of them." Keddie's observations about the Royal BC Museum reflect a key theme that run throughout all four case studies; namely, involving Indigenous people in the creation of exhibits is a *relationship* between (a) the interests, priorities, and passions of individual staff members at museums and (b) the wider society and its political climate vis-à-vis Indigenous rights. In other words, effective collaboration seems to require an individual staff member to become its champion, and is influenced by wider social movements. The museums in this study appear to be both proactive (if museum leadership decides that this is a priority) and reactive (to outside pressures and trends), depending upon context and circumstance. An exhibits employee at the Denver Museum stated that the exhibition trends that have happened there over the last thirty years "mirror" the way in which museums have evolved nationally and internationally (Frances Kreuger, April 24, 2013).

In Chapter 2, I introduced the concept of waves to represent the phases of development of Indigenous museology (see Table 1). I now return to this framework in order to demonstrate the links between my four case studies and the patterns I traced through museum studies literature. The concept of waves also serves to emphasize the connections among the history of museums, Indigenous people, and the Indigenous rights movement by showing that including their voices and perspectives in public representations about their culture is in their rights.

## Antecedents and First Wave (up to 1980): Consultation

Royal BC Museum Curator of Ethnology Martha Black argued that the postcolonial theory (e.g., Kreps 2003a) that museologists invoke to examine the history of involving Indigenous people and museums misrepresents "collaboration," presumes unequal partnerships, and erases the agency that First Nations artists and researchers had in developing representations of their own people (Black 2013: 785-786). In her interview with me (April 30, 2013), Black emphasized the involvement of First Nations artists and knowledge holders in creating the Royal BC Museum's First Peoples Galleries in the 1970s. The input and influence Indigenous peoples had on the creation of the Royal BC Museum's and other museums' exhibits during this early period of

collaboration is difficult to assess because the information is not readily available. Black's sense is that it is likely that First Nations people have contributed to exhibits at her institution by providing information and artistic products since its founding in 1886.

All of my case studies have revealed that there was limited *direct* participation of Indigenous people in the creation of museum exhibits within Canadian and American museums before the 1970s. More broadly speaking, however, the 1970s seemed to mark a new period of interaction between Indigenous peoples and North American museums, which is noted in the academic literature (Archambault 2011:17). The case studies seem to reflect this change. At the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, former Curator of Collections and current volunteer Joyce Herold (May 1, 2014) identified Department of Anthropology Chair Skip Neal as being the champion who insisted on involving Native peoples at all stages of the Crane Hall exhibit. The Native community in the city of Denver also became more politically active with the formation of its own chapter of the American Indian Movement in the early 1970s. The Denver Museum's Native American Resource Group included American Indian Movement members who requested that some Native American ancestral remains be taken off display; Neal listened and followed this advice.[107]

Working with communities in northern Canada influenced Robert R. Janes, the first director of the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, and he still relies on that experience when engaging Aboriginal people today (Robert R. Janes, July 12, 2013). He said that northern Aboriginal people had been empowered through the founding of the Northwest Territories' Indian Brotherhood in 1970;[108] that group was formed to advocate for resolving land claims with the federal government. Dene and Inuvialuit people were also empowered as they gave evidence to the Berger Inquiry, when Judge Thomas Berger travelled to 22 Northern communities gathering information that ultimately led him to recommend a ten-year moratorium on the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline project due to the negative cultural and environmental impact it would have. The leadership of the

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[107] Chip Colwell (April 22, 2014) recounted, "There's a little correspondence that I found in the 1970s when the human remains were on display, Native American human remains. My understanding is that [the American Indian Movement] threatened to do a protest and immediately Skip Neil took remains off display."

[108] See http://www.denenation.com/history.html for more details.

territory was also more firmly in the hands of Aboriginal peoples in the late 1970s, thus creating an atmosphere whereby they had some decision-making power over museum operations, including exhibits.

## Second Wave (1980s–1990s): Increasing Social Relevance

As posited in Chapter 2, the second wave of Indigenous museology marked a time of growing social consciousness in museums, paired with increasing collaboration between museums and Indigenous peoples in North America (Archambault 2011:17-19). Exhibits at all four museums I studied show signs of a greater willingness to include political and social messages about Indigenous peoples during this decade. The impacts of increased Native political activism in Canada and the United States, which began in the earlier period, manifested itself as requests for the repatriation of human remains, inalienable cultural property, and items of cultural significance.[109] Although belated, Indigenous peoples did eventually get a say in the process of exhibit creation, and public awareness of topics such as Indigenous rights set the groundwork for the changes they witnessed in the latter decades of the 20th century.

Examples of exhibits in this time period that addressed social justice issues were created in each museum I studied. The "Trapline, Lifeline" exhibit, which the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre created in the 1980s, toured until 1993. The exhibit was an example of advocating for Indigenous lifeways and their traditional bush economy in direct reaction to the animal rights movement.[110] Likewise, the Denver Museum used the "Moccasins on Pavement" exhibit to tell the stories of urban Native Americans in Denver and illustrate their contemporary struggles and achievements. These two exhibits featured first-person quotations by Indigenous people since their voices were essential to the exhibits. In contrast, the "Hawai'i, Royal Isles" exhibit emphasized the importance of Hawaii's royal, sovereign heritage, but was presented from a more anthropological and outsider point of view.

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[109] For example, the return of the Zuni *Ahayu:da* mentioned in Chapter 2.

[110] Robert Janes (personal communication July 4, 2015) noted: "I felt that [the museum] had a social responsibility, to defend and explain the hunting and trapping way of life," because "the NWT is the home to two of the greatest hunting cultures, the Dene and the Inuit."

## Third Wave (1990s–Present): Repatriation and Integration

By the 1990s, more integrated exhibit partnerships were occurring at each venue in my case study. Indigenous people were both willing and able to take on greater roles—a trend that continues to the present. Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre founding Director Robert R. Janes (July 12, 2013) observed that when he began to develop an exhibit about the Blackfoot people at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta, in the 1990s, the process he followed was quite different from the one he was familiar with at the Heritage Centre a decade earlier. In the Northwest Territories at that time, working with community meant creating a draft of the exhibit script and having it reviewed by leaders and Elders. Janes had been working on repatriation projects with the Blackfoot at the Glenbow since his arrival in 1989. When it came to creating an exhibit, he and the Glenbow Museum curators "turned the project over to 18 Elders" who "had all the power, authority, and responsibility for the research and the exhibit design." This process seems similar to the situation described by Curator of Ethnology Martha Black in the working relationship between the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council and the Royal BC Museum in creating the "Out of the Mist: *HuupaKanum Tupaat*, Treasures of the Nuu-chah-nulth Chiefs" exhibit, which opened in 1999.

The first decade of the 2000s saw numerous collaborative projects at the four case study institutions. The Bishop Museum's renovation of the Hawaiian Hall (2006–2009) set the tone for subsequent collaborative projects (such as the "*E Kū Ana Ka Paia*: Unification, Responsibility, and the Kū Images" exhibit) as it encouraged collaborative ways of working into its strategic framework. At the Royal BC Museum, updates to the Nisga'a exhibit case in the First Peoples Galleries were made in 2002, and included much more contemporary political content. As described in Chapter 5, the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre was also involved in several collaborative "replica" projects to reclaim cultural knowledge, the creations of some of which became exhibits at the museum.

Technological innovation and the increasing creative applications of various media—particularly social media—are characteristic of the third wave of Indigenous museology. It may even be the leading edge of a fourth wave (labeled by some as

"Museum 2.0"),[111] which promises an increasingly participatory experience for visitors, where visitors take a more active role in creating the museum experience. Several staff members at the Bishop Museum remarked that the technology available in the 2000s provided several advantages in terms of increasing the number of methods of transmitting information to visitors in the Hawaiian Hall. The use of digital audio and video technology within exhibits is something that the Northern Heritage Centre incorporated into its diorama renovation design. Newer exhibits throughout the Denver Museum and the Royal BC Museum embrace this technology, even if its use remains minimal in the exhibits discussed in the previous chapter. It is likely that social media and online gaming will play an increasing role both online and within physical exhibits in the years to come.[112] As mentioned previously, the Denver Museum has already experimented with QR codes as a way to include an Indigenous worldview in the galleries (Calvin Pohawpatchoko Jr., May 7, 2014).

## Exhibit Creation: Current Good Practices

Many interviewees emphasized the tangibility of exhibits, in contrast to the intellectual aspects and heuristics that are often the focus in museum studies literature. Royal BC Museum Curator of Ethnology Martha Black (May 29, 2014) noted that there is a "solidity of process that you can't get around if you are doing museums; it is a physical product." She felt that some of the critical museum theory glossed over this fact. Thus, considering involving Indigenous people in the creation of exhibits requires an understanding of the various roles of museum experts, as well as a basic understanding of process.

The creation of a museum exhibit is a collaborative undertaking, requiring various individuals with specific expertise to realize the final product. Knowledge of the subject,

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[111] "Museum 2.0" is both a concept and a blog (http://museumtwo.blogspot.ca/) created by Nina Simon to describe the opportunities that social media provide for museums. For a description of her participatory museum framework that incorporates social media, see Simon (2010).

[112] The "Expedition Health" permanent exhibit at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science exemplifies some of these characteristics as young visitors undertake a series of experiments on their health and track their results online. See http://www.dmns.org/exhibitions/current-exhibitions/expedition-health/

graphic and interior design, writing (label text), information technology (programming and installation), education, and public programming comprise the range of skills that intersect around exhibitions. Typically, an in-house curator with specific subject knowledge expertise, and who conducts research in the relevant field, will create the idea and content for an exhibit. The exhibit labels are written and edited collaboratively by subject, education, and design specialists.

Historically, one of the purposes of museums has been to report on the activities of the museum curators and other researchers employed there, meaning that the content typically came almost exclusively from in-house expertise and institutionally-funded research. Working with Indigenous communities in more recent years has meant that cultural information also comes firsthand, and that curatorial duties, such as providing content and directing intended messages, are shared between the in-house curator and the community.

As museums cater more heavily to visitor services, exhibit departments have been formed to take the lead in developing and managing exhibits. Denver Museum Senior Exhibit Developer Frances Kruger (April 24, 2014) likened her role as an exhibit project manager to a United Nations interpreter "because you are dealing with curators who think like scientists, designers who think like artists, and educators who think like teachers, and it is my job to be the visitor advocate and pull that stuff together." She observed that the Denver Museum has become more collaborative and team-based in recent years.

