

Redefining and “Re-presenting” Native American Collections and Curatorial Practice

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe the collections and curatorial practices of three O’odham museums and centers in Arizona. Specifically, this study explored how these museums amended the frameworks of preservation, accessibility to collections, and stewardship to suit their needs and how traditional care methods were incorporated. Since the tribal museum movement of the 1960s and 1970s, tribal museums and cultural centers have adopted Western collections management and curatorial museum practices and policies, often operating under pre-established museum models that contrasted against world and cultural views of Native people. Although much can be learned from Western collections and curatorial practice and policy, Native American worldviews and beliefs presented an alternative to the approach of Western practice and policy. Data was collected through semi-structured, one-on-one interviews conducted with museum staff at O’odham tribal museums. Study results suggested that tribal museum practitioners employed best practices that incorporated both Western frameworks and Native American cultural values, sought to foster connection to their home communities and

provided spaces that maintained tribal culture and history. A primary limitation was the small sample of tribal museums studied and findings may not be transferrable to phenomena taking place at tribal museums across the country.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the tribal museum movement of the 1960s and 1970s, tribal museums and cultural centers adopted Western collections and curatorial museum practices and policies, often operating under pre-established museum models that contrasted against world and cultural views of Native people.¹ Those models reflected the status quo or Western museum framework. This Western system did not reflect the beliefs held by Native people. Western collections and curatorial museum practices and policies were often implemented within tribal communities without culturally sensitive modifications. Although much was learned from Western collections and curatorial practice and policy, Native American worldviews and beliefs present an alternative to the approach of Western practices and policies, affecting how Native American run museums use and practice culturally appropriate ways of caring for their collections.

NAGPRA

Museums established on tribal lands rose out of the need for Native Americans to take ownership “in the presentation of their material culture”.² Activism sparked Native Americans to

Change museum practices by (1) protesting stereotypical display of Native American history and culture at mainstream institutions; (2) protesting the collecting, display, and holding of American Indian human remains; (3) seeking to change museums from the inside by having Native people enter into the profession; (4) challenging the authority of Western museums to represent Native American communities without including the Native perspective; and (5) pressuring for the repatriation of Native American cultural objects, human remains, funerary objects, and objects of cultural patrimony.³

¹ Fuller, N., & Fabricius, S. *Native American museums and cultural centers: Historical overview and current issues*. (Zeitschrift Für Ethnologie, 1992), 223-237.

² Lonetree, Amy. *Decolonizing Museums Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 16.

³ Ibid. 17.

To ameliorate this situation, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act was passed in 1990.⁴ This federal law was passed “to address the rights of lineal descendants, Indian tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations to Native American cultural items, including human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony”.⁵ For the first time since the era of “salvage ethnography”, Native peoples had the opportunity to take back “cultural heritage” returning hundreds of ancestors and culturally sacred items.⁶ Much work is still left in realizing the full effect of NAGPRA, however the passage “signaled a substantial change in attitude toward the cultural rights and responsibilities of non-Indians and Indian peoples alike”.⁷ NAGPRA was and is important because it redefined and reconstructed “traditional care” methods used by museums caring for Native American collections.⁸

⁴ National Park Service. “National NAGPRA”. <https://www.nps.gov/nagpra/>. Accessed May 12, 2017.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Salvage ethnography is defined as “the dominant paradigm of American anthropology during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries among anthropologists studying Native American cultures. During this period, Native American cultures were experiencing rapid change as a consequence of the disintegrative impact of Euroamerican expansion and domination. Anthropologists, many under the sponsorship of the United States government’s Bureau of American Ethnology, fanned out across America to document the seemingly “vanishing” ways of the life of Native Americans and to collect their material culture. The work of salvage ethnographers fed American museum collections and archives where Native American cultural materials could be preserved for the sake of science.

Kreps, Christina F. *Liberating Culture: Cross-cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation, and Heritage Preservation*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 87 and 114.

⁷ West, W. Richard. *A New Idea of Ourselves: The Changing Presentation of the American Indian*. In National Museum of the American Indian. *The Changing Presentation of the American Indian: Museums and Native Cultures*. (Washington, D.C.: Seattle: National Museum of the American Indian; University of Washington Press, 2000), 11.

⁸Traditional care is defined as, “Indigenous curatorial methods intended to protect both the material and spiritual integrity of objects, reflecting a particular community’s religious and cultural protocols regarding the use and treatment of certain kinds of objects. These methods might include the separation of culturally sensitive or sacred objects from general collections, or the segregation of objects based on gender. Access to certain types of objects may be restricted to either women or men, elders or religious leaders, particular clans, ceremonial smudging and “feeding” of objects in storage areas or wrapping objects in muslin and storing them in unsealed containers”.

Kreps, Christina F. *Liberating Culture: Cross-cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation, and Heritage Preservation*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 83 and 95.

Decolonizing Museum Curatorial Practice

In seeking to take charge of their cultural past, present and future, tribal communities managing museums and cultural centers began “writing [their] own versions of history, telling [their] own stories in museum exhibits”.⁹ Tribal communities started to take the stand to share, write and “decolonize”, controlling how they were presented thus changing the process of collections and curatorial practice, interpretation and exhibition within their own museums.¹⁰ Up until the late 1990s, Native people and objects displayed in non-tribal museums that were devoid of any Native voice, emphasis was placed on “the [primitive] materials, technology, and culture of production” of indigenous peoples.¹¹ In recent decades, “efforts to share curatorial authority and collaborate with Indigenous communities in all aspects of museum practice...is becoming more norm than the exception”.¹² In creating avenues for dialogue, a newfound understanding shaped how objects are held and cared for in non-tribal museums. This has demonstrated there is not one authority or expert, but there are multiple ways of knowing, thus giving a voice and “credence to bodies of knowledge and practices that have been historically overlooked, or devalued”.¹³

⁹ Sleeper-Smith, Susan. *Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 252. Child, Brenda J.

¹⁰ Decolonization refers to, “developing a critical consciousness about the cause(s) of our [Native American] oppression, the distortion of history, our own collaboration, and the degree to which we have internalized colonialist ideas and practices. Decolonization requires auto-criticism, self-reflection, and a rejection of victimage. Decolonization is about empowerment- a belief that situations can be transformed, a belief and trust in our own peoples’ values and abilities and a willingness to make change. It is about transforming negative reactionary energy into the more positive rebuilding energy needed in our communities”.

Lonetree, Amy. *Decolonizing Museums Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 8-9

¹¹ Krmpotich, Cara Ann, and Peers, Laura L. *This Is Our Life: Haida Material Heritage and Changing Museum Practice*. (Vancouver, BC; Toronto: UBC Press, 2013), 9.

¹² Lonetree, Amy. *Decolonizing Museums Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 16.

¹³ Kreps, Christina F. *Liberating Culture: Cross-cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation, and Heritage Preservation*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 4.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to describe the museum practices and policies of three O’odham tribal museums and cultural centers from Arizona. The following questions guided this study:

1. How do these institutions define the curatorial frameworks of preservation, accessibility and stewardship?
2. How are traditional care methods implemented within the museum or cultural center?
3. What does traditional care look like at the museum?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to describe the collections and curatorial practices and policies followed by O’odham tribal museums, particularly how they worked within the Western frameworks of preservation, access to collections, stewardship and how they manage incorporating traditional care. This research was framed largely around the work of scholars, Duane H. King PhD, current director of the Helmerich Center for American Research at the University of Tulsa, and Christina F. Kreps, Director of Museum Studies and Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Denver. Within the field of museology, these two individuals dissected the role tribal museums play for their respective communities and illuminated the importance of giving credence to Native American knowledge systems when looking to museum collections and curation practice. The following chapter will focus on five areas of literature. The first section will highlight a brief history of the establishment of tribal museums and the roles they play in tribal communities today. The second section will examine the importance of NAGPRA to the establishment of tribal museums. The third section will look at Western collections and curatorial practice. The fourth section will explore traditional Native American curatorial and care methods as distinct from Western curatorial frameworks. Lastly, the fifth section will examine the role tribal museums play in the decolonization of museum spaces.

