

**Competing Discourses, Developing Partnerships: Navigating Differences Between
Ethnographic Museums and Tribal Museums**

by

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Abstract

Though considerably more liberal than 20 years ago, museological practices common in ethnographic museums transnationally still point to their colonial origins and reinscribe dominant ideologies of Euro-American institutional superiority. By analyzing U.S. and German ethnographic museum discourses through the practices they employ in Native North American exhibitions, I explore how a particular setting (the museum) can be used to make a larger argument about the acknowledgement (or lack thereof) of tribal sovereignty that extends beyond North America, entering a global context.

I argue that there are five practices ethnographic museums use that reify Euro-American institutional superiority. The practice of (1) evaluating American Indian art in relation to Euro-American ideals of Indianness reinforces Euro-centric standards. Audience attention is drawn to these standards of Indianness through the museum's (2) reliance on the authority of three-dimensional objects. An artifact's authenticity, from which it gains its representational authority, is often instantiated through claims of being the oldest, best preserved, or rarest artifact in existence. The uniqueness of objects (i.e. age, preservation, rarity) in turn establishes the importance and status of the museum that collected and preserved the artifacts. Seldom do museums speak openly about collecting practices, which continue to include (3) a reluctance to release control over or ownership of items of significance. The lack of transparency in their own collecting practices speaks to the museum's desire to maintain authority over ethnographic content, even while neoliberal practices promote collaborations with American Indian experts. However, these American Indian experts are (4) vetted to ensure the expertise of the American

Indian is complementary but not overlapping with the expertise of the curator. The curator's expertise lies in the content of the exhibition, displayed through the labels they write that (5) often erase colonial actors from Native North American history. Specifically, labels narrate certain eras or topics as isolated events that happened *to* American Indians and First Nations, as if the event itself was the actor, in an effort to shield normative museum audiences from being co-opted into the role of perpetrator.

These practices contradict the work that tribal museums, owned and operated by the tribal nation on display, are doing to represent themselves. The overall goal of tribal self-determination, as it is constituted through tribal museums, is to develop and employ tribally specific representational practices instead of relying on Euro-American museum standards and practices. These practices include: employing standards for tribal membership when acquiring art and artifacts for the collections, framing information presented in exhibitions in relation to their own normative audiences (tribal citizens), and presenting their institutions as authoritative on not only their own tribal history or culture, but also American Indian historical periods (e.g. the Boarding School era). These practices are tribally specific and dynamic pointing to the flexibility of tribal sovereignty, the enactment of which depends on a tribes resources, values, and community needs.

By comparing the museum practices employed by ethnographic museums transnationally (in the U.S. and Germany) with the changes to museological practice in tribal museums, I seek to explore a larger empirical question. In what ways has a global neocolonialism circumvented and at times disregarded the flexible sovereignty of tribal nations in favor of outdated, exclusionary practices in ethnographic museums?

Introduction

I was barely through the first semester at college when I received a call from my tribal council informing me that I had been unanimously chosen to be the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO). After the initial shock and pride subsided because the *Eeyamquittowauconnuck* (Brothertown) have never unanimously agreed on anything, dread set in as I realized the weight of this responsibility.

Tribes started designating THPOs in the wake of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990. Although the protests and negotiations that led to NAGPRA spanned decades, many of which occurred in the museum, the act was passed faster than tribes thought possible. We were left scrambling to figure out for ourselves how to handle the influx of requests and repatriations from museums, universities, and individual researchers who were following the new federal legislation and a new moral compass. This meant creating procedures for handling consultation requests, reinterring returned ancestors, reincorporating items into the community, and working with federally funded institutions on research projects.

Besides repatriations, the biggest time commitment as THPO is overseeing and consulting on research projects about the Brothertown. I have been the liaison for an archeological survey near and in a Brothertown cemetery (Cipolla 2013). I have consulted on an exhibition with an artist who wove large tapestries depicting strong Native women, in which my ancestor was featured (Burns 2016). And most recently, I have seen two Master's students through their theses: one on tribal health and public policy and the other on contemporary

German fascination with American Indians. This second student is now in an American Indian Studies doctoral program in Canada.

These experiences made me sensitive to questions of expertise, as I am an expert, or at least consulted and treated as one, but an expert of what? Tribal history? I can think of a handful of tribal members who know our history better than I.¹ Am I an expert on tribal culture? As a citizen of a tribe that is struggling to regain the centrality of their culture in each member's daily lives, this is nearly impossible for any of our members to be an expert.

What I am is an expert on mediation. Seeing expertise as a form of political authority (Briggs and Baumann 1999; Said [1978] 1994), I acknowledge the need to negotiate and at times mediate expertise—the expertise of tribes, academically trained historians and anthropologists, and the expertise of individual American Indians. What seemed like an obligatory circumstance of being thrown into a position like THPO at such a young age has molded the way I approach my academic work, particularly with federally funded institutions like public universities and museums. It has led to the research presented here that tracks my work mediating knowledge systems and practices in a variety of museums as each attempts to negotiate (maintain or (re)gain) authority over content. In particular, this dissertation explores the enfranchisement and disenfranchisement of different audiences through the maintenance of authority in ethnographic museums. The negotiation of knowledge systems (Simpson 2007) is one such process, analyzed here by looking at how various discourses (Foucault 1980; 1977; 1972) are used and presented in ethnographic museums as a way to socialize mainstream museum publics.

Theoretical framework

I am concerned about the ways that such moments of a state's explicit grappling with its past and ongoing colonialist policies may be evaded by celebratory

¹ As is evident from a recent public talk I gave as Brothertown THPO where multiple Brothertown elders came and answered more questions during the Q&A than I did.

performances that stage ostensibly postcolonial reconciliation as a fait accompli. In so doing, such triumphant pageants impose a kind of historical closure on colonial violence, thereby attempting to silence recognition—and calls for redress—of the continued power asymmetries and systemic racism that affect Indigenous peoples and their struggles for social justice today.
(Wakeham 2008: 354).

Pauline Wakeham's quote can be applied to ethnographic museums as settings which present colonial violence as solely happening in the past. For example, the message of American Indians overcoming historical trauma through the inclusion of perseverance and survivance narratives, a response to criticisms of museum displays denying the contemporaneity of American Indians, ignores the continuing power asymmetries that play out in American Indian life today. It is the power asymmetries within ethnographic museums created by their current museological practices that I am concerned with here, even while I acknowledge the strides ethnographic museums have made to address criticisms like the need to display contemporary American Indian lifeways.

Additional theoretical trajectories this dissertation is concerned with highlighted in Wakeham's quote include: colonization (and decolonization) processes, systematic and systemic inequalities of representation, recognition, and authority. By focusing on Native North American exhibitions in U.S. and German ethnographic museums, I've analyzed the ways in which neoliberal museum practices *appear* to create a diverse, inclusive space. I argue, however, that these gestures of inclusivity and equity, in fact, reinforce the structural dominance of Euro-American intellectual institutions by disguising continuing power asymmetries.

It is "[t]he alleged innate neutrality of museums and exhibitions...that enables them to become instruments of power as well as instruments of education and experience" (Karp 1991: 14). The alleged innate sense of neutrality is accomplished through the implementation and maintenance of their authority created by standards of ethnographic writing (Clifford and

Marcus, eds. 1986; Simpson 2007), the inclusion and exclusion of particular experts and writers (Lassiter 2000), and most commonly through the creation and maintenance of academic disciplines in which institutionally sanctioned intellectuals are gatekeepers (Said [1978] 1994; Spivak 1988). Ethnographic museum authority is then constituted through the discourses (Foucault 1980; 1977; 1972) they present and teach their publics. In this way, discourses are perpetuated through the education of museum publics as they walk away from exhibitions, often with limited understandings of the diversity in Native North America represented in the displays.

In other words, the neoliberal practices analyzed in this study attempt to create a diverse, safe space, but have transformed the museum into a space that tolerates diversity (Taylor 1994; Simpson 1996; Brown 2006) while upholding outdated power relations (Boast 2011). These practices employed by museums when presenting Native North America are shrouded in a cloak of neutrality. This cloak of neutrality enables museums to be used as instruments of power (Karp 1991), transforming them into politically charged centers that disperse and perpetuate Native American otherness hegemonically—all of which is accomplished through discourse.

Discourse, therefore, becomes a core process for looking at the exhibitions, collaborations, and representations presented in museums (ethnographic and tribal). In ethnographic museums, representation is a significant power-laden neocolonial practice employed by the museum that is both social and cultural (Bauman and Briggs 2005; Sleeper-Smith 2009; Strong 2012). Pauline Turner Strong (2012) outlines four representational aspects: (1) the politics of representation (the control, appropriation, and exclusion of those represented), (2) the economics of representation (the commodification and circulation of Indianness), (3) the poetics of representation (signification and knowledge about Native North America), and (4) the technology of representation (the production and control of selves through material and social

practices à la Foucault (1977)). This study focuses on the politics and poetics of representation of American Indians in ethnographic museums in order to focus on how these museums construct and maintain their of authority over historical and cultural content.

Representation of American Indians in museums takes place through exhibition displays, which often employ similar and generic display types (Nason 2000). Geographical displays group tribal nations within geographical areas such as the Plains, Northwest Coast, or the Southwest. All the tribes that reside within these regions are lumped together, collapsing differences between each tribal nation. Chronological or developmental displays take a Pan-Indian look at the advancements in lifestyle, technology, fashion, etc. For example, displays showing the advancement of technology often show the change in hunting tools that begin with spears, bows and arrows, tomahawks, clubs, and end with guns. Life-group or habitat displays freeze a particular place and time into an everlasting display of what life *was* like. Large-scale dioramas that pose mannequins in recreated “traditional” settings are examples of these habitat displays. And open-storage concepts display a variety of objects from the collection, usually without context.

These ways of exhibiting the world’s cultures have been heavily criticized for being paternalistic (Rassool 2009), implying an inferiority of these groups to dominant society (Jenkins 1994), and at times denying the contemporaneity of groups. This denial of coevalness (Fabian [1983] 2002) is found in displays that “...emphasize Native Americans as peoples of a distant past; this is particularly true of dioramas, which ‘freeze’ Native people in a particular moment in time. Furthermore, all four of [Nason’s proposed] styles tend to establish Native American peoples as ‘other’ and frequently, whether intentionally or not, as exotic and inferior” (Cobb 2008: 342).

Perpetuating misrepresentations (King 2016) is also a common criticism of ethnographic museums, particularly Native North American exhibitions. Some scholars point to the inaccuracy of statements due to generalizations (Mithlo 2004; Shelton 2011); some discuss the morality of displaying or representing Native Americans (Howe 2005); and still others critically engage with the practice of upholding an imaginary image of what it means to be American Indian (ed. Calloway et al. 2002; ed. Mackay and Stirrup 2013; Penny 2002, 2013; Sleeper-Smith 2009).

Ethnographic museums have been adapting to these critiques by transforming their spaces into what is often colloquially referred to as “contact zones” (Clifford 1997; Pratt 1991 1992) by updating exhibits, incorporating diverse voices, and collaborating with Native experts. Labeling ethnographic museums as contact zones misses the nuanced struggles over their continued role in solidifying their authority over and the perceived diversity between the cultures they represent. In other words, the museum chooses what is similar or dissimilar between cultures, how to label these differences and similarities, and how to display them rather than deferring to the culture (e.g. tribes) to determine this information.

Currently, by only partially recognizing the authority of the cultures represented within (i.e. Native American tribes and First Nations) through practices like collaborations, while maintaining Euro-American authority over them, the museum maintains the West’s privileged position and reproduces itself as a neocolonial space (Boast 2011). For American Indians, the maintenance of this privileged position means misrecognizing tribal sovereignty. The effects of this misrecognition are both practical and political nationally (U.S. and Canadian) and globally,

making it difficult for tribes to dispel false and often damaging representations of their own nations.²

What follows is an exploration of how this misrecognition of tribal sovereignty occurs through transnational ethnographic museum practices that ignore the ways in which tribes are representing themselves historically and culturally. My ethnological look at ethnographic museums juxtaposes the politics and discourses as seen through representations found in seven ethnographic museums with those in three tribal museums by treating each exhibition as text. This juxtaposition allows for a critique of the persistent race thinking present in Euro-American institutions as seen through the messages they convey to their publics through labels and by directly using the voices of the tribal citizens who work in and with the tribal museums. As I will argue in the conclusion, it is partnerships, not collaborations with Native experts in “contact zones,” that can re-energize ethnographic museums in terms of their relevance for audiences and redefine their relationships with the peoples and cultures they represent.

Ethnographic museums are important vantage points from which to examine how socio-political structures of interpretive control affect mainstream discourse. Ethnographic museums are institutions that preserve, analyze, and display objects, art, and discourse associated with people and cultures and the “ethnographic” label suggests the narratives are from the point of view of the cultures being represented. However, the relationship between ethnographic museums and the peoples they represent has been dynamic and tumultuous since the museum’s beginnings. Established as store houses and research centers for artifacts collected during world exploration and colonial expeditions, ethnographic museums display non-Euro-American cultures and peoples through a Euro-American lens.

² Stuart Kirsch (2010) discusses the ways in which popular media, particularly things like movies and documentaries, solidify natural and violent stereotypes of West Papuans that are nearly impossible to overcome because of the ways in which this imagery has been taken up and used by organizations and governmental agencies in Indonesian West Papua.

Most ethnographic museums have a Native North American exhibition, whether the museum is situated in a country that has had a direct colonial presence in North America or not. Throughout this dissertation I compare and contrast the practices employed by ethnographic museums in the U.S. (a country that continues to have a colonial presence for American Indians) and Germany (a country that does not have a historical colonial presence in North America). By comparing ethnographic museums in each of these countries, I argue that the contemporary colonial practices I found in these museums are not necessarily tied to nation-driven past colonial events, but reflect an on-going (global) colonialism.

Ethnographic Museums Analyzed

If it is the 'making strange' or the act of defamiliarization that has given discovery its form in ethnography, then in a multi-sited imaginary of fieldwork, this operation is sustained in developing knowledge of the relationships and connections that extend beyond the frames that have held the traditional act of fieldwork in place. This is the contribution that a multi-sited imaginary makes in further opening possibility in the practice of ethnography, commensurate with its new interests and conditions of work.
(Marcus 1998: 21)

This dissertation, much like my fieldwork is interdisciplinary drawing from Anthropology, American Indian Studies, and Museum Studies. My hope is that the type of work I did and continue to do with tribes and my analyses throughout are considered a part of the growing scholarship of engaged anthropology (Kirsch 2010). By analyzing ethnographic exhibition practices in museums that were created out of colonial endeavors to display non-Western cultures I was able to compare them to the ways in which tribes are responding to these practices in their own tribal museums, allowing for an intertribal and transnational perspective (Marcus 1998; Strong 2012). Ten museums were investigated in two countries (the U.S. and Germany) as an attempt to get away from the restrictions settler colonial studies creates. In this way I wanted to show that it isn't just direct colonization that affects American Indians today,

but that similar practices occur across borders and within nations that have different historical connections to Native North America.³

Germany became a prime site because of its seemingly oppositional views and interactions with American Indians in contrast with the U.S. A deeply ingrained fascination with American Indians is still prevalent among German citizens wishing to escape the contemporary world as they play Indians and Indians (rather than Cowboys and Indians). This interest is brought to German ethnographic museums where the popularity of Native North American exhibits surpasses the popularity of most of the other world cultures on display according to multiple curators I talked to.

In comparison with U.S. based ethnographic museums the German ethnographic museums have comparable collections in size and make up. The *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* alone has over 500,000 objects—150,000 objects more than the British Museum and comparable to the Chicago Field Museum’s anthropology collections. This is nearly 17 times the size of the Oneida Nation Museum, one of the tribal museums included in this study, which has roughly 9,000 objects in their collection.

Additional means of comparison between German and U.S. ethnographic museums were historical factors for establishing the museums as the fields of anthropology in each country grew. The life of the museums, therefore, are similar in terms of when they were established, when collecting en masse dwindled, and even when their display practices became stagnant. It was through the similar trajectories of ethnographic museums across Euro-American countries that have resulted in the use of similar practices and why I was able to compare ethnographic

³ For this study, colonization in these ethnographic museums is the subordination of indigenous authority in relation to their own representation.

museums generally with the work of tribal museums, even though museum studies literature points to the role museums play in creating national identities (Crane 2000; Penny 2002).

Furthermore, Germany has a historically rooted interest in American Indians. Early contact with traveling Wild West shows and popular fictional series like *Winnetou* by Karl May (2014) brought about a genuine fascination with American Indian culture (Berkhofer 1978; ed. Calloway et al. 2002; Feest 1989; ed. Mackay and Stirrup 2013; Penny 2013; Wernitznig 2007) and material objects among many Germans (Kalshoven 2012). Fascination became biologically entwined when personal relationships occurred between Germans and American Indians stationed on military bases during the early to mid-twentieth century, producing a generation of Germans who could claim American Indian ancestry.

For those who claim American Indian ancestry and for those who are simply interested in American Indian culture a form of play-acting called Indian hobbyism continues as a way for people to connect with an American Indian heritage. American Indian hobbyists or “Indianists” perform this connection by dressing and acting as 19th-century Plains (typically) American Indians popularized through Westerns and Wild West shows (Carlson 2002; Kalshoven 2012; Penny 2013; Sieg 2009). German feelings of empathy towards American Indians, not generally found in other countries, were fostered by these various connections to American Indians. These empathetic feelings towards American Indians while maintaining an exoticized difference in contrast to and created by the West explains in part the significance American Indian exhibitions play in contemporary German life.

German Ethnographic Museums

The most extensive collections and popular exhibitions in Germany are housed in the three museums that are the focus of this research: Karl May Museum in *Radebeul bei Dresden*,

Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg in Hamburg, and *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* aka *Museen Dahlem* (Dahlem Museum) prior to its closure in 2016 and subsequent relocation opposite *Museumsinsel* in Berlin, opening in 2019. A fourth German museum, the *Übersee Museum* in Bremen, Germany is also included due to my professional connections with the North American curator, Anna. Anna and I met while I was working at the Grassi Museum in Leipzig, Germany summer of 2012 and have since worked together to answer questions as well as share resources for loans and purchases. I had planned to travel to Bremen to see the exhibition and meet with Anna, but at the last minute our plans to meet were cancelled. I have included a few of our conversations in my analysis, even though I have not talked to Anna in person since working at the Grassi Museum, nor have I seen the Native North American exhibition, which was in the process of being remodeled in 2015-2016.

Karl May Museum

For most German adults, Karl May is a recognizable name associated with American Indians. A late 19th-early 20th century German author, Karl May produced a series of novels (between 1875 and 1910) about an Apache named Winnetou, and his German “blood brother,” Old Shatterhand. Though May had never traveled to the Old West he depicts in his novels, they became inspiration for hobbies, movie adaptations, and festivals throughout Germany.⁴ Upon his death in 1912, his wife, Klara May, wanted to create a museum in his honor and in honor of his most famous fictional character, Winnetou.

The Karl May Museum opened in 1928 and was built in the garden of the May estate in Radebeul, Germany. Klara May partnered with a German man named Patty Frank who had an

⁴ Since the publication of the book series, the novels have been adapted to film, theater, and television series. The most current film adaption, *Winnetou—Der letzte Kampf*, was released in 2016 (Stölzl), starring Nik Xhelilaj (Albanian).

extensive collection of American Indian artifacts from his travels throughout the U.S. with Buffalo Bill's Wild West show as a stable hand. Patty Frank lived in a small log cabin on the May estate, which now holds the museum collection and the Native American exhibition. The building has been called *Villa Bärenfett* (see image 0.1) and it was where Patty Frank gave demonstrations, curated displays, and lived.



(Image 0.1 *Villa Bärenfett*, Karl May Museum, Radebeul, Germany. Photo by author)⁵

Currently there are “more than 800 fascinating objects” (Karl May Museum, 2015) on display in the *Indianer Nordamerikas* exhibition, and the exhibition has not changed in decades.

⁵ All photos were taken by author, unless otherwise specified.

A windowless series of rooms, *Villa Bärenfett* is organized by geographic areas or culture groups and object types with short archaeological labels. The displays make the exhibit feel outdated, static, and un-engaging.⁶ Displays depict *Nordwestküste* (Northwest Coast), *Navaho* (Navajo), *Prärie Indianer* (Prairie Indians), *Musik und Tanz* (Music and Dance), and *Waffen* (Weapons) to name a few. Numerous mannequins are periodically stationed throughout the exhibition, depicting an *Irokese Mediziner* (Iroquois Medicine Man), *Häuptlinge* (chiefs), and an entire family dressed in their finest clothes beaded from top to bottom (see image 0.2).



(Image 0.2 *Prärie Indianer* family, Karl May Museum, Radebeul, Germany)

For many Germans interested in American Indians or just the series *Winnetou*, the Karl May Museum is *the* museum to visit along with the graves of both Karl May (see image 0.3) and Patty Frank (see image 0.4) in a nearby cemetery. Visitor studies done by the museum suggest that over eight million guests from all over the world have visited the museum since it opened in

⁶ Archaeological labels tend to include the items geographical origins, function, material, and what Sally Price (1989) describes as any esoteric meaning of the object.

1928. To continue providing educational displays and activities for their visitors, the Karl May Museum has envisioned a renovated future compound. The compound includes an expansion of the North American exhibition. However, “[w]hile a desire for a cross-cultural exchange and education might be part of the vision, in actual execution the exhibition—and its future vision—mostly reinforces cultural appropriation” (King 2016: 38) that focuses on the images Karl May depicted in his series.⁷ May’s images rely on imaginary ideas of what it means to be American Indian and precludes any contemporary American Indians.



(Images 0.3 and 0.4 Graves of Karl May (left) and Patty Frank (right), Radebeul, Germany)⁸

⁷ The Karl May Museum has publically lauded the high cultural value of their entire collection and two curators have assured me that collaborations with American Indians are desirable to dispel the stereotypes German visitors bring to the museum. But once inside the *Villa Bärenfett*, an entire room is dedicated to popular Native images such as Pocahontas and Yakari, a children’s cartoon/comic character. The aim of this exhibition is to get children interested in the museum, but does not dispel stereotypes; rather it seems to reinforce them. The question becomes how welcoming is the exhibit to visitors other than Euro-Americans with a fascination for historically based American Indian tropes?

⁸ There are burned candles melted on the steps leading to Karl May’s grave and a photo of Winnetou is mounted in the left corner of the mausoleum. Eagle feathers wrapped in red string were placed in the flowerbed of Patty Frank’s grave. Frank’s headstone also depicts the profile of a Native man with a single feather secured to the back of his head.

Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg

The two German state-run museums included in this study are the ethnographic museums in Hamburg and Berlin. The *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg* was founded in 1879 with a small collection from the Museum of Natural History in Hamburg. Their motto is “a roof for all cultures” as a reflection of their respect for all cultures (Köpke 2004; Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg n.d.). Current collection estimates for the Hamburg museum are around 700,000 objects. The American Indian exhibit, *Natives of North America—Following the Trail* opened in 2008 after a state led initiative by the *Hamburg Kulturstiftung*. The initiative was meant to update all of the permanent exhibitions in the museum, starting with the American Indian exhibition (according to the Americas curator, Katia). The reason for this was that American Indians are the most popular of the ethnographic exhibitions in Germany. *Natives of North America—Following the Trail* received the most money from the state for its renovations in part because of this popularity.

The exhibition was given 12-18 months to plan and finish and was completed with the help of a First Nations collaborator from Skwahla Stó:lo-Halkomelem in Canada, Michael (discussed further in chapter 3). The exhibition incorporates sound, video, interactive stations for children, and typical ethnographic museum displays that focus on objects from the museum’s collections accompanied by short archaeological or “tombstone” labels and long textual labels contextualizing the objects within the theme of the display.

Over 500 objects are used in the exhibition, arranged thematically. The themes divide the exhibit into sections that include beauty, war and diplomacy, and language. There are also sections devoted to particular geographic regions designated by recreated housing structures like

tipis, a pueblo, a fort, and a Northwest Coast longhouse. The goal of the exhibition as a whole was to balance the historical information with modern American Indian life.

Berlin Ethnologisches Museum

The last of the German museums I studied, the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum*, is unlike any other museum in Germany because of its continuous support from the state (Penny 2002). Part of the *Staatliche Museen zu Berlin* (Berlin State Museums), the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* was originally founded in 1873 and its doors opened in 1886 as the *Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde* (the Royal Museum of Ethnology). The museum, however, has ties to an earlier display tradition through the Prussian-Brandenburg Kingdom's Royal Cabinet in 1794 (Colwell 2017) and an even earlier connection to the 17th century tradition of *Kunstkammer* (Cabinets of Curiosity). After the Second World War, the collection shrank in size by 55,000 objects when the Soviets transferred these items to Leipzig (East Germany) to be displayed in the Grassi Museum. These items were returned to the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which is when the museum was renamed *Ethnologisches Museum* and entered a consortium of German state run museums (Colwell 2017).

In January 2016, the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* started closing exhibits to prepare for a move to the city center of Berlin, opposite of *Museumsinsel* off of *Unter den Linden*. *Unter den Linden* is the boulevard connecting the *Brandenburger Tor* (Brandenburg Gate) to the *Berliner Schloss* where the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* is moving. If visitors continue to walk passed *Museumsinsel* over the river, Spree, they would stumble upon *Alexanderplatz*, making this area of the city a large tourist attraction. The move is an attempt to not only make the ethnographic museum relevant again, given the difficulty of drawing visitors when the direct

transportation between *Museumsinsel* and the Dahlem Museum stopped, but also to provide a counterpoint to the Occidental world displayed in the museums on *Museumsinsel*. The museum boasts its collection of non-European objects as being “among the biggest and most important of their kind worldwide...They regard them as important evidence of their history, and in many cases they are the only documents of their kind to have survived colonisation, missionary work and modernisation unscathed.” (Parzinger 2014: 19).

The plan for the new museum in the recreated *Berliner Schloss*, as outlined in a temporary building (Humboldt Forum) next to the construction site of the new location, suggests that more interactive technology will be used in the exhibitions. It also suggests that the American Indian exhibition will shrink to a fraction of the size it was in Dahlem and focus on the Northwest Coast and Arctic regions with open storage for the most popular American Indian artifacts from the Plains and Prairies.⁹ This will be a feat because the American Indian collection makes up a large portion of the museums collections with over 120,000 objects from American archaeology and 70,000 objects from ethnology—a total of over 190,000 objects pertaining to Native North America alone (Stephen, interview, November 4, 2014). The museum as a whole has half a million objects, 140,000 audio recordings, 285,000 historical photographs and 50,000 meters of film (König 2014).

The Dahlem Native North American exhibition was U-shaped and organized around geographic areas as well as object types. The exhibit at one time started and ended with contemporary topics in Native North America either as critiques of stereotypes of American Indians or as presentations of contemporary American Indian art (depending on which entrance visitors used) and moved into geographical areas such as the Northeast, Plains, Southwest,

⁹ A new article in the German newspaper, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, published July 11, 2017 suggests that the exhibition space in the new location dedicated to the ethnological collections may not come to fruition. Instead, the ethnological collections as well as the Museum of Asian Art may only be research based collections in the future (Häntzschel 2017).

Northwest Coast, and Arctic. However, to make room for a small exhibit titled *Europa Test* where visitors were asked to compare European practices, traditions, and beliefs with other countries, the American Indian exhibition was reduced in size, eliminating the contemporary American Indian stereotypes and part of the Northeast section. This left the exhibit feeling incomplete, rushed, and truncated with no contemporary content. Even with these changes and the ultimate closure of the Dahlem Museum, it was a useful institution to analyze as it stood between 2014-2015.¹⁰

U.S. Ethnographic Museum

The U.S. museums included in this study are all situated in the Midwest. They include: the Field Museum in Chicago, Illinois; the Neville Public Museum in Green Bay, Wisconsin; and the Mille Lacs Museum in Onamia, Minnesota.

Field Museum-Chicago

The Field Museum of Natural History is the largest of the U.S. based museums in this study with a collection of over 24 million specimens (anthropological, geological, paleontological, etc.).¹¹ Established after the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the Field Museum is situated on Chicago's Museum Campus adjacent to Lake Michigan, along with the Shedd Aquarium and the Adler Planetarium.

Though a large, world-renown museum, the Field Museum's Native North American hall has not been updated in decades and the museum promotes other exhibits like Sue the T-rex, the largest and most complete *Tyrannosaurus rex* fossil, over the Americas exhibitions. Completed

¹⁰ I have not included an analysis of the future American Indian exhibition at the *Berliner Schloss* (or the Humboldt Forum) without knowing what it will look like when it opens, but I hope to continue this study when the *Berliner Schloss* opens in 2019.

¹¹ The size of collections range in each of these museums based on how items are catalogued and counted (i.e. whole pieces versus detachable parts, does it include archives and photographs or just three-dimensional items, etc.). 24 million specimens is a very large number by ethnographic museum standards, but the Field Museum is also considered a Natural History Museum and includes natural history specimens in their numbers.

in the 1950s, the only portions of the Americas exhibition that have been updated are the Northwest Coast and Arctic sections, which were redone in the 1970s-80s. These two displays make up the majority of the contemporary Native North American exhibition, even though the Field has “[o]ne of the largest and most comprehensive collections, in any museum, from the Plains Cree, Cheyenne, Arapaho Sioux, and Crow. Particularly fine is the assemblage of Crow shields, which continues to inspire and inform Crow traditional leaders, art historians, and anthropologists alike” (Shopland 1998: 18).

The Americas curator and the repatriation staff at the Field Museum understand that the entire contemporary Native North American exhibition is outdated. Even labels point to the exhibitions need for future renovations (see Image 0.5):

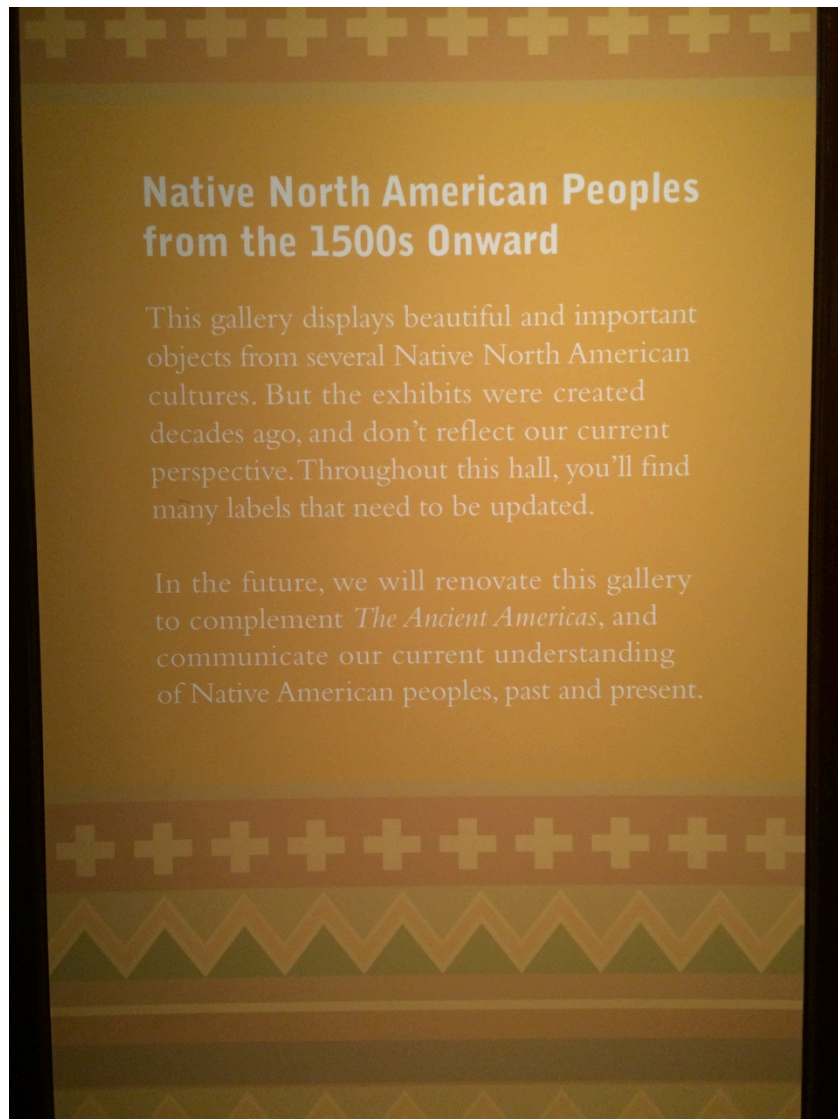
This gallery displays beautiful and important objects from several Native North American cultures. But the exhibits were created decades ago, and don't reflect our current perspective. Throughout this hall, you'll find many labels that need to be updated.

In the future, we will renovate this gallery to complement The Ancient Americas, and communicate our current understanding of Native American peoples, past and present.

(“Native North American Peoples from the 1500s Onward,” Chicago Field Museum)

Most of the Native North American exhibition is composed of artifacts from the Northwest Coast and Arctic regions, which face each other in one large room. Three smaller areas perpendicular to this main exhibition space display typological displays like clothing, household items, and tools with objects from across North America, with an emphasis on the Plains and Prairies. In a small antechamber is a replica of a Pawnee Earth Lodge that visitors can enter and learn about American Indian histories and stories. Lastly a small exhibit space at the end of the contemporary American Indian hall is used to display temporary exhibits that are

collaborations between American Indian artists and the curator of the Native North American exhibition (discussed in chapters 2 and 3).



(Image 0.5 Chicago Field Museum label, Chicago, IL)

Neville Public Museum

A smaller, regional museum, chosen for its proximity to and relationship with the Oneida Nation Museum (one of the three tribal museums incorporated in this study) is the Neville Public Museum in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Established in 1915 in the basement of the public library by a small local club interested in the history of the area, the Neville Museum opened its own

building in 1923 after it outgrew the library's basement and received a monetary donation from a local family to build and relocate. The museum claims to have nearly one million items in their collection, which is twice the size of the collections at the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum*. The Neville's collections include a large photograph collection and roughly 100,000 three-dimensional objects. The permanent exhibit, titled *On the Edge of the Inland Sea* has been roughly the same since I was a small child growing up near Green Bay. It portrays a 12,000-year history of Northeast Wisconsin starting in the Ice Age to the mid-20th century and integrates local American Indian histories, particularly of the Menominee, Ho-Chunk, and Oneida.

Like the Pawnee Earth Lodge at the Chicago Field Museum, the Neville Public Museum has incorporated architectural structures such as an ice cave (see image 0.6), a wigwam (see image 0.7), and log cabins for an experiential visit. These structures are coupled with typical ethnographic displays organized around themes or topics like religion, contact and trade, and beadwork. American Indian history seamlessly moves from contemporary American Indian life (circa early 20th-century) into a celebration of Euro-American settlement of Northeast Wisconsin where the presence of American Indians is suddenly dropped from the exhibition narrative.¹² Continuing the historical narrative of the area, sans American Indians, and lauding the industrial advancements of Euro-American settlers, makes the Neville Public Museum no different from other small regional museums located near American Indian reservations. By emphasizing “the stories of the brave pioneers who settled the areas, illustrated with family heirlooms...celebrate[s] the winning of the West, while the tribal museums [particularly the Oneida Nation Museum 10 miles away] mourn[s] the losing of the West” (Archambault 1993: 10).

¹² There is one instance of American Indians in the section dedicated to Euro-American settlement of the region when displaying early industries, particularly “Cigarmaking.” In this display, there is a Cigar Store Indian.



(Image 0.6 Ice Cave, Neville Public Museum, Green Bay, WI)



(Image 0.7 Wigwam, Neville Public Museum, Green Bay, WI)

Mille Lacs Indian Museum and Trading Post

The final U.S. based ethnographic museum, used peripherally in my study, is the Mille Lacs Indian Museum and Trading Post. My labeling of this museum as an ethnographic museum is contestable. I do so because Harry and Jeannette Ayer, original owners of the trading post and non-Natives, donated the building and their collection of American Indian artifacts to the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) in 1959 (Wedll 2000). The MHS continues to own and operate the museum. The museum opened in 1960 as the first state museum in Minnesota and remains categorized as a state museum and a state historic site even though it is situated on the Mille Lacs reservation and employs tribal members.

Some of the exhibitions and services the museum provides are similar to those found in tribal museums. Display labels are in both *Anishinaabek* and English and the exhibition moves between historic and contemporary periods in each section. Quotes from community members are used throughout to talk about what items are, what major historic events mean for the community, and what being Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe means for tribal citizens. However, even though this feels like a tribal museum at points, the displays are also very ethnographic centered calling attention to individual objects and accompanying these objects with archaeological or “tombstone” labels. Lastly, what gives it an ethnographic feel is the four seasons room, which displays a traditional Ojibwe village in each season (summer, fall, winter, spring), temporally freezing the display in a past era.

Tribal Museums

My research also investigates tribal museums in order to bring attention to the practices and concepts that tribal museums are using to represent themselves and ideally to decolonize their histories. For the purposes of this study tribal museums are defined as museums owned and

operated by a tribal nation or community. All the tribal nations in this study are U.S. based and are situated in the Midwest. Typically they have small collections that started with loans and donations from tribal citizens and exhibit the tribally specific history, culture, and future visions of the community that operates it.

The number of tribal museums in the U.S. has grown since the early 1990s from only 25 to nearly 150 as a response to the dominant narratives of nationally funded institutions like the Smithsonian museums.¹³ The tribal museums investigated for this study were chosen based on their proximity to one another, the work they do together through a collaborative traveling exhibit (see chapter 6), but also their cultural differences even while living close to one another and working with one another. Because the tribal museum practices are analyzed as responses to museological practices of the ethnographic museums (the focus of this study), they will be introduced and discussed in a separate chapter (chapter 6). Three tribal museums were analyzed: the Oneida Nation Museum in Oneida, Wisconsin; the Forest County Potawatomi Museum in Crandon, Wisconsin; and the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

Outline of Chapters

This is not a study that condemns the museum. Tribal nations see the importance of maintaining their own museums and upholding the concept of the museum (a place with educational and researchable collections) as an opportunity to make information accessible. And ethnographic museums can reach audiences that other educational institutions, including tribal museums, cannot reach. Rather, this study seeks to suggest ways in which ethnographic

¹³ The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) was not used as one of the ethnographic museums for this study for multiple reasons. First, the number of critiques of the NMAI is already an oversaturated body of literature. Secondly, the history of how and why NMAI was created starting with legislation (NMAI Act of 1989) and the creation of the exhibitions through collaborations with tribes in order to include Native-centric narratives makes the NMAI un-comparable to the other ethnographic museums analyzed in this study.

museums can incorporate different practices (based on the analyses of their current practices and the practices of tribal museums) in an effort to recognize, accept, and defer to tribal sovereignty (see conclusion).

Each of the chapters focuses on a type of museological practice that emerged through my analyses of Native North American exhibitions. Practices include: an over-reliance on three-dimensional objects, creating standards for valuing American Indian art, vetting expertise in the museum, erasing colonial actors from the historical narrative, and maintaining control over authority. Some of these practices are more prevalent in Germany and some more so in the U.S. The practice of using the term Whiteman within exhibitions as a way to index American Indian discourse and to not alienate mainstream museum audiences (chapter 4, erasing colonial actors) is more prevalent in Germany. In the U.S., wrapping repatriations in legal jargon to hide the museums true views about relinquishing ownership and control while suggesting that their actions are indicative of moral growth (chapter 5, maintaining control over authority) is more prevalent because of federal legislation. However, all of the practices that organize each chapter are to some extent used in nearly every museum investigated.

Additional museological practices include the ways in which purchasing American Indian art is creating standards of Indianness that preserve ethnicized and racialized aesthetic standards (chapter 2). By valuing American Indian art based on Euro-American ideas of aesthetic beauty, ethnographic museums are misrecognizing the ways in which Native artists are determining what Indian art is or should be. Ethnographic museum reliance on 3-dimensional objects to tell stories and stand in for cultures or events means a narrow view of history that glosses over or even erases historical events (chapter 1). And lastly I look at the ways in which knowledge used in ethnographic museum exhibitions is patrolled during collaborations with American Indians to

ensure that American Indian expertise is included, but does not challenge or overlap with the expertise of the museum curator (chapter 3). This is accomplished through a vetting process, which I have dubbed the “Native Test” and through the ways American Indian expertise is used in the exhibition as complementary to that of the curators.

Though the focus of the dissertation chapters are on each of the practices I identified, I attempt to allude to a common argument throughout—that of the museum’s misrecognition of tribal sovereignty. Rather than put tribal museum practices in dialogue with the practices in each chapter, which I felt would be too formulaic and would deter from the arguments of each chapter, I decided to explore the practices tribal museums use to demonstrate their sovereignty in a single chapter (chapter 6). In this chapter, I analyze the ways tribal museums are determining their own, tribally specific, processes of decolonization in response to the practices employed by ethnographic museums. In this way I hope to show that tribes, and their own museums, are first responding to and conversing with Euro-American institutions and secondly that there is no one way to gain control over one’s own representational authority. Rather, the practices employed by the tribal museums in this study are based on their community’s needs, values, resources, and future goals.