Royal BC Museum Curator of History Lorne Hammond (May 28, 2014) recounted an interaction he had at a conference when he publicly critiqued a colleague from another institution for suggesting that all of the power and process could be in the hands of Indigenous people. As Hammond explained, "… the building of exhibits is always an unequal experience. Nobody can give [the community] 50% power, First Nations don't know about exhibit design and presentation."[113] This suggests that while Indigenous people may be given control over deciding the content of an exhibit, the design and construction of the exhibit requires expertise beyond a typical layperson's experience.

[113] This point was also made by Miriam Kahn (2000:72).

Bishop Museum Exhibit Designer Dave Kemble (April 18, 2013) reported that although the early plans developed in the 1980s for the Hawaiian Hall were supported by a New Trade Winds Grant, and had numerous grassroots ideas, many were not applicable as the community members knew little of the exhibit medium. This is a key role that museums play when launching new exhibits: to provide expertise about exhibit design, construction, and interpretation.

While theoretically, the power over the *content* of exhibits can be managed or shared with Indigenous people, professional training is required to curate and design exhibits. Indigenous community members bring their own traditional knowledge and ways of working to projects, but should not be expected to know how to put an exhibit together. Northern Heritage Centre Director Barb Cameron (July 9, 2013) emphasized the importance of "mutual learning" while working with communities, as many Elders and cultural practitioners in the Northwest Territories have never been to a museum and need to be brought in to understand what they are contributing to an exhibit. Bishop Museum Exhibit Designer David Kemble (April 18, 2013), for example, saw his role as participating in a *process*, rather than focusing on a *product*, as he sought to help Native Hawaiian experts present information for the general public through the medium of exhibition.

The application of collaborative methods to exhibitions does not always mean that this message is clearly communicated within the exhibit.[114] Royal BC Museum Curator of Ethnology Martha Black (April 30, 2013) remarked: "Nobody's pretending to speak for First Nations. But the styles of the exhibitry, because of their drama and their interaction, might read that way. It's not clear from the presentation what was actually going on. And even if we did [attempt to show collaboration], it might still not be clear what is going on." While there are no labels in the Royal BC Museum's First Peoples Galleries that explain who produced the displays,[115] the museum explicitly does so in the "Our Living Languages" exhibit (Figure 6.1). The acknowledgement panel informs the visitors that Our Living Languages is "A Partnership Exhibition" and expresses thanks

[114] See Krmpotich and Anderson (2005) and Schultz (2011) for studies of how museum visitors perceive Indigenous collaboration in exhibits.

[115] This is one of the issues raised by Wickwire (2000:74) in discussing Frank's (2000) critique of the First Peoples Galleries.

both to the First Peoples Cultural Council and also to the exhibit partners. [116] The Bishop Museum's Hawaiian Hall includes a long list of Native Hawaiians and researchers who contributed to the renovation project; offering "sincerest appreciation" to these partners (see Figure 6.2). Public acknowledgement and expressions of gratitude are essential to successful collaborative practice.



**Figure 6.1.     Acknowledgement panel, Our Living Languages exhibit, Royal BC Museum.**
Photo by S. Carr-Locke

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[116] Label reads "Our Living Languages is a coproduction of the Royal BC Museum and the First Peoples' Cultural Council… Our partnership is inspired by the belief that diverse expression of First Nations' identities are key to the health and well-being of First Nations in British Columbia."

**Figure 6.2.    Hawaiian Hall acknowledgement panel, Bishop Museum.**
Photo by S. Carr-Locke

Throughout this study, I have emphasized the importance of ensuring that museums include Indigenous people in making decisions related to exhibit subjects, cultural content, overall design, and programming when the exhibits seek to explore topics relating to them and their heritage. This means that the images and representations created through exhibits are an aspect of intellectual property about which Indigenous people possess a right to provide input and direction. Thus, searching for the best ways to engage Indigenous peoples and to include Indigenous knowledge within exhibits remains a work in progress.

## Engaging Communities

The very concept of "Indigenous community" requires critical examination in the context of museum collaborations. Some have noted that, while necessary and useful as

a term to discuss ways of engaging in museums, the term "community" can imply exclusivity and difference. The idea of who speaks for a First Nations or other Indigenous community is also a complicated issue. Individuals involved in museum work must have the necessary cultural knowledge and expertise related to the topic of the exhibit. One of the reasons for the disbanding of the Native American Resource Group at the Denver Museum in 2008 was that, being urban and disconnected from their original cultures, the committee members did not have the expertise to provide the desired information about language or culture (Chip Colwell, April 22 2014). While there is some convenience when the descendant community represented in an exhibit speaks one single language—as is the case with Native Hawaiians—there are often different community organizations competing for authority, making it difficult to achieve consensus on topics such as spirituality (Blair Collis, April 10, 2013). Most of the interviewees in my case study acknowledged that there is rarely one cohesive "community" with which to collaborate; local protocols are followed with regards to how to engage, whether that be through the First Nations band council in British Columbia or through a Native American NAGPRA officer in Colorado.

The level of collaboration with community experts varies depending on the exhibit project. In her consultation work to collect community perspectives for the "Trapline, Lifeline" exhibit, Northern Heritage Centre Curatorial Assistant Susan Irving (July 16, 2013) said that she learned that she could "get more useful feedback if you say, 'What would you like people to know about you?' instead of, 'What would you like in an exhibit?'" Similarly, when Royal BC Museum Curator of History Lorne Hammond (May 28, 2014) toured British Columbia to put on a temporary exhibit on Italian history that included a collaborative component unique to each venue, he learned:

> … you just go into the community and ask, 'What would you like to discuss?', 'How would you like to be presented?', 'What would you like visitors to know about what would you like to say in this exhibit and how can we help you do that?' If you do that then all the skill you have as a museum professional building exhibits is at the service of the community, but you can't get there unless you give the community authority, and recognize the authority over what you might want to do personally.

Thus, working with communities means that museum staff must offer their expertise to help the community communicate a message of their choosing.

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Community-based partnerships are a key aspect of collaborative practice, as they participate in all aspects of the project (Atalay 2012:63). Bishop Museum President and CEO Blair Collis (April 10, 2013) described the process of collaboration under his watch as follows:

> Let's develop a group of individuals in our community who can work with us from the beginning through this process, so that we are not representing this to the community and going, 'Aren't you happy?' [Rather, we are saying to them]: 'You are going to share in the great joy and the great suffering that comes from this birthing or re-birthing of trying to do justice of telling a story like this'. It's bumpy. You are trying to tell someone—like a Native Hawaiian studies professor at the University of Hawai'i—'Talk to us about the overthrow [of the Hawaiian monarchy] and it's going to have to be in 200 words'… you can imagine that conversation… those are things that we wanted to make sure we did that we hadn't done before… being able to [change] a gallery space into a gathering space. Creating the environment in terms of the context to be able to have a conversation.

Similarly, Royal BC Museum Director of Exhibits Mark Dickson (May 26, 2014) articulated the difficulties and benefits of involving community members as partners in exhibit creation:

> We all want the same goal. I said in a recent planning meeting [with Indigenous partners]: 'We are all here for the same reason. We are here to get the message out: this is a time to have fun, to celebrate, but I also need to warn you, tears will be shed. Tempers will rise. It's a guarantee'. Building exhibits is a messy business. It is a passionate process. When you have people with passion, it's going to get heated. I think we have seen all of the emotions through the process. But when it opens at the end, we are all going to hug and cheer and celebrate together that we did this wonderful thing. The moments of angst will disappear at the end. We all benefit from working on a project like this.

Bishop Museum Director of Community Affairs Noelle Kahanu (April 15, 2013) agreed that working with community is challenging, but important: "At some point, you have to just make a commitment to the principles and values of which this relationship that the museum says it purportedly stands for and you have to let go of the desire to control the outcome." Kahanu explained:

> It's all about relationships. For me, it was hard to take the lead, and to facilitate the consultation process. You have to be willing to make the overture, to initiate the relationship. Be willing to understand that it's human nature that if someone's hostile, it's not personal if they are

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hostile towards the institution, there is all the emotions that you have to go through with the understanding that is all about establishing relationships, building relationships, and maintaining them and all that that entails. It's been incredibly rewarding.

The thing about the museum is that you can get to the point where people are passionate about us—whether negative or positive—it shows the depth of the community connections and then channelling that energy and making it be about partnerships.

The most innovative solution for collaboration that I found was the Royal BC Museum's method for the "Our Living Languages" exhibit. Rather than collecting a committee of experts to work with the museum, the museum created a formal partnership with the First Peoples' Cultural Council, who then had the responsibility to consult with their First Nations constituents. The council designated a First Nations curator who was the single point of contact with the community and who co-curated the exhibit by working at the museum. In this case, the relationship between the First Peoples' Cultural Council and the Royal BC Museum was formalized through a memorandum of understanding, providing a framework for the collaborative methods.

One of the principles of ethical collaboration is the development and maintenance of building long-lasting relationships with communities, rather than engaging them for a one-time project (Atalay 2012:86). This was also emphasized by many of my interviewees. Relationships between the Royal BC Museum and Kwakwaka'wakw communities have been ongoing for many years through the co-management of the Mungo Martin house (Wawadit'ła) in Thunderbird Park. The house is owned and controlled by descendants of the family. According to the Royal BC Museum website, the house "continues to be a place of meeting for urban First Nations people practicing their cultures, as well as a place where non-First Nations people can learn about these living traditions."[117] The community is the rights holder and still control its use, but the museum is responsible for upkeep and conservation. Indigenous community relationships can and will be formed within museums through a variety of departments and projects that do not always centre on exhibits.

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[117] https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/cultural-precinct/

One way of continuing to strengthen relationships with communities is to ensure that they are involved in other museum operations, such as programming, and that they feel some authority over their objects within the museum collections. Agreements about the contents of exhibits extend to what is not on display and ensuring that materials are treated in the proper way according to community protocols. At the Denver Museum, some of these storage and access protocols were shared with the museum during NAGPRA-sponsored tribal visits (Melissa Bechhoefer, April 30, 2014). Access to museum collections may make the museum more relevant to communities and might help them see the material as a resource. Myrna Pokiak, an Inuvialuit anthropologist (July 17, 2013), speculated "if [Inuvialuit] people were aware of the [Northern Heritage Centre] collections, I think it would create some excitement about coming here and seeing things." Collections access also provides an opportunity for community members to use the knowledge and collections to revive or strengthen cultural practices.