Tribal Museums

In *Exhibiting Culture: American Indians and Museums*, Duane H. King argued, “Tribal museums have their roots in antiquity. In pre-European North America, sacred and patrimonial objects of great community significance were kept by specialists under special conditions for the

community’s benefit”.¹⁴ “The first attempt by a Native American group to establish a museum was the Cherokee Nation in 1826 at New Echota, Georgia”.¹⁵ Due to the passage “of anti-Indian laws by the State of Georgia” and “forced removal...postponed...establishing a Cherokee Museum for more than a century”.¹⁶ This early movement in an effort for Native people to control cultural transmission over their identities and livelihoods was not in vain. In 1938, the Osage Nation Museum became “the oldest tribally-owned museum in the United States”.¹⁷ According to the most current report on tribal museums titled, *Tribal Museums in America*, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) estimated there exist approximately “two hundred and thirty-six tribal museums in the United States”.¹⁸ However, “it was not until the 1970s that Native Americans, in large numbers, began taking interest in museums as a way to tell their own stories”.¹⁹ Although these dates may seem relatively young in terms of Western traditions, tribal communities had established sites and centers serving the same core functions we consider museums to hold today in terms of access to collections, preservation and stewardship.

Without Western methodology, tribal communities throughout the Americas held sacred items in the trust and care of designated cultural practitioners or caretakers. “The museum idea and the practice of collection and preserving valued objects are generally considered distinctly Western cultural inventions and preoccupations. But nearly all cultures keep objects of special

¹⁴ King, Duane H. *EXHIBITING CULTURE: AMERICAN INDIANS AND MUSEUMS*. (Tulsa Law Review, 2009), 30.

¹⁵ Ibid. 28.

¹⁶ Ibid. 29.

¹⁷ “Osage Nation Museum”. Accessed January 26, 2017. <https://www.osagenation-nsn.gov/museum>.

¹⁸ Abrams, George H.J. *Tribal Museums in America*. (The American Association for State and Local History, September 2002), accessed November 2, 2016, http://www.atalm.org/sites/default/files/tribal_museums_in_america.pdf.

¹⁹ King, Duane H. *EXHIBITING CULTURE: AMERICAN INDIANS AND MUSEUMS*. (Tulsa Law Review, 2009), 28.

value and meaning, and many have developed elaborate structures for storing and displaying them as well as methods for their care and preservation”.²⁰ A qualified caretaker consisted of “an individual who knows the culturally prescribed rules for handling and maintaining culturally sensitive objects. In some cultures, the caretaker has the responsibility for keeping the artifacts safe on behalf of a larger group until they are passed on to subsequent generations, i.e. another caretaker”.²¹

One example of a cultural practice used in the past comes from the Southwest Puebloan tribes. They designate a subterranean room, known as a kiva, within the village, which “housed collections whose use was vital to the members of the Pueblo and to their sense of place in the world”.²² Objects would then be overseen by spiritual leaders, clans or families, and resurfaced and distributed when needed. Another modern example is drawn from the Makah Cultural Center and Research Center located in Neah Bay, Washington. Here objects were kept within a cultural center, but brought out to the community in order to perpetuate cultural transmission of traditions. According to former director of the Makah Cultural Center and Research Center, Janine Bowechop, “Part of our mission is to protect and preserve cultural and archaeological resources ... If letting our weavers handle... baskets preserves certain techniques and skills, then we don’t consider it deconstructive. We’ve been told it may shorten the life of the baskets, but we believe it will add immeasurably to the life of basket weaving among our people”.²³

²⁰ Kreps, Christina F. *Liberating Culture: Cross-cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation, and Heritage Preservation*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 1.

²¹ Williamson, L. “Pest Management at the National Museum of the American Indian”, *In Liberating Culture: Cross-cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation, and Heritage Preservation*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2003) 83.

²² King, Duane H. “EXHIBITING CULTURE: MUSEUMS AND INDIANS: EXHIBITING CULTURE: AMERICAN INDIANS AND MUSEUMS”. *Tulsa Law Review*, (2009): 30.

²³ Casey, Carolyn. “Tribal Museums Keep Exhibits, Culture Alive”. *Tribal College*, (1996): 12.

Tribal museums and cultural centers are diverse geographically, culturally and in approach but share in “the preservation and generation of Native culture and traditions as means to ensure a cultural foundation for future survival”.²⁴ In *Native American Museums and Cultural Centers: Historical Overview and Current Issues*, Nancy J. Fuller and Susanne Fabricius argued that tribal museums perform standard museum operations, collections, preservation, research and interpretation, as well as, “manag[ing] a full spectrum of cultural heritage services including the administration of archives collections, protection of archaeological sites and control of intellectual and physical access to tribal resources”.²⁵ King concurred, “Tribal cultural centers and museums have not replaced traditional institutions but have instead enhanced preservation for Native American Tribal communities”.²⁶ Additionally, tribal museums and cultural centers are continually “researching new methods for culturally appropriate storage, handling, and access consistent with the principles of best museum practices”.²⁷

NAGPRA

The passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990, gave a legal way for tribes to have a greater say in how their cultural objects and history were handled. Not only did NAGPRA allow for “tribes to make claims for certain categories of objects held by museums that receive federal funding [but] it has given rise to constructive dialogue among tribes and museums concerning the most appropriate care and treatment of art

²⁴ Fuller, N., & Fabricius, S. “Native American museums and cultural centers: Historical overview and current issues”. *Zeitschrift Für Ethnologie*, (1992): 230.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ King, Duane H. “EXHIBITING CULTURE: MUSEUMS AND INDIANS: EXHIBITING CULTURE: AMERICAN INDIANS AND MUSEUMS”. *Tulsa Law Review*, (2009): 30.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 30.

and artifacts. This increased communication has facilitated a mutual realization by non-tribal museums and tribal officials that they are important to each other”.²⁸

Native American stakeholders have consistently advocated for specific changes in the ways that Native American people and their stories are to be presented in institutions such as museums. In both the United States and Canada, protests by Native American people regarding the display and interpretation of our culture were finally heard. In the United States, years of lobbying saw the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and the establishment of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian.²⁹

With tribes becoming more involved in the expression and transmission of their cultural objects and heritage, NAGRPA challenged against “the hegemony of western, scientifically based museological paradigms”.³⁰ Opening up conversation between Western and Native American methodologies allows the “opportunity to establish collaborative relations” and “to gain a deeper understanding of the meanings and values of certain classes of objects...expand[ing] our knowledge of alternative methods of curation”.³¹ Additionally, “Native perspectives and methods of “traditional care” have begun to be integrated into mainstream museums”.³² In *A New Idea of Ourselves: The Changing Presentation of the American Indian*, W. Richard West added that NAGPRA has allowed for the growing understanding between Native American and non-Native museum professionals by “signal[ing] a substantial change in attitude” and a “growing sense of responsibility and respect for American Indian communities...in the process of...cultural representation”.³³ Ultimately, “The point is to give

²⁸ King, Duane H. “EXHIBITING CULTURE: MUSEUMS AND INDIANS: EXHIBITING CULTURE: AMERICAN INDIANS AND MUSEUMS”. *Tulsa Law Review*, (2009): 31.

²⁹ McGeough, Michelle. "Indigenous Curatorial Practices and Methodologies." *Wicazo Sa Review* 27, no. 1 (2012): 15.

³⁰ Kreps, Christina F. *Liberating Culture: Cross-cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation, and Heritage Preservation*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 3.

³¹ *Ibid.* 3-4.

³² *Ibid.* 3.

³³ West, W. Richard. *A New Idea of Ourselves: The Changing Presentation of the American Indian*. In National Museum of the American Indian. *The Changing Presentation of the American Indian: Museums and Native*

credence to bodies of knowledge and practices that have been historically overlooked, or devalued”.³⁴

In *Liberating Culture: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation and Heritage Preservation*, Christina Kreps added, “Of the many outcomes of NAGPRA is an increasing presence of Native American curators, traditional scholars, and advisors in museums”.³⁵

Numerous local and nationwide workshops and conferences were dedicated to the advancement of Native American museum professionals each year. Organizations such, as the Indigenous Peoples Museum Network hosted through the American Alliance of Museums and the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, & Museums (ATALM) addressed the need for Native American professionals to assist one another and adapt methods when working within tribal museum capacities and with their own collections. Kreps added that the field could help Native American museum professionals,

Carry out their tasks more effectively and aid in the protection of valuable cultural resources by providing professional training and skills. But we should also consider how the imposition of professional standards and techniques could inadvertently undermine local or indigenous curatorial practices as well as a museum's long-term goal of cultural heritage preservation. Indigenous curatorial knowledge and practices have much to contribute to our understanding of museological behaviour cross-culturally, or rather, how people in varying cultural contexts perceive, value, care for, and preserve cultural resources. These concepts and practices are worthy of preservation in their own right as they form part of people’s cultural heritage and identity.³⁶

Cultures. (Washington, D.C.: Seattle: National Museum of the American Indian; University of Washington Press, 2000), 11.