Sovereignty

The way sovereignty is used throughout this dissertation is not sovereignty in the sense of control over territory (Locke ([1689] 1947), citizenship (Dennison 2012; Ong 1999; Sturm 2010), or subjugation of life over death of those citizens (Foucault 1980, Mbembe 2003). It also is not the formal, legal power set up through the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934 (48 .S. Stat. 984), which established American Indian nations right to govern themselves, pursue

business ventures, and prohibited future land allotments, although it is an extension of these rights granted to American Indian tribes.

Jessica Cattelino defines sovereignty as “shared assertions, everyday processes, intellectual projects, and lived experiences of political distinctiveness” (2006: 700). What Cattelino is doing with this definition is re-conceptualizing indigenous sovereignty beyond the Western model. This allows Cattelino (2006; 2008) to analyze the material forms of sovereignty through the revenue earned by Seminole business ventures. Rather than material benefits, I suggest taking this process-oriented idea of enacting indigenous sovereignty (the lived experiences, discourses, and everyday practices) and applying it to an analysis of tribal museum practices that reinforce the tribe’s representational authority across tribal and national borders.

This broad definition of sovereignty allows me to explore the socio-political differences in the ways tribal nations operate their tribal museums, to argue that the maintenance and enactment of representational authority is tribally specific. Tribal sovereignty, in other words, is flexible. However, I do not use the term “flexible sovereignty” the same way Daiva Stasiulis and Darryl Ross (2006) use it when looking at examples of dual citizenship rights. Stasiulis and Ross see flexible sovereignty as a doubling of national rights through dual citizenship (as seen through the perspective of the citizen), but also as the narrowing of rights for dual citizens (from the perspective of the nation-state) depending on factors such as race, country of origin, economic partnerships between nation-states, or even perceptions of terrorism.

Even though the scholarly origin of flexible sovereignty for both Stasiulis and Ross and myself derives from Aihwa Ong’s (1999) “flexible citizenship,” I use flexible sovereignty to critically engage with the idea that tribal sovereignty is not the same across all tribes, nor once granted through federal recognition does it remain the same. Rather, flexible sovereignty evolves

based on current needs of the tribe and the relationship with other nations. Flexible sovereignty becomes the umbrella under which tribes can enact representational sovereignty (Graham 2016), political sovereignty, economic sovereignty, and so forth.¹⁴

I track this flexibility through the representational authority in three tribal museums. This authority was granted or delegated by the tribal government to individuals or small groups of tribal citizens through their employment at each museum. This representational sovereignty includes the authority over the historical narrative, determining collection scope and standards for what it means to be Native, and the presented image of themselves to others (discussed further in chapter 6).

Methods and Access

In order to document museological practices and styles of (re)presentation of American Indians a range of methods were used. Photography was used to capture labels and objects on display. Seeing where the objects have been placed within the exhibition space provides evidence of which objects were being featured based on position and sight lines. Sight lines were also recorded in hand drawn maps of the exhibit space where floor plans were unavailable. I paid particular attention to my own walk-throughs of exhibits using these floor plans. This is a method used in visitor studies I learned during an internship with a university archaeological museum. Visitor walkthroughs are used to determine which objects have the most foot traffic, which areas are rarely explored, and the overall flow of the exhibition.

Archival evidence of past exhibits in the space and make-up of the collection not displayed in the galleries were investigated in order to get a sense of how the exhibitions have

¹⁴ Representational sovereignty takes ideas from Laura R. Graham (2016) who looked at the role of film and media studies in giving indigenous communities in Brazil greater representational power over how their communities are represented. It also takes Scott Lyon's rhetorical sovereignty, which "is the inherent right and ability of *peoples* to determine their own communicative needs and desires in this pursuit, to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse" (Lyons 2000: 449-450). In this way, representational sovereignty is the ways in which tribal nations determine the style, language, and goals of representing themselves (made up of people and enacted by people), accomplished in tribal museums.

changed. This includes using museum catalogues from past exhibitions and photographs curators took of the exhibits, whether permanent or temporary. The use of these photographs and catalogues allows for a historical look at the exhibit spaces as they changed (or not) over time, significant for a study of how American Indians are represented today versus the practices of representation any number of decades ago.

To understand how exhibits were designed and collections were curated I interviewed curators (past and present), museum staff, tribal members, and American Indian collaborators on exhibits. Curators and collection managers became primary sources for access to the museum, typically due to job descriptions as contacts for researchers and individuals who would like access to the collections not on display. It was difficult to meet or interact with museum directors, who may seem important for my analyses.¹⁵ However, because my focus is on how exhibits are made, who curates them, and the reception of these exhibits, it was more fruitful to speak to curators and collection managers. Both curators and collection managers are directly involved with the curation of exhibitions in terms of handling artifacts (care and acquisition), as well as the synthesis of information presented to the publics.

Other museum staff interviewed included the docents walking around museums to answer any visitor questions as well as tour guides where docents were not employed. Often these individuals were volunteers and most were retirees who felt a nostalgic connection to the museum and enjoyed talking to visitors about history and culture.

Interviews were also conducted with museum visitors and focus groups of visitors to Native North American exhibitions. These interviews were used to get a sense of how the exhibits were interpreted and received by museum public(s), though not heavily relied upon in

¹⁵ The directors I emailed, called, and showed up to the museum to try and get a meeting with were unresponsive citing work demands, if they responded at all. Only one director was interviewed for this project due to my past experience working for her, which meant she was happy and willing to talk with me.

my overall analysis due to the focus on museological practices. Visitors who participated in these interviews remained anonymous and randomly selected as they moved about the exhibitions. Focus groups were used to get a general sense of how people felt about the exhibition, what they would have liked to see more of, and for them to discuss their general knowledge gained through schooling and popular culture about American Indians. The last group of interviewees was American Indians, who were asked questions exclusively pertaining to the tribal museum in their area or about collaborating with museums and other academic institutions. Because this study also seeks to analyze the ways in which the museological practices employed by ethnographic museums misrecognize tribal representational authority, it was important to gauge how tribal citizens are also recognizing their own intellectual reach as individuals and communities.

In total, eight curators and/or collection managers were interviewed in person. An additional ten of forty curators (not included in the eight) completed an informal email survey I had sent out as preliminary research to see who would be most receptive to my research project. Repatriation staff members in four of the museums were also interviewed. Anonymous museum visitor numbers average fifteen to twenty in each museum. Lastly, I reached out to the collaborators and artists involved in the exhibitions included in this study, but only four of them responded. Of these four, three were American Indian or First Nations. The fourth was a German group of four individuals (two male and two female) who had collaborated with a museum to create a film reenacting an expedition the museum had sponsored to the Northwest Coast to collect items for its collection in 1881.

From THPO to Anthro and back again—a note on positionality

I believe it is pertinent to say a bit more about my own positionality doing this research in an effort to be transparent and to address the multiple instances museum staff, mainly curators,

warned me that I “can’t generalize about museums.” Having been mostly upfront about my identity as a tribal citizen and THPO, I found this statement to be ironic—representatives of an institution that has notoriously generalized about Native communities and continues to do so were to some extent warning a Native not to generalize about museums. However, the frame from which I viewed each museum and my analysis of the exhibitions, collaborations, and outreach is influenced by my background as a Native, an anthropologist, and a museum professional who began her professionalization in a tribal museum.

As with all orientations, mine shifted while conducting fieldwork because it “is inherently relational... contextually situated and ideologically informed” (Bucholtz and Hall 2005: 605). But my initial experience in a tribal museum, and more importantly my work as THPO, meant my position researching museums was always a political one. So statements like “you can’t generalize about museums” that a few of the curators, collection managers, and repatriation staff made were taken as a political hedge in case what follows in this dissertation reflects unfavorably upon the Euro-American institutions I researched.

My positionality has also had an effect on how I write about my collaborators and research participants. In Germany, it is polite (particularly among the older generations of museum curators) to refer to an individual formally with honorifics until they state you can refer to them by their first name only. However, when talking to German curators I noticed a pattern that when referring to their colleagues they were formal and used titles, but when referring to the Native collaborators they had worked with they typically used first names only, or introduced them as first and last name and proceeded to use just their first names. Being sensitive to these small acts of social disparity, I have decided to refer to all of my research participants whether

German, American, or American Indian by first names only. When speaking to my research participants however, I would always introduce myself and greet them formally.

Terms such as American Indian, Indian, Native, and Native American are used interchangeably throughout this dissertation. This is partly because the popularity of each term has changed over time and continues to change based on context—who is using it, to whom that person is talking, and the message they are trying to convey. Generally speaking, I have attempted to use American Indian, which seems to be the current scholarly way of speaking about the First Peoples within the U.S. (where all my tribal research was conducted) even though it excludes First Nations in Canada. Though I have attempted to use this term exclusively, I often found myself slipping back into using the term Native when referring to my own experiences during fieldwork or when speaking with other Native participants in this study. I have also tried to consistently use the term “Native North America” when referring to museum exhibitions for these are the terms used in many of the exhibition titles.

These terms, whether American Indian or Native, that I found myself switching between speaks to the autoethnographic nature of this study (Behar 1996; Pratt 1992). Mary Louise Pratt describes autoethnography as a colonized individual or subject who is attempting to represent themselves “in ways that *engage with* the colonizer’s own terms” (1992: 7). In this way, I sought to engage with ethnographic museums that display American Indians first and foremost as a tribal museum professional, secondly as a Native anthropologist. Autoethnography allowed me to engage with ethnographic museum practices and exhibitions from a tribal museum perspective, even while acknowledging the strides museums have taken to alter some of these same practices.

Despite the well-intended efforts to create diverse, inclusive spaces through the incorporation of new voices and perspectives, my analysis shows how museological practices reify the museum's position as gatekeeper of knowledge, (re)presentation, and recognition, thus remaining entrenched in overarching modernist neocolonial discourses and structures of interpretive control. As a tribal museum professional, I suggest ways in which ethnographic museums can partner with tribal museums in an effort to recognize tribal sovereignty in the conclusion. The hope is that multiple implications come from the analyses in each chapter and my suggestions in the conclusion. This investigation of transnational museological practices has ramifications for how we think about nationalities (citizenship, political reach, etc.), how other forms of knowledge are integrated and used in Euro-American institutions (museums, universities, etc.), and how an understanding of the changing relationship between Euro-American nations and other sovereign nations includes and goes beyond the politics of recognition (Taylor 1994).

CHAPTER I

Discourses of Narratability: Logics of Omission in Object-Centered Exhibitions

What ties ethnographic museums, art museums, children's museums, aquariums, zoos, and science centers together? According to the American Alliance of Museums (2000), they all have stuff. They use things (objects, animals, botanical life, props, etc.) to educate, tell stories, and engage visitors. Some museums use objects more than others, and as technology evolves and visitors desire more interactive learning environments, even the some of the most object-centered museums have started moving away from relying on large numbers of objects. "Museum exhibits still use objects to tell stories, but with fewer objects to tell those stories, each object must do more of the telling. What's more, fewer objects mean fewer opportunities for alternative stories to compete" (Conn 2010: 23). These changes call into question the work that objects are expected to do in exhibitions.

Even as new museological practices are attempting to incorporate diverse types of exhibition practices to address variation in learning styles, ethnographic museums still rely heavily on objects to convey information and tell stories. Because of the expectation to use and rely on three-dimensional objects in ethnographic exhibitions, common historical narratives are omitted when there is a lack of three-dimensional objects. This chapter accounts for one of those periods in Native North American history: the Boarding School era. I argue that the omission of boarding schools is not intentional, but due to the lack of three-dimensional objects that survived this historical period curators are compelled to tell the stories illustrated by artifacts that are accessible to them. I do this first by reviewing the typical exhibition styles and collecting

practices found in ethnographic museums. Second, I examine how a reliance on three-dimensional objects has resulted in the neglect of the Boarding School era in ethnographic exhibitions. Lastly, I give an alternative example of how an ethnographic museum has dealt with their limited access to three-dimensional objects.

Museum Families

Object centered, when applied to museums, refers to what Elaine Gurian (2006) calls a family or cluster of institutions. Gurian proposed a classification of museums into one or more of the following five families: narrative, community, client-centered, national, or object-centered. Narrative museums focus on the story being told with the aid of strategically picked and placed items. “These institutions are interested in making the non-visible visible and are comfortable with including emotions, (pathos, humor, and dramatic tension) if it fits the story” (Gurian 2006: 50). Holocaust memorial museums are good examples of narrative museums. For example, the use of thousands of shoes in one display at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum illustrates the atrocities and sheer number of individuals murdered during the Jewish Holocaust.

Community based museums are locally oriented and encourage cohesion among community members through cultural nurturing (e.g. tribal museums). They often employ a narrative framework in their displays. They tend to be museums *by* the community *for* the community. In contrast, client-centered exhibitions focus on the visitor whether from the surrounding community or not and include hands-on displays and experiences like those found in children’s museums or science centers.

National museums present a sense of nationhood (Anderson [1983] 2006) while balancing celebratory stories and national pride with social criticism. For example, the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum came under attack from U.S. veterans and citizens

when the museum was planning an *Enola Gay* exhibition (discussed further in chapter 4) that included social criticism about the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima during WWII (Dubin 1999; Kohn 1995; Linenthal and Engelhardt 1996; Southard 2015). Curators had a difficult time determining what would be a fair and respectable exhibition when considering visitor demographics that included both U.S. veterans and Japanese-American descendants (who might also be veterans), while under political pressures.

Like the controversy over the *Enola Gay* exhibition, I would argue that ethnographic museums have similar visitor/audience conflicts. Some are state and federally funded institutions with collections that are considered national treasures, albeit treasures that were stolen, looted, and purchased during global explorations, conquest, and current economic developments. Visitors who enter these exhibition spaces are not only those who identify as part of the conquering groups, but may also be a member of those groups that have been conquered. In this way, ethnographic museums can instill conflicting feelings among its many audiences.

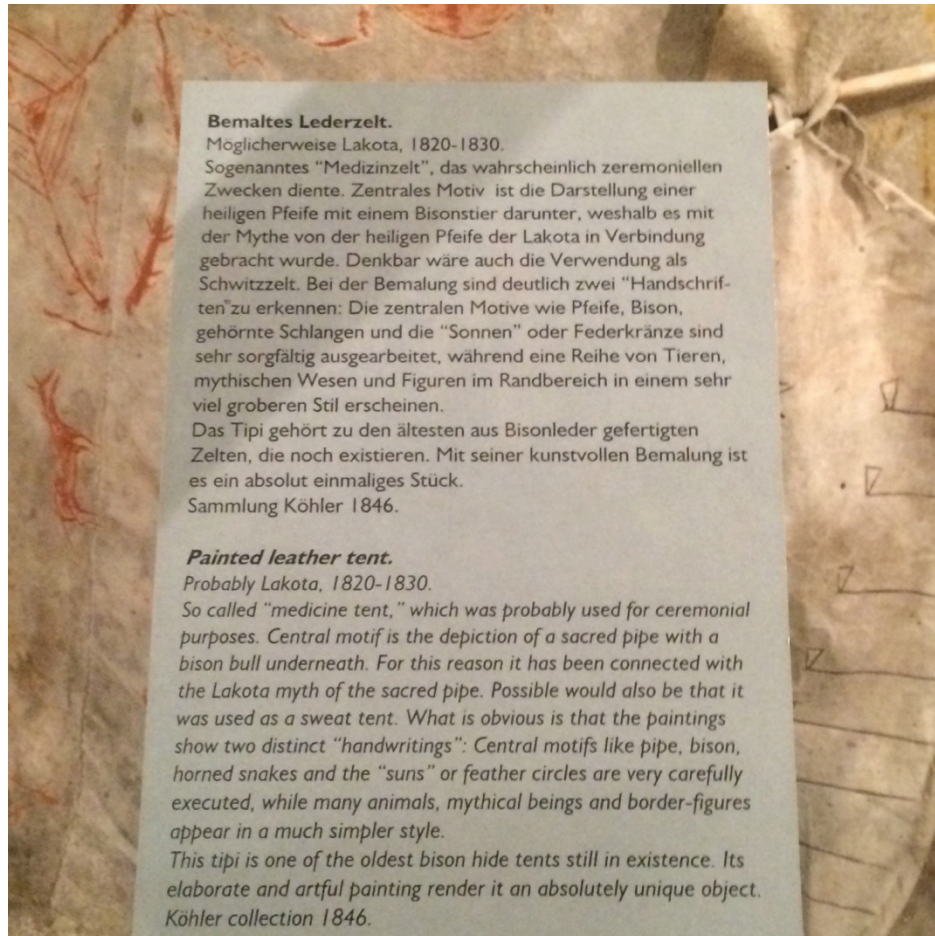
Gurian's fifth museum family—object-centered—relies on three-dimensional artifacts as “‘treasure-based’ museums that concentrate on the material they own or borrow. The objects are the source of research, scholarship, and the basis for their public exhibition programs” (Gurian 2006:49). These institutions have received the most scrutiny for not being aware of their potential audiences and for taking the artifacts they rely on for their authority out of context.

Any of the ethnographic museums in this dissertation can be considered object-centered based on common display practices. For example, the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* in image 1.1 focuses visitor attention to the tipi by not only displaying it in the center of the exhibit, but it stands alone in its own protective plexiglass display case. Behind it, headdresses are displayed in

a similar fashion. Labels (see image 1.2) point directly to the artifact by addressing the items material, the era from which it was made, and its cultural significance.



(Image 1.1 Tipi, *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum*)



(Image 1.2 “*Bemaltes Lederzelt/Painted leather tent*” label, *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum*)

Though each museum (and even exhibitions within museums) can be placed in any number or combination of Gurian’s families, this chapter’s aim is to explore how one of these families (object-centered) is an on-going colonial tool. The analysis goes beyond a call for these types of displays to contextualize the objects on display (Jenkins 1994; Macdonald 2011) or to be transparent about their own histories of collecting (Marstine 2013; Pearce 1992), and focuses on the social ideologies that object-centered museums assume and perpetuate. Object-centered here, therefore, simply refers to the museum’s (in most cases the curators’) reliance on the collections and three-dimensional objects in exhibitions to create a narrative. For many ethnographic museums these objects were collected during a relatively short period of time.

Anthropology and Collecting Practices

Ethnographic museums emerged in symbiosis with anthropology functioning as both a driving force for ethnographers to collect objects and specimens from their field sites, and as repositories for objects collected during those expeditions. Accounts of collectors and scientists who revolutionized collecting practices for anthropology and ethnographic museums are abundant in Germany. Carl Hagenbeck brought vertical economy, spatial setups, and professionalization of performers to his collecting practices (Ames 2008). Adolf Bastian and Johan Adrian Jacobsen worked together to create some of the largest collections in the world, resulting in the expansion of German museums exponentially such as the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* in a very short period of time (Koepping 1995; Penny 2002). After this push to expand collections and revolutionize ethnographic museums into research centers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, these same museums plateaued in their acquisition and collecting practices today.

The historical collecting practices in Germany differ greatly from the United States', particularly when dealing with Native American collections. Germany's collecting practices stem from a tradition that sought to connect Germans with non-European cultures without the need to travel outside of Germany (Penny 2002). A common conception of the world during the expansion of museums in Germany (1868-1914) was a belief in a single humanity from which the German ethnographic project began. Through this period, German collectors and ethnographers, under the direction of Adolf Bastian, collected on a mass scale.¹ Objects were collected in large quantities so that museum displays could compare cultures through similarities

¹ Adolf Bastian was the first director and one of the founders of the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* and integral to German ethnology. It was under Bastian that the museum collections grew exponentially as he hired men like Johann Jacobsen to travel the globe collecting as many objects for the museum as possible. A link between American and German anthropology lies with Franz Boas who also worked under Adolf Bastian at the Royal Ethnological Museum in Berlin.

between their material cultures. European visitors could then make connections between the world's "natural" cultures (*Naturvölker*) more easily. And by 1900 German museums were overflowing with ethnographic data such as artifacts, travelogues, and photographs (Penny 2002).

Naturvölker were part of a dichotomy with *Kulturvölker* and the belief that there is a fundamental difference between the two. *Kulturvölker* were the cosmopolitan, educated masses that could read and write and therefore had history and civilization (culture). *Naturvölker*, on the other hand, were groups of people who could not write and therefore did not have history or culture that would hinder their natural essence, which is something they possessed that could prove all humans were connected.² The terms underwent change when they became standard anthropological terms in the late 19th century to describe colonizers versus colonized and became biologically racialized and used to illustrate evolutionary progress and Social Darwinism (Penny 2002; Zimmerman 2001). In order to scientifically study *Naturvölker* and their unobscured human nature without contaminating them in order to find some sort of "psychic unity of mankind," objects were collected as indexical of the group.³

Because the act of collecting and labeling objects according to Euro-American interpretations connected artifacts indexically to a group, "anthropologists participated in imperialism by stabilizing the interpretation given by Europeans to the objects that they acquired from the colonized" (Zimmerman 2001: 150; Stocking, Jr. 1991). This decontextualization of each object (who made it, when, what it was used for, the meaning behind design, etc.) stripped the objects of their *Kultur*; thus, presuming a fundamental difference between colonizers and

² See also Bauman and Briggs (2003) and Latour (1993) for further discussions about modernity.

³ Adolf Bastian's theory of "psychic unity of mankind" stems from his understanding of Johann Gottfried Herder and Alexander von Humboldt and aims to show that human cognition works the same everywhere because of the physiological mechanisms that make up the human body. The closer a person is to a natural state the better understanding we may have of these physiological mechanisms and hence human consciousness. This idea that all humans share the same psychological capacity, was later taken up by Bastian's student, Franz Boas.

colonized, or those who were active and able to decontextualize objects for their purposes and those who were passive and controlled (Zimmerman 2001).⁴

American anthropology on the other hand is younger than German, French, or British anthropology (Barth, et al. 2005) and focuses on particularisms through close cultural comparisons. Franz Boas, claimed to be the father of American anthropology, was working against Social Darwinism and anthropologists who held this evolutionist perspective in the U.S. such as Lewis Henry Morgan and Edward B. Tylor. Boas began his anthropology research through a fascination with American Indians around 1893 when he went to Baffin Island for a geographical study and became interested in American Indian languages. Boas “made the empirical study of what were thought to be the rapidly disappearing native cultures the priority for anthropology; fieldwork was key to such study, although that generally meant the debriefing of elders and the recording of texts rather than the participant observation of later ethnography” (Barth, et al. 2005). The Boasian school of ethnography incorporated linguistic recordings as ethnographic evidence to document cultural relativism and historical particularism (Darnell 2001).

The nature of German ethnography versus the Boasian style of American anthropology, which can be glossed as seeking to find unity between men versus understanding cultural relativism, created different collecting practices (physical objects, photographs, or recordings) and engagements with the data. Even collecting practices between museums can vary. For example the bulk of the Chicago Field Museum’s ethnographic collections came from the Columbian Exposition in 1893 and to which the Field owes its origin.⁵

⁴ For an analysis of the relationship between objects and subjects and their intricate connection, see Keane (2006).

⁵ Franz Boas was tasked with assisting Frederic Ward Putnam, director (1864) and a curator (1874-1909) at the Harvard Peabody Museum and the head of the Department of Ethnology and Archaeology for the 1893 Columbian Exposition, during the exposition.

Though the motivations and collecting practices between German and American ethnographic projects were different, for the purposes of this chapter, my focus is on data or ethnographic objects, which practitioners in both traditions collected en masse. The scientific and humanist authority of ethnography described above is granted through ethnographic objects. For museums during this time (mid 19th-early 20th centuries), these are often three-dimensional, man-made artifacts collected aggressively during what is now referred to as a period of salvage ethnography. The premise of salvage ethnography was that objects should be collected before the cultures (and the people) disappeared. Once gone, science would miss the opportunity to study and glean from the objects any notions, rules, or observations.

Collecting for museums in both countries, however, was more than gathering objects before they disappeared. Collecting "is a set of distinctive--though also variable and changing--practices that not only produces knowledge about objects but also configures particular ways of knowing and perceiving" (Macdonald 2011:94-95). Museums become reliant on the objects collected as sources of knowledge, which converts into (the museum's) authority (see chapter 2). Therefore, object-centeredness ultimately suffers from "ethnographic atrophy because they tend to focus on what could be, and was, physically detached and carried away. As a result, what one has is what one shows" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:20). What ethnographic museums have are objects that were collected at various points in time that influenced the types of artifacts collected (or not collected) based on perceived need and interest of society, the museum, and individual collectors and curators. What is consistent in the ethnographic museums in this study is the advertisement of these artifacts today as rare, unique, and old. This draws visitor attention, but also maintains the museums authority over these objects for without the museum the artifacts would not have been saved.

Determining Reliance

Multiple cues in exhibit design can point to a museum's object centeredness. These include practices of bringing visitor's attention to individual objects through their placement in high traffic areas (such as the tipi in image 1.1), labels that point to unique characteristics of an object, or the marketing of specific objects to draw visitors into the museum. The *Ethnologisches Museum Berlin* boasted the possession of three robes from "the most famous chief of the Mandan," a rare side-fold dress, and "probably the oldest Blackfeet shirt still in existence" (Stephen, interview, November 4, 2014). And the *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg* has the oldest known painted war shirt from the Sioux on display (Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg n.d.). Such value-laden terms highlighted objects' significance.

Rather than using descriptive words such as "rare," "most famous," or "oldest" to draw visitor attention to objects, the Chicago Field Museum's Native North American exhibit, being old and outdated, shocks visitors by the sheer number of objects on display of any given type (see image 1.3). This was also a common practice of object-centered museums that allowed the objects to speak for themselves as visitors compare and contrast multiple examples side by side. These displays also maintain institutional authority by emphasizing the quantity of objects collected.⁶

⁶ This form of display, placing large quantities of similar items in one area, points to a universalist approach to collecting that obscures variability in favor of the traits and habits that make us all human.



(Image 1.3 Packed displays, Chicago Field Museum)

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) discusses the circular reliance on objects to create anthropology's authority (discussed further in chapter 2). If "ethnography artifacts are objects of ethnography" that have been detached from their context, then artifacts are created by ethnographers who, by defining them, create the ethnographic object. Detaching objects from their contexts and labeling them creates not only the subject of ethnography but the discipline itself (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998). For museums, the act of collecting and storing ethnographic artifacts in their own repositories maintains ethnography's authority in part by controlling the environment (exhibitions) where these artifacts are interpreted.

The reliance on objects for scientific authority through their use and position in exhibitions, as well as the marketing of them as being the "oldest" or "rarest" or "best preserved," politicizes them in a Benjaminian sense (1968) through their authenticity. The

politicization of aesthetics occurs through the authority and value placed on “authentic” and “original” collections, typically defined by age or rarity of the item. This maintains ethnographic museums as elite public spaces: the spaces that are equipped to preserve and care for these items, but also continuing the colonial hegemonic mindset that the knowledge learned from objects is most important and that only the facts, stories, and historical connections associated with museum collections are worthy of display and attention.

To elaborate this point, an analysis of the limits of authority because when there is a lack of three-dimensional objects is useful to show a logic of omission within ethnographic museums. By logic of omission, I mean it becomes easier to simply omit information or periods in history when there are no three-dimensional objects to illustrate the topic. This may be an unconscious decision rather than a deliberate political one, but this logic still has negative consequences. The topic most affected by an ethnographic museum’s logic of omission for Native North American exhibitions is one of the most life altering periods in American Indian history—the Boarding School era.

Boarding Schools

Institutionalized education for American Indians has been, and continues to be, a fraught endeavor. The Boarding School era, from the late 1800s to mid-1900s, promised the American public a new form of education that could “kill the Indian, save the man” (Pratt 1892).⁷ The period continued the American Indian diaspora in the U.S., only this time ripping families apart, as a way to assimilate American Indians into American society (Adams 1995).

⁷ The four most famous boarding schools include Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, PA (the first), the US Indian Industrial Training School better known as Haskell in Lawrence, KS, Flandreau Indian School in Flandreau, SD, and Hampton Institute in Hampton, VA. However, there are many small boarding schools near American Indian communities such as the one in Oneida, WI or the Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial School in Mt. Pleasant, MI now owned by the Saginaw Chippewa, who also own and operate the Ziibiwing Center.

The main difficulty for ethnographic museums is that there seems to be very few artifacts surviving the Boarding School era (or more likely, few made their way into museum collections) in comparison to other types of Native North American objects in museums worldwide. Rather, evidence of boarding schools found in museums (tribal and ethnographic) relies heavily on photographic and archival evidence (personal correspondences, ledgers, journals, etc.). The Boarding School era was well documented by government officials and school staff, as well as by the students and families of students. Letters were written by children to their parents in order to practice penmanship, to tell parents about their day, complain about the living conditions, and ease feelings of homesickness. Letters were written (or dictated) from parents to schools pleading to have their child enrolled in hopes of a better future for that child, to inquire why they hadn't heard earlier that their child was gravely ill, and to send love to their children (Child 2000).

A period that lasted half a century instilled fear in some, hope for advancement in others, and is still fresh in the cultural memory (Assmann 2006; Assmann 2011) of many American Indians proved a difficult discussion to have with museum curators. My questions about the limited displays educating the public about boarding schools typically elicited defensive excuses about the difficulty of acquiring objects from this period and the overall lack of objects currently in the collection related to boarding schools. When asked about photographs and personal accounts or correspondences, multiple curators assured me the museum had these but did not seem keen on using such evidence as a basis for an entire display. This lack of interest in displaying just photographs or archives to narrate a historical period, points to the logic of omission, many museums hold. It was easier to leave boarding schools out of the exhibition narrative. Two of the ethnographic museums (*Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* and the Karl May

Museum) and a possible third (Übersee Museum) don't mention boarding schools anywhere in their exhibition and the four other ethnographic museums in this study only mention them in passing to illustrate other points.

I say the Übersee Museum in Bremen possibly mentions boarding schools, but I am unsure, because of an interaction I had with the curator, Anna, during the renovation of the permanent Native North American exhibition in 2015. Anna was having a difficult time contacting tribal museums for possible loans for a section on boarding schools in the exhibit. She wanted artifacts like school uniforms, desks, chalkboards, etc. from the Boarding School era but was becoming frustrated with the lack of response she was receiving from the tribal museums she had contacted and came to me for help getting in touch with these museums. In an effort to fill the perceived need for three-dimensional objects pertaining to boarding schools and to encourage German museum and tribal museum partnerships, I accepted her request to locate loans. I contacted the Oneida Nation Museum and the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways directly for possible objects that could be loaned to the Übersee Museum.

I chose these museums to contact because of previous work I had done with each and my knowledge of their collections which both had boarding school collections. The Oneida Nation Museum (ONM) shared all of the correspondences and photographs of the boarding school in Oneida, WI and of Carlisle, where most of their members were sent, happy to share them with other museums.⁸ The Ziibiwing Center has the most extensive display of boarding schools (see chapter 6) I have seen in any museum, so I was hopeful that they would have items to loan. However, even the artifacts on display at Ziibiwing are not all the property of the museum, but

⁸ The Director of the Oneida Nation Museum was hopeful that the Übersee Museum would consider displaying their photographs and giving the museum credit to boost the visibility of the Oneida Nation Museum as they are currently undergoing a large archival project that will be the largest, researchable archival collection pertaining to *Haudenosaunee* and *Onayote'a-ká* in the world.

come from private collections of tribal members. The rest are from Central Michigan University's archaeology program, which is working with the Saginaw Chippewa to excavate the boarding school in Mt. Pleasant, MI. Staff at Ziibiwing did, however, have suggestions of databases to search, such as the National Archives and Library of Congress.

I compiled all the information I received about boarding schools from the ONM and Ziibiwing along with any information, photographs, or correspondences I had and sent the options back to the Übersee Museum. Unfortunately I could not find any original three-dimensional objects (uniforms, desks, tools for the skills taught at the school) that weren't already in use or were just stand-ins for the types of objects found at boarding schools. Defeated, the curator replied that because of the limited number of objects "it is questionable whether we will deal with this subject in the exhibition at all" (Anna, personal correspondence, March 17, 2015).

The Übersee Museum illustrates an extreme case of a logic of omission. I have not seen the final product of the renovation so do not know if boarding schools made it into the exhibition or not. However, most of the other museums don't go to the same extreme as the Übersee Museum when they felt defeated, unable to find the objects they had envisioned for their display. Other museums in this study instead incorporate a photograph or a quote or supplemental material to incorporate something about the education of American Indians. In this way, curators use boarding schools as illustrations of other topics rather than their own topic. This makes these instances feel as if the Boarding School era was merely a box that needed to be checked off.

For example, the Chicago Field Museum only mentions boarding schools in a temporary, collaborative exhibit with Bunky Echo-Hawk, an American Indian artist, as a topic he depicts through his artwork. The Field Museum discusses boarding schools Echo-Hawk draws attention

to in a supplemental, digital guide that the Field Museum created for visitors who wished to know more about the topics in the temporary exhibit. However, visitors have to find this information themselves through the museum's website and it was sparked by the art of their Native collaborator and not the museum itself. For other ethnographic museums, the solution seems to be simply throwing a sentence or two about boarding schools into other sections of the museum such as language loss and revitalization as a way to check that historical era off the list.

Two of the ethnographic museums, *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg* and the Neville Public Museum, do just this. When meeting with the curator, Katia, at the *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg* I had already seen the *Indianer Nordamerikas* exhibition twice and had not remembered any reference to boarding schools anywhere in the exhibit. Katia and I sat in a recreated diner booth opposite a Cadillac Deville, as nature sounds and powwow music emanated from various areas of the exhibition. For the two hours we sat there, only a dozen visitors walked by, being early in the morning and in the middle of the week.

Katia and I had been asking each other questions (me for the purposes of this project and her to gauge my opinions of ethnographic museums) and discussing our work in museums. I decided to mention that most museums don't talk openly about the atrocities that have occurred in Native North America, thinking of the genocidal and assimilation acts that litter Native North American history. I used boarding schools as my example, thinking it was a relatively safe way to talk about the "hard truths" (Lonetree 2012). Katia gasped and exclaimed, "It's right there!" pointing to a single panel within the language revitalization section that mentions boarding schools, shocked that I could have missed it. The panel is shaped like an animal hide with an image of female students lined up in front of a two-story building (see image 1.4). A long quote talking describes the experience of a First Nation man's great aunt when she went to boarding

school. It focuses on how she was forbidden to speak her native language and it situated in the language revitalization section of the exhibition. The quote reads:

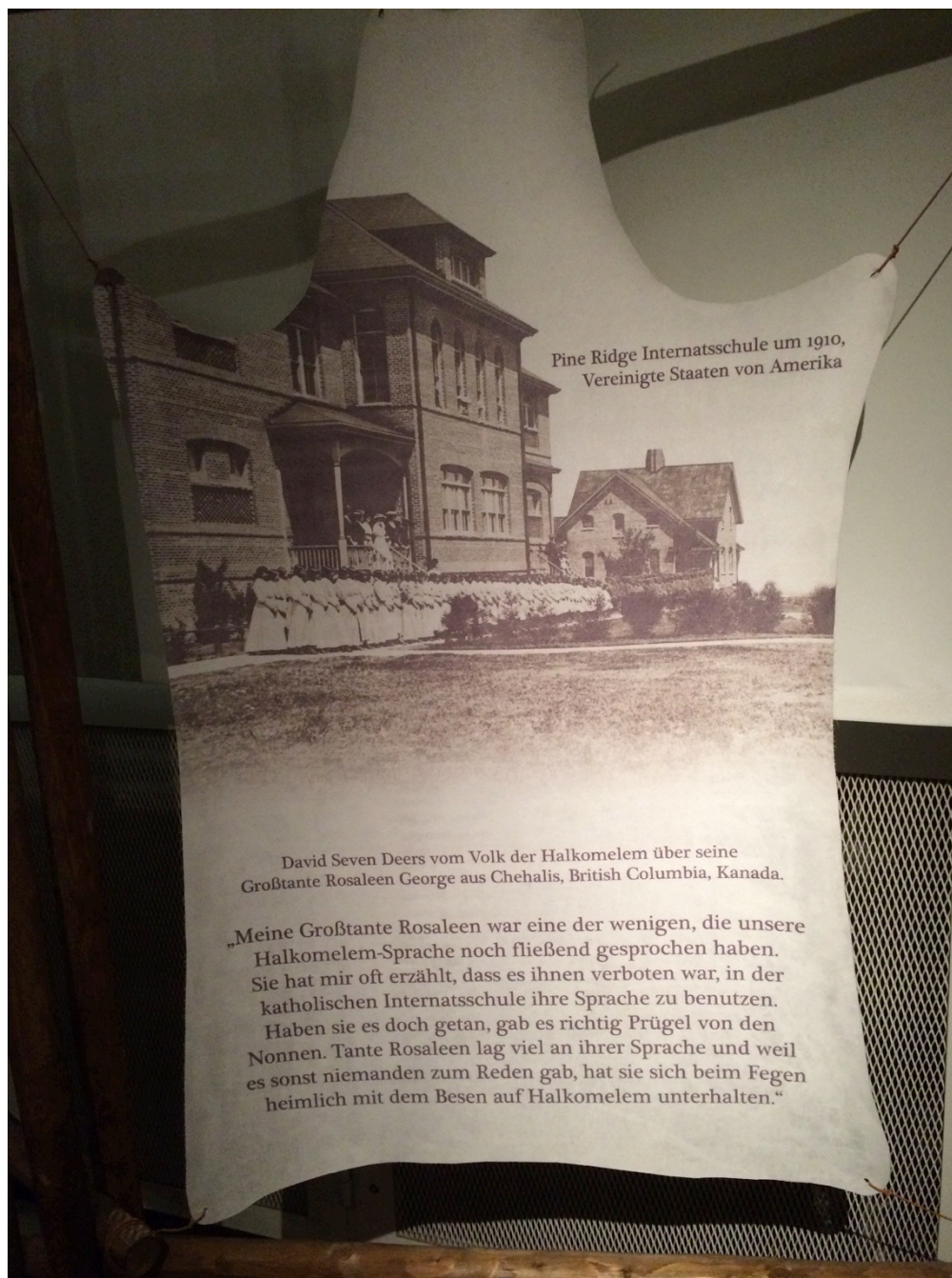
Pine Ridge Internatsschule um 1910, Vereinigte Staaten von Amerika

David Seven Deers vom Volk der Halkomelem über seine Großtante Rosaleen George aus Chehalis, British Columbia, Kanada. "Meine Großtante Rosaleen war eine der wenigen, die unsere Halkomelem-Sprache noch fließend gesprochen haben. Sie hat mir oft erzählt, dass es ihnen verboten war, in der katholischen Internatsschule ihre Sprache zu benutzen. Haben sie es doch getan, gab es richtig Prügel von den Nonnen. Tante Rosaleen lag viel an ihrer Sprache und weil es sonst niemanden zum Reden gab, hat sie sich beim Fegen Heimlich mit dem Besen auf Halkomelem unterhalten."

Pine Ridge boarding school around 1910, United States of America

David Seven Deers of the Halkomelem people, talking about his great aunt Rosaleen George from Chehalis, British Columbia, Canada. "My great aunt Rosaleen was one of the few who still spoke our Halkomelem language fluently. She often told me that she was forbidden from using her language in the Catholic boarding school. If they did, the nuns would beat them. Aunt Rosaleen really loved her language and since there was no one else to speak with, she would secretly talk in Halkomelem to the broom when she swept."