## Indigenous Museum Staff

Indigenous people who are trained exhibit designers or hold other positions at museums may simply be involved in an exhibit project as part of their job. In my case studies, I did not encounter or hear of any Indigenous persons who held technical jobs. Instead I observed that they tended to hold positions that focused more on research, curatorial, education, or collections work. My interviewees, including every one of the museum directors, all agreed that more Indigenous people on staff would be a benefit, because people inside the culture could care for and interpret their own material and would bring insider perspectives to their work.

Several of the Bishop Museum staff that I spoke to are Native Hawaiian and were engaged with their own communities and thus able to act as ambassadors for the museum. They often expressed how their cultural background gave them a personal connection to their work and imbued it with meaning. Bishop Museum Assistant Collections Manager Kamalu du Preez (April 12, 2013) talked about how Bernice Pauahi Bishop's "attitude, her will, her mental determination to ensure that Hawaiian culture is perpetuated" helps her feel that she is honouring her ancestors. Bishop Museum Cultural Connections Technician Lissa Gendreau (April 16, 2013) told me that her work has:

… sparked more of an interest in me to learn more of the language and learn more about who I am… I'm starting to understand more about responsibility and how to make this place a resource to the community… my biggest area of interest/concern is keeping the place relevant. [Community members] need to feel that it is not just a museum of history but of present culture… it helps with the community knowing that those efforts are being made.

Although there are only few Aboriginal people on staff at the Northern Heritage Centre, there is a permanent "community liaison" position. The position is staffed by an individual with personal ties to Aboriginal communities, whose role is to bring her perspective to the museum's work. Karen Wright-Fraser currently holds the position. She liaises with her own Gwich'in community, and also promotes the museum to other Aboriginal communities across the Northwest Territories in order to encourage further engagement with the museum's various sections. Wright-Fraser is not directly involved in all of the exhibit projects, but she does sit on the Exhibit Selection Committee. In this way, the Northern Heritage Centre has formalized a method for community feedback into its staffing structure.

However, the stakes may be higher for Indigenous museum staff since the choices that museum directors and other staff make can affect individual's relationships with their communities (Mike Mitchell, July 17, 2014). Indigenous peoples undertaking heritage projects can sometimes find themselves pulled in two directions as they balance personal and professional responsibilities. [118] Territorial Archaeologist Tom Andrews (July 15, 2014) mentioned that differences in community worldview and the decisions made by the museum were issues for his work as well. When the museum's exhibits did not clearly portray or honour the spirit of the collaborative relationships that he had formed, this had the potential to negatively impact his working relationships with communities.

My interviewees generally agreed that employing Indigenous people in various roles was the most straightforward way to incorporate their perspectives into museums. Despite this aspiration, particularly among those in positions of power like directors and

[118] Several other examples of this phenomenon are presented in first-person narratives found in *Being and Becoming Indigenous Archaeologists* (Nicholas 2010), including a chapter by Myrna Pokiak (2010).

department heads, they also acknowledged that professionally trained individuals make up a shallow talent pool. There is a clear need to encourage Indigenous youth to pursue post-secondary education in museum-related subjects in order to train the next wave of Indigenous museologists. The issue is difficult in the Northwest Territories, as there are no post-secondary institutions that teach museum studies, anthropology, or other heritage-related topics. Aboriginal youth possess little awareness about the jobs available in heritage fields. Myrna Pokiak, the only Inuvialuit anthropologist (July 17, 2014), noted that one remedy would be encouraging more youth involvement in the museum. She believes that the Northern Heritage Centre could play a stronger role "to give [high school] students opportunities to see jobs that are available in archaeology and anthropology" and to show them that their "cultural upbringing can help [them] gain a position or employment within the [Northern] heritage centre." She acknowledged that post-secondary education can be a barrier, but felt that the museum should also focus on other ways, such as internships, of quantifying cultural knowledge that are equal to a formal degree.

Indigenous communities have been engaged with each of the four case study museums as consultants, collaborators, board members, and professional members of staff. Museum staff seem to like the idea of more Indigenous staff at the museum who could bring their cultural perspectives and personal experience directly into their work; this has been a successful strategy at the Bishop Museum. Engaging communities in long-term relationships that include—but are not limited to—exhibit projects seems to be a preferred strategy for working together. When exhibit projects require quicker action than is possible in a long-term process of relationship building, museums have found a variety of ways of working whereby different elements of collaborative strategies are employed. In emphasizing the importance of understanding the elements of museum design, Bishop Museum Director of Education and Exhibits Mike Shannahan (April 16, 2013) remarked that "treating the [museum] customers nicely" was of equal if not more importance to ensure that the intended messages are not lost through a bad experience of the museum.

## Exhibit Design: Effective Messaging

During my interviews, many noted that portraying Indigenous peoples in the context of a "living culture" is important. This statement implies that museums have not always done an effective job at conveying the contemporary existence of Indigenous peoples and traditions. I discussed in Chapter 2 how evolutionary displays that treated non-Western cultures as analogous to those of "Stone Age" Europeans contributed to the image of Indigenous peoples as unchanging and primitive, and therefore doomed to extinction. Earlier I noted that Denver Museum Director of Exhibits Jodi Schoemer (April 24, 2014) stated that exhibits "capture a moment in the past," freezing the subjects in time and suggesting that they might not exist in the present. The four museums in my study have collaborated with Indigenous people to address this problem and coupled it with an earnest effort to portray an internalist sense of the contemporary culture.

When the Royal BC Museum worked with the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council on the "Out of the Mist" exhibit, the community insisted that two Nuu-chah-nulth hosts be present in the galleries and tour with the exhibit to other locations. Royal BC Museum Vice President of Visitor Experience Tim Willis (April 29, 2013) explained that "[o]ne of the great obstacles of a museum [is that] it almost inherently makes it seem like it all happened in the past." Willis believes that museum visitors "should meet Aboriginal people" rather than only engaging with items behind glass. Stereotypes about Indigenous people and culture as stagnant and stranded in the past continue to exist in North America, but they may be even stronger for visitors from Europe or Asia who know less about contemporary Indigenous North Americans.

Many Aboriginal people make Yellowknife their home and since daily interaction with Indigenous people is the normative experience, the Northern Heritage Centre does not need to communicate the message that "Aboriginal people are still here." What the museum concentrates on portraying is the continuation of traditional cultural practices. Northern Heritage Centre Graphic Designer Dot Van Vliet (July 16, 2013) said that including photographs of contemporary people practicing their traditions is one way to show this (see Figure 6.3). Exhibit Designer Rae Braden (July 16, 2013) agreed and added that having younger people telling stories about their culture shows that traditions are being handed down to the next generation.

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**Figure 6.3.  Mountain caribou diorama panel, Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre.**
Photo by S. Carr-Locke

## Storytelling

Many staff at the four institutions mentioned storytelling as a way to add dynamism to static exhibits. Northern Heritage Centre Curatorial Assistant Susan Irving (July 16, 2013) said "[a]n exhibit is a certain form of storytelling for me." Narrative learning is a method that reflects the worldview of northern Indigenous peoples. Bishop Museum Historian DeSoto Brown (April 15, 2013) was impressed and inspired by the use of "active voice" and storytelling when he visited the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. He noted that the interactions between live storytellers and visitors at the Bishop Museum are important to the institution, and are often mentioned by visitors in the comment book in the gallery.

President and CEO of the Bishop Museum Blair Collis has a background in publishing. When I asked him about the connection between his former job in that industry and his current job as CEO of a museum, he replied:

> I see both philosophically and operationally—or museum management
> –wise— publishing is very much a metaphor for museum work. On a
> philosophical basis, at the end of the day all you're really doing here
> [at the museum]—primarily—is storytelling. You are trying to present
> items of significance (if you are a collections-based museum) and
> intellectual property—whether it be Native ways of knowing or Western
> scholarship—and combining these into something that's compelling
> (Blair Collis, April 10, 2013).

Storytelling is a heuristic device that museums use to imbue objects with meaning and to present information to visitors. Museum exhibits typically join intangible culture in the form of information with tangible culture in the form of objects. Dioramas and object-centred exhibits are older styles of exhibitry that are still used in museums today. Since the 1980s, "thematic" exhibits have been employed whereby the focus is on telling a story or presenting an idea and objects are later found in the collection in order to illustrate the message. In all of these styles, museum objects become part of an exhibit through the presentation of information that makes objects relevant and portrays their spiritual, cultural, or scientific provenance. Creating an exhibit means deciding what information to present and then translating that information into a narrative. Denver Museum Exhibition Content Developer and Writer Frances Kreuger (April 24, 2013) eloquently distilled this process in her statement: "What you're doing is serving as a collector and a sieve for knowledge and information and ideas… [you are] trying to boil things down to what people will find interesting and how to write in a way that is captivating enough, but brief enough."

At Bishop Museum, Hawaiian Hall was intended to be more of a thematic-style exhibit, where objects were used to illustrate the narrative and messages that the Native Hawaiian consultants wanted to impart. Occasionally the exhibit designers struggled to find ways to illustrate certain stories or themes with the existing collection (Dave Kemble, April 18, 2013). However, solutions emerged from the dialogue that followed. For example, when there were gaps in the narrative and collection their terms of reference allowed them to commission artworks. In this manner the museum acquired a painting of the god Maoi pulling up the world with his fishhook to illustrate the creation story of the

Hawaiian Archipelago (Figure 6.4). Bishop Museum Assistant Collections Manager

Kamalu du Preez (April 12, 2013) noted that there is a cultural connection for Native

Hawaiians with the way storytelling is used in the galleries: "Our history is also telling

stories. It is a powerful moving metaphor."



**Figure 6.4.      Hawaiian Hall introductory case, Bishop Museum.**
Photo by S. Carr-Locke

It could be argued that narrative elements are an intrinsic element of museums,

in both research and storage as well as in display. However, when Indigenous

community members interact with collections on official research visits, a deeper level of

traditional storytelling is used as Elders interact with collections.[119] These stories can

serve to animate objects in a more relevant fashion to community members. Inuvialuit

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[119] See, for example, the "Sharing our Stories" projects at the Northern Heritage Centre. Elders
and youth spent time with their collections, with the former telling stories and the latter
recording video (http://www.pwnhc.ca/collections/sharing-our-stories/).