³⁴ Kreps, Christina F. *Liberating Culture: Cross-cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation, and Heritage Preservation*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 4.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 3.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 9.

Western Collections/Curatorial Practice

In the early days of Western curatorial practice, “museums for much of the 20th century were viewed by Native Americans, not as educational institutions, but as the storehouse for pawned heirlooms and stolen grave goods. Collecting practices of museum pioneers showed little regard for ethics or cultural sensitivity”.³⁷ More often than not, “preservation efforts focused on the collection and preservation of material culture rather than the living culture of Native Americans as the loss of the latter was seen as inevitable in the wake of progress and an assumed assimilation”.³⁸ Although dialogues have since opened when looking to collections that deal with Native American cultural material, “the overall purpose of most museums is to collect, preserve, research, and exhibit materials of artistic, historical, archaeological, and natural significance for the benefit of the public”.³⁹ Governing bodies overseeing museum national standards, such as the American Alliance of Museums, have also created a series of resources to help guide museums toward creating policies that follow “best practice”.⁴⁰ However, in *Caring for American Indian Objects: A Practical and Cultural Guide*, Sherelyn Ogden writes,

Standard practice, however, often fails to take into account cultural considerations. Museum staff, and conservators in particular, tend to apply the same standard procedures to all items regardless of the lifeways of the culture from which they come. The items are seen as artifacts, separate from their culture, rather than as cultural links between the past present and future. This can lead to strained relations between museum staff and American Indian people.⁴¹

³⁷ King, Duane H. “EXHIBITING CULTURE: MUSEUMS AND INDIANS: EXHIBITING CULTURE: AMERICAN INDIANS AND MUSEUMS”. *Tulsa Law Review*, (2009): 28.

³⁸ Kreps, Christina F. *Liberating Culture: Cross-cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation, and Heritage Preservation*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 87.

³⁹ Buck, Rebecca A., Gilmore, Jean Allman, and American Association of Museums. *MRM5: Museum Registration Methods. 5th ed.* (Washington, DC: AAM Press, American Association of Museums, 2010), 14.

⁴⁰ “Best practices are commendable actions and philosophies that demonstrate an awareness of standards, solve problems and can be replicated. Museums may choose to emulate them if appropriate to their circumstances.” “Standards and Best Practices,” accessed May 15, 2017, <http://www.aam-us.org/resources/ethics-standards-and-best-practices/standards>.

⁴¹ Ogden, Sherelyn. *Caring for American Indian Objects: A Practical and Cultural Guide*. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2004), 1.

When working with Native American objects, “it is vital to follow guidelines from various tribal groups for the proper handling of their objects”, seek assistance when needed, consult and collaborate.⁴²

Native American Collections/Curation Practice

Tribal museums and centers have created a new approach to how Western museology sees and works with Native American objects. Within *Indigenous Curatorial Practices and Methodologies*, Michelle McGeough noted, “Native people wished to be consulted and involved in telling their stories. The desire for such collaborations has resulted in substantial change of museum practices”.⁴³ Tribal communities not only saw the benefit of museums, but they were modifying the ways in which their heritage was presented to the outside world. King wrote, “Museums, for the most part, insist that information about Native American cultures be presented from the first person perspective and that Native American curators and consultants be hired to help develop exhibits and educational programs. At the same time, tribal leaders have recognized that museums can be powerful tools in educating the general public”.⁴⁴

In modifying the status quo, tribal museums were incorporating culturally appropriate museum protocols addressing sensitivities and needs for items of cultural heritage, integrating “Native philosophies and methods of traditional care”.⁴⁵ These practices were established and incorporated after the passage of NAGPRA and at the urging of Native American communities to the museum field. Today tribally-run museums seek to not only embrace traditional protocols

⁴² Ogden, Sherelyn. *Caring for American Indian Objects: A Practical and Cultural Guide*. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2004), 8.

⁴³ McGeough, Michelle. "Indigenous Curatorial Practices and Methodologies." *Wicazo Sa Review* 27, no. 1 (2012): 15.

⁴⁴ King, Duane H. “EXHIBITING CULTURE: MUSEUMS AND INDIANS: EXHIBITING CULTURE: AMERICAN INDIANS AND MUSEUMS”. *Tulsa Law Review*, (2009): 31.

⁴⁵ Kreps, Christina F. *Liberating Culture: Cross-cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation, and Heritage Preservation*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 93.

in display and curation, but go so far as to incorporate values treasured by the tribe. In the Makah Museum, care was taken to allow “curators to fully house the artifacts in a manner reflecting current Makah values. Close attention is paid to cultural and gender restrictions that apply to certain objects...the Makah curators groups items together based upon family ownership. They used the Makah language to label and organize the vast collection”.⁴⁶ The same is seen at The Museum at Warm Springs: “The museum reflects the tribes’ harmony with the natural environment. The building’s creative use of natural stone, heavy timber and brick demonstrates our tradition of incorporating art into everyday life. Tribal symbols such as the drum and Klickitat basket patterns also appear in the museum’s architectural design”.⁴⁷

Decolonization

Native Americans have endured a long struggle in staking claim in self-determination and authentic representation within the field of museology. King wrote,

For much of our history, Native Americans and Native American objects have been most often treated and exhibited as exotic curiosities with little or no interpretive context. The emergence of the field of anthropology in the late 19th and early 20th centuries gave rise to a more compassionate perspective, but still did not erase the ethnocentric bias by the dominant society and its treatment of Native American material as remnants of memory cultures and vanquished peoples.⁴⁸

Kreps agreed and added, “Until recently, museology has relied almost exclusively on one knowledge system, namely the modern, Western one. This knowledge system has dictated the ways in which cultural material have been viewed and curated, systematically organizing and

⁴⁶ Casey, Carolyn. "Tribal Museums Keep Exhibits, Culture Alive." *Tribal College* VII, no. 2 (1996): 12.

⁴⁷ Clements, Janice. “The Integration of Traditional Indian Beliefs into the Museum at Warm Springs”. *National Museum of the American Indian. The Changing Presentation of the American Indian: Museums and Native Cultures.* (Washington, D.C.: Seattle: National Museum of the American Indian; University of Washington Press, 2000), 69.

⁴⁸ King, Duane H. “EXHIBITING CULTURE: MUSEUMS AND INDIANS: EXHIBITING CULTURE: AMERICAN INDIANS AND MUSEUMS”. *Tulsa Law Review*, (2009): 25-26.

transforming them according to European constructs of culture, art, history, and heritage”.⁴⁹

Fuller and Fabricius agreed arguing that tribal museums running under a pre-established museum model contrasts against the world and cultural views of Native people.⁵⁰ Within this Western construct, “Typically, Indigenous knowledge is perceived as subjective and restricted while Western knowledge is seen as scientific, objective, and free of restrictions”.⁵¹ This continues to harm Native American representation and validity within the museum field. Alternative curation methods should be considered opportunities because “The recognition of indigenous curatorial practices and museum models is another step toward the decolonization and democratization of museum and museum practices”.⁵² By “acknowledging the value of indigenous curation [it] opens up possibilities for dialogue and the exchange of information, knowledge, and expertise”.⁵³

Although a Western and colonialist framework could be considered, “well intended, proponents of inclusion often neglected to incorporate alternative paradigms of knowledge, resulting in unrealistic assumptions about reconciling colonialist legacies. Incorporation of Native bodies does not necessarily indicate incorporation of Native thought”.⁵⁴ Restructuring of

⁴⁹ Kreps, Christina F. *Liberating Culture: Cross-cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation, and Heritage Preservation*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 7.

⁵⁰ Fuller, N., & Fabricius, S. “Native American museums and cultural centers: Historical overview and current issues”. *Zeitschrift Für Ethnologie*, (1992): 230.

⁵¹ Mithlo, Nancy Marie. "Red Man's Burden": The Politics of Inclusion in Museum Settings." *The American Indian Quarterly*, (2004): 743.

