Decolonizing Natural History Museums Through Volunteer Engagement

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Abstract

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In recent years, natural history museums have begun to place a greater importance on confronting their colonial pasts, and decolonization has become a popular topic of discussion among museum professionals. When a natural history museum is attempting to decolonize, they must do so at all levels of the organization. This includes the museum's volunteer program. Volunteer programs are often vital to the success and even existence of a museum. Yet, in general, volunteerism in the Western world, has strong connections to inequity and white privilege. The purpose of this study was to discover the ways in which natural history museums who have indicated a focus on decolonization, are also incorporating their vision of decolonization into their volunteer program and the impact that those strategies have on volunteers. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected from three natural history museums through semi-structured interviews, an online questionnaire, and document analysis. Findings suggest that volunteers who have attended trainings that incorporate topics related to decolonization and Native perspectives are more likely to be in support of museum decolonization, be more likely to feel that they can contribute to the decolonization of their organizations, and feel an increased empathy for Native American peoples. Furthermore, organizations that have focused on decolonization for a longer period of time have greater access to local communities and are better able to bring Native perspectives to their volunteers. Findings suggest a relationship between the incorporation of Native perspectives into volunteer training and increased empathy by volunteers for Native peoples. This study contributes to the greater conversation about museum decolonization and is intended to inform museum

professionals on effective ways in which they can incorporate their museum's decolonization practices into their volunteer programs.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Throughout the United States, natural history museums make the natural and cultural wonders of the world accessible to the communities they serve. Children and adults across the nation flock to these institutions to marvel at treasures ranging from the fossilized skeletons of monsters that lived millions of years ago to the smallest gemstone created when the Earth was still in its infancy. Many passionate and talented people work every day to care for and share these treasures with the public. This work would not be possible without volunteers, who often act as tour guides or docents and help to invoke curiosity and joy among visitors who traverse their halls. Many help to care for and manage the varying collections housed within the walls of each organization, among other things. Volunteers in natural history museums play an important role in how visitors experience, engage, and perceive these institutions. And because of their close connection with museum goers, volunteers are an essential element in the critical work these museums must take to confront and correct the legacy of colonial violence done to Indigenous peoples, often directly propagated by the influence of natural history museums.

Colonial violence against Indigenous people is interwoven into the very identity of natural history museums. For generations, museums have exhibited Native American cultures as if they are fixed in history, and only until very recently, Native American people were often depicted as the primitive “Other” (Belovari, 2013). Furthermore, as a result of the collection, or theft, of Native American remains, biological anthropologists devised discriminatory practices and published findings in an attempt to authenticate white supremacy (Redmond, 2016). These racist practices continued for generations resulting in the perpetuation of stereotypes and colonial misconceptions.

Consequentially, this systemic discrimination has been projected by and onto the museums' volunteers. Volunteers make a large impact on the organizations they serve and the communities of which they are a part. Yet, in general, volunteerism in the Western world has strong connections to inequity, white privilege and, in some cases, the white savior complex (Blum & Schafer, 2017). This pattern of privilege is evident in organizations such as natural history museums with its history of colonial practices (Teslo, 2002). A large portion of volunteers in the United States identify as white and age 35+ (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). When applied to museums, this diversity disparity can lead to a lack of cultural competency and can reinforce the museum as an exclusive space for some visitors (Rudham, 2012). But work of the recent past to address colonialism in natural history museums also lends itself to the influence of volunteers.

In 1990, the United States Federal Government passed the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act, or NAGPRA. This law "requires federal agencies and federally funded museums to provide Indian tribes, Native Hawaiian organizations and lineal descendants with information about their collections" (Graham & Murphy, 2010, pg.106). Since the passing of NAGPRA in 1990 countless federally funded museums in the United States have been compelled to face the problematic contents of their collections. NAGPRA "[…] affords tribes the right to repatriate five types of Native American cultural items and human remains, associated and unassociated funerary objects, cultural patrimony, and sacred items when certain criteria are met" (Graham & Murphy, 2010, pg. 106). Although there is still much work to be done by museums, with the implementation of NAGPRA "museums and tribes alike have developed policies and processes to implement the law and interact with each other. […] [There] is growing

common interests and collaborations between Native Americans and anthropologists [within museums]" (Graham & Murphy, 2010, pg. 107).

In recent years, some museums have begun to place a greater importance on confronting their colonial pasts, and the practice of decolonization has become a popular topic of discussion among museum professionals. In her 2016 TedX lecture "We Must Decolonize our Museums", Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko, points out that "museums hold the spoils of colonization, the artifacts and human remains of native people" (Catlin-Legutko, 2016). As the former director of the Abbe Museum in Maine, she led immense structural and philosophical changes in order to focus heavily on decolonization and on fostering relationships with Indigenous groups. The Abbe Museum's Vision Statement reads "The Abbe Museum will reflect and realize the values of decolonization in all of its practices, working with the Wabanaki Nations to share their stories, history, and culture with a broader audience" (abbemuseum.wordpress.com). This is only one example and vision of how one museum has interpreted decolonization for its organization.

According to the 2017 Museums as Sites for Social Action Toolkit, "[b]efore external change can be inspired and initiated, internal organizational changes are necessary. […] Top leadership and all staff levels must turn inward and consider systems that do not support equity and inclusion by […] [a]dopting a structured approach that includes all staff, volunteers, and board members" (Anderson, et al., 2017, pg. 17). Therefore, when a natural history museum, or any museum, is attempting to decolonize, it must do so at all levels of the organization. This includes the museum's volunteer program. Volunteers in natural history museums can serve many diverse and important roles. These roles may include visitor service positions, tour guides or docents, as well as collections or archival positions. Volunteer programs are often vital to the success and even existence of a museum. In the United States more than 80 percent of all

nonprofits rely on volunteers, and according to a study done by the Corporation for National and Community Service in 2015, it is estimated that 77.3 million Americans, or about 30 percent of the total population, volunteered in 2015 alone. This amounts to $167 billion worth of donated service (Kappelides, 2019). Because volunteers often represent the public face of the museum and simultaneously are so heavily relied upon by these organizations, I believe that efforts to decolonize museums are made stronger by including volunteers.

The purpose of this study was to discover the ways in which natural history museums that have indicated a focus on decolonization are also incorporating their respective visions of decolonization into their volunteer programs. While there is a large set of data surrounding decolonization, museum decolonization, and volunteerism in the United States, there is a gap in the research showing how museum volunteers make an impact on and are themselves impacted by museum decolonization practices. With my research I examined the nature of the decolonization strategies that natural history museums are implementing in their volunteer programs and the impact of these strategies on volunteers. In doing so, I hope to contribute to the ongoing conversation about decolonization within the museum field.

While I hope to contribute to the conversation about decolonization in museums, it is not my intent to decipher whether decolonization can ever fully be achieved or if the wounds caused by colonialism can ever be healed. As a white woman, I can never fully understand the impacts of the traumas caused by colonialism on Indigenous peoples. My interest in this study stems partially from my academic background, but also in the daily life as a Volunteer Program Assistant employed by a natural history museum. I have witnessed the long-standing impact that the historical misrepresentation of Indigenous people has on individuals who volunteer in museums today. It is my belief that history is not a thing situated in the past, but rather

something we carry with us. History is a part of us, and it influences individuals in myriad ways daily. The colonial past of natural history museums *is* a present reality. It is my intention, with this study, to discover the ways that natural history museums are facing their colonial past through engagement with some of the most passionate and loyal stakeholders within their organizations, their volunteers.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to discover the ways in which natural history museums that have indicated a focus on decolonization are also incorporating their visions of decolonization into their volunteer programs. My research sought to answer two questions: What are the strategies that natural history museums are implementing to introduce decolonization efforts into their volunteer programs? And what is the impact on volunteers when decolonization efforts are introduced and incorporated into volunteer programs at natural history museums?

To explore this topic and its underpinning concepts, two primary areas of literature were examined. The first of these relates to decolonization and particularly decolonization within natural history museums. The second focuses on volunteerism in American museums- the history, evolution, and impact of museum volunteers. The following chapter is organized into two sections addressing each of these and concludes with an examination of where and how these two bodies of literature intersect.

Section One: The Path to Decolonization in Museums

In order to best understand the ways in which natural history museums can and should decolonize as organizations, there must first be an understanding about the ways in which museums have supported and acted in colonial violence against Indigenous people and cultures. According to the American Alliance of Museum's *TrendsWatch 2019,* decolonization is "the long, slow, painful, and imperfect process of undoing some of the damage inflicted by colonial practices that remain deeply imbedded in our culture, politics, and economies" (TrendsWatch, 2019). Evidence for this "colonial damage" can be found among the halls, exhibits, and collections of our museums today.

Museums and Their Colonial Pasts

In the United States, settler colonialism, the process "in which colonizers sought to take the lands of Indigenous people and eliminate them in one way or another", has impacted Indigenous people and communities for generations (Ostler & Shoemaker, 2019, p. 361). One of the notions of settler colonialism is a logic of elimination. Historically, colonizers have used methods such as "genocide, removal, assimilation, and erasure" (Ostler & Shoemaker, 2019, p.362). Settler colonialism is not an event, but is, rather, a structure that enacts "various forms of elimination, showing them to be part of a project with an underlying temporal continuity that extends to the present" (Ostler & Shoemaker, 2019, p. 362). These colonial structures led to the decrease of populations among First Peoples throughout the Americas. As a result of European colonization of the Americas, tribal nations across the Western Hemisphere experienced great population declines. In fact, "[b]y the turn of the twentieth century, it is estimated that only 250,000 Indians were alive in the United States (Lonetree, 2012, p. 10).

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many anthropologists made their careers on the systematic collection of American Indian material culture. These collecting practices clearly influenced the types of exhibitions that curators developed, which in turn influenced the public's understanding of Native culture through the way that museums presented the objects. A majority of these objects was collected when Indians were supposed to have vanished from the American landscape- "the Dark Ages of Native American history," as scholars of the period have referred to it. This fact alone speaks volumes about the type of representations that tribes oppose and are moving away from in their current exhibition practices.

During this period of extreme violence and population decline within tribal nations, key institutions such as the Smithsonian in 1846, the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and

Ethnology at Harvard University in 1866, New York's American Museum of Natural History in 1869, and Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History in 1893 were first being established, and as Lonetree explains, museums aggressively pursued the collecting of Native American ethnographic and archaeological material. During this period, the Smithsonian's collection grew dramatically "from 550 items in 1860 to more than 13,000 in 1873"' (Lonetree, 2012, p. 10). Native people were believed to be "vanishing" and "anthropologists at the [time] thought they were in a race against time. They saw themselves as engaged in 'salvage anthropology' to collect the so-called last vestiges of a dying race" (Lonetree, 2012, p. 10).

As instruments of colonialism, natural history museums became agents propagating the idea that Native cultures were extinct and that the people represented belonged to a by-gone era. Representations of Native cultures in exhibits were, until recently, fixed in the past, and the art and objects that were collected and donated to these museums, were considered primitive. The narratives presented by natural history museums contributed to the attempted colonial erasure and silencing of the Indigenous cultures in the United States. Because of this, "museums can be very painful sites for Native peoples, as they are intimately tied to the colonization process" (Lonetree, 2012, p. 1).

Museums have historically represented bastions of culture, "[r]eflecting Europe as the ideal image", focusing on the collection and care of objects and artworks that were only shared with the privileged few (Catlin-Legutko, 2016). For instance, "[s]ince the 19th century, the museum world has been characterized by simplistic oppositions in which everything is either one thing or another- a masterpiece or a minor work, an original or a reproduction, a great artist or an apprentice, this species or that" (Silverman & O'Neill, 2004, p. 193). This "one thing or another" perspective has contributed to the view that American Indians are a vanishing race. In fact,

"[g]enerations of like-minded Euro-Americans assumed Native Americans to be rapidly disappearing. […] [S]cholars aspired to 'salvage' whatever might be preserved, from pottery to linguistic data to human bones" (Redman, 2016, p. 72). Museums were the repository for the so-called "salvaged" culture of American Indian communities and the "[q]uestion of ownership and representation, which arise out of the interactions of European and non-European peoples in the colonial era and the resultant plurality of societies are now necessitating resolution in the vastly different relationships of the post-colonial era" (Simpson, 2001, p.2).

Museums' Acknowledgement of Their Colonial Pasts

Despite, or perhaps because of, this foundation of colonial harm, the museum field in the United States is now in a period of awakening. "The last century of self-reflection- the beginning of the reinvention of the museum- was initiated by the general movement of dismantling the museum as an ivory tower of exclusivity and toward the construction of a more socially responsive cultural institution in services to the public" (Anderson, 2012, p. 11). Along with the dismantling of the ivory tower comes the "imperative that museums have the unique opportunity to contribute good in society" (Anderson, 2012, p. 11). One result of this reinvention is the slow grappling with a dark colonial past.