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Anthropologist Myrna Pokiak (July 17, 2013) said, "I know for my culture and how I was brought up, the way we learned and the way we show people things is by doing things and by showing rather than by speaking… so being able to see something [in an exhibit] rather than in a book or report, was really neat… it seems like an exhibit brings things a little more to life."

## Native Voice

The means to transmit the "Native voice" in museum exhibits is connected to storytelling. This term is used within museum anthropology to describe Indigenous perspectives and first-person quotes that are used in museum exhibits (West 2004:7). The inclusion of Native voice serves to emphasize agency so as to challenge "the social constructs that impose value and meaning on an Aboriginal voice as necessarily existing within an ethnographic and historical past" (Gough 2008:222). In the past, museums often employed neutral language that was unattributed to an individual, creating an impression of authority by masking the contextual nature of cultural knowledge. This narration style employs third-person pronouns and speaks about culture from the perspective of an objective outsider. While neutral voice still has its place in museums, including the Native voice was clearly evident in my case studies. Museum personnel credit this aspect of exhibitions for showing Indigenous people and their cultures as contemporary. Ruth Phillips (2003:163) calls these types of exhibits "multivocal."

Multivocality in the presentation of heritage research is something that has been acknowledged and worked through by those working in archaeology as well. Part of the postprocessualist movement in archaeology in the 1990s involved exploring different ways of interpreting and reporting archaeological data that upset the previously held assumption that archaeological interpretation was free of personal bias (Trigger 2006:471). Janet Spector (1993), for example, utilized a personal, autobiographical style, and a fictionalized story, to disrupt the dominant narrative of archaeology, which favoured the presentation of "facts." The typical presentation of archaeological results masked various biases, which feminist and other postprocessualists sought to identify. Sonya Atalay (2008a) notes that Indigenous archaeology is a way to promote multivocality by incorporating "Indigenous experiences and epistemologies into current mainstream archaeological practices" without replacing Western concepts with

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Indigenous ones. She explains that, for her, multivocality in archaeology means going beyond the inclusion of Native voice within interpretation, but including Indigenous theories and methods into the research design and management of heritage projects (Atalay 2008b:34).

Similarly, the inclusion of Indigenous voices within museum exhibits denotes sharing of authority over knowledge and demonstrates an important ideological shift towards acknowledging Indigenous knowledge as a valid form of interpretation (Brady 2011:205). As in archaeology, the inclusion of "Native voice" in museums emphasizes the belief that there are multiple forms of truth. As Christina Kreps (2003b:149) describes, "greater recognition of alternative perspectives and approaches has led to a critical reassessment of some of the most fundamental concepts underpinning the interpretation and representation of objects in museums." Viv Golding (2013:18) sees museums as a form of "polyvocal" practice, where community voices and perspectives are used to disrupt totalitarian curatorial power.

In the Royal BC Museum's First Peoples Galleries, Native voice appears in some of the presentations, such as the "Raven's World" exhibit cases. Visitors literally hear Nuu-chah-nulth and Kwakwaka'wakw storytellers speaking about the masks on display. However, the interpretation emanates from a typical distant curatorial voice, which leaves the impression that the people cannot speak for themselves. Despite attempts at "re-scripting" the Galleries (see Chapter 5), they continue to feature language and tone that conveys an outsider point of view, and do not employ first-person language. The exception is the Nisga'a exhibit, which utilizes first-person grammar (e.g., "Our land is sacred."). The "Our Living Languages" exhibit features greetings from 35 different language groups, and much of the information uses first-person syntax (e.g., "Our language comes from the land."). Although Native voice is present, limited as it is to these two areas of the First Peoples Galleries, it feels incongruous and limits Native perspectives to these two areas.

The Bishop Museum's Hawaiian Hall layers Native voice by featuring the text of traditional chants (in Native Hawaiian and English) on exhibit case vitrines, and first-person quotations about the uses of the objects within the cases. Historical Hawaiian voices sourced from archival documents or ethnographic studies are also included. All of

the quotes have dated attributions and eschew the neutral, curatorial voice. Although the Denver Museum does not have anything similar to the aforementioned chants, the newer-looking parts of the galleries (such as the Northwest Coast section) include many first-person quotes that explain important aspects of culture. Rather than providing Indigenous perspectives, the labels in the Royal BC Museum First Peoples Galleries primarily discuss patterns of food collection or facts about pre-contact lifestyle from an outsider perspective. Multivocality is clearly present in the Northern Heritage Centre dioramas; in fact, there is very little "curatorial" interpretation. Considering that the project was originally called "Northern Voices," the inclusion of Native voice seemed to be a guiding philosophy.

Native voice is sometimes actually heard in museum exhibits. The introductory section of Crane Hall at the Denver Museum features a video in which Native North Americans welcome visitors in their Native languages (see Figures 5.11 and 6.5). This technique is also utilized in the Canadian Museum of History's First Peoples Hall.[120] The Bishop Museum's Hawaiian Hall features a panel about *hula*, which includes demonstration video and audio of Native Hawaiian cultural advisors—their voices are occasionally heard singing throughout the Hall. There are other video installations that feature Native Hawaiian voices sharing their internalist experience of politics and identity.

[120] For a comparison of how various media are used to articulate "Native voice" at the Canadian Museum of History, the Chicago Field Museum, and the National Museum of the American Indian, see Brady (2011).
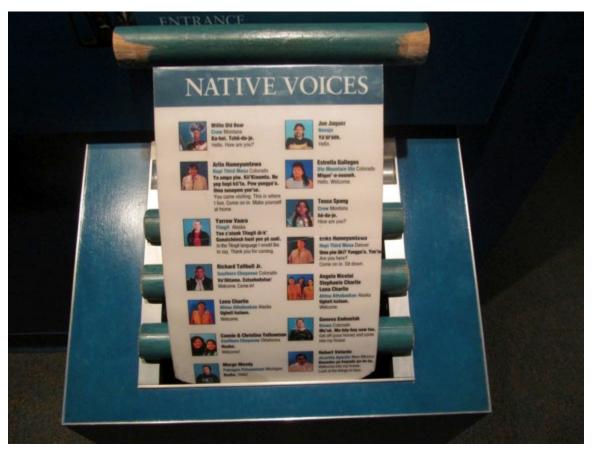
**Figure 6.5.    Native Voices exhibit label, Crane Hall, Denver Museum.**
Photo by S. Carr-Locke

## Programming

In museum parlance, "programming" is any activity that involves public interaction with a live person. Programs might range from guided tours of the building and exhibits to evening lectures to children's programs. Programming is not an aspect of exhibit design, but it helps to activate the exhibits and provides another level of interpretation and learning for visitors. Since Duncan Cameron (1971) first described museums as having the potential to be "forums" rather than "temples," the role of museums as places for learning and discussion has been widely recognized. As Tim Willis (April 29, 2013) from the Royal BC Museum noted, the museum can function as a "neutral, non-threatening place where people can meet." Jack Lohman, Royal BC Museum CEO (April 28, 2014), said that they can "be a catalyst" (employing the precise mission of the Denver Museum) at the same time that they create a neutral space for discussion, through public programming.

During my study tour, I observed several programs that were put on by museums for the public, primarily at the Northern Heritage Centre and the Bishop Museum. The Denver Museum manages a large number of volunteers who host hands-on programs that are held in many of the galleries during all open hours, however there were no volunteers stationed in the Crane Hall galleries to provide programming about Indigenous culture. Unfortunately, I was not able to observe any programs or go on any official tours at the Royal BC Museum due to time constraints.

Docents are typically volunteers whose role within programming is to give tours of the galleries. Bishop Museum Director of Education, Exhibits and Planetarium Mike Shannahan (April 16, 2013) told me that the docents there are trained by Native Hawaiians. That method ensures that an internalist perspective informs the tours. Royal British Columbia Museum Curator of Ethnology Martha Black (May 29, 2014) sees the potential in using live storytelling and interpretation to "re-script" the RBCM's First Peoples Galleries in lieu of changing the label text, and showed me some examples from her notes. The Royal BC Museum recently decided that First Nations alone will provide programming on topics about Aboriginal people, thus reversing a 30-year policy (Janet MacDonald 2014). Programming can also add another level of storytelling through the recounting of the guide's experience. For example, I was impressed by a docent Richard Wong at the Bishop Museum whose storytelling skills imparted many factual and quirky insights into Hawaiian Hall. The Northern Heritage Centre does not have docents or volunteers; public tours are given by the education staff, and typically only during the summer peak season.

I participated in one interactive program at the Northern Heritage Centre as part of an exhibit that was on display at the time. "Staff Picks" included archival photos of Dene hand games[121] tournaments. The museum hired Bobby Grygeese, a Dene man who runs cultural tours, to teach the visitors how to play the game in the exhibit gallery (Figure 6.6). The demonstration was accompanied by the live drumming that is part of the tradition. According to the Northern Heritage Centre French Language Heritage

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[121] A traditional betting game that involves guessing in which hand a small rock or token is hidden. Hand games tournaments are still very popular throughout Dene territory and are a key part of most cultural gatherings.

Education Officer Mike Mitchell (July 17, 2013), live interaction in the galleries was a newer practice for the museum, although Robert R. Janes (personal communication, June 16, 2015) noted that it was standard practice in the 1980s and 1990s. Mitchell thought this program was a "good model—that is, having someone in the gallery to host and interpret on-site,"—at the same time it shows that Dene are "living their culture." Mitchell expressed that the museum needs more interactivity in general. Exhibit team members Dot Van Vliet and Rae Braden (July 16, 2013) also mentioned the need for more interactive programming.



**Figure 6.6.** **Hand games activities, Staff Pics exhibit, Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre.**
Photo by M. Mitchell.

## Mission and Vision Statements

Communicating institutional priorities is something that motivates both staff work and the content of exhibits. One of the strongest messages that I received in my studies

was the value of a clear mission and vision statement that guides institutional work with Indigenous people. The 2011 Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum Mission Statement (Figure 6.7) was the result of a strategic planning process that involved Native Hawaiian community members.[122] The Mission Statement lays out the vision and mission that serve as the institution's strategic plan. The document includes twelve "guiding statements," including an explicit recognition that "Hawai'i and its host culture" are the priority for the museum. Bishop Museum Director of Cultural Collections Betty Lou Kam (April 15, 2013) told me that many of the staff who worked with this statement pinned a copy up behind their computers, and others mentioned that it was a valuable guiding document for their work. Previous studies on the Bishop Museum show that in the past, the museum struggled with its identity and that staff were divided about what the central goal of their work should be (Harrison 1993b; Kelly 1993). There was thus value in creating strong mission and vision statements that clearly defined the museum's role vis-à-vis the Native Hawaiian community. In contrast, the staff at the Northern Heritage Centre pointed to the *lack* of strong mission and vision as an issue that has a negative impact on their work.