⁵² Kreps, Christina F. *Liberating Culture: Cross-cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation, and Heritage Preservation*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 4.

Decolonization refers to, “developing a critical consciousness about the cause(s) of our [Native American] oppression, the distortion of history, our own collaboration, and the degree to which we have internalized colonialist ideas and practices. Decolonization requires auto-criticism, self-reflection, and a rejection of victimage.

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Lonetree, Amy. *Decolonizing Museums Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 8-9

⁵³ *Ibid.* 4.

⁵⁴ Mithlo, Nancy Marie. "Red Man's Burden": The Politics of Inclusion in Museum Settings." *The American Indian Quarterly*, (2004): 744.

institutional agendas, specifically in tribal museums allowed for “opportunities for community enrichment and preservation”.⁵⁵ As witnessed in many relations created through the process of repatriation of cultural objects, “Indian communities and museum scholars have recognized that they share a number of interests and goals, particularly in the area of cultural preservation”.⁵⁶ In *Decolonizing Museums Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*, Amy Lonetree wrote, “It is critical that museums support indigenous communities in our efforts toward decolonization, through privileging Indigenous voice and perspective, through challenging stereotypical representations of Native people that were produced in the past, and by serving as educational forums for our own communities and the general public”.⁵⁷

Tribal museums and libraries assisted in benefitting their communities by offering “trusted spaces for intergenerational activities”.⁵⁸ Activities included, but were not limited to, providing areas of social engagement, technological access and forums for education.⁵⁹ Native American communities were empowered to offer services to their people and transformed the purpose of what these institutions once stood for, not to objectify the population but to serve the population. Most importantly, tribal museums and libraries served “to assist communities in their efforts to address the legacies of historical unresolved grief by speaking the hard truths of colonialism and thereby creating spaces for healing and understanding”.⁶⁰ Lonetree continued, “Museums cease to function as places of oppression” rather “promoting community healing and

⁵⁵ King, Duane H. “EXHIBITING CULTURE: MUSEUMS AND INDIANS: EXHIBITING CULTURE: AMERICAN INDIANS AND MUSEUMS”. *Tulsa Law Review*, (2009): 30.

⁵⁶ Henderson, Amy, and Kaeppler, Adrienne L. *Exhibiting Dilemmas: Issues of Representation at the Smithsonian*. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 198.

⁵⁷ Sleeper-Smith, Susan. *Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 334.

⁵⁸ Roy, Bhasin, and Arriaga. *Tribal Libraries, Archives, and Museums: Preserving Our Language, Memory, and Lifeways*. (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 159.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Lonetree, Amy. *Decolonizing Museums Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 5.

empowerment”.⁶¹ This setting has allowed tribal communities to move beyond indiscretions of the past and brought change to the ways in which their stories and lifeways were transmitted.

Ultimately, as Raney Bench addressed in *Interpreting Native American History and Culture at Museums and Historic Sites*,

The responsibility to share one’s culture rests with the individuals who are members of that culture, and when appropriate, in partnership with museum, cultural centers, and other outsiders. For generations, Native people have not been allowed the authority to share their culture by their choice. Instead, Native people have often been on the outside, watching while others interpreted objects, ceremonies, and relationships-at times incorrectly.⁶²

Tribal museums also served as locations for “the preservation and generation of Native culture and traditions as means to ensure a cultural foundation for future survival”.⁶³ Tribal museums and the communities that support them are taking part in the movement away from Western standards,

The new museology is fundamentally concerned with the democratization of museum practices and bottom-up, participatory approaches. It stresses the importance of community of public participation in museums, not only as visitors, but also as participants in all aspect of museum work. The idea of museum democratization also suggests that the knowledge, skills, and experiences of the people for whom museums exists hold as much value as those of museum experts or professionals.⁶⁴

Conclusion

As the literature suggests, tribal communities have always had museums or museum-like sites and centers serving the same core functions Western museums are considered to hold today. Most of the time, these sites perform in the duty of preserving Native American culture and

⁶¹ Lonetree, Amy. *Decolonizing Museums Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 171.

⁶² Bench, Raney. *Interpreting Native American History and Culture at Museums and Historic Sites*. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), VII-Viii.

⁶³ Fuller, N., & Fabricius, S. “Native American museums and cultural centers: Historical overview and current issues”. *Zeitschrift Für Ethnologie*, (1992): 230.

⁶⁴ Kreps, Christina F. *Liberating Culture: Cross-cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation, and Heritage Preservation*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 10.

traditions. The passage of NAGPRA in 1990 aided tribal communities by allowing Native Americans to have a say in how their cultural objects were cared for and interpreted. NAGPRA also assisted in bringing Native American museum professionals to the field and opened up avenues for continued training and education, from both a Western and non-Western viewpoint. This major legislative passage continued to assist Native American communities with the breakdown of colonialist frameworks as tribal communities empowered themselves to decolonize systems of oppression. Native American curation within museums was the effort to reallocate accurate authority, voice and culturally appropriate protocols. Tribal museums were leading the way, voicing the notion that there were multiple ways of approaching curatorial practice. By examining O’odham tribal museums and their approach to collections management and curation in the following chapters, this study hopes to validate approaches they have chosen to implement at their institutions and offer insights to this practice.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to describe the curatorial practices and policies of three O’odham tribal museums and cultural centers in Arizona. Three research questions guided this study:

1. How do these institutions define the curatorial frameworks of preservation, accessibility to collections and stewardship?
2. Are traditional care methods implemented within the museum?
3. What does traditional care look like at the museum?

To address these questions, a phenomenological approach was taken with semi-structured, in-person interviews conducted with museum staff at these tribal museums. This approach allowed for the “lived experiences” of museum staff to be recorded.⁶⁵ IRB exempt status was obtained prior to start of study.

Sampling

The sites were chosen purposefully and intentionally in hopes to understand how these tribal museums were redefining Western curatorial methods to better serve their respective communities. The following criteria was used in choosing institutions for this case study: a.) Institutions were established as a tribal museum, center or heritage site; b.) Institutions were within the same geographic location, allowing for examination of cultural similarities and differences; c.) Institutions had established collections storage within their facility. The following sites were chosen for this study: Ak-Chin Him Dak Eco Museum in Maricopa, AZ,

⁶⁵ Creswell, John W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009), 14.

Huhugam Heritage Center in Chandler, AZ, Huhugam Ki Museum in Scottsdale, AZ and Tohono O’odham Nation Cultural Center and Museum in Topawa, AZ.

Participants

Interview participants for this phenomenological study were drawn from the four sites. Executive directors from each of the tribal museums were targeted to participate in this study and were contacted via email or phone. All museum executive directors deferred participation and designated curatorial staff to speak to the collections and curatorial practices observed at each museum. Appointments were set at a predetermined date and time with curatorial staff. Each site designated at least one staff member and one site designated four staff members. Formalities such as gaining permission by tribal councils was needed prior to talking with two of the sites. At the time of interview, only three of the four sites agreed to proceed with interviews, the sites being: 1. Ak-Chin Him Dak Eco Museum in Maricopa, AZ; 2. Huhugam Heritage Center in Chandler, AZ; and 3. Tohono O’odham Nation Cultural Center and Museum in Topawa, AZ. To be eligible for the study, participants must have been working at the museum site at time of the interview and have experience in either managing and/or working with collections for the museum.

Data Collection

Semi-structured, in-person interviews were conducted at the host site or at the place of participants’ choosing (See Appendix A for Interview Guide). Interviews were used to collect data based on the ability to gain the “views and opinions” of participants.⁶⁶ Qualitative data pertaining to museum collections and how the museum viewed access to collections, stewardship

⁶⁶ Creswell, John W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009), 190.

over collections, preservation of collections and traditional care methods were recorded. Approximately 47 semi-structured questions were directed to the participants, with interviews lasting from 45 minutes to one and a half hours. Questions were shared with participants prior to meeting for interview. Interview information was collected through audio recording and note taking upon gaining verbal permission from study participants. Data was saved and may be referenced again in the future, but only with written permission of the institution/tribal council. Collecting data through document analysis was sought, but each site was in differing stages in development of these documents, so only one source of data collection was used. At the conclusion of this study, study findings were shared with site participants.