Museums in the United States were first required to face their colonial pasts on November 16, 1990, when President George H. W. Bush signed into law the Native American Graves Protection and Graves Repatriation law, NAGPRA, which requires federal agencies and federally funded museums to provide Indian tribes, Native Hawaiian organizations, and lineal descendants with information about their collections (Graham & Murphy, 2010). Under this law, tribes were given the right to repatriate five types of items. These include human remains, associated and unassociated funerary objects, cultural patrimony and sacred items when certain

criteria are met (Graham & Murphy, 2010). NAGPRA also provides protections of Native American human remains and cultural items that have been discovered on federal or tribal lands after November 16, 1990 (Graham and Murphy, 2010).

It is not radical to say that this law was a massive push towards the decolonization of museum collections. The process of NAGPRA, in some cases, laid the groundwork for western museums establishing relationships with the tribal groups whose cultural artifacts they held. The "passage and implementation [of NAGPRA] has had a profound impact on museums and anthropology, and [has acted as] a catalyst for decolonizing museums in the United States" (Kreps, 2011, p. 74). For instance, "NAGPRA also required museums to invite authorized tribal representatives to consult about collections and to request information that would identify traditional religious leaders and lineal descendants. Traditional religious leaders can assist museums in recognizing those items that may be subject to repatriation" (Graham & Murphy, 2010, p. 106). It is in this requirement that there was and is potential for healing. Many museums and Native American communities have "establish[ed] relationships that recognize common goals of education and community service that are less centered on preserving objects of the past than on using those objects and newfound relationships to build a future. Today's reconnection between Native Americans and the objects in museum collections are vivid expressions of the vitality and continuity of these cultures" (Graham & Murphy, 2010, p. 122).

Following the enactment of NAGPRA, the National Museum of the American Indian, or NMAI, was built on the National Mall in Washington, DC, in 2004. This organization was groundbreaking in that it was "the first national museum solely devoted to the study, preservation and exhibition of the life, languages, history, arts, and culture of Native Americans.

The NMAI has been described as a 'post-colonial,' 'decolonized' museum that offers a new paradigm for the interpretation and representation of Native peoples" (Kreps, 2011, p. 75).

A Deeper Look at Museum Decolonization

While the implementation of NAGPRA in the 1990s and the opening of NMAI in 2004 began the conversation surrounding repatriation and representation of native people in museums, it has only been within the past decade that some museums have taken their decolonization efforts further. As the concept of museum decolonization has gained main-stream recognition, the need for change becomes more apparent.

In her 2016 TedX lecture Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko presents what she considers to be the three hallmarks of decolonizing museums: "1. decolonizing museum practices are collaborative, 2. prioritizing, or even privileging native voice and perspective, and 3. truth-telling" (Catlin-Legutko, 2016). With the implementation of these three hallmarks, museums "share authority and governance for the interpretation and representation of native people" (Catlin-Legutko, 2016).

The first hallmark of decolonization, collaboration, means that from the "very beginning [of any project], [museums] work with native advisors […] and that native advisors are involved as much as possible. [Through this collaborative approach museums can ensure that] it's a story that [they] have the right to tell, the right to share, and the right to do" (Catlin-Legutko, 2016). Collaboration between museums and the communities they represent can result in various outcomes. One of these is a cross-cultural comparison in which it is found that western and Indigenous approaches to the care and exhibition of Native American cultural objects and representations of history are both similar and different (Boxer, 2008). For instance, Indigenous

communities may view objects that are a part of a western museum's collection "not as belonging to that museum but rather as objects belonging to the family, clan or ceremonial organization […] while […] western museums […] tend to 'decontextualize' them from their cultural significance" (Boxer, 2008, p. 19). Through collaboration, which will allow for cross-cultural comparison, these objects may be recontextualized and proper, or more truthful, interpretation may be offered to the greater public, and museums can begin to implement Catlin-Legutko's second hallmark of decolonization, the privileging of native voices. According to Catlin-Legutko, "when we begin to prioritize Indigenous perspective [in museums] the narrative broadens, it shifts, it becomes more accurate and we have a narrative that is clear and unoppressed" (Catlin-Legutko, 2016).

The third hallmark as laid out by Catlin-Legutko is truth-telling, ensuring that the full measure of history is told. She explains that "when [museums] present the full measure of history, tell the truth, [they] can identify painful comments, [identify] painful decisions and make change" (Catlin-Legutko, 2016). One example of truth-telling as a practice to further decolonization is the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection at the University of Virginia. "The Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection has Indigenous representation, voice, and recognition embedded in its mission and values. This manifests in a variety of ways through its programming, curation strategies, publication, management, and more" (Jorgenson, D., Mae Sevedge, 2019). This organization exercises truth-telling through "[its] institutional language [that] addresses the Aboriginal perspective of the past. In tours, wall text, and online the museum uses the term 'invasion' rather than 'colonization'. [The Kluge-Ruhe has] an entire permanent exhibition devoted to unveiling whitewashed histories and highlighting Indigenous resilience in the face of invasion" (Jorgenson, D., Mae Sevedge, 2019).

Another example of a natural history museum that has begun the process of addressing racist and harmful interpretation and representation of Native American people and cultures is the Field Museum in Chicago, Illinois. The Field Museum's renovation of its Native North American Hall to be completed in 2021, for many, is a long time coming. The exhibits, which were originally installed in the 1950s, appear to be stuck in time (Rios, 2018). In fact, "[t]he hall's narrative is that the displays have remained largely untouched since their initial installation in the early 1950s. Entering the space is akin to opening a time capsule" (Rios, 2018). New plans for the renovation "will address the architecture of the hall as well as the larger cultural concerns, make visible the museum's new-found efforts to engage Native communities in order to better represent Native American histories and interpret Native American cultural objects. The renovations are taking place under the guidance of a robust advisory committee made up of contemporary Native American tribal leaders, scholars, artists, historical society representatives, and cultural caretakers" (Rios, 2018).

Museums have begun to address their role in perpetuating colonial structures through salvage anthropology and racist interpretation and representations of colonized people, which is unprecedented in the history of museums. "[T]hese trends mark a humanistic turn in museum anthropology that places cultural and human rights at the center of museological discourse and practice" (Krep, 2011, p. 71). This paradigm shift, which is a slow process that requires structural and organizational changes within museums, "signal[s] a dramatic rethinking of museological ethics" and is still in its infancy across the museum field (Krep, 2011, p. 71).

Section Two: Volunteerism in Museums

Roots of Public Service

The United States has a unique and robust connection to volunteerism as public service, but volunteerism is also intimately intertwined with colonialism which, consequentially, is intertwined with the American national identity. The civic humanist tradition of volunteering has its earliest roots in the United States in Protestant Puritanism with the immigration of Europeans in search of freedom from religious persecution to the United States (Ludwig, S., 2007). For example, one of the earliest visions of the virtues of American volunteerism was written by Cotton Mather, a New England Puritan minister, in 1710. In his book *Bonifacius: An Essay Upon the Good that Is to Be Devised and Designed,* Mather writes "It is an Invaluable Honour, To Do Good; It is an Incomparable Pleasure. A Man must Look upon himself as Dignifyed and Gratifyed by GOD, when an Opportunity to Do Good is put into his Hands. He must Embrace it with Rapture, as enabling him directly to answer the Great END of his Being" (Ludwig, 2007, p. 6). For Mather, doing good was equal to religious grace, and in order to do good, an individual must enact their religious freedom through missionary work, evangelization, and charity (Ludwig, 2007).

Taking up Mather's philosophies, Benjamin Franklin, one of America's most well-known civic servants, expanded volunteerism from a Puritan value to a humanist endeavor. Franklin's better- known undertakings include "the private organization of street sweeping and street paving, and for inventing a system of 'matching grants' to finance his projects, which involved business, private and government money and which is now a well-known fundraising procedure used by volunteer organizations. Franklin personifies private volunteering for the benefit of the

public" (Ludwig, 2007, p. 9). It is with Benjamin Franklin's vision that volunteerism became a cause for the good of society, particularly American society.

Value of Volunteers

Museums in the United States rely heavily on the donated time and labor of volunteers. In fact, many museums would not survive without the support of their volunteers. In some museums, volunteers outnumber staff 7 to 1, and for many organizations, volunteers hold many of the public facing positions (Merritt, 2019). For instance, many museum volunteers act as tour guides and visitor service representatives (Merritt, 2019). As a result, volunteers play an important role in shaping a museum's identity and image.

Contemporary non-profits maintain this tradition by offering opportunities for individuals to support organizations that closely align with their own values. Often, volunteers are the most devoted and passionate members of the organizations they serve, and a volunteer workforce can have positive impacts on organizations. For instance, "[o]rganizational leaders who depend on the services of a volunteer workforce […] benefit from having a highly motivated, skilled, and qualified professional workforce not otherwise inherent within their organization" (White, 2016, p. 20). Other positive organization-wide impacts include increased morale, increased innovation and creativity, and increased profitability (White, 2016).

In the United States "non-profits are embedded so deeply in the US culture because from [its] inception we valued nonprofit associations as a forum for civic participation" (Merritt, 2016). This civic participation through volunteerism allows organizations the capacity to accomplish more than they would without it, but it also provides the opportunity for individuals to do good in their communities while benefiting themselves from that opportunity. Therefore,

"[v]olunteers are a necessary and desirable part of the museum workforce. They are a distinct class of people who benefit from museums in deep and meaningful ways. And they expand our ability to do good work that reaches others" (Merritt, 2016).

Volunteer Demographics

Volunteers in museums, often, hold positions in educational and public engagement roles, they have a direct impact on accessibility and inclusion to the museum and the museum programming. According to a study conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2016, a large portion of volunteers in the United States identify as white and age 35+ (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). By comparison, a large majority of museum volunteers identify as "over 55, white, female, and middle to upper-middle class" (Merritt, 2019). This lack of diversity among volunteers has a large impact on museum visitors. In the 2012 study *Preserving Race and Class: A Critical Ethnography of Urban Art Museum Docents, Backstage and Frontstage Performances,* by Gretchen Bourland Rudham, it is found that white privilege and cultural incompetency have a large impact on the educational content presented to students depending on factors such as race, culture, and class. According to her research, Rudham concludes that white privilege and leisure class membership among docents in one art museum resulted in micro-aggressions, lack of cultural competency and socio-economic discrimination towards students who did not represent the volunteers' own racial, cultural, educational, or socio-economic backgrounds (Rudham, 2012). For instance, the docents "tend to ignore students of color and aim their content for the white (and maybe Asian) students. Yet, when faced with a group of entirely faces of color, docents' default to lowered expectations, watered down content, or in some cases, approach the group with practiced mistrust" (Rudham, 2012, p. 195). What Rudham is describing is likely the effect of unconscious bias, "the often-unspoken beliefs about various

social groups. These hidden assumptions- also referred to as implicit or unintentional bias- influence how we judge others' competency. They shape our expectations for human interactions and form the basis of prejudicial actions" (The American Alliance of Museums, 2018, p.7). The interactions between museum docents and student groups in Rudham's study exemplify the ways in which unconscious bias, and perhaps conscious bias, generate exclusion and inaccessibility of certain groups of people in museums, resulting in inequitable organizations.

Developing Volunteers

Volunteerism is defined as a workforce that is actively involved, not coerced into accepting the role, is not motivated by monetary gain, and is focused on the good of the organization or the client (White, 2016). A volunteer workforce can have positive impacts on organizations, including increased morale, increased innovation and creativity, and increased profitability (White, 2016). Therefore, non-profit organizations, such as museums, have a great deal to gain by implementing effective practices in volunteer management. These practices include the recruitment, management, training, and the act of sustaining a volunteer corps.

There has been a great amount of research done on volunteer motivations and the impact of motivation on volunteer recruitment and retention. "Volunteerism [involves] a decision-making process in which the helper's own needs and objectives provide the motivation for his or her choice of a volunteer venue. So volunteering is viewed as a planned activity that is motivated by goals. Similarly, [some] motivational aspects […] relate to an individual's concerns. These concerns may be reflected in a person's motivation for volunteerism" (Boling, 2006, p. 6). Examples of volunteer motivations include but are not limited to the following: 1) social motivations, or the need for love and belonging; 2) intellectual or skills development, or the need for personal or professional growth; and 3) values motivations, or the need to belong to an

organization that matches the values of the volunteer (Boling, 2006). Furthermore, research has indicated that among volunteers there is "a diversity of motivations that, in the lives of the individuals who harbor those motivations, set the stage for the events that will determine what will draw people into volunteering, whether their experiences as volunteers will be satisfying ones, and whether the benefits they accrue from volunteering will be translated into intentions to continue to be active as volunteers, and ultimately […] sustained helping over time" (Clary, et. al., 1998, p. 1528). Therefore, motivation must be considered an important aspect of volunteer recruitment and retention.

In order to effectively recruit and retain volunteers, volunteer management strategies must be considered and "[volunteer management] [must be] given a strong, strategic position within the organization so that it has sufficient authority to negotiate for volunteer management resources, strategic commitment, and volunteer interests" (Studer, 2016, p. 707). In non-profits including museums, "[v]olunteer management […] has been strongly influenced by classical human resource management […]. There is a growing body of volunteer literature, however, that argues that volunteers differ from paid staff and that [volunteer managers] should therefore respond to the uniqueness of volunteers," meaning that they differ than the paid workforce within an organization (Studer, 2016, p. 688). In order to a do so, volunteer managers should recognize the value that volunteers bring to their organizations and consider them an important stakeholder group in the functionality and success of the organization. However, these individuals are not paid staff and must not be managed as such. "As long as volunteer managers consider volunteers as being a part of the paid workforce—and not as a unique stakeholder—they will neither consider balancing the interests of volunteers and paid staff, nor encourage paid

staff to interact respectfully with volunteers, and therefore miss important management strategies" (Studer, 2016, p. 706).