[122] The Mission Statement can be found on the Bishop Museum website: http://www.bishopmuseum.org/images/pdf/stratplan.pdf

**Figure 6.7. Bishop Museum Mission Statement (2011).**[123]

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[123] http://www.bishopmuseum.org/images/pdf/stratplan.pdf, used with permission.

Although the Royal BC Museum and the Denver Museum had both recently created new strategic plans, at the time of my visit neither had directly articulated a vision pertaining to Aboriginal peoples. The Denver Museum's mission and vision focused on science and education: "Mission: Be a catalyst! Ignite our community's passion for nature and science. Vision: The Denver Museum of Nature & Science envisions an empowered community that loves, understands, and protects our natural world." However, neither the mission nor vision statements allude to human culture and they remain silent on directing its Department of Anthropology regarding an appropriate role. Both the curators and the President/CEO of the Denver Museum see anthropology through the lens of hard science. In the spring of 2014 the Denver Museum had just launched a "Community Voices Initiative," which may provide some official direction for engagement with the community; anthropological and sociological methods will be used to guide that engagement.

The Denver Museum has a statement of ethics that is an addendum to its mission and vision.[124] As in-house lawyer Lynda Knowles (April 24, 2014) explained:

> Generally speaking, the museum commits to the principle of non-discrimination, in terms of who it serves, in terms of how it serves, but... it's not just a duty not to do something, it's a duty to do something. That can be interpreted as engagement, as accuracy in terms of reflecting or displaying something regarding a particular people. Those are legally driven to some extent, but they're also institutional ethical guidelines that we use as well... those principles will guide what we all do. When we enter into exhibits, we will spend a lot of time thinking about not only what we are showing, but how we are showing it, to whom we are showing it, and the underlying accuracy of what we portray, and the sensitivity that's involved in that.

My interviews with Denver Museum President and CEO George Sparks (May 7, 2014) and others (e.g., Lynda Knowles, April 24, 2014; Steve Nash, May 2, 2014) convinced me that there is a strong sense of ethical practice at the Denver Museum guiding bilateral relations with Native American communities.

The Royal BC Museum's "Vision 2017" document sets out the philosophy that will guide the next few years during a redevelopment project for the museum.[125]

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[124] http://www.dmns.org/media/6902/DMNS-Ethics-Policy-Statement.pdf

Although it does not articulate a full, refreshed mission and vision, the document does state that the museum will focus on "living cultures" and will ask, "What is the cultural landscape that surrounds us today? Where did it come from? How does it sit today in a world where we are all online and multinational?" The Royal BC Museum will likely undergo significant changes in this regard leading up to the planned reopening in 2017 and because Jack Lohman, in his tenure as CEO, has prioritized direct changes in dialogues with Indigenous peoples.

Interviewees remarked on the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre's lack of strong mission and vision (Dot Van Vliet, July 16, 2013; Rae Braden July 16, 2013). Tom Andrews also wrote in his Ph.D. dissertation that "there exists no formal mechanism, either in the museum's mandate or its collections strategy, to endorse or facilitate" (2011:214) a collaborative approach to museum work, as he has taken. He notes that it "has been the practice of a few staff, not endemic to the operational procedures of the institution." Andrew's statements suggest that the current lack of formal inclusion of collaborative principles means that there is no obligation on the part of staff to act ethically or follow the high standards set by Andrews' and others' previous collaborative work. There is clear advantage in ensuring the ongoing articulation of the ways of working with Indigenous peoples within mission/vision or similar operating principles.

In their 2007 study of the ways in which museum governance affects relationship building with Indigenous communities, Elizabeth Scott and Edward Luby found that most museums in the United States lacked the structural and governance apparatus to support ongoing collaborations with Indigenous communities. They recommended that mission and vision statements should outline the museum's relationship to Indigenous communities (281). Formalizing relationships with Indigenous peoples via written documents such as policy statements and formal agreements is another one of their recommendations (280). The use of memoranda of understanding (MOUs) to guide museum/Indigenous relationships has also been noted by Robert R. Janes (2007:225), and is a fitting way to formally embed working relationships into institutional practices.

[125] http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/about/vision-2017/

The Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage project recommends the use of memoranda of agreement to formalize collaborative projects.[126]


## Challenges

Every person I interviewed was in favour of partnerships and wanted to increase interactions with Indigenous communities. The ideal scenario of collaboration seems to be what both staff and community members desire, particularly for large-scale permanent exhibits related to local, indigenous cultures. In order to carry out these projects correctly, however, significant resources (primarily staff time and money) are needed. Those making decisions regarding the allocation of resources at museums, such as directors, boards, etc., must be committed to its founding philosophy and understand what collaborative processes entail. Moreover, true collaboration requires a fair degree of negotiation, mutual learning, and may require additional travel for staff and community members. Most importantly, collaboration requires public museums to relinquish some control over the content of their exhibits. The development of ongoing relationships with Indigenous communities requires constant renewal of that commitment because some museums lack the capacity to maintain such relationships.

There are also, of course, capacity and resource issues on the community side. Museum projects are not always the top priority for bands, tribes, or other Indigenous organizations that may have limited resources, capacity, or other priorities. The community may not have an appropriate designate with the right expertise who is able to devote their time to an exhibition project. In places such as the Northwest Territories, transportation to and from communities can also add significantly to project costs. Despite the adoption of a philosophy of collaboration, consulting and/or collaborating with community for every exhibit is not always possible or practical. For example, Royal BC Museum Curator Grant Keddie (May 29, 2014) recalled a situation where he had archaeological material from 48 different communities in one exhibit case, which made collaboration simply impractical.

[126] See
    http://www.sfu.ca/ipinch/sites/default/files/resources/fact_sheets/ipinch_moa_factsheet_jan2015.pdf

At both the Royal BC Museum and the Denver Museum, staff reported being "embarrassed" by the age of the First Peoples Galleries and Crane Hall, respectively. All of the interviewees at these institutions acknowledged that these areas were overdue for renovations. However, given the size of both galleries, renovation projects would likely require millions of dollars, and so far maintenance or other, more urgent building projects has been the priority. Large multidisciplinary museums often focus their resources on galleries that have a large draw with children and families (such as dinosaurs). Royal BC Museum Vice President of Visitor Experience Tim Willis (April 29, 2013) acknowledged that significant resources are devoted to creating and hosting "blockbuster" exhibits that bring many visitors through the doors. Their value is visitor appeal, but that requires money that could be spent on renovating areas like the First Peoples Galleries. Denver Museum Director of Exhibits and Digital Media Jodi Schoemer (April 24, 2014) noted:

> The more that a cultural exhibition focuses on a culture that is far distant in the past or that doesn't have an obvious existing contemporary culture, the easier it is to explain those messages, and come up with it and synthesize. In a sound bite kind of way that are the things you want to know. And the more recent, familiar or contemporary the culture is, the harder it is to do that. That's not to say that we shouldn't embrace the challenges, but doing an exhibition on Pompeii, or doing an exhibition on ancient Egypt and doing an exhibition about Native Americans, those are different approaches you have to take.

Putting significant time, money, and effort into collaborative projects does not always result in their success. Despite the museum's best efforts to work with Dene communities on the interpretation of the dioramas, there remains some concern that Dene Elders do not approve of "stuffed animals" (i.e., taxidermy specimens), which they see as disrespectful to the animal's spirit (Tom Andrews, July 17, 2014). While the museum may have succeeded in creating suitable interpretation in the labels, the feedback would suggest that the concept of showcasing the animals in dioramas is a flawed premise that the Dene communities may not have favoured. However, since they were not brought in during the initial planning stages of the project, construction was already well underway before anything could be done.

Indigenous world views might affect exhibit plans in unexpected ways, which is a strong argument for ongoing consultation and involving people right from the planning stages. One example of this concerns "authenticity." Gwyneira Isaac (2011) shows that

Zuni people believe that replicas and reproductions of objects and people are just as sacred as originals, and are inappropriate for public viewing. In an example from the neighbouring Pueblo peoples, Chip Colwell (2011) explores the ethical "quandaries" of what the museum should do with a donation of artistic sketches of Pueblo rituals created against the wishes of the community. These examples underscore the need for exhibit designers and planners to understand the spiritual beliefs of the community they intend to portray. This understanding is likely only achieved through longer-term relationships and consultation with communities at all stages of exhibit planning to ensure that the topic and contents are appropriate.

## Chapter Summary

The Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, and the Royal British Columbia Museum each have their own ways of representing and working with local Indigenous peoples. However, the discussion above shows that there were commonalities between the museums as presented under each of my research question topics (history of collaboration, exhibit creation, and exhibit design). With regards to the history of collaboration, the case studies show that Indigenous peoples had limited involvement in exhibit creation in these institutions before the 1970s. The 1990s marked the first clear examples of museums working collaboratively to present their perspectives in temporary exhibits that were created as attempts to convey information about important issues such as trapping in the North ("Trapline, Lifeline" at the Northern Heritage Centre) and the plight of urban Indigenous people ("Moccasins on Pavement" at the Denver Museum) to the wider community. By the 2000s, there was stronger integration of Indigenous people as museums began to turn more power over to community members to dictate content (e.g., the Nuu-chah-nulth exhibit at the Royal BC Museum). The interview subjects also told me about their preferred practices for working with Indigenous communities on exhibit creation and how community members were engaged in the process. Addressing questions about exhibit design, my interviewees emphasized that exhibits are tangible products that require professional expertise to plan, design, and construct. The exhibits at each case study museum demonstrated aspects of effective messaging, including the importance of programming. There are

challenges associated with creating collaborative exhibits, and the limitations of time, resources, and capacity (both of Indigenous communities and of the museums) are real and must be addressed as part of exhibit projects.

# Chapter 7.

# Conclusion

> If the resources were otherwise available, would people really care
> about putting their culture on display to outsiders? Indeed, would they
> want to be on display at all? (Hendry 2005:81)

My goal in writing this dissertation has been to explore how Indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States are involved in the creation of exhibits that represent aspects of their cultures. The primary question that guided my research was: "What does ethical collaborative practice look like when developing exhibits about Indigenous people?" I framed my analysis of Indigenous collaboration with museums with the concept of Indigenous museology. In this final chapter, I summarize my main points and then turn back to the concept of Indigenous museology to explore how the insights gained about exhibits from my fieldwork provide insight into the past and the future of the theory and practice.