Data Analysis

All audio interview materials were uploaded to a project file in NVivo, a research data management system. Interview material was initially transcribed in NVivo. Later the interviews were transcribed, analyzed and coded manually for emergent themes and trends (See Appendix B for Coding Chart).

Limitations

The results of this study were limited in that the results pertained to only a select sample of tribal museums and findings may not be transferrable to phenomena taking place at tribal museums across the country. This study was limited to one geographic location and sample pool was small. Prior knowledge by the researcher of geographic area and cultural membership might advance bias in the shaping of data interpretation. Lastly, only one source of data was collected for this study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to describe the collection and curatorial practices and policies of three O’odham tribal museums and cultural centers in Arizona. To address these questions, a case study approach was taken with semi-structured, in-person interviews conducted with museum staff at these tribal museums. The organization of this chapter consists of an overview of each host site as well as their responses to the guiding research questions. Emergent themes that arose during the interviews were addressed.

Host Sites

Three sites served as case study sites for this research: 1. Ak-Chin Him Dak Eco Museum in Maricopa, AZ; 2. Huhugam Heritage Center in Chandler, AZ; and 3. Tohono O’odham Nation Cultural Center and Museum in Topawa, AZ.

- Ak-Chin Him Dak Eco Museum was established in 1988. During a land clearance project, cultural objects were unearthed and removed from the community. In order to bring these objects back home, community members were urged to pursue higher education in order to obtain a position in the newly established institution. The museum consists of gallery and art spaces as well as two historic properties, a mission school and B.I.A. house. Four museum technicians were interviewed for this study. The museum employed a staff of ten
- Huhugam Heritage Center was founded in 2004, first as a 36 CFR 79 Federal Repository, but has since adopted the role of heritage center for the community. Huhugam Heritage Center was built specifically to hold the Federal Bureau of Reclamation Central Arizona Project collection. A majority of the cultural material consisted of ancestral collections of

Akimel O’otham and Pee Posh cultures. The museum included a repository, gallery space, and outdoor educational spaces. The Senior Curator of Collections was interviewed for this study. The center employed a staff of 18.

- Tohono O’odham Nation Cultural Center and Museum opened in 2007 with the goal of bringing back archaeological collections that were removed from ancestral tribal lands. Conversations of establishing a museum on tribal lands began as early as the 1950s. The museum consisted of gallery space and outdoor educational spaces. The Curator of Collections was interviewed for this study. The museum employed a staff of 14.

Findings

1. How do these institutions define the curatorial frameworks of preservation, accessibility to collections and stewardship?

When the respondents addressed the idea of preservation, they unanimously agreed on the importance of preserving their history and culture as well as connection to objects. The respondents touched on the importance of cultural transmission stating, “the amount I have learned about the history and culture is really incredible, it’s not really out there anywhere and no one is really teaching it to us so I really believe in what we are doing here to preserve our past”. When talking about cultural objects, these were viewed as “irreplaceable cultural treasures made from the hands of the ancestors”. This idea was further supported by the responsibility of caring for these items: “this feels like we're caring for our family items...and I think that's different than the mainstream museum, in any major history museum you feel like you're caring for somebody else's grandmother’s item”.

In looking to accessibility to collections, respondents noted that their main goals were to focus on their communities and tribal members. One respondent stated, “our audience for the museum is geared toward our membership...our focus is mainly the community”. One site went further to implement a policy that allowed, “Any community member can request behind the scenes access. We provide it because we want them to know how we're caring for things and to receive their guidance”. All respondents also mentioned offering accessibility by providing tours through gallery and collections spaces. Museums did differ when asked how often tribal members access museum collections: tribal members either visited “a lot” or “not very often” to “very seldom”. Regardless of visitation, all sites agreed that “we always make it known...that we're here for them” and that they “provide more behind the scenes access than mainstream museums normally do”.

In addressing the idea of stewardship, trust, relationships and responsibility were common answers among all respondents. One respondent touched on all of these aspects, “to me you would treat it just like it's something you own, well you do own it, it is part of you, it is part of the community and you want to take care of it the best you know how. For as long as you can”, “because [the community is] really putting their trust in us to take care of these things. And if we were to damage them, if we were to be disrespectful to their items I think that would kind of break that trust between the museum and the community”. One respondent mentioned upholding both federal and community standards, “So, like I said, we are a 36CFR79 Federal repository. So...our goal is to meet and exceed all those standards. In addition to the cultural care standards of the community”. One respondent mentioned the importance of incorporating the community with museum decisions, “There's a lot of [tribal] members and I often refer to them when taking care of the collections. In terms of cultural perspective, I think that it's my job to

make sure that they're aware of what's going on and what's happening and what needs to happen. But I think that responsibility also relies on staff members as well”.

2. Are traditional care methods implemented within the museum?

When respondents were asked about implementation of traditional care in their museum, themes surrounding materials used and location were prominent. Respondents addressed the care in choosing how objects are stored and materials that are conducive to cultural values, “open storage”, “we use a lot of muslin and cotton”, and “acid free boxe[s]”. When physically connecting information to the object, sites stressed that “we don't put object numbers strictly on objects” and in housing, “tags are tied to [packaging], not on the item”. On the other side, there is a clear understanding that in spite of using culturally appropriate materials, room must be left in order to fully allow for the practice of traditional and cultural beliefs. One respondent referred to falling away from best practice, “I think that we try to do as much as we can. There are some things not considered best practice, we have done before. Like [allowing] little offerings in the collection. You know you shouldn't do it”.

Location is considered to be extremely important to traditional care because the sites chose locality with the intentional purpose of housing cultural objects. For all sites, the choosing of a specific locality reflects tribal values and history. Two respondents shared that “being as an eco-museum, it bonds preservation of the whole area” and “the museum was picked in that...area because it's really close proximity [to] a sacred mountain”. Architectural features also highlight an integral connection to tribal community history. Sites often contain water features, art forms, traditional ramadas, amphitheaters, ball courts, and unhindered views of nature and the outdoors. One respondent expressed the importance of such features, “The design of the structure itself, it was based upon something that would blend into the community. From the colors that

were chosen, to the type of materials that were used. I think a lot of the buildings now and the communities that are coming up are geared toward that. They're trying to blend in with what's here”.

3. What does traditional care look like at the museum?

When looking at how traditional care was seen at the museum, four themes emerged: respect, community input, cultural values and spirituality. Traditional care requires a lot of respect to practice, individuals and to ancestors. In the establishment of one museum, a respondent shared the following, “some of the elders were kind of leery about exhibiting ...human remains, funerary objects and sensitive objects. So we had to, as we were in the learning process, we had to explain to them that it would not be that way”. In practice, traditional care also adhered to gender roles, as one respondent shared, “for some of the reburial items, traditionally they wouldn't be handled by women. Of course, sometimes they can. But when we do our reburials, they are only attended by men. Women would have to stay back”. All sites expressed continued support of maintaining clear restrictions on the placement and access to sensitive objects. In all cases, “sensitive objects [are placed in a] locked cabinet or not visually accessible or physically [accessible]”. This ensures to the community that they “feel welcome and not like they stumbled upon something they shouldn't have”. When speaking of respect of ancestors, one respondent said, “a lot of items, the ancient items the Hohokam that we have here...we never...really saw some of them...buried. But at the request of the community we have to respect those items, we can't show them to the public”. At all sites, the following sentiment summed up the respect that went into the application of traditional care: “cultural care is a...it's a forever thing. It's an everyday thing. It's not written in a policy”.

Community input was sought as a form of guidance and considered traditional care in that it followed cultural protocols established by the community. The bodies of consultation ranged from tribal elders to tribal staff members. “We try to consult a lot with the elders almost everything that happens goes through the elders”. When looking to what was displayed within the museum, one respondent mentioned that “most of the staff members are tribal members and so there's a lot of sensitivity right from the beginning of a decision on whether or not to display something. Once staff have made selections, then the tribal historic preservation office- their entire staff will come and review everything”. The idea of community input tied the community to the museum. In one case a respondent stated,

It [the museum] was originally established to house the artifacts found within the community but it's grown to be something that actively involves the community in the exhibits. So, we encourage people to share their stories, we encourage people to bring in artifacts. If you go through our exhibit now, a lot of the things that we have up are from community members. Clothes that they've worn and items that they made. So this building is here to tell our story really and it's very different from some other museums where you have outsiders coming in and they're doing research from an outsider point of view. All of us live here and we grew up here and we're a part of this community. So it's not that we're telling their story, we're telling our own story it makes it that much more important for us to do a good job.