Another important aspect of effective museum volunteer management is volunteer professional development and training. One study conducted across multiple museums in Seattle, Washington, concluded that volunteer trainings, whether they are lecture style trainings or on-the-job trainings, benefited the volunteer individually, conveyed the organization's mission, and created ownership in the volunteer of their role within the organization (Ohlandt, 2013). This study states that "training is important because it increases the skills and knowledge of volunteers, but it also increases their commitment to an organization and its mission" (Ohlandt, 2013, p. 1). To enact effective volunteer training that will "ensure engagement and long-term success of volunteers, […] museums [should] establish a formal volunteer training program" (Ohlandt, 2013, p. 31).

Museum volunteers are important and influential stakeholders within the organizations they serve. To maintain an effective volunteer program, organizations should focus on the individual's motivation to volunteer, have a structured volunteer program in place, focus on recognition and volunteer satisfaction, and offer development and training opportunities. These strategies will likely lead to deeper commitment and engagement with the organization's mission (Ohlandt, 2013). "This deeper level of engagement encompasses getting to know volunteers personally and satisfying their social needs and desire for more knowledge," knowledge that will likely be passed on to the museum's audience and may result in greater social impact and contribute to the organization's mission (Ohlandt, 2013, p. 30).

Section 3: The Intersection Between Museum Decolonization and Volunteerism

Today's museums are no longer citadels of Eurocentric culture and ideals. Instead contemporary museums have become institutions beholden to the communities they serve. The act of confronting the inequities and the untruths disseminated through colonial practices in which museums have actively participated has become ever more imperative. "Museums are complicit in colonizers' continuing control over how the world sees Indigenous people, and what Indigenous people know of themselves and their culture. The extent to which a specific museum is faced with obligations related to the legacy of colonization will depend on its location, its community, its collection, and its particular history of founding and funding. But all museums share a responsibility to help their country and their society address the legacy of damage" (TrendsWatch, 2019). Museums have a considerable way to go before decolonization can be integrated into the culture of each individual organization. For this, there must be significant organizational change that must occur at all levels of the museum and "begins with willingness to inquire into the experiences of volunteers, staff, administration, and board members with regard to issues of inequity and injustice within the organizational culture" (Anderson, et al., 2017, p. 18).

When considering museum decolonization, it is important to note that museum decolonization is a systemic shift or organizational change. "A systemic shift is realized when systemic solutions move beyond [, for example,] prescriptions for one-time 'sensitivity' or 'diversity trainings' and move towards considering the museum institution at large" (Anderson et. al, 2017, p. 25). This work of systemic change is very difficult and takes time. According to the MASS (Museum as Site for Social Action) Toolkit:

> It takes time and effort to research and peel back the layers of history. It will require admitting to some ugly beliefs and actions. It will involve a redistribution of power, policy, and procedure in our institutions. It will take time to analyze and connect to current practice how both general legacies of injustice for your museum, e.g., how Western colonial practice might have shaped your collection, as well as specific aspects of your museum that might affect how your community responds to it (where it is located, how it advertises, etc.). Self-examination is often a painful process, even when done privately; this type of institutional self-examination will be more public and will require great transparency; it is this transparency that can help affect the disappointing dynamic that museums have with many communities (Anderson et. al., 2017, p. 26).

The large-scale systemic change that must occur in order to decolonize museums will not occur without large impacts on volunteer corps within museums. There will likely be volunteer and even staff turnover. However, "[w]ith […] turnover, the players will always change. Developing recruitment and interview strategies is critical. And it's equally important to design policies and practices that ensure that organization change will last beyond the players' (trustees, staff, ED) involved at the time of first approval and implementation" (Anderson et. al, 2017, p. 27). This will be particularly important when museums that are strategizing towards decolonization develop recruitment strategies. Furthermore, decolonization will have a large impact on what it means to volunteer at museums. Volunteers may be required to undergo much more rigorous trainings, in particular racial and cultural sensitivity training. When implementing decolonization strategies, "[t]raining, research, and consultation needs to be current and relevant to organizational needs and strategic directions. Ensuring that [organizations are] making lasting change, regular management and review of new systems is critical" (Anderson et. al, 2017, p. 27). With these organizational changes, harmful and colonial structures that have been in place for generations can begin to transform. Museum volunteers and volunteer managers will play an important role in this transformation. "When staff, board, and volunteers are recognizing this new system as regular operating practice," then true healing can begin (Anderson et.al, 2017, p. 27).

Chapter 3: Methods and Sampling

The purpose of this study was to discover the ways that natural history museums that are implementing decolonization practices within their organizations have incorporated those practices into their volunteer programs. To determine this, this study examined the nature of the decolonization strategies that museums are implementing in their volunteer programs and the impact of these strategies on volunteers.

The two research questions that directed this study are as follows:

1) What strategies are natural history museums implementing to introduce decolonization efforts into their volunteer programs?

2) What is the impact on volunteers when decolonization efforts are introduced and incorporated into volunteer programs at natural history museums?

Design

Due to the nature of museum decolonization as an emerging practice, for which no best practices or definitive definition have been derived, this study used a qualitative case study approach. This approach allows researchers "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (Yin, 2008, p. 23). This allowed for a holistic approach to the data collected at each research site, which resulted in a data set that is representative of the individual experiences of the participants, along with an overall understanding of the mechanics of decolonization practices within individual organizations and volunteer programs.

Research Sites and Subjects

Three research sites were selected for this study based on three qualifying criteria: 1) the organization indicated the use of decolonization practices as defined by that organization; 2) the organization has a current and active volunteer corps; and 3) the organization was willing to mediate data collection between the researcher and their volunteer corps through communication with volunteers and the dissemination the data collection instrument. A total of twenty museums were initially contacted by the researcher. Eight of these museums participated in initial screening and recruitment conversations and three museums fit the criteria of this study and agreed to become participants. These sites were the Arizona Museum of Natural History, Mesa, AZ; the Museum of Natural and Cultural History, Eugene, OR; and the University of Alaska Museum of the North, Fairbanks, AK.

The *Arizona Museum of Natural History (AZMNH)* located in Mesa Arizona is a small natural history museum that "is dedicated to inspire wonder, respect, and understanding for the natural and cultural history of the Southwest" (arizonamuseumofnaturalhistory.org). With a focus on archaeology and paleontology, the AZMNH is "renowned for its field research programs and provides the public with opportunities to work on archaeological and paleontological digs" (arizonamuseumofnaturalhistory.org). Founded in 1977 the AZMNH houses a collection of 60,000 objects of natural history, anthropology, history and art (arizonamuseumofnaturalhistory.org). Another important aspect of this site pertaining to this study is that AZMNH "preserves and interprets Mesa Grande, one of the last surviving Hohokam platform mounds in Arizona Mesa Grande" (arizonamuseumofnaturalhistory.org).

The *Museum of Natural and Cultural History (MNCH)* located in Eugene, Oregon, "enhances the knowledge of Earth's environments and cultures, inspiring stewardship of our

collective past, present, and future" (mnch.uoregon.edu). As a department of the University of Oregon MNCH "is a center of interdisciplinary research and education" (mnch.uoregon.edu). According to its website, MNCH not only serves the University of Oregon, but also Native American Tribes, the research community, k-12 student and teachers, and the wider public in Oregon and beyond" (mnch.uoregon.edu). MNCH's collections consist of "hundreds of thousands of objects ranging from archaeological and ethnographic items to fossils and geological specimens" (mnch.uoregon.edu).

The *University of Alaska Museum of the North (UAMN)* located in Fairbanks, Alaska, is a research and teaching museum with a collection of 2.5 million objects and artifacts heralding primarily from Alaska and Circumpolar North (https://www.uaf.edu/museum/about-us/). UAMN's collection also contains "over 13,000 [ethnological] objects, [and] is an official statewide repository for Alaska's ethnological and anthropological collections" (https://www.uaf.edu/museum/collections/ethno/). This extensive collection contains objects from the "state's nine Native cultures [which include the] Inupiaq, Siberian Yupik, Central Yup'ik, Dene/Athabascan, Tlingit, Haida, Tsimishian, Unangax/Aleut, and Alutiiq/Sugpiage [and] hold[s] artifacts from nearly every one of the 229 Federally Recognized Tribes […], and from all of the cultures represented by the 20 distinct Native languages in Alaska (https://www.uaf.edu/museum/collections/ethno/). According to UAMN's website, they choose to highlight the "continued vitality and ingenuity of [the people whose objects they hold]. […] Original works of art and craft are included in the collection to show the connection to the [past], while allowing for the incorporation of a current voice" (https://www.uaf.edu/museum/collections/ethno/).

At each research site, the researcher identified individuals holding the position of museum exhibit/curatorial/interpretation staff and/or volunteer manager/coordinator for participation in this study. Individuals identified as museum exhibit/curatorial/interpretation staff were recruited based on the criteria that they held extensive knowledge of their organization's decolonization philosophies and decolonization practices. Individuals identified as volunteer manager/coordinator were recruited based on the criteria that they held extensive knowledge about their organization's volunteers and volunteer program. Refer to Appendix A and B for the recruitment materials and language used by the researcher.

Data Collection

Qualitative data were collected in three phases: 1) semi-structured interviews; 2) self-administered voluntary online questionnaire; and 3) document analysis. Implementation of these three phases resulted in an understanding of each organization's decolonization philosophy or vision, the decolonization strategies and practices implemented at each site, and the impact of these philosophies and practices on volunteers at each site.

Phase 1: Semi-structured interviews

The first phase of data collection for this study involved semi-structured interviews with museum exhibit/curatorial/interpretation staff (Appendix C) and volunteer managers (Appendix D). Upon the consent of the participant, interviews were video/audio recorded using Zoom for later transcription and analysis. To maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of participants, only the primary researcher had access to the audio recordings and transcriptions.

Interviews of museum exhibit/curatorial/interpretation staff resulted in an understanding of the philosophies and impacts of the implementation of decolonization strategies at each site. This information provided a good understanding of what decolonization means specifically at each site and the projected future of decolonization practices at each site. Qualifying subjects were 18 years of age or older and indicated that they played a role in the decolonization practices at their organization. Subjects exhibited extensive knowledge of their organization's decolonization philosophies and decolonization practices.

Interviews of museum volunteer managers resulted in an understanding of the ways in which decolonization strategies are being implemented within each site's volunteer program. These interviews also contributed to the impact that these strategies had on each site's volunteer program. Qualifying subjects were 18 years of age or older and were designated as the individual who manages volunteers at their organization. Subjects exhibited extensive knowledge about the organization's volunteer program.

Phase 2: Volunteer Online Questionnaire

The second phase of this study consisted of a self-administered, voluntary online questionnaire (Appendix E) disseminated to museum volunteers associated with each research site by the designated volunteer manager/coordinator upon approval. This online survey was developed using Surveymonkey and included questions about: 1) the individual's volunteer experience at their museum; 2) their knowledge about current museum decolonization practices; and 3) their opinion about current museum decolonization practices. To maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of participant, no identifying information was collected and only the primary

researcher had access to the survey responses. No demographic information was collected for participating volunteers due to the sensitive nature of the study.

The goal of this survey was to discern the impact of the implementation of decolonization strategies at each site on the individuals who make up the volunteer corps at each of the selected sites. Qualifying subjects were 18 years of age or older and were considered current volunteers at their organization.

Phase 3: Document analysis

The third phase of data collection was document analysis. Documents that were analyzed included impact reports, annual reports, institutional strategic plans, volunteer training presentation slides, volunteer position descriptions, volunteer training documents, informational handouts, and volunteer policy and procedure documents. These documents were analyzed to supplement staff/volunteer-sourced data. Institutional documents were collected at the museum's discretion.

Description of the Sample

Seven museum professionals and 83 museum volunteers participated in this study. Museum professionals who were interviewed included 3 who held positions in exhibit/curatorial/interpretation and 4 professionals who held positions that incorporated volunteer management.

Organization	Interviewee Professional Title*	Size of Volunteer Corps	Volunteer Sample Size
The Arizona Museum of Natural History (AZMNH)	Curator of Anthropology Volunteer Coordinator	281	48
The Museum of Natural and Cultural History (MNCH)	Director of Public Programs and Exhibits Education Coordinator	+/- 130	26
The University of Alaska Museum of the North (UAMN)	Senior Collections Manager Education & Public Programs Manager School Liaison	+/- 30	9

**Note: The range of job titles in the above suggests differences in the way each organization manages its volunteer programs and under which department the responsibility of decolonization efforts originates.*

Most of the volunteers who participated in this study more frequently indicated holding public facing and education roles. For example, more than half of the participating volunteers at AZMNH indicated having held public facing roles (69%) such as docent/interpreter, education, events, outreach, and gallery monitory. Furthermore, many of the participating volunteers indicated having held leadership positions (21%) such as supervisor positions or as members of AZMNH's board. At MNCH, out of the twenty-six respondents, the majority indicated having

worked in public facing roles (77%) including docent/interpreter, education, store assistant, outreach, and events. Only six volunteers (23%) indicated that they worked in non-public facing roles such as in collection spaces. At UAMN all 9 of the participating volunteers held the role of docent/interpreter.