(Translation by author)



(Image 1.4 Quote about boarding schools, *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg*)

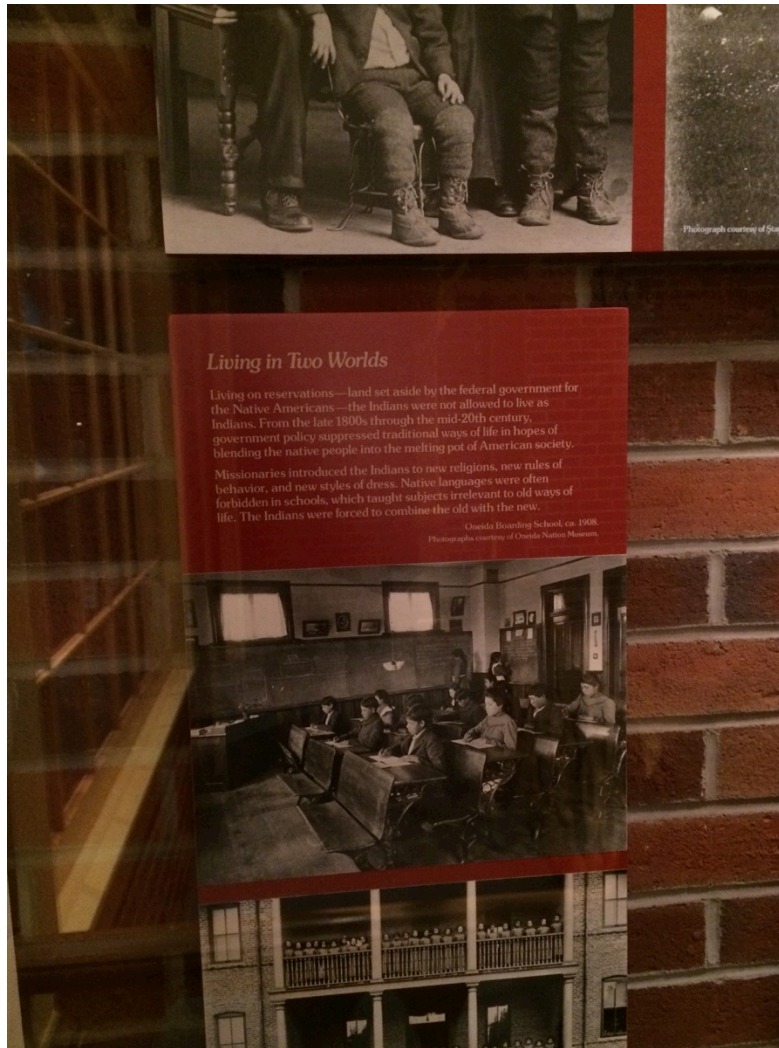
The second ethnographic museum that incorporates aspects from the Boarding School era without talking about boarding schools directly is the Neville Public Museum in Green Bay, WI. As a small, regional museum in northeast Wisconsin, the Neville Public Museum has had a Native North American exhibition depicting Native groups in northeast Wisconsin in its

permanent gallery since the 1980s. The exhibit begins with the Pleistocene Epoch and moves forward chronologically to present day with contextual information strewn throughout.

When visitors reach contemporary life, post 1492, the exhibit keeps to its chronological order, but shifts to a topical exhibition style. For example, within the period of contact in North America, the exhibit displays clothes, tools, religion, games, art, etc. The information gained by reading the labels and the corresponding objects give visitors a sense of what “traditional” life was like for American Indians in northeast Wisconsin, which will be used to understand the drastic shift of “Native Americans in the Modern World.”



(Image 1.5 “Living in Two Worlds” display, Neville Public Museum, Green Bay, WI)



(Image 1.6 “Living in Two Worlds” label, Neville Public Museum, Green Bay, WI)

In a display titled “Living in Two Worlds,” (see images 1.5 and 1.6) four photographs show the Oneida Boarding School in Oneida, WI. The accompanying label does not explicitly talk about boarding schools. Rather, the images used from the Oneida Indian School, only 10 miles from where the Neville Public museum now stands, are left as visual props in the display. The label discusses the difficulties of forced assimilation but only mentions missionaries and generalized “schools” that forbid the use of any Native language. The label reads:

Living in Two Worlds

Living on reservations—land set aside by the federal government for the Native Americans—the Indians were not allowed to live as Indians. From the late 1800s through the mid-20th century, government policy suppressed traditional ways of life in hopes of blending the native people into the melting pot of American society.

Missionaries introduced the Indians to new religions, new rules of behavior, and new styles of dress. Native languages were often forbidden in schools, which taught subjects irrelevant to old ways of life. The Indians were forced to combine the old with the new.

*Oneida Boarding School, ca. 1908.
Photographs courtesy of Oneida Nation Museum.*

Though this particular boarding school has undergone many iterations, first as a government school, then the Guardian Angel boarding school which was not exclusively for American Indians, followed by the Sacred Heart Seminary, and today holds the Oneida High School and offices of the Oneida Business Committee, the only indication we get that it was a boarding school is from the photograph acknowledgments. The acknowledgments (right justified between the written label and the photograph of the classroom in image 1.6) state that these photographs are from the “Oneida Boarding School, ca. 1908. Photographs courtesy of Oneida Nation Museum.” The photographs feature students sitting in a classroom, students posing outside in front of the school dormitory, and female students in the laundry room—one of the skills taught at the school.

The purpose these photographs have in this display is to juxtapose the new lifestyle, presumably learned at boarding school, with traditional life like beadwork and basketry (which the museum had three-dimensional examples of in their collection) also in this display case. The narrative tells of the difficulty American Indians had living in two worlds (traditional and modern) without contextualizing the processes of assimilation that occurred within boarding schools. It also doesn't discuss the difficulty boarding schools had in maintaining a consistent staff and owner, as could have been made evident with the lengthy list of ownership the Oneida

Boarding School went through in its short existence. The changes from Indian school to inclusive school to missionary meant inconsistent lessons and skills students could acquire, adding to the difficulty of “Living in Two Worlds.” However, none of this is discussed. Rather the exhibit draws attention to the traditional ways of life through three-dimensional objects with the new life style, depicted in the photographs; only using boarding schools as a way to discuss what is seemingly a more important topic—“living in two worlds.”

Alternative Exhibition Practices-*Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg*

One museum does not shy away from possible narratives they can tell because of a lack of three-dimensional objects in their collections. This museum is the *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg*. The Hamburg museum lost a sizable portion of their North American collection due to the destructions of war according to their curator of the Americas, Katia (interview, June 30, 2015). And yet she along with a First Nations collaborator created the most memorable Native North American exhibition I have been to.

When walking into the main entrance to the *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg*, visitors are walking into a large rotunda that creates the illusion that the building is smaller than it appears from the outside. Passed the admissions windows, in the rear of the rotunda, is a grand staircase that winds its way up to the second floor. The staircase hides the grandeur of the exhibitions that lie behind and to the sides of it, including a library, gift shop, and food court. As visitors walk towards the stairs there are two entrances into the galleries on either side of the rotunda. The right gallery entrance shows a quick glimpse of what lies inside (see Figure 1.7).



(Figure 1.7 *Indianer Nordamerikas* exhibition, *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg*)

This Northwest longhouse and totem poles mark the center of the *Indianer Nordamerikas* exhibit and establishes the template for what visitors can expect to encounter in this exhibition—architectural structures they can easily explore. A two-story Pueblo stands to the left of the exhibition entrance, while to the right partitions introducing the exhibition partially block the view of a sweatlodge. A large fort structure called Fort Sully is built in the back corner flanked by various weapons (bows and arrows, clubs, tomahawks, and guns) along its outside perimeter. Straight back, behind the Northwest longhouse is a smaller room with two erected tipis filled with pelts and a fake fire. Opposite Fort Sully is a mock diner, Red Horse Diner, equipped with a window and booth where visitors can sit and peruse one of the *Indian Country* magazines. And directly behind Red Horse Diner is an old car that can be seen through the window of the diner (see image 1.8).



(Figure 1.8 Red Horse Diner, *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg*)

The car is a 1960s/70s Cadillac Deville—a rusty, deep burgundy color with a black hard top, parked in front of a backdrop of the Golden Gate Bridge (see image 1.9). This four-door sedan is surprising to see in an exhibition about Native North America and has become a favorite feature of the exhibition for many visitors according to Hamburg curator, Katia (interview, June 30, 2015). The driver’s door has been removed, inviting visitors to sit behind the wheel listening to powwow music emanating from a speaker within. The back seat and dashboard have trinkets scattered about, including beaded lighters, rosettes, and blankets. There is no corresponding label describing the purpose of the car or if it has any great historical significance; its history is left to the visitor to imagine.



(Figure 1.9 Cadillac Deville, *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg*)

Upon seeing the Cadillac for the first time, I chuckled and immediately associated it with a Rez Runner—an old, worn down, cheap vehicle driven by American Indians around a reservation. When I was seven years old my father bought a Cadillac Deville just like this one for \$400. The rear axle was shot and the gas gauge didn't work, which meant no matter how many times my father filled the gas tank (and having atrocious fuel mileage), we would eventually be stranded on the side of the road, waiting for the OPD to pick us up and bring us to my grandmother's house.⁹ Within two weeks, even though my father now insists it was a luxury vehicle and not a “real” Rez Runner, he sold it for \$400.

⁹ Local police department

The incorporation of the housing structures and an old Cadillac was a practical solution to the limited collection of the *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg* due to the devastations of war. A second reason for the minimal use of three-dimensional objects was the inconsistent and often unreliable (and hence unsearchable) collection documentation—an ongoing process to update that plagues most museums. The lack of objects that fit in with the vision for this permanent exhibit, led the museum to incorporate modern day items and items not in the permanent collection, acquired either through purchase, loan, construction, or donation according to Katia.

A completely co-curated project with a First Nations expert, Michael, the *Indianer Nordamerikas* exhibit in Hamburg wants visitors to think about what they are seeing, hearing, and touching by *experiencing* the exhibit. The exhibition's subtitle "Following the Trail" (*Eine Spurensuche*) not only suggests an exploration of Native North American topics, but also leaves the paths through the museum open to visitor interests. Suggested paths are marked, particularly for children, through the inclusion of animal footprints on the floor that lead visitors to various displays and activities. But this guidance through the exhibition is not attached to a single, dominant narrative. Rather, labels associated with displays connect objects through broad topics like "beauty" in order to focus on the factual and contextual background of the objects on display. There are also displays, periodically throughout the exhibition, that encourage visitors to place themselves, their knowledge, and experience in dialogue with what they were learning.

For example, having just walked through an entire section that looks at the diversity of beauty in Native North America through beauty and the earth, beauty and harmony, beauty and status, beauty and changing traditions, beauty and life, beauty and protection, beauty and artistic skills, and beauty and identity, visitors stumble upon a reflection in a mirror. Surprised to see a person staring back at me, for there are no mannequins in this exhibition, I realized I was staring

at myself through another figure (see image 1.10). The figure is of a young Native staring solemnly back at me; the only label is above the mirror that reads “*Schönheit liegt im Auge des Betrachters/Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder.*”



(Image 1.10 Mirror display, *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg*)

Keeping with the theme of beauty, this display asks visitors to reflect on themselves, their identity, and opinions of what makes something or someone beautiful. It asks them to be a part of the conversation in the exhibition in a very intimate way. It creates an experience and a memorable one at that. In this way, the exhibition at the *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg* has found an effective way to educate visitors without relying on three-dimensional objects to do all the work. It does this by creating a dialogue between visitors and the exhibits ideas presented to the public(s) through not only structures, but constructed displays that ask them to grapple with the messages the exhibition is presenting.

Suggestive narratives such as questioning what is beautiful through introducing different ideas and uses of ‘beauty’ and then asking visitors to be reflexive about what they consider beautiful are found throughout this exhibition. The Cadillac’s narrative as an old, beat up, cluttered Rez Runner is a bittersweet tale that incorporates a small detail distributed across the exhibition that only the most astute visitors may notice. Blankets are staged throughout the exhibition space; they cover the sweatlodge to keep the heat and moisture inside (see image 1.11), they cover the floor within the tipis as bedding, and they fill a barrel in Fort Sully as trade goods (see image 1.12). The first time I had walked through the exhibition I hadn’t paid much attention to these blankets. I didn’t see the connection between the comfort and warmth of the sweatlodge blankets and the empty gesture of camaraderie of the trade good blankets that aided in the spread of biological warfare. Michael, the First Nations collaborator, confirmed this reading. He said he wanted people to understand “the absolute brutality” inflicted on the North American continent through clandestine means and empty promises (Michael, interview, July 30, 2015).



(Image 1.11 Sweatlodge, *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg*)



(Image 1.12 Wool blankets in barrel, *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg*)

According to Michael, these blankets are meant as an overarching historical lesson that began with a promise of warmth and comfort but also spread fear and caused displacement; a displacement westward that is experienced and felt today through relocation, only this time via a Cadillac Deville. The Cadillac takes this westward movement of American Indians to urban centers like San Francisco, signified by the Golden Gate Bridge backdrop, and suggests the freedom to do so—to start afresh in hopes of a better future. All the while, the blanket draped over the back seat is still indexing economic insecurity, a consequence of forced relocation because of generations of colonial rule (Michael, interview, July 30, 2015).

Without labels or signposts to cue visitors to these narratives, not everyone will see them. I certainly did not associate the blanket that covers the backseat of the Cadillac with the others throughout the exhibition on my first visit. Still visitors are encouraged to seek their own understandings with the information they are given through not only the objects from the collections, but also the props made for or used in this exhibition (e.g. Cadillac Deville, wool

blankets, and the mirror). This exhibit, therefore, reaches multiple levels of interpretation from a rudimentary introduction to American Indians. This exhibition is only able to accomplish this because the ethnographic objects are un-emphasized in favor of an experiential, educational vision, which is a consequence of a lack of three-dimensional objects in their collections.

The curator of the *Amerikas* collections, Katia, was afraid that the design of the *Indianer Nordamerikas* exhibition was excessive taking attention away from the authentic objects on display.¹⁰ As a curator and anthropologist, Katia's authority is channeled through the authenticity of the objects and the historical facts she can draw from those objects and present to public(s). Some of Katia's colleagues also criticized the exhibit by calling it entertainment, meaning the authority of the objects was non-existent (due to a small number of authentic artifacts and the incorporation of replicas) and therefore the exhibit was not scholarly enough (Hall 2006). For ethnographic museums, being called entertaining or Disney-like is a harsh criticism, particularly when it comes from colleagues in the same institution—the same colleagues who were eager to see the instillation of a Cadillac Deville.¹¹ However, the lack of emphasis on the “authentic” objects on display is exactly what differentiates Hamburg's exhibition from other ethnographic Native North American exhibitions. The seeming unimportance of the objects' authenticity in this exhibition over their use to narratively guide visitors allows for a more personal (and therefore memorable) visit.

Conclusion

Object-centeredness grants authority to ethnographic museums and ethnology, but it also exacerbates issues surrounding displayability and accountability. The relationship of objects to

¹⁰ It is common for German curators who are in charge of North America to also be in charge of Central and South America.

¹¹ Hilde S. Hein (2000) has argued that museums have also looked to Disney as an inspiration for creating memorable and unique experiences in realistic detail. However, in the context of an ethnographic museum, as an institution that is striving to maintain its scholarly and scientific reputation, being entertaining and Disney-like becomes a criticism. Disney-like inflects Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994) argument of hyperreality, in a business that is charged with presenting facts.

ethnology is less of a semiotic relationship than an interdependence. In a semiotic relationship objects stand in for or are extensions of persons (Keane 2006) though this is true of how objects have been treated in ethnographic museums. Rather, ethnology's reliance on objects as an interdependence suggests objects created ethnology, which creates strict guidelines to protect those objects (Miller 2010). The displayability of objects is intrinsically tied to their authority over subject matter or ability to illustrate various topics. Along with an item's value, measured in terms of its rarity, age, and condition. It is these values that give ethnographic artifacts their authority for museum displays.

What displayability, as a form of museological control over the subjects in exhibitions lacks is accountability for presenting a diverse and indepth understanding of history. As is evident by the lack of boarding school displays in ethnographic museums, displayability of museum collections has exclusionary limits (logic of omission) to the topics they can represent. This argument is further complicated when the scientific legitimacy of ethnographic museums is tied to the displayability of authentic ethnographic objects, as discussed in my critique of the Native North American exhibition at the *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg*.

The narratives at the Hamburg museum were able to tell deeper and numerous histories because they were not tied to the museum's collection. Though they did not go into depth about boarding schools, the topic of boarding schools is not the point of my critique. Rather, I use this example to examine how a lack of (or limited) boarding school displays in these ethnographic museums illustrate how the reliance on three-dimensional ethnographic artifacts allows for a logic of omission within ethnographic museums. The ease by which a curator can create an exhibit from what they have determines what subject matter is displayed and allows other historical events or perspectives to be ignored. This allows ethnographic museums to maintain

control over American Indian history, using the authority of three-dimensional objects as contemporary tools of cultural domination.

The question can be raised from this critique, what do we do with the objects that were collected and are now in the museum? Critics in favor of traditional object-centered exhibitions such as Katia's colleagues, point to a desire by some museum professionals to maintain the central role of objects in ethnographic museums. When objects are not made central to the displays,

critics bemoan...a decline in the 'museum product,' as museums 'move away from object-based museum services to the contextual approach advocated by the New Museology.' This move, as they see it, does not just take objects out of the spotlight, but also removes them from the gallery. It emphasizes education and visitor services, at the expense of curatorial research based on museum collections...Museums were once defined by their relationship to objects: curators were 'keepers' and their greatest asset was their collections.
(Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:138)

Over the last few decades, practices used in exhibitions have begun changing to focus attention to visitor experience and education (Pine and Gilmore 1998) rather than on objects. Recreations like the structures at Hamburg, as well as hands-on displays, and interactive stations are making their way into the exhibition space, and objects from the collections are no longer the central focus of the exhibition, but instead supplement educational goals. The advantage to this reframing of what an exhibition can do allows for the attraction of new, diverse audiences (Gurian 2006; Hein 2000). It means experimentation with new forms of exhibitions, such as digital collections (Henning 2006; Skramstad 2010) and the acquisition of new kinds of art and artifacts (discussed in the next chapter). It also means a broadening of the narrative to include multiple histories and to encompass more voices and contradictory retellings (Karp 1991; ed. Lonetree and Cobb 2008).

CHAPTER II

Discourses of Value: the Aesthetic Beauty of American Indian Art

The U.S. federal government passed the Indian Arts and Craft Act (IACA) in 1990, regulating the sale of American Indian arts and crafts. The IACA is a truth-in-advertising law that states art and crafts cannot be misrepresented and marketed as “Indian jewelry” or “Indian art” simply because of the motifs or mediums. IACA served several purposes. It first and foremost was meant to curb the number of mass produced fakes that were being sold to tourists at low prices and negatively impacting Native artists. It constrained the labeling of “Indian” made to mean only those artists who held citizenship in a federally recognized tribe. And through these criteria, it helped fine-tune the definition of authenticity for ethnographic museums looking to purchase American Indian art and crafts. A benefit of this was the hope of reducing the number of forgeries and misrepresented artifacts from entering the museum. Though every museum attempts to authenticate each item’s provenance prior to purchasing or receiving the item, forgeries from around the world and misrepresented acquisitions are inevitable.

For example, Karl May Museum curator, Christoph, recounted tales from German American Indian hobbyists, individuals who are interested in American Indian culture and lifeways through experiential activities and in this case are German citizens. They bragged that items they made were being displayed as authentic American Indian items in museums in the U.S. as well as in Germany (Christoph, interview, June 2, 2015). These tales are a source of pride among American Indian hobbyists because they mean that their recreations were so detailed and exact in facsimile that even experts (museum curators, art dealers, and appraisers)

couldn't tell the difference. To illustrate the point, Christoph showed me two photographs of what appeared to be the same pair of moccasins (see image 2.1). However, one is a replica made by an American Indian hobbyist who recreated the beaded moccasins by counting each bead on every strand, every stitch, and every feather of the Native-made original.



(Image 2.1 Beaded moccasins and facsimile, Karl May Museum archives)

Situations like this were one of the reasons IACA was passed in the U.S., to protect the economic rights of fellow American (Indian) citizens by preventing non-Natives from selling their crafts as American Indian. Through the regulation of what can be marketed as American Indian or specific tribal art with IACA as well as the increased recognition of Native artists and the worth of their work, American Indian art has become even more niche and expensive to purchase, especially on a museum budget. In response to tightening budgets coupled with a desire to continuously acquire new and innovative works of art, ethnographic museums have become more discriminatory about the art they purchase. In order to do this, individual ethnographic museums have created their own systems of valuation. This chapter outlines how changes in practice have created valuations of Indianness that preserve ethnicized and racialized stereotypes. This is accomplished by labeling only a small range of mediums used in American

Indian art as beautiful and worthy of an art label. It is also accomplished, particularly in U.S. based ethnographic museums, through artists in residence programs and artist collaborations that dichotomize American Indian art against an American identity.

Ethnographic Artifact or Art?

The display of American Indian art in ethnographic museums to mimic high art museums (white walls, large spaces between each artwork, and short labels that include the name of the piece, the artists name, and the medium) is part of a larger debate surrounding the labeling of objects as art or artifact. The debate began when criticisms were raised about the implications for determining art (individual works of expression admired for their aesthetics) from artifact (communal items with a purpose). Attached to this debate are values bestowed upon each category (art or artifact) tying perceptions of Western superiority to art as compared to artifacts.

Rather than explore the scaling of high versus ethnographic art (Clifford 1988; Corbey 2000; Errington 1998; Michaels 1994; Myers 2002) I explore how such value-creating events employ metrics that reassert dominant ideas of beauty, value, and Indianness. The exploration here is similar to Corinne Kratz's (2011) discussion of how museums persuasively create "rhetorics of value" or social meanings and judgments. I argue further, how the museum's role in valuating American Indian art ignores self-determination efforts that allow American Indian nations and citizens to define the metrics to evaluate and value Native American objects and art.

Native artists constantly negotiate the labeling of their work as artifact or art. This is particularly true in the case of Michael, a First Nations artist known throughout American Indian art networks for his sculptures and educational work with primary schools. Michael recounted one of his experiences working with a German ethnographic museum. He wanted to be clear from the beginning of their relationship that he saw his work as art. He described his work as

“traditional” in the sense that most of his work is displayed outside, allowing the environment to continuously morph and erode the art. “I do all my art as the ancestors and spirits would give it to me to do and I make the impossible happen” (Michael, interview, July 30, 2015). During negotiations in Germany over one of his original pieces, Michael said the museum staff made the decision to place his work in the ethnographic museum: “those guys read ‘oh First Nations, he belongs in the museum’ and I told them the ‘f’ word. I said ‘you filthy dogs, you can’t accept it that it’s art, you have to classify me into your anthropological B.S.’” (Michael, interview, July 30, 2015). This interaction, along with dozens of similar interactions with museums over his art and his identity, has discouraged Michael from working with Euro-American museums. He prefers to create his art for educational purposes and teach primary school aged children in Canada about his tribal history and inspiration for his art.

It isn’t just American Indian artists that have pushed the debate between ethnographic artifact versus high art. African religious objects have been relabeled as art to bridge the materiality of the items with local traditions (Silva 2017). And Jewish ceremonial items have been labeled as art to integrate Judaism into civilizational discourse (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998). The goal of both of these projects was to reframe how the items are interpreted. As artifacts, community or place of origin is privileged, dematerializing them. As art, their materials and formal qualities (artist, medium, subject) are privileged in order to focus attention on the item and/or artist rather than as an illustration of a larger social group (Silva 2017).

These shifts in labeling happen within Euro-American institutions because “...there is a line of reasoning by which objects of Primitive craftsmanship do not constitute art until Western connoisseurship establishes their aesthetic merit” (Price 1989: 68). For Price, this means that the Western discriminating eye is often seen as the only judge that can elevate ethnographic artifacts

to art. This authority in turn creates its own disciplines, like anthropology, and maintains it through interacting with ethnographic objects. In other words, Euro-American expertise has created the meaning and significance of their objects of study (Said [1978] 1994). This in turn ensures that "Westerners have assumed responsibility for the definition, conservation, interpretation, marketing, and future existence of the world's arts [and cultures]" (Price 1989: 69).

I want to explore how this control over the definition and interpretation of American Indian art is negotiated as a process by which ethnographic museums designate value for what constitutes "good Indian art." This value of good Indian art is based on the museum's metric of authentic "Indianness." Such valuing takes as a starting point ideas of art versus artifact and prescribes aesthetic standards that preserve ethnicized and racialized features of what it means to be American Indian in relation to the items in question.

The scaling of Indianness through the constitution of good Indian art during acquisition varies from museum to museum and from Germany to the United States, but all have comparable components. Components that include aesthetic similarities that point to a work of art as being about Native North America or the medium pointing to its connection to American Indians (i.e. beadwork). But there are also different factors that are taken into consideration based on personal preferences of curators, the artifacts needed to illustrate exhibition narratives, and the current composition of the collection.

The ethnographic vignettes below illustrate two evaluative extremes. At one end the Übersee Museum's insistence that an American Indian artist's work wasn't "Indian enough" solidifies historical and stereotypical images of what American Indian art should look like. On the other end, the Chicago Field Museum's inclusion of artist collaborators who use their art as a

form of political expression creates a sense that an artists' Indianness (from not Indian enough to very Indian) as displayed through their art is in opposition to Americanness.

Beadwork, Birchbark, and Being Indian

An explosion of color fills the convention room at the 2016 Woodland Indian Art Show and Market (WIAS&M) in Oneida, Wisconsin. Table after table displays artwork in different mediums from acrylic paint to metalwork. As I slowly make my way down the first row, admiring the quality and the time it takes to make each piece, a table covered in brown hues catches my eye. Some of the colors are golden, others oaky, and others the telltale light tan I associate with black ash. As I approach the table I immediately know whose work this is, having met the artist while he was an artist in residence at the Mille Lacs Indian Museum and Trading Post in Onamia, Minnesota. Pat Kruse, Red Cliff Chippewa, catches my eye and we quickly greet each other with a smile and a handshake, but something changes in Pat's demeanor when I ask how negotiations with a German museum were going.

Nearly a year earlier, while in Germany, the Übersee Museum in Bremen contacted me hoping to obtain contemporary American Indian art for their new Native North American exhibition. I had met the Übersee Museum's North American curator, Anna, while she was still working at the Grassi Museum in Leipzig, Germany when I was collaborating on an exhibition in the summer of 2012. Anna had emailed me prior to this request looking for loans or purchases of three-dimensional items related to the Boarding School era for a new permanent exhibit (discussed in chapter 1), so I was not surprised to receive another request.

Anna asked me if I had a list of American Indian artists who would be willing to sell some pieces to the museum, as they were renovating their Native North American exhibition and wanted to include a contemporary art section. Since the request was for purchases I was happy to

contact the artists I knew, asking permission to forward their contact information to the Übersee Museum. My list included Native artists well known in Indian Country, but who might not have made it into the mainstream art sector yet. My hope was that this would not only give these artists publicity, but also help the Übersee Museum create a truly unique and groundbreaking contemporary art exhibit. Among the list of artists I included a sculptor, a painter, a beader, a potter, and Pat Kruse, who works with birchbark. Pat's art ranges from wall hangings with traditional Ojibwe floral motifs and animal imagery to baskets with similar designs. All of his art is completely made from birchbark, which he and his son harvest and prepare.

Prior to providing Pat Kruse's name and contact information to the Übersee Museum, he called me, barely able to contain his excitement at the prospect of being featured in a European museum, especially a German museum. During our conversation he told me about his grandparents, his German ancestry, and his excitement to some day travel to Germany to teach a small class about birchbark baskets. Having taken one of his birchbark classes, I knew firsthand Pat's commitment to this art form and his excitement to share it with others.

I compiled the list of artists, including short blurbs about each artist's work and emailed it to Anna. I described Pat as:

a wonderful birchbark artist, which is nearly a lost art... Everything he and his son make is out of birchbark. They do baskets or wall hangings like paintings just made entirely out of birchbark. Of all the artists I have listed here, Pat will give you the most "bang for your buck" as they say. He is super excited to get the chance to be in a German museum too because his grandfather was German and married an Ojibwe woman and basically the tribe accepted Pat's grandfather as one of their own, so he told me if his work could be on display in a German museum it would be like honoring his grandfather. The great thing about his work is that it comes in so many different sizes so if you are trying to fill a small or large space he has something for you already made. He also said that he and his son would like to travel around and demonstrate their art, which is how I met him and they do a fantastic job if you are ever interested in that.
(Email correspondence, May 7, 2015)

It was a couple weeks until I heard back from Anna thanking me for the contacts. She said, “today Pat Kruse sent some photos of his works, but our director does not like them very much” (email correspondence, Anna, May 22, 2015). I was thrilled that the museum had at least contacted Pat, but was disheartened that the director of the museum, whom I had never met, was not interested in Pat’s work. This was the last I heard about the negotiations until I saw Pat at the 2016 WIAS&M.

After saying our hellos, I asked Pat about the purchase and if the museum had contacted him after I heard that he sent them images of his work. Pat’s facial expression turned dark as his brow furrowed and he said “No! They said my stuff wasn’t Indian enough and they don’t acknowledge me as an artist.” In utter shock, I felt the heat rising in my face partially from anger that anyone would be so brazen as to tell a Native artist that their work isn’t “Indian enough” and partially from shame and humiliation for putting Pat in this situation, sensing the slight resentment he held towards me. I cannot say what exactly the Übersee Museum said to Pat and though I recognize that he was most likely paraphrasing what they had said, his interpretation of the interaction suggested a conflict of interests and understanding.

Such conflicts ring true particularly for American Indians for whom being Native is not simply some racialized or ethnicized category. The complicatedness of what it means to be Indian is further muddled by requirements for tribal citizenship, which are based on a number of criteria that are incorporated differently by each tribal nation. Native heritage is partially biological as is evidenced by the blood quantum or ancestry requirements used for tribal citizenship (Dennison 2012; Sturm 2010). It also means being socialized into a set of values and social relationships (Basso [1979] 2008; 1996). It means being recognized by others as American Indian (Garrouette 2003) as well as self-identifying as one. And it means constant competition

against the fantasized Indian many non-Indians have imagined since before contact (Berkhofer 1978; ed. Calloway et al. 2002; V. Deloria, Jr. 1969; Deloria 1999; ed. Feest 1989; Green 1988, 1988b; ed. Mackay and Stirrup 2013; Mihesuah 1999; Strong 2012).

American Indian self-identification coupled with an imaginary Indian that permeates media and pop-culture also means those who don't fit the stereotypical image of what an American Indian looks like or should act like (even those who are tribal citizens) are constantly bombarded with questions and statements like "you don't look Native" or "what is your blood quantum?" And understandably, questions and statements like this wear on a person. I cannot help but wonder if my introduction of Pat to the Übersee Museum as having German ancestry tainted their view of purchasing a "real" Indian artist's work.

Collecting as a form of Curation

Museums can provide valuable resources for the renewal of dead or dying cultural practices or artistic and technological skills, lost through the colonization process and the subsequent acquisition of important material culture by collectors and museums. In recent years many indigenous artists have drawn upon these collections in order to re-discover the imagery and technical methodology of the arts in which few of their contemporaries were trained.
(Simpson 1996: 249)

While attending a conference at the Mille Lacs Indian Museum and Trading Post in Onamia, MN, the Minnesota Historical Society scheduled a session with their artists in residence to talk about each artist's experience working with the Mille Lacs collections and staff. Pat Kruse was one of these artists. For the talk, he discussed how working with the collections impacted his art. Participants at the talk were able to admire some of his pieces and see the transformation his art went through while participating in the artist in residence program.

One of the things that always strikes me when listening to artists in residence talk about their experiences is that no one acknowledges the fact that museum collections have already been

curated through the acquisition process. Even though these artists undoubtedly learn from the museum collections whether it be techniques, designs, or materials, the collections they are using have already been filtered through a Euro-American gaze.¹ Curation does not begin when an exhibition is in the planning stages; curation begins prior to acquisition and purchase.

This isn't to say that artists in residence and Native researchers who use collections whether for historical-genealogical research or to gain a more "traditional influence" in their artwork aren't learning from museum collections. The cautionary tale is the irony that Pat's work was not considered "Indian enough" by one museum even as he participated in another museum's artist in residence program where his artwork was influenced by traditional birchbark art found in that museum's collection.

Pat told me that his time with the Minnesota Historical Society transformed his birchbark work, particularly his baskets. They went from single sided to double baskets sewn together with sweetgrass with designs on the outside and inside—a difficult and time consuming process. Pat's experiences of both learning from a museum collection *and* being told that his work is not Indian enough for another museum collection speaks to the idea that disciplines, in this case ethnology, create their subjects. They also remind us that the discipline is constantly patrolling itself and its stakes by controlling parameters in order to maintain authority over the subject. In Pat's case with the Übersee Museum, opting for art typically found in ethnographic museums over art that was different and interesting and still a traditional American Indian art form. The desire to have American Indian art at the Übersee Museum did not mean any art made by American Indians. Instead, it meant the right kind of art, which was expressed as what the art isn't (birchbark isn't Indian enough) rather than what the right kind of art is.

¹ The Mille Lacs Museum collections were donated by an American couple the Ayers, who collected American Indian items while running the trading post (ca. 1930s) the museum was built next to and which is utilized as additional exhibition and work space, as well as their museum gift shop.

As a museum practice, the Übersee Museum has the right to determine their collecting practices based on collection need, narrative of the exhibition, and personal preference. Scholarship about collecting has argued that it is a process of self-identification (Benjamin 1968b; Clifford 1988; Pearce 1992; Putnam 2001). This illustrates that collecting can signify a cultural memory (Crane 2000; Macdonald 2003) based on taste of the collectors, their institutions, and even nations. In this way, exhibitions and the acquisition of items for collections tell us as much about the curator and the creation of a national identity, if not more, as it does about the cultures the items come from (Dubin 1999).

Collections are accrued through ethnographic expeditions, long-term loans, donations or gifts, and purchases. The reality of the museum world today is that there is a decline in large collections entering the museum from expeditions, a general decline in the American Indian art markets and private collecting in Germany (Christoph, interview, June 2, 2015), and budget constraints. These are coupled with an increase in prices in art and cultural markets (auction houses) making desirable purchases unaffordable. Therefore, unlike donations and gifts, these constraints on purchases mean that museums are increasingly discriminating in their acquisitions. Two possible alternatives some curators have started using to get the items they want even if they are too expensive for the museum to purchase are to cut out the middleman and go directly to the creator/artist to purchase the item for a cheaper price or, less common, to buy the item for their personal collection and loan it to the museum for display (a practice that goes against many museum association's code of ethics as a conflict of interest).

One German curator, Stephen (*Berlin Ethnologisches Museum*), was open about his personal interest in and commitment to American Indian art and objects. As we were walking through the exhibition, he pointed out all the items on display that were on loan from his private

collection. He said that rather than having to travel to the U.S. in order to view, negotiate, and purchase items (a process that was too expensive for the museum), Stephen relied on the personal contacts he had established while doing fieldwork in North America to find items for the museum's collection. He pointed out two items on display in particular. The first was a side-fold dress in near perfect condition, purchased by the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum*, which Stephen had heard of from a personal friend/colleague.

The second item, a *lithographie* by Fritz Scholder (Luiseno citizen), Stephen purchased and loaned to the museum. Scholder is credited as an influential American Indian artist. He shifted away from traditionalist styles starting in the 1960s bringing about a new surge in contemporary American Indian art. His artwork had a political stance unveiling the problems related to reservation life, like substance abuse and poverty. Scholder's artwork was revolutionary in the sense that it depicted strong, mysterious Native American figures in vibrant color and large brushstrokes.² Stephen purchased the Scholder *lithographie* for 50,000 Marks, the most expensive item he has ever purchased and loaned it to the museum. The painting was displayed in the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum*'s contemporary American Indian art section, one of the largest in Germany, where other ethnographic museums only designate small portions of the exhibition space to contemporary American Indian art.³

Taste—Aesthetically pleasing

The fact that both the Hamburg and Berlin museums have Fritz Scholder pieces on display in their Native North American exhibitions is no coincidence. Museums help create and perpetuate standards of evaluation for what art, or whose art, is worthy of display. In particular,

² Paintings are not his only specialty; one of Scholder's sculptures can be seen displayed in the George Gustav Heye Center (affiliated with the National Museum of the American Indian) and featured in movies such as *Black Swan* (2010).

³ For example, the *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg* displays only three pieces of contemporary American Indian art. Of these, one is a Scholder print and the other two are small painted sculptures: a buffalo and an army helmet. The section is titled "Indian Pop Art" and briefly discusses the changing mediums, topics, and reach of American Indian art.

artists who were part of a general shift in American Indian artwork in medium or expression and who tried to break away from the niche of American Indian art are showcased in these museums as part of a narrative arc in their exhibitions. They provide a new perspective on the “living between two worlds” narrative associated with American Indian assimilation stories. According to a label discussing modern Indian art, starting in the 1960s, Native American artists had:

the desire to be recognized as artists in themselves, rather than as ‘ethnic’ artists who are merely represented in ethnological museums. On the other hand they were aware that ‘Indian’ art forms a niche which interests buyers. Without the label of ‘Indian’, they would find it far more difficult to assert themselves in the international art market.

(“Moderne indianische Kunst/Modern Indian Art,” Berlin Ethnologisches Museum)

This quote points to the role of taste not just in the art market, but also in the museum.

Taste becomes the force by which collecting and acquisition decisions are made and it differentiates social distinctions that must be communicated, deciphered, and decoded (Bourdieu [1979] 1984)—in the case of ethnographic museums, between what constitutes good and bad Indian art. The curation of contemporary American Indian art creates the standards, which are taken up when multiple museums purchase from the same artist (i.e. Fritz Scholder) or similar styles of art that are stereotypically American Indian (i.e. beadwork).

When visitors enter the museum to learn about American Indians, the collecting practices of the past and present, as well as the arrangement and display of the items affect their taste by “configur[ing] particular ways of knowing and perceiving” (Macdonald 2011: 95). Public(s) taste is influenced by that of the perceived authoritative institution, in this case, which will be argued below through the example of the Chicago Field Museum, the ethnographic museum.

Ethnographic museums do so by perpetuating a racialized and ethnicized Othering of American Indians into a very particular and limited sense of what it means to be Indian. In this way,

collecting becomes a political tool for the “deployment of a possessive self, culture, and authenticity” (Clifford 1988: 218) while curators make sense of the world.

Artists like Pat Kruse already have ideas of what being Native means for them and their artwork. It is not solely a matter of taste, but of being. There are more relationships forming and ways of being in the world than Bourdieu’s sense of taste constitutes. Relationships are valued differently between artists and their artwork, between the artists and the museum, between the museum and the artwork, and between the artwork (and therefore the artist) and the public(s). Each of these relationships and their values are deciphered, decoded, and communicated differently based on the social interaction. For Pat, the value of his artwork is in the way he creates it through traditional ways of harvesting his materials, preparing them, and constructing his art, which he conveys by teaching small groups of people about his birchbark art and the experience of making it rather than only admiring it.

The admiration of the aesthetic value of items was once relegated to works of art in art museums, but has started to be a way of viewing ethnographic artifacts as well. The consideration of artifacts as art means their selection is based on aesthetic reasons rather than, or in addition to, cultural ones. The change from artifact to art is an attempt “to imbue them with some of Benjamin’s aura [an objects unique aesthetic authority (Benjamin 1968)]...Yet at the same time, the objects are still asked to stand in for the people from which they came” (Conn 2010: 37). This is unlike art, which is often (and inaccurately) presented as a singular achievement of the artist, even though they are placed in dialogue with other, similar works by artists of the same period (i.e. Impressionism, Cubism, Italian Baroque Art, etc.) or other organizing factors. Cues for visitors to consider an item as art rather than merely as artifact include staging by hanging the artifacts on white walls and leaving space between each artwork

or placing individual pieces on podiums with a plexiglass box placed over them. Another cue for visitors is through the labeling of artifacts as “beautiful.”

The labeling of artifacts as “beautiful” is more problematic because labels become one of the primary ways in which ethnographic museums communicate, decipher, and decode aesthetic taste (Bourdieu [1979] 1984). They are one component of the publications of the research, organization, and production of scholarly work that goes into creating both art and ethnographic exhibitions (Ames 1992). Labels, then, become primary sources to determine how an item is categorized within the museum. For ethnographic artifacts, labels typically include geographical origin, function, fabrication or medium, and the item’s arcane meaning (any mysticism behind it). On the other hand, art labels are more like “dog collars” which state the owner’s name (artist) and address (Price 1989). These label types firmly place items into categories of communal pieces (ethnographic artifact) or a universal aesthetic (art). For items moving between artifact and art, the label becomes a site to negotiate this change as well as confer ways of speaking about these artifacts or art to visitors. This is the process by which museums perpetuate certain tastes to its public(s).

All art is beautiful

Sónia Silva (2017) discusses how curators working on an exhibit of African (art)ifacts wanted to highlight both the aesthetic qualities of the items and their links to Africa. “Their solution to this conceptual and curatorial challenge was to blend the categories of art and artifact. By redefining the African religious objects as cultural artifacts, the curators preserved the link to Africa; by redefining those same objects as art, they were able to retain the focus on materiality and elevate those objects to the transcendental plane of a universal aesthetics” (Silva 2017: 82). Silva’s observations about a universal aesthetic is valuable for an analysis of the ways in which

(contemporary) American Indian art is categorized and talked about in ethnographic museums through adjectives that highlight aesthetic characteristics (i.e. their beauty).

The Native North American exhibition within the *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg* has no fewer than eleven displays that use beauty as a typological organizer. However, these do not include labels that describe individual objects as beautiful. The *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* points to objects' beauty and aesthetics as a way to draw visitors' attention to the objects on display (see image 2.2), many of which have beadwork. The Chicago Field Museum has exhibit cases filled with “Decorative art” (see image 2.3) that display “Beautiful and important objects.” The Neville Public Museum in Green Bay, Wisconsin displays the “Beauty of beadwork” (see image 2.4).



(Image 2.2 Beaded cradleboard, Berlin Ethnologisches Museum. Label reads “A sedentary life and easier access to trade wares caused the art of beadwork to bloom.”)