Another respondent shared the same sentiments, “I think that's something that really resonates with me, the idea of a museum being there for community and listening to its community from the very get go”.

Language played a tremendous role in how cultural values were transmitted. All sites were in various stages of incorporating the usage of O’odham within databases and in gallery spaces. One respondent shared the work of the tribal language department in assisting with “creat[ing] agreed upon terms for baskets. For particular shapes, designs, tools and techniques”. Language was also vital in the naming of O’odham museums. For example, one museum’s name

translated to “culture house” because it was important to pay homage to the “past, present and future”. Another inferred value came from actively practicing culture. “We've all grown up with stories and teachings about how we should behave and treat things and I think that comes out a lot in our work”. This belief was supported again by another respondent when they shared the following, “You know you have to be considerate of all these different things, have to be respectful. I think that's really important. I think a lot of it is just knowing in your heart that you're giving the best care and being as thoughtful as you can be”.

Spirituality took the forms of spiritual cleansing of spaces and individuals involved in caring for collections. One respondent shared, “we've had traditional spiritual people come in and not only bless the room, bless...the materials and then also the individuals handling these items”. According to respondents, blessings took place “regular[ly]” and in one case “every six months”. Spirituality also touched on the institutional responsibility that museums had to their staff. In one case, providing spiritual support in handling reburial objects, “she...asked me if I was comfortable and everything. I did feel comfortable because she said she would get a medicine man to come out and bless me and those who are going to be working in that area”. Additionally, the spiritual practitioners were also available to assist in “mak[ing] determinations...before [staff members] handle [objects]”.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Discussion/ Interpretation

The purpose of this study was to describe and understand how three O’odham museums and cultural centers defined the Western frameworks of preservation, access to collections, stewardship. The study also aimed in describing Native American traditional care methods and protocols and if they were implemented and practiced at each of the sites. Each of the questions guiding the study were examined against definitions provided to interviewees at the start of the interview. The definitions were as follows:

- Collections Access - the museum, guided by its mission, provides public access to its collections while ensuring their preservation.
- Preservation - the protection of cultural property through activities that minimize chemical and physical deterioration and damage, preventing loss of informational content.
- Stewardship - careful, sound and responsible management of that which is entrusted to a museum’s care. This takes into account legal, social and ethical obligations to provide proper physical storage, management and care for the collections. Collections are held in trust for the public and made accessible for the public’s benefit.
- Traditional Care- Indigenous curatorial methods intended to protect both the material and spiritual integrity of objects, reflecting a particular community’s religious and cultural protocols regarding the use and treatment of certain kinds of objects. These methods might include the separation of culturally sensitive or sacred objects from general collections, or the segregation of objects based on gender. Access to certain types of objects may be restricted to either women or men, elders or religious leaders, particular clans, ceremonial smudging and “feeding” of objects in storage areas or wrapping objects in muslin and storing them in unsealed containers.

In terms of preservation, most of the sites agreed that while preservation did not take place in the form of object rehabilitation, preservation to them consisted of remembering and creating avenues for tribal community members to record histories. On a grander scale, the museum appeared to be a vault that held tribal history and treasures. Museums in a Western

sense do attempt to maintain integrity of objects into perpetuity, but for tribal museums, it appeared that they do so when looking to preserving and maintaining tribal culture and history. Access to collections was interesting in that visitation consisted of tribal members and they were allowed to visit as frequently as they wanted to. In considering the amount of access tribal members were granted, the museums were not accessed as much as museum staff hoped. In looking to the concept of stewardship, tribal museum staff felt a personal responsibility to uphold respect and trust. This was key in providing a space that historically was not welcoming to Native Americans. The museums not only wanted to break down assumptions, but they wanted to reinvent what museums could be, for the community and by the community.

In terms of traditional care, the definition to tribal museums and centers consisted of many facets. It did not just incorporate object care; it encompassed personal beliefs about spirituality, cultural values, respect and community input. This redefined what traditional care meant to O’odham tribal institutions. Traditional care also carried with it a certain mindset aligned with tribal values. This could be embodied by tribal museum workers as well as non-tribal museum workers. The goal of traditional care was to indigenize the museum to fit Native American and tribal needs.

Future research

There are two possibilities for further research. The first possibility surrounds a complete survey amongst tribal museums in the United States to evaluate how closely they align to Western best practice in the management of their collections. A second possibility, looks to how tribal museums may provide a manual of best practice attuned to Native American cultural protocols.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to describe and understand how three O’odham museums and cultural centers defined the Western frameworks of preservation, access to collections and stewardship. The study also aimed in describing Native American traditional care methods and protocols and if they were implemented and practiced at each of the sites. It was determined that these three tribal museums did embody Western frameworks, but they modified definitions and practices to suit their cultural needs and goals. There was no need for these museums to embody Western collections or curatorial best practices because best practice does not allow for the incorporation of Native American values and beliefs. Traditional care methods were also practiced at each of these institutions. Traditional care involved practices surrounding object care as well as incorporating personal beliefs about spirituality, cultural values, respect and community input.

Implications

This study illuminated the ways in which Native Americans made progress in redefining how their cultures were “re-presented” to the outside world through their cultural objects and collections held within their own cultural institutions. By interviewing tribal museum practitioners involved in this process, Native cultures were represented through their own cultural lens. By realizing that Western curatorial practices and policies were not fully adaptable to tribal museums, non-tribal museums benefited by realizing that there were alternate practices for managing and using Native American collections. It also showed that tribal museums had the ability to serve multiple cultural purposes within their communities.

This study is just the beginning in understanding how we can and should care for Native American objects and collections. It looked to the possibility of incorporating traditional care as a new best practice, adopted by not only tribal museums, but all museums. Doing so would allow the museum field to adhere to policies and procedures addressing cultural sensitivities of Native Americans. A suggested action would be to enlist the help of the American Alliance of Museums and other notable museum organizations to sponsor a panel inviting Native American museum professionals and tribal members to discuss how and what to incorporate for this new best practice. This route is the next step in redefining what best practice looks like in support of Native American object care.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide for Redefining and “Re-presenting” Native American Collections and Curatorial Practice

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Interview Guide for Cultural Practitioners

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me to talk about this museum/tribal center. As we discussed previously I am a graduate student at the University of Washington and I am gathering information about the curatorial practices conducted at your institution. Specifically my research looks to curatorial practices and policies; so examining the ideas of preservation, access to collections and collection stewardship and what these concepts mean to your institution and your own individual practices. This interview is broken into sections with each part containing a couple of questions. The entire process should last approximately 45-50 minutes. I intend to record the interview and take some notes along the way. If there is anything you do not want me to include in this interview please let me know. Any information you share will be used for this research study and only with your written permission may be used again in the future. Individuals interviewed can choose to be identified by name or institution. At the start of the interview, please let me know how you would like to be identified. You were designated by the museum to speak to the curatorial practices observed here. Permission has been granted by your institution to share your experience and expertise regarding this matter. Do you have any questions before we begin? Great, let us begin.

About the Interviewee

1. Let’s start off with telling me your name and title here at the museum.
2. How did you come to be a curator/museum professional?
3. What are your daily roles and responsibilities?
4. When did you start working with the museum?

About the museum/tribal center

1. When was the museum founded? What is its role within the community now?

2. How has the mission grown/developed with the growth of your museum?
3. How many people work for the museum?
4. How is it organized?
5. Who supports your museum?
6. Who visits your museum throughout the year?
7. When your museum was founded, did it start with a collection already and if so what was it?
8. What are your collecting practices today?
9. Is there a policy that outlines what is collected and not?
10. When you get donations outside of your mission who decides what is accepted?

Thank you for providing this background information. For the next part of the interview, I will be asking some questions about curatorial practices. These following sections address preservation, stewardship, collections access and traditional care.