Data Analysis

This study obtained quantitative and qualitative data through open-ended interview questions, open-ended self-administered voluntary online survey questions, and document analysis.

To answer the two research questions which shaped this study, the researcher identified themes through emergent coding within the open-ended interview questions and the open-ended self-administered voluntary online survey questions. To analyze the quantitative data collected from volunteers through the online volunteer questionnaire, descriptive statistical analysis was conducted. As a supplement to the interviews and online survey, the researcher identified themes among varying documents provided by the research sites.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. One limitation is the use of the term "decolonization." Because museum decolonization as a practice does not have a unified definition that is recognized across the entire museum field, it was necessary for each research site to define this concept itself, which yielded variations in the underlying understanding of the term. Furthermore, for many, decolonization is a problematic word. Many believe that decolonization is not something to be achieved with a single end goal but is a continuum of healing. Museum decolonization "is […] challenging because it is necessarily unreachable,

necessarily indefinable. The legacies of European colonialism are immeasurably deep, far-reaching and ever-mutating, and so decolonial work and resistance must take on different forms, methods and evolve accordingly" (Kassim, 2017). Many of the organizations that are implementing practices that may be considered decolonization practices, do not refer to their work as decolonization. Because of these reasons, site recruitment involved preliminary philosophical discussions about museum decolonization. During the preliminary discussions, the participating sites self-identified as an organization that practices decolonization. Furthermore, during the semi-structured interview phase of this study, each participant was asked to define decolonization for themselves and for their organization as a way to set a baseline for the discussion.

Another limitation to this study was the geographical distance between the primary researcher and the participants in this study. While this was less of a limitation when conducting interviews with museum professionals, which were conducted via Zoom which allows for audio/video meetings, this may have had the greatest impact on the data collected from museum volunteers. Because of the limiting factor of geography, the researcher was unable to interact directly with volunteers which potentially lessened the desire by volunteers to participate in this study. The lack of personal interaction with volunteers may have limited the number of participants who completed the questionnaire. To mitigate this issue, an email introduction of the researcher was provided to volunteers by volunteer managers/coordinators. Furthermore, to bolster responses volunteer managers/coordinators were asked to send a second request to volunteers when necessary.

A third limitation of this study is the self-reported nature of the online volunteer questionnaire as well as the self-reported nature of the interviews with museum professionals.

These methods collect only participants' reflections on their organization's decolonization practice and the impact that these practices have had on them as individuals. Because responses are based on the volunteer's perceptions and understanding of what "decolonization" means, the data will vary.

To mitigate this, volunteers were provided with the following definition of museum decolonization to act as a baseline for understanding the concept and to act as a prompt to carefully consider the concept before continuing:

> As applied to the relationship of institutions such as museums to the Native people of the United States, "decolonization" means, at a minimum, sharing authority for the documentation and interpretation of Native culture. […] Decolonized museums recognize the potential of museum collections and expertise to be of service to Native communities in many ways: supporting education, community health, economic development, and spiritual practice. The Abbe Museum (abbemuseum.wordpress.com/about-us/decolonization/)

Museum professionals were asked to set their own baseline definition for the concept of museum decolonization by providing their own personal definition and by then considering if their personal definition is also the overarching definition used by their organization. In this way, participants were asked to consider the concept carefully before continuing the interview.

The fourth, and final, limitation to this study is the absence of demographic information. Because of the sensitive nature of this study, no identifying demographic information was collected. Therefore, the positionality of participating volunteers in relation to museum decolonization is unknown.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover the ways in which natural history museums that have indicated a focus on decolonization, are incorporating their vision of decolonization into their volunteer programs. This study explored two key questions:

1. What strategies are natural history museums implementing to introduce decolonization efforts into their volunteer programs?
2. What is the impact on volunteers when decolonization efforts are introduced and incorporated into volunteer programs at natural history museums?

This chapter summarizes the results of this research in two sections. First, it is organized by case and will present each site's definition of decolonization, the decolonization strategies used, the challenges of implementing this work, and the impact on volunteers. It concludes with the presentation and cross comparison of the results from each site in relation to each of the research questions of this study.

Results by Case

Arizona Museum of Natural History (AZMNH), Mesa, Arizona

Defining decolonization at AZMNH

Staff members at AZMNH defined decolonization within their organization as the act of carefully and critically considering the interpretation and representation of cultures. By displaying and interpreting cultural objects and artifacts alongside other natural history objects, for example extinct animals, museums are portraying those represented as extinct or more primitive than the dominant culture. At this site, according to the Curator of Anthropology, decolonization is the process of deciding whether "cultural objects should be displayed in a natural history setting, and if they are, how they should be discussed?"

Having only begun the process within the last two years, it is unsurprising that the AZMNH Volunteer Coordinator described the implementation of decolonization practices as "just in its infancy." Despite this, AZMNH's staff and volunteers have already begun to move forward in enacting organizational change to incorporate decolonization practices at their museum. One way that AZMNH has begun the process of moving away from the traditional colonial structure of natural history museums is by focusing on interpretation and representation of cultural objects and the inclusion of the voices of the individuals whose cultures are represented within the museum.

Decolonization strategies

In order to incorporate their decolonization philosophy into their volunteer program AZMNH uses the following strategies: 1) lectures and education opportunities by staff and outside experts; 2) clear communication about appropriate language and behavior when discussing people and cultures; and 3) information sharing through easily accessible resources.

At the time of this study, in-person lectures were a main source of training. For example, interpretation volunteers were asked to attend a lecture by the museum's Curator of Anthropology titled *Socio-cultural Anthropology and the Modern Natural History Museum.* This presentation discussed topics such as cultural appropriation, race, ethnicity, representations of race and gender, and harm done to Indigenous and colonized peoples by the dominant culture. Furthermore, AZMNH works in collaboration with local community colleges and universities to enhance the education of volunteers. According to AZMNH's Volunteer Coordinator, AZMNH "like[s] to utilize those relationships with local colleges and universities to engage speakers to come in and present things that they [are studying] and their research. [These presentations are made] available to volunteers at quarterly meetings or special adult education opportunities."

Clear communication by staff about appropriate behavior and language when discussing Native peoples is another important decolonization strategy implemented by AZMNH. According the Curator of Anthropology, the changes that AZMNH has made in the ways in which Native people are represented to visitors has resulted in some tensions among some long-standing volunteers. To provide volunteers with the knowledge and tools to act in accordance with the museum's decolonization practices, training has been offered. However, it was emphasized by the Curator of Anthropology that volunteers have a responsibility as representatives of the museum to uphold those inclusive practices that contribute to the decolonization of the organization.

Easily accessible online resources and information sharing are other strategies implemented at AZMNH. At this site, volunteers are given access to an "Online Training Portal" that contains "training materials in several formats - slideshows, pdfs, videos as well as practice quizzes to check [volunteers for] understanding of the training materials, and tests to meet […] training qualifications. [This resource also provides volunteers with a place to] […] comment and communicate with […] fellow volunteers on topics at hand." In terms of content that covers topics related to decolonization, the "Online Training Portal" contains materials that discuss, for example, cultures of the ancient Americas and Native Cultures of Western North America. Additionally, the training lecture by the museum's Curator of Anthropology is available via the training portal to all volunteers at AZMNH.

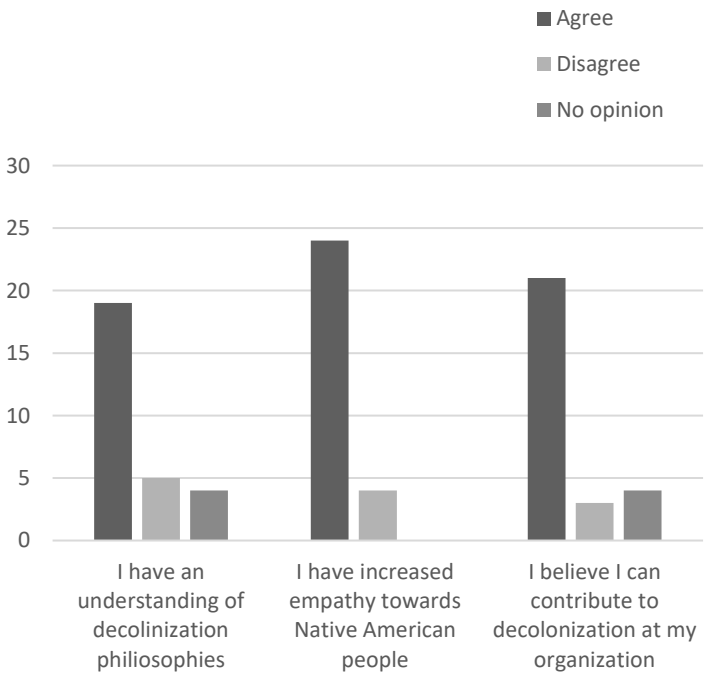
Impact on volunteers at AZMNH

At AZMNH, not only do volunteers hold public facing and educational roles, many indicated that they frequently discuss Native American culture or history with visitors, other volunteers and museum staff and/or work with Native American artifacts or objects as

collections volunteers or during conversations with visitors. Thirty-five percent of participating volunteers indicated they discuss Native American culture or history and 42% of participating volunteers indicated they work with Native American objects.

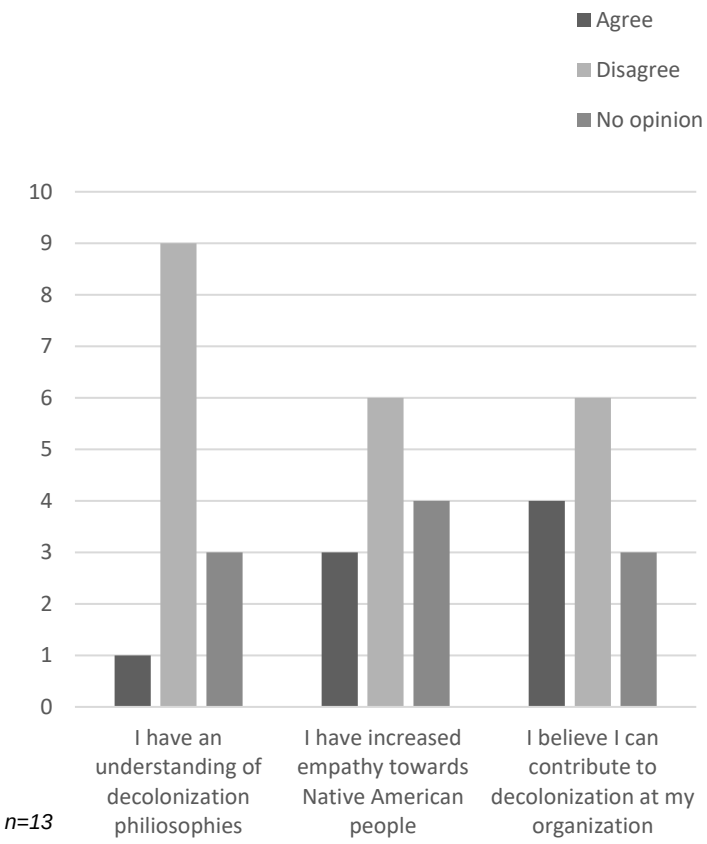
More than half of AZMNH's volunteers (58%) indicated having attended a training that included the following topics that were provided by the researcher: 1) cultural sensitivity; 2) equity and inclusion; 3) diversity; 4) Indigenous ways of knowing; and 5) decolonization. More volunteers responded to having attended cultural sensitivity (40%) and diversity trainings (35%) over any of the other types of trainings listed. Analysis was conducted to determine the impact on volunteer's perceptions of decolonization based on their participation in training programs. Figures 1 and 2 present those results.

Figure 1- Level of agreement for perceptions of decolonization at their organization by volunteers who attended trainings at AZMNH (n=28).



n=28

Figure 2- Level of agreement for perceptions of decolonization at their organization by volunteers who did NOT attend trainings at AZMNH (n=13).



Volunteers were asked to rate their agreement with the three statements listed in Figures 1 and 2 based on their participation in trainings at AZMNH. The majority of these volunteers thought that because of the trainings that they had attended, they had a better understanding of decolonization principles at AZMNH.

Challenges faced by museum staff

At AZMNH, the implementation of decolonization strategies has, in general, had a positive impact on volunteers; however, this work was seen as has been challenging for staff members who focus on decolonization efforts. At AZMNH, one challenge articulated by

participating staff members was the lack of support or even resistance from superiors. According to the Curator of Anthropology at this site, "[t]here's been a lot of pushback [from superiors]. […] Traditionally anthropology has been included in natural history […] and biological anthropology does have its place in a natural history museum, but we need to rethink [the presence of culture in natural history museums]. […] I get a lot of pushback from [a few people higher up in my organization] who maybe don't quite understand the subtleties of [structural] racism." It is possible that the reason for this is that AZMNH has only very recently begun this work and is, therefore, in the initial stages of larger organizational change. There may be several reasons for this resistance. For example, it's possible that there is a hesitation by leadership to break with traditional structures and systems within their organization. However, it is equally possible that leadership is unsupportive due to implicit or conscious biases felt towards Native American peoples.