## Indigenous Heritage and Public Museums

In order to gain a fuller understanding of the process of collaborative exhibit creation with Indigenous peoples, I divided my analysis into three themes: 1) the history of collaborative practice; 2) the current process of collaborative practice; and 3) design characteristics of collaborative exhibits. My research consisted of a literature review (Chapter 2) and case study research (Chapters 4 and 5). I conducted ethnographic studies of the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, and the Royal British Columbia Museum to look at "on the ground" collaborative exhibition methods and exhibits. These case studies allowed me to explore the history and present application of collaborative methods in context and practice and to reveal common patterns (Chapter 6).

In Chapter 2, I introduced the idea of Indigenous museology to describe the approach Indigenous people adopt in museum work done with, for, and by them. I categorized these developments as three "waves," which cumulate in the current practices in place in museums today. I showed how the development of Indigenous museology is part of a wider conversation about the right of Indigenous people to be involved in the care, research, and presentation of their heritage. In Chapter 6, I demonstrated how the patterns of development of collaborative exhibit creation at the four museums mirrored many of the patterns discussed in the historical overview presented in Chapter 2. Through this exercise, I showed that current collaborative practices are the result of a long development influenced by both individual staff members' interests and agendas. Larger trends in museum and heritage studies literature, along with Indigenous activism, have also guided the development of these collaborative practices.

My fieldwork involved in-depth studies of four museums in disparate parts of Canada and the United States. The main goals of these studies were twofold: 1) to conduct interviews with staff about their knowledge of the history of collaborative methods and their experience with current practice and 2) to conduct visual analyses of heritage exhibitions created with Indigenous people using collaborative methods. My secondary goals were to gain an understanding of the institutional culture of these museums by spending time there as a researcher, to experience other aspects of the institutions, and to collect publically accessible reference materials.

My four case studies varied greatly in their geographic contexts and the Indigenous cultures and languages they represented, in their histories, and in their final exhibit products. The "character" of each case study institution was dictated by these factors, as well as the individual personalities, agendas, and cultural backgrounds of the staff at each location. However, four main patterns emerged: 1) Overall, there seems to be implicit support for involving Indigenous people (both as external partners and as staff members) in all aspects of museum operations, including exhibits; 2) The general trend over time has been to increase their involvement in all of the museums I visited on my study tour; 3) The interviews showed that champions of collaboration are important, and that the leadership of each museum needs to be in favour of collaborative practices; and 4) The importance of involving Indigenous people in museum work, despite the

additional resources, planning, and time required.

Each museum's character is dictated by the contents of their collections and their institutional mission statements. The four case study museums presented here can be described as multidisciplinary based on their collections and research agendas. Each is also charged with representing the scope of their state, province, or territory's natural and cultural history. The missions of the museums varied greatly. The Denver Museum focused on presenting anthropology and Native American cultures as part of their overall mission to spark interest in science; they plan to remove the exhibits of Native Americans in favour of telling an anthropology-focused story about humanity as a whole. Although the Northern Heritage Centre has a relatively weak mission statement, and the exhibition program suffers slightly from lack of direction, most of the exhibits presented nonetheless include the voices and perspectives of Aboriginal peoples. The Royal BC Museum is in the midst of a restructuring and re-visioning process, but seeks to change its exhibit tack in order to ensure that the Aboriginal peoples express their experiences using first-person grammar and syntax, and are incorporated into the main narrative about the province's history.

The Bishop Museum's mission, vision, and guiding principles (Figure 6.7) promote an interesting model that shows how a multidisciplinary museum can ensure that its activities are conducted ethically with respect to Native Hawaiian cultures and people. Its third guiding statement reads: "We recognize Hawai'i and its host culture as our priority." The museum has a greater number of Indigenous people on staff than the other case study museums. The Bishop Museum's recent successes with collaboration on the Hawaiian Hall renovation, the Kū exhibit, and the collaborative creation of the mission and vision statement have brought the museum in closer contact and collaboration with members of the Native Hawaiian community. This museum also shows that an internalist perspective can be included in the exhibits about Native Hawaiian culture and history, and about the landscape, environment, and even the astronomy of Hawai'i.

My case studies revealed that there is a need for flexible, creative, and most of all pragmatic approaches to creating museum exhibits in collaboration with Indigenous people. The process is complicated and necessarily involves a variety of cultural and

museum experts in order to execute. All interviewees agreed that community engagement requires the development and maintenance of long-term relationships. Everyone agreed that each museum should continue to foster and develop such working relationships. Unfortunately, long-term relationships between museums and communities can be hampered by various factors, including the capacity of both parties, the retirement of staff who were key to the relationships, and a lack of commitment to the partnership from all of the parties involved.

## Good Practices

The interview subjects from the four museums told me about their best practices for working with Indigenous peoples. A key point made by my interviewees is that an exhibit is a tangible product that requires professional expertise to plan, design, and construct. Museums need to ensure that both museum staff and community partners are well-suited to working collaboratively. Working partnerships between communities and museums that are forged during exhibit projects should foster long-term relationships that involve other aspects of museum practice, such as collections care and management. The staff of each museum would ideally like to see more Indigenous people become museum professionals so they can bring community perspectives directly into their work.

In critically analyzing the exhibits at each case study museum, I noticed strategies that were effective at transmitting messages to the public. Interviewees noted that the key message for them was to ensure that visitors realized that Indigenous cultural practices remain active and are part of the modern world. The ways to convey this message include ensuring that "Native voice" is seen and heard in the exhibit so that Indigenous people's input is included in their own words. Storytelling was underscored as one particularly effective way to conceptualize the function and role of museum exhibits and to help connect exhibits to customary storytelling. Programming was noted as a way to transmit messages to the public by engaging them directly with Indigenous people who can teach them more about the exhibit content.

Finally, in order to direct the future development of collaborations, to formalize ethical practice, and to direct effective design, both a strong museum mission and vision are needed. The development of strategic frameworks that accompany museum missions and vision statements may involve including Indigenous people and other stakeholders as part of the process, as was done by the Bishop Museum. While the other museums show that ethical principles were being followed with respect to working with communities, these were not necessarily recorded as official institutional guiding principles. Museum mission statements can be an opportunity for cementing institutional commitments to working with Indigenous peoples.

After careful analysis of my case study results, I offer seven recommendations for fostering ethical, collaborative practices with Indigenous communities for creating museum exhibits. These are:

1. ***Have a strong mission and vision statement*** that articulates responsibilities to Indigenous peoples and descendants of object creators;

2. ***Solidify ongoing relationships*** with the institution through the use of memoranda of understanding so that they extend beyond the foundational personal relationships. These relationships should include engaging youth to help mentor and prepare them for heritage jobs;

3. ***Ensure early and ongoing engagement*** of communities in exhibition projects so that the whole process from concept to execution includes community input. These relationships should be acknowledged in exhibit signage;

4. ***Embrace multivocality*** as a key element in exhibits that allows multiple perspectives and epistemologies to be heard;

5. ***Utilize contemporary art*** and other objects to complement older collections and demonstrate that material culture is part of a continuum of cultural practice and worldview; and

6. ***Develop museum programs*** with the community to enhance the desired messages of the exhibits. Ensure that Indigenous peoples are involved in the program execution.

7. ***Employ digital technologies critically*** to give exhibits a reach outside the physical museum space. It is important, however, to ensure that cultural information is shared in line with local Indigenous protocols and that Indigenous ownership over intangible material is recognized.

In presenting these recommendations, it is understood that a perfect balance between them is difficult. In the section below, I look at some of the barriers that prevent museums and their staff from being one hundred percent successful in their collaborative exhibit projects.

## Cautions and Challenges

In this dissertation, I have focused on the ways Indigenous peoples work with museums to create exhibits in Canada and the United States. While I expect that the results of this study will resonate beyond my geographic focus, the results and recommendations might require reworking in order to be applicable to a global context. Notably, there is some evidence to show that museums in other places are applying many of the principles outlined above (see, for example, McCarthy 2011).

My study is biased to promote and support collaborative practices in museums. The people I interviewed were all seemingly in favour of promoting and supporting their museum's work with Indigenous peoples. While I did hear some criticisms of the exhibits and museum processes, I did not seek out those who were against working with communities. While I was able to speak to a larger percentage of the staff at the Northern Heritage Centre, there were likely some dissenting opinions that I did not capture. Comparatively, at the Bishop Museum, the Denver Museum, and the Royal BC Museum, I talked to a much smaller percentage of staff. I was not able to incorporate the opinions of any archaeologists or those on the "research" side of the Bishop Museum and was not able to gather their impressions of the prioritization of Native voice rather than an academic tone. At the Denver Museum, I did not interview people in any of the research departments other than anthropology. I was also unable to interview many contractors or Indigenous people at any of the four locations as these proved difficult to arrange. Thus, the voices of Indigenous museum partners are largely absent from this study, which means that perspectives on the museum were all from those who may have been more sympathetic to museum operations. While I do think that the staff were able to reflect critically on their work and their institutions, outsider perspectives may have provided additional critical insight.

The six good practices listed above form the basis of ethical practices when creating exhibits about Indigenous culture. Of course, these are ideals that are not always possible to put into place. The main factor inhibiting good collaborative exhibit practices is a lack of commitment to the full package of obligations that come with this type of work. A truly collaborative project takes considerable time and money. Museums are often tempted to cut corners, try to rush the process, or neglect to engage communities at every step along the process in order to cut costs. As was the case with the Northern Heritage Centre, not involving community members right from the start of a project ended up slowing its development, and thus costing more money and time in the end as adjustments were made through later consultations.

My interview subjects communicated these cautions or limitations to me that should be considered when creating exhibits with community. First, exhibits are physical products that require expertise to create; neither the museum nor the community can expect that people with no exhibit experience should be able to understand the principles of visual communication and how to write label text, for example. Second, thinking about whether a full collaborative process is suitable, possible, or even required is also important; sometimes the museum is required to create small exhibits with a timescale or focus that makes collaboration very difficult. Finally, a commitment to collaborative methods needs to be a priority of the leadership of the institution to ensure that adequate support is provided to collaborative projects.