Caring for and preservation of collections

1. How do you see/treat/value the collections?
2. Following museum best practices guidelines set out by AAM, and others etc.... does your museum follow such national standards?
3. Within the museum field, preservation is an important role that involves the protection of cultural heritage and property through activities that minimize chemical and physical deterioration and damage, preventing loss of informational content. Based on this, how is the idea of preservation observed here at the museum? Do preservation practices reflect tribal community goals?
4. How are collections organized and stored at the museum? Are objects stored by type, material, cultural relevance or museum classification?
5. What items are actively collected by the museum?
6. Is collecting by the museum specific to a geographic area? What does that include? Is your collecting tribally specific?
7. Are objects ever loaned out? If so, to individuals, researchers or institutions? How are culturally sensitive objects managed and who decides how this is handled?
8. Do you publicly display collections to the public? Is so, why or why not? Who and how are decisions made to what is shared with the public and what is not when dealing with culturally sensitive topics and collections?

9. Do you have scheduled monitor practices set up for each object and collections?
10. How are objects monitored for pests?
11. Do you have annual condition reporting? Condition reports on each object?
12. Do you make your own mounting and supports, or contract them out?
13. Within the museum field conservation means the practice of conserving cultural property for the future, given that, how does the museum engage in conservation efforts? Who assists with this?
14. If an object is ever removed permanently from public display, what are the policies and practices within the museum to ensure this piece is properly cared for and who gets to view it thereafter?
15. One last question for this section, does your museum in any way look at preservation differently? If so, how?

Stewardship

1. Within the museum field, stewardship means the careful, sound and responsible management of collections entrusted to a museum’s care. In looking at the idea of stewardship and taking care of the collections, is this the job of the museum staff? Tribal community?
2. When acquiring objects, what type of information is critical to capture for record? How is this recorded? Is it done manually or computerized? What software do you use? Which one?
3. How were these practices established at the museum/center?
4. Is there training for the staff or a manual you refer to?
5. One last question for this section, does your museum look at stewardship differently? If so, how?

Collections Access

1. Within the museum field, collections access provides public access to its collections while ensuring their preservation. Are objects made accessible to the community?
2. Is there a formal process or policy that must be followed to gain access to collections? Are there any restrictions to who has access to collections?
3. Are items available to be used as teaching tools or in cultural ceremony or practice? If they are, is there a time period items are loaned out for?
4. How often does the tribal community access objects?
5. Who is responsible for monitoring access to collections?
6. One last question for this section, does your museum look at collections access differently? If so, how?

Traditional Care

1. Traditional care methods are seen all throughout the country and the world and can be defined as protecting both the material and spiritual integrity of objects, reflecting a particular community’s religious and cultural protocols regarding the use and treatment of certain kinds of objects. Are any methods observed here? (Some examples may include smudging, observing gender restrictions, handling.)
2. Do you practice any other traditional care methods not mentioned?
3. Some tribal museums incorporate traditional designs, directional observations in architecture, religious or spiritual observations. How does the museum incorporate tribal beliefs in the museum?
4. Does the museum observe traditional care methods when looking specifically to collections and objects?
5. Is there specific terminology used when speaking about the objects? Are tribal names used?
6. Are traditional care methods taken into consideration for preserving objects?
7. Is it a priority for the museum to practice traditional ways to care for objects housed here? (Example: segregating objects, ceremonies performed, certain objects off limits.)

Definitions

- **Collections Access** - the museum, guided by its mission, provides public access to its collections while ensuring their preservation.
- **Collections Management Policy** - a set of policies that address various aspects of collections management. This policy defines the scope of a museum’s collection and how the museum cares for and makes collections available to the public. A collections management policy also explains the roles of the parties responsible for managing the museum’s collections.
- **Conservation** - the practice of conserving cultural property for the future.
- **Preservation** - the protection of cultural property through activities that minimize chemical and physical deterioration and damage, preventing loss of informational content.
- **Stewardship** - careful, sound and responsible management of that which is entrusted to a museum’s care. This takes into account legal, social and ethical obligations to provide proper physical storage, management and care for the collections. Collections are held in trust for the public and made accessible for the public’s benefit.
- **Traditional Care**- Indigenous curatorial methods intended to protect both the material and spiritual integrity of objects, reflecting a particular community’s religious and cultural protocols regarding the use and treatment of certain kinds of objects. These methods might include the separation of culturally sensitive or sacred objects from general collections, or the segregation of objects based on gender. Access to certain types

of objects may be restricted to either women or men, elders or religious leaders, particular clans, ceremonial smudging and “feeding” of objects in storage areas or wrapping objects in muslin and storing them in unsealed containers.

That concludes the interview, do you have any final remarks that you would like to include? Again, thank you for taking the time out of your schedule to meet with me. I am truly grateful for your assistance with my research.

Appendix B

Coding Rubric

1. How do these institutions define the curatorial frameworks of preservation, accessibility to collections and stewardship?

Theme	Description	Ak Chin Him Dak Eco	Huhugam Heritage Center	Tohono O’odham Nation Cultural Center & Museum
Preservation	The site mentions protecting cultural objects through activities that minimize chemical and physical deterioration and damage, preventing loss of informational content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount I have learned about the history and culture is really incredible, it’s not really out there anywhere and no one is really teaching it to us so I really believe in what we are doing here to preserve our past. • Traditional homes being re... you know preserved but we don't do that. We don't. Do that because it was brought up to our elders at one time about preserving one to one of them little home sites. But. The elders stated that they didn't. Want that to happen because of the fact that that person is no longer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We're both a federal repository and a heritage center • That is irreplaceable cultural treasures made from the hands of the ancestors. Of. The tribal members. • It’s part of everything that we do. I mean we have I.P.M. and environmental monitoring program high security. Handling guidelines. So mainstream. Practices are part of everything we do and we have found that. That all of those things are also valued. By most community. • Absolutely. I think because I mean we look we look at. I mean we look at it as. The same as 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The museum is very caring of the collection • We really have had priority based on like taking care of the collections but not only the collections but our staff as well and the building and the people who visit the museum • Collecting is something very new to the TO. And so the idea that. We're collecting is one thing and it's something that was done you know like the understanding. You know. Collecting objects. The idea is that you know. You don't collect things. • I think that it's kind of interesting to me that like there is a lot of information,

		<p>here and out of respect for that person or the family that the structure goes back into the ground where it came from. So we respect that and we don't do that.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We do the best we can with what we have. • We try to do the best we can for our collections here. And of course there's always room to learn more. • I would think that we would try and do the best we could to preserve the integrity of the item. 	<p>mainstream museums but then on top of that. It's different when you're caring for your grandmother or grandfather's item. Do you know what I mean or somebody else's? And to us this feels like we're caring for our family items you know all of that. And I think that's different than the mainstream museum. In any major history museum you feel like you're caring for somebody else's grandmother's item, does that make sense.</p>	<p>there are a lot of things being lost in that sense. But at the same time I can understand. What the idea is. So in terms of preservation I don't think that that is a very big priority. I think that. The specifics of where those items are coming from is really important and I think once it gets to you know where people know the provenance and the background</p>
<p>Accessibility to Collections</p>	<p>The site mentions providing public access to its collections while ensuring their preservation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be an educational for the members as well as the youth and the public surrounding us to understand the uniqueness that Ak Chin is. • Our audience for the museum is geared toward our membership not outside visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tribal members are. Our mission is to serve tribal members first. • We have a policy right now that any community member can request. Behind the scenes access we provide it because we want them to know how we're caring for things and to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have some items that are on view. In the main gallery exhibit areas. We do have an artifact lab and there's a window to glance to see what is done there and then we often do tours. • As often as they request it usually • Not very often

		<p>although we do welcome visitors so our focus is mainly is the community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our main audience is our community • If they had an interest they would either come they would come here. We would bring them here. • Very seldom. But we always make it known you know that we're here for them. 	<p>receive their guidance. And so community members. May access. Anything in the back. Other than what has been determined to be culturally sensitive and is in either a special locked cabinet or inappropriate materials up high.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So like I said community members can always request. A visit behind the scenes to see the objects and how we're caring for them. • Well. A lot. In the gallery. Also a lot back here. I mean we're pretty frequently giving tours back here. But less often you know then in the gallery. • And again just to say that we provide more behind the scenes access than mainstream museums normally do. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to Nation members who work at the museum
Stewardship	The site mentions careful, sound and responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You'd treat as if it were your own you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So like I said we are a 36CFR79 federal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There's a lot of TO nation members and

	<p>management of that which is entrusted to a museum’s care.</p>	<p>would want to take care of it. You want to take care of it properly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To me you would treat it just like it's something. You own well you do own it. It is part of you it is part of the community and you want to take care of it the best you know how. For as long as you can. • It’s like that with any of the objects because they’re really putting their trust in us to take care of these things. And if we were to damage them if we were to be disrespectful to their items I think that would kind of break that trust between the museum and the community • Think it's just having respect for the things that you work with and liking what you do. 	<p>repository. So we our goal is to meet. And exceed all those standards. In addition to the cultural care standards of the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museum collection staff in particular. On behalf of the tribal community. • Yeah it’s the exact same thing. Yeah I mean it’s just like there's an incredibly important from just an accountability perspective. You know as it is at all museums. But then multiply that by 100 because it's. The ancestral collections of the people who lived on this land from the beginning of time. I mean it's. An incredible honor and responsibility. 	<p>I often refer to them. When taking care of the collections. In terms of cultural perspective I think that. It's my job to make sure that they're aware of what's going on and what's happening and what needs to happen. But I think. That responsibility also relies on staff members as well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yeah I do think that it kind of gets like their tribal members are responsible for what's there that they do. And they're aware of. Things. So they do speak up and they do try to put best care forward for objects and for the staff in the building. And themselves.
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2. Are “traditional care” methods implemented within the museum?