Another challenge expressed by staff at AZMNH is the lack of time and the overwhelming nature of the collaborative task of incorporating decolonization into their organization and volunteer program. For instance, according to the volunteer coordinator at AZMNH, "this is not something that one person can do, it's a conversation with staff, and community members. It's a real collaborative effort. It involves a lot of communication both internally and externally and then you [bring] all that together into comprehensive training for the volunteers. […] It's a big job." Staff members at AZMNH emphasized the importance of creating effective training for their volunteers, despite the lack of time, personnel, or the overwhelming nature of the task.

Museum of Natural and Cultural History (MNCH), **Eugene, Oregon**

Defining decolonization at MNCH

The Museum of Natural and Cultural History has worked to implement decolonization practices for many years. According to MNCH's Director of Public Program's and Exhibitions, this work began prior to passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990, primarily within the collections and research departments; however, only recently has MNCH begun to use decolonization as a term. At MNCH, decolonization practices focus on representation, providing authorship to local tribes whose cultures are on public display, and serving local tribal communities.

As explained by the Director of Public Programs and Exhibitions decolonization at MNCH is defined as:

> Both a continuum and a cladogram that [consists of many] branching efforts. Because most of our collections and most of our public exhibitions, for many, many years were focused on Oregon Indigenous tribes, we think about [decolonization in relation to these tribes]. For us, it's about providing authorship to the tribes on public display. […] It's not up to [MNCH] to be the authors. It's up to us to be a vessel.

One example of MNCH providing authorship to local tribes was the reopening of its cultural exhibit hall in 2016, which originally had been installed around 2005. For this restoration, MNCH "appointed a […] tribal liaison, who spent two or three years in conversation with tribes, communicating with tribes." During the restoration of the cultural exhibit hall, local tribal members selected a project to be highlighted by the museum in an exhibit. Examples of these projects included Native food restoration and habitat restoration. MNCH then "dispatched a team to collect the story through video and all of the content was provided to the tribes.

[MNCH] did not hold control of the footage." In this way, the museum was providing authorship to local tribal members.

Decolonization strategies

To incorporate its decolonization philosophy into their volunteer program MNCH uses the following strategies: 1) the incorporation of decolonization into volunteer trainings 2) the incorporation of Native perspectives into volunteer training; and 3) training and education of staff by tribal organizations.

At MNCH, the topic of the harmful impact of colonialism on Indigenous people is present in volunteer trainings. For instance, documents provided by MNCH show one volunteer training presentation titled "Native Americans & Oregon Tribal History." In this presentation, volunteer interpreters were given information on the following topics: Indigenous population decline post first contact with colonizing Europeans, the reservation period, the Oregon Donation Land Act of 1850, which allocated Native lands to white settlers. On this topic, the training presentation slide reads, "By the time the law expired in 1855, approximately 30,000 white immigrants had entered Oregon Territory, with some 7,000 individuals making claims to 2.5 million acres of land. Oregon's population increased from 11,873 in 1850 to some 60,000 by 1860." Furthermore, volunteer interpreters who participated in this training were asked the following introspective questions:

1) When you think of American Indians, what images or words come to mind?
2) What was the first story about Native Americans you learned?
3) How does where you are from influence the way you think about Indigenous people?

Questions such as those listed above may present the opportunity for attendees to think critically about their own biases and where those biases may have originated.

A second strategy used by MNCH is the incorporation of Native perspectives into volunteer trainings. For instance, as was explained by MNCH's Director of Public Programs and Exhibits, during the restoration of MNCH's culture hall, a video was created in collaboration with local tribes to ensure accurate and contemporary representation. This video was part of an exhibit in which "it's very intentional to show contemporary people wearing contemporary clothes. Sometimes they're engaged in traditional activities, […] and some of them are just people gathering." This contemporary representation of local tribal members was important to those communities who worked in collaboration with MNCH. According to MNCH's Education Coordinator, this video has been incorporated into volunteer trainings to "highlight current tribal members and what they're doing to maintain their culture and share that within their own community." In this way, MNCH has incorporated Native voices and Native perspectives into their volunteer training.

Other ways that MNCH has worked to incorporate decolonization strategies into their volunteer training is through the professional development of staff members. For instance, staff at MNCH have attended webinars and professional development trainings that were facilitated by tribal organizations, such as programs offered by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. Some of the information and knowledge gained by staff who attended these trainings have been passed onto volunteers. According to MNCH staff members, once they have attended these trainings, they "take what [they've] learned and bring it back [to MNCH's volunteers]." In doing so, staff members and volunteers have shared knowledge about topics discussed in these trainings. Therefore, the trainings facilitated by tribal organizations may have a greater impact on

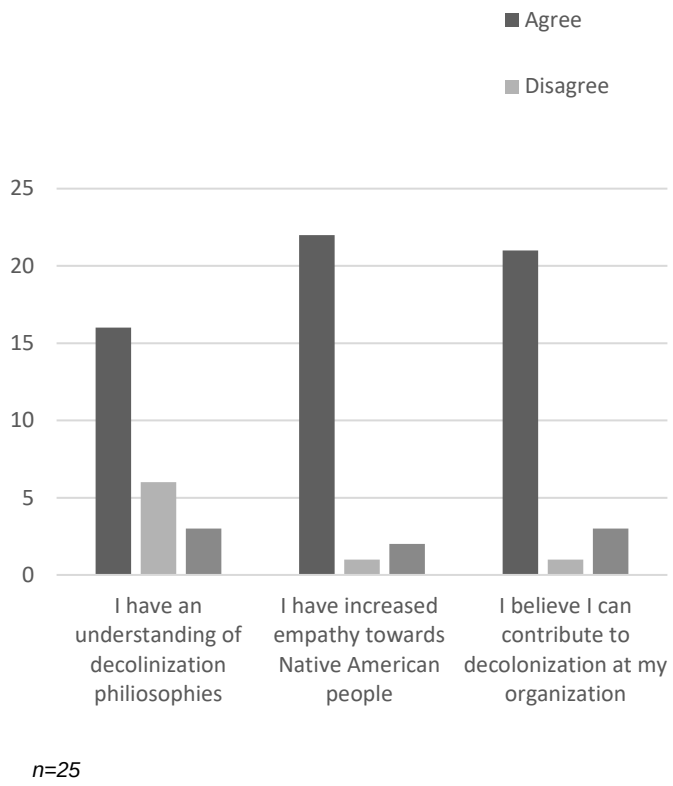
the organizational culture in relation to decolonization and the incorporation of Native perspectives at MNCH.

Impact on volunteers at MNCH

More than half of MNCH's volunteers (68%) indicated they frequently work with Native American artifacts or objects as collections volunteers or during conversations with visitors. and a large majority (84%) indicated that they discuss Native American culture and/or history with visitors, other volunteers and museum staff as part of the responsibilities of their position. Furthermore, all of the MNCH volunteers who participated in this study indicated having attended a training that included the following topics provided by the researcher: 1) cultural sensitivity; 2) equity and inclusion; 3) diversity; 4) Indigenous ways of knowing; and 5) decolonization. This unanimous response may be due to the length of time that MNCH has focused on and practiced decolonization, having done so since the early 1990s. The largest number of volunteers at this site indicated having attended trainings that included the three topics of cultural sensitivity (96%), equity and inclusion (88%), and diversity (84%) while fewer responded as having attended trainings on topics such as Indigenous ways of knowing (68%) and decolonization (60%).

A large number of volunteers indicated that because of training that they had participated in at MNCH they: 1) had a strong understanding of the decolonization philosophies MNCH (65%); 2) had increased empathy towards Native American groups and tribal organizations (88%); and 3) believed that they can contribute to the decolonization at MCNH (85%). Figure 3 presents these findings.

Figure 3- Level of agreement for perceptions of decolonization at their organization by volunteers who have attended trainings at MNCH



n=25

These findings suggest that volunteers perceived that decolonization training positively impacted their understanding of decolonization principles at MNCH.

Challenges faced by museum staff

At MNCH, staff members expressed the greatest challenge they face in implementing decolonization strategies is the lack of time and resources. According to staff members, it can be difficult to "keep all the balls in the air." For example, the Education Coordinator, who manages and trains volunteers, also focuses on youth and family programs in addition to managing the museum's volunteer corps. It is also explained that this work can be challenging since

"volunteers have limited time [as well], and not everyone can make it to the training. [It takes time and oversight] to make sure everybody's on the same page."

The University of Alaska Museum of the North (UAMN), Fairbanks, Alaska

Defining decolonization at UAMN

At this site, decolonization practices focus on collaboration, shared authority, honoring and balancing multiple knowledge traditions, and truth-telling. Although the use of the term decolonization is new to UAMN, this museum has been practicing what may be categorized as decolonization since the early 1990s following the passage of NAGRPA. According to UAMN's Senior Collections Manager of Ethnology, decolonization work at UAMN began in 1994 with the first repatriations. Consequently, it became necessary to "heal relationships with Alaska Native communities who might have a bad feeling about museums in general and our museum in particular." This led to the use of decolonization practices such as "sharing authority, seeking broad input on collections, and privileging Indigenous knowledge."

Additionally, the Museum of the North focuses on "working towards [including] Native voices [and Indigenous] representation within the exhibits, within programs, and [on] social media. [Decolonization is also about keeping] things modern [and being respectful of] the way that people want to be represented. […] [People want to be represented] in a way that is celebratory and accurate."

Decolonization strategies

To incorporate their decolonization philosophy into their volunteer program, UAMN uses the following strategies: 1) in-person lectures by external experts; 2) the incorporation of decolonization topics in volunteer training; 3) the incorporation of Alaska Native perspectives in

volunteer training; 4) clear communication from staff about appropriate language and behavior when discussing people and cultures; and 5) information sharing through easily accessible resources and training materials.

In-person lectures are an important part of the incorporation of decolonization practices into volunteer programming at this site. According to one volunteer, some in-person trainings have included discussions about "Native cultures [and how they] are represented, valuing different perspectives, [conveying] accurate information so that common questions from students can be answered appropriately, [and] pronouncing words in Alaska native languages." The most recent training was facilitated by external experts from the Alaska Native Language Center in which facilitators discussed the connection between thought patterns and language. This training was offered to volunteers because UAMN is hoping to "incorporate [Native] languages into some programs [led by volunteer docents]."

UAMN volunteers also have had opportunities to attend various lectures and talks by the Alaska Native Knowledge Network an organization "designed to serve as a resource for compiling and exchanging information related to Alaska Native knowledge systems and ways of knowing. It has been established to assist Native people, government agencies, educators and the general public in gaining access to the knowledge base that Alaska Natives have acquired through cumulative experience over millennia" (http://ankn.uaf.edu/about.html).

Additionally, UAMN volunteer docents are required to attend multiple trainings that discuss Indigenous peoples, their history, cultures, and the appropriate representation of Indigenous people, which are integral to the important role that volunteer docents play in the educational programming at UAMN. According to UAMN's School and Community Liaison, school field trips for school aged children, grade level Kindergarten through 6th grade, are led by

members of the volunteer docent corps. Each field trip comes with a guide provided by the museum. These guides give clear direction on appropriate and inclusive ways of teaching about Indigenous Alaskan people. For instance, the "University of Alaska Museum of the North: Directed Discovery Field Trip" guide for 2nd and 3rd graders clearly states: "There is a rich diversity of Native Cultures in Alaska. Traditionally, Alaska Natives lived a subsistence lifestyle dependent upon regional resources. Alaska Native cultures are not a thing of the past, rather, they are continuously evolving." Additionally, the docent guide instructs: "[b]e sure to emphasize that although many of the things we will see in the museum and photographs are historic, these are modern cultures. You could ask the class if anyone is Alaska Native."

At UAMN, appropriate language is also an important part of the incorporation of decolonization practices. For example, it was explained by staff members that the use of appropriate identifiers and language when it comes to discussing Indigenous people and cultures is important to consider. Staff feel it is important to provide volunteers with the most current information about the ways that Native Alaskans identify themselves. These "self-identifiers have been incorporated into the docent materials and [updated] in [presentations used for] volunteer training." The use of appropriate self-identifiers may result in the creation of a more inclusive and safe space for Indigenous people who may be visiting or working at the museum.