Commitment to collaboration goes beyond creating single exhibits. Individual projects are ideally just one manifestation of a broader and longer relationship between individual communities and museums. These relationships can be formalized with communities through the use of agreements, but can also be articulated within the museum's mission and vision statements. For some museums, such as the Denver Museum, anthropology and ethnology are only one small part of what the museum does. It is therefore difficult to include a commitment to focus on the institutional relationships to Indigenous peoples as primary stakeholders. While the Bishop Museum does present Native Hawaiian interpretation of non-ethnographic collections, it is made easier by the fact that there is only one cultural group involved, as I mentioned earlier. Identifying the proper community to collaborate with has been made all the more difficult by the movements and sometimes demise of Indigenous communities over the last 500 years.

In Chapter 2, I identified the differences between public and tribal museums. The recommendations that I make in this dissertation may be of interest to tribal museum practitioners. Even for those museums with a deep commitment to collaborative principles and ethical practice, final decisions within the museum are in the hands of directors and are guided by boards or governments who are rarely Indigenous community members. There is no legislation in either Canada or the United States that explicitly outlines museum obligations to work with Indigenous peoples on exhibits or to acknowledge that Indigenous intellectual property is being used. However, protests such as those that arose over "The Spirit Sings" exhibit seem to be effective tools to keep museums from acting against the wishes of Indigenous peoples and help keep museums more in line with Indigenous perspectives.

An issue not often discussed in museum literature is that decisions about museums are also necessarily guided by those who manage their budgets. In larger museums such as the Denver Museum and the Royal BC Museum, exhibits that bring a higher profile or visitorship to the museum (i.e., "blockbusters") are prioritized as they help support the institutions financially by bringing more paying customers through the door. Although public museums are not-for-profit, they do typically rely on admission fees to support their operating costs. The economic realities of running museums cannot be ignored—they are expensive undertakings, and collaborative exhibits and practice do not usually translate directly into revenue generation.

I have shown throughout this study that exhibit designs have changed over time in response to changes in wider society. The roles of museums have changed, and as audience tastes grow more sophisticated and the messages that museums want to emit become more multi-layered, museums need to become responsive and able to change. As the example of the First Peoples Galleries at the Royal BC Museum demonstrates, the representations that were desired by the communities and the museum in the 1970s are different than what everyone would like to see today. The scope of renovating and renewing such a space is, however, a massive undertaking. Part of the lesson out of this is that museums might want to create exhibits that are more flexible and less permanent than they once were.

## Indigenous Museology

Having reviewed the research presented above, I now return to the concept of Indigenous museology. As I articulated in Chapter 2, I see Indigenous museology as being similar to Indigenous archaeology, as it is both a theory and a practice. Indigenous archaeology is influenced by interpretive archaeology, Marxist theory, critical archaeology, and feminist theory (Nicholas 2008:1665-6). Underlying the philosophies of these theoretical outlooks is the idea of using critical theory to promote positive social change through both an awareness of and resistance to systems of inequality.

Robert R. Janes has written extensively about the duty of museums to be "socially relevant" (i.e., Janes and Conaty 2005; Janes 2008; 2010). He says that museums should be "mindful," going beyond being self-critical to making purposeful and conscious contributions to the world. To achieve this, museums should have missions that focus on the "interconnectedness of the world and its challenges," specifically addressing issues like climate change and globalization (Janes 2010:330). Other museum theorists point to the social role that museums can and do play in creating global citizens and breaking down the walls between people (Shelton 2001:242; Skramstad 2004:128). As Viv Golding (2013:14) explains, "at the museum, we can display evidence of our common humanity and cultural diversity while posing questions about what a museum is and can be, which vitally includes addressing racism and working to dispel fearful stereotypes for more accurate perspectives."

For Indigenous museology, positive change is enabled by ethical museum practices that acknowledge Indigenous peoples as key stakeholders in the management and presentation of their heritage. I have shown that collaboration between museums and Indigenous peoples is not a new innovation, but has been gradually building over the last thirty years. Nevertheless, Indigenous peoples in North America and elsewhere do not enjoy equal rights and still suffer the negative consequences of colonialism. Therefore, museums wishing to promote ethical practices must continue to employ critical theories in order to ensure that positive social changes continue to occur and evolve.

In Canada, over the last seven years there has been increased public dialogue about reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, sparked by the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission process that began in 2008.[127] As a social and political process, I argue that concepts of reconciliation might have a place in museums as a necessary part of Indigenous museology. Moira Simpson (2009), for example, suggests that museums can play a key role in healing from historical trauma. Since the process of colonialist policies such as residential schools and bans on traditional customs like the Northwest Coast potlatch served to divorce Indigenous peoples from their heritage and traditions, museums could encourage the preservation and renewal of such practices by offering a positive space where reconnection may occur (Simpson 2009:123). Likewise, Amy Lonetree (2012:171) notes that part of the process of "decolonizing museums" that she promotes "enables museums to become places for decolonizing the representations of Native peoples and for promoting community healing and empowerment."

The process of healing that Lonetree (2012) describes also makes connections to the importance of representations. While early museums and ethnographic showcases had expressly pro-colonialist intentions in their presentations of Indigenous cultures, today, museums tend to present culture in a way that is culturally relativistic, meaning that no people are assumed to be superior to any others. The importance of ethical representations in museums is identified by those working in museums in many formerly colonized regions, such as South Africa (see Davidson 2001; Skotnes 2001). The way to ensure appropriate representations is to involve Indigenous people in the process. The question "Who owns Native culture?"[128] is a fundamental one asked by others in the critical heritage field. Related to this question is "Who owns museum exhibits about Native culture?" I argue here that representations of Indigenous culture are in part "owned" by the people whose culture is on display. While the tangible objects may be the legal property of the museum, some degree of rights must be conferred to Indigenous and descendant communities.

[127] The Commission was created by the government of Canada to redress the impact of government-run residential schools on Indigenous people. It travelled to communities all over Canada to collect the stories of victims.
[128] After Brown (2004).

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As mentioned briefly in the introduction, during the course of my Ph.D. studies, I have been involved with the Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage (IPinCH) project, which is an international, collaborative project that "explores the rights, values, and responsibilities of material culture, cultural knowledge, and the practice of heritage research."[129] IPinCH seeks to promote equitable exchanges of heritage research, ethical uses of heritage products, and full involvement of Indigenous peoples within heritage projects. By advocating for collaborative museum exhibit creation involving Indigenous stakeholders, my research fits into the project goals as I seek to promote the accurate, fair, and appropriate use of tangible and intangible Indigenous heritage. I contextualize the issue of Indigenous representations in museums by looking beyond the objects in museums and to consider the intellectual property rights of the intangible culture in museums. Museums therefore do not and cannot contain or "own" Indigenous culture. My study shows that museums generally acknowledge that they do not own the exclusive right to communicate information about Indigenous people or cultures without the input of the people themselves.

In the last five years, the topic of North American Indigenous representation has also become a topic of concern in popular media. Blogs such as "Native Appropriations"[130] and "Sociological Images"[131] point to the power that popular media has in shaping public images and working to support systems of oppression. Native Appropriations author Adrienne Keene discusses how the negative stereotyping of Native Americans (and Canadians) causes harm, and uses the blog as a platform to discuss the history of colonialism and how it relates to the lives of Indigenous people in the present. Museum exhibits are a form of media that communicates ideas about Indigenous people to the public. We may benefit from paying close attention to these dialogues about the importance of Indigenous self-representation. The aforementioned

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[129] http://www.sfu.ca/ipinch/

[130] Written by Adrienne Keene, a Postdoctoral Fellow in Native American Studies at Brown University and a member of the Cherokee Nation. The blog is "A forum for discussing representations of Native peoples, including stereotypes, cultural appropriation, news, activism, and more." http://nativeappropriations.com/

[131] Written primarily by Lisa Wade, Associate Professor of Sociology at Occidental Collect in Los Angeles. http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/

blogs encourage the public to be critical about who is creating the images of Indigenous peoples, and what harm these images may cause.

As sites where the public comes to engage with Native culture, museums have a special responsibility to ensure the accuracy of exhibit topics by including Indigenous people in the creation of representations. Furthermore, museums may also provide a "forum" in which to discuss ideas about the effects of colonialism on how Indigenous people are viewed in the mainstream and to discuss the harmful effects of negative stereotyping. For example, the "Fluffs and Feathers" exhibit at the Woodland Cultural Centre in the late 1980s was subtitled "An Exhibit on the Symbols of Indianness," and directly challenged and explored both historical and contemporary images and symbols of Canadian Indigenous people (Doxtator 1992).

In January 2015, I visited the Royal Ontario Museum and saw another creative example in an Iroquois case that was an old diorama picturing ancient Iroquois, where they were re-imagined as modern people with "Idle No More" shirts, holding iPods. The "Insider/Outsider" exhibit at the Denver Museum was the only example from my case studies of an exhibit that directly challenged stereotypes and representations. Harris and O'Hanlon (2013:10) note that ethnographic museum collections have often been "reconceived as major resources for the interrogation of colonialism and/or for engaging with Indigenous people and other audiences." Certainly the examples I highlight show how exhibits can be used to critique and engage directly with the museums to critique how Indigenous people have been represented.

The Reciprocal Research Network is a project that exemplifies the characteristics of Indigenous museology (see Rowley 2013; Rowley et al. 2010). The online network connects researchers with museum collections data from participating museums around the world. The project was co-developed and is co-managed with the Musqueam Indian Band, the Stó:lō Nation, Stó:lō Tribal Council, and the U'mista Cultural Society; roles are formalized through the use of a memorandum of understanding (Rowley 2013:23). For the Reciprocal Research Network, "researcher" is defined broadly to encompass both typical professional researchers as well as Indigenous community members interested in learning about or engaging with museum collections. The software, based on social media, was designed to enable users to "share their knowledge about an item with the

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institution that holds the item" (Rowley 2013:23) so that information flows in two directions. This information sharing has included informing museums that given items may be sacred and inappropriate for display, providing information about the makers of objects, and providing museums with instructions for the proper care of the items, for example (Rowley et al. 2010). Users are able to share in research processes and to engage directly with museum collections as well as to group items to create virtual exhibits that can be shared with other registered users.