(Image 2.3 “Decorative Art” display, Chicago Field Museum, with mostly beadwork)



(Image 2.4 “Beauty of Beadwork” display, Neville Public Museum)

Beadwork seems to be the most common American Indian art form to be described as beautiful in ethnographic museums, I suspect because it lends itself well to such adjectives with

its vibrant colors and intricate designs (see image 2.5). What this (not exhaustive) list illustrates is not only that beauty is readily attached to beadwork, but most interestingly that it is used to describe American Indian items in nearly every ethnographic museum involved in this study.



(Image 2.5 “Schönheit und Kunstfertigkeit/Beauty and artistic skills” display, *Hamburg Ethnologisches Museum*)

Kant’s analysis of aesthetics and beauty (1987) presents this relationship as a natural property of things. Beauty (à la Kant) is a universal feeling associated with pleasure, which he

argues is also associated with a sense of perfection and goodness.⁴ Michel de Certeau (1984), Pierre Bourdieu ([1979] 1984), and Katharine Young (2014) move from Kant's intrinsic property of things to a consumer-based judgment of them as provocations to incite feelings connected to socially derived tastes. In other words, rather than aesthetics and beauty being paired as goodness and perfection, implying a standard goodness-beauty relationship, the shift in focus to consumer experience allows theorists such as Bourdieu to analyze the socio-economic nature of taste as emergent in and through processes of socialization.

These techniques of drawing attention through a discourse of inherent aesthetic beauty began in the 1980s and early 1990s in auction house catalogues in order to increase sales (Satov 1997). It was then adopted by ethnographic museums in part to draw visitors in, but also as a way to soften criticisms they received for categorizing non-Western items as ethnographic artifacts rather than art.

The curator might, with good intentions, believe that he or she is bestowing greatness on the work by neglecting its cultural content and context in favour of aesthetics. However, this merely confirms the universal claims of Western art by assimilating Aboriginal art into its aesthetic regime. Ironically, this aestheticizing gesture, designed to make Aboriginal art appear like Western art, ignores Western contemporary art's explicit deconstruction of the aesthetic regime.
(Neale 2014: 301)

By focusing on the aesthetic nature of ethnographic artifacts through a Euro-American frame, museums ignore American Indian artists' "deconstruction of the aesthetic regime". In other words, it ignores the ethno-racial alternative aesthetic regimes that remain suppressed. Pat's art is admired visually as something beautiful, but also imparts a taste or appreciation for a traditional Anishinaabe art form, materials, and craftsmanship.

⁴ Other scholars have taken up Kant's theory of inherent beauty to explore notions of the Wonder and Resonance of museum objects (Greenblatt 1991) and how language politics used Sublime as a romanticized trope (Moore 2006).

The goal of associating adjectives like beauty to Native American artifacts within ethnographic museums is to direct the public(s) assessment of and engagement with these objects as something that is inherently good and visually enjoyable—as art. In this way the language used to describe the object becomes part of the object, and categorizes it with the types of objects that are treated in this way. For the American Indian objects in German ethnographic museums, the result is of a very limited type and scope (e.g. beadwork). Certain discourses are crucial for authorizing standards of Indianness in the museum. This is the first process of valuation within ethnographic museums, moving from collecting specific objects based on curatorial taste to the display of the items as beautiful examples of American Indian artwork. It conveys to museum public(s) that American Indian artwork is limited to certain mediums that are inherently beautiful (i.e. the “beauty of beadwork”) and others that are less so.

A second process in valuing Indianness also takes as a starting point the aesthetics of art and though a similar process to the evaluation of artifacts as beautiful, disperses a different sense of taste to museum public(s). The next section focuses on the Chicago Field Museum’s current practice of collaborating with American Indian artists on small, temporary exhibits. By working with artists whose works are politically motivated and pointing to these political messages within the art, the Field Museum is emphasizing the artistic depth of the artifacts. However, the museum is also differentiating American Indian art from Americanness, which is only partially intended by the artists themselves, by virtue of the setting in which it occurs—a setting that displays non-Euro-American cultures.

Everyone’s a Critic: Native OR American

The Chicago Field Museum is currently collaborating with contemporary Native artists on temporary exhibits that showcase their artwork alongside the museum collections. Though an

innovative way to bring a diverse set of voices into the exhibition, I was uncomfortable with the project initially and thought my discomfort was because the first three temporary exhibitions relied on artists who had been working with museums for a while. My small town community pride thought, “There are so many outstanding artists back home that could be doing this project.” However, I believe my uneasiness is not necessarily due to the sharing of artists between museums, but the presentation of the art in opposition to mainstream society—American society.

The first artist, Bunky Echo-Hawk (Yakama and Pawnee), is well known for his politically charged imagery that incorporates contemporary Native issues. Echo-Hawk uses his art as critique of mascots, toxic pollution near Native communities, and most recently the oil pipelines. The second artist, Chris Pappan (Kanza), is known for his ledger art, some of which were lain over the display cases of traditional artifacts at the Field Museum. The juxtaposition between the artifacts behind the plexiglass with Pappan’s contemporary take on ledger art is not as stark as Echo-Hawk’s work. A Plains Indian tradition, ledger art morphed from being drawn on hides depicting communal events, to being drawn on ledgers provided through trade during the period when American Indian communities were being forced onto reservations (Plains Indian Ledger Art Project 2017). This corresponded with the decimation of buffalo herds, a traditional canvas for this art form, leading to the need for a new type of canvas. So although Pappan’s ledger art may not overtly depict critical dialogue with current American Indian affairs like Echo-Hawk’s work does, its history is closely linked to political upheaval for Plains communities.

The third artist featured was Rhonda Holy Bear (Lakota) who has many talents from doll making to beading to carving. Holy Bear’s art melds well into ethnographic displays, as curators

can seamlessly shift visitor attention from her contemporary artwork to the museum artifacts.

The most traditional of the three artists, Holy Bear's art readily lends itself to the label American Indian due to its likeness to the Field Museum's American Indian collections on display—items found in any ethnographic museum.

Three vastly different Native artists with different agendas, but the display of these artists in the Chicago Field Museum within the Native North American exhibition left me with a sense of Othering. Contemporary Native art exhibits in these ethnographic museums are trying to educate the public about the evolving nature and diversity of American Indian art. But what incorporating collaborative exhibits with contemporary American Indian artists in ethnographic museums fails to realize, is that these exhibitions are not just comparing American Indian art with Western art, but American Indianness with Americanness.

I am under the impression that in the new museological climate that demands a shift in the political and social roles of the museum, artists like Echo-Hawk, Pappan, and Holy Bear are appealing. Echo-Hawk's work openly criticizes American politics for environmental pollution, endangerment of Native communities through chemical waste sites, and historical and contemporary genocidal practices. Echo-Hawk's work, therefore, establishes a *Native* American framework as opposed to an American framework because of the subject matter—these ethical atrocities are happening to American Indians by the American government. This is solidified by displaying his work within an ethnographic museum context and through additional digital information titled “Beyond the Labels: Bunky Echo-Hawk Modern Warrior” written and published (Wali 2013) by the museum about US-Native relations with emphasis on relocation, nuclear waste contamination, and assimilation.⁵

⁵ <https://www.fieldmuseum.org/blog/beyond-labels-bunky-echo-hawk-modern-warrior>

Pappan's and Holy Bear's artwork is not as easily juxtaposed with American culture except for the fact that each artist practices a version of what is considered traditional Native art—whether it be ledger art or beaded doll making. Their work is visually American Indian, which makes it not-American art. Pappan's ledger art is a recognizable Plains art form and Holy Bear's dolls look stereotypically Native with long black hair, dressed in immaculately beaded clothing.

My critique is not a judgment on the artists themselves. Their works are among the best Native artworks in the world and the mediums and messages they choose to convey in their artwork are their own as is their decision to participate in these exhibitions. What I am critical of is the use of these artists by the Chicago Field Museum to perpetuate their image as a culturally sensitive museum that showcases various contemporary artists in a dialogical narrative. There is no doubt that what the Chicago Field Museum was attempting to make a positive step in the display of contemporary American Indian art and they succeeded in part. However, I do not think they pushed the boundaries of what Native art is and can be far enough. The narrative used by the Chicago Field Museum placing Native artists in dialogue with the museum's collections seeks to be critical of the role of the museum as an authoritative institution and of the wider publics (American society) treatment of Native Americans. However, without institutional change pertaining to what kinds of Native art are displayed and used to teach museum publics about the American Indian point of view (as seen through art), the art and artists are being Othered as not American.

The display of contemporary art in ethnographic museums and even the inclusion of what once were considered artifacts in an art museum setting illustrate the changing nature of American Indian art and avoids the perpetuation of American Indian cultures as being static and

unchanging. This allows the museum to emphasize cultural continuity through change (Doxtator 1985; Simpson 1996). This might include artists whose work involves continuity in design from tradition but incorporates a change in medium, or continuity in medium with a change in design. “For many years, change in style or content was discouraged and art work which did not conform to tradition was not considered to be ‘authentic.’ While this is a continuing problem facing Native artists, contemporary art forms are beginning to be appreciated and valued as evidence of the natural process of cultural and creative evolution” (Simpson 1996: 251), most readily seen in the work of Pappan and Holy Bear at the Field Museum.

What the Field Museum as well as the other ethnographic museums in this study have not done is include work by a Native artist that does not also visually cue visitors that it is somehow “Native American art,” through either medium or imagery. Phil Deloria (2004) has written about the presence of American Indians in music, sports, and technology in *Indians in Unexpected Places* as a way to examine American Indians who have not conformed to mainstream ideas of what American Indians are and used this to their advantage. I would make a similar case about Native Americans in the arts, who have created art beyond expectations of what it should be about, the materials that should be used, or the techniques used to create it. Many of these artists fall outside the niche of “American Indian art,” but are still creating Native art.⁶

This becomes apparent when looking at contemporary art exhibits in ethnographic museums or in art museums that use “ethnographic” artifacts. The Metropolitan Museum of Art is no stranger to this type of exhibition and is currently working on a new one that will showcase a recently donated collection of American Indian art that includes what have been traditionally viewed as ethnographic artifacts such as pottery, a dagger, and a painted shield to be displayed in

⁶ There is an example of this in chapter 6 through a piece of artwork titled *A Night in Paris*, now in the Oneida Nation Museum’s collection. It depicts a celebrity made out of common everyday objects and is in the ONM’s collection because it was made by a tribal member making it American Indian art.

the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Kennedy 2017). This is not the first time the Met has displayed non-western or 'primitive' artifacts in their galleries (Conn 2010), but it will be the first time American Indian art(ifacts) have been displayed in the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Rather than argue for an intervention solely in art museums, I would argue that interventions need to occur in ethnographic museums as well. I could argue for the inclusion of more Euro-American art in ethnographic museums. However, I think more needs to be done in terms of what art is included (i.e. Native art that doesn't point to its Nativeness necessarily), curation of contemporary art exhibits by American Indians (particularly from different communities), and a more holistic practice of acquisition that does not discriminate based on Euro-American aesthetic standards by partnering with American Indian art professionals to determine what art should be acquired.

Conclusion

By only displaying artwork that adheres to a generic standard of Indianness, museums eliminate the voices of American Indian artists, their messages in their artwork, and their authority to decide what is or is not American Indian about their work and hence themselves. Likewise, labeling objects as beautiful which erases the depth of interpretation, ultimately trivializes the historical aspects of the medium (i.e. the historical contexts associated with the introduction of beadwork to American Indian communities) and the voices of the artists.

The desire of museum curators to help artists by purchasing from them directly and changing the categorization of ethnographic artifacts to art can be seen as a move towards solidarity with Native artists. However, what this chapter attempted to illustrate is that the alliance is merely the appearance of change. Rather, art standards are created by museums

through purchases and curation of collections, reaffirming racialized and ethnicized ideas of what it means to be Indian—not just a Native artist, but a Native. This is accomplished through the types of art purchased by museums such as beadwork that is colorful, vibrant, and beautiful. Or it is accomplished by displaying Native art that is not only visually Native but is politically motivated, most often critiquing the settler colonial state and therefore setting up a dichotomy of Native American as not American. In these ways, American Indian contemporary art is being Othered—an Othering that should only be defined by the artists themselves as the experts, a topic I turn to in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

Discourses of Expertise: Interaction in American Indian and Museum Collaborations

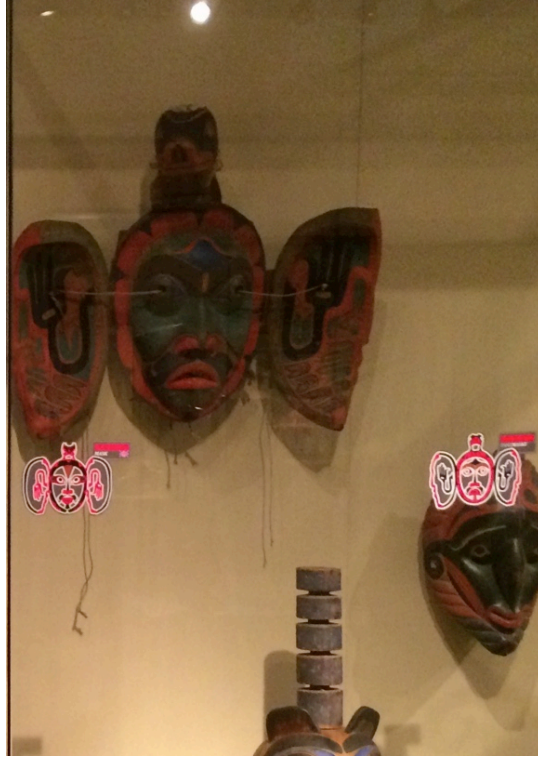
The acquisition, performance, and validation of expertise is constituted socially, often through Euro-American institutions such as museums. In this chapter, I analyze the ways in which museum staff, mainly curators, are diversifying the voices present in American Indian exhibitions by collaborating with American Indians, whom I call Native experts. And yet, these collaborations and the recognition of Native expertise is managed and modified by the museum. Part of this process has resulted in the dichotomization of expertise into Native and curatorial types. This management of expert types allows museums to maintain their control of the dominant historical narrative while alleging multi-vocality. I begin by describing the vetting process Native experts are subjected to before delving into the types of expertise at play in the creation of museum exhibitions. The chapter ends with a discussion of the labels placed on Native experts when collaborating with museums through a case study of a co-curated exhibition and the strategies used by the museum curator to maintain the museum's standards of museological representation and thus its privileged position as gatekeeper of knowledge.

Vetting: the Native Test

Prior to negotiations about the expert content that will be incorporated into exhibitions when working with Native collaborators, curators often vet Native experts through what I refer to as the "Native Test." The "test" is presented as a deceptively simple and innocuous question such as "What's wrong with this?" or "What is this?" as curators draw attention to a specific object in the collection or exhibition. Questions vary depending on the person asking them and

the project the American Indian is being vetted for, but each question aims at determining the type and breadth of knowledge the American Indian has along with his or her own status in relation to the questioner and in relation to their Native community.

On one occasion, I was walking through the Native North American exhibition with the now retired *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* curator, Stephen, discussing the time, money, and care he put into creating this exhibition. We had already been chatting for nearly two hours about his work with the museum, the move the museum was about to make, and the changes to the staff and the exhibition since his retirement. As we slowly walked through the gallery, Stephen reminisced about the narrative flow the exhibit once contained before the new curator made changes to incorporate a more interactive exhibition. Some of the changes include a shortening of the Native North American exhibit to incorporate a small temporary exhibit that focused on European visitor's lived experiences in comparison to what they typically see in ethnographic museums. Additional activities added to the Native North American exhibition including a video game in which players build and explore a Native settlement, as well as iPads that have prerecorded stories associated with objects on display. Visitors can walk through the Northwest Coast section of the exhibition with the iPads, hold them up to stickers that utilize a QR code type system (see image 3.1), and listen to dramatizations of an object's history (both fictionalized and historical).



(Image 3.1 Story-telling activity stickers, *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum*)

The Native North American exhibition at the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* once moved through geographical regions, often drawing visitor attention to material goods and religious or cultural events within each region: beadwork in the Plains, hunting and ivory in the Arctic, and masks and totem poles in the Northwest Coast. Halfway through the exhibition, Stephen and I stopped in front of a large Kachina display in the Southwest section (see Image 3.2). Stephen turned to me and asked “What’s wrong with this?” He waited patiently as I feigned scrutiny while internally I was thinking “Are you serious?” And to this day, I am unsure what was “wrong” with this exhibit display.



(Image 3.2 Kachina display, *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum*)

On another occasion, I was meeting with a woman who would become my friend in Potsdam, Lina. Lina and I met at a *Kontinental Markt* at the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* where temporary booths are set up and items from all over the world are sold. Colorful woven blankets and pan-flutes from Central and South America, woven baskets that look like black ash baskets made in Eastern Europe, and any type of jewelry needed to complete an anthro-chic look are sold at *Kontinental Markt*. Lina was promoting her educational pamphlets and activities about Native North America and her (private) library, which at the time resided in her basement with the hope that one day she will have the largest repository of literature about American Indians in Germany.

Months later I ran into Lina at the Karl May Festival in Radebeul, Germany where she was once again promoting her library and a social/educational club she was part of. Lina invited

me to tell stories with her club, which I agreed to do in hopes of making more contacts in Berlin and Potsdam, even though I was uncomfortable with the idea of telling stories and ultimately performing Indianness. Fortunately for me, but unfortunately for the group of people that attended, we were rained out, forced to make a hasty retreat from the field where the club usually meets.¹ Instead, Lina invited me to have dinner with her, two of her daughters, and her grandchild at her home in Potsdam.

Driving through the former East German city, Lina would point out different areas of buildings that reminded her of the good life that socialism afforded her family as well as the distrust it created between neighbors. On one block, she pointed to the housing structures built that allowed her family to have a decent, affordable place to live. On the next block she pointed out the school she was barred from volunteering in because her neighbor told authorities about the Western made movies that she would watch in her own home—all of which were about American Indians.

Our conversation continued as we entered her apartment and I looked out her balcony to see identical concrete apartment buildings, remnants of East Germany, across a small, shared courtyard. Sitting on the balcony was a small potted plant, barely germinating. She walked over to where I was standing, looked down at the plants, slid the balcony door open, grabbed the pot and asked, “What is this?”

Though the above examples were not meant to gauge my worthiness for a possible museum collaboration, similar Native Tests are given prior to collaborative projects in museums. While conducting preliminary fieldwork in Germany, summer 2012, I collaborated with the Grassi Museum in Leipzig on an exhibition showcasing the German sculptor, Ferdinand

¹ The club meets in an open field just outside of Potsdam where they can sit in a circle on wood logs, the only thing missing is a campfire which was forbidden by the owner of the property.

Pettrich.^{2 3} The museum curator, Violet, had set parameters for our working relationship when introducing me to other museum staff during my first few days at the Grassi Museum. “This is my intern, Courtney” was the phrase she uttered most often when introducing me to museum staff rather than as collaborator or Native expert. She continued this practice as we traveled to other museums to look through their collections for possible items to incorporate into our exhibition. If the tasks Violet had given me had mirrored those of previous internships I had had in museums, I would not have thought more about being called an intern. However, many of the tasks often presumed a specialized knowledge of Native North American customs, histories, and individuals not gained from formal training.

My role for the exhibition was to proofread information about Native North America and add to it my Native knowledge. This became a point of contention. For example, when Violet asked me to contact the descendants of Tecumseh for the opening of the exhibition, I replied that I could get her the phone number and email of the descendant tribe of Tecumseh (Shawnee) along with the contact information for the Sauk and Fox which had a prevalent place in the exhibit, but I personally did not know Tecumseh’s descendants. Violet was visibly disappointed and confused, having thought I had personal contacts with these groups and individuals.

The outcome of such vetting processes is an exhibition with (hopefully) multiple voices narrating it. These types of exhibitions attempt to alter the paradigm that Western institutions are the sole authority over knowledge. Vetting of American Indian expertise prior to collaborative work enables the institution/curator to understand the breadth of knowledge the Native expert

² The exhibit Violet (the curator) and I were working on was a collaboration with the *Musei Vaticani* in particular the Vatican Ethnological Museum, which held a large collection of Pettrich’s busts. The collaboration was organized that the Vatican Ethnological Museum would contribute artifacts such as the busts and the responsibility of the Grassi Museum was to contribute complementary artifacts to the exhibit based on Pettrich’s interest in Native North America as well as create most of the informational texts for the exhibition.

³ Pettrich’s most famous work is a large sculpture depicting the last breaths of Tecumseh, titled “The Dying Tecumseh,” currently on display in the National Portrait Gallery, Washington D.C.

will bring to the project. It also ensures that the curator is aware of the particular voice that will be incorporated into the exhibition through the Native expert and that the collaborator is in fact, Native.

The use of collaborations to bring in multiple voices and incorporate other forms of authority in ethnographic museums was the hallmark of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) was built. Collaborations and consultations with American Indians were used during the planning stages through implementation of the NMAI, and these consultations (mostly in the conservation department) continued with American Indians in the years immediately after its opening. Criticisms of what NMAI was able to actually accomplish range from an inability to fulfill its mission to have a Native-centric philosophy guide each exhibition (Cobb 2008; Howe 2005), to a range of criticisms that look at NMAI's performance of reconciliation (Wakeham 2008), and its spoon-fed narratives that create public opinion rather than foster a sense of "response-ability" or the desire of publics to learn and interpret on their own (Archuleta 2008). While the end product of NMAI may not have fully met scholarly, American Indian, or general audience expectations, the attempt to alter the way a national museum looks, operates, and collaborates with individuals and communities represented in it is monumental. It attempted to alter the image of the museum as a space of solely Western authority and created a model for collaborative work in museums.

The NMAI remains an exceptional example, albeit not perfect. On the other hand my own examples of being given the Native Test and collaborating with ethnographic museums illustrate two major and common asymmetries between Native experts and Non-Native museum experts. The vetting process is another way for the museum to validate Indianness (see chapter 2) by measuring an American Indian's knowledge based on the museum's metric, a process that is

not reciprocated in an official capacity or as overtly by the Native expert. The reason for not reciprocating the vetting process is because the Native expert has often been asked to collaborate *in the museum on a project for the museum* with an individual who has an advanced degree. Suggesting that others have already vetted the curator. It also suggests the Native expert does not have quite the same stakes in creating the exhibit.

The second asymmetry is that the vetting process attempts to determine the Native expertise based on common tropes to complement the curators expertise. Being asked to identify the plant that was barely germinating in a pot relies on the environmental Indian trope. Asking me what is wrong with the Kachina exhibit collapses American Indian diversity into a singular pan-Indian idea—all Natives are the same—and hints at the trope that Natives are also spiritual people or hold similar beliefs. Finally, assuming I have personal connections with other tribes or individuals assumes that all Natives know one another. This suggests that American Indians can only have a very specific type of knowledge that is not the type of knowledge museum curators possess. In the next section, I explore what these two knowledge types are and what they suggest about the relationship between the Native expert and the museum expert.

Gaining Expertise: ‘Knowledge what’ versus ‘Knowledge how’

Expertise, as it is used here, is predicated on the types of information and experiences that make up an individual’s knowledge—“what a person employs to interpret and act on the world” (Barth 2002: 1). Through this definition, knowledge includes attitudes, information, embodied skills, and even verbal taxonomies or ways in which they speak about classifications. Knowledge becomes expertise, according to Michel de Certeau ([1984] 1988), through the conversion of competence into authority by talking about what one knows. Experts, therefore, are interpreters or translators—individuals who are able to communicate their competence

(knowledge) for others through hegemonic apparatuses such as education (Gramsci [1971] 1989).

Both de Certeau and Gramsci acknowledge the universality of expertise (anyone can be an expert); however it is the weighing of certain types of expertise and its ability to create discourse that delineates between authoritative experts and those who are just knowledgeable. Ironically, the process of gaining “[a]uthority is indissociable from an ‘abuse of knowledge’” (de Certeau [1984] 1988: 8) through the conversion process. Therefore, expertise is a “procurable and securable ‘body’ of professional proficiencies and knowledge, but also a relationship of jurisdiction and authority that is intersubjectively determined and reproduced” (Boyer 2001: 77). Expertise can be multiple and is always relational and dynamic, procured through various means, including study, personal experiences, and practice.

E. Summerson Carr discusses the ways in which knowledge is gained and validated in her article “Enactments of Expertise” (2010). Gaining expertise, according to Carr, is a four-part process that includes: socialization, evaluation, institutionalization, and naturalization. Socialization is the first step, in which individuals create an intimacy with their subject through apprenticeships, fieldwork, research, etc. Evaluation or authentication occurs discursively through the creation of hierarchies between people or people and objects of study. Institutionalization or authorization of an individual’s knowledge is the byproduct of the evaluative process, which leads to the fourth and final stage of enacting expertise, naturalization, or the ‘speaking of what one knows.’

Because of an assumption about differences in socialization, museum collaborations begin in the second step of Carr’s process of enacting expertise with the authentication of the Native expert through some sort of Native Test given by museum curators or staff. If successful,

the Native expert becomes a ratified collaborator (authorized (step three)). As an interactional determination of what type of knowledge the Native expert is bringing to the project, the Native Test most often solidifies the presumption that the Native expert will possess a ‘knowledge how’ (O’Donovan-Anderson 1997). ‘Knowledge how’ is an experiential-performative knowledge (Boyer 2008) gained mostly through life experience of being American Indian. This is in juxtaposition to the (non-Native) museum curator’s ‘knowledge what’ (O’Donovan-Anderson 1997) which is a social-institutional knowledge (Boyer 2008) of a particular subject (i.e. Native North America). The assumption that Native experts possess more of a ‘knowledge how’ rather than a ‘knowledge what’ is misleading and based on ethnicized ideas of what it means to be American Indian. It has also created the perception that Indigenous knowledge is restrictive and subjective, whereas Western knowledge is scientific and objective (Mithlo 2004). This is discussed further in chapter 5 as a pro-Indian/anti-science argument when it comes to repatriations.

Forcing Native experts into the ‘knowledge how’ category becomes apparent, when analyzing the ways in which Native experts are used and referred to when talking about collaborations with museum staff. In the next sections I will introduce the labels applied to Native experts by museums during collaborations as a way for museums to maintain their institutional authority over Native North American expertise and prevent the naturalization (step four of Carr’s process) of Native expertise within academic institutions (i.e. the museum).

Expertise types: Artists as Collaborators

A co-curated exhibit between the Chicago Field Museum and social, environmental justice artist, Bunky Echo-Hawk, recently closed. The exhibit, titled *Bunky Echo-Hawk: Modern Warrior*, opened September 2013 through September 2015 and displayed some of Echo-Hawk’s

iconic images alongside items from the Field's Pawnee collections. An enrolled member of the Yakama Nation and traditional dancer/singer of the Pawnee Nation, Echo-Hawk is known for his mix of American Indian imagery and strong political messages. Most recognizable of Echo-Hawk's work are his acrylics on canvas which depict figures wearing gas masks, bringing attention to the practice of placing toxic, radioactive waste sites on or near reservations, linking the biological warfare of the past with that of today's waste management practices (Echo-Hawk 2017).⁴

The process of co-curating an exhibit with a contemporary American Indian artist created such a worthwhile project for the Field's curator of the Americas, Michelle, that she recently opened another co-curated (art) exhibit this time with Chris Pappan (Kaw Nation). The exhibit, titled *Drawing on Tradition: Kanza Artist Chris Pappan*, opened October 29, 2016 and will close January 13, 2019. It features traditional Plains Indian art forms, particularly Pappan's ledger art that illustrate a narrative dialogue between Pappan's critique of traditional museum exhibition models and the Field Museum's Native North American exhibition.

Michelle plans to continue creating co-curated exhibits like these that feature a range of mediums, topics, and traditions with American Indian artists from all over North America. She began with Echo-Hawk and Pappan not only because of the connections the Field Museum had with each artist through museum staff and local American Indian organizations, but also because the Pawnee and Plains collections are some of the museum's strongest collections. Putting "our objects in conversation with their artwork" will never get stale (Michelle, personal communication, September 29, 2015) and points to a current shift in museum practice that

⁴ The most identifiable of these sites in North America is the Hanford site in Washington state, where radioactive materials were unsafely disposed of, polluting the air and the Columbia River and affecting American Indian communities who use the river and its runoffs for fishing, hunting, etc. These tribes include Yakama, Nez Perce, and Umatilla.

incorporates collaborative work that can diversify exhibition styles and forms of ethnographic expression.

Collaborations with artists makes the Native Test obsolete because the expertise of the artist is on display through their artwork. Only one artist who has collaborated on an exhibit has mentioned being subjected to a Native Test, which I will return to shortly. I want to draw attention first to the fact that “artist” is an expert type used in ethnographic museums. It does not only refer to individuals who paint, draw, or create some sort of tangible product (painters, beaders, quill workers, metal workers, etc.), but also includes performers (singers, dancers, poets, etc.) who have worked with museums.

For example, every year Radebeul, Germany hosts a Karl May Festival in honor of the German author, Karl May. In the summer of 2015, the festival invited a group of Oneida Nation dancers back to the festival along with a *Haudenosaunee* lacrosse maker.⁵ They danced, gave demonstrations of how lacrosse sticks were made, and discussed how/why lacrosse is played over the festival weekend. At the end of the festival, the *Haudenosaunee* performers donated three lacrosse sticks to the museum, an Oneida Indian Nation Silver Hawks lacrosse jersey, and a video of the entire process of making lacrosse sticks from cutting the tree to scoring a goal to the Karl May Museum.

Live performances such as the dance performances and lacrosse demonstrations have been analyzed as being problematic in and of themselves. Criticisms about cultural performances in spaces like the museum point to the performers “becoming signs of themselves;” whether totalizing or essentializing, the representation on display through cultural performances includes “problems of capturing, inferring, constituting, and presenting the whole through parts”

⁵ The dancers were introduced and advertised as Oneida Nation dancers, but the group was made up of members from nearly all *Haudenosaunee* nations, Oneida being one of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy (*Haudenosaunee*).

(Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 55). Of course, in accepting or agreeing to perform, the performers and artists are also agentic, deciding how to perform, what to perform, and what to refuse to share (Myers 2002; Simpson 2007). Most importantly for this chapter, these performers' expertise is not questioned by museum staff and there is no vetting (or audition) process. Rather, the vetting occurs prior to artists being invited to collaborate with or perform in the museum based on recommendations from others outside the museum or personal preferences/interests of curators (i.e. taste discussed in chapter 2).

Artist collaborations, which involve artists whose artwork performs for them (painters, beaders, sculptors, etc.), such as the Chicago Field examples, as well as (ethnographic) performances like the *Haudenosaunee* dancers and lacrosse stick maker, are becoming formulaic. Performances are scheduled to draw in audiences for special events and promote both the performers and the museum. Artists are invited into collections storage to view objects, learn new techniques or designs from the museum collections, and create an exhibition that complements the museum collections with their own artwork.

Additionally, choosing only well-known, established professional artists rather than local Native American artists problematizes the expertise used in the museum in two ways.⁶ First, by choosing "Pawnee artist" Bunky Echo-Hawk or "Kanza artist" Chris Pappan, the impression is that Echo-Hawk and Pappan are representatives of the tribal nations they are associated with. This usurps the self-determination of tribal nations to choose who represents them or what represents them (see Conclusion). Secondly, choosing artists over other Native experts for an exhibit that is structured as art *and* objects ensures that the knowledge brought to the exhibit will

⁶ The ease of approaching an individual about a professional relationship that has a clear delineation of tasks and a common goal (an exhibition) cannot be denied. It also means bringing in a wider audience when the name on the exhibit is well known or recognizable. However, this practice does nothing to recontextualize the museum as a place of open dialogue, multi-vocal perspectives, and inclusion of knowledge systems other than the Western one.

remain distinct between the artists and the curators. Artists will be experts over their artwork, mediums, techniques, and the imagery they depict, whereas curators maintain expertise over the dissemination of information about objects in the exhibit. Even while learning from the artists, the information presented in labels is often interpreted and written by the curator.

Expertise Types: Elders as Collaborators

A second type of Native expert utilized by museums is that of the elder. Elders have come to be archetypal to Native communities as individuals with wisdom (knowledge) about history, traditions, the community, etc. They are individuals who are unconditionally respected and cared for through social programs that provide aid in most aspects of their life (health, housing, socials), and are often sought for advice. Because of these things, they have also become what it means to be quintessentially Indigenous (Meek 2007) and therefore sought after by ethnographic museums built upon ideas of authenticity (Benjamin 1968). Having spoken with many elders for oral history projects or simply to pass the time, elder knowledge consists of a ‘knowledge how’ through life experiences: how the land has changed over time, genealogies of families in the area because of personal connections, and knowledge of tribal history from creating it or witnessing it. It also consists of a ‘knowledge what’ through years of study in a specific occupation, hobby, or belief that incorporates both experience and research. This complicates the dichotomy of Native experts only possessing a ‘knowledge how’ in juxtaposition to the curators possession of a ‘knowledge what.’

Elders not only problematize the ‘knowledge what’ ‘knowledge how’ dichotomy in this way, it is also problematic that elders are constructed as *the* ‘authentic’ knowledge source for collaborations (Meek 2007; Nadasdy 2003), ignoring younger demographics as not having the knowledge or the right knowledge to participate in collaborations with museums other than

performances (artwork, dancing, singing, etc.). This is partly due to the adoption of the “respect your elders” practice in other realms, including the museum, which focuses on elder knowledge at the expense of other generational knowledge.

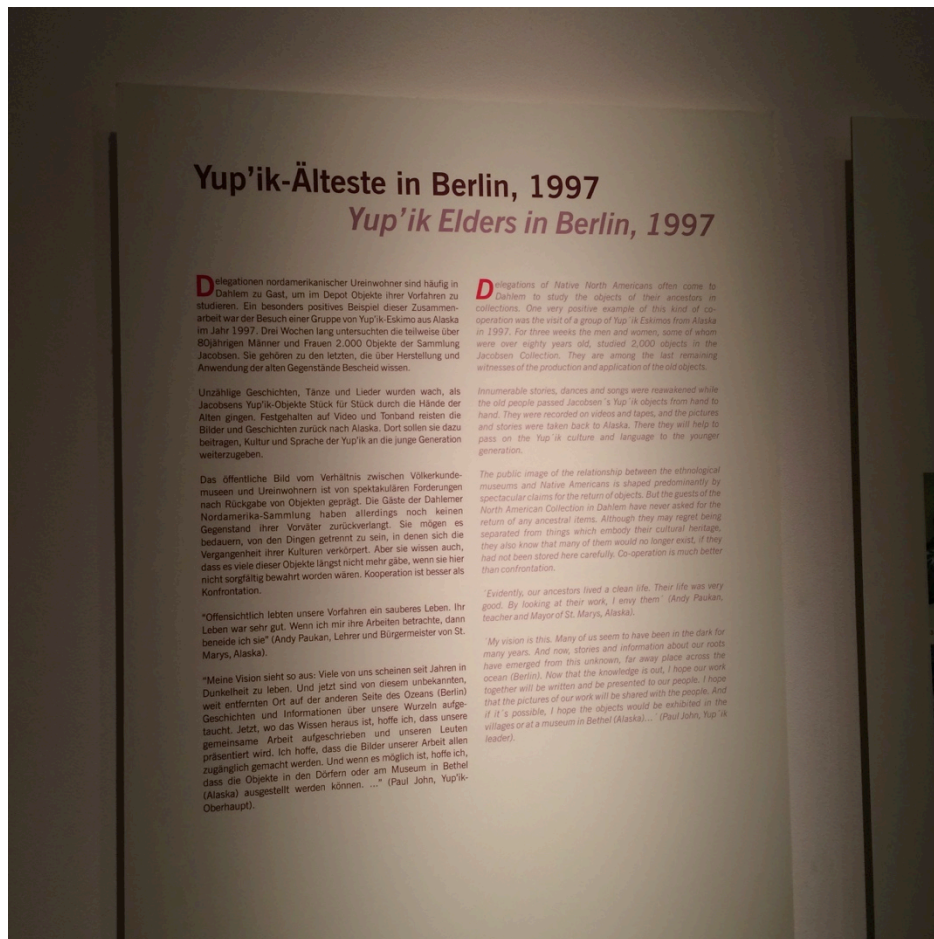
Museums enjoy inviting American Indian elders to view collections related to tribal history. Elders get to see what objects the museum has in its collections and how these objects are being cared for in exchange for the museum getting to listen to their stories and potentially fill in the objects’ provenance (names, places, and dates associated with the objects). The knowledge imparted through these stories becomes part of the researchable importance associated with the object(s).

An example of elder collaborative work was documented in the Native North American exhibit at the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* through a large text panel in the Arctic section of the exhibition after a group of Yup’ik elders were invited to the museum in 1997. Among the visitors were some of “the last remaining witnesses of the production and application of the old objects” (Berlin Ethnologisches Museum, “Yup’ik Elders in Berlin, 1997”) the museum housed.⁷ “Innumerable stories, dances and songs were reawakened while the old people passed Jacobsen’s Yup’ik objects from hand to hand” (Berlin Ethnologisches Museum, “Yup’ik Elders in Berlin, 1997”).^{8 9}

⁷ “Last remaining witnesses” references the old trope of the Vanishing Indian taken up by salvage anthropology as a way to quickly document people, traditions, language, etc. before it disappeared.

⁸ Johan Adrian Jacobsen was the foremost collector for the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* under the direction of Adolf Bastian. Jacobsen is credited for collecting most of the items in the Arctic collection as well as for taking extensive notes on his expeditions to the Arctic.

⁹ This label goes on to quell the questions and comments about American Indian and museum relationships, particularly over repatriations, assuring the visitor that this particular museum has not been asked for a repatriation and that Native Americans like the Yup’ik elders who visited understand that these objects would no longer exist if it weren’t for the museum. Similar to the discussion of the Haida and Tlingit letter sent to the Chicago Field Museum discussed in depth in chapter 5.



(Image 3.3 “Yup'ik-Älteste in Berlin, 1997/Yup'ik Elders in Berlin, 1997,” Berlin Ethnologisches Museum)

Statements like this are numerous not only in exhibits, but also when talking to curators who use them to deflect questions surrounding repatriation while attempting to assure the interviewer (me) that their relationships with Native groups are always in good faith. They project the stance that ethnographic museums are better equipped to care for and handle objects than anyone else. Lastly, commemorating collaborations through labels (see image 3.3) also legitimates the museums' representations of American Indians because American Indian elders visited the museum, shared their wisdom with the curator, and in so doing authenticated the museums' representations and interpretations, which were in turn displayed to visitors. Re-interpreting and presenting knowledge from Native experts monitors the dispersal of knowledge

to museum public(s), not by naturalizing (Carr 2010) Native expertise, but by naturalizing that of Euro-American interpreted expertise.

Using specific types of Native expertise and the reference to them as artists or elders points to the power relationships between types of knowledge systems working within the museum. This has lasting effects on the naturalization of specific types of knowledge. When museum curators presume the type of expertise of American Indian collaborators as only experiential (elders) or mis-acknowledges their expertise as skills (artists), they reinforce the hierarchy between Western and non-Western knowledge systems, even while they tout the importance of American Indian knowledge saying, “the expertise of the people is important. With their knowledge and ideas, a fruitful cooperation [can] end in a joint exhibition” (Christoph, interview, June 2, 2015).

Much like anthropology, museum acknowledgment of non-museum staff expertise is not a new concept. In other words, some authority over knowledge is granted to American Indians. According to Briggs and Baumann, this authority is "invented [in the sense] that a double process of authorial displacement largely erases the role of the anthropologist and his indigenous collaborators in the elicitation, inscription, and circulation of these texts. Thus, what authority is granted to Native Americans is always already shared with anthropologists" (1999:511). Authority, the conversion of competence, is granted to American Indians as artists or elders, but tightly monitored so as not to simulate or overturn that of the museum's authority. American Indians also have the ability to refuse to share information, or what Audra Simpson (2007) calls “ethnographic refusal,” as a sovereign right to determine what needs to be known. The question remains; to what extent do anthropologists (particularly curators) grant authority over knowledge

to American Indians during co-curation, and how does this maintain the hierarchy between a Western knowledge system and all others?¹⁰

Hamburg Ethnographic Museum Collaboration

Having discussed how American Indian expertise is vetted for collaborations, how expertise is gained, and the labeling of actors in museum collaborations, the remainder of this chapter focuses on one particular collaboration in the *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg* that resulted in the permanent Native North American exhibition. The exhibit opened in December 2008 as part of a project initiated by the *Hamburg Kulturstiftung* to update all exhibits in the museum. The exhibit, titled *Indianer Nordamerikas Eine Spurensuche (Native Cultures of North America Following the trail)* is engaging, informative, and uniquely displays American Indian life. According to the curator, Katia, the Native North American hall was the first to be renovated in the museum because “Indian exhibits are the most popular” (Katia, interview, June 30, 2015) which means it also had the largest budget. The renovation was given 12-18 months to complete and there is no intention to change the exhibition in the near future.