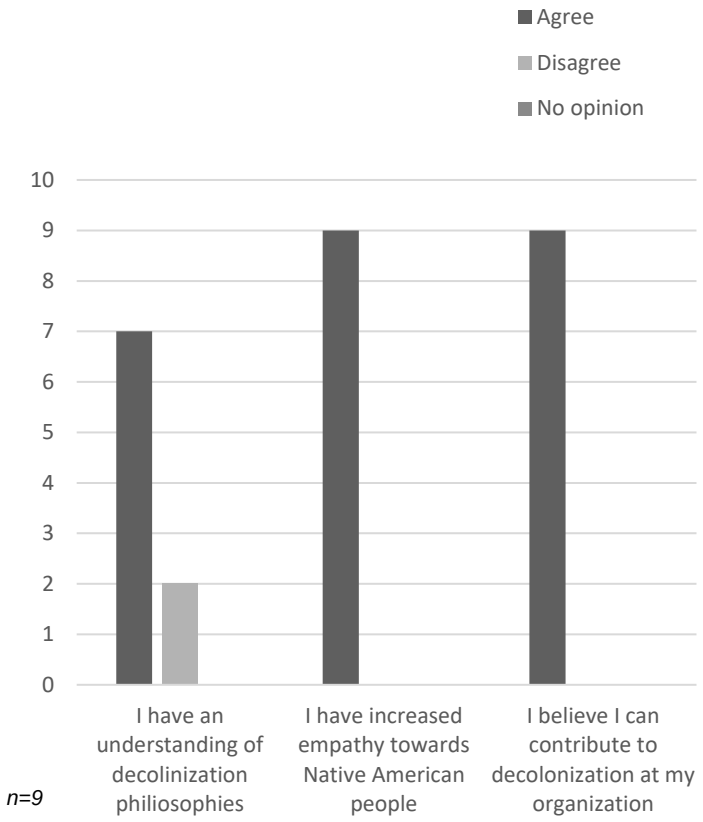
The final strategy that UAMN uses to incorporate decolonization is to provide their volunteers with easily accessible training materials via the volunteer page located on their website. You can find these materials at www.uaf.edu/museum/education/docents/. This page includes documents such as docent program guides that include Native cultures guides and presentation slides about Native cultures.

Impact on volunteers at UAMN

All nine volunteers surveyed at UAMN indicated that they hold the position of docent/interpreter. No other volunteer positions are represented at this site. Of the nine participating volunteers, all indicated that they both discuss Native American history and culture visitors, other volunteers and museum staff and that they work with Native American artifacts and objects during conversations with visitors as part of the responsibilities of their roles.

Furthermore, all of the UAMN volunteers who participated in this study indicated having attended a training that included the following topics provided by the researcher: 1) cultural sensitivity; 2) equity and inclusion; 3) diversity; 4) Indigenous ways of knowing; and 5) decolonization. The largest number of volunteers at this site indicated having attended trainings that included the three topics of cultural sensitivity (9), equity and inclusion (7), and diversity (7) while fewer responded as having attended trainings on topics such as Indigenous ways of knowing (4) and decolonization (3).

Figure 4- Level of agreement for perceptions of decolonization at their organization by volunteers who have attended trainings at UAMN



Overall participating volunteers at this site indicated agreement to having a strong understanding of UAMN's decolonization philosophy, having increased empathy for Native American groups and tribal organizations, and believed that they can personally contribute to the decolonization of UAMN (Figure 4).

Challenges faced by museum staff

At UAMN, the greatest challenges expressed by participating staff differed from the other two sites in that they focused more strongly on the moral ramifications of their work and less on the logistical challenges that museums face. For instance, one staff member explained

that the challenges they face in terms of communication and collaboration with local villages stems from generations of trauma that were suffered due to colonialism. It is explained by this staff member:

> We of course, working in a museum, think that what we do is the most important thing in the world and that cultural heritage is so important, and that we can solve the world's problems. But [for example], our villages [in Alaska], are dealing with the highest suicide rates, dealing with substance abuse, sexual abuse, and generations of trauma. […] We try to engage these groups to do these projects that we think are really important. We [know that we] can really promote [their] needs and get people to understand why [their] cultural heritage is so beautiful and innovative and important. But these are the realities of existence that we know [these communities and villages] are grappling with. And so, we grapple with a lot of non-responsiveness.

The practice of museum decolonization through collaboration highlights the importance of creating balance between the organization's desire to serve the Native communities that they represent and ensuring that in asking for collaboration, they are not burdening the very communities that they serve.

Additionally, according to the School and Community Liaison at the UAMN, another moral challenge present in this work is the feeling of being an "imposter." They explained that UAMN's "docent corps and employees [are white] pretty much across the board. [UAMN has] a lack of diversity in many ways, […] [but despite that lack of diversity], you want to be an ally and you want to do the right thing. [It is] good to try [to incorporate decolonization] instead of not doing it. […] It's better to help people amplify their voices through you and through what you're doing."

Cross-case discussion

What strategies are natural history museums implementing to introduce decolonization efforts into their volunteer programs?

Each of the sites that participated in this study are unique in the ways that they incorporate decolonization into their volunteer program and the length of time that they have focused on decolonization practices. At AZMNH, this work has just begun. Staff at this site have only recently, within the last year, begun to introduce their volunteers to the concept of museum decolonization. MNCH and UAMN are at a similar stage in their decolonization journey. Staff at both sites indicated they believe their organization has been practicing decolonization in some form since the implementation of NAGPRA policies in the early 1990s; however, both acknowledge that they have only recently begun to equate these practices with the newly popularized term "decolonization."

Furthermore, at these sites the members of staff who work to progress decolonization practices include those who hold positions in cultural collections, programs and exhibits, education, and volunteer management. At AZMNH, the greatest advocate for museum decolonization is the Curator of Anthropology who collaborates closely with AZMNH's Volunteer Coordinator and other staff members. Similarly, at UAMN, the Senior Collections Manager of Ethnology leads decolonization work at their organization. At MNCH, decolonization efforts are led by the Director of Public Programs and Exhibits. All of these individuals have worked in positions that require them to consider how Indigenous people are represented by their organizations.

Similarities and differences can be drawn between the strategies that each organization uses to incorporate decolonization into their volunteer programs. AZMNH relies mostly on

traditional approaches to decolonization training such as lectures, materials, and online resources with a focus on cultural sensitivity. MNCH focuses their efforts on the inclusion of Native voices and collaborating with tribal organizations on staff development. UAMN, in turn, utilizes a combination of strategies observed at the other two sites and emphasizes the importance of Native voices and Native languages. Table 1 below outlines the strategies used by each site and indicates where there is overlap of strategies and where there are differences.

Table 1- Decolonization strategies by site

Decolonization Strategy	Arizona Museum of Natural History (AZMNH)	The Museum of the North (UAMN)	The Museum of Natural and Cultural History (MNCH)
Incorporation of decolonization topics in volunteer training	X	X	X
Clear communication from staff about appropriate behavior and language	X	X	
Information sharing through easily accessible online resources	X	X	
Lectures by external experts	X	X	X
Lectures by museum staff	X		
Inclusion of Native perspectives in volunteer training		X	X
Staff training and education			X

Source: Museum staff interviews

All three sites have incorporated topics relating to decolonization in their volunteer training. While some of these trainings directly present information on colonial harm, such as MNCH's training entitled *Native Americans & Oregon Tribal History*, others, such as AZMNH's lecture *Socio-cultural Anthropology and the Modern Natural History Museum*,

discuss topics related to decolonization such as the history of racism and truth-telling in museums and academia. At UAMN volunteer training covers topics such as the diversity of Native cultures in Alaska, Native Alaskan traditions, and the emphasis that "Alaska Native cultures are not a thing of the past, rather are continuously evolving." Furthermore, AZMNH and UAMN both provide their volunteers with accessible online training materials and resources and clear communication about appropriate language and behavior when discussing Native American peoples and cultures.

At all three sites, lectures by staff and/or external experts were utilized as part of their decolonization strategies. At AZMNH lectures were conducted by staff members as well as outside experts sourced from local universities and community colleges. Staff lectures like the ones given by AZMNH's Curator of Anthropology, are intended to present a baseline of knowledge for volunteers surrounding decolonization topics. At UAMN and MNCH, lectures are conducted by outside experts sourced from, for example, educational and tribal organizations. UAMN invites experts from the local school district to discuss topics such as the different populations of students they may encounter. This site also invites experts from tribal organizations to discuss Native Alaskan culture, language, and history. At MNCH volunteers are given the opportunity to attend lectures by outside experts or guest speakers. These opportunities happen sporadically but often correspond with the installation of a new exhibit. The use of outside experts may be a result of the desire by these two sites to share authority and authorship with the Indigenous people with whom they collaborate. Both UAMN and MNCH have worked to foster relationships with local tribal organizations since adopting NAGPRA policies in the early 1990s.

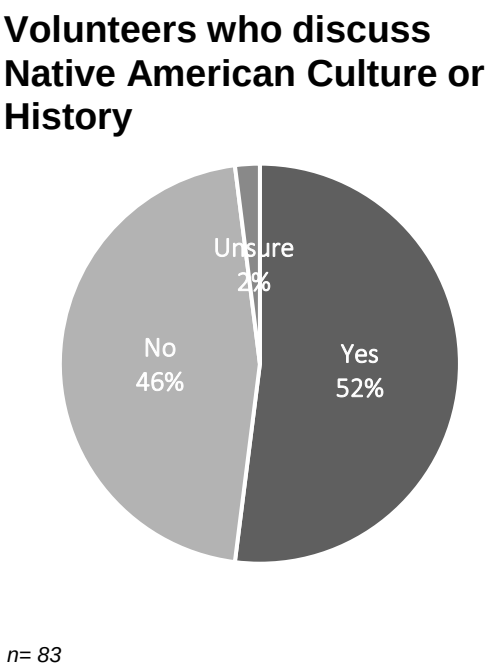
It is also possible that these relationships have influenced the extent to which UAMN and MNCH have incorporated Native perspectives and Native voices into their decolonization practices in volunteer training. Examples of these include trainings facilitated by tribal members or organizations and videos of tribal members presenting information about their own lives and cultures. UAMN and MNCH have subsequently opened pathways that enable them to directly interact with individuals belonging to tribes who can share their experiences and perspectives. Since AZMNH has only recently begun to focus on decolonization, the museum may not have had time to develop the same types of relationships with the local tribal organization and members. Consequently, these findings suggest that the longer the organization has been involved in decolonization work, the stronger the relationship it has with tribal organizations and members, and the more robust opportunities the museum is able to offer its volunteers, including the incorporation of Native perspectives into their volunteer training and decolonization strategies.

What is the impact on volunteers when decolonization efforts are introduced and incorporated into volunteer programs at natural history museums?

Of the eighty-three volunteers who participated in this study, sixty indicated having attended one or more trainings that included topics such as diversity, equity and inclusion, Indigenous ways of knowing, decolonization, and cultural sensitivity. Thirteen volunteers indicated having not attended any of these types of trainings and eight were unsure. The volunteers who indicated that they had not attended any training or were unsure, are all members of the volunteer corps at AZMNH. This may be due to the newness of AZMNH's decolonization focus.

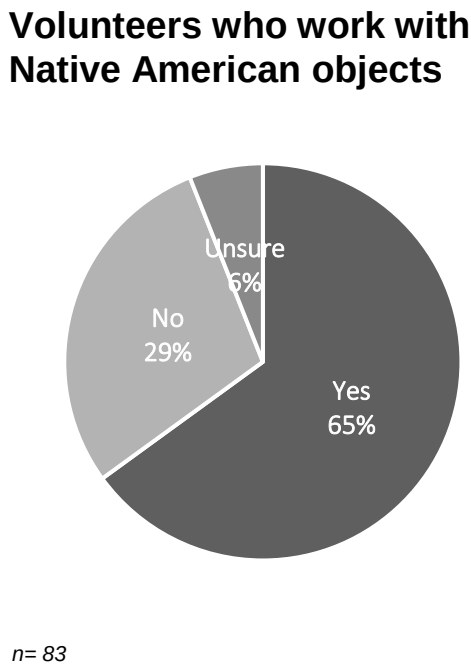
Further, more than half of the respondents indicated that their volunteer position requires them to discuss Native American culture or history and an even larger percentage indicated that they directly work with Native American objects as part of their duties. Figures 5 and 6 present these results.

Figure 5



n= 83

Figure 6



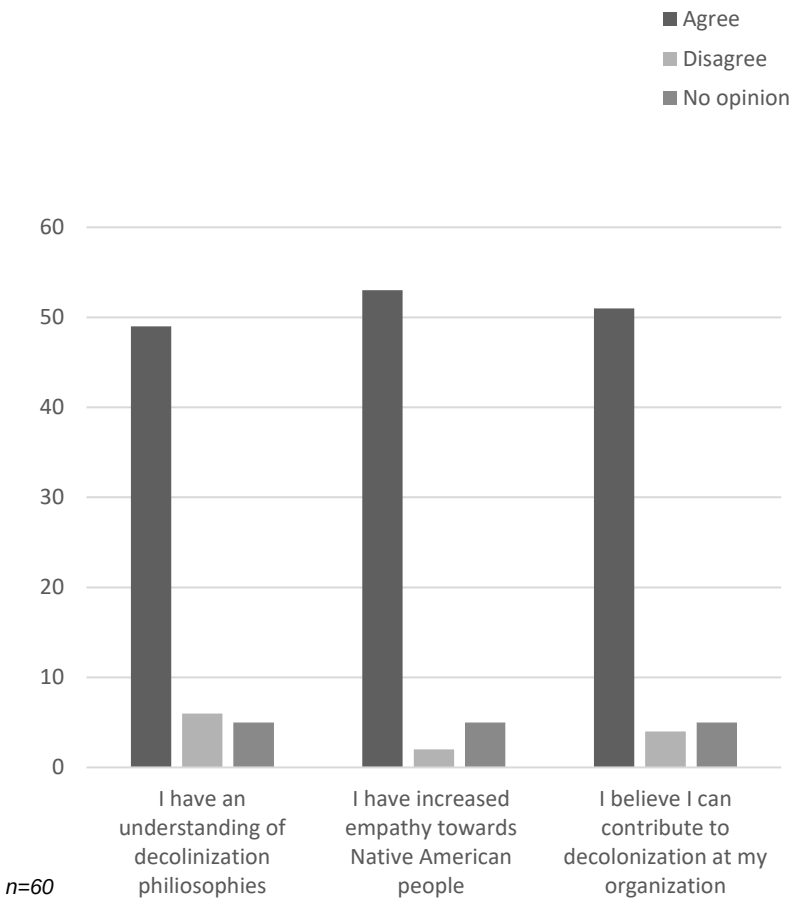
n= 83

Volunteers were asked to indicate their level of agreement to the following statements: Because of volunteer training at my organization…

1) I have a strong understanding of the decolonization philosophies at my organization.
2) I have increased empathy towards Native American groups and tribal organizations.
3) I believe that I, as a volunteer can contribute to the decolonization of my organization

These statements were meant to gauge the impact that trainings that included topics related to museum decolonization had on volunteers. Figure 7 presents the level of agreement for these three statements by the sixty volunteers across all three sites who attended trainings. Overall, volunteers are more likely to agree with all three statements than to disagree or indicate no opinion.