Theme	Description	Ak Chin Him Dak Eco	Huhugam Heritage Center	Tohono O’odham Nation Cultural Center & Museum
Location/Architecture	Provides examples of site significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being as an eco-museum it bonds preservation of the whole area and any of the members can have an exhibit of something • This was chosen because. It was more in the center • The design of the structure itself it was. Based upon or something that would blend into the community. From the colors that were chosen. To the type of materials that were used. And I think a lot of the buildings now and the communities that are coming up are geared toward that. They're trying to. Blend in with what's here. • We have an amphitheater. They've built these large replicas of ...the Ramada is important for us. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yeah very much this architecture is. Very reflective of. Cultural values and tribal history. And for sure that's the case again with the interior exhibit design that's going to be happening in the New Gallery. Many of the other elements are all very meaningful and have a purpose. • Yeah the river around the berm went just when you're coming up that big round earthen shape. It's supposed to be pottery sherd rising up out of the earth. And then the backside of it. If you look at the back of it when you're going out kind of stone stair stepping down that through terraced farming of the ancestors. You know the ball court great house this is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The museum was picked in that location. Area because it's really close proximity a sacred mountain • When you go to the museum you walk in and there's a lot of windows. And I think that was one of the things that community members wanted people to know when they went to the museum. That they wanted people to know or they wanted a place where people and saw the outside because there was a great connection with being outdoors. So there's a lot of windows in that you know nature, TO specifically a deep connection. • Also with the building itself it is kind of shape like to be a part of the man in the maze basket.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our little wash is supposed to represent. Our wash that's to the west that's Kind of like what Ak Chin means, mouth of the wash. 	<p>Casa Grande and to use it in the? Ruins.</p>	
<p>Materials</p>	<p>Mentions avoidance of or usage of certain materials in object housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little tags that are tied to not on the item but when it's wrapped it's tied 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So anything that we do you know even the use of gloves in the beginning. You know we thought boy this might not. Be a cultural value but it's turned out that it is because it's anything that we do that's deeply respectful and is valued culturally • Open storage which is definitely a cultural value. It's cultural care. • Types of storage materials we you we use a lot of muslin and cotton. Unbleached muslin cotton. Again sensitive objects and our locked cabinet or. Not visually accessible or physically really without. Special equipment. • Acid free boxed system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I that think we try to do as much as we can .there Are some things not considered best practices we have done before which is like little offerings in the collection You know you shouldn't do it's all about some things like. Things that we have done that don't follow The National standard.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filing system with tissue • Oh we don't put object numbers strictly on objects. What. Else. We care for a vast number of vessels that have been reconstructed. We don't actively. Practice that. We could if it's requested by its feels like. Intervention you know I mean we don't we don't we just maintain everything as it's arrived here. 	
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3. What does “traditional care” look like at the museum?

Theme	Description	Ak Chin Him Dak Eco	Huhugam Heritage Center	Tohono O’odham Nation Cultural Center & Museum
Respect	Mentions ways in which personal or cultural attributes of respect are implemented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the elders were kind of leery about all exhibiting arts and crafts the things that would was their concern or human remains and funerary objects and sensitive objects. So we had to, as we were in the learning process we had to explain to them that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What they consider sensitive and those things are. Stored separately they are inaccessible they don't even come into our at all into our decision about what might be exhibit able. And then we also have elders come in and review everything. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making sure that there is a Practitioner that. Comes in or an elder who kind of gets guidance • You want people to feel welcome and not like they stumbled upon something they shouldn't have like

		<p>it would not be that way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lot of items to the ancient items the Hohokam that we have here we never we never really saw some of them are buried. But at the request of the community we have to respect those items. We can't show them to the public. • For some of the reburial items to traditionally wouldn't be handled by women. Of course sometimes they can. But when we do our reburials they are only attended by men. Women would have to stay back. • Items she has on display are both in O'odham and English. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For me cultural care is a. It's a forever thing. It's an everyday thing. It's not written in a policy • We all just have great love and respect you know for the objects and for traditional culture. 	<p>there was a surprise in there.</p>
<p>Spiritual</p>	<p>Seeking assistance in spiritual guidance, permission or inserts personal belief</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We've had traditional spiritual people come in and not only bless the room bless them you know for the materials and then also the individuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • But blessings when particularly when new collections come the regular blessings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We consult with cultural people I guess and make determinations at that point. Before we handle • Well I've had recommendations

		<p>handling these items.</p>		<p>for that. Like. Seasonal type objects and it's like during the winter summer and then make them available if not you know put them away and is what I've had before and just making sure that there is cleaning done. Spiritual cleans. To. Clean the place out in.</p>
<p>Cultural Values</p>	<p>Mentions values that are upheld by individual or site</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So it's not just we're here giving tours and doing exhibits but we're actively being involved in the community life as well • We've all grown up with stories and teachings about how we should behave and treat things. And I think that comes out a lot in our work when we're doing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We worked with language to. And they really did the work to begin to create. Agreed upon terms for a baskets for particular shapes and designs and tools and techniques. And we really do want to prioritize O'otham and Pee Posh and start to use that in the database it's a goal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is O'odham language used in our database. And then. There's some speakers on staff. So they use that Terminology. There • The museum HimDag Ki translates to culture house we want to since we are cultural center museum I want to make sure. That's a Priority. Even in the naming of the museum. They wanted to make sure that our cultural center was put first before the museum in a sense that you know that was something that

				<p>was very strong. There was all about Himdag, how you think, believe how are you. Considerate of others. You know them. You know I think that's one of the most important things there. How you approach different things in other people as well and their beliefs that come. Along with that as well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Past, present and future • And I think that a women in the field have it maybe a little bit harder in that sense because in their idea of roles and responsibilities. • And where I'm coming from it's like you have to have a certain mindset. Can't be some other space. You have to be considerate and that where women's strong point comes from. You know you. Have to be considerate of all these different things have to be
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				<p>respectful. And I think that's really important. And I think a lot of it is just doing in your heart that you're giving the best care and being as thoughtful as you can be.</p>
<p>Community Input</p>	<p>Seeking guidance of community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was originally established to house the artifacts found within the community but it's grown to be something that actively involves the community in the exhibits. So we encourage people to share their stories. We encourage people to bring in artifacts. If you go through our exhibit now a lot of the things that we have up are from community member's clothes that they've worn items that they made. So this building is here. To tell our story really. And it's very different from some other museums where you have 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There's a lot of I mean most of the staff members are tribal members and so there's a lot of sensitivity right from the beginning of a decision of whether or not to display something once staff have made selections than what the tribal historic preservation office their entire staff will come and review everything they've already given us guidelines about. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Or the elders • It was really interesting to hear about the history of the museum, how it opened the things that led up to how that museum had been there and the involvement of the community. It is to me I think that's something that really. Resonates with me in the idea of a museum being there for community and listening to its community. From the. Very get go. We've had community input as to what goes on exhibit. community curators

		<p>outsiders coming in and they're doing research from an outsider point of view. All of us live here and we grew up here and we're a part of this community. So it's not that we're telling their story we're telling our own story it makes it that much more important for us to do a good job</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We try to consult a lot too with the elders almost everything that happens goes through the elders. • As well as our tribal council 		
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