This was the first exhibit Katia created for the museum and it was her first North American exhibit, being a South Americanist specializing in the Andes.¹¹ But she was not alone in creating this exhibit; a number of people participated, including an exhibit designer, the director of the museum, the pedagogy staff, and a First Nations expert, Michael. I interviewed

¹⁰ The limited amount of authority granted to American Indians over knowledge is part of a larger competition over historical authority between Native experts and museum curators (or ethnographers). In a Marxist fashion, it is the ethnographer’s expenditure of his or her own time and effort that creates their expertise (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998). This is at the core of the problem of acknowledging or institutionalizing other knowledge systems, which threatens one’s own. Therefore, a first step to acknowledging the knowledge of American Indians in collaborations is by vetting them (through the Native Test).

¹¹ Interestingly, many museum collections include an Americas collection, which lumps all North, Central, and South American collections into one group. While curators need to now possess an academic degree, their specialization need not be in Native North America, but could be in South America because of the way the collections are demarcated. This was the case for the Grassi Museum in Leipzig, Germany in 2012, *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg*, Chicago Field Museum, and many other smaller museums I visited particularly in Germany. And due to budget cuts, the curator of the North American collection in Munich was an Asianist.

both Katia and Michael on separate occasions about their experiences collaborating on this exhibit as the two people who worked most closely and most often on it. I received vastly different insights into the process.

When asked what it was like working with all of these people on a single exhibit, Katia said it was difficult but also rewarding. Whereas Michael's comments about the collaboration were less than enthusiastic, openly discussing the difficulties dealing with the museum staff and the differences in ideologies. He "never wanted anything to do with them [the museum and the anthropologists working there], ever" (Michael, interview, July 31, 2015), but he was well known at the Hamburg museum and felt obligated to help.

Michael's first trip to Hamburg was in 1992 when he accompanied one of his own pieces of artwork around the world. The sculpture he created incorporated granite from the center of Europe, which, according to Michael, was in an old concentration camp for Russian prisoners, with red granite from the center of America, in Minnesota. The sculpture would eventually come to rest in front of the Light House of Columbus in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic after it finished touring Europe. His last stop before Santo Domingo was Hamburg, Germany. This trip was his first visit to the city of Hamburg. Since then he has collaborated on the permanent Native North American exhibit and donated a totem pole to the city of Hamburg, which now stands in front of the museum (see Image 3.4).



(Image 3.4 Totem pole, *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg*)

From Michael's 1992 encounter with the museum staff and the city's cultural division (*Kulturstiftung*) he was not overly excited to return and help the museum. He told me how the museum staff immediately asked what tribe he was from and had to consult one of their books which listed all the tribes and areas near missionary campsites. Upon finding his community's name they exclaimed, "We found you! You're real!" to which he replied, "Oh shit." Though annoyed at being subjected to such a Native Test, Michael said he "had to help [with the exhibition] for my people...And I said okay what can we do to help each other?" A more personal reason for his on-going collaboration "is to try to free the spirits of that house and all the other houses...it's like a prison" (Michael, interview, July 31, 2015).

Michael was an ideal collaborator for the museum because he has worked with numerous museums and is fluent in German. Rarely do Native experts have the freedom Michael had when aiding a museum with a permanent exhibition.¹² The circumstances that led to this unique collaboration included the unfamiliarity the curator had with Native North America when this exhibition was being created and the experience and expertise Michael brought to the exhibition from having worked with other similar museums.¹³

Michael wanted the curation process to be similar to his experiences of how tribal functions operate: eliminating hierarchy between individuals by giving everyone a say and working circularly. What he meant by this was not just giving everyone the opportunity to speak, he also wanted them to sit in a circle to help eliminate any hierarchy and to discuss the exhibition in a way that would make the process and product beneficial for all.

Rather than follow this approach, the museum hired a professional designer that Michael did not get along with because the designer relied on Native American tropes for the majority of his design. For example, standalone walls in the middle of the exhibition floor have etched designs in the sides that are meant to index American Indian iconography without explanation many of which have no meaning, but look tribal (see Images 3.5 and 3.6). Michael finally told the museum “I won’t work with him...if I’m here you better put me in the position of field marshal and I will use this guy’s technical abilities,” (Michael, interview, July 31, 2015) which for the most part, the museum more or less agreed with.

¹² Some of the elements Michael brought to the design of the Native North American exhibit were borrowed and used in the Mayan exhibition proving the collaborative experience with the First Nations co-curator was beneficial.

¹³ I question to what extent the museum would have used an American Indian expert if the curator had been an expert in Native North America rather than a South Americanist. However, she also collaborated with an individual from South America when she created the Mayan exhibit later on. A collaboration that did not go as well as the Native North American exhibit (Katia, interview, June 30, 2015). The curator believed this to be the case because the First Nations expert had worked with other museums and understood more fully what went into an exhibition and the different actors that needed to be appeased when creating it (donors, museum director, visitors, etc.).



(Images 3.5 and 3.6 Tribal-like iconography, *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg*)

The exhibit was created with three guiding principles in mind. First, it was to display spiritual aspects of Native life, which was very important to Michael. Secondly, each section of the exhibit had to include contemporary life, which worked nicely for addressing Pan-Indian topics as well as specific tribal topics and allowed the curator to stay away from a regional exhibition. Lastly, Michael wanted the exhibition to always be mindful of the children who visit and what they would find interesting as well as educational.

Education was the main goal of the exhibit, a focus that Michael and Katia needed to remind the museum administration of. “You know we’re dealing with common people who come through that door. Most of them do not have higher education. You want to show them as close as you can get with possibilities of imagery, the truth of what took place and what is still taking place today” (Michael, interview, July 31, 2015). The goal was to correct the misconceptions

people have about Native North America without instilling a sense of victimization, pity or, equally as detrimental, to instill in the visitor a sense of guilt or shame. However, what this was going to look like became a point of contention between Katia and Michael.

Fort Sully: Symbolic Brutality

The most political section of the exhibition was a fort like structure called Fort Sully (see image 3.7). The purpose of Fort Sully was to display the military and political force meant to subdue American Indians since contact. Michael's vision for Fort Sully included a parapet façade, bold colors on the wall, and cases chock-full of weapons (see images 3.8 and 3.9). Finding as many similar weapons as Michael envisioned in the *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg* collection was a problem according to Katia, because of the heterogeneous nature of the collection as well as the destruction of large portions of the collections during war.



(Image 3.7 Fort Sully, *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg*)



(Images 3.8 and 3.9 Weapon displays, *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg*)

The message that all the weapons were intended to convey to audiences was “a little bit more of the absolute brutality that has taken place on this [North American] continent for five hundred years and is still taking place” (Michael, interview, July 31, 2015). Katia, on the other hand, was not wholly convinced and needed statistical facts about the brutality that has happened to Native Americans in North America. She said “if this is true” she wanted numbers of how many people were killed during early contact. It is understandable for a museum curator to want to display factual information that includes numerical data to reinforce narratives being presented in the exhibition. However, studies of the decline in American Indian populations immediately after contact report large discrepancies associated with varying estimates of American Indian populations pre-contact (Mann 2002; Thornton 2004). From unknown population sizes pre-contact to the uncertainty of the percentage at which American Indian populations declined post-contact, figures like the ones Katia wanted are more political statements than factoids.

Kwakiutl Mask Dispute

A second dispute between Katia and Michael occurred over an ideological clash pertaining to an informational label associated with a Kwakiutl mask. Not surprisingly, information to include in an exhibition label is going to be contentious between curators and co-curators who have different philosophical stances and relationships with museum objects. The mask was displayed in the longhouse in the center of the exhibition. The curator's label for the mask discussed the use of the mask based primarily on museum records and other written documents about Kwakiutl masks and played up spiritual and mystical aspects of masks. Michael, though not *Kwakwaka'wakw*, shared his version of what the masks meant to him personally and how they were used communally based on his own experience as a First Nations man from the Northwest Coast. The final label reads:

Masken und Zeremonien

In den kalten Wintermonaten ist die Zeit, wenn die Menschen der Nordwestküste in den großen zeremoniellen Plankenhäusern zusammenkommen, um die spirituellen Mächte in Zeremonien und Maskentänzen zu ehren und sich ihrer mythischen Herkunft zu erinnern.

Jeder Klan besitzt seine eigenen Ahnen und Erzählungen, die nur seine Mitglieder wiedergeben dürfen. Als spirituelles Eigentum der Klanmitglieder werden sie von Generation zu Generation weitervererbt. In manchen Kulturen gab es auch spezielle Geheimbünde innerhalb der Klane. Sie waren für die theatralische Aufführung eines mythischen Tanzes und die Einführung neuer Mitglieder verantwortlich.

Masks and Ceremonies

The cold winter months are the time when the people of the North West coast gather in the large ceremonial houses built of planks to honour the spirit beings in ceremonies and mask dances and to remind themselves of their mythic origins. Each clan possesses its own ancestors and legends, which only its members are permitted to pass on. They are handed down from generation to generation as the spiritual property of the clan members. In some cultures there also existed secret societies within the clans. They were responsible for the performance of a particular mythical dance and the initiation of new members.

When speaking to me about the disagreement of how to frame the mask label between herself and Michael, Katia exclaimed “but he isn’t Kwakiutl.” She said she listened to what he had to say about the masks, but that she had the ultimate say in what was to go into the label based on her (scientific) research. This recounting of the situation illustrates an example of detextualization (Briggs and Bauman 1999) or erasure (à la Irvine and Gal 2000) of the First Nation expert’s discourse and not including it in the exhibit content. It was excluded because of its social dimension (class, race, gender, and ethnicity that forms his discourse), which did not match that which the Museum wished to perpetuate. The museum curator undercut the legitimacy of Michael’s expertise by dismissing his contribution as the wrong type of Native and questioning the authenticity and legitimacy of his experience and knowledge. This granted the curator the authority to say what is important information to share with the public about particular items.

Labels are the medium through which curators display their authority over content. The descriptions that content depict, according to Said ([1978] 1994) in turn produces discourse in the Foucauldian tradition, neglecting the fact that textual content was originally created by an individual who observed the world around them. A new dialectic emerges that not only requires the intellectual expert to understand, but also requires the individuals about which the content discusses to perform. The performance is based on the intellectual’s values, interests, and goals. The new performance by the individuals the information or discourse is about will again demand the intellectual to assert control over content as contemporary history (Said [1978] 1994), creating a never-ending cycle of knowledge creation and performance of knowledge to maintain a cohesive identity.

Michael was included as a co-curator to perform Indianness, but once his performance contradicted the knowledge of the curator, Katia, in order to explain this discrepancy, changed the framing of the situation. Situations like dismissing Michael's knowledge because he is not the right kind of Native, create and perpetuate a cycle that does not allow for the integration of other knowledge systems (Native expertise). Particularly when these other knowledge systems in some way question the authority of the knowledge system that has created and perpetuates the cycle.

What this means for the dispute over the meaning of the Kwakiutl mask is that "since it is more or less assumed that no [Native expert] can know himself the way an [anthropologist or museum curator] can" (Said [1978] 1994: 239), the situation lends "a certain unchallenged expertise and validity to anthropologists [or museum curators] as image-makers for Indians" (Medicine 2001: 290). Even though a First Nations man was telling the curator exactly what the masks meant to him and his culture, the information he was providing her contradicted her understanding of the masks and the vision she had for the exhibition and the work the masks were doing in the exhibition. Katia, therefore, dismissed Michael's expertise in favor of her own.

The finished product was the label the curator wrote from what she described as the "scientific" (objective) point of view; opposed to Michael's subjective and personal point of view. This hierarchical relationship was further exacerbated when Michael was referred to as an "artist," such was the case when Katia talked about Michael with me. Labeling Michael as the artist who worked on the exhibition, subjecting him to a form of the Native Test by validating his tribal affiliation through scholarly books, managing the information he was contributing by requesting numerical data when talking about the decline in American Indian populations post-contact, and dismissing his analysis of a Kwakiutl mask because he was "not Kwakiutl"

solidifies the superiority of the institution and depoliticizes Michael and his expertise. In this way, Michael's role in the exhibition and the political message he wanted to incorporate in it were diminished, illustrating what one research participant called "ethno-arrogance."

Expertise, Anti-expertise, and Ethno-Arrogance

The vetting (Native Test), labeling (artist or expert), and acknowledgment (or lack thereof) of Native experts leads to frustrations that often are articulated in short, unintentional bursts in conversations with Native experts. For example, Lina, who asked me what type of plant was germinating in the pot on her balcony, is a German citizen, but ethnically and by descent Native American.¹⁴ She was telling me about one of the first exhibits she had curated as a guest in a museum and said numerous highly educated people came up to her after seeing her exhibit and asked where she got her degree. She became irritated, exclaiming, "...I get angry. We have Asians, we have Africans, we have people from all over the world here and some are very educated about their heritage, but are *they* allowed to present their own culture? *No*, they have to have a *paper* to talk about where they come from. This is what I call ethno-arrogance" (Lina, interview, August 31 2015).¹⁵

The constant questions of where she received her degree implied she needed a degree in order to create such a well thought out, factually accurate, and well-designed exhibition. This infuriated Lina. The "arrogance" of academics, even though individual academics and museum curators may not be arrogant, is a perception Native experts are carrying with them as they enter

¹⁴ Ethnically American Indian here means she intentionally has internalized those characteristics she deems desirable and American Indian. For her this includes a respect for elders, a respect for nature, attempts to create what are seen as Native American crafts (beadwork and leatherwork), and she presents herself as American Indian with a long braided pleat of hair as she educates children about Native North America.

¹⁵ "Paper" here is referring to a degree that grants them the authority to talk about a specific subject (i.e. history degree, cultural studies, or anthropology degree).

the museum collaborations, where the authority of the curators expertise is often not confronted.¹⁶

This was not always the case. As the museum became professionalized from private collections and curiosity cabinets, qualifications deemed desirable for curators resided in the human and hard sciences (Penny 2002) but did not require formal education. Now, curators in large state or national museums are required to have some form of higher education. This means that their expertise lies firmly in the ‘knowledge what’ category, legitimized by academically sanctioned degrees.

Many curators, particularly in East German museums lacked formal education, but possessed knowledge that rivaled that of any individual with institutional documentation to authenticate their knowledge. Some of these individuals are still curators and will remain so until retirement, when it is likely they will be replaced by someone with a higher degree (masters or doctorate equivalent). These individuals gained their knowledge much like traditional academics have through years of study, personal interest, and experience, but without having attended university.

The consideration of these curators, along with a group of individuals who like to perform American Indianness through a popular hobby in Germany (German Indian Hobbyism) problematizes the privileging of academic expertise used in museums today.¹⁷ Both the curators

¹⁶ Typically, these academics are anthropologists or labeled as anthropologists by American Indians because they were the most common type of academic to engage American Indian communities for the sake of research. The historical relationship anthropology has had with Native Americans has fostered a deep-seated distrust still seen today through comments like “block headed anthropologist,” “backstabbing anthropologists,” or “your average white anthropologist is about the racist thing I’ve ever bumped into in my life” (various interviews with American Indians 2014-2016).

¹⁷ Though German Indian Hobbyism appears to be moving into Eastern European countries, there is still a large group of individuals who practice the hobby throughout Germany. Many do not admit to being Indianists and I believe this is to protect their interest after having come under harsh criticism from academics, journalists, and American Indians for their appropriation of American Indian lifeways. Though none of the curators admitted to being part of the hobbyist scene, other interviewees (museum professionals) had mentioned so-and-so’s involvement as a hobbyist and one (an individual I could not meet because of his untimely death) was known to be an Indianist. The others maintained their professional persona. Of the four male curators (aged between mid 30s to late 60s) I met, for there is also a gender component to the hobby, I would guess each walks a fine line between professional interest and appropriation. When I met with each of them, the similarities in clothing style and hairstyle

who do not possess a formal degree and German Indian Hobbyists or Indianists (Kalshoven 2012) teach themselves about a particular aspect of American Indian life (i.e. history, music, metalwork, flute making, weapons, etc.). Such study allows them to become specialists and acknowledged for their expertise in the area of their interest. Museums have in the past asked these individuals for help with exhibition content and exhibit design.¹⁸

What the ethnographic vignettes illustrate in this chapter is that in the setting of the museum, expertise is competitive and negotiated, but never downplayed by the individual who possesses the expertise. This is not the case in other educational settings, such as Barbra Meek (2010) observed during the institutionalization of the Kaska language and the self-subordination of Kaska language speakers to professional linguists and university trained teachers. “In doing so, such self subordination recognizes and thus legitimates the authority of those people who are products of dominant language establishments and tacitly invalidates those who are not” (Meek 2010: 110).¹⁹

In Meek’s example, those who are not part of dominant educational establishments self-ascribe as anti-experts, but not necessarily in the sense that Nicolas Bommarito intended the term to be used (2010). Rather, for Bommarito, a self-ascribed anti-expert acknowledges their beliefs are incorrect and wishes to correct that misinformation. These self-ascribed anti-experts are confident in their abilities to once again understand the subject, which is a different practice than found in Kaska speakers who deferred expertise to institutionally trained individuals as experts.

were remarkable. All wore jeans with a button up collared shirt (usually flannel) and each had long hair pulled back in a small ponytail at the nape of their necks.

¹⁸ There have been occasions when German Indian Hobbyists were allowed into collection storage in groups to view, study, and learn from the objects; often to perfect their own craftsmanship by counting beads in a row, determining fabric types, or getting design ideas. However, a German curator shared that on one occasion there were a group of hobbyists in the collections storage looking at a few items. Upon their departure, the curator was returning items to their proper storage places and noticed a large hole in the back of a shirt from the Native North American collection and believed one of the hobbyists cut the design that was on the back of the shirt out as a souvenir. This curator no longer allowed groups of hobbyists to enter the collection storage and has since been adamant about staying near individuals who are looking at objects in storage.

¹⁹ See also Meek (2013) for a discussion of categorical changes in terms of competence and expertise.

The examples from the *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg, Berlin Ethnologisches Museum*, the Chicago Field Museum, and my own experiences with the Grassi Museum illustrate the confidence American Indian experts have in their own knowledge. However, they also show the misrecognition and lack of validation of that expertise on the part of the museum staff, illustrating the social nature of expertise. Knowledge is therefore regulated in the museum through these fleeting exchanges between museum curators and the American Indian experts they collaborate with. “No matter how much we try to make the spaces accommodating, they remain sites where the Others come to perform for us, not with us,” (Boast 2011: 63) maintaining Euro-American authority over knowledge and expertise and relegating Native experts/collaborators/co-curators to ‘knowledge how’ specialists (artists, performers, or elders).

In the next chapter I explore how the differences in expertise types or discourses get mapped on to the information presented to the public. In particular, I look at the ways in which expertise is framed and how the framing is connected to racial ideas of whiteness. The goal of this framing is to maintain distance for certain museum publics from the colonial, historical narratives presented in Native North American exhibitions.

CHAPTER IV

Borrowed Discourses: The Indian's "Whiteman" and Erasure of Colonial Actors

The historical narrative of Native North America presented by museums and educational materials includes a shallow history of the continent, shallow in the sense of lacking multivocal accounts and the inclusion of multiple histories discussed in the previous chapters, but also shallow in the sense that American Indian history is portrayed as beginning post contact (after 1491) and is focused more acutely on contemporary history (1800s-present).¹ Besides contemporary history being the focus of ethnography, the sheer amount of historical records focusing on contemporary history limits the time periods researchers have access to. These records tend to be about common topics and eras (i.e. Indian removal), which lends to continual interest and repackaging of only a few topics in American Indian history.

Though only a few hundred years, the number of events and shifts in lifestyles, identities, and place since contact continue to have significant effects on American Indians. The major catalyst for these changes has been colonization and its antecedents. The lack of attention to this major catalyst (colonization and its effects) has been a criticism of many ethnographic museum displays. Myla Vicenti Carpio (2008) is one of the scholars criticizing the initial exhibitions in the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) for not including more colonial narratives and discussions of colonization, problematizing the inclusion of only a small fraction of the colonial narrative as an 'absent presence.' Carpio argues, "[t]he 5 percent solution of minimizing the discussion of colonization [to only 5% of the exhibition], especially in a historical context,

¹ Other scholars have criticized the shallowness of historical accounts, which has led to such edited works as *Deep History: The Architecture of Past and Present* (Shryock & Smail, ed. 2012).

thus centers colonialism as the ‘absent presence’... The absence of colonization and empire throughout the museum renders the actual presentation of colonialism most problematic” (2008:296).

Drawing on Carpio’s notion of “colonialism as the ‘absent presence,’” this chapter focuses on what is absently present *in* discussions of colonization in ethnographic museum displays—colonial actors. I focus on who is individualized by name in the colonial narrative presented by ethnographic museums, who is generically included through group description, and what key terms are borrowed from (spoken) American Indian English to describe colonial actors. Because these actors are included in exhibitions, but veiled behind consciously determined terms, I am choosing to describe this museum practice not as an ‘absent presence,’ but as an erasure of colonial actors, in the sense of the sociolinguistic term defined by Judith Irvine and Susan Gal (2000).

Irvine and Gal describe erasure as one of three semiotic processes by which “ideologies ‘recognize’ (or misrecognize) linguistic differences” (2000:36). The other two processes include iconization, which occurs when linguistic features become iconic representations of social groups or activities and fractal recursivity, which is the projection of an opposition onto different levels. Both iconization and fractal recursivity occur in the ethnographic data below, but are less important to the analysis this chapter focuses on, particularly in the discussion of the strategic ways in which the term ‘Whiteman’ is used.

The third process of erasure, according to Irvine and Gal “is the process in which ideology, in simplifying the sociolinguistic field, renders some persons or activities (or sociolinguistic phenomena) invisible” (2000:38). The erasure found in museums is a process of simplifying the presentation of history through the incorporation of generalized linguistic terms

(i.e. white or white man) that stand for a diverse array of actors and are meant to conjure some image. Therefore erasure of colonial actors is not a deletion or a complete absence of the actors, it is a veiling achieved by generalizing actors as merely white settlers, white traders, or the white man, rather than locating these actors in a specific nation, region, or group.^{2 3} It is presumed that visitors share similar sociolinguistic ideologies and know what the labels reference when they mention these ‘white’ actors. In this way, sociolinguistic practices used by museums can render certain groups and their actions invisible (Irvine & Gal 2000; Philips 1983) and “whitewashes” (Dennison 2014b; Harris 1993; Moreton-Robinson 2004) the inconsistencies in the dominant narrative/discourse.

This chapter is divided into four sections pertaining to how colonial actors are labeled in ethnographic exhibitions. First, it explores who is typically named in exhibitions as perpetrators (i.e. the Spanish). It then looks at the generalized term ‘white’ and what this label means for Euro-American or normative audiences that attend ethnographic museums. Lastly, I look at the way white is appropriated from an Indian Country context through the use of ‘white man.’ The chapter concludes by arguing that this appropriation depoliticizes the term for American Indians and allows for the continuous subversion of perpetrator accountability.

The Spanish brought disease, horses, and guns

Native North American exhibitions take visitors through a historical narrative that highlights the continuous presence of American Indians since contact and through events that curators deem important for the narrative they wish to convey. Often this means incorporating generalities of what are considered major events in American Indian history: the introduction of

² The terms ‘erasure’ and ‘veiling’ are often interchangeable in my analysis because of the type of erasure that is taking place—actors are still named, but are veiled behind generalized terms, but the sociolinguistic process is that of erasure.

³ As will be argued later in this chapter, the use of white man or Whiteman is more problematic than the generalized terms of white trader or white settler. This is not to suggest that all museums take part in this practice of using the term ‘white man’ or even that a majority of museums do. Rather, it has been used frequently enough in museums, particularly in Germany that warrants critical analysis, which will be done contextually below.

diseases that decimated American Indian populations, the colonial presence and expansion of European Populations in North America, and contemporary struggles over rights and resources such as land between First Nations and national governments.

When exhibitions present events linked to the genocide, assimilation, or colonization of American Indians, they do so by presenting events as something that happened *to* American Indians, rather than produced by actors who caused the drastic decline in American Indian populations as well as American Indian assimilation. There is one consistent exception; it is the narrative that introduces the viewer to the moment of contact between American Indians and the Spanish in order to demonstrate the devastating effects of colonial encounters. The narrative reads that the Spanish brought disease, horses, and guns, effectively decimating or providing the tools for large portions of the Native populations to decline, and altering American Indian lifestyles indefinitely.

Typically, the inclusion of contact with the Spanish situates the time period presented in exhibitions as starting in the 16th century. However, history and historical actors quickly become muddled or leveled due to word count constraints, overarching themes of the exhibit, and the desire to make the information accessible to general audiences (both grammatically and topically). Therefore, even though most of the exhibitions I documented in this study begin with a colonial narrative of the 16th century and Spanish conquest, they quickly lose a linear sense of time in favor of a topic driven presentation. This temporal flexibility aids in obscuring the historical actors and sequence of events.

For example, prior to its closure, the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* had a large U-shaped exhibition organized regionally and then topically within each region. The regions are typical (mostly U.S. based) regions like the Plains and Prairies, Southwest, Northwest, and

Arctic. At one point, the exhibition also had an introductory section that talked about common stereotypes and included the Woodland tribes before these were converted into a temporary exhibit dubbed *Europa Test*.

Within the Prairie and Plains region of the exhibition, a particular label illustrates not only the introduction of guns, diseases, and the reintroduction of horses to North America by the Spanish, but also how quickly timelines and actors become muddled. The label (see Image 4.1) was titled “*Kulturwandel: Pferde, Händler und Siedler/Cultural Change: Horses, Traders and Settlers.*”



(Image 4.1 “*Kulturwandel: Pferde, Händler und Siedler/Cultural Change: Horses, Traders, and Settlers,*” Berlin Ethnologisches Museum)

The label stood on its own in the middle of visitor traffic. Visitors could walk around the label and read about cultural change through settlers, traders, and horses or they could read about the “Indians of the Prairies and Plains” on the back of the label displayed in image 4.1. Like all other labels in the exhibition, this one was in both German and English. The label begins with the reintroduction of the horse to North America by the Spanish and its effects on mobility for American Indians:

The horse, which had become extinct in America, was reintroduced by the Spanish in the early 16th century. Horses spread north from New Mexico after they had been stolen or acquired through trade. By about 1775 all of the Plains Indians rode horses.

The horse increased the success of buffalo hunts and extended the radius of war parties. Horses as prestige objects were often richly decorated for parades. Within a few decades equestrian nomadism became widespread. This led to great changes in power structures among the peoples of the Prairies and Plains.

(“Cultural Change: Horses, Traders, and Settlers,” Berlin Ethnologisches Museum)

The reintroduction of horses is presented as beneficial for increased hunting success, particularly of the buffalo, as well as the ability to expand a community’s territory. This also led to power shifts between communities, perhaps alluding to the need for war parties mentioned earlier in the paragraph.

When visitors continue reading, the next paragraph leaps two centuries into the future. Time has passed, there are now “white fur traders” who have established settlements and trading posts on the North American continent, but the historical introduction of trade goods is the focus, much like with the Spanish in the previous paragraph.

In the 18th century white fur traders had already penetrated the area and at the beginning of the 19th century an increasing number of permanent trading posts were established. Traded goods included highly sought after ironware, such as cooking pots, knives or arrow tips, textiles, glass beads, sugar, flour, and finally alcohol and guns. The Indians’ major trading goods were buffalo skins which

were processed in the east of the USA to produce industrial leather (e.g. drive belts for machines).
("Cultural Change: Horses, Traders, and Settlers," Berlin Ethnologisches Museum)

The connections therefore between the first two paragraphs are the materials introduced to American populations. Not just the economic relationships that trading created, but the materiality that became part of American Indian life through the introduction of trade goods. Visitors can even make connections between the types of goods that were used both during Spanish contact and white contact such as the connection between hunting buffalo to use as trade goods with white fur traders, made easier through the introduction of horses by the Spanish. However, this connection is not made explicit in the label.⁴

The next paragraph once again leaps over another century to discuss the settlement of California and Oregon, without discussing colonial expansion, resource extraction (the Gold Rush in 1849 that caused a wave of migrants to head West), and Manifest Destiny that also pushed Americans westward, but acknowledges that the constraints placed on American-Native relationships because of this expansion led to conflicts.

The settlement of California and Oregon brought streams of settlers to the west from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. This led to increasingly bitter conflicts and finally to the Indian Wars.
("Cultural Change: Horses, Traders, and Settlers," Berlin Ethnologisches Museum)

The last paragraph on this text panel discusses the negative effects during this period that span three centuries, but introduces these negative effects in list form without making connections to the previous paragraphs or most importantly the mechanisms (who or how) that caused these consequences. They include: imported diseases, decimation of buffalo herds, and

⁴ The focus on materials in this label also points to the Berlin Ethnologisches Museum's interest in three-dimensional objects (see chapter 1). The materiality that is the main lesson in this label suggests that three-dimensional objects or simply just stuff also became important for American Indian life leaving an impression that it is the material aspects of American Indian life that is most important.

the disappearance of Plains Indian resources. However, connections are not made between who imported the diseases or who these ‘white hunters’ actually were that decimated large buffalo herds and effectively altering American Indian mainstay (a source of food, clothing, tools, trade goods, etc.).

The sedentary village tribes died out almost completely as a result of imported diseases. The destruction of the large buffalo herds by white hunters wiped out the mainstay of the Plains Indian existence. Their resistance to the civilization measures of the American government was broken. They were forced to move into the reservations under the authority of an Indian agent.
(“Cultural Change: Horses, Traders, and Settlers,” Berlin Ethnologisches Museum)

As can be seen, this label quickly devolves into general topics and actors. Actions and actors begin with an increase in trade relations between Natives and ‘fur traders.’ We then see the settlement of California and Oregon by ‘settlers,’ while Native populations decreased due to diseases that were imported by unknown actors. Finally we learn about the destruction of an American Indian food and resource staple (i.e. the buffalo) by ‘white hunters.’ Who these fur traders, settlers, and white hunters are is left to the visitors to determine, along with the connections between the introduction of horses and materials with disease and any specificity in the timeline of events.

I want to focus on the last two sentences in this label: “Their resistance to the civilization measures of the American government was broken. They were forced to move onto the reservations under the authority of an Indian agent.” ‘Their’ is referring to American Indians, but the important verb is ‘resistance.’ American Indian resistance is lauded as a testament to ‘their’ desire to remain ethnically unique even through forced assimilation, confinement to reservations, and external authority over sovereignty. This of course collapses all (Plains) American Indian communities into one generalized group under a placeholder name of (Plains) “Indian,” which

has been discussed by historians such as Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr. (1978) in terms of the origins of the word “Indian” as well as its use and connotations over time.⁵

The use of ‘American government’ in these last two sentences is merely a stand-in as a historical actor that veils the individuals behind a general label for an amorphous (and institutional) actor. The erasure of specific actors behind a veil of general terms such as ‘American government’ maintains the superiority of one group (Euro-American) by not implicating contemporary lineages with the transgressions of colonial perpetrators of the past. These contemporary lineages include museum visitors. This choice to not implicate museum audiences becomes particularly important for an authoritative institution, like the museum, that has the ability to affect mainstream discourse through their authorization of particular narratives and suggested interpretations.

This label presents history as a list of events, which allows the museum curator to discuss multiple topics that could be applicable to many regions or tribal nations. The now retired curator of this exhibition, Stephen, had devoted his life to the study of Native North America, which suggests that when creating exhibitions and their accompanying labels or catalogues, there will always be more information than can be incorporated. Label word count restrictions, based on what visitors can be expected to read, have resulted in a common response of the museum to be more generic with information as well as the aim to reach a broad range of audiences and their educational levels. Other reasons for generalities in most museums include: the need to display the broad story of Native North America in a small space, which means a flattening of American Indians into one group “Indians,” or colonizers into “white,” to a responsibility towards the collection and the specifics of individual objects. Therefore, there is an argument to be made that

⁵ Even though, this label is located within the Plains region of the exhibition and references the Plains in the sentence prior suggests this is just about Plains tribes, however the generalized history being presented in these few sentences is shared among many American Indians and First Nations.

Stephen generalized across tribes (and leapt over centuries) in order to get as much information as he could within the spatial constraints of a single label, effectively distorting actors. However, there are semiotic effects and meaningful consequences to the use and uptake of such generic terms.

Erasure through Whiteness: Who is ‘white’?

The use of ‘white fur traders’ and ‘white hunters’ in the label at the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* without specifying who these traders and hunters are is a sociolinguistic tool linked to an early colonial and anthropological practice of prescribing racial categorizations to historically distinguish “them” from “us.” However, it serves a second, less obvious purpose in the way it is employed in ethnographic museums: it is a distancing tool used to shift responsibility to an imaginative actor completely distant from normative museum visitors (white, middle-class, and college educated). Within the context of the museum, describing the actions of ‘white settlers’ or ‘white hunters’ creates an historical actor who does not hold citizenship with any one nation and whose actions are also placed firmly in the past, essentially creating what Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1992) called a chronotope.

The Spanish are often named as the actors who brought horses, diseases, and Christianity to the New World in Euro-American museum exhibitions. In marked contrast to the agency of “the Spanish,” colonial endeavors carried out by anyone other than them were the consequences of strained relationships between American Indians and ‘white’ settlers/hunters/traders. ‘White’ in this context presumably means a citizen of any of the remaining (past) major European colonial powers (French, English, or German), but this is never explicitly stated either in the

labels or by museum staff, presuming that visitors maintain similar cultural ideologies and make similar assumptions about the term ‘white.’⁶

The use of “white” can even point to the importance placed on visitor make-up when determining what exhibitions to include and the voicing within these exhibitions. While planning and organizing exhibitions, the likely audience is considered when determining what would be interesting, educational, and graspable. What I am suggesting in this chapter is that these visitors are also (consciously or not) taken into consideration when voicing exhibitions labels. Attention is paid to what would make visitors comfortable and what may leave the impression that they are perpetrators of the historical events displayed within the exhibition. This becomes salient when we take into account the ways in which museum experiences can aid in the creation of a national-identity through their display and collecting practices. The creation of a self-identity also occurs in the museum through visitor experiences within exhibitions and the reflection of what they have learned compared or likened to their own lives.

By introducing colonial perpetrators by a generic term rather than as citizens of any one nation allows imperialism to remain simply a Western problem without laying blame to specific countries that may (or may not) be asked to atone for their involvement through official apologies or reparations.⁷ More importantly, it alludes to a more influential shortcoming of the museum in terms of its public(s): generalizing historical actors in order to avoid alienating the

⁶ Once the United States forms, and even slightly before with the colonies, individuals who are citizens of the colonies/U.S. are incorporated into this group of white settlers in labels. The exclusion of the Spanish in the label ‘white’ adds to discussions about race thinking in Germany (see Arendt 1994; Partridge 2010, 2012). However, the focus of this chapter is ultimately about the purpose of using the term ‘white’ in museum exhibitions rather than what constitutes ‘white’ in these contexts. Therefore a discussion of race thinking is beyond the current scope of this chapter.

⁷ Atonement and reparations may not be the ultimate goal of naming historical actors in these ethnographic museums. Damani Partridge (2010) critiques the foundation of atonement, which fails to recognize the continual racist discourse and policies. “If atonement means getting over guilt, and that guilt is tied to *getting over a history of racism*, then atonement also potentially means not recognizing contemporary racism because *the nation* can be and has been forgiven” (834). What this entails is the linking of racism to particular moments in history that Euro-Americans presume they have overcome.

largest visitor demographic and remain politically neutral in the eyes of dominant public(s) (the contemporary descendants of the ‘white’ settlers/traders/hunters).

Museums are focusing more on expanding the diversity of their audiences by incorporating new display techniques, activities, and resources. This process of broadening perspective takes time. Curators attempt to include topics, stories, or objects that speak to many different audiences, but the awareness of who supports the museum, who visits the museum most often, and the fear of not alienating these audiences remains.

As noted earlier, in the 1990s, the National Air and Space Museum cancelled an exhibition about the B-29 airplane, *Enola Gay*, and the atomic bombs dropped from it on Japan during WWII. One of the reasons for this cancellation was protestation from U.S. veterans, politicians, and patriotic (non-Japanese) citizens (Linenthal & Engelhardt ed. 1996; Kohn 1995; Southard 2015).⁸ They argued the “exhibition script dishonored the Americans who fought the war by questioning the motives for using the bombs, by portraying the bomb as unnecessary to end the war, and by sympathizing too much with the Japanese killed by the bombs and, by implication, with the Japanese cause” (Kohn 1995:1036). The decision to cancel this exhibit resulted in alienating a Japanese American audience, which also included Japanese-American veterans, in order to appease a more vocal audience in the context of a federally funded “national” museum.

In contrast to the *Enola Gay* exhibition, Steven C. Dubin documents an incident at the Brooklyn Museum of Art (BMA) that “demonstrates how an institution can withstand substantial threats while preserving its professional vision” (1999:246). During the exhibition titled,

⁸ During the planning of this exhibition, there were more pressures than described here, which include things like the desire of the museum staff to be more scholarly rather than celebratory in their standards for exhibitions right when a new secretary of the Smithsonian was appointed. The change in style (seen as critical of U.S. military actions discussed in this chapter) caused an uneasy relationship between the museum and the aviation community. At this same time (1994) there were larger culture wars being waged across the U.S. Lastly, there was a political turn in the U.S. when Congress shifted from a Democrat majority to a Republican majority (Kohn 1995).

Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection, a painting of the Virgin Mary by Chris Ofili caused a stir. The painting incorporated elephant dung as a medium to symbolize regeneration and veneration. Protesters heard of the inclusion of the piece in the exhibit and considered its display a form of Catholic bashing. The MoMA refused to change the exhibit and instead addressed the painting's inclusion in a statement warning against the privileging of one's own cultural perspective over others'. Unfortunately, while on display at the MoMA, one of the protesters defaced the painting.

Not as overt as the cancellation of the *Enola Gay* exhibit or the protests of the *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection* exhibition, label text describing 'white' actors rather than naming the colonial participants is a way to make the largest visitor demographic comfortable. While there is no study that suggests visitor discomfort with the use of the term 'white' in Native North American exhibitions, this practice maintains a specific demographic as the target audience. The target audience is seemingly most welcomed at museums through veiled referents, contradicting new museological practices that attempt to make the exhibition space and museum in general more inclusive for a variety of audiences.⁹

To further illustrate this point, I want to briefly return to the last few sentences from the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* label previously discussed:

The destruction of the large buffalo herds by white hunters [weiße Jäger] wiped out the mainstay of the Plains Indian existence. Their resistance to the civilization measures of the American government was broken. They were forced to move into the reservations under the authority of an Indian agent.
(“Cultural Change: Horses, Traders, and Settlers,” Berlin Ethnologisches Museum)

The mention of the American government is in relation to civilization and civilizing efforts to create a more comfortable place and to mold American Indians into what is deemed the

⁹ The emphasis of most American Indian critiques of museums that has led to this attempt to make the exhibition space more inclusive is on (mis)representations and the display of NAGPRA related objects (see chapter 5).

proper way of being in the U.S., albeit through a limited kind of citizenship.¹⁰ It is the Indian agent who is the actor in control of the forced move onto reservations and it is the white hunters who ‘wiped out’ large herds of buffalo. In this way the American government is furthering advancement, but an Indian agent and the white hunters are the active actors. General audiences who may only have a limited education about Native North American history are left to make connections as to how the Indian agent is associated with the American government and how the ‘white hunters’ are acting according to their own free will, outside of an autonomous authority, forcibly changing American Indian lifestyles in negative ways.

These Indian agents, white hunters (*weiße Jäger*), white fur traders (*weiße Pelzhändler*), or white settlers (*weiße Seidler*) remain something that we, the visitors, (temporally and spatially) are not. And therefore, the negative aspects of colonization (e.g. the decimation of the buffalo herds) was the act of individual white hunters, while the American government and its citizenry were in a process of making the landscape habitable and its stewards (American Indians) civilized.

The white mans’ ‘Whiteman’

Conversations with the *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg* curator, Katia, and the now retired curator of the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum*, Stephen, suggested that they believed that exhibitions about American Indians needed to paint a broad picture of the continent. Therefore, terms like Anglo-American (*Angloamerikaner*) and European (*der/die Europäer*) tended to be too specific for their purposes; they chose instead to use ‘white.’¹¹ Another term that Stephen claimed German curators would like to use, but censor themselves because of its political

¹⁰ The alienation and partial inclusion of citizens has been taken up by scholars like Aihwa Ong (1999), and Rhacel Salazar Parreñas (2001), Damani Partridge (2010; 2012).

¹¹ When pressed, it was not made clear how these terms are too specific.

incorrectness and the stereotypes it elicited, is “Cowboys and Indians.” So to avoid this phrasing he said he talks about “Whites versus Indians,” which he finds more acceptable.