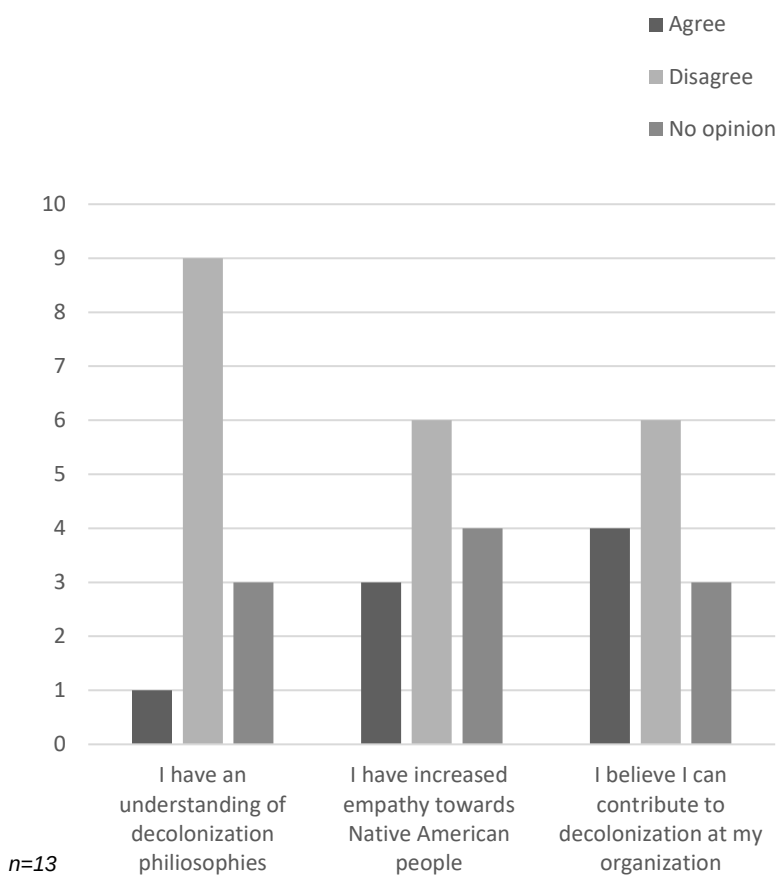
Figure 7- Level of agreement for perceptions of decolonization at their organization by volunteers who have attended trainings



Thirteen of these volunteers indicated that they did not attend a training. All of these volunteers hold positions at AZMNH. This may be because AZMNH has only having begun

recently focusing on decolonization and offering trainings covering topics related to decolonization. Figure 8 presents the level of agreement for the three statements listed above for the thirteen volunteers who did not attend trainings.

Figure 8- Level of agreement for perceptions of decolonization at their organization by volunteers who did NOT attend trainings



Volunteers who indicated that they did not attend training that covered the topics previously listed were less likely to have a strong understanding of their organization's decolonization philosophy, did not have increased empathy towards Native American groups, and did not believe that they could contribute to the decolonization of their organization.

Lessons Learned

The museum staff who were interviewed for this study were asked to share the greatest lessons about the process of implementing decolonization practices at their organizations. One lesson expressed by staff members was the importance of acknowledging volunteer differences. According to staff at both AZMNH and MNCH, one important lesson they have learned in their experiences so far is that educating volunteers about inclusion, equity, and decolonization can be challenging. Museum professionals who work with volunteers should not "assume that every [volunteer] is starting with the same information or [that they're all] on the same page or that they are all thinking about what you are covering in the same way." Trainings must start with the basics and "then build from there to make sure everybody has the same groundwork to start from."

Similarly, according to AZMNH's Volunteer Coordinator, no matter how passionate a museum professional is about decolonization "you can't make people participate, but you can provide them with the information and ask them to participate." In some cases, despite providing volunteers with the knowledge and tools to further decolonization practices, some will choose not to participate. For instance, as it was explained b AZMNH's Curator of Anthropology, "anytime you start to change a vision or a direction, you're going to have some loss." At AZMNH, "some volunteers [have left] who were [upset] about the direction that [AZMNH is] taking. As much as [these volunteers] wanted to see [AZMNH] professionalize, they felt a little left out of it. No matter how much they were included, it's such a different outlook from the one that they were most involved with […], it [was] hard to reconcile."

A second important lesson to doing this work is to be open and committed. It is okay to not know everything, but museum professionals doing this type of work must be vigilant and

resilient. According to the Senior Collection Manager at the Museum of the North, "it's okay to not know the answers and to not know how to do this work. It's okay to make mistakes and if you're learning from them. You can learn from [that] mistake. […] Be open to new experiences and just always remember that these are real people, real families and real connections that we're trying to represent and make relevant." UAMN staff members explain that "you have to show up. What we do is a service job. […] We do this because we believe in it and we love it, and we are a part of social justice work. We have a huge responsibility and we have to keep showing up."

Furthermore, this work is a continuum. UAMN staff members explained that decolonization work "is ongoing. It doesn't end. There are always questions. […] It's a conversation so it doesn't just end. [For example], you might think you had something well vetted, but that doesn't mean that next time you revisit it you might not have to change something."

One final lesson imparted by participants was to celebrate success. Although this work is difficult, ongoing, and morally challenging for museum professionals, it is also rewarding. For instance, at AZMNH, this work has "reinvigorated" their museum and bolstered "excitement about Archaeology and Anthropology." It has also "opened up new ways of connection with [AZMNH's] community and created a more inclusive environment [at the museum]". According to AZMNH's staff members, volunteers have played a large role in the creation of this reinvigoration.

At MNCH, reward comes when a volunteer applies something they learned in the training to real world situations. MNCH's Education Coordinator explains that they "always love it when a volunteer picks up something from training and then they go out into the real world outside of

the museum and they use it. They have some type of interaction or conversation, [and realize that these trainings have real world applications] that they will use for the rest of their lives. […] There is a real impact."

The impact of this work is evident in visitors as well. For instance, at the Museum of the North, docents play a large role in facilitating education programming during school field trips. The greatest reward, according to UAMN participating staff members is witnessing the celebratory manner in which visiting Alaskan Native children share their history and culture with their peers, the docents, and museum staff. One participating staff member explained that "there's definitely a more positive self-identification with Native peoples. In the past, someone might not [want to say that they are a Native person]. Whereas now, I see kids that come in for our programs and they're excited to share their backgrounds […] and have pride in their culture."

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications, and Further Research

Modern day museums are undergoing a paradigm shift. These organizations are moving away from acting as bastions of western culture to spaces where social justice and equity are taking high priority. Along with this paradigm shift comes the necessity to confront the history of colonial harm upon which museums lay their foundations. Because of the connection between museums and colonial harm "museums can be very painful sites for Native peoples, as they are intimately tied to the colonization process" (Lonetree, 2012, p.1). Museums must reckon with this connection if they are ever to truly be equitable and accessible spaces for all people.

Museum volunteers, like staff, are an important part of the acknowledgement and confrontation of colonial harm. Volunteers can be strong advocates for the organizations to which they belong. As Elizabeth Merritt explains in her article *Volunteers and Museum Labor,* "[v]olunteers are a necessary and desirable part of the museum workforce. They are a distinct class of people who benefit from museums in deep and meaningful ways. And they expand our ability to do good work that reaches others" (Merritt, 2016). These individuals support their organizations by donating not just their time, expertise, and skills, but by also donating their passion and commitment. When given the tools to make change within their museums, volunteers may prove to be a powerful force.

Conclusions and Implications

There is a large amount of fieldwide knowledge surrounding volunteer motivation and impact in natural history museums; however, there is a gap in the knowledge surrounding the ways in which volunteer programs contribute to colonial structures and the ways in which they could contribute to decolonization efforts in natural history museums. Because the literature

lacks specifics on how volunteer managers and museum staff can incorporate decolonization practices into their volunteer corps, the purpose of this study was to investigate the strategies and the impact of those strategies on volunteers utilized at three organizations that are focusing on decolonization. More specifically, this study sought to gain an understanding of: 1) the strategies that natural history museums are implementing to introduce decolonization efforts into their volunteer programs; and 2) the impact on volunteers when decolonization efforts are introduced to them.

What strategies are natural history museums implementing to introduce decolonization efforts into their volunteer programs?

This study identified seven strategies used by the participating museums to incorporate decolonization practices into their volunteer programs. These strategies included: 1) the incorporation of decolonization topics in volunteer training; 2) clear communication from staff about appropriate behavior and language when discussing Native American peoples, culture, and history; 3) information sharing through online resources; 4) lectures by external experts; 5) lectures by museum staff; 6) inclusion of Native perspectives in volunteer training; and 7) staff training and education.

Strategies used by each site varied; however, there were notable differences when comparing strategies used by MNCH and UAMN, two museums that have focused on decolonization since the early 1990s, with those used by AZMNH, a museum that has only recently begun focusing on decolonization. For instance, MNCH and UAMN both incorporate Native perspectives in their volunteer training. By contrast, AZMNH does not utilize this strategy. Additionally, UAMN and MNCH offer their volunteers opportunities to attend lectures conducted by tribal members and tribal organizations. At AZMNH lectures are conducted by

experts sourced from local universities and community colleges and not from tribal organizations. It may be that, because MNCH and UAMN have practiced decolonization for a longer period of time, these museums have had the opportunity to foster connections and relationships with local tribal members and organizations who are open to sharing their perspectives with museum staff and volunteers.

What is the impact on volunteers when decolonization efforts are introduced and incorporated into volunteer programs at natural history museums?

Through the implementation of strategies such as volunteer trainings that include topics related to decolonization, volunteers at all three sites exhibit greater support for museum decolonization, increased empathy towards Native American people, and are more likely to feel that they can contribute to the decolonization work at their organizations. For instance, volunteers who participated in trainings overall indicated they are in support of common decolonization practices. In contrast, volunteers who did not attend any trainings that covered topics relating to decolonization were less likely to feel they understood the decolonization philosophies at their organization and were less likely to feel empowered to contribute to the decolonization work at their organization.

These findings are reinforced by Ohlandt in her study entitled *Creating a greater connection: Volunteer training in Seattle-area museums*. Ohlandt concluded that volunteer trainings, whether they are lecture style trainings or on-the-job trainings, benefited the volunteer individually, conveyed the organization's mission, and created ownership in the volunteer of their role within the organization (Ohlandt, 2013). This sense of ownership is evident in volunteers who attended trainings at each of the three participating sites of this study. Those who attended trainings were more likely to feel empowered to contribute to the decolonization of their

organization. Therefore, volunteer managers and museum leadership should consider incorporating decolonization topics into volunteer training.

Furthermore, an increase in the incorporation of Native perspectives in volunteer training correlated with an increase of empathy in volunteers for Native American people. According to Graham and Murphy, in a post-NAGRPA era, museums and Native American communities have "establish[ed] relationships that recognize common goals of education and community service that are less centered on preserving objects of the past than on using those objects and newfound relationships to build a future. Today's reconnection between Native Americans and the objects in museum collections are vivid expressions of the vitality and continuity of these cultures" (Graham & Murphy, 2010, p. 122). By providing more robust opportunities for volunteers to understand the perspective of Native American people, decolonizing organizations will encourage a growing understanding between the Native American communities they serve and the individuals who make up their volunteer corps.

The results of this study also found a potential relationship between the amount of time that museums have been practicing decolonization and the extent to which their decolonization practices and philosophies are integrated into their volunteer programs. The longer a museum has focused on decolonization, the more aware and supportive its volunteers are of their museum's decolonization practices. This is likely evidence of a systemic shift in the organization. "A systemic shift is realized when systemic solutions move beyond [, for example,] prescriptions for one-time 'sensitivity' or 'diversity trainings' and move towards considering the museum institution at large" (Anderson et. al, 2017, p.25). Museum professionals working to incorporate decolonization into their volunteer trainings should note that the process of enacting systemic change takes time and great effort. This includes developing stronger relationships with tribal

communities and members to ensure that Native perspectives and voices are present in volunteer trainings, along with strong communication strategies between staff and volunteers about appropriate language and behavior when representing Native peoples and cultures.