The use of digital and social media technologies, such as the RRN is one way that museums seek to serve constituents (including Indigenous communities) who live in rural areas. Another example is Mukurtu, software that aims to "empower communities to manage, share and exchange their digital heritage in culturally relevant and ethically-minded ways" by ensuring that access to uploaded contents is in the hands of the Indigenous communities. Online exhibits and cultural databases do not eliminate the need to create exhibits in "brick and mortar" museums, however Mukurtu, the Reciprocal Research Network, and others demonstrate how museums are changing ideas about authority, research, ownership, and access. In this way, heritage can be reconceptualised as a "cultural practice" (Smith and Akagawa 2009:6) that is both tangible and intangible. As museum practitioners continue to engage with different forms of collaboration and continue to present creative solutions, more interesting examples of uses of digital media and physical exhibit design can be expected. Indigenous museology places Indigenous community members as active participants in the creation of knowledge.

## Personal Reflections

I began my Ph.D. program with some experience of working in a museum and a background in Indigenous archaeology. Through my coursework, along with experiences with IPinCH and attendance at various conferences, I expanded my understanding of heritage theory by engaging further with critical heritage studies, including concentrations on Indigenous archaeology and museum theory. I designed my fieldwork to gain exposure to museums that seemed to be quite different from one another in order to explore how the principles and theories that I had been learning about are

applied on the ground. My fieldwork yielded great research and helped me to explore these issues. More than that, however, I had a unique opportunity to meet many museum staff and felt lucky to be able to sit down and allow them to reflect on their work. I gained valuable personal insight and received professional advice (ancillary to my studies) that will strengthen my professional practice. For that I am very thankful to all the people I spoke to over the course of my research.

Writing the results and recommendations of this dissertation has been made more complex due to the fact that my career has now been interwoven not only with the subject matter but with one of the case study institutions. In July 2014, I began working as assistant director at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife.[132] While my research was already complete when I began my job, the bulk of my dissertation was written while working at the museum. The assistant director position oversees visitor services at the museum, so the Exhibits, Education, and Public Programs and Website teams are under my direction. Some of those that I interviewed now report directly to me, while the rest are my colleagues. My job is to manage the exhibits program and to guide the direction of the museum's public face. In other words, it is now my responsibility to remedy many of the issues that arose in my Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre interviews and to operationalize the good practices presented above.[133]

One of the projects I am currently overseeing is a collaborative exhibition with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation. The Yellowknives are the people on whose traditional territory the museum and the city of Yellowknife is located. The project was born out of a connection that was made when I gave a public talk about collaborative research at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre when I visited in July 2013. At the end of my talk, entitled "Making Exhibits Together," Fred Sangris, Yellowknives Dene member, historian, and former Chief, stood up and suggested that it was time for the museum to work with the local community to create an exhibit specifically about them. Director Barb Cameron followed up on this suggestion and a small working group was formed, including Sangris, to undertake the creation of a Yellowknives Dene exhibit. This was

[132] As of March 2015, I have taken a one-year temporary assignment as Director.
[133] Please refer to Appendix C for a Conflict of Interest Statement related to this position.

one of the projects that was underway when I began working at the museum. As the exhibits staff faces the challenges of how to create an exhibit design that presents the Yellowknives on their own terms while ensuring that the exhibit is entertaining to the visitors, I find that my research is valuable to guide the process. Some of this guidance is simply the knowledge that collaborating on exhibits is sometimes challenging; the team is reassured by the fact that negotiating the differences in worldviews and schedules is a normal part of creating museum exhibits with Indigenous people. I feel fortunate to be able to put my dissertation research into practice so soon.

## Final Thoughts

It has been my intention in this dissertation to demonstrate the value and importance of involving Indigenous people to creating representations of them and their culture within museums. I do not argue that every museum exhibit should be done collaboratively—as a museum professional, I am aware that due to the expense and length of collaborative projects, it is neither possible nor practical to do every one in partnership with groups or individuals with no museum training. However, within Canada, the United States, and other colonized countries, museums have the potential to harm Indigenous peoples by misrepresenting them. This is predicated on my belief that museums matter; they are a key site where the public comes into contact with cultures that are not their own. People come to museums expecting to learn and therefore museums have the ability to influence public opinion. I believe that museums need to use this power conscientiously, to promote reconciliation and understanding.

As an anthropologist, I find museums endlessly fascinating. The way culture and nature are presented in museums can impart as much information about the creators and the audience of the museum as the people or things that are the subject of the exhibit. In the early era of museums, where "primitive" peoples were presented as a stage in the development towards the "civilized" audience, visitors in some ways were seeking to learn as much about themselves as about others. I posit that museums are still a place where people go to learn about themselves, even though some of the content has changed. In the present day, learning might involve reflecting on personal insignificance, the role they play in the natural world, or indeed how their personal

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actions affect others. As a new museum practitioner, I look forward to experimenting with these perceptions and combining art and science while working with people to put their images into exhibits.

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# Appendix A

# Interview Questions

**Questions for Museum Staff**

<u>General History of Collaboration</u>

Describe what you know of the history of the relationship between the museum and the local Indigenous community (who co-created the current exhibit)?

Does the museum have any ongoing relationships with the aforementioned specific community or any other communities?

How were these relationships initiated? Have there been any conflicts? How were they resolved?

What is your personal role in the initiation, development, or maintenance of these relationships?

      How have these relationships changed and developed over time?

      What have you learned through these interactions?

      What is the future of the relationship? Are there any projects that you would like to undertake?

<u>Exhibit-specific Questions</u>

Who proposed the exhibit idea?

Who was consulted?

How were the goals of the exhibit project developed?

What was the process for consultation and exhibit creation?

How was information shared?

How involved were the Indigenous community partners?

How was their voice honoured during the process of exhibit creation and in the exhibit design itself?

How was the project initiated? How was Indigenous support for the project solicited?

Were all party's needs ultimately met in the project?

Who funded the exhibit (and did this have an effect on the message/content)?

**Additional Questions for Community Partners**

Does your community have a heritage policy with respect to museums?

How do decisions get made within your community regarding work with this museum?

Describe what you know of the history of the relationship between the museum and your community. How were these relationships initiated? Have there been any conflicts? How were they resolved?

What is your personal role in the initiation, development, or maintenance of these relationships?

Which (if any) benefits does your community derive from the relationship with this museum?

Do you feel that your community's voice is adequately represented in the exhibit?

# Appendix B

# List of Interviews

| Bishop Museum, April 2013 | |
|---|---|
| April 10 | Blair D. Collis (President and CEO) |
| April 11 | Richard Wong (Hawaiian Hall Volunteer Docent) |
| April 11 | Bill Marston (Hawaiian Hall Docent Coordinator) |
| April 12 | Kamalu du Preez (Assistant Collections Manager) |
| April 15 (lunch) | Noelle Kahanu (Director of Community Affairs)<br>Betty Lou Kam (Director of Cultural Collections)<br>DeSoto Brown (Historian) |
| April 16 | Lissa Gendreau (Cultural Collections Technician) |
| April 16 | Mike Shannahan (Director of Education, Exhibits and Planetarium) |
| April 17 | Marques Marzan (Cultural Resource Specialist)<br>Lokomaika'i Lipscomb (Cultural Educator)<br>Marcus Quiniones (Cultural Educator) |
| April 18 | David Kemble (Senior Exhibit Designer) |
| Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, July 2013 | |
| July 9 | Barb Cameron (Director) |
| July 9 | Boris Atamanenko (Manager, Community Programs) |
| July 10 | Karen Wright-Fraser (Community Liaison Officer)* |
| July 12 | Robert R. Janes (Founding Director of PWNHC, Independent Scholar and Editor-in-Chief Emeritus of *Museums Management and Curatorship*) |
| July 11 | Joanne Bird (Curator of Collections) |
| July 16 | Susan Irving (Curatorial Assistant) |
| July 16 | Dot Van Vliet (Graphic Designer)<br>Rae Braden (Exhibit Assistant) |
| July 15 | Tom Andrews (Territorial Archaeologist) |
| July 17 | Mike Mitchell (French Language Heritage Educator Officer) |
| July 17 | Myrna Pokiak (former Employee–Contract Curator) |
| July 15 | John B. Zoe (Tłı̨chǫ Cultural Expert) |
| Royal British Columbia Museum, April 2013 & May 2014 | |
| April 29, 2013 | Tim Willis (Vice President, Visitor Engagement and Experience), retired in May 2013 |
| April 30 2013 | Martha Black (Curator of Ethnology)* |
| May 26 2014 | Mark Dickson (Head, Exhibits Department) |
| May 28, 2014 | Lorne Hammond (Curator of History) |
| May 28, 2014 | Jack Lohman (Chief Executive Officer)* |
| | Tzu-I Chung (Curator of History)* |
| May 29, 2014 | Martha Black (Curator of Ethnology) |
| May 29, 2014 | Grant Keddie (Curator of Archaeology) |

| | |
|---|---|
| June 5 2014 (by phone) | Janet MacDonald (Head of Learning) |
| Denver Museum of Nature and Science, April–May 2014 | |
| April 22 | Chip Colwell (Curator of Anthropology & NAGPRA Officer) |
| April 23 | Heather Thorwald (Collections Registrar) |
| April 24 | Jodi Schoemer (Director of Exhibits) |
| April 24 | Lynda K. Knowles (Legal Counsel) |
| April 24 | Frances Kruger (Exhibition Content Developer and Writer) |
| April 28 | Liz Davis (Adult and Children's Programs) |
| April 28 | Michelle Koons (Curator of Archaeology) |
| April 30 | Melissa Bechhoefer (Collections Manager for Anthropology) |
| May 1 | Joyce Herold (former Curator of Collections, now volunteer) |
| May 2 | Steve Nash (Department Chair & Curator of Archaeology) |
| May 7 | Calvin Pohawpatchoko Jr. |
| May 7 | George Sparks (President and CEO) |

# Appendix C

# Disclosure Statement for Conflict of Interest

During the course of my dissertation research, I spent time at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage (PWNHC) Centre in Yellowknife examining museum exhibits and conducting interviews on the development of the centre, the involvement of First Nations partners, and the experiences of staff members. When the position for Assistant Director there was posted a year later, I applied for and was successful in the competition. All aspects of my data collection, including recruitment of participants and analysis of interviews conducted there, as well as all other research pertaining to the PWNHC, were completed before I applied for the position of Assistant Director in spring 2014. Since beginning my job there in July 2014, I was in the writing stage of completing this dissertation. The management plan for potential conflict of interest was reviewed by the SFU Office of Research Ethics and SFU's Research Ethics Board and found to be satisfactory.

Sarah Carr-Locke, July 2015