It is interesting that the problematic term is ‘Cowboys’ and not ‘Indians’ in the German context. This is partly because the German word for American Indian is still *der Indianer*, which directly translates to ‘Indian.’ Being the most common term used to refer to American Indians in Germany along with a continuing fascination with *der Indianer* in the country keeps this term and the romanticized image it elicits alive. Academic interests surrounding German (and European) fascination with American Indians (Calloway et al. ed. 2002; Conrad 1999; Penny 2013, Wernitznig 2007), popular children’s television cartoons like *Yakari* about a young Apache boy who speaks to animals (Job and Derib 2005-2014), the ever popular East and West German movies about American Indians and their “white brothers,” and German Indian hobbyism (Kalshoven 2012, Sieg 2009) maintain the prevalence of the term *Indianer* in Germany.

On the other hand, the use of ‘*Weißer*’ (white), ‘*die Weißen*’ (white people), or ‘*der weiße Mann*’ (white man) in exhibitions, albeit infrequently, is a literal translation of white to differentiate Native from non-Native while maintaining the focus of the exhibition on American Indian cultures. In other words, ‘white’ de-emphasizes one set of actors who aren’t typically present in ethnographic museums when displaying American Indian history in order to concentrate on one of the primary ethnicized and racialized groups typically found in ethnographic museums—American Indians.

For example, the one instance the term ‘*des Weißen Mannes*’ (the white man’s) was used in the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* exhibit pitted artistic techniques of American Indian artists against those of Euro-American artists. It appeared in the label pertaining to a particular set of

four watercolors (see image 4.2) by Running Antelope (ca. 1880), a Hunkpapa Lakota, according to the label. The watercolors are part of the Hoffman collection (1888), donated to the museum roughly around the time they were created. The label associated with these watercolors discusses the imagery Running Antelope used to depict himself during a battle. It ends by discussing the artistic techniques and presumably the medium Running Antelope used to create these works, which have been identified as a turning point in American Indian art.

Aquarelle von Running Antelope.

Hunkpapa-Lakota, ca. 1880.

Sammlung Hoffman 1888.

Die autobiographischen Darstellungen, die jeweils mit dem Namenszeichen Running Antelopes versehen sind, zeigen Szenen aus Kämpfen mit den Arikara. Der Künstler hat sich selbst stets zu Pferde mit zeremonieller Ausrüstung dargestellt. Arbeiten wie diese kennzeichnen den Beginn der modernen indianischen Kunst, als Indianer damit begannen, die künstlerischen Techniken des weißen Mannes zu nutzen.

Watercolors by Running Antelope.

Hunkpapa Lakota, ca. 1880.

Hoffman collection 1888.

The autobiographical pictures, each marked with Running Antelope's name glyph, depict battle scenes with the Arikara. The artist has portrayed himself on horseback, wearing his ceremonial regalia. Works like this mark the beginning of modern Indian art, when Indians started to use the artistic techniques of the white man.

(Ethnologisches Museum Berlin)

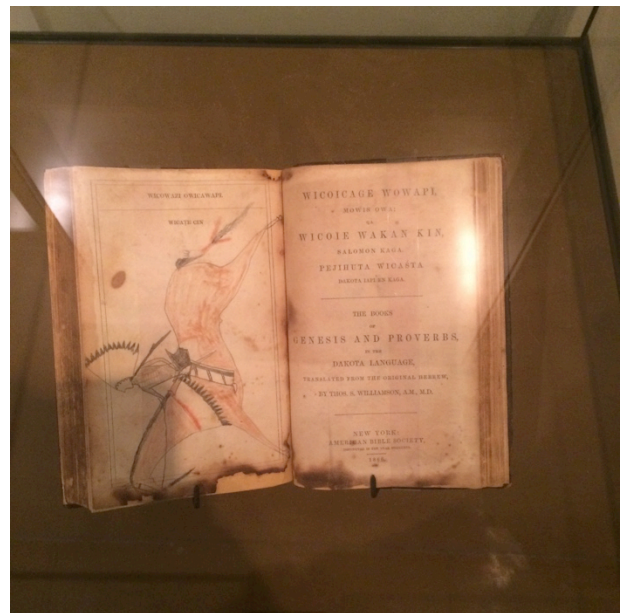


(Image 4.2 Watercolors by Running Antelope, *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum*)

This was the only instance within the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* where ‘white man’ was used. In this instance, its use defines “modern” Indian art as the incorporation of “white” techniques, reaffirming a modern-primitive dichotomy. What these artistic techniques are is unclear, but presumably the label is referring to the use of watercolors as a medium, as the imagery is reminiscent of Plains ledger art. Other examples of ledger art are displayed next to these four watercolors by Running Antelope.

My conversations with a focus group composed of German and international adults (two from Azerbaijan, one from China, one from Russia, and one from Sweden) that toured this

particular museum exhibit revealed that they did not seem to notice the label or these prints, even though they commented on a set of ledger prints, drawn on the pages from a Bible of the same time period. These Bible ledger drawings (Images 4.3 and 4.4) were next to Running Antelope's watercolors in the contemporary American Indian art section of the exhibition. When asked what the focus group found interesting about the ledger drawings on Bible pages, a female Russian visitor in her early 20s stated that she found the weird balance between traditional and modern interesting, a comment many of the other participants agreed with. The traditional was in reference to the imagery of American Indians on horseback wearing what is considered traditional clothing, whereas the modern referred to the canvas, which in this case were pages from the Bible.



(Images 4.3 and 4.4 Ledger art examples, *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum*)

Members of the focus group questioned less the label I brought their attention to (*des weißen Mannes*), which stated modern American Indian art was due to acquiring the “techniques of the white man,” than the weird balance between the imagery depicted in the ledger drawings

using Bible pages as a canvas. At the time of our discussion I hadn't thought to ask why they did not question the use of 'white man,' and instead let the conversation flow freely.¹²

Still curious about the use of 'the white man' (*der weiße Mann*) in Germany, I asked a master's student, Marie, what 'the white man' means in Germany. Marie and I had met at the Karl May museum while I was interviewing the Karl May curator, Christoph.¹³ She was working on her master's thesis about the imaginary Indian found in Germany and had quite a bit to say about it. She said the use of this term is simply a literal translation of 'the white man' (*der weiße Mann*). A critic of the Karl May Museum and its continuing ability to shape the image of American Indians in Germany, Marie explained during a later discussion that the term was made popular by its use in the Karl May series, *Winnetou*. The series is among Karl May's most popular works, depicting a seemingly unlikely bond between a Native man (Winnetou) and his white brother (Old Shatterhand). The *Winnetou* series is popular among older generations of Germans who not only read the series but also have seen the movies made in both East and West Germany. Like a lot of Wild West shows and narratives, it employs some form of *der weiße Mann* as a label (May 2014).

In this way, the use of 'the white man' would be something found in a script that employs Hollywood Injun English (Meek 2006): certain terms and ways of speaking that are meant to index American Indian speech. Unlike Hollywood Injun English (HIE), however, it is not the spoken performance that indexes American Indianness, but the written form that is coupled with mainstream discourse of what an American Indian is. Because there is no performative aspect of speaking HIE, either in Karl May's novels or in museum exhibition labels, the use of 'the white

¹² A possible reason for not questioning the use of 'white man' could be that they did not read the labels. Each of these participants had started on the other end of the exhibition so exhaustion could have set in or they may be the types of visitors who do not read every label associated with individual objects throughout the exhibition.

¹³ Marie had heard Christoph and I talking at the Karl May Museum about American Indians and the need to bring American Indians and hobbyists together and she asked if I was "from the Sioux tribe" and if she could interview me for a newspaper article she was writing about the Karl May Museum scalp controversy (see chapter 5).

man' in these contexts loses the colonial connotations that 'the Whiteman' has in Indian Country. The appropriation of this term is a "notion of emulation, which allows both for cultural distance, difference, and respect and for expertise and mastery across cultural lines, [which] goes right to the heart of the problem of appropriation" (ed. Calloway et al. 2002: 228). A lack of understanding of what 'the Whiteman' truly means in its original (Native) contexts and its flippant use depoliticizes the term and causes the historical and troubled past it marks to remain unproblematized. Even through claims that its appropriation is meant as a form of respect or attempt to be authentic.

The use of the term 'Whiteman' is saturated with historical and contextual information, which brings to mind the use of the N-word among comedians like Dave Chappelle and Richard Pryor. Each of these comedian's performances allude to the complicated history of U.S. race relations when they invoke the N-word (Asim 2007:172-173). In a way, the use of "whiteman" in museum exhibits "wipes" the audiences clean of "centuries of blood and filth" by creating a semantic vacuum "that can be pulled and stretched into new meanings" and the loss or erasure of historical meaningfulness (Asim 2007: 172). Setting aside the joking relations and the different ownerships that come about from these terms—the N-word being a derogatory term about an oppressed group of people, later taken up and reframed by some individuals within that group and Whiteman a term used by the oppressed as a derogatory way to speak about their oppressors—it is the meaning attached to each term in the context of their deployment that gives them significance.¹⁴

Discussions about 'the Whiteman' with German interlocutors (museum visitors, museum staff, and everyday acquaintances) suggests that a more closely related term to the significant use

¹⁴ One American Indian research participant said he refused to use the term 'Whiteman' unless he was speaking directly to another American Indian who he felt comfortable with and the topic of conversation warranted the use of the term to illustrate a point.

of ‘the Whiteman’ in the United States by American Indians would be *Bleichgesicht*, which literally translates to ‘paleface.’ Similarly in old Westerns, “paleface” is a derogatory term referring to white settlers and most often used by American Indian characters. However, I remain unconvinced that even *Bleichgesicht* conjures the same image as ‘the Whiteman’ in contemporary uses for anyone who hasn’t experienced the historical trauma and micro-aggressions American Indians face on a daily basis. Through these micro-aggressions and historical trauma American Indians share experiences, coupled with community values that differentiate them from mainstream society, which allow them to understand the deployment of Whiteman in context. The context and deployment of Whiteman is meant to elicit feelings, send messages, or create comradery between individuals. The terms in German as literal translations of the English, remain Western ideas of what a ‘Whiteman’ may be, focusing solely on the Euro-American individual or image of that individual and not on the purpose that using ‘Whiteman’ is intended to do.

The appropriation of ‘Whiteman’ by ethnographic museums is an example of what Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1992) termed heteroglossia, the expression of two or more distinct voicings within a text. By appropriating the term from American Indian speech, incorporating it into exhibition labels to index American Indianness, but doing so through an authoritative Euro-American centric voice, ‘Whiteman’ becomes a way to arrange difference in particular ways, the difference being between American Indians and Euro-Americans. Not only are these two groups historically differentiated from each other through the terms of Whiteman and American Indian within the museum exhibition labels, but also the voice of these terms suggests differences between the groups as they reference one another. In order to get at this voicing, I first want to

introduce the museum that used “Whiteman” the most within its Native North American exhibition.

The Whiteman is everywhere—*Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg*

Of the museums in Germany involved in this research only one (the Karl May Museum) did not use any variation of the term ‘white man,’ and none to the extent that the *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg* did. The exhibit opened in December 2008, after one and a half years of planning, research, and construction. It was the first phase of a plan by the *Hamburg Kulturstiftung* to revamp all the exhibits within the museum (discussed in depth in chapter 3).

As discussed previously, the Native North American exhibition was a major collaborative project between the curator (trained as a South Americanist), Katia, and a First Nations expert, Michael. It was Katia’s first exhibit pertaining to Native North America and because the museum had a First Nations expert working on the exhibit, she seemed more than happy to give Michael more influence than is typical in museum collaborations like this. Where Michael’s input seemed to be stymied was in the writing of the labels and what information to include in those labels, which were researched, written, and edited by the museum “scientists” or “*Wissenschaftler/in.*”

Michael’s influence was most prevalent through the overt inclusion of what Amy Lonetree describes as “hard truths” (2012) without masking them within exhibit design or generalized terms amidst long narrative labels that dance around the issues (such as the use of ‘white’ in the examples above). The inclusion of many of the hard truths about the outcomes of colonization such as epidemics, poverty, and loss were the result of Michael’s knowledge and desire to elaborate this side of history in order to educate audiences. However, the historical as well as contemporary actors discussed in the labels (products of the curator) present a generalized white male image.

The *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg* incorporates the term “white men” in nearly every section within the Native North American exhibition. The introductory label for the exhibit not only uses “white men” but also incorporates a term that has been strongly criticized in a U.S. context: “Redskins.”

Christopher Columbus was seeking a new sea route to India. When he made landfall to the west of Europe in 1492, he thought that he had reached his destination and so called the inhabitants simply “Indians”. After it had become clear that the country he had found was the continent of America, the name which he had coined stuck. What is more, it soon became evident that the “Redskins” did not, as had at first been surmised, have a uniform culture.

On the contrary, the white men [die Weißen] found a region with one of the highest levels of linguistic and cultural diversity anywhere in the world... ” (“’Indianer’ – gibt es die überhaupt?/’Indians’ – do they really exist?,” Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg)¹⁵

When asked about the use of the term ‘white man’ in general throughout the country and what Germans think of when they hear or read ‘white man,’ Katia said it is a very complicated term that would need a lot of time to really explain and parse the complexity, but that for most visitors it means Europeans.¹⁶ It was unclear if that meant specific European nations or which ones are included in this umbrella term. It was also unclear whether German visitors are reflexive when reading these labels, viewing themselves as part of this European actor or not. Particularly because the narrative pertains to Native North American history whose colonizers were not historically German.

The image that comes to my mind when thinking of a Whiteman in this context is a male who has had direct contact with American Indians, typically on tribal or Native lands or in the fringe area between Native populations and non-Native populations. Therefore, he is someone

¹⁵ The German portion of the label reads: “*Die Weißen trafen vielmehr auf ein Gebiet mit einer auch im weltweiten Vergleich extreme hohen Sprachen- und Kulturreichhalt.*”

¹⁶ It seems strange to me that “Indians” and “Redskins” are placed in scare quotes but ‘white men’ is casually placed in a sentence without them, however I had not thought to ask Katia why this is.

we (the visitor to the museum) would *never* be. Katia did allude to the difference between a European understanding of the word and a possible American understanding of it as stemming from racist history that also used words like *Rothaut* (racial slur akin to Injun or Redskin) or *Bleichgesicht* (pale face). But other labels within the exhibition suggest that the connotation of this term is not fully grasped or graspable by the normative visitor to this museum.

Most of the instances where this term is found at the *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg*, appear in the fort structure near the back of the exhibition space, called Fort Sully. Fort Sully tells the history of increasing conflict and the attempts to temper those conflicts between American Indian nations and between American Indians and non-American Indians. Before entering the fort, visitors pass the various types of weapons typically associated with Native North America: bows and arrows, tomahawks, clubs, rifles, etc. Once visitors enter the fort they are confronted with blood red walls, “a bold color for a bold statement” (Katia, interview, June 30, 2015). Hanging from the walls are large timelines, photographs, treaties, and labels almost exclusively in German.¹⁷

Within the context of Fort Sully, ‘white man’ is typically used when adding an ancillary actor to the topic at hand mostly through the displays of various kinds of weapons and the labels associated with those weapons.

...Armed conflicts were frequent between the tribes of the plains and the prairies. These increased drastically, however, when land became ever scarcer due to the advance of the white men [der Weißen], and the tribes became rivals for the ever shrinking hunting grounds.

(Totschläger und Lederkeulen/Slingshot clubs and leather cudgels, Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg)

...The iron blades were much in demand and were obtained from the white men [den Weißen] through barter. A particularly highly esteemed variant was the pipe

¹⁷ Nearly every other label within this exhibition, except for those in Fort sully, are in three languages: German, English, and French. German because it is a German museum, English because it pertains to American Indians, and French because of the French province in Canada where First Nations reside.

tomahawk, a combined axe and pipe. It was regarded as a manifest symbol for war and peace.

(Holzkeulen und Tomahawks/Wooden clubs and Tomahawks, Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg)

As the white men [der Weißen] advanced into their lands, more and more Indians gradually came to possess firearms...

(Feuerwaffen/Firearms, Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg)

In the first example, “Totschläger und Lederkeulen/Slingshot clubs and Leather cudgels,” the focus is on the conflicts between tribes in the Plains and the Prairies. The arrival of white settlers in the area caused these conflicts between American Indian *regions* to escalate, but the focus of the sentence structure is the conflicts and not one of the reasons—“the advance of the white men.” The same is true for the second example, “Holzkeulen und Tomahawks/Wooden Clubs and Tomahawks” which focuses on the tools or weapons of the label title which were “obtained from white men through barter.” And finally, the focus of “Feuerwaffen/Firearms” is obviously the firearms, which were obtained in response to the white men’s advancement on to American Indian lands. Even though the label does not go into who has supplied these firearms to the American Indian populations, the firearms are being used in response to encroachment by the white men.

The use of the term ‘white men’ throughout this exhibit clearly demonstrates an understanding of whiteness in relation to a German or Eurocentric orientation and fails to take into account its relationship to the social-historical context on display, that is, its interpretive force (for American Indians). In these examples, ‘white man’ or ‘white men’ is simply a placeholder for Euro-Americans very broadly—an unmarked individual in a Peircean fashion. By decontextualizing the term, making it just another label for a generalized group of people, and appropriating it has the effect of depoliticizing ‘Whiteman’ and its significance when deployed by American Indians and within American Indian contexts.

The Indians' "Whiteman"

In contrast to the deployment of 'white man' in the above examples, the label "*American Dreams? Facetten indianischen Lebens heute/American Dreams? Facets of Native American life today*" in the *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg* brings the content of the exhibit to today's world—a world in which American Indians are trying to find balance between the pressures of dominant society (the white men) and the desire to be different. The label reads:

Today's Native Americans in the USA and Canada are living out their own American Dreams. These may often appear from outside to be contradictory, but in fact they are all facets of the same goal – to survive and lead their own lives with dignity in their own country. American Indians are not relics of a bygone past, but firmly anchored in the present. And they reserve the right to take over what they consider important from their traditions – irrespective of whether it meets with the approval of the white men or not [--unabhängig davon, ob die Weißen dies gut heißen oder nicht].
(*Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg*)

This use of 'white men' is more closely related to the connotation of the Whiteman in intimate American Indian circles. The purpose of 'white men' here is to create an image of what it means to be American Indian in opposition to the term itself (Whiteman), not in opposition to the person it stands for. It indexes the characteristics that are undesirable in American Indian societies but are often considered polite in Euro-American society that this use refers to.

The use of language to teach desirable traits by calling out the undesirable trait through analogies has been studied in American Indian contexts. Scholars like Keith Basso ([1979] 2008) and Sara Trechter (2001) describe narratives and statements made by fellow American Indians that describe what it means to be a good moral Apache or Lakota by contrasting it with an immoral Whiteman. These teachable moments, and the use of Whiteman within them, are used to elaborate on the ethical and moral standards that define and maintain each Native community to ensure their survivance (Vizenor 1999; ed. Vizenor 2008).

However, even this does not account for the complicated nature and use of Whiteman in every setting, which are as diverse as American Indian cultures. Why ‘white man’ was incorporated into the *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg* exhibition to such an extent is unknown. When discussing the plan for Fort Sully the curator, Katia reminisced about how Michael (the First Nations co-curator) often became mad and spoke harshly about the history and the oppressors, speaking of their discussions as if she couldn’t understand why someone would be so upset about a history that she could easily detach herself from as having happened in the past and elsewhere. Whereas Michael confided in me on a separate occasion that he had a very clear idea of what he wanted to do with the fort, down to the blood red walls that would cohesively, albeit figuratively, tie the whole gruesome story together both through the narrative of the objects, treaties, maps, and labels, but also artistically. What Katia failed to realize is that, even in Germany, Michael could not detach himself from a history of oppression at the hands of the Whiteman.

Even though the fort seemed to be Michael’s project, the labels were Katia’s responsibility, which is where ‘white man’ appears. In a conversation with Katia, she mentions, “it [the Whiteman] wasn’t a term or concept Michael was interested in” (Katia, interview, June 30, 2015). Rather the general topics such as alcoholism, life on reservations, the lack of respect by the American and Canadian governments towards Native peoples, and the negative aspects of contact such as disease, land loss, and the repudiation of treaties by the U.S. and Canadian governments were the most important. Even during the conversations I had with Michael, “the Whiteman” was never uttered by either of us. Rather we talked about the Canadian government or the United States government or the French depending on what parts of our own histories we were sharing. The closest either of us came to uttering a term like those discussed in this chapter,

was when talking about anthropologists, “white anthropologists” in particular: individuals both Michael and I have had personal and professional relationships with as collaborators, research participants, and colleagues.

Naming the Actors

For museums to name the historical actors erased by terms like ‘white man,’ ‘white trader,’ or even simply ‘white’ is not wholly unheard of. With the passing of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990 and the ever growing self-determination efforts of American Indians and First Nations to define their own identities, museums have substituted general terms for American Indian groups in certain regions (Northwest Coast, Plains and Prairies, Southwest, etc.) with tribal names—names the tribes have adopted for themselves. For example, while working at the Peabody Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts I was tasked with researching the tribes of the Northwest Coast so that all instances of Inuit could be replaced with the current tribal names. This was a second re-naming, the first had happened when museums substituted Inuit for the now politically incorrect term Eskimo.

These changes have become common practice in museums as a way to support tribal self-determination efforts and demonstrate the museums’ commitment to their constituents (in this case American Indians and First Nations).¹⁸ While this practice has focused primarily on the replacement of tribal names, it could easily extend to include other historical actors in American Indian history, such as those involved in the colonization of the continent. To not do so continues to deny the involvement of historical actors by not holding them accountable for their actions,

¹⁸ Native voices as critics of museums and the appropriation of speech (dialects and catch phrases (Meek2006) including Mock Spanish (Hill 2008, etc.)) in the U.S. as well as tribal self-determination efforts that hold educational institutions accountable for the information they disperse are possible reasons for why the use of ‘Whiteman’ is not typically found in U.S. based ethnographic museums.

thereby denying American Indians an opportunity to heal from their historical traumas (Lonetree 2012).

This chapter began with a discussion of Carpio's critique of the five percent solution to limit the amount of information pertaining to colonialism to only five percent of the exhibition. But even if "the past five hundred years of 'war, disease, and exile' are not the entire span of Indigenous history, it is critical to acknowledge that it has had a disproportionate impact on our communities and cultures" (Lonetree 2008:312). The call for exhibitions that focus honestly and specifically on this period is not a matter of laying blame, but rather of presenting a more in depth picture of history to create a space that can than promote cross cultural understanding (Bennett 2006) in a setting that has the ability to facilitate the healing process through the education of its visitors, *all* of its visitors.

Amy Lonetree (2012) continues by calling for specificity in the presentation of American Indian history in museums; a specificity that needs to extend to the colonial actors, not just the events and consequences of colonialism. For some museums this would mean updating quite a few exhibition labels with more accurate information even if it requires finding ways to speak about these historical events without alienating a large portion of their visitor demographics (although I do not think this is entirely in the hands of the museum). It also means digging deeper into the historical narrative to determine where actors came from as well as where their authority to act as they did came from.

What such a change accomplishes is a more in-depth, multidimensional history that more easily lends itself to multivocal narratives. It also uncovers the sociolinguistic ideologies that permeate Western institutions like museums and recommends a way to transform exhibitions and exhibit discourse about American Indians so that these museological spaces can be of interest to

and educate a wider, more diverse audience. Finally, and most importantly, it allows for the healing process Lonetree (2008; 2012) calls for when presenting history's hard truths—in order to heal from the atrocities, their orchestrators must be named.

CHAPTER V

Logic of Ownership: Repatriation Struggles and NAGPRA Compliance

[T]he standard view held by much of the public is that science and Indian beliefs do not mix. This is not necessarily the case if one recognizes that resistance to 'science' may mean only resistance to discourses of domination. The nature of this domination has been one where the language of control (over human remains and objects) has been couched in terms of the importance of universal science and the pursuit of truth. In reality, many people making those claims are doing so in the absence of any working theories regarding the ends to which research over these items held in hostage are being put. They point to a future time when improved technology can yield heretofore undreamed-of secrets, but they do not connect propositions in present time to theories that can be linked, as all social theories must, to ethical ramifications of the uses of the particular knowledge in question. In such a context, the invocation of ecumenical science as a rationale for holding onto bones and artifacts in perpetuity can therefore only sound like the invocation of religious dogma, which, in fact, it is.
(Fine-Dare 2002: 167).

As Kathleen Fine-Dare highlights in the quote above, the incorrect suggestion that American Indians are somehow against science has arisen most often through issues of repatriations (see also Weiss 2008). The demand for the return of ancestral remains and funerary objects has been taken as an anti-science position, which pits American Indian beliefs against science. On the contrary, American Indian perspectives and relationships with science versus what could be considered American Indian traditional or religious beliefs are individualistic and cannot be generalized (see Kirsch 2011). The suggestion that traditional beliefs and the request for repatriations are fundamentally against science—positioning science as the victim—illustrates the construction of knowledge as a dimension of power and inequality (Erikson 2008; Foucault 1980b). Such discourse frames American Indian epistemologies as political rejections of an organized scientific discourse (Fine-Dare 2002). By claiming American Indians are against

science because they wish to remove particular items from scientific centers (museums) further entrenches debates about repatriation by victimizing science.

While previous scholarship recaps these pro-Indian/anti-science arguments surrounding repatriations (Miheuah 2000), or seeks to historicize repatriations and the U.S. federal law known as NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, 1990) (Colwell 2017; Fine-Dare 2002), this chapter's goal is to draw attention to the museological practice that creates this politicization through how repatriations are codified in the museum—how are repatriations talked about or referred to in scientific/educational institutions? In turn, what impressions are museums presenting to their public(s) through the ways they talk about and present repatriations? By focusing on this codification, we can better understand museological practice as it pertains to a logic of ownership expressed through a practice of compliance with repatriation guidelines and laws that are increasingly looking to international contexts. In this way, international museums illustrate their acknowledgment of U.S. federal law that provides a template for international museum guidelines pertaining to repatriations. All the while upholding a Euro-American discourse surrounding ownership and the importance of artifacts to future scientific discoveries.

Loosely, the definition of repatriation is a return of someone to his or her country or place of origin. For cultural repatriations, this definition can be expanded to include things being returned to the community of origin. However, most definitions of repatriation incorporate ideas and language of ownership and property. Ownership and property as it pertains to human remains, sacred objects, and items of communal patrimony are highly contested as being Euro-American centric (à la Locke or Rousseau). U.S. property rights are recognized as having a basis in Locke's idea of property ([1689] 1947), or land on which an individual has done labor. From

this basis, additional characteristics have been added to broaden the scope of what is and is not included in property.

For example, Carol Rose (1994) speaks of an intention to appropriate something as property, which must be communicated to and recognized by other individuals, making ‘acts of possession’ a ‘text’. Whereas Marilyn Strathern (1999) and Stuart Kirsch (2001) discuss ways of integrating and organizing persons and collectivities when discussing cultural property rights, further broadening the definition of cultural property to include relationships; relationships between individuals, materials, concepts, discourses, etc.

However, the humans and items associated with American Indian repatriations are not considered property by American Indians, and this is why scholars like Patricia Pierce Erikson (2008) argue that repatriation is a human rights issue and not an issue of property ownership. Shrouding repatriations in a discourse of human rights issues allows for an international dialogue that includes the recognition of self-determination or tribal sovereignty (Fine-Dare 2002). And though an analysis of international repatriations of North American human remains, funerary objects, and items of patrimony would be useful for a discussion about tribal sovereignty that reaches across borders, I have not witnessed a repatriation from a non-U.S. based museum. Currently, there is a repatriation request from the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa to the Karl May Museum (discussed below), but the request has so far been unsuccessful.

I align my own opinions about repatriations with those of scholars like Erikson (2008) and Fine-Dare (2002). Erikson believes repatriatable objects are not property, but rather fall under a human rights issue. Fine-Dare (2002) sees the keeping of human remains in museum collections in the hopes of future discoveries as a dogmatic imprisonment of those people. However, this chapter takes seriously the idea that human remains, sacred objects, and items of

patrimony are considered property by the museum. I do this because museum practice points to a logic of ownership over artifacts (not including human remains) even while museum discourse has shifted to speaking about the museum as stewards over rather than owners of objects. This becomes apparent when museums are asked (or forced) to relinquish control over these objects during repatriations.¹

By considering repatriations as a return of property and taking into consideration collecting practices of museums, it is easy to see the link to the idea that there was a transfer of ownership during collecting whether artifacts were purchased, gifted, or otherwise acquired. What will become evident throughout this chapter is that the language used by museum staff when discussing repatriations is ingrained with a sense of ownership that drives decisions and debates about repatriation. This sense of ownership focuses repatriation debates in the legal realm (particularly in the U.S.). Ignoring not just the moral and ethical stances that surround repatriations, but the reason for U.S. federal law such as NAGPRA—the acknowledgement of tribal sovereignty and self-determination efforts.²

Contemporary Repatriations: Karl May Museum Request

Most repatriations to American Indian nations occur from U.S. funded institutions under federal legislation (NAGPRA, 1990). Items can be returned to tribes within the U.S. and some U.S. federally funded institutions are repatriating objects to indigenous communities the world over following the processes laid out in U.S. legislation. Repatriations to American Indian

¹ The most public requests for repatriations that have been denied include the Elgin Marbles back to Greece from the British Museum which UNESCO offered to mediate in 2014 but was turned down by the British Museum (Fitz Gibbon 2005) and the bust of Nefertiti currently on display at the *Neues Museum* in Berlin back to Egypt in 1975. These two requests are relatively new considering repatriation requests from American Indians have been occurring for over a century.

² One of the first repatriation requests from American Indians was in 1889 when the Iroquois Confederacy requested the repatriation of four wampum belts from collector John Boyd Thatcher. Repeated requests were made for the belts repatriation, but were denied based on ownership ideas and state authority. New York State eventually came to possess the wampum belts and they were placed in the New York State Museum. Subsequently, they became part of the collection at the George Gustav Heye Museum of the American Indian (currently connected to the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian), before they were finally repatriated to the Onondaga in Canada in October 1989 (Sullivan 1992; Fine-Dare 2002), a century after the first (documented) request for their return.

communities from European nations, on the other hand, are uncommon. The first occurred in 2012 when the University of Birmingham repatriated several skulls and bones to a small tribe in California (Chawkins 2012). Since this initial repatriation there have only been a handful from Europe to North America, and none from Germany. Opportunities have arisen to repatriate from Europe, such as a recent repatriation request from the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa that has been widely publicized. The request is for the return of two human scalps from the Karl May Museum in Radebeul, Germany.

My first visit to the Karl May Museum was in the summer of 2012 for preliminary fieldwork, just prior to the formal repatriation request from the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa. I met with a senior curator who was enthusiastic about the museum, the collections, and Native North America. On my second visit to the Karl May Museum in 2015, I met with the newest curator, Christoph who shared the previous curators enthusiasm. Christoph and I met two weeks after the Karl May Festival, an annual three-day festival put on by the city of Radebeul, celebrating the fictional characters of German author Karl May. The festival attracts thousands of individuals who travel to Radebeul for the day or entire weekend enjoying food, activities, and demonstrations (see image 5.1).



(Image 5.1 *Karl May Festtage* activities, Radebeul, Germany)

I arrived in Radebeul on the opening day of the festival. Already, the entire campground was full of pitched circa 19th century tents (see image 5.2), fire pits with suspended metal pots cooking an assortment of stews, and individuals dressed as cowboys, Indians, and Civil War soldiers. As I made my way through the grounds, I witnessed a Civil War reenactment complete with canon fire, saw a prince from Persia, walked through a Western town (Little Tombstone), and of course stumbled across tipis (see image 5.3) in which dancers from the Oneida Nation were preparing for their demonstrations in.³

³ The Haudenosaunee did not live in tipis; rather they constructed longhouses, which could reach the size of an American football field. Since the Oneida Nation dancers have been performing at the Karl May festival in Radebeul for years, this is not only an



(Image 5.2 *Karl May Festtage* Civil War Camp, Radebeul, Germany)



(Image 5.3 *Karl May Festtage* tipi and demonstration stage, Radebeul, Germany)

anachronism but a blatant desire to maintain a Euro-American image of what American Indian lifestyles entail including types of housing structures that are readily identifiable as American Indian.

Two weeks after the Karl May Festival, life in Radebeul had calmed down and visitor numbers to the museum returned to normal.⁴ I had planned to speak with Christoph a few weeks after the festival in order to give him some time to catch up on his work after an upsurge in not only visitor numbers, but also an increase in the number of activities provided by the museum for the festival weekend. We met in the courtyard of the Karl May Museum on a hot June day. We sat at a picnic table drinking coffee with the sound of children playing around us as they panned for gold, one of a number of outdoor children's activities at the museum.

Christoph had prepared for our conversation by pulling archival books and pamphlets as well as his own research into German Indian hobbyism.⁵ We discussed a number of topics pertinent to my current research interests such as museum collections, Karl May himself, and the recent repatriation request for two scalps from the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa. I was not the one to bring up the repatriation of the scalps, but once Christoph mentioned it in passing (accompanied by a furtive glance in my direction), I wanted to get a better sense of the museum's position on the issue. Because of the precedent this repatriation request from the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa would create, all other German museums and many European museums were and still are looking toward the Karl May Museum for guidance and the setting of precedent in handling similar, future situations.

The Karl May Museum had just revised their guidelines "For the Care of Human Remains and Material of Sacred Significance in the Collection of the Karl May Museum" (May 30, 2015) two days prior to my meeting with Christoph.⁶ The guidelines were based on the

⁴ The Karl May Festival is put on by the city of Radebeul and not the Karl May Museum. The Museum is not affiliated with the festival, but signage point's visitors to the Karl May Museum from the festival grounds.

⁵ I had emailed Christoph a list of topics I wanted to discuss with him during our meeting so that he could prepare for our discussion. My initial research project had focused more on German Indian hobbyism, which was a topic the Christoph was also interested in both academically as well as personally.

⁶ The guidelines were not yet available when I interviewed Christoph, nor were they mentioned in our conversation. He did

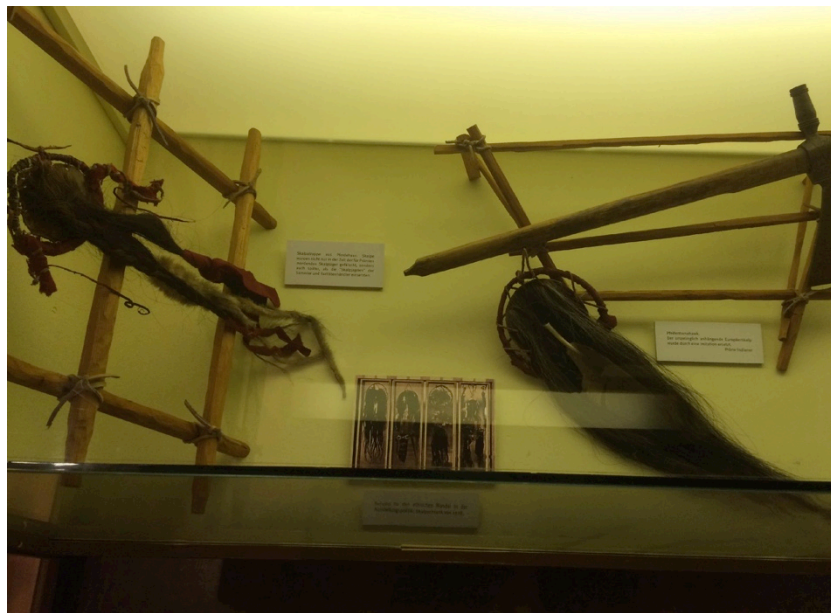
German Museums Association's (*Deutscher Museumsbund*) "Recommendations for the Care of Human Remains in Museums and Collections" (2013), ICOM's "Code of Ethics for Museums" (2004), and the "UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" (2007), all of which describe general guidelines for the handling and care of human remains. The Karl May Museum's policy states: "[t]he return of a claimed object is possible *after* the conclusion of *all* research with the result of a clearly *verifiable* attribution of the object to a *legitimate* individual person or community of origin" (emphasis added, Karl May Museum 2015). This policy is not only very general, it also leaves the timeline for a possible return open ended. Only after all research has been completed and verified will the artifact or human remains *possibly* be returned to a legitimate person or community. This differentiates the Karl May Museum's policy from the current iteration of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act in the U.S. and aligns itself more closely with the first iteration of NAGPRA (discussed below).

The Karl May Museum's policy for care and handling also defines the types of items it considers human remains. Items include human bodies in their entirety or in part and objects with human remains "knowingly incorporated," meaning bones, hair, teeth, etc. that are incorporated into either the design of the item or are contained within as a funerary object. What is not included are objects associated with humans that do not have human remains incorporated into them, but are still considered burial or sacred objects. Strangely, scalps are not considered under either of these categories, but rather are listed under exceptions to these categories because scalps were acquired through injustices (Eddy 2014). The original scalps have been removed from the exhibit, but replicas made of horsehair have been placed in the original display case

mention having guidelines that were based off of ICOM's Code of Ethics, but did not mention that the museum had been revising them in the wake of the repatriation request from the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa.

(see Image 5.4).⁷

The story of how Patty Frank, the first collector and curator of the museum, came to possess these scalps is a common narrative excitedly told by museum staff (told both during my summer 2012 visit by the senior curator and again by Christoph in 2015). Christoph told me of Patty Frank's travels throughout the U.S. as a circus performer. While touring, Patty Frank rode out to a nearby American Indian settlement and purchased the scalps and a scalping knife from Dakota Chief, Swift Hawk, for three bottles of alcohol and \$100.⁸ It was said that Chief Swift Hawk got the scalps in a fight with a Chippewa, which is all the museum knows of the scalps' provenance.⁹ The connection with the Chippewa is what sparked the repatriation claim from the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa.



(Image 5.4 Replica scalps, Karl May Museum, Radebeul, Germany)

⁷ King argues that the removal of the scalps and their replacement with replicas made from horsehair does not alter the message of the display because “the scalp label oversimplifies and sensationalizes a historical practice, overgeneralizes about who did what, and makes Indians absolute (extinct) victims” (King 2016:42).

⁸ The payment for the scalps differs slightly between the two curators, the senior curator told a film crew making a short documentary about the scalps that the scalps were acquired by Patty Frank in 1904 for two bottles of whiskey, \$100, and a shot of brandy (DW English 2014).

⁹ Clarification of names: Ojibwe, Chippewa, and Anishinabek, all of which are used in this dissertation, are related. Ojibwe and Chippewa are synonyms. I have used Chippewa here because the Sault Ste. Marie call themselves Chippewa, according to their tribal website (2017) and official name. Chippewa or Ojibwe tribes (spellings also differ) are part of a larger cultural family called Anishinaabe/Anishinabek/Anishinaabeg, which also describes a language family. Other groups included in this larger family are: Potawatomi, Odawa, Mississaugas, Oji-Cree, and Algonquin peoples.

My conversation with Christoph took place in the summer of 2015, nearly a full year after the request by the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa was made public and multiple letters with Sault Ste. Marie were exchanged. These correspondences included a personal visit from a Sault Ste. Marie citizen to Radebeul, Germany during the Karl May Festival (2015) where he received a letter of cooperation from the Radebeul *Bürgermeister*.¹⁰ The letter was presented to the Sault Ste. Marie citizen during the festival, in front of a large crowd of witnesses. Both the *Bürgermeister* and the Sault Ste. Marie citizen gave short speeches discussing the possible repatriation, both in support of creating lasting relationships between the city of Radebeul and the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa.

I approached the Sault Ste. Marie representative and talked about my research project and upcoming visit to the museum. He wanted to make it clear to me that while Radebeul supported peaceful and respectful interactions the museum was privately owned and not as cooperative as the city. He confided in me that he did not think the repatriation would happen in the near future, but that he was going to continue negotiating with them and demanding the return of the scalps to the Sault Ste. Marie.

For the museum, giving back these scalps would mean a loss of two precious items in the collection that in the future could be scientifically important and are certainly educationally valuable for the museum right now. This sense of value of the collections as well as pride in the uniqueness of them translates to a responsibility museum staff feel for the collections' safety. "[I]f we do not know anything about the provenance of the object, we must keep it here in the collection on a safe ground" (Christoph, interview, June 2, 2015). This was the reason Christoph used when pressed about the delay in making a decision on the scalps.

¹⁰ This member is not the current tribal repatriation specialist for the Sault Ste. Marie and it is uncertain whether he made this visit on behalf of the tribe or if the tribe authorized him to speak on the tribe's behalf.

Many museums have used this argument; they must be absolutely certain of an item's provenance before repatriating it because of the fear that future research will prove it belongs to another community and the museum would appear irresponsible. Tribes have criticized this stance as a stalling tactic and have even created alliances among themselves in order to avoid these situations. For example, the Michigan Anishinaabek Cultural Preservation and Repatriation Alliance (MACPRA) is an alliance between thirteen Michigan Anishinaabek communities for the protection and preservation of cultural resources (MACPRA 2017). The agreement these thirteen tribes have come to includes the ability for any one of them to receive a repatriation of Anishinaabek cultural patrimony and human remains without the need to identify the specific tribe of origin making the repatriation process easier and faster.