Further Research

For future studies, it will be important to understand the impact that increased empathy towards Native American people as a result of volunteer training changes the ways in which volunteers perform their duties in natural history museums. Are docents or interpreters better able to impart their increased empathy along to visitors? Will collection volunteers have a greater respect for or understanding of the meaning behind the objects or artifacts with which they work? This type of study will be important for decolonizing museums in that it will help them understand the type of impact that incorporating decolonization practices into their volunteer programs will have on the communities they serve.

Research should extend to measuring the impact on visitors who interact with volunteers who have undergone decolonization training. Will visitors exhibit any change in attitudes or behaviors towards colonized people? This research will further and contribute to the broader discussion among museum professionals about decolonization in museums and will benefit volunteer managers seeking to understand the impact that their volunteers have on the decolonization efforts at their organizations and among the communities they serve.

Finally, and of greatest importance, research should be done to understand the ways that Indigenous people who are asked to collaborate with natural history museums to train volunteers are impacted by this work. Is it a burden for these individuals to participate in museum work? Do they experience discrimination or racism? What types of experiences do they have when sharing their knowledge and perspective with museum volunteers? After all, the only way to truly enact

change towards decolonization in museums is to listen to the individuals who have been and who are presently most impacted by colonialism.

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Appendix A

PROSPECTIVE RESEARCH SITE – RECRUITING MATERIALS

Prospective Research Site Email Template

Good afternoon,

I am a Museology graduate student at the University of Washington, and I am seeking potential research sites for my thesis. I am also the Volunteer Program Assistant at the Burke Museum here in Seattle.

My thesis topic is decolonization strategies at natural history museums with a focus on volunteer programs. I am interested in your museum as a potential research site and I am wondering if you would have a few minutes, no more than 15 minutes, to talk with me about the details of my study.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Sarah Brenner

Prospective Research Site Phone Talking Points

- Explanation of my study and the reason I chose my study.
- What, if anything, does your museum do to further decolonization?
- Would you say that your museum has a focus decolonization?
- What does the word decolonization mean for your organization?
- What is the nature of your volunteer program?
    - Size
    - Types of roles
- Do you incorporate decolonization strategies into your volunteer program?
    - Training
    - Roles

Once determination has been made that a site is an appropriate location for the research study the contact will be given an overview of next steps. Contacts are informed that they will receive a follow up communication via email or phone call to set up dates and times for interviews to take place and for the dissemination of the online volunteer questionnaire.

Appendix B

ONLINE VOLUNTEER QUESTIONNAIRE EMAIL INTRODUCTION TEMPLATE

This statement was provided to Volunteer Coordinators/Managers to include in their email/ newsletter/ etc. to volunteers when distributing the Online Volunteer Questionnaire to volunteers.

Hello!

My name is Sarah Brenner and I am a graduate student at the University of Washington in Seattle, WA. I am excited to be working with (insert institution name) to conduct my research study. The purpose of my study is to discover the ways in which museums are incorporating decolonization practices in their volunteer program.

Please consider completing this short (about 5 minute) survey to help me better understand your experience as a volunteer at an institution that is implementing decolonization practices. Your answers are anonymous and confidential and will be contributing to the advancement of decolonization practices at your museum and within the museum field in the United States.

Thank you for your time!

With gratitude,

Sarah Brenner

Appendix C

MUSEUM EXHIBIT/CURATORIAL/INTERPRETATION STAFF INTERVIEW GUIDE

Sarah Brenner
Date:
Interview Site:
Name and title of interviewee:

Research Instrument:
Decolonizing Natural History Museums Through Volunteer Engagement

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Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. You are being interviewed by me because you and your colleague/s have indicated that you are interested in participating in my research study. I am conducting this study to discover the ways in which natural history museum are incorporating decolonization practices into their volunteer programs. With our discussion today, I hope to gain an understanding of the philosophies and impacts of the implementation of decolonization strategies at your museum. This information will help to give me a good understanding of what decolonization means specifically at your institution presently.

I will be recording our conversation today for the purpose of retaining as much information as possible. The recording will not be shared with or used by anyone other than myself.

I will be using quotes from our conversation, but I will not be attributing them to you and the information you provide will be completely anonymous.

Are you comfortable with me recording our conversation today?

Do you have any questions about this study or what is being asked of you?

Do you agree to be interviewed for my study?

Great. Let's begin…

Section 1: General professional information

1. What is your professional title?

2. What are the general roles and responsibilities of your title?

3. How long have you been working at [institution name]?

Section 2

For the next set of questions, I will be using the term decolonization. Decolonization is a complex term and does not have one specific definition.

---

4. To begin our conversation, are you willing to share your personal understanding of what museum decolonization means?

5. Is the definition of decolonization we discussed earlier how your institution uses the term? Or is it described differently in some way?

6. In your position, do you focus on decolonization? In what ways?

7. To your knowledge, is decolonization something your institution is thinking about or acting on?
   If yes:
   - In what ways?
   - Why did your institution decide to start thinking about decolonization?
   - How did you institution begin the process?

8. Who are the people, committees, or groups that are the most active in furthering the process of decolonization at your institution?

9. To your knowledge, how involved are board members in pursuing decolonization processes at your institution?

10. What groups or communities does your institution collaborate with to further the process of decolonization?
    - Can you describe the relationship between your institution and these groups?
    - In your opinion, how has collaboration with these groups impacted your institution?

11. In your opinion what has been the most challenging aspect of implementing decolonization strategies at your institution?

12. In your opinion, what has been the most rewarding aspect of implementing decolonization strategies at your institution?

13. What are the important lessons that you and your colleagues have learned throughout the process of implementing decolonization strategies?

14. In what ways has your institution been impacted by the process of implementing decolonization strategies?

15. Looking forward, can you describe what the future of decolonization is at your institution?

Thank you for your time and the thoughtfulness of your responses. I look forward to sharing the findings of my study with you and your colleagues.

Appendix D

MUSEUM VOLUNTEER MANAGER/COORDINATOR INTERVIEW GUIDE

Sarah Brenner
Date:
Interview Site:
Name and title of interviewee:

Research Instrument:
Decolonizing Natural History Museums Through Volunteer Engagement

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. You are being interviewed by me because you and your colleague/s have indicated that you are interested in participating in my research study. I am conducting this study to discover the ways in which natural history museum are incorporating decolonization practices into their volunteer programs. With our discussion today, I hope to gain an understanding of the way in which decolonization strategies are being implemented within your museum's volunteer program. I also hope to understand the impact that this has had on your volunteers and volunteer program.

I will be recording our conversation today for the purpose of retaining as much information as possible. The recording will not be shared with or used by anyone other than myself.

I will be using quotes from our conversation, but I will not be attributing them to you and the information you provide will be completely anonymous.

Are you comfortable with me recording our conversation today?

Do you have any questions about this study or what is being asked of you?

Do you agree to being interviewed for my study?

Great. Let's begin…

Section 1: General professional information

16. What is your professional title?

17. What are the general roles and responsibilities of your title?

18. How long have you been working at [institution name]?

Section 2: Overview of Volunteer Program

19. How many volunteers do you have at your museum?

20. What types of roles/duties do your volunteers perform?

21. What types of professional development or training do you offer or require of your volunteers?

22. On average, how long do your volunteers typically remain active at your institution?

23. In your experience, what are the main motivators for your volunteers? Why do they choose to volunteer at your organization?

Section 3: Decolonization strategies/impacts

For the next set of questions, I will be using the term decolonization. Decolonization is a complex term and does not have one specific definition.

---

24. To begin our conversation, are you willing to share your personal understanding of what museum decolonization means?

25. Is this definition of decolonization that you provided how your institution uses the term? Or is it described differently in some way?

26. To your knowledge, is decolonization something your institution is thinking about or acting on? If so, in what ways?

27. Please describe the ways in which you have, or are planning to, incorporate decolonization into your volunteer program?

28. In what ways, if at all, have you incorporated decolonization practice into your volunteer training?

29. What other groups/ staff members/ communities have you collaborated with, if any, to incorporate decolonization practice into your volunteer program?

30. I'm interested in learning how your museum's decolonization practices have impacted various aspects of volunteer culture. Specifically, how, if at all, has decolonization practice impacted:
    - the structure of your volunteer program?
    - individual volunteers?
    - volunteer-visitor interactions?

31. In your opinion what has been the most challenging aspect of incorporating decolonization practice in your volunteer program?

32. In your opinion, what has been the most rewarding aspect of incorporating decolonization practice in your volunteer program?

33. What are the important lessons that you and your colleagues have learned throughout the process of incorporating decolonization practice in your volunteer programs?

34. Looking forward, can you describe what the future of your volunteer program looks like? Will you continue or increase focus on decolonization in your volunteer program? In what ways are you hoping to further this work?

Thank you for your time and the thoughtfulness of your responses. I look forward to sharing the findings of my study with you and your colleagues.

Appendix E

VOLUNTEER ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

Decolonizing Museums through Volunteer Engagement: Volunteer Questionnaire

Welcome!

You are being asked to participate in a research study about the ways in which museums are addressing their colonial pasts through volunteer engagement. You have been selected because your organization has indicated a focus on decolonization and has agreed to participate in this study.

If you agree to participate in this research, you will complete the following online survey which includes questions about your volunteer experience at your museum and your opinions and knowledge about current museum decolonization practices. The survey will take about 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

There are no anticipated risks to you by participating in this study. Your answers will be anonymous. The records of this survey will be kept private, accessible only by the researcher. No identifying information will be included in any reports resulting from this study.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and there are no consequences to you if you choose not to participate. You are free to quit the survey at any time. If you do exit the survey, your answers will not be cached or included in any data analysis. Only those participants who fully complete the survey will have their responses counted. If you have questions about this study or would like a copy of this consent page, please contact the researcher:

Sarah Brenner
UW Graduate Studies
Museology Master of Arts Program
dotsos@uw.edu

By clicking "OK" below, I indicate that I have read the above information, had the chance to ask questions and receive answers, and I consent to take part in the research.

NEXT PAGE

Section 1: General information about your volunteer position

1. How long have you been a volunteer at your organization?

   - ☐ Less than 6 months
   - ☐ 6 months -1 year
   - ☐ 2-3 years
   - ☐ 4-5 years
   - ☐ 6-10 years
   - ☐ More than 10 years

2. What volunteer position/s have you held at your organization?

3. Approximately how many hours per month do you volunteer at your organization?

   - ☐ Occasionally, for special events only
   - ☐ Less than 1 hour
   - ☐ 1 to 5
   - ☐ 6 to 10
   - ☐ More than 10 hours

4. In your own words, please share what motivates you to volunteer at your organization.

NEXT PAGE

Section 2: Decolonization practices and volunteer training at your museum

Statement about "decolonization":

My research study focuses on the issue of decolonization. Decolonization does not have one specific definition and many people feel that the term is problematic for varied reasons. However, for the purpose of my study, I am defining decolonization as follows:

"As applied to the relationship of institutions such as museums to the Native people of the united states, "decolonization" means, at a minimum, sharing authority for the documentation and interpretation of Native culture. […] Decolonized museums recognize the potential of museum collections and expertise to be of service to Native communities in many ways: supporting education, community health, economic development, and spiritual practice."

The Abbe Museum (https://abbemuseum.wordpress.com/about-us/decolonization/)

The following questions refer to decolonization, as defined above.

5. Does your volunteer position require you to discuss Native American history or culture with members of the public?
   [ ] Yes [ ] No [ ] Unsure

6. Does your volunteer position require you to work with Native American cultural objects or artifacts?

   [ ] Yes [ ] No [ ] Unsure

7. Has your organization provided any of the following types of training to you? (e.g. in person trainings, reading materials or videos/webinars)
   Please mark all that apply:

   [ ] Cultural sensitivity

   [ ] Equity and inclusion

   [ ] Diversity

   [ ] Indigenous Ways of Knowing

   [ ] Museum decolonization/ Colonial history

[ ] None

[ ] Unsure

8. During your training, did you learn from or work with any member/s of a Native American tribal organization or community?

[ ] Yes [ ] No [ ] Unsure

If yes, in your own words, please describe this portion of your training (e.g. topics of discussion, activities that you participated in, etc.):

9. For the following statements, indicate your agreement on a scale of "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	No opinion
I believe that all Native American artifacts should be repatriated.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I believe that museums must collaborate with Native American groups and tribes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I believe that indigenous peoples should have access to objects and artifacts that are part of a museum collection.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I believe that all people should have agency and control over how their culture is represented.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

10. For the following statements, indicate your agreement on a scale of "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree:"

Because of volunteer training at my organization…

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	No opinion
I have a strong understanding of decolonization philosophies at my organization.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have increased empathy towards Native American groups and tribal organizations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I believe that I, as a volunteer, can contribute to the decolonization work at my organization.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Thank you for contributing to this research study.