The reasoning museum curators, such as Christoph, give for keeping objects on “safe ground” is to ensure people who have some sort of connection to the items (including German people) can come visit and learn from them. Educating the public, present and future, is the most important role these objects have, connecting repatriation refusals to an argument I made in chapter 1 about the over reliance on three-dimensional objects to do all the work in ethnographic museums. Of course, even though the museum does not want to repatriate the items, they would still be happy “to give [American Indians] the opportunity to come here, see it, and do some prayers over them” (Christoph, interview, June 2, 2015).¹¹

Some of Christoph's comments point to old techniques that saturate the field of anthropology and museums with authority, making it difficult to argue against. The museum has a “responsibility” to the objects that only the museum can handle in some sort of neutral or “safe space.” For the Karl May Museum, this argument relies on or claims a lack of provenance.

¹¹ Additionally, the claim that the museum would welcome American Indians to travel to Radebeul in order to pray over the scalps is preposterous. It is not only a financial burden, but would also mean a large portion of time spent traveling to Germany and being with the items.

Provenance is the history of any object from who made it, where it comes from, who purchased/donated it, to when it came to the museum. Provenance points to anything that can tell researchers and visitors about the origins and transfer of the object from its creation to the current possessor.

Newspaper articles (Haircrow 2014; Oltermann 2014), short documentaries (DW English 2014; Gerdau et al. 2014), and conversations with museum staff all discuss the poor and incomplete provenance records for the scalps at the Karl May Museum. Unfortunately, weak provenances are often used as an excuse to not repatriate items, even while a focus on complete and detailed provenances is a relatively new museological practice. The fear is if in later years the provenance can be ascertained it might prove that the scalps were not the patrimony of Sault Ste. Marie. The museum uses this as an excuse to claim they have a responsibility to keep the scalps at the Karl May museum for further scientific testing and research to determine their provenance.

When pressed about the standards laid out by ICOM (International Council of Museums) when dealing with repatriations and mentioning the nearly 30 year old law in the U.S. (NAGPRA, 1990) to contextualize my question about the ethical obligations museums have to the peoples they represent, Christoph responded “they’re only guidelines.” This utterance struck me. As a Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) myself and understanding the arguments used by fellow THPO’s and museum staff for both repatriating and keeping items in the museum, I was surprised that a museum could dismiss guidelines that took years to develop and negotiate.¹² Christoph’s remark still reverberates in my ears, comforted only by the knowledge that such phrases as “they’re only guidelines” do not hold for U.S. ethnographic museums that

¹² Each museum curator I interviewed was aware of not only my research project, but also my background and work as a THPO. I never withheld this information, opting for complete transparency in preparation of discussions about repatriations, appropriations, and (mis)representations.

are federally funded.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act: Beyond Guidelines

The year 1990 saw key U.S. legislative changes pertaining to repatriations of human remains, sacred objects, and items of American Indian patrimony after what had arguably been nearly a century of repatriation requests and struggles (Fine-Dare 2002). The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA, 1990) required U.S. federally funded institutions (universities, museums, etc.) to undergo procedural changes that altered the nature of their relationship with American Indian collections and tribes.¹³ A legislation that passed quickly, NAGPRA came on the heels of the National Museum of the American Indian Act of 1989 which required Smithsonian institutions to inventory and repatriate human remains, and created the National Museum of the American Indian and an advisory committee with American Indian members to oversee the decisions and processes of repatriation from the Smithsonian (Colwell 2017).

Once NAGPRA was passed, a series of events started to occur. “[E]ach Federal agency and each museum which has possession or control of holdings or collections of Native American human remains and associated funerary objects shall compile an inventory of such items and, to the extent possible based on information possessed by such museum or Federal agency, identify the geographical and cultural affiliation of such item” (25 USC ch. 32: Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation, section §3003. Inventory for human remains and associated funerary objects). In short, federally funded institutions inventoried Native North American collections, identifying items defined under NAGPRA as human remains, associated funerary objects, unassociated funerary objects (UFOs), sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony.¹⁴ They

¹³ NAGPRA falls under the National Park Service: <https://www.nps.gov/nagpra/>

¹⁴ The act first defines each of these categories.

then registered these items/persons on a national registry and once registered, the repatriation process was able to begin *if requested* by the tribal nation who is associated with the items'/persons' provenance.¹⁵

Since NAGPRA's passing, guidelines pertaining to repatriations outlined in the act have been adopted into the revised version of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) Code of Ethics (1986, revised 2004), as well as local museum associations such as the *Deutscher Museumsbund*, about which Christoph stated "they're only guidelines."¹⁶ What differentiates these international guidelines from U.S. federal law, are of course the penalties and criminal charges that can accrue if NAGPRA is not followed. Civil penalties for offenses include: a fee of .25% of the museum's budget or \$5,000, whichever is cheaper, an additional fee for damages suffered by aggrieved parties (though unspecified what this might entail) can be charged, and a \$100 per day fine for continuing to violate the law. NAGPRA also makes the trafficking of human remains or cultural property a felony with a 1-5 year jail sentence and a fine of \$100,000-\$500,000.¹⁷

Over two and a half decades have passed since NAGPRA was enacted and there have been many revelations as to its effectiveness and feasibility. More than 1,500 museums have been confronted by hundreds of tribes to discuss the repatriation of more than 200,000 human remains and one million items of cultural patrimony including sacred and funerary objects.

¹⁵ The wording of NAGPRA states: "Upon the request of the Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization... where the requesting Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization can show cultural affiliation by a preponderance of the evidence based upon geographical, kinship, biological, archaeological, anthropological, linguistic, folkloric, oral tradition, historical, or other relevant information or expert opinion" (25 USC ch. 32: Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation, section §3005. Repatriation). This places the responsibility on the tribes, which created the need for tribal repatriation departments and THPO's.

¹⁶ ICOM is a partnership between museums in 136 countries and territories worldwide including museums in Germany and the U.S. that also partner with UNESCO and the UN to determine museum best practices. These guidelines are discussed, negotiated, and agreed upon, but have no legal authority or accountability.

¹⁷ The uncovering of ancient remains (Kennewick Man) sparked a debate over how old remains that fall under NAGPRA should be. Politicians, such as Senator John McCain, proposed (2005) adding the words "or was" to the definition of Native American so that ancient human remains can also be considered repatriation material, but the proposal was unsuccessful (Colwell 2017, Harjo 2007).

However, prior to a 2010 amendment to the act, only roughly 27% of the human remains from just over a third of the 1,500 museums had been affiliated (Colwell 2017). One of the problems this created was “more than 115,000 sets of human remains [were left] in a kind of legal purgatory” (Colwell 2017: 200) within museum and academic collections.

However, this changed in 2010 when an amendment was added to NAGPRA that created procedures for repatriating Culturally Unidentifiable Human Remains and Associated Funerary Objects, which made up the majority of those 115,000 sets of human remains. The procedures stated that any unaffiliated human remains and funerary objects were to be repatriated to the tribe present in the area from which the remains were removed when they were removed. If that tribe refused the repatriation or there was no associated tribe, the remains and funerary objects would be repatriated to the federally recognized tribe currently in the area. And if they say ‘no’ to accepting the repatriation the remains and funerary objects would go to a non-federally recognized tribe or reinterred based on state law. The Karl May Museum scalps would fall under Culturally Unidentifiable Human Remains and Associated Funerary Objects. However, the museum’s stance on the scalps and the exceptional position the scalps hold as not human remains or sacred objects because they were taken unjustly, point to the museum’s use of the pre-2010 revision NAGPRA as a template.

Even with this 2010 revision, NAGPRA is far from perfect. Additional problems include the requirement to register archaeological sites deemed sacred on the national registry, making it easier for looters to locate them. Unfortunately, even though the first offense is considered a misdemeanor and subsequent offenses being felonies, the likelihood of being prosecuted, length of jail time, and fine are not enough to deter individuals from committing these felonies repeatedly. There are also glaring problems when institutions wrap repatriations in large bundles

of red tape to essentially cease the repatriation process, creating animosity between museum staff and American Indians. But even with all of these unforeseen problems, NAGPRA has done a lot to further the sovereign rights of tribal nations in the U.S. and has created institutional allies within academic settings (universities and museums).

Most of the repatriation staff I have met and worked with in multiple museums and academic institutions are the most staunch allies for American Indians within academic institutions. They have been ignored, ostracized, and hidden within the institutions they work by their colleagues. They include anthropologists and archaeologists, two groups that have been generalized and demonized by American Indians for decades. They are individuals who do not have the power to truly enact change from within their professional institutions. So even though the examples below are from individuals with whom I talked, the analysis of the discourse used when talking about repatriations is that of the institution and I acknowledge the hard work and struggles my repatriation colleagues (Native and non-Native) continue to face.

Compliance as Codification of Ownership

I have been on both the giving and receiving ends of the repatriation process, volunteering at the University of Michigan's repatriation department my first few semesters of grad school and being charged with receiving repatriations for the Brothertown Indian Nation.¹⁸ I noticed the way I started to talk about repatriations changed depending on what role I was performing. Was I sketching yet another pottery sherd, recording its dimensions, and casually chatting with other repatriation staff about a large upcoming return? Or was I discussing how to handle the remains of a human person who was left on our tribal council's doorstep in an

¹⁸ For historical background in the creation of UM's repatriation department see Silverman and Sinopoli (2011).

unmarked shoebox?¹⁹

My analysis hinges on one word, “compliance.” I hadn’t noticed the use of this word until I heard myself say it repeatedly (like a broken record) to my students prior to our class trip to the University of Michigan’s Repatriation Department. We had been discussing NAGPRA in both lecture and discussions and I thought meeting UM’s repatriation staff and seeing what they do prior to repatriating items back to tribes would be a prime educational moment. Many students enjoyed this fieldtrip, but it was also emotionally draining for others who had not realized the sheer size of collections that fall under NAGPRA. Standing in the storage area (human remains and funerary/sacred objects are kept in a separate room, only accessible to certain staff members and tribes) where large cardboard boxes fill nearly every shelf from floor to ceiling, really has an impact on students, especially with the knowledge that large repatriations had already been completed. Even though these boxes do not contain sensitive items, the impact of the storage area is striking for students to see.

At first, hearing myself use the term “compliance,” most likely picked up through one of the readings assigned for this class, made me think of Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs’ book, *Voices of Modernity* (2003). Bauman and Briggs discuss “ways of speaking and writing [that] make social classes, genders, races, and nations seem real and enable them to elicit feelings and justify relations of power, making subalterns seem to speak in ways that necessitate their subordination” (2003: 17). As a young grad student, marked by my speech and more often by my writing style, instances like my use of “compliance with” tend to stand out and surprise me as examples of my performance in a professional realm.

¹⁹ This unmarked person was the first repatriation the Brothertown Indian Nation had received (anonymously). Not having procedures in place, we were forced to use this person as a test run for determining what the process of receiving repatriations and re-interring the bodies into the earth would entail. This individual was given a proper burial in an unmarked grave in our tribal cemetery, which dates back to the 1840s.

The self-reflection on my speech meant, once fieldwork started, I could not, *not* notice the use of the word “comply” or the phrase “compliance with” when speaking to ethnographic museum staff. No fewer than three U.S. based ethnographic museums where I interviewed museum staff used the word “compliance” or “we comply with” when discussing NAGPRA.²⁰ It became so common that I assumed the staff were given a script and coached on how to talk about repatriations because within NAGPRA, the written act itself, the word comply is only used twice and compliance is not used at all. The first instance is under Repatriation subsection Competing Claims and states, “Where there are multiple requests for repatriation of any cultural item and, after complying with the requirements of this chapter...” (NAGPRA 1990: §3005. e). The second is under subsection Penalty and states, “Any museum that fails to comply with the requirements of this chapter may be assessed a civil penalty...” (NAGPRA 1990: §3005. a).

The use of this word and phrase is reminiscent of arguments made by Wendy Brown (2006) and Charles Taylor (1994) pertaining to recognition or tolerance of multiculturalism—to comply is to tolerate in a legal fashion. In a Foucauldian sense, compliance is the codification of knowledge and position into discourse, much like governmentality. And, like tolerance, compliance becomes a liberal institutional tool of depoliticization (Brown 2006). Thus, compliance is used to illustrate that the museum is obeying the U.S. legal system without indicating the museum’s stance or individual staff member’s stance on repatriations and firmly positioning repatriations as a legal process, removing any moral or ethical stances that may be taken up by the museum as an institution or individual staff members.

Happy byproduct of NAGPRA in museological practice

Though not explicitly stated in NAGPRA and therefore not something a museum needs to comply with, a practice that has become common in museums is the removal of sacred objects

²⁰ This is three institutions within which multiple staff used the term “comply” or “compliance,” not just three individuals.

from display. The decision to remove items from display in order to inventory and document them prior to possible repatriations comes from individual institutional repatriation policies. Such is the case with the Neville Public museum whose removal of objects from display is replaced with small labels (see image 5.5) that read:

In accordance with current Neville Public Museum exhibition policies, artifacts of religious and ceremonial significance have been removed from this case and replaced with additional household goods and sporting equipment.
(Neville Public Museum, Green Bay, WI)



(Image 5.5 NAGPRA removal label, directly above lacrosse stick, Neville Public Museum, Green Bay, WI)

Policies like this may only affect a few individual objects in exhibitions and can be removed quietly without disrupting the flow of the exhibition or narrative. At other times, entire displays have been de-installed or covered up. Such is the case with a display titled “Spiritual World” in the Northwest Coast section at the Chicago Field Museum (see image 5.6). The four large display windows are covered with panels and an image of a Tlingit and Haida village along with a label discussing NAGPRA and an official letter from the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska.^{21 22}



(Image 5.6 Covered “Spiritual World” display, Chicago Field Museum)

²¹ The Chicago Field Museum adopted their own repatriation policy in 1989, prior to NAGPRA’s passing during which time they had already begun repatriating human remains to tribes. Around the same time between 1989-1990, a coalition of museums including the Chicago Field Museum, Denver Museum, Harvard Peabody Museum, and the University Museum of Philadelphia (to name a few), was created to protest the proposed act H.R. 5237 (NAGPRA) because it “would ‘set up a ruinously expensive, adversarial, and lawyer-dominated process that would financially cripple the museums, remove uniquely valuable collections from the public domain, and deprive future generations, including Native Americans, of knowledge of an important part of human history’” (Colwell 2017: 105). In this way, museums like the Field wanted to act ethically on their own terms rather than be forced by federal legislation.

²² Letters like this are proactive ways for tribes to contact museums about sacred objects any museum may possess. Letters can teach museum staff (and in this case visitors) the importance of such objects for the community and general spiritual beliefs such as “spirits reside in and are associated with sacred and shamanic objects” (letter from Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, Chicago Field Museum 1996). These letters also lay out the desired practices museums should use for objects: who can access, what they should be stored in, who should be cited as creators, and can include a request to remove items from the exhibition.

The section of the exhibition in which this display has been covered is in the outdated contemporary North American portion (as opposed to *Ancient Americas* which precedes this section), created in the 1970s. The Native North American hall is split into four sections. There is the *Ancient Americas* exhibit (recently renovated), the Northwest Coast and Arctic exhibitions which face one another in a large, open two story hall, and an adjacent room where everything else is on display with an emphasis on the Plains and Prairies region.

The “Spiritual World” display is situated on the Northwest Coast half of the exhibition and is the only display that has been completely covered. A scattering of objects have been removed from other cases, replaced with small labels that read “object permanently removed for repatriation.” The “Spiritual World” display and the individual objects that have been removed throughout have left voids in the exhibition since 1996. Over 20 years is a long time to leave areas within display cases empty and to have an entire display covered with only rudimentary labels explaining why objects have been removed from display.

The marked removal of NAGPRA related objects, as well as covering the “Spiritual World” display with the NAGPRA explanation and display of the Tlingit and Haida letter, are how the Chicago Field Museum is teaching visitors about its negotiated relationship with American Indian tribes through repatriation.²³ The letter from the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska talks about the importance of sacred objects to the tribes in their own words. By displaying the letter in full, the Field Museum is attempting to bring in diverse voices to explain the meaning of not only NAGPRA for these American Indian tribes, but also why there was a need for NAGPRA generally by giving context to the significance of the items

²³ Why the removal of objects and leaving the space empty has become a common practice could be explained by a complaint made in 1986 by the National Congress of American Indians to the National Museum of Natural History stating “an empty hall with a candid explanation would serve a better educational purpose for the Smithsonian visitors than does the current exhibit” (Erikson 2008:53).

removed from display.

Though a practice many tribes used in the early years of NAGPRA, letters such as from the Tlingit and Haida tribes are also problematic when the focus is on the negotiated relationship between tribes and museums. Statements like: “As you are aware sacred objects are subject to claims under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. However, it is more than likely that massive claims are not forthcoming in the near future” (Letter from the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian tribes of Alaska 1996) is a warning for museums as well as an appeasement. The first sentence reminds the museum that it not only has a responsibility to the peoples it represents, but that these peoples are now supported by federal law if or when they choose to start the repatriation process. The second sentence assures the museum, however, that such a request is not imminent, creating a professional relationship between the Tlingit and Haida tribes and the Chicago Field.

My fear is that letters like this, with their emphasis on spiritual aspects of the objects, the assurance that repatriation isn't imminent but possible, and the request to not display or perform scientific tests on the objects solidifies the place of repatriation recipients (American Indian nations) firmly in an anti-Science/pro-Indian category (Erikson 2008) in the eyes of museum visitors. I have also heard statements by museum staff that the tone of such letters is aggressive, which sets the tone for future dialogue. For example, the director of the Karl May Museum discussed how the initial letter from the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa was aggressive and offensive, stating that “you can't just turn up and say give me that” (DW English 2014). Even though, I would consider leaving empty spaces within displays or entire displays covered for over two decades a passive-aggressive move on the part of the museum.

Conclusion

Because repatriations of American Indian human remains and sacred or patrimonial items in the U.S. are now legally being forced, conversations between repatriation staff, THPO's (or similar tribal positions), and museum staff need to be handled carefully and diplomatically on both sides. Repatriations are above all else political processes. And unlike the self-determination efforts tribes are employing in their own tribal museums (see chapter 6), repatriations are a melding of different processes in different institutions. Given the differing views over ownership, with the museum utilizing a logic of ownership and most American Indians seeing the issue in terms of human rights and sovereign rights, there is an even greater need for diplomacy, which means museums must acknowledge tribal sovereign rights to request and receive repatriations.

This also requires a shift in the ways in which museums present repatriations to their publics that does not include holes in exhibit displays, both large and small. Labels such as the "removed from display" place holders in the Neville Public Museum and the Chicago Field Museum should be updated so as to not leave an impression of impeding scientific and educational processes. Displaying repatriation as a loss or absence once again essentializes a pro-Indian/anti-science dichotomy when it comes to museum collections and the display of objects. Not being able to see objects nor receive adequate explanations through short labels that simply say, "object permanently removed for repatriation," can be construed as forms of censorship; censoring science in favor of traditional (spiritual) beliefs.

This essentialization of science versus pro-Indian stance is further exacerbated by the language used by museum staff when talking about NAGPRA (i.e. the deployment of "compliance"). Though meant to formalize the process of repatriation through legal jargon, it inflects a tolerance narrative where the museum is tolerating the demands of tribal nations, but only because they are being forced to do so by a governing body they acknowledge as having

power (the U.S. federal government). Tribal nations' sovereignty is left misrecognized by shifting the frame of repatriations to that of complying with a federal law. This is further seen through the refusal of the Karl May Museum to repatriate two scalps to the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa, stating the codes of ethics adopted by German museums, including the Karl May Museum, are "only guidelines."

In this way, the use of compliance, leaving displays or areas void of objects, and phrases like "they're only guidelines" in fact "reduces conflict to an inherent friction among identities and makes religious, ethnic, and cultural difference itself an inherent site of conflict" (Brown 2006: 15). These practices, particularly compliance, becomes a management tool or technique for handling threats over control and ownership of objects represented by difference—difference in ideas of ownership, difference in handling of human remains and objects, and a difference in conveying these ideas. In this way, the museum's logic of ownership becomes transparent through the practice of speaking about repatriations as compliance with federal law.

To recognize other practices of ownership besides those of Western legality is to practice a form of mutual respect and recognition that arguably continues to elude most theorists of both property and culture. Effectively, it is to acknowledge that cultural property is just one dimension of cultural rights—a category of human rights that puts enhance emphasis on moral rights, collective cultural identity, cultural integrity, cultural cooperation, cross cultural communications, and intercultural exchange.
(Coombe 2009: 401).

My recommendation for museums is not only to alter the ways in which they talk about repatriations in order to (re)humanize the process from how it is conceptualized and talked about academically now, but to also grapple with other forms and practices of ownership. This does not mean merely to understand different practices of ownership as an intellectual endeavor, but to recognize and enact those differences out of mutual respect.

CHAPTER VI

Alternative Discourses: Tribal Museum Practices

The mutual respect I call for in the previous chapter cannot solely take place in ethnographic museums by asking tribes or American Indians to continuously collaborate in those museums. Setting becomes an important component for establishing the asymmetries I have identified in this dissertation, perpetuated by museological practices. This chapter, on the other hand, explores what tribal museums are doing in their own settings to embody tribal sovereignty in response to the museological practices identified in each of the previous chapters.

The first tribal museums, museums that are tribally owned and operated, were established in the 1970s, though there are accounts of private collections owned by American Indians that were displayed as far back as 1800 (Abrams 2004). Tribal museums were established in conjunction with new U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) endeavors that sought to help tribes employ their own members through various economic development projects. Tribal Museums and hotels were among these developments, which not only employed tribal members and created small amounts of revenue (mostly through the hotels), but also contributed to the national tourism industry (Abrams 2004).

However, for most tribal museums, according to a survey conducted in 2002 funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and a project of the American Association for State and Local History, the least important function of tribal museums is generating revenue. The most important function of tribal museums is outreach to tribal youth (Abrams 2004; Ackley 2009; Erikson 2005), followed by being a repository for cultural items (Abrams 2004). Multiple

staff members in the tribal museums I worked with echoed this ranking stating their purpose is to teach their youth about their culture and history.

EDA support was not the only initial reason why individual tribal museums were established. The Onondaga (one of the six nations of the *Haudenosaunee*) wanted to create a tribal museum to satisfy the demands of a repatriation they requested from New York State. The repatriation was for five wampum belts, which are important records that depict *Haudenosaunee* history, laws, and traditions. The New York State legislature passed an act stating they would return the wampum belts under two conditions. First, facsimiles needed to be made and given to the state for further educational use. Second, the originals needed to be preserved in a museum standard, fireproof display case in an approved facility (Simpson 1996). What this meant was the designation of a tribal museum, which the Onondaga were unable to secure (Simpson 1996).

However, they got their start, tribal museums are crucial and important sites for information about and dialogue with the tribal nation. As the director of the Oneida Nation Museum (ONM) describes her job, “I see us as the ambassadors for the tribe.” The ONM is not only an ambassador to the outside world, but also to tribal members who want to know more about *Tsi[’]niyukwalihota* (“Our Ways”). ONM and other tribal museums such as the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways and the Forest County Potawatomi Museum, serve as safe places where tribes or nations maintain control over their own representation by detangling centuries of writing and rewriting history (Lonetree 2012). They are spaces where tribes and nations can present their own culture and history to counter the partial truths in white public spaces such as ethnographic museums. They, therefore, are key institutions through which tribes enact sovereignty.

Sovereignty and Tribal Museums

Because tribal museums are first and foremost intended to reach tribal youth, they become important sites for teaching the next Seven Generations about the history, government, and future goals of the tribe. This includes sovereignty: what it means, what it entails, and the consequences for the tribe. In the introduction, I defined sovereignty as the flexible and tribally specific discourses and everyday processes shared by tribal members. This Flexible sovereignty held by tribes allows them to enact various types of authority over representation, politics, economy, etc. based on the needs and the resources at their disposal. What the tribal museum examples below illustrate, are the ways in which three different tribes are developing their representational authority through their museums.

Tribal sovereignty is a direct response to colonization histories meant to regain a tribe's autonomy. Colonization according to attorney and Hawaiian sovereignty expert, Poka Laenui (2006), is a five-part process that begins with (1) denying the merit of indigenous cultures and the withdrawal of indigenous individuals from their traditional culture. This is followed by (2) a literal destruction and eradication of indigenous communities and any remaining practices are (3) denigrated and belittled until it becomes politically or socially relevant to (4) tokenize and tolerate any surviving remnants of indigenous cultures. And lastly, (5) indigenous cultures, symbols, and knowledges are exploited by both indigenous and non-indigenous individuals such as the incorporation of indigenous symbols in fashion or the inclusion of indigenous causes in political debates to gain popularity (Laenui 2006).

The museological practices in the chapters preceding this one can be categorized under the tokenization and exploitation processes of Laenui's colonization model. The tribal museum examples below are in response to these tokenization and exploitation practices of ethnographic

museums. The first is an art acquisition by the Oneida Nation Museum that broadens the idea of what Indian art is. This is in response to the tokenization of Native artists and my critiques of the valuing of American Indian art and the creation of Indianness in chapter 2. Next, I discuss how the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways has created an educational boarding school exhibit with limited resources to illustrate a way in which ethnographic museums can represent topics without the need for three-dimensional objects (in response to chapter 1). The third example is with the Forest County Potawatomi Museum and their style of presenting information that speaks directly to their target audience (Forest County Potawatomi citizens). This voicing allows them to present colonial actors in a way that speaks directly to this audience (in response to chapter 4) as well as their refusal to include information sensitive to tribal culture and beliefs, addressing the debate raised in chapter 5 pitting Indians against science. The last example is through an alliance between tribal museums, archives, and libraries in the Midwest called Convening Great Lakes Culture Keepers. Because it is an alliance between tribes and different departments within each tribe, expertise is continuously being negotiated (in response to chapter 3) as those involved attempt to create a truly collaborative traveling exhibition.

A Night in Paris: the Oneida Nation Museum

The Oneida Nation Museum (ONM) opened in 1989 with a small collection loaned and donated from tribal citizens.¹ The ONM was among the first tribal museums to open, with only 25 other tribal museums preceding it (Ackley 2009). Between 1994-95 the collection at the museum grew dramatically when the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin purchased the collection of the

¹ There is a discrepancy in the dates for the opening of the ONM. Ackley (2009) claims it opened in 1989. However, museum personnel including a previous director put the opening of the museum in 1976. This could be explained through a series of restructurings the museum has undergone. Currently, ONM has been placed under a broader area called Cultural Heritage. Cultural Heritage currently oversees the museum, library, history department, and the language department. This new, larger area with more programs and staff was possible through the economic security the Oneida Nation casino provided the tribe. However, it also meant that the museum had to start competing with other departments under Cultural Heritage for funding, space, and recognition by tribal members as a source of information.

Turtle Museum, which was closing in Niagara Falls, New York. After integrating the Turtle Museum Collection into the museum in Wisconsin, the ONM made a plan to become the leading research archive for all things *Onayoteʔa-ká* (Oneida) and to some extent *Haudenosaunee* (Iroquois).² ONM is working towards this aim by creating an accessible and digital repository of the photograph and archive collections as well as a researchable database of all three-dimensional objects in the collection for safe and easy access for visitors, researchers, and tribal citizens.³

The exhibition in the museum is on a quarterly rotation; meaning every three months a section of the exhibition is updated and within a 12-month period all the exhibit cases are changed. This is due to the small size (one room, divided into sections by half-walls) of the museum and the desire to keep drawing people (particularly tribal citizens) in. The exhibition presents a broad history of the Oneida and the *Haudenosaunee* starting with Skywoman's Story and the creation of Turtle Island (a Creation Story). Visitors move through a small replica of a longhouse with interactive stations and staged living conditions before entering what is currently a contemporary cornhusk art section that incorporates artist biographies and collaborative displays with local Oneida artists or members who have an idea of an exhibition they would like to see in the museum.

After the contemporary art section the exhibit moves through the history of contact, removal, and relocation to Wisconsin. As a memorial to and in honor of Oneida veterans there are displays that emphasize tribal members involvement in the American military, a source of community pride because the Oneidas are one of the only tribes to have fought alongside the colonists during the American Revolution, allowing them to boast a long history of Oneida

² Oneida are one of six nations that make up the *Haudenosaunee*. The others are: Cayuga, Seneca, Tuscarora, Mohawk, and Onondaga.

³ A project I have been working and collaborating on for over ten years.

veterans who have fought in *every* American battle or war. The exhibition ends with additional contemporary art made by tribal citizens and a community youth video made by and about the youth programs in the area.

Extending the exhibition beyond the walls of the museum, ONM utilizes hiking trails with activities periodically placed on them and a longhouse (a traditional housing structure) on the premises to educate visitors. During the summer months, visitors, particularly school groups are taught lacrosse, traditionally used as a way to settle disputes, and play in the open area in front of the museum. Throughout the year there are craft workshops and art competitions to get community members involved that take place in a trailer directly behind the museum. These activities and spaces allow ONM staff to go beyond the barriers the small exhibition space (1000 square feet) creates due to its size.

Even with spatial restrictions, ONM is not *only* presenting their history. It is also functioning as a stage for community pride and a space that displays multiple community interpreters while upholding the ideals and beliefs of the Oneida in and of Wisconsin (Ackley 2009). The collaborative displays of artists' work and community curated displays of particular individual accomplishments such as a display highlighting the work the last two first language speakers of Oneida had done to ensure the language would continue point to the museum's role in celebrating Oneida accomplishments, but can also tell us about the politics of the community at the time. Things like who gets displayed in contemporary community art sections or which community members help create displays can say a lot about the community politics.

Tribal politics also is echoed through acquisition criteria at the museum. However, unlike the examples in chapter 2, ONM practices what could be construed as a lenient acquisition policy even while dealing with the same obstacles ethnographic museums face: lack of funding, lack of

staff to catalogue, and lack of space to house new acquisitions. For many museums a lack of funds, space, and staff means being selective when it comes to objects that do not meet the museum's collection or educational missions. Artifacts and art can be rejected from the acquisition process because they do not fill some sort of gap in the collections, meaning it does not meet collection mission as an item worthy of the collection due to date, kind, material, subject, etc. or there are already examples of similar artifacts already in the collection.

ONM's unit of measurement for determining what to acquire is based on current tribal citizenship and descent standards. These standards are determined through community needs and desires and enacted into policy by the tribal governing body. Current citizenship requirements are based on blood quantum set at a fraction that took into consideration the (then) current make-up of Oneida citizens and their "blood quantum" to determine the size of the next generations. It also took into account the resources the tribe had and how many citizens those resources could accommodate. Descendants (those who do not meet the minimum blood quantum but are descendants of Oneida's who do) are tiered differently in terms of the social services and benefits they can receive.

The ONM as part of the Cultural Heritage area under the Governmental Services Division of the Oneida Nation's organization uses these citizenship requirements to create a consistent standard for museum acquisitions. The acquisitions affected by these criteria are artifacts, art, and archives that do not directly illustrate Oneida history or culture.⁴ The Collections Advisory Team is made up of the Business Committee Secretary or appointee, Manager of the Cultural Heritage area, Museum Director and Assistant Director/Collections

⁴ The ONM is not the only records repository for the Oneida Nation. Among them is also the Records Management Department, which archives historical documents like correspondences, minutes of meetings, books, etc. The Records Management department already has many of these documents available electronically for employees throughout the Oneida organization and public access is forthcoming. The acquisition process outlined here is for ONM acquisitions only.

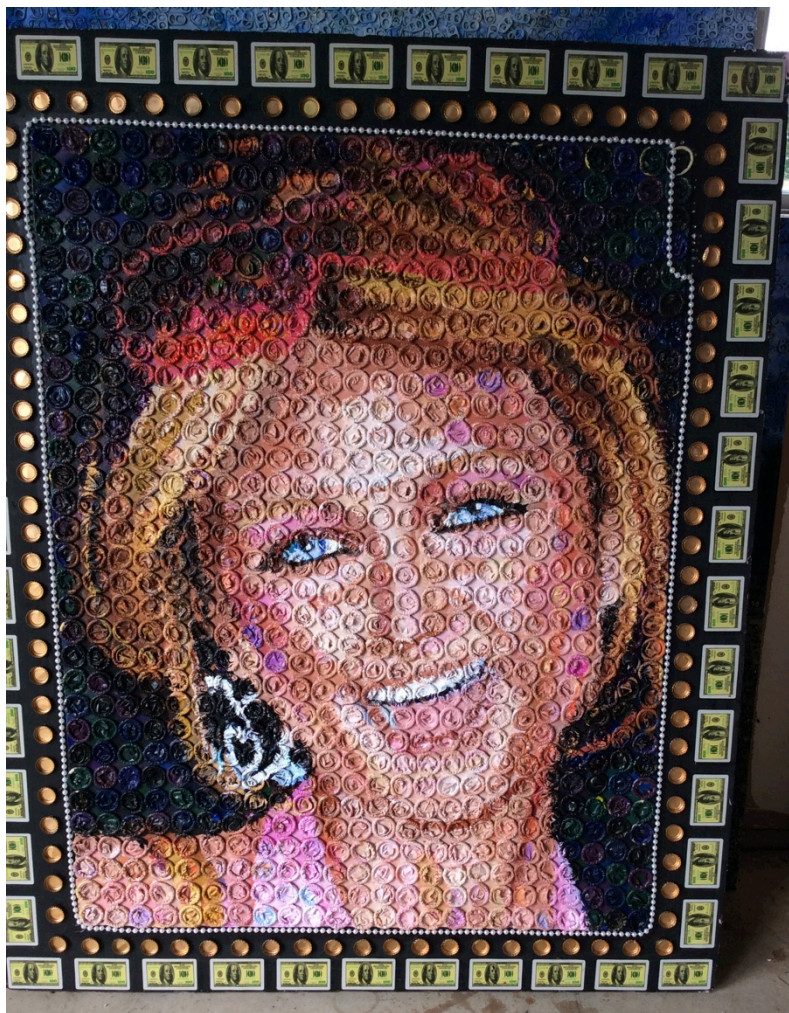
Manager, Tribal Historian, Records Management Director, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO), Archivist, and Cultural Advisor(s). These individuals bring their own expertise to the meeting including expertise on tribal history, culture, collections management, and preservation.

This small team suggests that only a small number of individuals are determining what enters the museum and therefore what represents the Oneida People. However, to say that they are setting precedents for what it means to be Oneida through the acquisition of certain items or collections into the museum does not mean that only a small group of people are determining what it means to be Oneida. Rather, these individuals were hired because of their expertise as individuals who went to school for Oneida history, have been handling repatriations for decades, or individuals who know Oneida culture because of their commitment and upbringing in the community. So though it may seem that the authority rests in the hands of a select few, it is a delegated group based on expertise, citizenship, and commitment to communal standards of what it means to be Oneida that qualifies these individuals for the job of acquiring Oneida and *Haudenosaunee* art and artifacts for the Oneida Nation. Their expertise is then coupled with Oneida citizenship criteria.

In the summer of 2016, the Collections Advisory Team met to discuss an acquisition from the surviving family of an Oneida artist that wanted to donate his art to the ONM as a large contemporary art collection. His work does not depict any sort of American Indian imagery, he was not well known in the art world, nor does his work signal that it is related to Oneida or *Haudenosaunee* through medium or design. Rather, the family donated this collection to the museum because they are Oneida and wanted his art to go to an institution where people could appreciate it.⁵

⁵ Some Native artists and collectors of art made by American Indians are leery of placing their work in a tribal museum setting in fear of it becoming tagged “Native art” rather than “art” (a niche that is near impossible to get out of). However, what donating,

This artist used everyday objects like thumbtacks, soup can lids, and rubber bands he had been collecting to create intricate scenery and portraits. One particular piece of artwork that seemed to be a staff favorite was made of condoms, which he had painted different colors and arranged in such a way that it created a portrait of Paris Hilton, great-granddaughter of the hotel mogul. From a distance, it merely looks like a portrait of Paris Hilton, but as you step closer to examine it, you realize hundreds of condoms had been painted to make this image. The title of the piece is *A Night in Paris* playing off both the medium and the subject matter (see image 6.1).



(Image 6.1 *A Night In Paris*, photo courtesy of the Oneida Nation Museum)

loaning, and selling art made by American Indians to a tribal museum such as the ONM, is a way to ensure that community members can also see the evolving nature of contemporary art made by fellow members. This is important to gain interest in different art forms, mediums, and imagery in order to inspire a younger generation of artists within the community.

The acquisition of this large (unlikely) art collection by an obscure artist is a performance of ONM's (and more generally the Oneida Nation's) authority on multiple levels. By choosing to acquire this art collection, ONM is broadening the stereotypical parameters of what Oneida Indianness entails. Unlike the refusal to buy birchbark artwork because it wasn't "Indian enough" in chapter 2, the artists' Indianness comes from (1) self-identification as American Indian and (2) tribal citizenship or descendent status. Each tribe determines their own citizenship standards, which are never based on an imaginary, idealized sense of what it means to be Indian.

Condemned Buildings and Educational Futures: Ziibiwing Center

With their rigorous, collaborative and commonsense approach, they [the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways] have achieved one of the most engaging exhibitions of Indigenous history and memory in any museum in this country. The exhibition represents a decolonizing museum practice and sets the standard by which future presentations of Native American history and culture should be judged.

(Lonetree 2008b: 162-163)

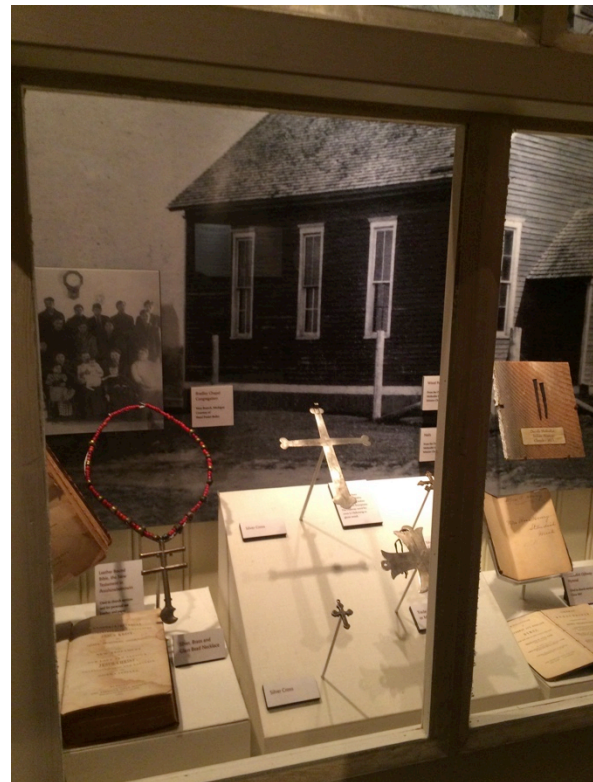
The Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways opened in 2004 after receiving a \$10 million grant to build a center that would honor the Saginaw Chippewa ancestors and teach the world about the *Anishinabek* (Lonetree 2008b). The museum is the largest tribal museum in this study and because of the grant, incorporates the most up to date technology and display methods of arguably any of the museums (ethnographic or tribal) in this study, with the possible exception of the upcoming *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* in the *Berliner Schloss*.

The Ziibiwing Center, owned and operated by the Saginaw Chippewa in Mt. Pleasant, MI, has one of the most detailed and visually appealing displays about the Boarding School era I have seen in any museum. The exhibition follows the Seven Prophecies given to the *Anishinabek* by the Creator, each of which tells of a future event. The fifth prophecy/fifth fire (*Eko naaning Niigaanaadjimong*) foresees separation and struggle for the *Anishinabek* brought on by visitors

to who will bring promises of joy and salvation. The prophecy states that those *Anishinabek* who accept this promise will forget the old ways, tearing the community apart.

This prophecy introduces a section of the exhibition that presents diseases introduced into the community, missionaries that converted many *Anishinabek* to Christianity, and boarding schools as catalysts for cultural decay. The boarding school displays give visitors a general overview of the Boarding School era with particular examples from the Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial School (1893-1934), located just a few miles from the Ziibiwing Center.

Mock windows separate the photographs of classrooms and small 3-dimensional objects from the visitors (see images 6.2 and 6.3). The windows invite visitors to lean in and take a closer look at the metal crucifixes, lesson books, and photographs of classrooms, athletic teams, and bands. These photographs were staged to show the U.S. government and the American people how well boarding schools were working to assimilate American Indian children.



(Images 6.2 and 6.3 Boarding school displays, Ziibiwing Center, Mt. Pleasant, MI)

The displays look as if they could be part of any museum (Euro-American or tribal) exhibition about boarding schools. However the three-dimensional objects and photographs are accompanied by text panels that discuss the assimilation procedures at boarding schools and the militarization of the schools through letters written and exchanged between Euro-Americans charged with implementing forced assimilation through these governmental programs. The display for boarding schools within the Ziibiwing exhibition is relatively small, but the impact it has is large because of the way it (1) is displayed through the small windows that focus the visitors sight to small areas that appear to have many three-dimensional objects and (2) through the supplementary information (digital guides, references, guided tour narratives, and interviews) about the Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial School.

But it isn't just the exhibit and the supplementary materials that make the Ziibiwing Center stand out as an expert of the Boarding School era. The Saginaw Chippewa currently own the Mt. Pleasant boarding school campus. Most of the buildings on the campus are still standing, though condemned due to age and materials (i.e. lead paint) even though some were still in use until the 2000s when the Michigan Department of Mental Health used them as home and training facilities.

The Saginaw Chippewa are working with Central Michigan University's (CMU) archaeology department at the boarding school in an attempt to recover as much information as possible through archaeological excavation before determining the future of the buildings. One hope is to reconstruct one of the school buildings and transform it into a visitor and research center about the Boarding School era. A strategic political move by the Saginaw Chippewa to

gain authority over information about and the history of boarding schools, particularly the Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial School.⁶

The overall message the Ziibiwing exhibition about boarding schools presents relies on common responses of hatred, fear, and anger towards the use of boarding schools as assimilation tools. These emotions were echoed by museum staff giving a guided tour through the exhibition which highlighted many of the most atrocious acts documented at boarding schools., however that could have been for the benefit of the tour group I was part of being made up of almost exclusively Natives. The anger and hatred for boarding schools often shouts over the opinion that other American Indians (including the parents of children being sent to boarding schools) have of boarding schools as an opportunity for education and advancement.

Aside from a seemingly biased opinion of boarding schools that could also be read as a broadening of dominant historical accounts of them, the Ziibiwing Center is well on its way to becoming a leading expert on boarding schools without having to rely on three-dimensional objects (discussed in chapter 1). Their expertise is presented to publics through the compilation of resources such as educational materials both compiled and created by Ziibiwing staff, archaeological data from the excavations at the Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial School with Central Michigan University, as well as interviews with tribal citizens who attended boarding schools and their descendants.⁷ Their authority over this topic is therefore not tied to three-dimensional objects allowing them to tell a different narrative of boarding schools. A narrative that meanders between facts presented about boarding schools and the felt experiences by tribal

⁶ This is the primary reason I contacted Ziibiwing when the Übersee Museum was looking for three-dimensional objects for a boarding school exhibit discussed in chapter 1.

⁷ Most of the information the Ziibiwing Center wishes to convey about the Boarding School era is written and published by them in *American Indian Boarding Schools: An Exploration of Global Ethnic & Cultural Cleansing* (2011), which they gift to schools as educational materials.

members who attended these schools. They present this information in multiple venues from exhibition displays and guided tours to educational and supplemental materials.

Right to Refusal: the Forest County Potawatomi Museum

The mission of the Forest County Potawatomi Museum is to educate its main audience (Forest County Potawatomi citizens) about the tribe's history and pass on the culture and traditions of the *Bodewadmi*.⁸ Because their focus is reaching tribal citizens, the Forest County Potawatomi Museum practices what Audra Simpson (2007; 2014) describes in her work as a right to refusal: the control over access to information or knowledge and the ability to limit that access.

The museum is a spacious one-room museum that divided into sections by the strategic use of photographs suspended from the ceiling and small walls that hold information labels. The exhibit integrates multiple display types. Three-dimensional objects are displayed behind or beneath plexiglass with small labels describing the artifacts. Three-dimensional objects include a small number of typical artifacts found in ethnographic museums, complemented by contemporary pieces made by tribal members, and props made for the exhibition. A life size diorama with mannequins is included as one of these props, a practice that is contested in many ethnographic museums as racist and patriarchal.⁹ On the walls are large text panels discussing historical events and topics for visitors who would like more information. And visual and audio recordings from tribal members to bring in personal narratives that complement the information and narratives presented throughout the exhibition.

⁸ In the same building as the museum there is a large library dedicated to resources by and about American Indians, including a large selection of children's books to draw tribal members in and to encourage literacy while instilling pride in American Indianness.

⁹ Compromises over mannequins have been made between museums and indigenous peoples. An example of this is the *Grassi Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig*, which had long discussions about an Oceania exhibition that incorporated life size mannequins. The discussion centered around the use of mannequins in the museum as vivifying in an uncanny way (Weber 2016) as well as the local indigenous belief that spirits of likenesses live on even after a person's death. Therefore, the agreement the museum made with the indigenous participants was that they would combine the likenesses of multiple people to create one mannequin (Violet, interview, Summer 2012).

The narratives presented by the museum through these display types are targeting tribal citizens by assuming a basic knowledge in some areas and refusing to present information or display artifacts the tribe deems unsuitable for non-tribal members to know. This right to refusal (Simpson 2007; 2014) includes a lack of discussion and display of items used in ceremonies (i.e. eagle feathers, drums, and pipes) because of their sacredness. In the label titled “*Bidegêk*/Welcome,” the museum draws attention to this fact, stating:

Upon touring the museum, you may notice the absence of some items stereotypical of Native Americans, yet considered very sacred and respected. The eagle feather, drum, and pipe are all items used in various ceremonies by the Potawatomi. Each hold a high place in our culture, traditions, and ceremonies. Therefore, being sacred, these items are not displayed anywhere within this facility.

(Forest County Potawatomi Museum)

The exhibition also refuses to focus on, and at times even include colonial actors in the exhibition as an acknowledgment of the asymmetrical power relations typically found when writing about American Indian history. I criticized ethnographic museums in chapter 4 for doing exactly this—not explicitly naming colonial actors. What needs to be clarified however is that this criticism is in the context of Euro-American ethnographic museums where naming actors would be a practice of accurate, complete, and transparent knowledge dispersal. In contrast, for the Forest County Potawatomi Museum, it is a practice used to maintain the focus on the community.

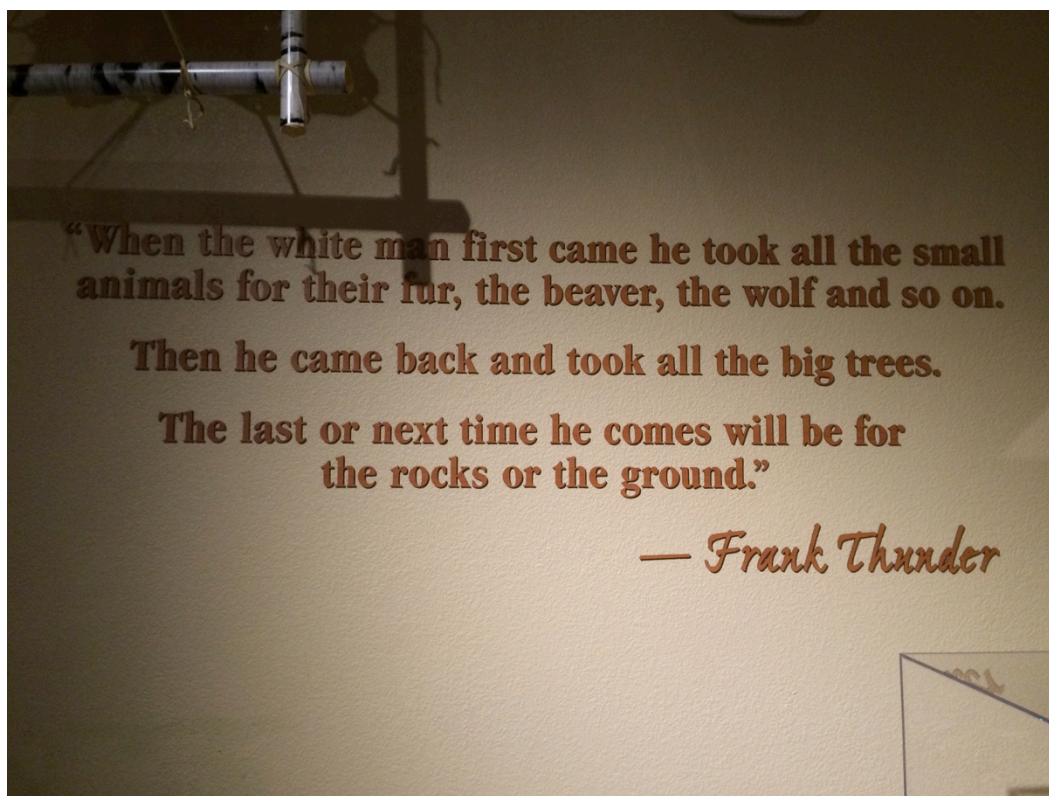
This move to ignore colonial actors who caused forced removal, assimilation, and genocide while maintaining the focus on community is a way to instill pride in the community for the primary audience at the museum—Potawatomi citizens. It accomplishes this through its first person narratives displayed in the museum, through recorded interviews played on small screens throughout the exhibit, and quotes from tribal members speaking in both English and

Potawatomi. This isn't to say that there aren't sections, labels, and displays talking about Potawatomi-U.S. or colonial relationships or the experiences the tribe has had with assimilation efforts and forced removal. There are historical accounts of the French and Jean Nicolet (a French explorer noted for his exploration of Northeast Wisconsin) and the "forced" removal of the Potawatomi by colonists in the exhibit, as well as a section discussing education of Potawatomi children that includes a long discussion about boarding schools. However, these displays and labels make up a very small portion of the content of the exhibition.

These two refusal practices of not including sacred and ceremonial objects or discussions in the exhibition and keeping the focus of historical narratives on the tribe itself by ignoring colonial actors are meant to protect the community's interests. They also act as acknowledgments of "the asymmetrical power relations that inform the research and writing about native lives and politics" (Simpson 2014: 105). It is a presentation of history from the Potawatomi point of view, determining who has the right to decide what or who is discussed within the exhibition and who their primary audience is because they are representing themselves and their community for themselves and their community, even though the museum is open to the general public.

In terms of voicing for a particular audience, these two refusals are not the only techniques the Forest County Potawatomi Museum uses to reach a specialized audience (i.e. Potawatomi citizens). Multilingual text panels are used throughout the exhibition, which display information in Potawatomi first and then in English to promote and foster a Potawatomi-centric way of thinking. Furthermore, it isn't just the languages used to present the information, but the voicing of that information that speaks directly to Potawatomi citizens.

I analyzed the use of the term “white man” in ethnographic museums in chapter 4 and implied that the use of the term in ethnographic museums stripped it of its contextual meaning. There is one instance in the Forest County Potawatomi Museum where “white man” has been incorporated as a message explicitly for Potawatomi citizens (see image 6.4). The quote is from tribal citizen and previous tribal leader, Frank Thunder, at the very end of the exhibit, displayed on the wall. It reads:



(Image 6.4 Frank Thunder quote, Forest County Potawatomi Museum, Crandon, WI)

When the white man first came he took all the small animals for their fur, the beaver, the wolf and so on. Then he came back and took all the big trees. The last or next time he comes will be for the rocks or the ground.
(Frank Thunder, Forest County Potawatomi Museum)

This quote acts not only as a warning, but a foreshadowing of what may yet come, given the current political climate and treatment of the environment for capital gain. It illustrates the ways in which tribal museums choose who to address as their audience throughout the museum

through voicing. Read by all visitors who come to the exhibition, it holds a particular message and meaning for those visitors who are part of the Forest County Potawatomi community and may know or have known Frank Thunder. It can even hold meaning for other American Indians from different communities who know what “the white man” means contextually as a warning, as a lesson, as someone who is not Native. Anyone can read this quote when tour the exhibition, but it is directed at a very specific audience. An audience that includes the descendants of those who were there when the “white man first came” for the animal furs as well as when he came back for the trees, and those individuals who will certainly be there the “next time he comes...for the rocks or the ground.”

Negotiating Authority: Convening Great Lakes Culture Keepers

These three museums (ONM, Ziibiwing Center, and Forest County Potawatomi Museum) along with the Mille Lacs Indian Museum and Trading Post, the Brothertown Indian Nation (of which I am THPO), and over a dozen other tribes in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan participate in an annual conference called Convening Great Lakes Culture Keepers. Culture Keepers, as it is commonly referred to as well as the individuals who participate in it, began as a project pioneered by the University of Wisconsin-Madison SLIS (School of Library and Information Studies) Program. Initially, SLIS students wanted to bring attention to indigenous information and skills within museums, libraries, and archives through a project they called the TLAM (Tribal Libraries, Archives, and Museums) Project. The TLAM Project integrated coursework with community building and networking with American Indian tribes and cultural-history divisions such as tribal museums and archives.

Since its inception in 2008, TLAM and Culture Keepers have grown to now include a collaborative traveling exhibition, opening in the fall of 2017 and supported by an IMLS

(Institute of Museum and Library Services) grant. The traveling exhibit has been a three-year endeavor that included professional development training, group planning, and community building activities. The participating tribes meet twice a year to continue professional development and work on the traveling exhibit together. For each of these meetings we are asked to bring whatever content and materials (archives, photographs, and three-dimensional objects) we have gathered since the last meeting from our own institutions and tribal communities. This material is what is being considered for the traveling exhibition.

I could describe the collaborative nature of Culture Keepers as we attempt to create a traveling exhibit that is both community driven and attempts to democratically make every decision. However, this would take too long and I fear it would set precedents for future collaborations, when I am of the opinion that collaborative projects are only successful when they are project specific. I, as the only Brothertown citizen able to attend nearly all the planning meetings, am also overly critical of the collaborative efforts we are trying to accomplish through Culture Keepers. Many of my fellow Culture Keepers feel similarly. This is a response to the make up of the group being mostly *Anishinabek* tribes, along with one *Haudenosaunee* tribe, an Algonquian tribe, and one or two Siouan tribes. The make up of this group and varying opinions over the desired focus of the traveling exhibition have led to the constant negotiation of our collaborative processes and procedures, which is an integral part of our project.¹⁰

Instead of focusing on the inevitable complexities of this collaborative process, I wish to focus on the expertise that Culture Keepers draws upon for our professional development and

¹⁰ Ray Silverman (2015) discusses some of the unforeseen issues that arise during collaborations between academic institutions and communities that often have principles like with Culture Keepers that need to be renegotiated periodically. He calls this process “slow museology” which includes the extended time frame all collaborations require (even when additional time had been integrated into the process from the beginning). He also discusses the expectations scholars have from their institutions that demand a critical distance from the processes they are entrenched in through the publication of (often times) single authored articles. Silverman calls for more “collaborative community-based scholarship” (2015: 14).

delegation of tasks for the traveling exhibit in order to illustrate the moment in which we all realized how much further we have to go to decolonize our personal mental processes.

The content of our workshops is driven by the needs of the professionals who attended the previous Culture Keepers conference, which we write on our evaluations after every conference. From the suggested needs, SLIS students and their faculty mentor plan the next conference and recruit individuals or tribal institutions in attendance at Culture Keepers to teach the workshops needed, based on their own expertise. Expertise is determined by (1) knowing the tribal employees who attend Culture Keepers both professionally and personally and (2) visits to tribal libraries, archives, and museums to get a sense of what each of our institutions and personnel has accomplished and therefore has to offer.

Conference workshops draw on these accomplishments and expertise to offer workshops on grant writing, creating an artist in residence program, community involvement in exhibitions, and pest control to name a few.¹¹ Specialists are contracted for certain workshops when deemed necessary such as for digitizing, Mukurtu (an online digital storage bank for collaborative work), and for traveling exhibition support, we have contracted a Smithsonian traveling exhibition specialist.

One workshop I was asked to facilitate created a yet unresolved tension due to its content. The workshop was about permissions and ownership and I was asked to create a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) template that we could all use to inform each of our tribal governments what we are doing through Culture Keepers as a way to gain permission to collect information from tribal members for the traveling exhibition. I am not an expert on ownership or copyright laws, but I was asked to do this particular workshop because I have ample experience

¹¹ These workshops also illustrate that Culture Keepers is about gaining sustainable professional development skills and not just the traveling exhibit as an end product.

with gaining permission from tribes and individuals to conduct research (after all, I'm an expert in mediating), which includes interviews and use of personal objects, photographs, and archives. I was also asked to do this particular workshop because I had experience writing a MOU between the Oneida Nation and the Brothertown Indian Nation. The MOU discussed a collection purchased by the Oneida Nation on behalf of the Brothertown Indian Nation for which the Brothertown are making payments annually.

It was after I had defined and discussed ownership and copyright possibilities that I opened the floor to a discussion of how we should proceed in gaining permission from our individual tribal nations, collecting items and content, and compiling it all.¹² The exhibition's purpose is to bring content, imagery, and objects from multiple tribes across three states together to share with one another and a broader audience. Our hope is to instill pride in our youth and help audiences see the similarities and the diversity between neighboring communities. But because the content and the objects being used for the exhibition are community or individually cared for (discussed as "owned"), the issue of who would take care of ("own") the traveling exhibition and its content (mostly the digital copies of each tribes' originals) was on everyone's mind.

What was meant to be a quick introduction about ownership as something we needed to start thinking about, turned into a long discussion about the myriad ways a collaborative project like this needs to think about the protection of tribal information. Who would care for the physical items incorporated in the exhibition? Who would handle the transport of those items to each new location? Who "owns" the final product? What about the digital copies of everything we have been collecting and placing on our Mukurtu site, who "owns" those? And what of the

¹² I had sat down after I finished presenting what I had prepared and prior to the beginning of our discussion about ownership to signify my position as one of the delegates from the tribes involved rather than a facilitator of the workshop.

financial burdens that come with the ownership or stewardship over the finished product and the items accompanying since our IMLS grant does not cover this?¹³

Our discussion, which relied heavily on the topic of ownership, quickly went from needing to gain permission from each of our tribal councils to collect information for a traveling exhibit to the real worry that has been on most of our minds since we began this process: how is *my* tribe going to protect its authority and rights (ownership/stewardship) over *our* content? Options we discussed included making Culture Keepers an organization that would then own the copyrights to the traveling exhibit; having one tribe with enough money and space to house the exhibit as the stewards of the exhibit; or somehow having each tribe maintain ownership of their own content and contribution, which seemed to be the desired option but also the most labor intensive and logistically complicated.

After discussing our options for nearly 30 minutes, an elder who had been silent through the entire discussion sitting in the back stood up and said, “I need to say something.” Silence fell across the room and a knot formed in my stomach because it is never a comfortable feeling when an elder is about to lay some wisdom on the less humble, younger generations. This elder proceeded to tell us that we needed to refocus on what we are trying to do with this traveling exhibit, which is to share each of our individual cultures and histories with one another and our young people. He said we had lost our perspective and had adopted the language of “our oppressors” by talking about owning things we could not own. We were essentially co-opting ourselves into the dominant framework because we were so caught up in the fear of not having control of our own cultures and histories in the finished exhibition. The concerns this elder raised

¹³ There is a clear difference between ownership and stewardship, but our discussion at Culture Keepers was using the words interchangeably even though the fears most of the participants had was over the control of and authority over content or items.

left many of us silent, lost in our own thoughts about how we could have strayed so quickly and easily into this colonized mindset, for most of us preach and teach decolonization every day.

We all took a short break before beginning our afternoon sessions, parting fragmented and internally torn.¹⁴ Each of us needed time mentally to grapple with what the elder was telling us and figure out how, as museum, library, and archive specialists to stay true to our missions as Culture Keepers working on behalf of our tribes. As Culture Keepers, we are experts in multiple capacities: as caretakers of traditional knowledge that is not owned but willingly shared with tribal members and as professionals who see the need to protect this same knowledge based on the policies of each of our individual tribal governments when presented to other publics.

This is decolonization in process in the sense that I and many of my fellow Culture Keepers understand it and live it: the mental negotiations between expertise as both tribal member and as a professional each person must experience to determine our stance as a Native, as tribal citizens, and for future generations. It is easy to say that decolonization means a complete rejection of Euro-American or mainstream practices, lifestyles, etc. (Antone 2013; Fanon [1963] 2004; Laenui 2006; Zig-Zag 2006), but in actuality it is a much more intimate process that must take place internally.

Conclusion

What these examples show, is that tribes are utilizing practices they find useful and meaningful for their tribal nation and their citizens in order to represent themselves—what I am calling Flexible sovereignty. They do so by designated tribal employees sanctioned by each tribal government as approved experts trying to maintain authority over tribal history and culture in the

¹⁴ I was co-teaching one of the afternoon sessions about community collaboration and the elder had decided to sit in on this session. I was initially uncomfortable because it had been my introduction to ownership that started the debate and I felt responsible for it. However, as the afternoon session continued, the elder started to interact more in the class and teased me incessantly which is always a good sign.

face of competition such as ethnographic museums. These employees or experts are deciding how to represent the tribe and what to represent about the tribe based on things like community discourse and citizenship requirements.

The Oneida Nation Museum example illustrates how a tribal museum can define what it means to be Oneida during an acquisition process that is based on citizenship and descendant requirements. These acquisition standards are in juxtaposition to the ethnographic museums standards that look for elements that point to the art or artists Indianness (chapter 2). What ethnographic museums can take note of are the artists museums like ONM are acquiring or collecting from. As was mentioned in chapter 2, museums look to one another to validate their own evaluations of art, which results in multiple museums acquiring similar art or similar artists, such as the multiple German museums that own Fritz Scholder pieces. This turn to tribal museums like ONM to determine which contemporary artists are valued and recognized by tribal communities is an acknowledgment of their ability to appraise and value art/artists. From the tribal museum perspective these values are tribal specific based on things like citizenship requirements. In turn, this deferral of ethnographic museums to tribal museums is also an acknowledgement of tribal sovereignty.

The Ziibiwing Center has created its own niche as a world authority on the Boarding School era. They do so through the research they've collected and compiled, the guidebooks they have created and disperse to schools, and the hope to have an information center open in one of the renovated Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial School buildings. Rather than lament a lack of three-dimensional objects to create their own boarding school exhibits (chapter 1), ethnographic museums could look to tribal museums like the Ziibiwing Center as educational resources and

direct visitors who are interested in boarding schools to these museums and online guides.¹⁵

Acknowledging the expertise and perspectives tribal museums like Ziibiwing have of boarding schools is a recognition of the tribes ability to represent a particular point in their history.

The Forest County Potawatomi Museum enacted their sovereign rights through the control of information presented to the public in multiple ways. First the refusing to include certain kinds of information in the exhibition (i.e. ceremonial objects and colonial actors) was an effort to be true to their understanding of historical accounts and keep the focus on the tribe. This form of representational sovereignty was continued into the ways information was presented. The curators choose to speak directly to tribal citizens by first presenting information in the Potawatomi language and by incorporating quotes from tribal citizens addressing other tribal citizens. Ethnographic museums, by touring tribal museums like Forest County Potawatomi, could learn what information is important for the tribe and what information to exclude from their own exhibitions. In this way ethnographic museums would be recognizing the representational authority of the Forest County Potawatomi over the tribes image and history.

Finally, the negotiations of tribal authority (that include relinquishing control of authority in some instances) between designated tribal experts (in dialogue with chapter 3) during Culture Keepers shows how tribal sovereignty is not just about land, citizenship, and power. Tribal sovereignty is about protecting and being responsible for fellow tribal citizens and their history and culture. Culture Keepers illustrates that the partnerships between ethnographic museums and tribal museums, I suggest in the conclusion, are also occurring between tribal museums. They therefore have experience to draw upon for future partnerships with ethnographic museums.

¹⁵ It could be argued that tribal museums need to promote themselves more so that visitors and other museums know they have these resources. An alternative, because tribal museums do promote themselves, is for ethnographic museum's to make it the role of curators to know what tribal museums are out there and what they have to offer, much like they do with other ethnographic museums.

Conclusion

Reclaiming the past does not only rehabilitate or justify the promise of a national culture. It triggers a change of fundamental importance in the colonized's psycho-affective equilibrium. Perhaps it has not been sufficiently demonstrated that colonialism is not content merely to impose its law on the colonized country's present and future. Colonialism is not satisfied with snaring the people in its net or of draining the colonized brain of any form or substance. With a kind of perverted logic, it turns its attention to the past of the colonized people and distorts it, disfigures it, and destroys it. This effort to demean history prior to colonization today takes on a dialectical significance.
(Fanon [1963] 2004: 148-149)

Introduction

The museological practices discussed throughout this dissertation show that the creation of publics through sharing museum discourses is an exclusionary practice in all museums (ethnographic and tribal). The inclusion and exclusion of audiences is done by similar means, such as how American Indian art is valued, how objects are relied upon and controlled, and how historical narratives are voiced. This dissertation has also shown that these current practices are not nation specific, even though scholarship often points to the museum's role in the creation of national or cultural identities (Crane 2000; Dubin 1999; Macdonald 2003). Thus the shared practices, particularly across ethnographic museums, allowed for a transnational critique of a global neocolonialism.

Tribal museums, as discussed in chapter 6, participate in these inclusionary-exclusionary practices as well. Tribal museums cannot be critiqued to the extent I have criticized ethnographic museum exclusionary practices because tribes are exclusionary in relation to the exercise of their sovereignty and the regimentation of their sovereignty by dominant nation-states. The practices

employed in tribal museums are reacting to the practices found in ethnographic museums that perpetuate power asymmetries by engaging in disruptive practices within their own tribal museums. Many tribal museums were based on Euro-American museum models such as ethnographic museums, historical societies, and art museums. The disruptive practices include breaking from Euro-American museological practices and methods and incorporating practices that highlight tribal discourses and values. These processes, therefore, are tribe specific and include practices such as the incorporation of tribal language within the exhibition as well as using tribal categories to label and describe artifacts rather than the standard categories and labels created by larger Euro-American museum associations like American Alliance of Museums (AAM) or the International Council of Museums (ICOM). Disruptive practices also include types of displays and the way the displays are created collaboratively not paying attention to exhibition design standards, the care and preservation of artifacts, or a specific educational purpose (i.e. exhibits about community members achievements created by other community members).

These tribal museological practices are part of a larger response by Indigenous communities towards their continued colonization in settler colonial nations. Tribes are talking about their responses to colonization as a form of “decolonization.” As a starting point in terms of scholarship, decolonization is typically talked about as a demand to reorient how work with American Indian communities is done in order to best serve the needs of that Native community (Deloria 1969; King 2016; Tuhiwai-Smith 1999). However, this is from the perspective of researchers working with tribal nations based on criticisms from both Native and non-Native intellectuals. Rather, decolonization in the tribal museums is an effort to reclaim tribal authority over history, culture, discourse, and representational imagery.

Decolonization calls for a ‘rediscovery’ and ‘recovery’ of beliefs and traditions while making room for individuals and communities to ‘mourn’ the past. When rediscovering and recovering, colonized communities are also ‘dreaming’ about an ideal future for the community and demanding that citizens ‘commit’ to ‘actions’ that will ensure this future (Laenui 2006). Though very general, these processes are an attempt to reevaluate “the political, social, economic and judicial structures [created by colonization], and the development, if appropriate, of new [tribal] structures which can hold and house the values and aspirations of the colonized people” (Laenui 2006: 4). More concretely, decolonization processes can mean not only enforcing a tribe’s sovereign rights to self-govern through law, but creating change at a local and social level. Altering diets to eat Indigenously (Mihesuah 2005; Taylor 2013) or changing road and building signs to be in the local Native language are some of these local and social changes. Additionally, what many tribal cultural heritage departments (under which tribal museums fall) are doing is altering the ways in which tribal citizens conceptualize and act in the world.

As exemplified in the previous chapter, the Forest County Potawatomi presents information in the tribal museum first in Potawatomi and then in English. This is meant to privilege the Potawatomi language above other languages *and* encourage tribal citizens to read Potawatomi first. By producing labels in the Native language, the museum can frame the information as Potawatomi and contextualize the information within a Potawatomi worldview.

These practices are unlike some of the more radical recommendations (Antone 2013; Zig-Zag 2006) pertaining to decolonization which seek to end colonialism and liberate the colonized by calling for a complete and immediate dismantling of colonial institutions. What this entails is a complete break from the colonial government making decolonization “a revolutionary struggle aimed at transforming the entire social system and re-establishing the sovereignty of tribal

peoples” (Zig-Zag 2006: 20). However, this sort of scholarship fails to present a practical guide or an achievable goal. Furthermore, it has created animosity towards American Indian communities at times through their black-and-white views of the settler colonial state.

To use decolonization vocabulary is to assume that there will one day be a post-colonial state. It also sets up each action made by tribal nations as first and foremost counter to colonialism. However, the ways in which tribes and tribal museums talked about decolonization during interviews suggests they don’t believe the goal of these processes is a postcolonial society (Fanon [1963] 2004). They understand how this is nearly unattainable, and therefore improbable. Rather, in tribal museums decolonization includes the reclaiming of authority over content about the history, culture, and lifeways of the tribe it serves. Even though many of these tribes are discussing their decolonization needs and processes, this focus on reclaiming authority is about flexing tribal sovereignty.

The uniqueness of tribal sovereignty is due to the nature of their relationship with a larger settler colonial state. Tribes are nested sovereign nations within a settler colonial state, which means they are paradoxically “within and apart from settler governance” (Simpson 2014:11). As nations within a nation, American Indian tribes become sovereign through recognition by the larger governmental entity, in this case the U.S. federal government. The recognition of tribal sovereignty by the U.S. federal government hierarchizes the power relationship between the two nations and sets up tribal governance at the level of a state or a domestic dependent nation. Unable to free themselves of this geographic and political dependence, the idea of a post-colonial society within the U.S. is “the convenient invention of Western intellectuals which reinscribes their power to define the world” (Tuhiwai Smith 1999: 14).

Rather than focus on a future, imagined state (a postcolonial state), tribes are choosing to immediately enact their sovereignty in multiple ways. The ways in which various tribes employ their flexible sovereignty was discussed in the context of tribal museums in chapter 6 as tribes seek to work within the restrictions of being a domestic dependent nation. They are using their flexible sovereignty to (re)claim intellectual and representational authority over their history, culture, and lifeways. To accomplish this, individuals are delegated as Native intellectuals (Maddox 2005; Warrior 1995) such as tribal museum staff, to enforce the flexible sovereignty established by the tribe as a whole. These individuals, employed by the tribal nation, are tasked with enacting a flexible sovereignty—the deployment of tribal authority based on needs, resources, and current values. Tribal museums are accomplishing this by deliberately adopting, manipulating, and transforming available practices to educate publics in new and novel ways in the tribal museum. These practices mirror the values and traditions the tribe holds in esteem. Though not necessarily forms of decolonization in Fanon's or even Laenui's definitions, these practices are talked about using decolonization rhetoric.

Museums are choosing practices that are attainable for both short term and long term tribal goals of authority without co-opting themselves into continuously using Western institutional frameworks. To do this, decolonization in tribal museums has to be a context specific process with community-determined goals. Such was the case for each of the tribal museums used in this study that are constantly in dialogue with the museological practices of Euro-American ethnographic museums.

Though in dialogue with ethnographic museum practices, the tribal museum practices place the emphasis on embracing Native history, culture, and lifeways as good and positive, not by rejecting and demeaning Euro-American society. They positively display the tribe and its

citizens' accomplishments (i.e. tribal art) to instill a sense of pride. They maintain a focus on the tribe, even if that means dismissing other histories or actors that are prominent in other educational settings (i.e. the focus on colonial actors). They also promote themselves as educational resources and experts of tribal history, customs, and even historical events (i.e. Boarding School era).

Beyond the tribal museum, ethnographic museums can create their own dialogue with tribal museum practices similar to the way tribal museums are in dialogue with ethnographic museum practices. This would be an acknowledgment and recognition *by* ethnographic museums of American Indian efforts to (re)claim intellectual authority and representational sovereignty. I am not suggesting that tribal sovereignty needs to be recognized by ethnographic museums; quite the contrary. The recognition needs to come in the form of acknowledging tribal authority over tribal content and representations.

Furthermore, my recommendations are not intended to recreate the "Red Man's Burden" (Mithlo 2004) by further exploiting a demographic that lacks resources, while Euro-American ethnographic museums tout their inclusivity. The responsibility to incorporate alternative knowledge paradigms and practices for organizing and distributing information to publics should not be the sole responsibility of tribes and their museums. Therefore, some of the suggestions I make must take place in ethnographic museums in terms of staffing and structural changes and for ethnographic museums to seek out partnerships in other settings.

The tribal museum's responsibility is to determine and enforce practices that uphold their authority (Benjamin 1968; Bruner 1994; Said [1978] 1994) over tribal culture and history as it is presented to their publics with a focus on tribal citizens. Seeking partnerships between ethnographic museums and tribal museums should be a shared responsibility between these

museums. And it is the ethnographic museums responsibility to the peoples and cultures they represent in their exhibitions to seek advice and learn from these peoples and cultures in much the same way they seek advice and learn from other museums and public institutions.

Shifting the Setting

...the proliferation of claims to cultural property might be more significant as an indicator of and impetus toward transformations in political relationships than as an area requiring domestic or international property law reform, although such reforms seem imminent at different scales in various jurisdictions. The production, exchange, and consumption of cultural property involves the construction, recognition, and acceptance of social groups and group identities in global public spheres as much as it concerns control over objects per se. Changing practices, behaviors, attitudes, and protocols regarding cultural heritage both index and reflect transformations in social relationships that are indicative of larger patterns of late modernity and decolonization.
(Coombe 2009: 296)

Because museums are about stuff (three-dimensional objects, photographs, and archives) the focus is often on those items as property. As Rosemary Coombe points out in the quote above, this stuff also means the recognition of social groups and the creation of dynamic social relationships. Likewise, sovereignty does not occur in a vacuum. It becomes manifest in negotiations between tribes as seen through the Culture Keepers example (chapter 6), and most importantly, between transnational institutions as detailed here. Though I will call for more partnerships as a way for ethnographic museums to recognize tribal sovereignty, I want to make it clear that tribal sovereignty is not contingent on this recognition (Dennison 2014; Povinelli 2011) by ethnographic museums.

The political standing of ethnographic museums around the world does not match that of the sovereign powers of tribal nations (theoretically). To call for the recognition of tribal sovereignty by ethnographic museums would place ethnographic museums in a place of power they do not and should not possess. Rather, the focus should be on recognizing tribal authority

over their history, culture, and lifeways as it is presented through tribal museums. However, this does not necessarily mean tribal museums are recognized as holding the same place as ethnographic museums. Constantly having collaborations and consultations occur in ethnographic museums rather than in other settings, places them in a position of control and authority. To shift the scene of negotiation would therefore shift the structure of control and authority. I would like to see more collaborations occur outside ethnographic museum settings. For example, exhibitions could travel between ethnographic museums and tribal museums or community centers. Consultations with elders such as the one between Yup'ik elders and the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* (discussed in chapter 3) could occur in the Yup'ik community.

A change in setting would mean new contact zones. Only situating contact zones in museums as sites for cross-cultural dialogue (Bennett 2006), “is simply an extension of the role of the museum as an instrument of governmentality (drawing on Foucault)...clothed in rubrics such as multiculturalism” (Harrison 2005: 31). This isn't to say that there isn't a place (as contact zones) for ethnographic museums today. On the contrary, ethnographic museums are far more popular and better equipped to reach a broader audience than tribal museums can.¹ So to try and draw more audiences from ethnographic museums to tribal museums is unlikely and would mean the types of information visitors are learning about Native North America becomes tribally specific. By shifting the spaces of negotiation from that of ethnographic museums, a historically white public space for housing the treasures of colonialism, to tribal communities, would flip the practice of authority and open up the possibility of new, innovative dialogues.

¹ “By definition, [ethnographic] museum exhibitions reach a more diverse, general audience than do scholarly analyses. Through the incorporation of first-person narratives, live interpretations, and local examples of national trends, exhibitions can create an immediacy that compels visitors to remember and perhaps learn more about the subjects presented” (Wedll 2000: 97). And the popularity of ethnographic museums such as the *Berlin Ethnologisches Museum* or the Chicago Field Museum is much higher than small tribal museums.

Consultations, Collaborations, or Partnerships

Current dialogues between ethnographic museums and American Indians tend to occur in one of three ways. American Indians are asked to contribute to ethnographic museums through consultations, collaborations, or partnerships. The differences between these types of projects include time commitments, investments in the project, and gains. Though consultations, collaborations, and partnerships have different functions in ethnographic museums, I want to focus on and call for more partnerships between ethnographic museums and tribal museums, not just American Indian individuals. This would be a way for ethnographic museums to recognize the authority of tribal museums.

Consultations tend to be short interactions with a specific purpose. American Indians enter the museum and are asked questions about particular artifacts, concepts, or arrangements of displays. For example, one of the consultations I was a part of as an intern at the National Museum of the American Indian asked a tribal elder to come in and consult about the three-dimensional artifact options the museum had for an upcoming exhibit. The concept for the exhibit was already established by the curator as well as the narrative flow. The American Indian elder was asked which artifacts, already in the collection, would be best to present the narrative. The Native expert, in this case an elder, is providing the museum with information (factual and opinion based), but the framing is already in place.²

Collaborations, such as the one that created the permanent exhibit at the *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg* (chapters 1 and 3), entail longer time commitments that can reach years. American Indians are asked to contribute information like in consultations but may also be asked to contribute their own personal crafts and artwork to the exhibition or project (i.e. artist

² They may or may not receive monetary compensation, but otherwise are not receiving anything for their knowledge and validation.

collaborations discussed in chapter 2). The difference between consultations and collaborations includes time commitment and investment in the end product of the collaboration. This isn't to say that mutual goals and visions created the finished product or that it is beneficial for all of the contributors. Most collaborations find common goals and educational messages that the museum curator and the collaborator can work towards. However, the collaborator's role is always secondary to the authority that rests with the museum who is paying for the project and whose property (artifacts, art, archives) is most often on display.

Partnerships, on the other hand, seek to create an equitable relationship between individuals or institutions (Horse Capture 2015). They are relationships that can be fostered over a number of years and various projects. The projects are meant to benefit both parties in some way, even if those parties' opinions are at odds. For example, I discussed compliance with U.S. repatriation law in chapter 5 as the most cogent example of how ethnographic museums are presenting the image of neoliberal change while still misrecognizing representational sovereignty. However, repatriation departments in ethnographic museums or even universities can also be seen as positive partnerships. The mutual goal of providing the best care for sacred objects and human remains is accomplished in different ways from both sides of the partnership. Initial partnerships created through a single repatriation can lead to future repatriations and the fostering of a relationship that can also lead to other projects.

Even though I defined partnerships as more equitable between parties than collaborations or consultations, I think the initial motivation for the partnership should be made by ethnographic museums. These museums can address a need tribal communities have. This is a similar argument made by Vine Deloria, Jr. (1969) when he chastised anthropologists working with Native communities. As institutions with more resources (though not endless) and which

are more visible to various publics than tribal museums, ethnographic museums should be approaching tribal museums for possible partnerships on projects deemed necessary and important by the tribe. In this way they could establish a relationship that could lead to reciprocal projects in the future.

In this way, ethnographic museums need to be flexible and adaptable to the needs and time commitments of American Indian communities. These needs can be better understood and met if ethnographic museums would hire more American Indians in positions such as curators, exhibition designers, repatriation managers, in addition to including them on their board of directors. Bringing Native Americans into these key positions and roles would make salient the perspectives and needs of American Indians and make their perspectives central to the management of ethnographic museums.

Conclusion

In Fall 2016, I received a series of emails from the Yale Indian Papers Project asking for permission from the Brothertown Council to digitize Commuck's *Indian Melodies*. Thomas Commuck was a Brothertown Indian member who wrote a series of hymns in the form of shape note music. Because shape note music, a form of dictating communal music, is not widely used or documented, the Yale Indian Papers Project wanted to also perform the music with the help of students from Yale's Institute of Sacred Music and record the performance. I gained the permissions from the tribal council and authorized this project to begin under the condition that the Brothertown Indian Nation would receive copies of everything for our museum and archives upon completion. We also requested regular updates and announcements of upcoming performances of this music.

Months later I received an email from an independent shape note scholar who had heard about, seen, and worked with Commuck's *Indian Melodies*, requesting access to see the Brothertown Collection, currently housed by the Oneida Nation in Oneida, Wisconsin. This scholar received permission, travelled to Oneida, and spent weeks perusing the Brothertown Collection for more information about shape note music. In return, he performed selections of shape note music for the Brothertown at our annual Gathering, which occurred while he was in Wisconsin. We also requested that our tribe be acknowledged in any publications as the source of the information and stewards of the archives.

A third individual associated with Yale emailed me six months after the initial request from the Yale Indian Papers Project. This individual worked for the Yale Peabody Museum in the repatriation department looking for further information about a possible pipe repatriation. Though seemingly unconnected and not examples of partnerships per se, the initial communication from Yale created the possibility for additional communications and an ongoing relationship between the university and the Brothertown Indian Nation. A future partnership is possible based on a continuous respectful relationship between the university and the tribe. Such simple yet profound exchanges can result in productive partnerships that equally benefit tribes and the Euro-American institutions that serve a broader public.

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